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ELDER'S DIGEST

THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE



ELDER'S DIGEST 25TH ANNIVERSARY



FEATURES

- 4** THE POWER OF MUSIC AND EVANGELISM
- 6** THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 2
- 8** 10 THINGS PASTORS WISH THEIR CONGREGATIONS WOULD DO
- 10** ADDING MEMBERS THROUGH STUDIES: HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT >PART 7 OF 8
- 12** CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD?
- 19** A SIMPLE GUIDE TO PAUL'S EPISTLES
- 20** DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES AS PHYSICAL PLANT MANAGERS
- 24** PREPARING YOUR CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS: I CAME BECAUSE I WAS INVITED
- 26** SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER >PART 2
- 30** MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH



- EDITORIAL **3**
- HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS **14**
- SERMONS **15**
- QUESTION & ANSWER **22**
- KIDDER'S COLUMN **28**

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MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION



A generation of experienced Adventist leaders is passing from the scene today. If the younger generation is to take their place successfully in these end times, we must learn, teach, and intentionally exercise the art and strategy of mentoring. As we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Elder's Digest*, it is appropriate to reminisce about significant moments of our church's heritage in the beginning of Adventist youth ministry. From this beginning we learn important lessons for the huge challenges facing our youth today as we minister to them in Seventh-day Adventist churches around the world.

In 1879, God used two young men to raise the first Adventist Youth Society and youth ministry: Luther Warren, 14 (who subsequently became a pastor and evangelist), and Harry Fenner, 17,¹ members of the former Hazelton Church in Michigan, USA. There they were divinely inspired to organize the youth, later to be followed by millions of young people of future generations. Archived records show that Luther and Harry had both the concern and support of the local church leadership and their own parents, who hosted the first meetings in their homes before moving to the church building. The first meeting was held at Luther's

home in an unfinished upstairs room with the support of Doran and

Ellen Warren.² Their parents ignited the vital roles of mentors, counselors, trainers, coaches, role models, and prayer warriors for the youth.

I want to mention another young man God used to form a different youth society in those formative years: Meade McGuire. He became a pastor and eventually an associate

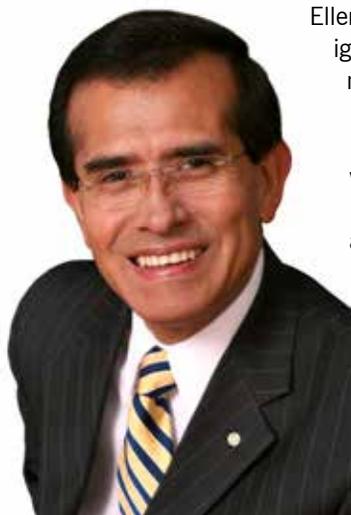
Ministerial secretary of the General Conference. His photo is portrayed on the historic wall display of the General Conference Ministerial Association. His story illustrates how youth initiative and adult mentorship may combine to do powerful work for God. He wrote:

My first experience in young people's work was gained in the church at Antigo, Wisconsin, [USA] in 1891. I was but a youth and had no one to counsel with; but I felt that something ought to be done to help and inspire the young people. I had never heard of any young people's organization among our people.

Then he faced something that would be challenging to any young person:

I proposed holding a young people's meeting, but my proposal was met with almost universal disapproval. . . . However, the elder, a saintly old man, long since dead, placed his hand on my shoulder and said: "My boy, you go right ahead. You may have the church for your meetings, and I will stand by you."³

What a vision! What a leader! What a formula to be emulated in our church today. What a voice to be echoed in each level of our church structure: "My boy [girl]. . . . You may have the church . . . and I will stand by you." The historic account identifies that church elder simply as Brother Conner,⁴ but I am sure that in the heavenly account that saintly old man, with his full name, is regarded as a faithful elder, an honorable leader, and a visionary mentor! ED



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¹ Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 3:119.
² Sharon Boucher, *Luther Warren: Man of Prayer and Power* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1959), 15, 40.
³ Matilda Erickson, *Missionary Volunteers and Their Work* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, n.d.), 12–13.
⁴ Spalding, *Origin and History*, 120.

THE POWER OF MUSIC AND EVANGELISM



The power of music in evangelism was evident even in early Christianity. For example, in the fourth century, the Council of Laodicea prohibited “all private hymn singing” because of its influence in spreading heresy. This prohibition emerged from the spread of Arianism, a third-century heretical movement whose members, according to Austrian historian and musician Egon Wellesz, “spent their nights singing their heretical songs which had refrains in the style of modern songs [gospel], thereby attracting large crowds and much attention.” This led Chrysostom, the fourth-century patriarch of Constantinople, to forbid the Arians from entering the city on Saturday, Sunday, and some festival days.

The Protestant Reformation was a great evangelistic movement, and, without minimizing Luther’s exaltation of the Scriptures, one historian alleges “Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as by his translation of the Bible.” “Except for theology,” writes Luther, “there is no art which can be placed in comparison to music.”

Charles Wesley forwarded the English Reformation with 6,600 hymns. Dyerman says that the old Methodists were remarkable for their singing. He writes, “Their religion made them happy, and happiness always finds vent in song.”¹

One of Dwight L. Moody’s biographers acknowledges Moody’s extensive use of music in his evangelistic meetings. He writes: “From the time he came before his great audiences to the moment he rose to preach, he kept the entire audience absorbingly occupied with something interesting. Singing by the massed choir, by quartettes, duettists, soloists and by all the whole assembly never ceased except for prayer.”²

Similarly, the early-Advent/William Miller movement was able to stamp its imprint during the Great Advent Awakening through gospel songs and hymns generated by its urgent message.

Note the following positive influences music can have on evangelism:

1. *Music attracts.* Music of a high standard, professionally performed, exerts immense drawing power. It will attract many people who otherwise would not attend a religious lecture. When Moody first heard popular soloist Ira Sankey sing, he arranged to meet him the next day on a downtown Chicago street corner. Moody arrived with a wooden box. He instructed Sankey to stand on it and sing. Before long, a large crowd had gathered, whereupon Moody took Sankey’s place on the box and began preaching. Thereafter, preacher and singer became a team, attracting and holding large crowds and winning thousands of souls.

2. *Music speaks a common language.* It provides a meeting place for all races, all classes, and all creeds. The great hymns of the Christian church were composed by musicians representing a variety of denominations. And when music is partnered with evangelism, whether Jew or Baptist, Methodist or Catholic, Congregationalist or Presbyterian, all can unite their voices on common ground in any evangelistic venue, be it a tent or theater.

3. *Music can create an atmosphere conducive to removing barriers.* Music and song offer common ground. Music can promote a spirit of conviviality and a feeling of goodwill and even has the power to awaken sympathy and banish gloom and foreboding, . . . subdue the rude and uncultured, . . . quicken thought, and . . . [carry] the mind from heaven to earth.³ Under such an influence, is it unreasonable to suppose that those attending evangelistic meetings would have their prejudices softened and reservations removed?

4. *Music impresses the truth.* If there is thematic correlation between the music and the message, people can be favorably receptive to the truth being presented. And there is no limit to the variety of available hymns and song topics. The topical index of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal* clearly shows that sacred music covers the same range of doctrinal subjects presented in an evangelistic series. Ellen G. White argues, “Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart.”⁴

5. *Music can lead to conversion.* “Often by the words of sacred song,” writes White, “the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed.”⁵ Thousands can attribute their actual conversion to a gospel song or hymn.

Finally, those participating in and providing music for evangelism must have consecrated talent. White cautions about using “worldly singers” when she presses the question, “How can those who have no interest in the Word of God . . . be expected to sing with the spirit and the understanding?”⁶

ED

¹ Dyerman, *Life and Tunes of Wesley*, 1:397.

² R. D. Johnston, *The Man Who Moved Multitudes*.

³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 496.

⁴ White, “Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give,” *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1912.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ White, *Evangelism*, 509.

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FOUR HYMNS ON THE SECOND COMING

WE HAVE THIS HOPE

Wayne Hooper (1920–2007)

What do a sixth-century composer, a twentieth-century singer in the King's Heralds Voice of Prophecy quartet, and the song "We Have This Hope" have in common?

While pursuing a graduate degree at Occidental College near Glendale, California, Wayne Hooper studied the symphonies of Johannes Brahms. He was asked to write the theme song for the 1962 General Conference Session, which convened in San Francisco. He wrote,

While driving to La Sierra College . . . I started thinking about the motto that had been chosen, "We Have This Hope." All of a sudden, the four notes following the pick-up note in the final theme of Brahms' *Fourth Symphony* No. 1 in C Minor came to mind as fitting those four words exactly. . . . In a matter of half an hour I had all the words and most of the music.

Brahms believed "all truly inspired ideas come from God." Describing the steps that led to his compositions, he admitted that he first studied the Bible, contemplating particularly John 14 and 17, where Jesus said, "The father that dwelleth within me, he doeth the works." Similarly, Hooper believed that "We Have This Hope," which became the theme song for GC Sessions in Detroit (1966), Vienna (1975), and others, was "a gift from God." His other favorite hymns were "We Know Not the Hour" and "Are You Ready?"

FACE TO FACE

Carrie E. Breck (1855–1934)

What connection does jelly have to a hymn written by someone who, by her own admission, could not even carry a tune?

In 1898, Grant Colfax Tullar, a Methodist Episcopal minister, was assisting in evangelistic meetings in Rutherford, New Jersey. During a meal at the home of a colleague, he was offered a small quantity of left-over jelly. Tullar said, "So this is all for me?" The last three words inspired him to write a gospel song—with no reference, of course, to jelly. He sang it at an evangelistic meeting that same evening. The next morning, he received several poems written by Mrs. Carrie Breck. One of them, "Face to Face," was in the same meter as the jelly song, so he set the words to the music. Tullar published this hymn in his *Sermons in Song* in 1899. He edited many hymnals and songbooks and founded a music publishing house.

Mrs. Carrie E. Breck was a devout Presbyterian. She wrote verse for religious periodicals and penned the words to about 1,500 hymn texts. Most of these were written while she was engaged in housework.

LO HE COMES

by John Cennick (1718–1755)

A contemporary of the Wesley brothers, John Cennick, a Quaker in Reading, England, wrote a hymn beginning, "Lo! He cometh, countless trumpets blow before His bloody sign." It was first published in his *Collection of Sacred Hymns* in 1730. The hymn went through several compositional alterations. Its present four stanzas, written by Charles Wesley, were published in his *Hymns of Intercessions for All Mankind* (1758). A hymn of six stanzas by Martin Madan, combining both Cennick's and Wesley's hymns, appeared in his *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* in 1760. The hymn is a scriptural reinforcement of the visible, audible, and personal return of Jesus.

Cennick served as a teacher to mine workers' children in Bristol. After dissociating himself from John Wesley on doctrinal issues, he became a lay preacher with George Whitfield, joined the Moravians, and ministered in Germany and Northern Ireland. He published four volumes of hymns and two volumes of sermons.

Martin Madan, the composer of this hymn tune, was trained in the legal profession. He was converted after hearing John Wesley preach on "preparing to meet thy God," became a chaplain, and published his *Collection of Hymns and Psalms*, which greatly influenced Anglican hymnody.

HAIL HIM THE KING OF GLORY

Henry de Fluiter (1872–1970)

From sign painter to one of Adventism's great hymn-writers, Henry de Fluiter wrote the words and music for two hundred gospel songs, many of which were printed as leaflets and given away at meetings. He published two gospel songbooks, *Bible Songs* (1943) and *Christ-Centered Songs* (1953), and most songs focused on heaven and the second coming. His songs include "Ride On, King Jesus" and "Homesick for Heaven." "Hail Him the King of Glory" was written in 1916, and, though martial in tone, contrasts the World War I years with the Prince of Peace who will end all wars.

de Fluiter was born in Holland in 1872 and came to America as a small boy with his parents. At an early age, de Fluiter witnessed the great Moody-Sankey revivals in Cleveland, Ohio, and determined that he would write music for people like Sankey. He became a sign painter and then enrolled in the music/Bible course at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute. He converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through books from a colporteur, and for one year assisted a pastor-evangelist in some Ohio meetings for five dollars per week. During those meetings, he wrote his first song on "Matthew Twenty-four" about second coming prophecies. For twelve years, he worked with H.M.S. Richards, often singing a new song related to Richards' sermon themes. Just before his death at ninety-eight, he expressed his wish to direct a choir of a thousand voices in heaven. ED

THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 2

BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 1

“When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, ‘You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?’”—Galatians 2:11–14

Part 1 of this series was centered on Paul’s experience with Jesus. Before meeting the Lord, Paul saw Jesus through the perspective of the law and persecuted Christians. But after his personal experience with Jesus, the persecutor became the servant, and he began seeing all things through the perspective of

Jesus. In our text today, Paul, after being called to teach the gospel to the Gentiles, finds himself in conflict with Peter, the disciple of Jesus, in Antioch. The situation is as follows: Peter had been eating with the new converts (Gentiles) when the Jewish brethren from Jerusalem arrive. Immediately, Peter jumps up from the table—and consequently from the fellowship—and distances himself from the Gentiles in order to appear aligned with the Jewish tradition. The Jews had laws about table fellowship that extended from what or what not to eat to purity laws. Eating with Gentiles would mean that Peter had relinquished his “Jewishness” and aligned with “sinners.” Isn’t it amazing that after being with Jesus for so long Peter would not know better? As Paul sees this, he has only one conclusion in mind: if we all do not sit at one table, then everything Jesus did was in vain. It is through Jesus that now we are able to receive salvation by faith, and not by the law, allowing us to fellowship with God and with one another sitting at one single table. The gospel of grace is the gospel of one



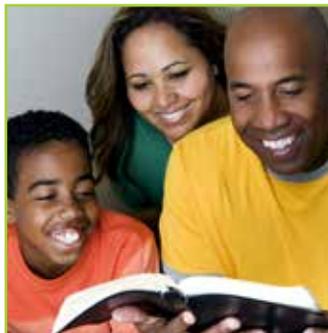
single table—a single table where everyone is welcome, where everyone can find food in abundance! Any movement toward exclusivity is foreign and offensive to the gospel of Jesus.

Is our Christian life—our church—a model of what Peter does, or what Paul does? Have we been distancing ourselves from those who are different, who think differently, who eat differently? Is our church life a life of one single table, or a life of many tables? May we allow the gospel of grace to fill our hearts so that we may see all things through Jesus. May we understand that the gospel of grace is a gospel of a single table, where all of us can feast together in fellowship with God and one another!

BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 2

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”—Galatians 2:15–16

The previous biblical thought touched on a sensitive idea: the early church was not all butterflies and flowers. They had arguments, discussions, and even confrontations. And biblical writers like Paul did not skip these incidents because they knew that even these incidents could help us understand that the journey with Christ *is* a journey. The disciples still had much to learn about what Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished and what life in Jesus actually looked like. In this text, Paul extends his argument: we are not superior to the Gentiles; in fact, we are all in the same position, in need of the grace of Jesus! By works of the law, Paul writes, no one will be justified. This simple yet powerful phrase represents the undoing of the old religion. If this is truly what Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished, then no one had to offer any sacrifice, of any kind, to please God anymore. The Jews were used to worshipping and sacrificing in the temple. We are used to worshipping and sacrificing (time,



money, efforts) in our churches and in our lives. We too, sometimes, believe that God wants us to live a life of constant sacrifice for Him, a life of many “spiritual obligations,” and in this we also carry the risk of falling into the trap of Peter and so many others in the early church: the trap of not trusting in the liberating power of Jesus that sends us into life as new creatures in a new religion. In Christ we are free to live a life that finds its roots in *His* sacrifice for us. And this is why Jesus taught that His “new wine” would be incompatible with the old wineskins. The new religion of Jesus would blatantly destroy everything in the old establishment. This is what enraged the Jewish leaders; this liberation is what got Jesus into trouble and killed. If what Jesus did and said was indeed the will of God, then the old religion was dead. The religion where works of the law made you feel important, superior, and distant from those who were not was finished. Oh, that we would also understand and remember the power of this simple truth: not by works, but by faith in what Jesus did. And if we do believe in His sacrifice for us, the life that follows is a life not of sacrifice, but of freedom. Christ does not free us *from* life, but *for* life! ED

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10 THINGS PASTORS WISH THEIR CONGREGATIONS WOULD DO



1. Pray for your pastor. The pastor is the spiritual catalyst for the church. That makes the pastor a target for the enemy. Pray for the pastor's spiritual health. Pray for protection. Pray for wisdom. Pray that the catalytic gifts of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, evangelism, and shepherding will grow strong in your pastor. The most affirming words a pastor could ever hear are, "Pastor, I'm praying for you every day" (Rom 15:30; 2 Cor 1:11).

2. Affirm your pastor. Pastoring may be one of the most difficult jobs in the world these days. Pastors work in an intense environment where their work of caring for humanity brings them up close to the results of sin. While the average person sees death, injury, illness, or family conflict occasionally, the pastor deals with these things on a regular basis. Although pastors do not live for affirmation, words of validation do pro-

vide a lifeline of strength through treacherous times. Those little notes saying, "Pastor, you're making a difference" may be the very thing that helps your pastor make it through another day (Acts 4:36).

3. Bless the pastoral family. Pastoral stress leaks into families and is enough to test the family bonds. Throw in a few wild expectations about how the pastoral spouse and kids are "supposed" to behave and you have a recipe for a family meltdown. The antidote is blessing: Bless the spouse. Bless the kids. Let go of any expectations and treat the family with a rich blessing of heaven's grace (1 Cor 9:14).

4. Release the pastor from constant ministry so renewal can take place. Pastors who go 24/7 for days, weeks, and months on end will inevitably self-destruct. Mandate that your pastor take weekly breaks for spiri-

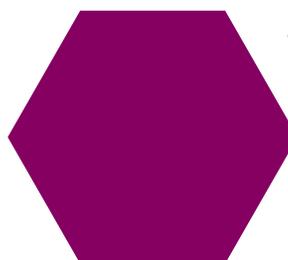
tual renewal, as well as annual extended breaks for study leave and vacation. It is a small price to pay for the rich spiritual energy that results from regularly releasing your pastor from ministry (Matt 14:23).

5. Talk with your pastor—not about or around your pastor. Complaining to someone else is corrosive for the entire church family. Writing anonymous critical notes are acts of spiritual sabotage (by the way, smart pastors just throw them in the trash can without reading them). If you have a problem with the pastor, talk directly to him or her and try to work it out. If a resolution cannot be found, then bring a spiritual leader with you and try again. And then (and only then) if a resolution is not found, bring together a larger group to dialogue with the pastor. Challenge privately, and affirm publicly (Matt 18:15–17).

6. Forgive your pastor for falling short of your expectations, because no pastor will perfectly satisfy your demands. Remember that your vision of what a pastor should be is probably unique to you. Everyone else in the congregation has expectations too, and many of these expectations are mutually exclusive. Your pastor will make some mistakes, as all pastors do. Extend your pastor the same grace that God extends to you. If your pastor knows that he or she practices ministry in a safe, grace-filled congregation where risk taking is expected and stagnancy is deplored, your church can become spiritually turbocharged (Matt 18:21–22).

7. Feed yourself spiritually. Don't expect to live on a limited spiritual diet of thirty-minute weekly sermons. Just as going seven days without eating makes one weak, even with the best sermons you will spiritually starve to death. The role of the shepherd is not to force grass into the mouths of the sheep, but to lead the sheep to green pastures. As you listen to the great sermons your pastor preaches, may you be inspired to get into the Word yourself every day in prayer-filled Bible study (Ps 23:2).

8. Bond with a small group. Do not expect your primary pastoral support to come from the pastor. It is mathematically impossible, and primary care is not his or her role. Regular spiritual support occurs in small groups. When you are plugged into a weekly small group, you will grow together, pray for one another, care for one another, and support one another through all the ups and downs of life. The pastoral staff and lay pastors can serve as a safety net for those not in small groups, as well as care for those in life transitions (Matt 18:20).



9. Follow the leader. The pastor is not the CEO of the congregation; that role is reserved for Jesus. However, the pastor has been given the gift of apostleship, so you should take your cue from the pastor as you follow Jesus, and let your pastor lead. A new pastor might bring change; that is to be expected. But God has always brought a succession of quality pastors, each with leadership to take your church to the next level. God gives your pastor vision. Help the pastor flesh out that vision and do your part to turn vision into reality (Heb 13:17).

10. Exercise your spiritual gifts. Pastoral gifts don't do much by themselves. However, if you let those catalytic gifts energize your own gifts, you will come alive spiritually. Let the pastor equip you so that your church family can reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Take advantage of the teaching and ministry opportunities at your church. Place yourself in optimal places for spiritual growth (Eph 4:11–12). ED

Dave Gemmill is Associate Ministerial Secretary for the North American Division. This article was first published in *Best Practice* (July 29, 2013) and has been lightly edited for *Elder's Digest*.

ADDING MEMBERS THROUGH STUDIES: HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT

>PART 7 OF 8



Part 6 of this series dealt with determining a person's spiritual interest and persuading that person to take Bible studies. Part 7 explains how to bring a person to a decision for baptism upon completion of the studies, having shown a positive interest and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The weakest link in bringing people to a decision for baptism is in knowing how to ask for it. The evangelist who never calls the people to come forward as a clear manifestation of their commitment to be baptized would baptize very few people. And the lay personal evangelist (working strictly through personal Bible studies in homes) who never asks his or her party at the end of the studies for baptism would get very few commitments. Less than *five percent* of potential baptismal candidates voluntarily ask for baptism. This is a great surprise to many laypersons, but experience by successful lay and church evangelists has shown this is a proven fact. Until the pastor or lay worker accepts this as truth, most candidates will slip through their fingers, and when this happens, the worker will soon get discouraged. Getting decisions calls for what some have called “holy boldness”—the courage to ask for decisions without fear, without embarrassment, and with total self-confidence. It includes the insight of knowing just the right questions to ask and the right time to ask them. God will give you that holy boldness, as He has given it to thousands of others, and He is patiently waiting for you to ask for it. If you don't already have it, begin praying that God will give it to you. How, then, to get a decision for baptism?

OBJECTIONS TO THE DECISION FOR BAPTISM

There are several objections likely to be offered by people who have yet to decide to be baptized. One of the most common has to do with the Sabbath, and there are at least four reasons why people under conviction will shy away from baptism for reasons related to the Sabbath: 1) if they start keeping the Sabbath, they will lose their job, and this seems unbearable for many candidates; 2) by keeping the Sabbath they will lose the support of their spouse or other family members, which is a daunting problem; 3) by keeping the Sabbath they will lose friends and/or appear foolish to them, and this, too, is a fearful contemplation; and 4) by keeping the Sabbath they will invite the scorn and even wrath of the pastor and members of their former church, which they want to leave in peace.

A second objection, especially heard from Muslims, is the dishonor they will bring upon themselves by changing religions. This can mean rejection by their family, and may even—in some ultra-conservative Muslim societies—be life threatening.

A third objection is that the decision can't be made alone since the group or community would have to agree, and in group-oriented societies, it is a barrier difficult to surmount. A frequent fourth objection is similar: the wish to wait for a spouse to make his or



BE ASSURED, A SKILLED DECISION-GETTER, WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, CAN ALMOST ALWAYS MOVE PAST THESE OBJECTIONS.

her decision so the two can be baptized together, although it seldom happens that way.

A fifth objection is the claim that they aren't quite ready yet—not in a genuine sense, but as a reflection of some other unrelated problem or fear, which with skill can be ferreted out. Similarly, an occasional sixth objection is the fear of the physical act of baptism. Being immersed is a real fear held by some candidates.

A seventh objection is that the tithe they will be expected to pay is not within their budget, which usually implies that they do not have a clear understanding of the principle of tithe paying, failing to see the blessings God will give if they do pay tithe.

An eighth objection is the wish to postpone the decision until a later, more convenient date.

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

The question is: how do we overcome these objections? Be assured, a skilled decision-getter, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can almost always move past these objections.

There are six steps that should be taken to answer the objections:

1. Ask a question that can be answered with one or more Bible texts, and which increases the conviction.

2. Provide the Bible text with the answer to your student.

3. Let the student read the text, although you may look it up and hand him or her the Bible open to the text.

4. Ask the question again after the student reads the text.

5. Quietly but firmly look the student directly in the eye and patiently wait until the student answers—you must not give the answer to him or her and you must not take your eyes from his or her face until there is some kind of response.

6. If there is no positive response, present yet another text and repeat the procedure. This process of making eye contact and not deflecting until there is a response is the most potent of all the strategies you can administer. It is the crucial part of the procedure.

Here are some suggestions of texts you may use for various situations:

- For the student who is clearly under conviction but dragging his or her feet: "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (Jas 4:17; see also 2 Cor 6:2 below).

- For the student who is afraid of keeping the Sabbath: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exod 20:8–11).

- For the student who is fearful of paying tithe: "Will a mere mortal rob God? . . . Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse" (Mal 3:8–11). Be sure to read the following verses for the promised results of paying tithe.

- For the student who needs encouragement: "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). One of your greatest tools is the matter of the danger of postponement.

- For the student who needs to be reminded of God's love for us: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jer 31:3).

- For the student who needs to know that when you are disconnected from God, it is impossible to keep any one of the Ten Commandments: "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person" (1 John 2:3–4).

- For the student who needs to know the danger of hardening one's heart: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did" (Heb 3:7). To this, you may say, "Do you want to be like those people who saw all the evidence of God's love for them during the exodus and yet rejected His calling?" ED

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CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD?



There are so many uncertainties in our world: We do not know how secure our jobs are. We are not protected against fatal illnesses, attacks by terrorists, war, and disaster. But we can be sure about our relationship with God and the gift of everlasting life.

I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

1. *Common Misunderstandings*

Some people think that only sinless persons can know they are saved. Imagine what could have happened after the prodigal son had returned home: The next day father and son have breakfast together. The son accidentally hits a glass of orange juice, spilling it over the tablecloth. The glass falls to the floor and breaks, and the son starts swearing. Would the father send him back to the pigs? Hardly. He may tell him that at home such behavior is unacceptable, but the son remains a son. Likewise, a person who has been saved is not a sinless individual, but someone whose goal is not to sin.

Others follow the motto, "Once saved, always saved." In other words, it does not matter much how you live after you have been saved. Revelation 3:11 rejects such an idea. Still others believe that certainty

of salvation depends on emotions. If you feel you are saved, you are saved; if not, bad for you. But the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda obeyed Jesus' command before feeling that he was healed. Certainty of salvation has to do with faith. Feelings are secondary (Heb 11:6; Rom 1:17).

2. *Persons Who Had This Certainty*

- Moses (Exod 32:32; for the "book" see Rev 20:15)
- Peter (1 Pet 5:1)
- Paul (2 Tim 4:7–8)
- Christians in Ephesus (Eph 2:8)
- Christians in Colossae (Col 1:12–14)

Some may argue that we cannot compare ourselves with these persons. But they were sinners like we are: Moses was a murderer, Peter betrayed Jesus, Paul persecuted Christians, and the believers in Ephesus and Colossae were not sinless (Eph 4:25–32; Col 3:2–13).

3. *God's Wish with Regard to Certainty of Salvation*

We want certainty in all areas of life. What about our salvation? The Bible offers us wonderful assurance (John 3:16, 36; John 5:24; John 20:30–31; Rom 8:1). In 1 John 5:11–13, it is God's will for us to have assurance of salvation.

II. CERTAINTY OF SALVATION IS NEEDED

1. *The Importance of Certainty of Salvation*

Assurance is necessary in order to have the right relationship with God. It allows us to let go of all attempts to save ourselves. Instead of having religious stress we can love, thank, and trust God.

Assurance is necessary in order to have the right relationship with fellow humans. We do not help them through good works and our testimony in order to receive some points that would count toward our salvation. Our ministry is selfless.

Assurance is needed for our own psychological well-being—to experience joy, fearlessness, and serenity.

Assurance is needed when it comes to dying (2 Sam 23:1–5).

2. *How to Find Certainty of Salvation?*

What must we do to be saved? “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Five steps may be helpful:

1. Recognize that God loves you and has a plan for your life (John 3:16; 10:10).

2. Accept that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself. As sinners we are separated from God, have to expect death, and cannot bridge the chasm that exists between God and us (Rom 3:23; Isa 59:2).

3. Recognize that in Jesus Christ God has prepared the only way out of our dilemma. By dying in our place Jesus has bridged the chasm (Rom 5:8; John 14:6).

4. Accept Jesus as Savior and Lord (John 1:12; 6:47–48, 54) by faith (Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8–9). Invite Him to take complete control over your life.

5. Rely on God’s promises, not your feelings. If you have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, trust the divine promise that you now have everlasting life (1 John 5:11–13). Maintain your relationship with the Lord by daily talking to Him in prayer and listening to His Word, by seeking the fellowship of believers and talking about Jesus to others.

CONCLUSION

Why shouldn’t we now in our prayer invite Jesus into our lives? Assurance of salvation is a priceless gift and treasure. ED

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LET'S TALK

In my work as a psychiatrist I met many patients and heard their stories—stories of pain, stories of suffering, stories of struggles, stories of abuse, stories of neglect, stories of being broken people in broken relationships in a broken world.

The greatest mystery often was not the reasons why they were struggling and perhaps contemplating giving up on life. Often, what amazed me was that they had not given up already. I was impressed that despite all the pain and challenges, they still pressed on, that the will to live was stronger than the desire to give up. I have never met anyone who truly wanted to die, but I have met many who were not sure there was any way of escaping the pains of life other than by suicide. As a church, we should be there to comfort the suffering and help them find life paths worth walking.

If you met one of my patients on the street or in my waiting room, you would find that most of them look just like you and me. And most of them *are* just like you and me. Mental health challenges do not afflict “them”; they afflict us. Mental health disorders and symptoms are a normal part of living in a sinful world. We are living in a world we were not created for, and

that makes us susceptible to struggles and hurt.

We may never know who is suffering unless we talk with one another about it. The ultimate cure for mental health challenges is heaven. But while we wait for it, the church should be a safe place where people can find comfort, hope, and healing. As a church, we are in a unique position to support people who are suffering mentally. Through comprehensive health ministry we can embrace people and their whole existence—physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

Our programs—Celebrations, Youth Alive, Journey to Wholeness, Gateway to Wholeness, and the upcoming MindWell—are well suited to support and increase mental resilience. As the World Mental Health Day approaches (October 10) with its theme “Young People and Mental Health in a Changing World,” we challenge you to take the opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of mental health in your local church. ED

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:10, KJV

PETITION THREE: "THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

In the second petition of the Lord's Prayer we prayed for God's kingdom, that it may be set up and established in our hearts; for His visible kingdom, the Church, that it may increase; and for His heavenly kingdom, that it may soon drive away and put an end to every kind of sin and sorrow. But we cannot desire that He be King over the earth without desiring that His will be done on earth. We do not sincerely own Him as King unless we set His will above our own and every other. A king whose will is not done is a dethroned king. This brings us to the third petition.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PETITION

1. *"Thy will be done" is the foundation of all prayer.* What is prayer? It is not a mere means of trying to extort something from God, nor an attempt to change the will of God regarding us, as if, by our continual asking, we might obtain certain things God had hitherto denied us. It is, first of all, an acknowledgment on our part that God knows what is best for us. We cannot rightly ask for anything unless we ask for it in humble dependence upon the will of God—unless, in asking, we are conscious that we do not desire it unless God desires it for us.

2. *"Thy will be done" is to be the spirit of every true life.* We learn that we do not stand alone. Gradually there is borne in us the triumphant consciousness of a life lived, not according to any self-willed object or desire, but unfolding itself step by step according to "the complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God." With the psalmist, we can exclaim, "O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust. My times are in Thy hands." This mature state toward which all should strive is the following: "If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."¹

3. *"Thy will be done" is to be done here—here on earth—and now.* We are told that the angels of God "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word," and that they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And the ministry of the angels is, as this petition teaches us, to be the model of our ministry.

II. JESUS' LIFE MODELED THIS PETITION

1. *"Thy will be done" demands assent.* Is it possible that Mary herself had a special share in teaching her Son how to pray it? For she herself had prayed it, not in so

"My God, my Father, make me strong.
When tasks of life seem hard and long,
To greet them with this triumph song,
Thy will be done.

Draw from my timid eyes the veil,
To show, where earthly forces fail,
Thy power and love must still prevail,
Thy will be done.

With confident and humble mind,
Freedom in service I would find.
Praying through every toil assigned,
Thy will be done.

All power is here and 'round me now,
Faithful I stand in rule and vow,
While 'tis not I, but ever thou:
Thy will be done.

Heaven's music chimes the glad days in,
Hope soars beyond death, pain, and sin.
Faith shouts in triumph. Love must win.
Thy will be done."

—Frederick Mann

many words but at least in essence: "I am the Lord's servant, . . . may your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38). Jesus learned the lesson, in part from her; when His great moment of crisis came, He knew how to pray in agony in the garden, "Thy will be done" (Matt 26:42, KJV). His was the great assent, the great "Yes" to the will of God, as hers had been.

2. *"Thy will be done" requires servanthood.* Mary had interpreted her assent in terms of servanthood. "Behold the handmaid, the servant, the slave of the Lord," she said. There is nothing more abject or lower than a slave. It requires absolute subordination and obedience to a master. As it had been with Mary, so it was with her Son. What Jesus learned at His mother's knee about the meaning of being a servant of the Lord, He found elaborated in Isaiah's pictures of the suffering servant (see Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). It seems that Jesus interpreted His mission as Messiah in their light. When the great temptation came to Him in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), it came in the form of a temptation to interpret His mission in terms of power and popularity. Three times He was tempted; three times He refused the temptation. He was to be the Servant of the Lord and the Servant of His people. Only so could He redeem, restore, and rescue. Mes-

siahship was to be accomplished by love and service and sacrifice. "Behold the Servant of the Lord." "Here I am, I have come to do your will" (Heb 10:9). His will and the Father's were one.

3. *"Thy will be done" is without any reservations.* The prayer of consent, the prayer of assent, my "Yes" to the divine will: What does it mean? In what spirit does such surrender manifest?

- It could be in a spirit of broken and abject surrender, as by one who is beaten to his knees by a superior and ineluctable force.

- It could be in a spirit of weary resignation, as by one who has come to see and admit that further resistance is useless.

- It could be in a spirit of bitter resentment, as by one who has ceased to struggle, who has accepted the inevitable but who still shakes his fist in the face of fate.

- It may be in a spirit of utter love and trust, as by one who does not need to understand in order to submit, who knows that a father's hand will never cause harm, and who realizes that he is not a plaything of circumstance or the sport of a capricious God. He is certain he can take his life and leave it in God's hand and be content. Jesus in Gethsemane is the most notable example of this dimension of surrender.

Even in the face of a mystery, even when the heart cries out for some evidence—some token, however small, of the nearness of God, of the presence of Christ—"If only," we say, "for one moment He could rend the veil, and for one moment the walk of faith might be turned to the wonder of sight." But no, it does not happen. It is then that God looks to us for our assent: "Lord, if that is Thy way for me, behold the servant, the handmaid of the Lord: but do it according to Thy will." That will work out in steady continuance—in prayer, Bible study, and service. In that way there will be no embitterment but a deepening of the spiritual life. That way, God will fashion a servant, a handmaid, or more after His own pattern, until the day dawns when faith gives way to sight and "His servants shall worship Him; they shall see Him face to face" (Rev 22:3-4, NEB). God will give the grace of steady continuance—the grace if not "to mount up with wings as eagles" or even "to run and not be weary," then at least "to walk and not faint." And perhaps that is the greatest grace of all. ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 668.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:11, KJV

PETITION FOUR: "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

In the Lord's Prayer, there are three petitions for God's glory, three for our spiritual necessities, and, in the midst, one petition for our bodily needs—only one, and that one full of significance: "Give us this day our daily bread." Prayer should always begin with our eyes turned Godwards. We should never rush into His presence with a list of all our wants. Humble adoration, sincere alignment of our will with His—this is where we begin. Then we may turn to petition. Jesus teaches us to ask for the simple, basic things of life: food, forgiveness, guidance, and deliverance from evil.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PETITION

1. *This is a prayer of dependence.* It reminds us of our humanness: "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps 100:2, PVB), "and we are His" (Revised Psalter). He who is our creator is also our sustainer. We depend on Him for each breath and for each day's food.

We need to pray this prayer, for the sin of hubris/pride/self-sufficiency is a besetting one, especially in this generation of great scientific achievement. "Glory be to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things." The lines of Swinburne are congenial to our contemporary outlook. This petition is an antidote for self-dependence.

2. *This is a prayer of inclusion.* "Give us . . ." Who is "us"? Half of the people in this world are undernourished, and many are on the edge of starvation. In this prayer, we align ourselves with those suffering from hunger and with God's concern for them. It is noteworthy that, in this prayer, Jesus does not use the word "love" at all; however, He does show an interest in people having enough to eat. But William Barclay reminds us that "the problem is not the supply of life's essentials: it is the distribution of them. This prayer teaches us never to be selfish in our prayers." This is a word of wisdom to those who speak glibly about love and do little about meeting the immediate and urgent needs of their brothers and sisters. But man cannot live by bread alone. If it is true that he has a body that hungers for food, it is equally true that he has a heart that hungers for love.

3. *This is a prayer of submission to God's will.* For Christians, as for their Lord, their "bread," their "food," is doing the will of God. On one occasion, the disciples returned from a Samaritan village and found Jesus greatly refreshed at a well. Remarkably, when they pressed Him to eat, He did not seem to need the food they brought Him. He explained, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about. . . . My food. . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:32–34).

"Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace
Our path when wont to stray;
Stream from the fount of heavenly grace,
Brook by the traveler's way;

Bread of our souls, whereon we feed,
True manna from on High;
Our guide and chart, wherein we read
Of realms beyond the sky.

Pillar of fire, through watches dark,
And radiant cloud by day;
When waves would whelm our tossing
bark,
Our anchor and our stay.

Word of the everlasting God,
Will of His glorious Son;
Without Thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all aright to learn
The lessons it imparts;
And to its heavenly teaching turn,
With simple, child-like hearts."

—Bernard Burton, 1826

Learning this lesson—finding and fulfilling the will of God—is life's deepest satisfaction. Thus prayed, the clause means: "Thy will be done in me this day. Thy kingdom come through me this day." "In His will is our peace," wrote Augustine. "To do the will of Jesus, this is rest," wrote E. H. Bickersteth. "I desire to do your will, my God," wrote the psalmist (Ps 40:8). This is food, bread, and life.

4. *This is a prayer of adequacy.* We pray for "daily" bread. The Revised Standard Version translates "daily" from a very rare word, *epioussios*. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in this prayer. But it has turned up in a papyrus fragment found in Egypt, relating to a housekeeper's book and prescribing the amount of daily food given to slaves, soldiers, and laborers, which was probably allotted a day beforehand. Hence Moffatt's rendering: "our bread for tomorrow." This suggests day-by-day trust in the providence of God. We do not ask for provision for the distant future or for a blueprint of the way we should go in the years ahead. God does not deal with us in this way. He leads us step by step, day by day, and, as we trust in that way, we find Him adequate. So J. H. Newman writes: "Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see / The distant scene; one step enough for me."

One day at a time—this is the attitude of trust as it is also the antidote for worry.

Several times in the chapter where the Lord's Prayer is found, Jesus bids us to "not worry about your life" (Matt 6:25). Worry is the opposite of having faith. A child whose hand is firmly grasped in his father's does not worry.

Every Christian must work out for himself or herself the tension between these two things: on the one hand, to look and plan ahead, to be "provident" and move through life and work through his or her program peacefully and purposefully; on the other hand, to live a day at a time and not worry. "Give us . . . our *daily* bread"—the future and its needs are in God's hands. In the words of a rabbi, "He who possesses what he can eat today, and says, 'What shall I eat tomorrow?' is a man of little faith."

5. *This is a prayer for spiritual reinforcement.* Jesus says, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). What is Jesus saying? We have a spiritual hunger that can never be satisfied with material things. He says, "Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15). He also says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Thus, Jesus identifies spiritual food as the Word of God. As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. But, how does that strengthen our spiritual nature? "The creative energy that called the worlds into existence," writes Ellen G. White, "is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One."¹ The prophet Jeremiah found this to be true: "When your words came," he declares, "I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jer 15:16).

We pray for bread, writes Martin Luther, "so God may grant us food and drink, clothes, house and home, and a healthy body; that he let grow the grain and the fruit of the fields . . . and that our labor turn out well." Even though God may provide these blessings without our asking, the great reformer added, He wants us to acknowledge that they came from Him—a sign of His parental care. But further, this prayer is a reminder that, without faith, our works are dead. Barclay suggests this prayer recognizes two basic truths: "that without God we can do nothing, and that without our effort and cooperation, God can do nothing for us." ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 126.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

PETITION FIVE: "AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS"

At first sight, the fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer presents itself as a straight bargain. We beg God to forgive us our debts (Luke says "our sins"; the Book of Common Prayer, "our trespasses") as we forgive our debtors. In teaching us this prayer, Jesus rightly presumed that no man can go through life without committing sins or hurting others. So, in debt to both conscience and God, we now confess those sins and ask for His compassion.

I. IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PETITION

What, then, are some of the implications of this petition?

1. *Divine forgiveness presumes an admission of guilt.* Some say "trespasses," others say "debts," and both words are correct; the oldest manuscripts used both. In either case, the admission of guilt is the stamp of nobility. All of us have done things we shudder to recall; hence, the petition acknowledges that "our debts" are ours exclusively and cannot be ascribed to another person. It is in vain to blame others for our failings. Our temptations are not our sins, and our tempters cannot sin for us. Further, our debts are ours inseparably. Many tickets include the words "Not Transferable," meaning we are not allowed to hand them to someone else. Who can blot out memory or change the past? The Lord made us; to Him we must go. There is only one who can say, "Put that on my account." But, to be forgiven, we ourselves must forgive, and this costs more, for he who pardons must assume the punishment. The price is high. The assumption of our sins sent Christ to the cross. But we collect our promised amnesty as we cancel out the wrong done by us. We pay not as victims but as partners in crime, and we draw the funds on God.

2. *Divine forgiveness cannot be earned.* To think of the Lord's Prayer as a kind of *quid pro quo* prayer is, of course, to completely misunderstand it. On any count, it is likely that I am guilty of worse sins than is my fellow-creature—a great plank is in my eye while he has a speck of sawdust in his (Matt 7:3). We cannot earn divine forgiveness. However, as we shall note, divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are inextricably linked.

3. *Divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are inseparable.* Queen Elizabeth I, angry with her rival, said, "God may forgive you, but I never can." According to Jesus, the queen was quite deliberately asking God not to forgive her (Matt 6:14–15), for the "unforgiving, unforgiven dies." Thus, Barclay argues, the literal meaning of this petition

"Wilt Thou forgive the sin where I begun
Which is my sin, though it were done
before?"

Wilt Thou forgive those sins, though which
I run,
And do run still; though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive the sin by which I have
won
Others to sin? And made my sin their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two; but wallowed in, a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
Swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy
Son
Shall shine as He shines now, and
heretofore:
And having done that, Thou hast done,
I fear no more."

—John Donne (1573–1631)¹

is, "Forgive us our sins in proportion as we forgive those who have sinned against us." The implication is clear: if we pray this petition with an unhealed breach, an unsettled quarrel in our lives, we are asking God not to forgive us. According to George Herbert, refusing to forgive someone for what he or she did "breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven."

4. *Divine forgiveness can be refused.* This clause states a hard fact. If we refuse to forgive, we so harden ourselves that the forgiveness of God cannot reach us. We grow an impenetrable callous of the soul. We hurt ourselves far more than we hurt the other person, just as Saul hurt himself by kicking at the goad (Acts 26:14, Moffatt). We are made that way, just as the gears of a car are made: not to be forced. Force them, and you achieve nothing but a bad noise and a bad smell. So Jesus states that when we refuse to forgive one who has wronged us, we automatically shut ourselves from the forgiveness of God. So important is the principle that this clause, alone of all the clauses of the prayer, has an explanatory addition in verses 14–15. And a long parable, the parable of the unforgiving servant, is devoted to its illustration (Matt 18:23–35; see also 5:23–24).

But, while this is the negative side of the teaching on forgiveness, there is also a positive side.

5. *Divine forgiveness has creative and healing power.* This positive and creative side is illustrated in the life and example of Jesus and His followers through the ages: "Father, forgive them," He prays for His murderers. Stephen prays a similar prayer for his murderers: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Augustine argues that "if Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have had Paul."² We may add, "If Stephen had not forgiven . . ." Each succeeding century provides its examples of the healing, creative power of forgiveness. In the words of Mark Twain, "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

6. *Divine forgiveness has a civic message.* How can we expect to be forgiven if, with regard to our debtors, we insist on a pound of flesh? Here, then, the Lord's Prayer holds a civic message. It makes it our moral duty to keep the peace, to settle things harmoniously and gladly between our neighbors and ourselves. The golden rule of doing to others as we would have them do to us is thus raised to a new dimension. Our prayer makes it part of our overall account with God.

"The truest joys they seldom prove, /
Who free from quarrels live; / 'Tis the most
tender part of love, / Each other to forgive."³

CONCLUSION

During World War II, Coventry Cathedral was completely destroyed. In the reconstruction of this building, two remaining charred beams were formed into a cross, beneath which are inscribed two words: "Father, forgive." Not three words—"Father, forgive them"—but two. For we all have a share in the sin of the world and in its shame. While the New Testament uses five different words for sin, the one translated "debt" means what is due but has not been paid. Sins represent duties that have not been met, making us guilty and liable for punishment. Therefore, we—all of us—need the forgiveness of God.

"Forgive us our debts." The gospel is in these words. Here, in the Master's Prayer, given for the perpetual use of all men, is mention of sins belonging to all and of forgiveness ready for all. ED

¹ His name is pronounced "Dunn." The whole poem turns on the pun on his name.

² Augustine, Sermon 315.

³ John Sheffield.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:13, KJV

PETITION SIX: "AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

The wording of this petition has caused difficulty for many—a difficulty little eased by the rendering, "Let us not be led into temptation." Naturally, we do not think of God tempting us. We recall the words of the apostle James when he wrote, "No one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (Jas 1:13). What does this petition mean?

I. THE MEANING OF TEMPTATION

To best understand this petition, we must start with the biblical meaning of "tempt." To most of us, the word "tempt" has a bad connotation: to tempt a person is not so much to seek to seduce him into sin as it is to test his strength and his loyalty and his ability to serve." Viewed in this light, every experience of life is a temptation. Our joys and sorrows, health and sickness, work and play, and adversity and prosperity can and do put us to the test quite as effectively as Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden.

II. THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION

1. *Temptation is a test.* Abraham is a classic example. His loyalty to God was severely tested when he was asked to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. While the Standard English Bible says "that God did tempt Abraham," the Revised Version renders the text, "Some time later God tested Abraham" (Gen 22:1). Clearly, it was a test of Abraham's loyalty and obedience. "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Jesus asks Philip. "He asked this," comments the evangelist significantly, "only to test him" (John 6:5-6). In both these instances, the verb is that from which the noun "temptation" in this petition is derived. So God makes muscles for His servants. They are strengthened by the fires of testing. "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

It was this kind of thing that the apostle James was thinking of when he wrote, "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" ("the testing of your faith produces perseverance," Jas 1:3). And Robert Browning: "Then, welcome each rebuff / That turns earth's smoothness rough, / Each sting that bids not sit nor stand but go."

But, what about Jesus' wilderness temptation? The inspired record says He was led by the "Spirit." So, when He was "tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1), is the Bible saying that the Holy Spirit partnered with the devil in compelling Jesus to sin? Absolutely not! Jesus' temptation was a negative preparation for His ministry. In His baptism, He had received the Spirit and confirmation of His mission; in His

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Thy word;
But in Thy life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters.

Such was Thy truth, and such Thy zeal
Such deference to Thy Father's will,
Such love, and meekness so Divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine.

Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Thy prayer:
The desert Thy temptation knew,
Thy conflict and Thy victory too.

Be Thou my pattern; make me bear
More of Thy gracious image here;
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Amongst the followers of the Lamb."

—Isaac Watts (1709)

temptations, He received the strengthening that comes directly from trial and testing. It was a test, as Ellen G. White observes, of His "trust in God."¹

2. *Temptation is inevitable.* Every Christian, while in the world, will face temptation and dangers, and as long as there is any evil in him, he will be prone to yield to them. There is a law written across the universe that no one shall be crowned unless he has first struggled. No halo of merit rests suspended over those who do not fight. Only after a fight, a fight with the evil within him, around him, a fight which he is at times tempted to abandon in despair, is the victory his. Therefore, Jesus adds to the petition for forgiveness a further petition: "Lead us not into temptation." As forgiveness points to the past, temptation points to the future. When we pray, "Forgive us our debts," we think of contracted guilt that we ask God to cancel, liabilities we have failed to meet that we ask Him to pardon. When we pray, "And lead us [bring us] not into temptation," we think of the trials and difficulties lying before us and ask for grace and strength to meet them. It is as if, with the psalmist, we cried, "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life" (Ps 56:13; 86:13).

3. *Temptation places us under the guidance of God.* It may be asked, "Why should we pray such a petition to God?" Do we not know that as He "cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (Jas 1:13)? Yet, God may permit temptation; however, unlike the tempter, He does not stand on the side of temptation and desire to see evil as the result of it. He may at times place us in a situation where it is very easy for us to do wrong and very hard for us to do right. So it was with Jesus when He was led into the wilderness "to be tempted by the devil." He was as much under the guidance

and direction of God then as when He went to be baptized, and because He surrendered to the guidance of the Word of God, the outcome was predictable: He overcame. And so, when we anticipate the temptations we are to meet in the world, what petition can be more natural for us than that God should not bring us into such as may prove too strong for us? It is our prayer of conscious weakness, the weakness that shrinks from the danger by which it may be overcome, that God would keep us from being tempted to sin or support and deliver us when we are tempted. So this petition is best understood as an admission of our frailty, an acknowledgement of our liability to sin, as well as a promise of His support and guidance when we are tempted.

4. *Temptation must be avoided.* If we are following Christ fully, we will not hesitate to go with Him into any experience, however perilous it may be. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." Yet, so much is involved in temptation, such possibilities of defeat and failure are dependent on the issue, that we dare not desire to enter into it. It is presumptuous to clamor for and be led into conflict. More than once, Jesus warned His disciples to watch, that they might not enter into temptation. He knew how inadequate their courage and strength would prove in battle with Satan, how their faith would fail in the moment of assault. Temptation is too terrible an experience to be rushed into, unled by God. So, poised between good and evil, we turn to our Father for support. We would rather not be put to the test, but our way out has been prescribed: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas 4:7). And remember, "Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name."²

5. *Temptation has an eschatological connotation.* Certainly, the clauses "hallowed be Thy name" and "Thy kingdom come" both have an eschatological reference: they quote the old Jewish prayer, the Qaddish, imploring God to reveal His final glory, asking for the coming of the hour in which God's name will be hallowed forever and His kingdom will prevail. The petitions for bread and forgiveness are for the here-and-now—this is "realized eschatology," the message that God's kingdom is already effective if we open our hearts. Then, in the sixth petition, we swing back to the fully eschatological note: "preserve us from falling away in the last temptation." He will not bring us into it, and He will not suffer our enemies to prevail over us. Hallelujah! ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 125.

² *Ibid.*, 130.

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A SIMPLE GUIDE TO PAUL'S EPISTLES

As a pastor, church members often asked me Bible questions: “What is a wave offering?” “Should women still cover their heads in church?” “What does the scarlet beast of Revelation represent?” Sometimes their questions were difficult, requiring me to ask for a little time to study before answering. Of course, I asked them to study too and share what they discovered, but when someone asks me a Bible question I cannot answer, it drives me to learn in order to satisfy my own curiosity. So serving as a pastor led me deep into my Bible.

My practice has always been to start my daily Bible study at the particular book and verse where I stopped the day before, and force myself to write something about it. It usually is not a lot of writing—maybe a paragraph or two, or even just a couple sentences. But over time, those small amounts of writing grew until I had amassed a significant volume of work.

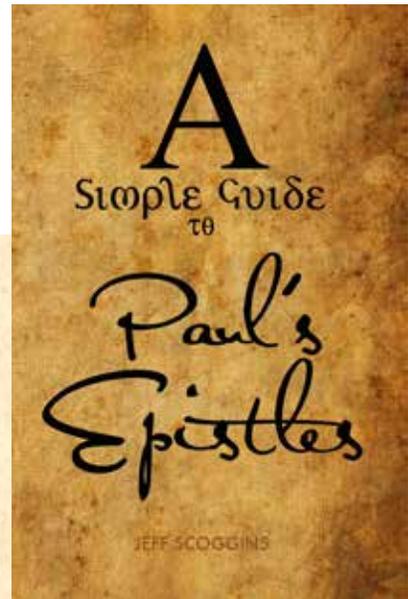
After a few years of doing this, I began to feel guilty about leaving this work hiding on my computer, and thought I should put it into a book so others could benefit also. And thus was born *A Simple Guide to Paul's Epistles*, a verse-by-verse journey through the writings of the apostle Paul, written specifically to be accessible to those who might not have the luxury of formal theological training.

The apostle Paul wrote a significant portion of the New Testament and was, therefore, single-handedly responsible for a vast amount of Christian theology. But his writings are so deep and culture-bound (as is the rest of the Bible) that people usually assign his writings to one of two extremes: either they say that Paul's writings are so complex as to be virtually inaccessible, or easily accessible to anyone when simply taking the plain and obvious reading of the text. The reality, though, as usual, lies somewhere in between those two extremes. Paul's writings are neither as simple nor as complex as others assert.

The apostle Peter stated that some of what Paul wrote is difficult to understand. And although time and study have clarified his writings in many ways, distance from Paul's time and culture has only obscured his writings further. This is especially true of the particular circumstances Paul was addressing in

his letters to the churches. We do not always clearly understand what situation caused Paul to write a specific part of his letter. But that situation, whatever it was, is critical to correctly interpreting the principles of how we should apply his words to our own lives. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul says that women should cover their heads, it makes a significant difference in our application when we recognize that it was a demand of modesty in Paul's culture and time, and the principle we should draw from his statement is not that women must cover their heads but that all Christians should dress modestly so God will be glorified. ED

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This book and its companion books, *A Simple Guide to the Book of Revelation* and *A Simple Guide to the Book of Isaiah*, are valuable Bible study aids for pastors, elders, deacons, Sabbath school teachers, and others. *A Simple Guide to Paul's Epistles* is available at the lowest price from Skapto.org or by calling 240-381-4513 to order, and is also available at many Adventist Book Centers around the United States and online from Amazon.com. Internationally, the book is available in English in digital format from Skapto.org or through Amazon.com and Apple's Book Store.



DEACONS AND DEACONESSES AS PHYSICAL PLANT MANAGERS¹

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* and the *Manual for Church Officers* present a vivid description of the deacons' responsibilities in regards to maintaining church properties. When the deacons perceive this work as being an opportunity to witness for God, they will count doing it a privilege. The *Manual for Church Officers* states:

The appearance of church properties, both the yard and environs, as well as the buildings, bears a striking witness not only to those who enter but to the community at large. Far more people drive by the church than enter in, and their concept of the people who worship within may be largely drawn from the appearance without. An unkempt yard overrun with weeds, or a lawn not properly mowed, will bear an unfavorable testimony. The

deacon's pride in his church and concern for its witness will not permit this to happen. His care of church properties will include the following:

1. Oversee the janitorial work, being certain that the church, including the grounds, is well cared for. It may be necessary at times, as in the spring, for the deacons to arrange for a general work bee at the church. Under proper supervision, much can be accomplished in a few hours.
2. See to such needed repairs as broken windows, plumbing, lighting, and heating.
3. Bring to the church board or finance committee suggestions for major repairs and improvements.
4. See to the care and proper distribution of the church hymnals in the sanctuary. Have them properly placed, front facing the worshiper and

right side up, in the hymn racks. Keep the racks free from litter.

5. Have the offering envelopes properly placed in the racks.

6. Have the pulpit furniture properly placed, microphones checked, and everything in order for services.

7. Open the church building before each regular meeting, and lock the doors after the service is concluded.²

In areas that overlap with the work of the ushers and other departments, deacons and deaconesses should seek to have a harmonious relationship with them and work out a schedule that will allow for the sharing of these responsibilities.

It is important to note that, although the deacons are the ones primarily responsible for the upkeep of the church properties, they do not have to do all the work themselves. They may request a budget from the church to contract it out or use volunteer help. The *Church Manual* addresses this issue by saying, "In large churches where it is necessary to employ a janitor, the deacons should recommend a suitable person to the board, which votes to employ such help, or the board may authorize the deacons to employ a janitor."³

Remember, first and foremost, the deacons' calling is a spiritual calling. Although they are responsible for multiple tasks in the church, they are not to be distracted from their primary goal of winning souls and nurturing the membership.

In some churches, the building committee is responsible for seeing that the church is clean and the temperature is appropriately set. Even when this is the case, Robert Naylor states:

Deacons, however, as officials of the church, are to have an interest in the building and take pride therein. If the building is not warm enough and no one is doing anything about it, the deacon should be the first one to arise quietly and see that something is done. All of the deacons should be alert to the details of the building appointments when they arrive on Sunday [Saturday/Sabbath] morning. To wait until the service is underway to make criticisms or adjustments is to wait too long. It could be that it is the particular responsibility of some of the deacons to serve on the building committee and to tend to these matters that are suggested.⁴

The *Manual for Church Officers* gives some specific instructions to deacons for providing a comfort-

able atmosphere in the church for those who come to worship. It states:

Although we can cite instances in which worshipers have been glad for the privilege of worship even amid most rigorous and uncomfortable circumstances, still it is true that one's comfort may affect the spiritual blessings received and may even determine whether some worshipers will return. Comfort has much to do with providing the proper atmosphere for worship. Visitors especially will react quickly. Church comfort will include the following:

1. Ensuring proper heating [and cooling] of the building before each service.

2. Maintaining proper heat and ventilation.

3. Ensuring proper lighting.

4. Seeing that all supplies are complete, such as towels, soap, and toilet tissue. Special attention should be given to assure that bathrooms are clean and wastebaskets empty.

5. Checking carefully at each service to see that nothing is lying about to mar the appearance. . . .

6. Taking special note of visitors and newcomers to the church, making sure that they are comfortably seated and that they have hymnals.

7. Providing for proper ushering.

8. Helping to maintain reverence.⁵

Although the sources cited direct their focus on deacons, deaconesses should assist in those areas of physical plant management that are within the range of their physical capabilities. ED

¹ Materials in this article were taken from the author's book, entitled *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model* (Huntsville, AL: AVA, 2011).

² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Manual for Church Officers*, 85.

³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 173.

⁴ Robert E. Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1955), 85.

⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Manual for Church Officers*, 85–86.

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

POSTURE DURING PRAYER

ARE THERE ANY BIBLICAL GUIDELINES, OR INSIGHTS FROM ELLEN G. WHITE, REGARDING POSTURE DURING PRAYER?



Church members often ask about the proper posture in prayer—whether in church we should only pray kneeling down, or if sitting or standing are also correct postures. The question is prompted by the teachings of some well-intended church members who, based on their personal study, have concluded that all prayers in church should be offered on our knees. The debate demonstrates that for many church members prayer is very significant and meaningful and they want to ensure that in its practice they are following God's instructions. We will discuss this issue not to discourage interest in this very important subject of Christian praxis, but to provide information and clarification.

BIBLICAL INFORMATION

According to Scripture, God's people present their prayers in different circumstances and physical postures. I will summarize the most important biblical information on the topic:

Kneeling

There are many examples of people praying to the Lord on their knees, suggesting this was a very common practice. Daniel prayed on his knees three times a day (Dan 6:10); Stephen fell on his knees and talked to the Lord before he died as a martyr (Acts 7:60); and Peter knelt down before Tabitha's corpse, prayed for her, and she came back to life (Acts 9:40; see also Acts 20:36; Eph 3:14). Sometimes the person placed the head on the knees while praying (1 Kgs 18:42). Kneeling was a ritual expression of the willing surrender of the life of the worshipper to God. By kneeling down, the worshippers voluntarily went down to the dust, from which humans were created, surrendering their lives to the Lord in prayer (cf. 2 Kgs 1:13).

Standing

Standing before the Lord in prayer was also a common practice, perhaps more common than kneeling. One of

the most impressive cases is found in 2 Chronicles 20, where a corporate act of prayer is described. When Judah was about to be invaded by the combined military forces of Moab and Ammon, Jehoshaphat called the people to pray to the Lord. He stood in the assembly in the house of the Lord and prayed for liberation while the people "stood there before the Lord" (2 Chr 20:5, 13). Hannah presented to the Lord her petition while standing, and the Lord answered her (1 Sam 1:26). Job also prayed standing (Job 30:20).

The Jews used to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to display their piety. Jesus condemned the pride, but not the practice of praying standing (Matt 6:5). In fact, He endorsed it when He said to the disciples, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:25). Standing in prayer emphasizes the privilege we have to approach God and address Him with our needs and concerns, knowing He can grant us our petitions. Those who were allowed to have an audience with a king usually stood before him and presented to him their petitions (cf. Esth 5:2). Standing in prayer means we acknowledge God as the king of the universe and consider it a privilege to approach Him to request guidance, blessings, and favors.

Sitting Down

The practice of praying to the Lord while sitting down is rare in the Bible, but not totally absent. A good example is King David, who "went in and sat before the Lord" (2 Sam 7:18). This is the posture assumed by an individual seeking instructions from the Lord, through His prophet (e.g. Ezek 8:1; 33:31), and who is ready to serve Him.

Lying Down

We also find in the Bible cases in which people prayed during the night from their beds. While lying on the

THERE ARE DIFFERENT POSTURES FOR PRAYER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ANY ONE OF THEM DOES NOT EXCLUDE ANY OF THE OTHERS.

bed they remembered the Lord and meditated on Him (Ps 4:4; 63:6). Sometimes the person would bow down (prostrate) on the bed and pray to the Lord (1 Kgs 1:47). Praying while lying down on a bed emphasizes prayer as an opportunity to meditate on the goodness of the Lord and approach Him during the night seeking His help. This is a private act of personal piety.

Prostration

When prostrating, people lie down horizontally with their faces on the ground, usually with outstretched arms. One of the knees remains bent in order to facilitate rising up from the ground. Rarely is prostration clearly associated with prayer in the Bible (e.g., 1 Kgs 1:47; Mark 14:35). It is fundamentally an expression of homage and submission before a superior. A person seeking help from the king would prostrate before him in dependence and submission (2 Sam 14:4). It was also practiced to greet a superior (2 Sam 14:22), or as an act of homage (1 Sam 28:14). In religious contexts, this is the posture of worship (cf. 2 Chr 20:18). It intensified the conviction that God was the very source of human life and the one who could preserve it (e.g., Num 16:45; Josh 7:6; 2 Sam 7:18). Sometimes worshippers came before the Lord, prostrated before Him as an act of homage, and then assumed the posture of kneeling—probably to pray to Him (Ps 95:6). Prostration before the gods was very common throughout the ancient Near East as an expression of homage, submissiveness, worship, and dependence. Prostration did not become an indispensable aspect of worship in the Christian church, probably because God no longer manifested Himself or dwelt permanently in a particular place on earth, but was accessible through His Son (cf. John 4:21–24).

This review of postures during prayer in the Bible indicates there was not one particular posture that was always required from worshippers when addressing the Lord with their requests. Postures are important in the sense that they are the external expression of reverence, inner feelings, and commitments to the Lord, but no single one of them was large enough to encompass

all these experiences. Hence, we find in Scripture a diversity of options and possibilities. Any attempt to select one as superior and indispensable over the others lacks biblical support.

THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen G. White emphasizes praying on our knees and encourages us to do so. She writes, “Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the Lord when we offer our petitions to Him.”¹ We should never consider kneeling down a burden, but a privilege. Again she comments, “Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God.”²

Statements like these should not be used to teach that the only proper position for prayer in public worship is kneeling. She makes it clear that it is not always necessary to kneel down in prayer.³ While participating in public worship, White herself at times asked the congregation to stand for a prayer of consecration,⁴ or to remain seated,⁵ or to kneel down.⁶ One must conclude that according to her, kneeling down was not the exclusive posture of prayer in church. In her private life she even prayed sitting in bed.⁷

CONCLUSION

By way of summary we can conclude that according to the Bible and Ellen G. White, there are different postures for prayer and the importance of any one of them does not exclude any of the others. During worship the Adventist church allows for praying sitting down, standing up, or kneeling down. Since worship should be characterized by order, it is important that when the community of believers comes together to seek the Lord we all follow the common liturgical elements accepted in our worship services. Those who kneel down to pray in church when the rest of the community is praying standing up may be unintentionally displaying piety in a questionable way. ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 178.

² White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, 312.

³ White, *Ministry of Healing*, 510–511.

⁴ White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 268–269.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 267–268.

⁶ White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 148–149.

⁷ White, “The Work in Oakland and San Francisco—No. 3,” *Review and Herald*, December 13, 1906.

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PREPARING YOUR CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS:

I CAME BECAUSE I WAS INVITED

The Blue Christmas service came to a close and several members and guests remained in the sanctuary, sitting in the light of candles and Christmas tree lights. I walked over to a woman in a pew and introduced myself. After hearing her name, "Suzie," I asked what brought her out that night and if she knew anyone in the church. Quickly, she reached into her purse and held up the invitation card our church had sent to the homes in our community. "No, I don't know anyone here," she said, "I came because I was invited."

Suzie had lost a friend three weeks earlier to cancer and when she saw the Blue Christmas service, she knew this was for her. When she walked in, she described feeling comfort and sensing God's presence, which is what she needed. I was glad God used the worship service to minister to His daughter.

Later that night, hours after our conversation, her words echoed in my mind. *"I came because I was invited."*

I wonder how many others long to be present. Are there more who would say the same thing?

The truth is, during the Christmas season, churches have the opportunity to serve people who are unreached other times of the year. There are people in our communities who are more open during the holidays, both to the story of Jesus and to a warm invitation to engage in celebration. During Christmas we celebrate God who is with us, who comes near to where we are. How will we invite those around us to participate?

COMMUNICATE

Your church probably has many great things going on at Christmas time already. You have your annual Christmas brunch, Christmas concert, or maybe a community canned food drive you do each year. It is worthwhile to take the time to put all these opportunities into one place. Often the task is not to create new events, but to explore what we are already investing in and decide who and how to invite others to participate.

Create an invite card, along with Facebook and website banners, to share the story of what your

church is doing. Then the next step is to share it. Print these cards and allow your members to use them to invite friends, family, and co-workers. Take young people out door-to-door to the homes immediately around the church. Do a mailing to your zip code. Put an ad in your local paper (both online and in print). Hang posters in the local restaurants, hardware store, or coffee shop. Share with the community center. Send an invitation home with each of the students in your school or children's center so the parents are invited. In all the ways that work best in your area, spread the word about the events and make it easy for people to get involved.

COLLABORATE

In the process of creating your invitation, start to think about all that will happen during the Christmas season. When will the potluck or fellowship meal take place? Do you want to add a cookie social after the concert? What community need will people be invited to give to? This is a great opportunity for collaboration with ministry leaders in your church. Bring together the music ministry, social ministries, and Adventist Community Services (or someone else invested in outreach) to talk about what you can offer during Christmas. Christmas is also a great time for your collaboration to extend beyond the church walls. Does the neighborhood shelter need supplies for those they serve? Does the city need a place to host the Christmas event? Can you partner with the local hospital or cancer treatment facility to invite those who have lost loved ones to a Blue Christmas service? Does the public school have families that need extra support to make the holidays special? There are so many opportunities for collaborative efforts that fit both the gifts and strengths of your church and the needs of the community.

Over the years, the Christmas invitation card at the churches I've served often invited people to a special sermon series, Christmas concert, Christmas meal, and a service opportunity of some kind. One church even did annual caroling and invited the community to participate in bringing cheer to the neighborhood! Whatever you decide to do, invite others to be a part of the holiday fun.

CREATE

Review your sermon series, Christmas concert, Christmas Eve service, or any other event with the guest in mind. Ask yourself, "If I weren't from this church, or any church, how would I experience this?" Often the changes necessary to make a guest feel welcome are small. But it does take intentionality as you work through the service. During the welcome, do you include guests? Do you have a card in the pew or bulletin for them to fill out to get connected? Is there a way for your church to follow up with the people who come? For the offering appeal, will you acknowledge that you do not expect guests to give? Would someone new know what to do during the service, or are there times for standing, sitting, or kneeling that need some explanation in the bulletin or from the pulpit in order

to understand? Do you preach like someone could be hearing it for the first time? In all you plan, imagine someone there who is walking into your church for the first time.

CELEBRATE

You plan, pray for, and anticipate what God will be doing during the Christmas season. Now it is time to be on the lookout for stories to celebrate. Who came? What did we give? How did we make a difference? Talk about it. Celebrate the way God's Spirit shows up and works among us.

"I came because I was invited." These words still move me. I am moved to outline Christmas messages before school is in session. I am moved to collaborate with other ministry leaders. I am moved to dream of what needs our congregation can meet. I am moved to pray, months before Christmas, for those who will walk through these doors and hear the story of God who is truly with us. May we continue to say, "You're invited."
ED

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

>PART 2



THE BEAUTY AND MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The foot washing with the aspect of cleansing has set the stage and the tone for the subsequent Lord's Supper.

Salvation through Christ (Matt 26:17–19)

The Lord's Supper was originally linked to and grew out of Passover. Both Passover and the Lord's Supper still share some common elements. The participants eat. They drink of the cup. Their thoughts turn to God, and God intervenes. He brings about salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. All slavery is gone. Freedom is restored. We can enjoy fellowship with God and serve Him willingly. We are saved through Jesus Christ.

The Means of Salvation (Matt 26:26)

In the Lord's Supper, the bread represents the body of Christ and the contents of the cup represent the blood of Christ. The life of Jesus and His death are the only means for our salvation. By celebrating the Lord's Supper, we recognize that all attempts to save ourselves are futile. We are dependent on what Jesus has done for us, not on what we have done, are doing, or will do.

In light of the cross, all our attempts at self-improvement and all our intriguing ideas of using the powers of self in order to reach our full potential are useless.

Remembering Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24)

The Lord's Supper is taken as a remembrance of the substitutionary atonement. Because we forget so easily, because we may tend to grow too accustomed to the gracious gift of salvation, because we are imperiled by our reliance on ourselves instead of on the Lord, we

constantly have to remember what Jesus has done for us. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service, not a funeral service. It is a joyous celebration of the love of the Godhead and the sacrifice of Christ that has brought us to full salvation.

Fellowship of Christ and Unity in Christ (1 Cor 10:16–17)

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul stresses to a great extent the concept of *koinonia*. The term can be translated as "fellowship," "a close mutual relationship," "sharing in," or "participation," to name some possibilities.

In the Communion we participate in the blood of Jesus.

Those who receive the cup rightly receive Christ. They are bound together in fellowship with Christ. . . . Such a reception is, of course, a spiritual process, and therefore takes place by faith. . . . The statement about the bread must be understood similarly: the broken loaf means a participation in the body of Christ.¹

Fellowship with Jesus produces fellowship with those who belong to Him.² Because we partake of one bread, we become one body. The Lord's Supper contributes to the unity of the church.

The New Covenant in Christ (Matt 26:28)

Jesus taught that the cup we take represents the blood of the covenant. A new covenant was already promised by God through Jeremiah. There are elements of continuity and discontinuity between the old and the new covenants.

God's basic law and intentions would not change. But whereas the old covenant only foreshadowed the new covenant, salvation became a reality under the

new covenant, not through the sacrifices of animals but through the sacrifice of Christ.

In the Last Supper this new covenant became a reality. As the disciples partook of the cup, they participated in the provisions and power of that new covenant, made possible by Christ's death. . . . In Bible times a covenant was often consummated with a meal. By eating together, the parties committed themselves to fulfill their pledges. . . . Jesus would shed His blood for them, making possible their salvation; He also agreed to prepare for them a place in God's kingdom, to which He eventually would take them. . . . As their part of the agreement, Christians partake of the emblems of His sacrifice as evidence of their compliance with the terms of the covenant.³

The covenant concept stresses the close relationship between the two parties involved in the covenant. We enjoy such a close relationship with God.

Forgiveness through Christ (Matt 26:28)

In taking the Lord's Supper we remember that our sins are taken care of by Christ. One of the most important elements of the new covenant, especially stressed in the book of Hebrews, is the fact that forgiveness is a reality to those who repent and believe.

We do not need to live guilt-ridden lives. We do not need to fear God or Christ's second coming. The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are free from sin and guilt as we accept Christ's gift of redemption and forgiveness and commit our lives to Him.

The Expectation of Christ's Second Coming (Matt 26:29; 1 Cor 11:26)

The Lord's Supper not only takes us back to the life and death of Jesus but points ahead to Christ's second coming.

By partaking of the emblems, we remember that Jesus has promised to eat and drink with us again in His Fa-

ther's kingdom. By partaking of the emblems, we confess that we are eagerly waiting for His return.

Loyalty to Christ (1 Cor 10:21)

It is a serious contradiction to attempt to worship Christ by celebrating the Lord's Supper while we worship ancient or contemporary idols. The Lord's Supper calls for us to express our loyalty to Christ as the supreme Lord of our lives and challenges us each time we take part in its emblems to recommit our lives to our only Savior and Hope.

Proclaiming Christ (1 Cor 11:26)

Participation in the Communion is an act of proclamation. We confess that we are followers of Christ, in order that we may rely on His merits only. We are grateful with all our hearts and minds for His life, death, and ministry for us, and we look forward to and count on His second coming.

We keep our priorities in order because of what He has done for us, is doing for us, and will be doing for us.

Living Lives Worthy of Christ (1 Cor 11:27)

Finally, the Lord's Supper has an ethical dimension.

Paul discusses abuses of the Communion in 1 Corinthians 11 and stresses that we cannot play with the Lord's Supper but must celebrate it worthily. What does this mean? The context tells us that the way in which we treat our brothers and sisters is crucial.

The Lord's Supper not only has a vertical dimension—namely, our relationship with God—but also influences the horizontal, our relationship with each other.

CONCLUSION

Foot washing and the Lord's Supper are rich and beautiful in meaning. In them our Lord wants to meet us, and we want to be open to Him. When we meet to celebrate the ordinances, we lay aside all routine and whatever hinders us to listen to His voice and His story. We accept the Lord's invitation to His wonderful meal. ED

¹ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1993), 143–144.

² The idea of fellowship may be present already in Matthew 26:27.

³ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 598.

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CHURCH VOLUNTEERS: FINDING THEM, TRAINING THEM, AND KEEPING THEM >PART 1

I hear it all the time: “We just don’t have enough laborers in our church. Those who are serving are overworked, and too many people do nothing.” As an elder, one of the most exciting responsibilities you have is making sure the church is fulfilling its God-given mission to minister and win people for Jesus. The church was designed to be primarily a volunteer organization. The power of the church lies within its members and attendees—men and women, young and old—finding their place to serve and work out God’s redemptive plan.

When your attendees serve the Lord with the gifts He has given them, your church can accomplish all that God has called you to do. It is our responsibility as pastors and church leaders to help our attendees grow in grace and love, see their potential, use their God-given gifts, and develop their leadership and influence.

In the last church I served, we used to say, “We don’t recruit volunteers; we build and release leaders.” Your attendees are leaders with great potential to serve God and make a difference in the world.

This three-part series will be devoted to the subject of finding, training, and retaining volunteers, using ideas gleaned from many growing and effective Adventist churches.

Below are some tips that will help you find the leaders God has placed in your church:

Pray That God Will Send You New Leaders. Enlist a team of members to pray continually for God to send you new leaders; pray before recruiting, while recruiting, and even after recruiting. Your church will have more laborers if you intentionally, earnestly, and strategically pray for more. Jesus taught us to pray for laborers to enter the harvest fields. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of

the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt 9:37–38). I have experienced the power of this promise many times. Our church was once in need of a music director. We prayed, and in less than three months God had sent us a husband and wife who were music teachers at the community college. They turned out to be terrific music and worship leaders. Another time we prayed for a volunteer youth pastor. About five months later I got a telephone call from one of our young adults who was studying for the ministry at college, telling me that God had convicted him to come home and be the youth pastor for a year. He loved it so much that he stayed there for two years and grew the youth program attendance from three young adults to about fifty, and from no leaders to eleven. Every time we claimed the promise in Matthew 9, we saw amazing answers. Try it; I know God will take care of the needs of your church.

Teach About Spiritual Gifts. Drill deep into the fundamental truths of 1 Corinthians 12: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work” (vv. 4–6). No believer should be able to read this text and remain unwilling to serve, either inside or outside the church.

Build Relationships. Your goal is not to recruit; it is to build healthy and meaningful relationships. Get to know the members of your church. Ask questions, and listen to their answers. Learn about their families, jobs, passions, and hobbies. Then help them understand the roles in your church that fit their passions, personalities, and gifts.

Be Passionate. Are you passionate about your ministry? People are attracted to leaders with passion and vision, so if that naturally pours out of you, people will want to serve alongside you. Therefore, grow in your love for God and your ministry, because you are contagious! Paul said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Evaluate Your Current Methodology. Do the same people serve in multiple positions? Do new members know how to get involved? What percentage of members are not involved? Are members serving in the wrong places? Are ineffective leaders permitted to remain in their position? Does the current process reflect a 1 Corinthians 12 understanding of member responsibility? Be honest. If the current process is not working, then something must change.

Use “Disciple” Rather Than “Volunteer” Language. Yes, church members are volunteers in the sense that they do not get paid for their service. However, we are not called to be “volunteers” in God’s

“FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE, AS I FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST”

(1 COR 11:1).

kingdom; we are expected to be obedient disciples of Jesus. We sign up to die when we follow Christ. That is much different than being a volunteer.

Start with People Rather Than Positions.

Many churches start the recruitment process by seeking to fill current *positions* rather than considering the *people* God has brought them. This approach de-emphasizes 1 Corinthians 12, neglects the possibility that God may intend new ministries to begin, and often results in “warm bodies” in the wrong positions. It is better to start by giving seminars on spiritual gifts three or four times a year. Then ask the people where their gifts and passions are, and ask them to serve in ministries that fit their personalities, passions, and gifts. This might even empower them to start new ministries to serve the community and the church.

Require a Membership Class, and Explain Involvement Expectations.

Many church members remain uninvolved because they have not understood they must be involved, they assume they are not needed because others are serving, or they do not know how to get involved. Address all these concerns before a new member has the chance to develop a habit of complacency.

Help Members Consider Where They Might Serve.

Move beyond simple spiritual gift inventories, and help church members evaluate their life experiences, desires, skills, passions, and spiritual gifts. This holistic approach helps members better understand what God has done to prepare them to serve. A person might have a passion to teach while his personality lends itself to teach children and not adults. Another person might be an introvert who will serve well in behind-the-scenes ministries. Asking members about their spiritual gifts, passions, and desires will help the church put the right people in the most effective ministries. It is also important to create a system of evaluation to take stock of ministry positions every six to twelve months, and move people as needed.

Recruit Face-to-Face. Bulletin notices, pulpit announcements, and email requests are helpful recruiting tools, but they are not enough. Recruit the way Jesus did: face-to-face, voice-to-voice. Use the most passionate, properly placed leaders to recruit others. Ministry leaders who believe in their work are a winning recruitment team. ED

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MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

OUR MISSION

Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; Rev 14:6–12).

OUR METHOD

Guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists pursue this mission through Christ-like living, communicating, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving.

OUR VISION

In harmony with Bible revelation, Seventh-day Adventists see as the climax of God's plan the restoration of all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness.

IDENTITY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR MISSION

Our Identity

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sees itself as the remnant Church of end-time Bible prophecy. Members of the Church, individually and collectively, understand their special role as ambassadors of God's kingdom and messengers of the soon return of Jesus Christ. Seventh-day Adventists have enlisted as co-workers with God in His mission of reclaiming the world from the power and presence of evil, as part of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan.

Therefore, every aspect of a Church member's life is influenced by the conviction that we live in the last days described in Bible prophecy and the return of Jesus Christ is imminent. Seventh-day Adventists are called by God to live in this world. Every action of the Christian life is done "in the name of Jesus" and to advance His kingdom.

Implementation of Our Mission

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the Bible as God's infallible revelation of His will, accepting its authority in the life of the Church and of each believer, and its foundational role for faith and doctrine. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Holy Spirit is the power that transforms lives and equips people with abilities to advance God's kingdom in this world.

Called by God, guided by the Bible, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists, wherever we live in the world, devote ourselves to:

1. *Christ-Like Living*—Illustrating the lordship of Jesus in our lives by moral, ethical, and social be-

haviors that are consistent with the teachings and example of Jesus.

2. *Christ-Like Communicating*—Realizing that all are called to active witness, we share through personal conversation, preaching, publishing, and the arts, the Bible's message about God and the hope and salvation offered through the life, ministry, atoning death, resurrection, and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

3. *Christ-Like Discipling*—Affirming the vital importance of continued spiritual growth and development among all who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we nurture and instruct each other in righteous living, provide training for effective witness, and encourage responsive obedience to God's will.

4. *Christ-Like Teaching*—Acknowledging that development of mind and character is essential to God's redemptive plan, we promote the growth of a mature understanding of and relationship to God, His Word, and the created universe.

5. *Christ-Like Healing*—Affirming the biblical principles of the well-being of the whole person, we make healthful living and the healing of the sick a priority and through our ministry to the poor and oppressed, cooperate with the Creator in His compassionate work of restoration.

6. *Christ-Like Serving*—Following the example of Jesus we commit ourselves to humble service, ministering to individuals and populations most affected by poverty, tragedy, hopelessness, and disease. ED

This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in Silver Spring, MD, USA on October 13, 2014.

WE ARE THE *Message!*



“You yourselves
are our letter,
written on our
hearts, known and
read by everyone.”

2 Corinthians 3:2

PASTOR'S
APPRECIATION
DAY

OCTOBER 12, 2019



MARK THE DATE

NOVEMBER

9

ANNUAL
SACRIFICE
OFFERING



WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE UP FOR ONE WEEK TO SUPPORT MISSION WORK?

What if you took a week to save money you would have spent on something you don't really need – and then donated it to the Annual Sacrifice Offering for Global Mission?

You'll be helping Global Mission pioneers to start churches in new areas among unreached people groups. Living on a small stipend, these pioneers live simply to go and live among the local people, putting Christ's method of ministry into practice.

So what are you willing to give up to support mission?

The November 9 Annual Sacrifice Offering is a great time to make a special gift to support the work of Global Mission pioneers. If you want to help share Jesus with unreached people, please mark your tithe envelope "Annual Sacrifice Offering for Global Mission" or visit Global-Mission.org/Giving, click on "My donation is for" and then select "Global Mission's Annual Sacrifice Offering."



GLOBAL MISSION

From the Office of Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, 20904, USA

Global-Mission.org/Giving