

quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2018

ELDER'S DIGEST

PREACHING:
AN ESSENTIAL, CENTRAL, SPIRITUAL
DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP



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EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

SUBSCRIPTION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: One-year subscription, US\$18.00. Three-year subscription, US\$47.00. Please subscribe at www.eldersdigest.org or send check to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. Please send address changes to garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

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THE REASON FOR EVERYTHING

What is Christmas all about? Although December 25 is only a symbolic date, we know that Christmas has to do with Jesus Christ's arrival on Planet Earth. Why did He come? Why was He born? What led Him to leave the comforts of heaven to appear in the flesh on this dark and dreary planet?

One of your most important tasks as a church pastor, elder, or leader is to teach your flocks about who Jesus is and why He came. So, it is especially appropriate during the Christmas season to ask again why the Incarnation took place. Why did Jesus visit this planet, and what did He seek to do while here?

Christian leaders must get Christmas right. They must have a clear grasp of what the Bible says about the first coming of Christ. If we get this wrong, we will get everything else about Christianity wrong as well.

During the Christmas season, the phrase "Jesus is the reason for the season" is repeated often. While this is true, the reality is that Jesus is the reason for all

seasons. Luke 2:11 reminds everyone the reason for the season, saying, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

With the Christmas season rapidly approaching, I hope that you will take time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. He willingly came to this earth to die on the cross for our sins. That's right! He loves us that much!

But Jesus is not just the reason for the season; He's the reason for everything good. So then, what is the reason for Christmas? We are also the reason He came. We are the reason He died.

As you celebrate Christmas, remember its real purpose. It isn't just a time to reflect on the Baby born in Bethlehem so long ago. That Baby was God in the flesh. He was born to die for you and me. Jesus was so willing to do whatever was required to redeem us from Satan and sin that He humbled Himself even unto death on a cross! That is what Christmas is all about!

So, during this season, remember that Jesus is the reason for the season! This Christmas, take out your Bible, pray that God will speak to you, and let His words inspire in you the spirit of Christmas, honoring Jesus Christ with your life, all year long. Merry Christmas!



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

DEACONS: PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL AND WINNING SOULS >PART 4



It is important to note the impact that deacons made on the first-century Christian church. After they were elected, Acts 6:7 records, “The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.” With great insight, Ellen G. White attributed this growth experience to the work of the deacons. She stated:

“This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success.”¹

David S. Dockery concludes that “the selection of the

seven [deacons] started the church on its world evangelism mission.”²

These statements indicate that, in addition to addressing the physical needs of the poor, the deacons of the early church proclaimed the gospel and won converts to the church, as did the apostles. The Book of Acts gives undisputable evidence of this fact, as it portrays the ministry of deacons Philip and Stephen. Although there is no biblical record that proves that the other deacons proclaimed the gospel and won converts, neither is there any record that proves otherwise. According to 1 Timothy 3:9, one of the qualifications necessary to serve as a deacon is to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. This includes being “a well-informed Bible student.”³ This would suggest that all of the deacons were expected to share their faith verbally.

Philip is portrayed as an effective evangelist and Bible worker. In Acts 21:8, he is referred to as “Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven . . .” As an evangelist, he conducted a public evangelistic meeting in the city of Samaria with tremendous success (Acts 8:5-8). Ellen White stated, “Philip’s work in Samaria was marked with great success, and, thus encouraged, he sent to Jerusalem for help. The apostles now perceived more fully the meaning of the words of Christ, ‘Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.’ Acts 1:8.”⁴

Philip also had the skills of a Bible worker: to teach the Scriptures to a one-person audience. After completing the meeting in Samaria, he was instructed by the angel of the Lord to go into the desert of Gaza. There, he met an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the Scriptures. Philip explained the Scriptures to him and baptized him (Acts 8:34-38).

Stephen is another example of a deacon who won converts to the church. Acts 6:8 gives this account of Stephen: “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Unfortunately, Stephen faced great opposition because of his work and was stoned to death (Acts 7:58-60); however, the infamous Saul witnessed Stephen’s courage and was convicted. Ellen White indicated that God chose Saul “to take the place of the martyred Stephen, to preach and suffer for His name, and to spread far

and wide the tidings of salvation through His blood.”⁵ Therefore, Stephen witnessed through his life and his word—and also through his death.

The implication of the deacons in the first-century Christian church proclaiming the gospel and winning souls for today’s deacons is that there is a potential for an explosion of new members added to the church. Deacons who have the gift of evangelism can conduct public meetings—home meetings, hall meetings, church meetings, and prophecy seminars. They can also serve as Bible workers in meetings conducted by their pastor or guest evangelist. This would reduce the expense of hiring outside Bible workers. ED

¹ Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 90.

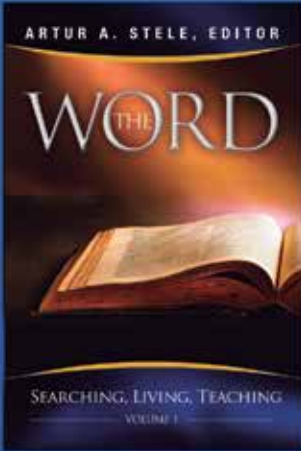
² David S. Dockery, “Acts 6–12: The Christian Mission Beyond Jerusalem,” in *Review and Exposition* 87 (Summer 1990): 424.

³ “Faith,” in *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:299-300.

⁴ Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

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The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching

Arising from the International Bible and Mission Conferences held worldwide, this book is a first! Designed to provide busy pastors and teachers with the best thinking on current topics of discussion including the nature of inspiration, the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, the Trinity, the Incarnation as a model for mission, contextualization, and many more. Several chapters are also devoted to key issues in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Altogether, the book’s nineteen chapters represent clear and concise treatments of the most important subjects for Seventh-day Adventists today by sixteen well-known authors, teachers, and church leaders.





PREACHING: AN ESSENTIAL, CENTRAL, SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP

The church of Jesus Christ is His body, bride, temple, army, flock, and family. It is a vibrant community sometimes referred to among Christians as a great ship traversing the stormy seas of life where Satan, like the iceberg that sunk the Titanic, threatens to derail and destroy its designated mission to seek and save the lost. Preachers are divinely appointed pilots of this ship, and the congregation is the anointed crew. There's perhaps no greater privilege or responsibility than to be called to be a leader of this great ship. While the Bible provides some challenging requirements for Christian leadership, Ellen G. White noted that "the Lord does not leave the ship one moment to be steered by ignorant pilots."¹

When it comes to preaching as an essential, central, spiritual leadership dimension, "what is needed today is not a new gospel but men and women who can restate the gospel of the Son of God in terms that will reach the very heart of our problems. Today, people are flinging the truth overboard along with the terms. Why should we not become workers who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth to our own people? The majority of orthodox ministers are hopelessly useless, and the unorthodox seem to be the only ones who are used. We need men and women who are saturated with the truth of God who can restate the old truth in terms that appeal to our day."²

For spiritual leaders, there are times when deconstruction is helpful to create reconstruction of a new life in the Word. Familiarity with a theology of preaching (1) helps the preacher decide what significance should be attached to research, sermon preparation, and delivery; (2) shows that the methodology of "how" to preach, under which most preachers are trained, seldom, if ever, answers the question, "How can or will they preach and lead unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:15a); (3) clarifies for the preacher what leadership does for theology and vice versa, so that sermons are not endless methodological rules and formulas or rhetorical gymnastics; and (4) "theology's exposition of the faith and its openness to the world corresponds with preaching's dual responsibility to the word and the world."³

There are "major issues within a theology of preaching, including the authority [or leadership] responsibilities

“THE OFFICE OF THE PREACHER IS IDEALLY PRESERVED FOR THOSE WHO ARE CAPABLE OF CAREFUL AND FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION OF THE TRADITIONS OF THE CHURCH.”

of the preacher, the relationship of the Bible to preaching, and the historical, social, and liturgical contexts of preaching.”⁴ Additionally, expectations of leadership in preaching range from proclaiming the Word of God, to liberating the oppressed, to providing pastoral counseling on a group scale. Although this range is broad, some experts suggest three major groupings: (1) preaching principally is to play a role in the sanctification of the people of faith; (2) preaching’s primary role is in the justification of human beings before God;⁵ and (3) good preachers are also good leaders, although the reverse is seldom expected. David M. Greenhaw suggests that “the office of the preacher is ideally preserved for those who are capable of careful and faithful interpretation of the traditions of the church. He or she is to have enough training and character to promote a fitting Christian style of life, to explicate the sources of the Christian faith and apply them meaningfully to the present setting.”⁶ Preachers who are called to these responsibilities are also expected to be human and holy, but tend to be either human or holy. Both extremes are detrimental to potential spiritual leadership and the growth of a congregation.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN AND HOLY

Jesus calls us to follow Him, and He was human and holy: “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are” (human) and “yet without sin” (holy). Being human, “Jesus did not die a death with dignity but a death endured, screaming to a God who did not answer. Jesus paid the price. He became utterly poor. In this total renunciation, Jesus professed what it means to be human. He endured our lot. He came to us where we really were and stood with us, struggling with His whole heart to have us say yes to our innate poverty.”⁷ But it’s not a material poverty; it’s a poverty of spirit (Matt. 5:3) that drives one to total dependence on God. “How does this poverty of spiritism [sic] reflect itself in day-to-day living?” asked Brennan Manning. He answers with an invaluable description of a great leader: “In conversation, the poor man always leaves the other person feeling, ‘My life has been enriched by talking with you.’ And it has. He is not all exhaust and no intake. He doesn’t impose himself on another; he doesn’t overwhelm him with his wealth of insights; he doesn’t try to convert him by concussion with one sledgehammer blow of the Bible after another. He listens well because he realizes he is poor and has much to learn from others. His poverty enables him to enter the existential world

of the other, even when he cannot identify with the world. Being poor, he knows how to receive and can express appreciation and gratitude for the slightest gift.”⁸ To be holy is one of God’s commands (Lev. 11:44). Because holiness is to the spiritual life what breathing is to the physical life, it wasn’t a principle to be observed only by Moses and the Israelites during their exodus, for this injunction is repeated in 1 Peter 1:1, 15.

Despite these biblical admonitions for holiness, some who claim Christianity as their faith and leadership as their gift have little or no concept of what it means to “be holy.” In fact, a survey conducted by the Barna Research Group found the idea of holiness baffling to most church-attending Americans—both preachers and congregants. It concluded that they were and remain confused, if not daunted, by the concept.⁹

The biggest challenge to practicing holiness is “self.” Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he/she must deny [say no to, absolutely repudiate] self and take up his/her cross and follow Me” (Mark 8:34, amplification mine). According to A. W. Tozer, this “self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by instruction. As well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us” because “self can live unrebuked at the very altar. It can watch the bleeding victim die and not be in the least affected by what it sees. It can fight for the faith of the Reformers and preach eloquently the creed of salvation by grace, and gain strength by its efforts. To tell the truth,” he emphasized, “it seems actually to feed upon orthodoxy and is more at home in a Bible Conference than in a tavern. Our very state of longing after God may afford it an excellent condition under which to thrive.”¹⁰ However, “let us beware of tinkering with our inner life in hope ourselves to rend the veil. God must do everything for us. Our part is to yield and trust. We must confess, forsake, repudiate the self-life, and then reckon it crucified.”¹¹ Two practices for the repudiation of the self-life can be named among Christian leaders.

First is a negative autosoterism. This is a combination of two Greek words: *autos* (self) and *soter* (salvation) or the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted by God alone (Rev. 12:10) without human participation or intervention, unlike *sozo*, the temporal, human, and divine partnership of deliverance from sin. It is a naturalistic religious belief that one can save oneself, based on one’s natural powers to accomplish everything God requires for salvation. Preachers who practice autosoterism, this most pernicious false religious doctrine that proposes that humans are capable of doing what only God can do, are also authoritarian leaders.

Second is the prayer of relinquishment. “We learn the Prayer of Relinquishment in the school of Gethsemane. Gaze in adoring wonder at the scene. The solitary figure etched against gnarled olive trees. The bloodlike sweat falling to the



ground. The human longing: 'Let this cup pass.' The final relinquishment: 'Not my will but yours be done' (Luke 22:39-46). We do well to meditate often on this unparalleled expression of relinquishment."¹² This type of prayer is a giving up of all rights to oneself to God. It "is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope. We have no fatalist resignation. We are buoyed up by a confident trust in the character of God. Even when all we see are tangled threads on the backside of life's tapestry, we know that God is good and is out to do us good always. That gives us hope to believe we are the winners, regardless of what we are being called upon to relinquish. God is inviting us deeper in and higher up. There is training in righteousness, transforming power, new joys, deeper intimacy."¹³ This can be the source of strength for a spiritual leader.

HOW BEING HUMAN AND HOLY AFFECTS THE PREACHER AS A LEADER

First, the preacher should be as intense about worship as she or he is about preaching. If and when "worship lies lower down the priority list behind preaching, leadership, pastoral care, and administration . . . hubris plagues the act of preaching; rightly convinced of preaching's importance, preachers can wrongly become self-important."¹⁴ This trend can tempt preachers to think more highly of themselves and usurp the role of God among His people instead of plumbing the depths of Scripture to bring out the beautiful gems of wisdom to transform worshippers. According to Jeff Crittenden, Walter Brueggemann passionately declared that it captures their imagination and reshapes their experience of the world in such a way that justice, compassion, right relations, and hope abound. Crittenden also referred to Augustine's statement that the preacher's responsibility as leader is to educate, delight, and persuade. Affirming this, Karl Barth is reported to have said that to function legitimately as a human and holy ambassador of Christ, the preacher should have the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other.

Second, the preacher should show that he or she is human by preaching hope and practicing grace with loving

understanding through life's many transitions. "Preaching through transitions demands that the preachers be carefully tuned into the context of the community they are serving."¹⁵ Times of grief and loss are some of the most difficult and dreaded responsibilities of pastoral leadership. They should be used to: (a) honor the memory of the loved one with authentic vignettes of his or her life; (b) comfort the bereaved in their loss with a homily or short sermon, not with a long evangelistic sermon to capture the minds of people who would not otherwise come to church; and (c) avoid controversial theological discourses. A good leader points to the biblical promises of Jesus Christ that death will one day be overcome (1 Cor. 15:26). While visitation and homilies are important tools, counseling and compassionate conversation also bring relief to those going through painful transitions.

Weddings are happier occasions, but they are transitions that require as much sensitivity and preparation as funerals. "The celebration and blessing of a marriage presents the preacher with a unique opportunity. The ambiguity of the marriage ceremony, in which secular and sacred elements combine, challenges the preacher's imagination, pastoral skills, and powers of communication."¹⁶ Weddings are also great opportunities for a spiritual leader to demonstrate that he or she is both human and holy.

Now more than ever, what we need is spiritual leadership through preaching that helps hearers make transitions "from what was toward what is emerging in their personal lives."¹⁷

EO

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 42.

² Oswald Chambers, *Approved Unto God*, 19.

³ Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching*, 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, 477, 478.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 478.

⁷ *Souvenirs of Solitude*, 90.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/162-the-concept-of-holiness-baffles-most-americans>.

¹⁰ *The Pursuit of God*, 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹² *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁴ *Preaching As Worship: An Integrative Approach to Formation in Your Church*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 426.

¹⁷ *Three Goals for Preaching in Our Context*, 41, 42.

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SAME-SEX UNIONS

Over the past several decades the Seventh-day Adventist Church has felt it necessary to clearly state in various ways its position in regards to marriage, the family, and human sexuality. These subjects are at the heart of many pressing issues facing society. That which for centuries has been considered to be basic Christian morality in the marriage setting is now increasingly called into question, not only in secular society but within Christian churches themselves.

The institutions of marriage and family are under attack and facing growing centrifugal forces that are tearing them apart. An increasing number of nations are not only debating the topic of “same-sex unions,” but some have already passed various pieces of legislation, thus making it a world issue. The public discussion has engendered strong emotions. In light of these developments, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is clearly restating its position.

We reaffirm, without hesitation, our long-standing position as expressed in the Church’s Fundamental Beliefs: “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.”¹ Though “sin has perverted God’s ideals for marriage and family,” “the family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any human relationship,” and thus “families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships” (An Affirmation of Family, 1990).² God instituted “marriage, a covenant-based union of two genders [male and female] physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as ‘one flesh.’” “The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is . . . the only morally appropriate focus of genital or related intimate sexual expression.” “Any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal” (An Affirmation of Marriage, 1996).³

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disturbance and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by the entrance of sin into the world. While everyone is subject to fallen human nature, “we also believe that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word” (Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality, 2012).⁴

We hold that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are loved by God. We do not condone singling out any

“MARRIAGE WAS DIVINELY ESTABLISHED IN EDEN AND AFFIRMED BY JESUS TO BE A LIFELONG UNION BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN IN LOVING COMPANIONSHIP.”

group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse. Still, God’s Word that transcends time and culture does not permit a homosexual lifestyle. The Bible’s opposition to same-sex unions/marriage is anchored in God’s plan at creation for marriage (Gen 1:26-28; 2:20-24), in divine legislation (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11), and in Jesus’ explicit confirmation of a permanent, monogamous, and heterosexual marriage relationship (Matt 19:4-6). EO

¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An exposition of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Doctrine 23 on “Marriage and the Family.”

² Public Statement, *An Affirmation of Family*, released July 5, 1990, at the General Conference Session, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³ Statement voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee on April 23, 1996.

⁴ Statement voted by the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, October 17, 2012.

This document was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, October 17, 2012.





ADDING MEMBERS THROUGH STUDIES:

HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT >PART 3 OF 8

Part 2 of this series gave 14 steps the Bible study instructor needs to take before actually opening the Bible with his or her students once in the home where the studies will be given. It related the importance of personal spiritual preparation, a good understanding of the topic to be studied, the best sequence of the studies for these particular students, the importance of reading verses before and after the text under examination, the value of emphasizing the Good News in every teaching, the advantage of always arriving on time, the benefit of sitting around a table in a formal setting, and the importance of beginning with prayer if it won't offend anyone. Part 3 explains the procedures to be followed once the study begins.

Your first study, to a great extent, will set the stage for the continuation of the studies. However, as explained below, it's the mood, the tenor of your voice, the look on your face, and

your diplomacy in dealing with sensitive issues and student remarks that, to a great extent, create an ambience that will prompt the students to desire to continue with the studies.

OPENING AND SHARING THE WORD OF GOD

1. Once you are all seated and have had prayer (if convenient; sometimes, at the first session, not knowing your students well enough, prayer could be uncomfortable for them), then ask everyone to open their Bibles. Be sure to show passion and enthusiasm, as well as reverence and awe, for the Word of God. Your students should learn early on that the Bible is a sacred book.

2. Now you can make a brief statement, like "Today [or tonight/this afternoon] we're going to study about death and what happens when we die [or whatever the study is about]. In other words, where do we go when our time comes?"

IT'S USUALLY GOOD TO BRIEFLY EXPLAIN THE MEANING, BUT IT ISN'T ALWAYS NECESSARY SINCE SOME PEOPLE CATCH ON VERY QUICKLY. YOU WILL HAVE TO BE AWARE OF YOUR STUDENTS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND.

There are many beliefs about what happens to us when we die, but tonight we want to see what the Bible tells us." Don't use the term "Holy Scriptures" with Muslims, since they believe that the only holy book is the Koran; rather, use "Book" or "Taurat" or "Injil." You can use the term Holy Scriptures when you are studying with a Protestant or Evangelical; Catholics and Orthodox believers prefer this term more than "Bible."

3. Announce the first verse. If you are using a prepared study guide, it may list these questions first, then the Bible texts where the answers are found. In any case, all present (including the instructor) should

take turns reading the questions and looking up the texts, and all should fill in the blanks with the answers. If the father is present, ask him to begin by reading the first verse. If the father isn't present, ask the eldest person present to begin. As far as possible, go from eldest to youngest; there may be a hierarchy in that group that you don't know about, so don't take the risk of not following it and possibly offending someone. Also, the father, as the head of the house, should be recognized as the principal person.

4. If clearly there is no hierarchy, you can simply ask who would like to read first.

5. If someone doesn't want to read, even after some light encouragement, don't insist. Unless students really struggle with reading, don't skip them the next time it's their turn. Be patient with them. Never laugh at them. Don't correct their mispronounced words unless it changes the meaning of the thought or verse. You would be surprised and amazed at how many illiterates or semi-illiterates have learned to read by studying in a Bible study group!

6. It is very important to always have a pleasant ring to your voice and a smile on your face. Friendliness and kindness go a long way to keeping a joyful mood in the circle and a desire to continue.

7. When the verse has been read, ask the students what they have understood (and what they don't). Explain what is obviously not understandable for the beginners. Don't expect them to know what a synagogue is, for example, or a Pharisee, or to understand concepts like repentance. People will seldom tell you that they don't understand/follow you; they don't want to lose face, and they think that they understand when actually they don't. Then you can make your comment about the reason why you relate this text to the topic of the study. It's usually good to briefly explain the meaning, but

it isn't always necessary since some people catch on very quickly. You will have to be aware of your students' ability to understand. Always make your explanations as objectively as possible. Never let your voice sound as if it is condemning someone's current beliefs.

8. When you have finished your explanation, ask if there are any questions. Answer the questions as briefly but clearly as possible. If someone asks a question you can't answer, there are at least two possible answers you can give: be honest and say, "I'm sorry, I can't answer that right now, but I'll be glad to bring you the answer next time;" or (and this is the preferred answer) "Let's all look for an answer when we go home and share it with each other next time." This approach looks less like a master-student relationship. You don't want the students to be afraid of you and be intimidated to the point that they're afraid to ask questions.

Furthermore, you don't want the students to think that you are confused or not clear yourself on the viewpoint you are trying to show them or that you are attempting to appear as the great, infallible teacher who arrogantly knows everything. We don't want to cultivate in the church a separation between the specialists and the ignorant. Remember, a little humility goes a long way, as long as you don't appear confused and foolish. Your expertise is that you know the Bible a thousand times better than they do. Otherwise, you are someone just like them, with the difference that you have accumulated some knowledge because of your passion for the truth.

9. During your studies, never scold for not giving the right answer and never argue. If you see an argument developing, look for a way to reduce tensions and terminate the argument. Go on to the next question. You can make a simple statement such as the following to stop an argument: "Let's go on to the next question because I think we will find your answer there or in a further study that we're going to have." Never give the idea that you are on the defensive. Your studies should always have a ring of objectivity, and that should be indicated in the tone of your voice.

10. If a person asks a question totally irrelevant to the current topic under study, you should try to divert that question to a later date, saying, "That's a question that we're going to deal with in a future study. If you don't mind, we'll put it on hold till then."

11. If you make a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it, but don't grovel; admit it with simple elegance. For example, you could say, humbly and with a smile, "I don't claim to be infallible, and sometimes I err unintentionally. If I have confused or disappointed you, I ask your forgiveness." With these few words, you should be able to clear the air.

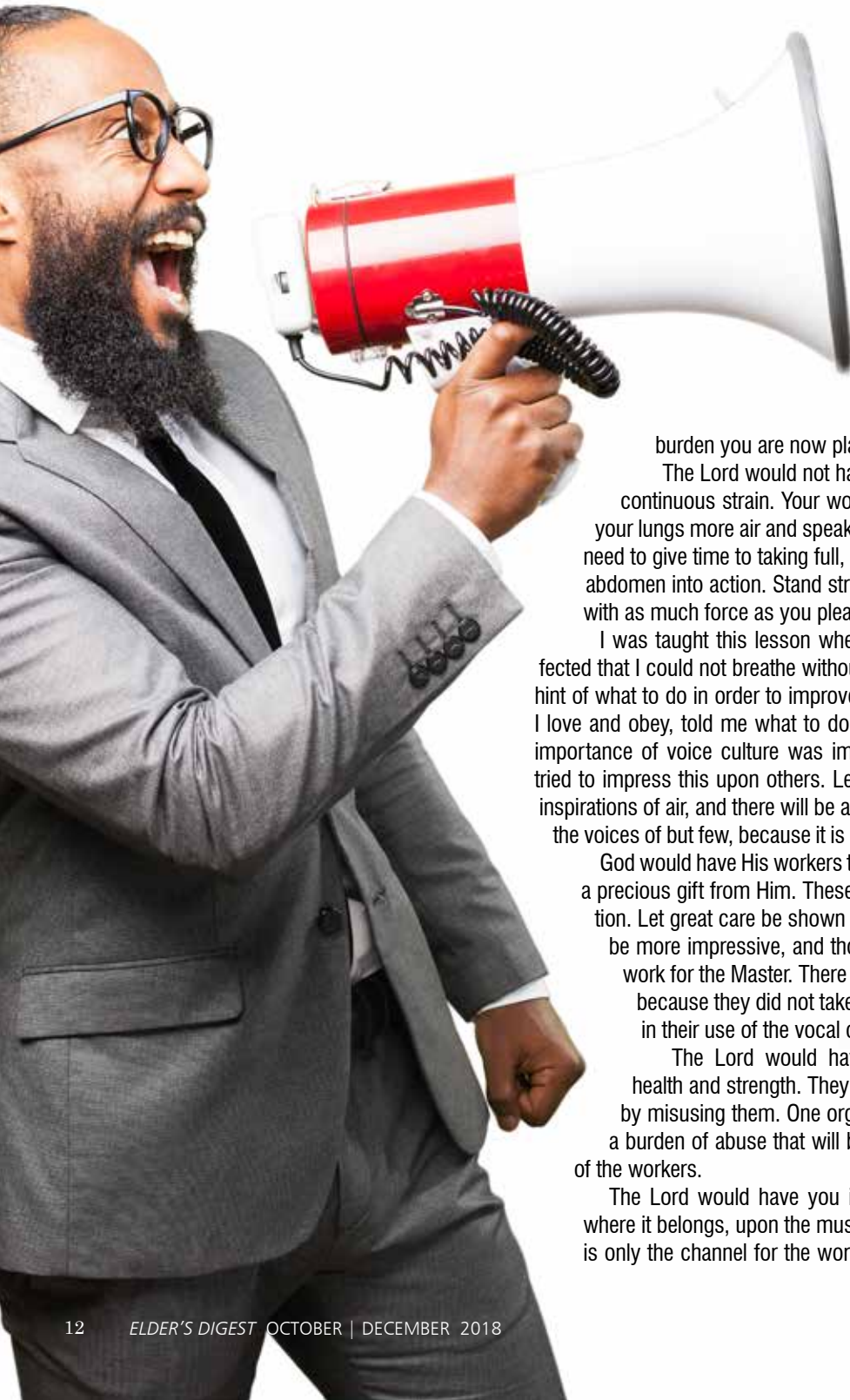
To be continued



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

SPEED AND TONE

>PART 2



VOICE INSTRUCTION FROM GOD

I have words of caution to give you, which I am repeating to you in the night season. I was saying this: "I have a message for you from the Lord. Cultivate your vocal organs. This is your privilege and duty. The voice is a most precious treasure. You often speak too hurriedly. Words are crowded too quickly upon words, and your utterance lacks the clear distinctness that it should have."

Speaking to large congregations as you do, it is your duty to give your vocal organs all the relief possible. When speaking, take deep, full inspirations of air. Use the muscles of the abdomen, and thus put upon them the

burden you are now placing upon the throat and lungs.

The Lord would not have you injure your vocal organs by a long, continuous strain. Your words will be much more forcible if you give your lungs more air and speak fewer words. When you are speaking, you need to give time to taking full, deep inspirations. Bring the muscles of the abdomen into action. Stand straight, breathe deep, and speak your words with as much force as you please.

I was taught this lesson when my throat and lungs were so much affected that I could not breathe without suffering. No human friend gave me any hint of what to do in order to improve, but the great Medical Missionary, whom I love and obey, told me what to do. The directions given me, I give you. The importance of voice culture was impressed upon me, and ever since I have tried to impress this upon others. Let our ministers speak slowly, taking in full inspirations of air, and there will be a melody in their voices that is now heard in the voices of but few, because it is hard to change wrong habits for right ones.

God would have His workers treat their vocal organs with special care, as a precious gift from Him. These organs are not to be abused by overtaxation. Let great care be shown in their use. Then the discourses given will be more impressive, and those who speak will be enabled to do more work for the Master. There are men who have gone down to the grave because they did not take pains to be in harmony with nature's laws in their use of the vocal organs.

The Lord would have His messengers guard sacredly their health and strength. They are not to sacrifice their God-given organs by misusing them. One organ is not to be overstrained, made to bear a burden of abuse that will bring disease and cut short the usefulness of the workers.

The Lord would have you improve in speech by placing the burden where it belongs, upon the muscles of the chest and abdomen. The throat is only the channel for the words. Speak slowly and breathe deeply. This

will enable you to throw out your words with distinctness and volume, while the throat and lungs, instead of being injured, will be strengthened to resist consumptive tendencies.

It is your privilege to take lessons in voice culture, if possible. Voice culture is a study that should find a place in every institution for the education of the youth. Especially is this study essential for those who are preparing themselves to labor as teachers or ministers. In every study the importance of speaking slowly and distinctly, and of placing the burden upon the muscles of the abdomen, should be made prominent. This line of work should be made a specialty in every school. The students should be taught to stand straight, to breathe deeply, and to give the proper emphasis to important words and sentences. . . .

Think of these suggestions. Give them due attention, for the preservation of your life demands this. The human agent is to do all in his power to preserve his health and strength. The minister of the gospel should give the organs of speech special care, giving the throat every advantage, so that it shall not become irritated. He must take time to rest. Then his vocal organs will not be so overworked that they will become diseased beyond remedy.

I must urge you to exercise discretion. You talk hurriedly, and the throat and lungs become wearied and irritated. Elder D was a man of great ability. I did my best to persuade him to be careful of his health, but he would not follow my advice.

He said that he could not enjoy freedom in speaking if he kept the rules which he knew to be essential to the health of his vocal organs. The force of habit was so strong that he did not change. When he was dying, he sent for my husband and me to come and pray for him. While we were with him, he said, "Oh, Sister White, I need not now be dying had I heeded the warnings that you gave me."

NOISE AND HURRY NO EVIDENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Some ministers have fallen into the error that they cannot have liberty in speaking unless they raise their voices to a high pitch and talk loud and fast. Such should understand that noise and loud, hurried speaking are not evidence of the presence of the power of God. It is not the power of the voice that makes the lasting impression. Ministers should be Bible students, and should thoroughly furnish themselves with the reasons of our faith and hope, and then, with full control of the voice and feelings, they should present these in such a manner that the people can calmly weigh them and decide upon the evidences given. And as ministers feel the force of the arguments which they present in the form of solemn, testing truth, they will have zeal and earnestness according to knowledge.

ED

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp 260-264, by Ellen G. White.

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

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REST FOR THE SOUL


We usually think that stress is caused by life's negative pressures or unhappy events. Those are easily recognized. However, sometimes we do not realize that even "good pressures" and working for a good cause, such as in service to God, may result in unhealthy effects of long-standing stress. The key is to evaluate how balanced our lives are. If we are not getting proper rest, our bodies may experience profound physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual damage. We must be reminded that, as ministers in God's service, it is our duty to "put our glass down" for a while and rest. What does it mean to put the glass down?

A lecturer once raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers ranged from 20g to 500g. He replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." He continued, "And that's the way it is with managing the stress and responsibilities in our lives. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as burdens become increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on." As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. And, when you are refreshed, you can carry your responsibilities in a more effective way.

This healthy concept was best exemplified by Christ Himself. He had a perfect sense of when to serve and minister to others and when to stop and rest. In Mark 1:35-38, we read

about a crowd looking for Jesus, seeking to be healed and to listen to His words. But after a long and full day ministering to their needs, Jesus woke up early the next day to rest and commune with God. When the disciples found Him praying and resting under a tree, they told Him, "Master, the multitude is looking for you. . ." Instead of stopping and going to attend to the needs of the crowd, Jesus decided to leave and go to another town. You may ask, "How could He leave that needy multitude?" Jesus knew His mission, and in His daily devotions, the Holy Spirit revealed to Him when to say "Yes" and when to say "No." He had wisdom from above to know when to "put the glass down" for a while.

Sometimes it's easy to be so fully engaged in ministry that we forget to rest our minds, bodies, and souls. As I travel around the world, I have seen many dedicated leaders who find little time for rest. Some even feel guilty when they rest.

We must remember that God never asked us to sacrifice our health and our families as we serve. We must choose to set time aside for rest, to enjoy His presence alone daily, and make time for loved ones and even hobbies. That is an essential part of our ministry and living a healthy life. As we finish this year, we are reminded to follow Jesus' example. May we each seek His wisdom and plan ahead to put our work down as needed, seeking rest in His presence. We can pick it up tomorrow, or a few days later, reenergized to best fulfill His plan for us. 

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WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

In this series of sermons, we are dealing with the biblical truth that, through Christ, the Holy Spirit is God's answer for our world. I will use John 14:16-18 as introduction to this message. Let's read it.

Before we can deal with the fact that the Holy Spirit is God's answer for life, for home, for effective witnessing, and thus for a finished work, we must first seek to learn His specific functions. In this message, the purpose is to show from Inspiration who the Holy Spirit is (as far as it is possible for the human mind to grasp) and to do this not from logic or mere fact but, much more importantly, to understand this through the Christian's faith in Christ and His righteousness.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

First of all, please note the great importance which the Savior placed upon the subject of the Holy Spirit:

"Christ the Great Teacher had an infinite variety of subjects from which to choose, but the one upon which He dwelt most largely was the endowment of the Holy Spirit. What great things He predicted for the church because of this endowment. Yet what subject is less dwelt upon now? What promise is less fulfilled? An occasional discourse is given upon the Holy Spirit, and then the subject is left for after consideration."¹

As we contemplate this statement, we realize that, more than 100 years after it was written, it still appears to be true today! Notice the following statement in which the servant of the Lord was shown even more graphically the need of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives:

"... I seem to be in a meeting, presenting the necessity and importance of our receiving the Spirit. This was the burden of my labor—the opening of our hearts to the Holy Spirit. . . . In my dream a sentinel stood at the door of an important building, and asked every one who came for entrance, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost?' A measuring-line was in his hand, and only very, very few were admitted into the building."²

How much more we need the divine presence of this gift which was purchased for us at infinite cost! Our need is far greater than we imagine to bring about a finished work of character development within us individually, and through the latter rain to also affect this finished work that has been over 170 years in process—and in reality is still far from being completed today.

II. THE GREAT SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

In Genesis 1:1, we read that "God created the heavens and the earth." Who was this God? In some places in Scripture, the reference is to Christ as the Creator (see John 1 and Col. 1). In Hebrews 1:1, 2, it implies that the Father was the Creator with Christ acting as co-Creator; and then, according to Genesis 1, it is the Spirit of God who was the active agent of creation. How do these passages harmonize?

The secret is found in the first verse of the Bible. The word "God" in this verse is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is the plural form of the word and means "two or more." Hence, all the passages are correct, and the Scriptures are trying to tell us that all three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—worked together in the creation of our world. Let us illustrate this even further.

The Old Testament includes many references which indicate that the heavenly Godhead consists of more than one person or personality. In Genesis 1:26 there are three personal pronouns—us, our, and our. Notice also that, in Genesis 3:22 and 11:6, 7 and also in Isaiah 6:8, it is obvious that there is definitely more than one personality indicated.

In the New Testament, it is also clear that there is more than one being intended in the truth of the divine Godhead and that the Holy Spirit is included. Matthew 28:19, 20 associates the Holy Spirit with God the Father and God the Son *as their equal!* Thus, the Trinity is not 1+1+1=3, but rather 1+1+1=1 Godhead with 3 separate personalities. Thus, the Holy Spirit is equally divine with the Father and the Son.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

One of the reasons the Holy Spirit is so mysterious in our thinking is because we think of Him as "It." However, He or Him does not refer to the Holy Spirit as male in contrast to female but rather to denote a personality. According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the Holy Spirit is a person yet does not have a human personality. Notice the following inspired declaration: "We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds."³

"The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of *humanity*, and independent thereof."⁴

You may want to look up the following biblical references which are ascribed to the Holy Spirit indicating that He is a Person—a divine Person:

1. He speaks (1 Tim. 4:1).
2. He intercedes (Rom. 8:26).
3. He testifies (John 15:26).
4. He directs (Acts 16:6, 7).
5. He appoints (Acts 20:28).
6. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3, 4).
7. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30).

Thus we see some of the emotions and actions which are characteristics of personality.

Therefore, it should be clear that the Holy Spirit is not some mystical force or vague influence; rather, He is a Person with the attributes of a divine personality.

We must here remember that in our desire to better understand the Holy Spirit, we must not even attempt to bring Him down to our level. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person—He is God! Notice the following attributes possessed by divinity and specifically attributed to the Holy Spirit:

1. He is *omnipresent*, i.e., present everywhere (Ps. 139:7).
2. He is *omniscient*, i.e., all-knowing (1 Cor. 2:10, 11).
3. He is called "God" (Acts 5:4).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is one very important point to remember whenever one attempts to understand the Holy Spirit. Of course, there must be much prayer but especially in the study of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration declares: "The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. . . . Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden."⁵ Let's pray.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:156, 157.

² *Ibid.*, 109.

³ ———, *Evangelism*, 616.

⁴ ———, *The Desire of Ages*, 669, emphasis supplied.

⁵ ———, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 52.

David Wolkwitz is a retired ordained minister who served as pastor, chaplain, evangelist, administrator, and departmental director. As a speaker, he challenged his audiences to pray daily at 6:15 a.m. for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This sermon is used by permission from the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHAT IS HIS ROLE? – PART 1

This topic will be divided into two messages. In the first one we will study what the special connection of the Holy Spirit was with the Son of God throughout Christ's ministry here on earth; then, in the next sermon we will study the role of the Holy Spirit as He works in perfect harmony and identity with Christ in connection with our salvation.

The overall objective of this message is to show what the role of the Holy Spirit is—Christ's personal representative. In illustrating this through Scripture, we shall notice the perfect interaction between Christ and the Helper that He promised. This interaction was and is so perfect that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are often referred to interchangeably or synonymously; however, this is not to suggest that they are the same person, but rather to show their perfect harmony. We will specifically study Jesus' earthly dependency on this divine member of the Godhead. And finally, we will see that our dependency on the Holy Spirit is synonymous with dependency on Jesus Himself. It is Christ's way of making Himself present in us.

I. JESUS' EARTHLY SOJOURN WAS DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we begin this topic, the following important point will be kept in mind. During His earthly mission, Jesus chose to be completely dependent on the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit; yet this dependency did not in any way exclude or shut out the Father. Instead, the Holy Spirit was the means or the agency by which the Father worked for and through His Son. Let's keep this relationship in mind.

II. JESUS WAS DEPENDENT AT HIS BIRTH

One of the most difficult areas in comprehending the virgin birth of Jesus was the role that the Holy Spirit played. Matthew 1:18, 20 clearly states that the Holy Spirit played a key role. We cannot, of course, understand these details, but when remembering the Holy Spirit's active role in the creation of the world, that He "moved on the face of the waters," then it would follow that the Holy Spirit must have also been the active agent in the creation of the human form of Jesus. And so, even at birth, Jesus was dependent on the divine power of the Holy Spirit.

III. JESUS WAS DEPENDENT AT HIS BAPTISM

According to Scripture, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were shown as being in very close relation-

ship at His baptism. And thus, it was at this central event that the Holy Spirit descended in full measure upon Jesus. Notice John 1:32, 33. Here the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father to guide the Saviour in His earthly sojourn—to enable Jesus in His humanity by making available to Him the very same divine power that is now also available to each one of us!

IV. JESUS WAS DEPENDENT IN THE WILDERNESS

Turn and read both Mark 1:12 and Luke 4:1. Notice here the specific leading of the Holy Spirit in the wilderness temptation experience. It is clear from these passages that the Holy Spirit was directing the activities of the Saviour day by day. Why need this be? Because Jesus knew that human nature was not capable of depending solely on its own wisdom and power. And if one so holy, so perfect, so pure, so wise as Jesus, was so submissive to this divine leading, should not we who are so less than all these attributes, recognize that we must cherish the same submission to the divine leading of God the Holy Spirit?

V. JESUS WAS DEPENDENT TO DO GOOD

The Scriptures record that Jesus "went about doing good." In other words, in His life there was daily evidence that divinity was shining through Him. He healed the sick, the lame, the blind; He brought comfort to the sorrowing; spoke truth to the searching; he was always kind, courteous, and tenderhearted; even the scathing rebuke that He sometimes found it necessary to give, He gave with tears in His voice. Truly, Jesus went about doing good. Have you ever wished that every thought you thought, every word you spoke, every action, every expression on your face were like Jesus? Have you ever felt a longing desire that you could respond in all situations just like Jesus would? The key is the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We can, we can, fellow traveler. That's exactly why Jesus came—to make it possible. And He not only came to show that it is possible, but He also wants us to become acquainted with the "how," or in other words, the "Who." Notice Acts 10:38 where it says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him."

Can you see then that it was specifically because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was enabled as a human being to do these things? Our "doing good," our radiating the

love of Jesus in every facet of our lives, is not the result of more determined effort on our part to "try harder" to do good; rather it is the result of being consciously dependent on our Helper, the Holy Spirit, who works in us to "will and to do of His good pleasure."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit is Christ's representative commissioned to bring to us the presence and experience of Jesus. In John 16:14, 15 Jesus spoke clearly what the role of the Holy Spirit was to be. This assurance of the Helper was given by Jesus to His disciples for all time in order to assure us that He would not leave us as helpless orphans but, rather, through the indwelling of His Spirit, Jesus was promised to dwell in each one of us. And in reality this would make Him closer to each one than if He had remained bodily here on earth. Notice the following three quotations which illustrate how completely the Holy Spirit brings Jesus' presence to us:

"Christ is represented by His Holy Spirit today in every part of His great moral vineyard. He will give the inspiration of His Holy Spirit to all those who are of a contrite spirit" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 215).

"The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805).

"To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ, when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 21).

Do you want this kind of relationship? Do you desire to have an experience with the Saviour that, through His Spirit, He will actually imbue or live out within you the very attributes of Christ? You can experience this day by day as you continue to claim the promise found in Luke 11:13. Turn there now and read this verse as we bring this topic to a close. Remember, the Holy Spirit is there for the asking!



David Wolkwitz is a retired ordained minister who served as pastor, chaplain, evangelist, administrator, and departmental director. As a speaker, he challenged his audiences to pray daily at 6:15 a.m. for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This sermon is used by permission from the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHAT IS HIS ROLE? – PART 2

John 14-17

In this message we will study the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily life and salvation and how in this work Christ and the Holy Spirit are perfectly united. Thus, in reality, we have very special help available to aid us in living the daily Christian life, as well as working through us to be a witness to the world. In this message we will continue to study the role of the Holy Spirit as He works in perfect harmony and identity with Christ in connection with our salvation and then, through us, to our neighbors and friends.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT, HELPER AND SUCCESSOR OF CHRIST

Let's begin by noticing the three chapters of John 14, 15, and 16. [Read the verses you want to emphasize.] These three chapters are a vivid and detail attempt of Jesus to make clear to the twelve disciples, as well as to us, just what He was so concerned about in the upper room after instituting the Lord's Supper.

In John 14:16 the Saviour uses the term "another Helper" when referring to the Holy Spirit. For Jesus to have emphasized the word "another," surely indicates a very complete harmony and unity between Himself and the Holy Spirit; no one else could so perfectly represent the Saviour. And hence the daily study of the life and character of Jesus will increase our desire for more of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our own life. For it is through Him that our life is filled with more and more of the likeness and attributes of Jesus.

In the next chapter (John 17) Jesus makes a promise regarding the Holy Spirit which indicates that there is to be a change in function, a new capacity. He told the disciples that this special gift would no longer just dwell *with* them; instead the Holy Spirit would actually dwell *within* each of them. This promise is for you and me and begins at Bible baptism as we shall see later.

And so it was necessary for Jesus to leave this earth in order that His power might be displayed through each of His followers. The depth of Jesus' love for each of us takes on new meaning as we realize that the Saviour is closer to us now than when He walked here on earth, all because of the person of the Holy Spirit. Notice this in the following inspired statement:

"Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No

one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. *By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high*" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669. Italics supplied).

Due to the fact that Christ is closer to us now than even when He walked on earth, we can understand that thus we need an increasing measure of this gift if we desire to walk closer to the Saviour each day.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT ANOINTED JESUS TO FULFIL HIS MISSION

Early in His ministry on earth Jesus preached one day at the worship service in Nazareth where He had grown up as a boy. On this occasion He very clearly told what His mission here was to be. The story is recorded in Luke 4:16-20. Verse 18 says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. . . He has anointed Me to..." He quotes an inspired passage from Isaiah 61 listing six things that the Holy Spirit had indicated was to be His work. They are:

1. To preach the gospel to those who are "poor" in whatever way.
2. To heal those who grieve, are depressed or discouraged.
3. To preach the assurance of His deliverance to captives of Satan.
4. The recovery of sight to those who are blind.
5. To set the oppressed or downtrodden free.
6. To preach or announce the time when God would accomplish this.

In the passage just described, Jesus clearly states what Power it is that enables Him to accomplish these tasks—it is the Holy Spirit.

III. DIVINE AGENCY TO REPRESENT CHRIST

The Holy Spirit is Christ's chosen Agency to reveal Jesus and to be His representative in every need we have. Therefore, to suggest complete dependency on the Holy Spirit is to suggest complete dependency on the Saviour Himself. Note the following inspired thoughts:

"When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid those who against great odds are fighting the

good fight of faith. *Ever remember that Jesus is your helper*" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 17. Italics supplied).

These quotations make it very clear that the role of the Holy Spirit is to bring Jesus to our aid. The last sentence of this last quotation shows the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit for our good; both are called our "helper." Consequently, as we submit to be molded and controlled by His special gift, the Holy Spirit, we are experiencing the work of Jesus in our lives.

There is one additional quotation that I would like to share with you which indicate how very essential is our need of the Holy Spirit. They reveal that whether it is for salvation itself or for living a consistent Christian life, the aid of the Holy Spirit is clearly indispensable.

"He may have wisdom to overcome an opponent; but wise unto salvation, he cannot possibly be without the agency of the Holy Spirit" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 240).

According to *The Desire of Ages*, p. 175, we cannot even repent without the aid of the Holy Spirit. So, the reason why we are invited to depend so completely on the Holy Spirit is because He is the Agency whereby Jesus is able to aid all of us at the same time. The two of them are perfectly in accord; along with our heavenly Father they work not only in the forgiveness of sin but in the restoration of His image/character in each one of us.

CONCLUSION

"Let none leave the love of Christ out of their labors, but let each ask himself the question, Is my life a consistent life? Am I guided by the Holy Spirit?" (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 362). Perhaps now we are beginning to grasp the importance of being "Spirit-filled" for to be "Spirit-filled" is to be filled with the presence of Jesus. Would you be willing to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit worldwide? Let's pray.

EO

David Wolkwitz is a retired ordained minister who served as pastor, chaplain, evangelist, administrator, and departmental director. As a speaker, he challenged his audiences to pray daily at 6:15 a.m. for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This sermon is used by permission from the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

THE EVERLASTING FATHER

Isaiah 9:6

Some of us have wonderful memories of our childhood and our fathers. But for others, fatherhood is a painful thought. For some, their dads were not very good to them, and they live with the scars from that: the hurt, the wounds, the damage.

Still, for others, it wasn't that dad was bad or good—he was just *gone*. He was absent, either physically or, perhaps worse, emotionally. For a few, dad wasn't a part of their lives because of death, and they may have struggled with the feeling of having been abandoned, even though they know it wasn't their fault. Speaking to the theme of fatherhood will indeed strike a deep chord in your heart, either painful or pleasant.

And yet here is the good news of the gospel: Jesus Christ helps us know God as our Father, not just our Father, but our *everlasting* Father, One who will never leave nor forsake us, One who is always there for us, One who has us in the palm of His hand for ever and ever.

In fact, it is the distinctive mark and privilege of a Christian to know God as everlasting Father. This is at the heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. You know God as Father. You don't grope in the dark looking for some higher spiritual power or chase after some false and fickle deity. No, because of Jesus, this child to be born, this Son to be given (Is. 9:1-7), you confess that "there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:6).

I. WE ONLY RELATE TO GOD AS FATHER THROUGH ADOPTION

Jesus enjoys a unique relationship with God. But here's the truly beautiful thing: Because of what Jesus has done for us—in His life, death, and resurrection—He enables us to enter into a relationship with God as our Father: indeed, our everlasting Father.

He opens the way to us through *adoption*. We only know God as Father because of Jesus Christ His Son, and because He sends His Spirit into our hearts to enfold us into the family of God as children of the heavenly Father (Matt. 11:25-27).

Some of you know that within the adoption community, a wonderful phrase is used to talk about the hope that adoptive families provide for orphaned children. Many orphans will be passed from family to family, sometimes three, four, or more times—which is very difficult for the child, leaving them with a profound sense of insecurity and uncertainty about their place and value in the world.

Adoptive families now talk about being the forever family for these children. The bond of adoption, while not the same as the bond of blood and biology, is nevertheless just as permanent.

Did you know that God has a *forever family*, of which He is everlasting Father? Our adoption is guaranteed for all eternity; we are, by faith in Jesus, part of God's forever family.

II. THE BENEFITS OF BEING ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD

Becoming a child of God is the highest privilege and honor that can be imagined. Because of it, we have a new relationship with God and a new standing before Him.

Being a child of God, adopted "through faith in Christ Jesus" is the source for our hope, the security of our future and the motivation to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph. 4:1).

As children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we are called to a higher standard, a different way of life and a greater hope.

As we come to understand the true nature of God as revealed in the Bible, we should be amazed that He not only allows us, but even encourages us, to call Him "Abba Father." It is amazing that a holy and righteous God, who created and sustains all things, who is the only all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God, would allow sinful humans to call Him "Daddy."

III. JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY: "OUR FATHER!"

To know God as your everlasting Father is a privilege beyond description! I love the way 1 John puts it, with the right sense of wonder and amazement: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (3:1). What a privilege, what a gift, what a grace!

When you know God as Father, not simply as a cosmic force, it changes the way you *address* God; it changes the way you pray. You learn to look to the Father in prayer with a childlike boldness. This is how Jesus taught us to pray.

But we also learn to approach God in prayer with vulnerable dependence: that is, when we find ourselves in a difficult spot—pain, fear, doubt, or hardship—we learn to cry out to God with the words, "Abba, Father!" (Matt. 7:7-11).

Often, when difficulty comes into the life of a Christian, they can feel like God is farther away, less available, or less intimate. But don't miss the ex-

ample of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed in this way: "*Abba*, Father ... everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15).

CONCLUSION

Recently, Mohamed El-Erian, the CEO of an investment company that manages over one trillion dollars in assets made news when he quit his job. He didn't leave because of a shady business deal or corporate conflicts. He left for his family. His daughter was starting to be rebellious and when questioned about why she wasn't listening, she came back with a list of over 20 times in the last few months when her father had chosen work over her.

El-Erian had valid reasons for missing her first day of school, the many soccer matches, and parent-teacher conferences. Travel, important meetings, and emergency situations were to be expected because he ran an international company. Making work a priority was helping the business grow, but at what cost? He realized that he no longer had a relationship with his daughter—someone he loved very much. Someone who was counting on him to be there. When he realized the true cost of his job, El-Erian quit so he could focus on being a dad.¹

Just like El-Erian, God is a father. But even though He is the father to every person on earth, He is the daddy that will never miss anything in our lives. God is always there. God was there when you were born, learned to walk, and tied your shoes. He was there for your first day of school, first date, and first break up. He was there when you were baptized and when your parents passed away. He rejoices when you rejoice and cries with you in your sorrows. He sits with you in the hospital room when you have your first child and when you are diagnosed with cancer. He was there to lead you to your job and introduce you to your friends. He was with you when you got married, when you celebrated your 25th anniversary, or in your singleness. He delights in being by your side in good times and bad, in trials and victories. God—the everlasting Father—is always with you!

¹ Mohamed A. El-Erian, "Father and Daughter Reunion," http://www.worth.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6722:father-and-daughter-reunion&catid=4:live (accessed October 15, 2014).

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HOLY TO THE LORD

IS IT CORRECT TO RETURN TITHE TO ANY ORGANIZATION OR INDIVIDUAL WHO CLAIMS TO BE DOING THE WORK OF THE LORD?



Photo: Anderson Loyola

Money is one of those things that we consider ours in a particular way. It represents the fraction of our lives that we accumulate through the investment of our energy and time. It is life preserved in liquid form; that is to say, we exchange it for almost any goods we may want or enjoy. Therefore we usually don't want others to tell us how to use it or what to do with it. For believers, life is a gift from God, whether in the form of the breath of life or in the form of money. Therefore, it is to be used to the glory of God. With these comments as a background, let me address your specific concern.

1. The Owner of Tithe: Tithe is a percentage of the money that reaches us as the result of the investment of our time and energy. It is therefore natural to conclude that it is ours and that we should decide how to administer it. Here the Scripture surprises us by making a claim that is scientifically unverifiable. Tithe—the 10 percent of our income or increase—belongs to the Lord: “A tithe . . . belongs to the Lord [leYahweh]; it is holy to the Lord [leYahweh]” (Lev. 27:30, NIV). From the human point of view, all income is the result of the investment of our time and energy. Yet this text rejects that conclusion by indicating that a portion of our income/increase is fundamentally different from the rest of it. It is described by the Lord as “holy.” In this passage divine ownership is clearly emphasized by using the Hebrew preposition *le* (“belonging to”) two times, along with the word “holy.” The “holy” designates that which God set apart for His divine purpose that, therefore, belongs to Him. We do not consecrate tithe to the Lord; the Lord has already declared it holy. He has placed in our hands some-

thing that is holy, and we are sanctified when we, in obedience to His will, use it the way He intended us to use it.

2. Determining Proper Use: Once we acknowledge that tithe belongs to the Lord, the next questions would be: Who has the authority to determine its purpose; and who should receive it? The answer is obvious. If it belongs to God, He is the one who defines its purpose and destination. This was clearly the case in the Old Testament. “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel . . . for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting” (Num. 18:21, NIV). Tithe is assigned by the Lord to a specific group within His people, and its purpose is to pay them for the work they do at the sanctuary on behalf of the people, a work assigned to them by God.

3. God Established a System: Not only were the purpose and use of tithe determined by God as the owner of tithe, but also the system through which tithe reached those appointed to receive it. The Israelites were to separate their tithe at home and bring it to the house of the Lord for the Levites (Num. 18:24; Mal. 3:10). The “storehouse” refers to rooms in the Temple employed to store the tithe that was to be distributed among the Levites. In other words, people were not free to give their tithe to whomever they wanted, or to deposit it in any other place except the Temple. Specific persons were in charge of collecting and distributing it to the Levites and priests (2 Chron. 31:12, 13, 15, 16). In the church tithe is to be used only by those recognized by the church to be God's appointed instruments in the proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:13, 14).

We are expected to return tithe to the church through its local treasury, not send it to individuals or groups who run their own personal religious businesses. Let God's tithe be used by the Lord as He intended it: for the fulfillment of the mission of His church.



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.

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MAKING DISCIPLES:

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE GREAT COMMISSION (MATT. 28:19)



The growth and spread of Christianity as a world religion can be traced to Jesus' command as recorded in the New Testament to take the message of the gospel to all the world. Among the other texts that contain this command found in the Gospels (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21), Matthew's account to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19, NKJV), popularly known as the Great Commission, is well known among Christians.

But what does it mean to make someone a disciple of Jesus Christ? Who is a disciple and what is the process for becoming one? Since this New Testament text was written in the context of first-century Jewish culture, there is a need to answer these questions from that background and seek to understand the implications for Christians today who strive to win true disciples for Jesus in contemporary times.

RABBI AND DISCIPLE: THE PROCESS IN THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.

In the Great Commission stated in Matthew 28:19, the word "disciples" (translated from the Greek word *mathetes*) must be understood as part of the educational system of first-century Judaism. Jewish children, especially males, were taught the Scriptures from childhood by their parents and in the synagogues. After the age of 12 or 13, gifted students enrolled in a more intense study of the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) and Jewish oral tradition under the tutelage of a rabbi. The student, usually called a *talmid* (Hebrew for disciple),¹ would attach himself to and travel with the rabbi and learn his interpretations of the Torah until he internalized them. This continued until the student became a full-fledged rabbi or scribe at the age of 30.

Students enrolled in this stage of Jewish education usually had to choose their rabbi. It is said that “students investigated various rabbis and decided to whom they wanted to attach themselves.”² Whatever rabbi they chose would evaluate the potential disciples with test questions to see if they qualified. If the rabbi believed that the student was good enough, he called the disciple to follow him. After this, the student left his family and village and went wherever his rabbi went until he was figuratively “covered in the dust of his rabbi” and took up his “yoke” (his way of teaching and interpreting the Scriptures).³

Unlike traditional Western education, the learning at this stage of Jewish education did not involve sitting in a classroom and absorbing lectures. The disciple learned by literally following his rabbi in everyday life: traveling with him, living with him, and imitating him. The primary task of the disciple was to become like his rabbi in every way possible.⁴ This was the process by which disciples were made in first-century Judaism.

MAKING DISCIPLES: FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY A.D.

Time and again, many Adventists have understood the Great Commission to be only about baptizing and making more church members. However, a careful look at the text shows that the main command of the text is grounded in the verbs “go” and “make disciples” (from the Greek *matheuo*). The other actions (in participle form) mentioned in this text (baptizing and teaching) are subordinate to these main verbs. This means that the main verbs state “what” should be done and the subordinate participles state “how” it should be done.⁵ Therefore, the text can be paraphrased as, “Go and make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them.”

From a Christian context, a disciple is not just a church member. Just as in ancient times a disciple was a committed follower of a rabbi, a disciple now is a person who sincerely follows Jesus in every aspect of life—one who, not only believes and has been baptized, but has matured in the Christian faith and actively participates in church ministry and mission, consistently serving others.⁶ A disciple is a truly committed and active follower of Jesus in worship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism.⁷

As Adventist elders and church members strive to fulfill this command in contemporary times, there is a need to learn from the first-century Jewish process of making disciples. Here are three key points for Adventist disciple-making today:

1. Making disciples requires quality time. A rabbi’s task of making Jewish young men his disciples involved quality time as he intensively poured out and reproduced himself in his disciples until they became like him.

Disciple making is labor-intensive, involving teaching and investing one’s life in others.⁸ “Disciples cannot be mass-produced. We cannot drop people into a program and see

DISCIPLE-MAKING COMMUNITIES NEED ACTIVITIES THAT HELP GROW AND TRAIN CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS TOGETHER IN THE FAITH AND ENGAGE THEM IN OUTREACH AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES.

disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples.”⁹

Because discipling is a process that takes time, disciple-makers (or disciplers) need to be patient and supportive of potential disciples as they make progress in their journey toward Christian maturity. Christian believers should avoid trying to rush people into baptism and other church programs in the disciple-making process. It must be understood that making disciples is not just about baptizing people but about guiding them (before and after baptism) in ongoing spiritual growth until

they become mature followers of Jesus and, in turn, lead others to Jesus.¹⁰

2. Making disciples requires a community. A rabbi always had a group of disciples, and this group formed a community that became the basis of learning together. Within the group, there were discussions and interactions about the Hebrew Scriptures, how previous rabbis had interpreted them, and how they applied to life.¹¹ In this context of community, there was transparent sharing and accountability as they lived daily with the rabbi. Jesus did the same with His disciples, enjoying community with them and others (Luke 8:1; John 3:22). This community was part of the process of making disciples.

Disciple-making communities need activities that help grow and train Christian believers together in the faith (Bible study and prayer) and engage them in outreach and service opportunities. These community activities of sharing within and without the faith settings provide practical, hands-on life experiences that are vital to becoming mature disciples of Jesus.

3. Disciple-making requires authentic disciples of Jesus. In Mark 3:14, the first reason why Jesus chose disciples is “to be with Him.” This implies that disciples are those who spend time with Jesus first before they seek to make disciples for Him. Those who make disciples for Jesus must themselves be disciples of Jesus. While everyone is a disciple of something or someone, disciple-makers seeking to fulfill Matthew 28:19 must personally follow Jesus first.¹²

CONCLUSION

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19—“go and make disciples”—continues to motivate Adventist mission the world over. From the context of first-century Judaism, making disciples required quality time with and total commitment to a rabbi who reproduced and invested himself in them. Contem-

porary Adventist followers of Jesus need to understand how disciples are made and focus on genuinely and continually fulfilling this great command: to produce truly mature disciples of Jesus who will change the world for Him.

ED

¹ Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 54; B. D. Chilton, "Rabbinic Traditions and Writings," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Joel Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 654.

² David A. Toth, "In His Disciple-Making Ministry, How Did Jesus Christ Determine What to Say and/or Do?" a dissertation submitted to the faculty of George Fox Evangelical Seminary in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry. George Fox University, Portland, Oregon. March 2015, 23, 24. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=dmin>.

³ "How to Disciple: How to be Jesus' Disciple: A Vision for Discipleship." FOCUSequip, 2. Retrieved from <http://www.focusequip.org/assets/pdf/how-to-discipleship-vision-preview.pdf>.

⁴ Spangler and Tverberg, 51.

⁵ James H. Park, "Making Missionary Disciples in Matthew," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry*, vol. 1 (2009): 53, 56, 57; Kim Papaioannou, "Proclamation and Discipleship: Two Sides to Evangelistic Outreach (Matt 24:14 and Matt 28:19, 20)," *Asia-*

Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry, vol. 11 (2015): 189, 191; James Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay On Board* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 13.

⁶ Papaioannou, 189.

⁷ Papaioannou, 189; Cress, 13, 17.

⁸ Papaioannou, 191; Michael Dornbrack, "The Discipleship Challenge," from *Ministry*, May 2016, 8.

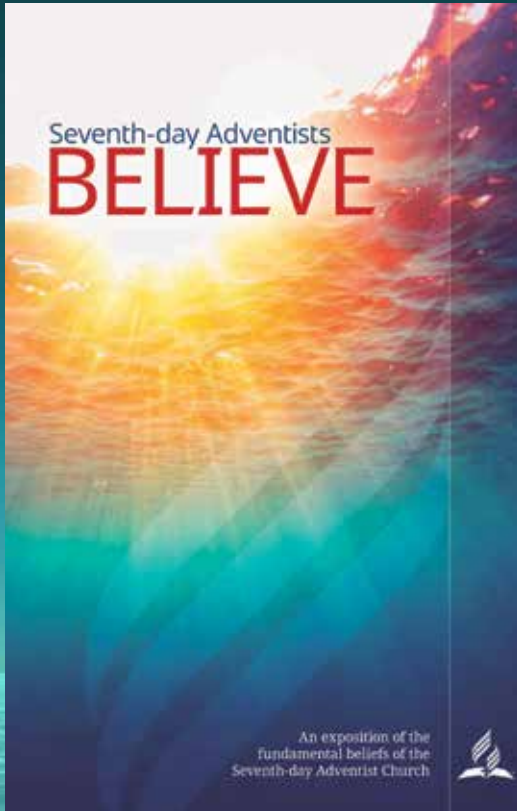
⁹ Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple-Making* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978), 45, quoted in Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples A Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 67.

¹⁰ Dornbrack, 8.

¹¹ Doug Greenwold, "Disciples and Rabbis: Missing Perspective," 26, 27. Retrieved from http://preservingbibletimes.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/DisciplesIII_2.pdf.

¹² Spangler and Tverberg, "We are also called to be in daily, living relationship with Rabbi Jesus, becoming His talmidim [disciples] and then sharing our lives with others so that they too, can become His disciples," 205.

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THE SABBATH: GOD'S ANTI-STRESS PROGRAM

Stress is a serious matter. Although some stress may be healthy, too much is dangerous and, in some cases, even fatal. Stress is caused by an overdose of stimulation, a hectic life, traffic in large cities, noise, overload at home, at work, in school or in the personal sphere, etc. It includes the anxiety to fail and the fear not to be able to cope with what confronts us. Consequences include nervous mental blockages, aggression, depression, a weakened immune system, cardiac, circulatory, liver, and gall problems, etc. We need to protect ourselves against too much stress. Therefore physicians recommend that we relax and rest, exercise, and avoid the intake of alcohol, tobacco, and coffee.

However, long before the medical profession talked about the benefits of rest and relaxation, God recommended it. He has not only told us that we should rest but also how we should rest. Our Creator has given us tips that can help us—when we observe them—to function at our best. In addition to daily devotional time when we focus on God, He has given us one entire day per week for reflection, regeneration, and communion with Him. In Scripture this day is called “Sabbath.” God’s special blessing rests on this day.

THE SABBATH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Sabbath was installed when God created this world including plants, animals, and humans. Creation was completed with the Sabbath, and the Sabbath existed before sin came into our world. Adam and Eve, the representatives of humankind, celebrated the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3).

The Sabbath (modern Saturday) is part of the unique law called the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments, complete in their comprehensiveness, constitute God’s unchangeable law. The term “remember” in the Sabbath commandment points back to the creation account (Ex. 20:8-11).

The Sabbath was known even before the law was written on tables of stone (Ex. 16:4, 19-29; see also Gen 26:5).

God wants all human beings to keep the Sabbath (Is. 56:2).

The Sabbath is associated with the new earth (Is. 66:22, 23).

THE SABBATH IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Christians follow Jesus, their Example. It was Jesus’ custom to keep the Sabbath (Luke 4:16).

Jesus’ followers observed the Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

Jesus corrected a false understanding of the Sabbath and rejected human traditions (Matt. 12:8-12).

Jesus did not abolish the Ten Commandments (Matt. 5:17-19).

In the context of Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in 70 AD, Christians were urged to pray that their flight might not be on a Sabbath. Jesus wanted His disciples to keep the Sabbath even after His death on the cross (Matt. 24:20).

THE SABBATH IN THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES

Paul’s practice was to preach to Jews and Gentiles on Sabbath (Acts 13:42, 44; 17:2; 18:4, 11). Nowhere in Scripture is the Sabbath done away with. Nowhere is another day recommended which was to replace the Sabbath.

THE MEANING OF THE SABBATH

- The Sabbath reminds us of creation and the Creator (Ex. 31:17).

- The Sabbath reminds us of salvation and the Savior (Deut. 5:12-15).

- The Sabbath is a sign of our sanctification and relationship with God (Ex. 31:13, 17).

- The Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between God and His people (Ex. 31:16).

- The Sabbath has a future dimension (Ex. 31:16, 17; Is. 66:22, 23).

The Sabbath is a wonderful gift of God through which we can experience rest, time for reflection, fellowship with others and especially with God, as well as joy and regeneration. This day cannot be replaced by another day because God’s special blessing rests on it. We can make the decision to accept God’s anti-stress program and enjoy intimate communion with the Lord.



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INTRODUCING NEW MUSIC IN WORSHIP SERVICES:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

>PART 2



The Council of Carthage in the fourth century laid this injunction upon the singers: “See that what thou singest with thy lips thou believest in thy heart; and what thou believest in thy heart thou dost exemplify in thy life.” This admonition can never lose its authority; faith must support all true church music. To supplement this ancient warning, however, there comes the behest from modern culture that the music of the sanctuary shall adapt itself to the complex and changing conditions of modern life, and, while it submits to the pure spirit of worship, it shall grow continually in those qualities which make it worthy to be honored by the highest artistic taste.

Now, here are some general principles to guide our choices of church music that will both command respect and be worthy of our worship.

1. *Be realistic.* Different people speak different languages, musically as well as in the literal sense. The fact that we differ does not prove one right and the other wrong; it simply proves that we differ. Stigmatizing the current musical trend in church music, James A. Pike declared: “Perchance these songs *might* lift up some to the living God. But for many more it downgrades Him to the commonplace. It is an ersatz religion, without awe, without mystery, without reverence, without judgment, and in the end, without reality.”¹

2. *Be perceptive.* Know what music says and what it does. Know what is contemporary as opposed to what is compromising. Know what you, as a believer, want to accomplish through music. Know what language to use with various audiences in accomplishing your goal. Avoid music that is subjective in nature, that is, music that centers around our own experience rather than music that is objective and points us to God. Would the Lord judge us, as with Israel of old, saying, “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth . . . but their heart is far from Me” (Matt. 15:8)?

3. *Be humble.* Not everyone is going to see things your way or my way. What fulfills and satisfies you musically may not be adequate, or even intelligible, for another. Realize that God reserves the right to use people with whom you or I may

disagree. However, we have specific counsel relating to using unconsecrated talent. For instance: “We are not to depend on worldly singers.”² The reason for this counsel follows: “How can those who have not an interest in God’s Word be expected to sing with spirit and understanding”³ and “Money should not be used to hire singers.”⁴

4. *Be constructive.* For the Christian, music must be more than a performance; it is a ministry. All we do for God and His people must be done heartily (Col. 3:22-24), with forethought and with sincerity (2 Cor. 4:1; 6:3, 4). Exemplary leadership applies equally to directors of music (1 Tim. 4:12). Entertainment is not the criterion by which we should judge. Church music is not an end in itself but rather a means to that end, which is *worship*.

5. *Be balanced.* While there is a legitimate place for contemporary sound and innovative procedures, there is need also for a corresponding reverence for all that is done in the name of and for God. Dr. Harold Lindsell observes, “If you were going to be presented to the Queen of England, you wouldn’t go in blue jeans, would you?” Ellen G. White cautions, “Unless you educate yourselves to respect the place of devotion, you will receive no blessing from God.”⁵

It may be well for directors of church music to consider the advice of Edward Dickinson: “Those churches which, for any reason whatever, keep their musical standard below the level of that which prevails in the educated society around them are not acting for their own advantage, materially or spiritually.”⁶

¹ James A. Pike was an American Episcopal bishop, prolific writer, and one of the first mainline religious figures to appear regularly on television.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 508.

³ *Ibid.*, 509.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:608.

⁶ Edward Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, 403.

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HYMNS OF THE FIRST ADVENT [CHRISTMAS]

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY by James Montgomery (1771-1854)

This hymn written by James Montgomery is considered by hymnody students as one of the finest. The text addresses 3 audiences: first the angelic chorus in the first stanza, then the shepherds in the second stanza, and finally today's believers—calling all to worship Christ our King.

James Montgomery was born in Scotland in 1771. His father was a Moravian minister and later with his wife left for the West Indies as missionaries where they died. From the age of 10, James was writing verse and was even expelled from a Moravian school because it interfered with his studies. He left school, found work in various places and finally was apprenticed to a bookseller and editor of the *Sheffield Register*. Later, Montgomery took over the newspaper and became its editor for 31 years. He became a popular lecturer on poetry in Sheffield and London. He defended freedom of speech and opposed slavery and was twice jailed for his convictions. He wrote about 400 hymns and three hymnbooks and alongside Watts and Wesley was a major contributor to English hymnody.

Henry Thomas Smart composed the tune, designed and built organs, was a music editor of *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*, composed cantatas, operas, and contributed many tunes to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Phillips Brooks visited the Holy Land in 1865 and on Sunday, December 24, went into the fields outside Bethlehem where, according to tradition, an angel appeared to the shepherds. From there he proceeded to the Church of the Nativity where he remained until early Christmas morning. The music and the scenes left an abiding impression. Three years later, while pastoring the Holy Trinity Church in Boston, he wanted a special carol for the Sunday school children to sing for the Christmas program. Recalling the peaceful scene in the Bethlehem church, he wrote 5 stanzas of the carol in one evening. He gave a copy to his organist, Lewis Redner, and requested him to compose a melody designed for children. On the evening just before the program was scheduled, Redner awakened suddenly from sleep and with the melody ringing in his ears, wrote out the tune which was sung on December 27, 1868.

Phillips Brooks was born in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. He was 19 when he graduated from Harvard in 1855; he was in his thirties when he assumed the pastorate of the Trinity Church in Boston and 42 when he delivered his famous lectures in the Beecher series at Yale. At his death in 1893, twenty thousand persons gathered to mourn.

His memory is evident in this Christmas carol.

THE ADVENT OF OUR GOD by Charles Coffin (1676-1749)

It is remarkable how the musical, translation, and compositional skills of three men from three different countries combined to give this vibrant Christmas hymn birth! A Frenchman, Charles Coffin, the author of this hymn was the contemporary of Bach and Handel, and rector of the University of Paris. He published the Latin original of this hymn in his book *Hymni Sacri* (Sacred Hymns) in 1736. An outstanding Latin scholar, he also wrote the hymn "On Jordan's Banks."

An Englishman, John Chandler, the translator of this hymn, was an Oxford graduate and Anglican minister. He published two books of hymns between 1837-1841. He believed "that 'modern' hymns were unsuitable to sing along with the ancient prayers that were part of the service, so he translated older hymns from the Latin."

An American boy organist from Newark, New Jersey, William Henry Walter, composed the tune. At age 17 he went to New York City, and had an outstanding career as organist in many churches including Columbia University's Chapel. The tune was published in 1872 by John Ireland Tucker, in *The Hymnal With Tunes Old and New*. The hymn is unique because it combines the 1st and 2nd Advent themes as in Hebrews 9:28 (See stanzas 2 and 3).

SILENT NIGHT by Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)

This beloved hymn was written by two Swiss men from villages in the Tyrol Alps not far from Salzburg, Austria. Joseph Mohr, an assistant priest in the Oberndorf Church of St. Nicholas and Franz Gruber, schoolmaster of the nearby village of Arnsdorf, were discussing music and agreed that a perfect Christmas song had never been written. It was Christmas Eve in 1818. Mohr quickly wrote the text and presented it to Gruber who said: "Friend Mohr, you have found it—the right song—God be praised." Gruber immediately composed a tune that perfectly fitted the words and the carol was completed in time for the Christmas Eve mass. Since the organ of St. Nicholas Church was not functioning, Mohr and Gruber sang their new hymn to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar.

The carol was not published for 20 years, but it became known through the organ repair man, Karl Mauracher who heard the carol, secured a copy and circulated it around his district. For a long time it was thought to be a folk song of the Austrian Tyrol. There have been many translations and it was translated into English in 1863 by John Freeman Young, an Episcopal minister who was appointed the bishop of Florida in 1867.



THE OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS

WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?

“Christmas is coming” is the note that is sounded throughout our world from East to West and from North to South. With youth, those of mature age, and even the aged, it is a period of general rejoicing, of great gladness. But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention? This day has been made much of for centuries. It is accepted by the unbelieving world, and by the Christian world generally, as the day on which Christ was born. When the world at large celebrates the day, they show no honor to Christ. They refuse to acknowledge him as their Savior, to honor Him by willing obedience to His service. They show preference to the day, but none to the one for whom the day is celebrated, Jesus Christ.

I. CHRIST’S BIRTHDAY IS NOT KNOWN

The twenty-fifth of December is supposed to be the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, and its observance has become customary and popular. But there is no certainty that we are keeping the veritable day of our Savior’s birth. History gives us no certain assurance of this. The Bible does not give us the precise time. Had the Lord deemed this knowledge essential to our salvation, He would have spoken through His prophets and apostles, that we might know all about the matter. . . .

There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through the infinite sacrifice made for them, should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed, the glory is turned from Him

to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for Him to come to our world.

II. THE WONDERFUL THEME OF THE INCARNATION

Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, the royal King of heaven, laid aside His royalty, left His throne of glory, His high command, and came into our world to bring to fallen man, weakened in moral power, and corrupted by sin, aid divine. He clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery, to lift up fallen man. By taking upon Himself man’s nature, He raised humanity in the scale of moral value with God. These great themes are almost too high, too deep, too infinite for the comprehension of finite minds.

III. THE GIFT SEASON FOR GOD’S CAUSE

Parents should keep these things before their children, and instruct them, line upon line, precept upon precept, in their obligation to God—not their obligation to each other, to honor and glorify one another by gifts and offerings. But they should be taught that Jesus is the world’s Redeemer, the object of thought, of painstaking effort; that His work is the grand theme which should engage their attention; that they should bring to Him their gifts and offerings. Thus did the wise men and the shepherds.

IV. A DAY OF GLADNESS AND REJOICING

As the twenty-fifth day of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to

pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.



V. NOT TO BE IGNORED WITH CHILDREN

The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels, and made to result in good to our fellow-men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked His course of action. Let it mark ours who profess to love Jesus; because in Him is centered our hope of eternal life.

Youth cannot be made as sedate and grave as old age, the child as sober as the sire. While sinful amusements are condemned, as they should be, let parents, teachers, and guardians of youth provide in their stead innocent pleasures, which shall not taint or corrupt the morals. Do not bind down the young to rigid rules and restraints that will lead them to feel themselves oppressed and to break over and rush into paths of folly and destruction. With a firm, kindly, considerate hand, hold the lines of government, guiding and controlling their minds and purposes, yet so gently, so wisely, so lovingly, that they still will know that you have their best good in view. . . .

VI. THE EMBLEM OF THE EVERGREEN

On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress,

to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize.

Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let everyone remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. . . . In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, "evergreen," suggest the holy work of God and His beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith. . . .

Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen, because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the upbuilding of his kingdom.¹

VII. INTERCHANGE OF HOLIDAY GIFTS

The holiday season is fast approaching with its interchange of gifts, and old and young are intently studying what they can bestow upon their friends as a token of affectionate remembrance. It is pleasant to receive a gift, however small, from those we love. It is an assurance that we are not forgotten, and seems to bind us to them a little closer.

VIII. MAKING MELODY AND PRAISING GOD

Brethren and sisters, while you are devising gifts for one another, I would remind you of our heavenly Friend, lest you should be unmindful of His claims. Will He not be pleased if we show that we have not forgotten Him? Jesus, the Prince of Life, gave all to bring salvation within our reach. . . .

It is through Christ that we receive every blessing. . . . Shall not our heavenly Benefactor share in the tokens of our gratitude and love? Come, brethren and sisters, come with your children, even the babes in your arms, and bring your offerings to God according to your ability. Make melody to Him in your hearts, and let His praise be upon your lips. . . .

IX. NOT FORGETTING GOD

While urging upon all the duty of first bringing their offerings to God, I would not wholly condemn the practice of making Christmas and New Year's gifts to our friends. It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget God, our best friend. We should make our gifts such as will prove a real benefit to the receiver.²

¹ Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1884.

² *Ibid.*, Dec. 26, 1882.

MODERN-DAY SACRIFICES

The believers in the Old Testament showed their worship to God by offering sacrifices, but what kinds of acts do the believers in the New Testament do to show their love, worship, and devotion to God? The apostle Paul identifies three spiritual sacrifices that bless us and the people around us: (1) the sacrifices or offerings¹ of praise, (2) doing good, and (3) sharing with others. “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13:15-16).² When we do these things, not only is God pleased, but people are blessed.

Paul is describing to us what the Lord requires from us. The rest of this article will expand on the three sacrifices that God requires of us as part of our worship.

WE ARE TO OFFER THE LORD OUR PRAISES

First, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us to “. . . let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15). This does not mean that the mere singing of songs or the recitation of prayers with our lips in our worship constitutes acceptable sacrifice. The “fruit of the lips” must be the response of the heart to the incomprehensible grace of God in Jesus Christ. As we sing and praise God, let us remember that our songs are to be sung to the Lord, to His glory and honor, even though they also serve to edify and admonish other believers as well as ourselves. “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Col. 3:16).

Margaret Phippen writes about her father, a British minister, who was suffering from muscular atrophy. When his voice gave out, he took to writing. As he continued to deteriorate, his passion did not. Through his articles, books, and groups, he worshipped. On Easter morning, a few weeks before he died, he wrote a letter to his daughter, saying, “It is terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice to shout, ‘He is risen!’ But it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout.”³

WE ARE TO OFFER THE LORD OUR GOOD WORK

A second spiritual sacrifice the Christian is urged to offer is the doing of good works. “And do not forget to do good and

to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13:16). Not all the good deeds of men are acceptable to God. The man who presumes to offer to God his own good works to earn his own salvation instead of placing his full trust and confidence in the sacrifice of Christ is offering contempt to God. The apostle Paul spoke of the sad condition of the Jews, saying that because “they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness” (Rom. 10:3). He warned such men that “the wrath of God has come upon them at last” (1 Thess. 2:16).

However, true believers were reminded by the same apostle that they were to “be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good” (Titus 3:8). These are the works that are a spiritual sacrifice. What is included? Any deed which is done because of the love of God and the desire to honor Him is a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God.

The first priority of God’s people is to worship Him, build His kingdom, serve Him, pursue His purpose, glorify His name, and honor Him in everything they do. They do these things by offering Him their good work. The faithful Christian focuses on the Master. The goal of the faithful Christian is to bring glory to the Master. This is done by acts of mercy, love without boundaries, and giving without limits.

Often I hear people say, “But I do not have talent to serve the Lord. I can’t sing. I can’t preach or witness. I don’t have money to give.” It’s not the gifts we have but how we allow God to use them for His glory.

One of Ripley’s “Believe It or Not” items is a plain bar of iron worth \$5. If made into horseshoes, the bar of iron would be worth \$50. If made into needles, it would be worth \$5,000. If made into balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it would be worth \$500,000. The raw material is not as important as how it is developed. God says that we have spiritual gifts, but their worth to Him will be dependent on how we develop them.⁴ As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to offer ourselves, in our entirety, to Him.

WE ARE TO OFFER THE LORD OUR POSSESSIONS

The third spiritual sacrifice mentioned in Hebrews is sharing. “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13:16). Whenever the believer, in thanksgiving to God, shares his material substance with those in need or those who are engaged in the

ministry of the Word, or when he cheerfully places a generous check in the offering plate to support the work of God and His church, he is making an acceptable offering to the Lord.

Sharing is an act of worship. The genuine sharing of our possessions and money with God is our worship to Him. The presentation of our sharing should be a sincere act of worship. It should be clearly evident that this is a response of the entire heart to the goodness of God.

TRUE GIVING

An excellent model of true giving that involves the offering of our praise, good work, possessions, and lives is demonstrated in the experience of the Magi. Giving is something these men came a long way to do, and it was a demonstration of their worship. Offering is always an indication of our true worship.

In Matthew 2:16, we learn that Jesus may have been two years old by the time the Wise Men showed up. They must have considered the worship of Jesus a high priority to spend two years of their lives, time, and possessions to find the newborn King and worship Him.

Their worship was accompanied by gift-giving. It is worth noting that these gifts were substantial. The Wise Men didn't run out to Wal-Mart and get a blanket or something on sale. They gave expensive presents of gold, frankincense, and

myrrh. In addition to the honor and value of these gifts, they were chosen for their special symbolism of Jesus Himself. The gold represented Jesus' kingship, frankincense was a symbol of His priestly role, and myrrh prefigured Jesus' death and embalming.⁵ For the Wise Men, Jesus was King, Priest, and Savior. In our offerings to Jesus, we also acknowledge Him as our King, Priest, and Savior.

We give of our praise, good works, and possessions as stewards to support others and the church, but there is a much higher reason for giving. We give to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior and our special connection with Him. ED

¹ <http://biblehub.com/greek/2378.htm>, accessed March 23, 2018.

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NIV.

³ S. Joseph Kidder, *Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2009), 37-38.

⁴ James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 232.

⁵ Biblical Archaeology, Why Did the Magi Bring Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh? <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/why-did-the-magi-bring-gold-frankincense-and-myrrh/>, accessed December 3, 2017.

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SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THERE —GREECE



I took a train to Piraeus, the main port in Athens, to meet Nikos Fotinos, a Global Mission pioneer who's planting a new group of believers near the city. I caught a bus to the proper street and then walked the remaining distance to the address he'd texted me earlier. I arrived a little early and was glad to see that Nikos was already there.

After greeting me, he beckoned, "Come see our meeting room!" I followed him to a nicely reconstructed room on the main level of an older structure. "The church owns this whole building," he told me as we took a seat. "It turned the floors upstairs into apartments, which it rents to generate income, and renovated the first floor for our church group." The renovation took place before Greece's huge financial crisis.

While we were waiting for people to arrive, I asked Nikos to tell me about the project. He began by sharing his personal story because it has heavily influenced his approach to outreach.

"Some time ago, I slipped on soapy water that someone had poured out on a sidewalk," he said. "I fell under a vehicle, and it crushed my ankle." Though he had drifted away from the Adventist Church, the horrific experience not only brought Nikos back into the church but also inspired him to go into ministry—a ministry with an interesting focus.

"I noticed that the only people who could understand what I was going through as I recovered from my injury were those who had suffered a similar traumatic experience," he said. This made Nikos realize that he would be able to reach out to people with comparable injuries in ways that no one else could.

"You see," he continued, "everyone who helps you with such an injury is doing so because they get paid to. It's all about the money. But my experience taught me that an injured person needs more than paid services. They need personal help from someone who's been there. That's why Jesus came to earth to live among us."

You can often find Nikos in the hospital helping such people. "I take their contact information, and we talk by phone whenever they need to about the things no one else can understand," he said.

"AN INJURED PERSON NEEDS MORE THAN PAID SERVICES. THEY NEED PERSONAL HELP FROM SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THERE. THAT'S WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH TO LIVE AMONG US."

Nikos has just started work on this project, but he hopes and prays that after he builds relationships with these individuals, he will be able to begin meeting their spiritual needs as well. Some already attend a midweek social gathering that he holds in the meeting room.

Nikos has also made contact with two psychologists and a physical therapist who are interested in his work. Even though they're not Seventh-day Adventists, they've been intrigued enough to volunteer some of their time to help.

The fact that Nikos lives in Athens, one of the places the apostle Paul visited on his church-planting journeys, isn't lost on him. "People in Athens have lost interest in traditional religion," he said. "That's why we don't even have a sign on our building. If they saw a sign that this was owned by a church, they would avoid coming in. We must use Paul's approach in reaching people. We must build small groups of people who meet together and who are defined by their personal community, not by their building."

Nikos' very personal approach is slowly gaining momentum. Though this work takes time, there have already been a few baptisms. He's excited to see the gospel move forward as he relates to people simply as someone who's been there.



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MARK THE DATE

NOVEMBER

10

ANNUAL SACRIFICE OFFERING



Taiwo and Onifade are Global Mission pioneers working in a city in southwestern Nigeria. Each day they meet people, share food when they can, and help those who are ill or injured to get medical care. Then they tell the people that Jesus has sent them to love and serve them in His name.

The pioneers face challenges that make their work difficult and wish that they had more Bibles and literature. But God is blessing their efforts to make friends for Jesus. When they arrived in this city, only a handful of Seventh-day Adventists worshiped there. By following Christ's method of ministry, they have raised up a strong group of believers.

Global Mission pioneers continue to make great sacrifices to be laborers in God's field. On November 10, your sacrificial offering will help equip them with much-needed resources to reach even more people with God's love. Mark your envelope "Annual Sacrifice Offering" or Visit Global-Mission.org/Giving

"...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." — Onifade



GLOBAL MISSION


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> OCTOBER 13, 2018



PASTOR'S APPRECIATION DAY



“And I will give you pastors according to
mine heart, which shall feed you with
knowledge and understanding.”

Jeremiah 3:15, KJV

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