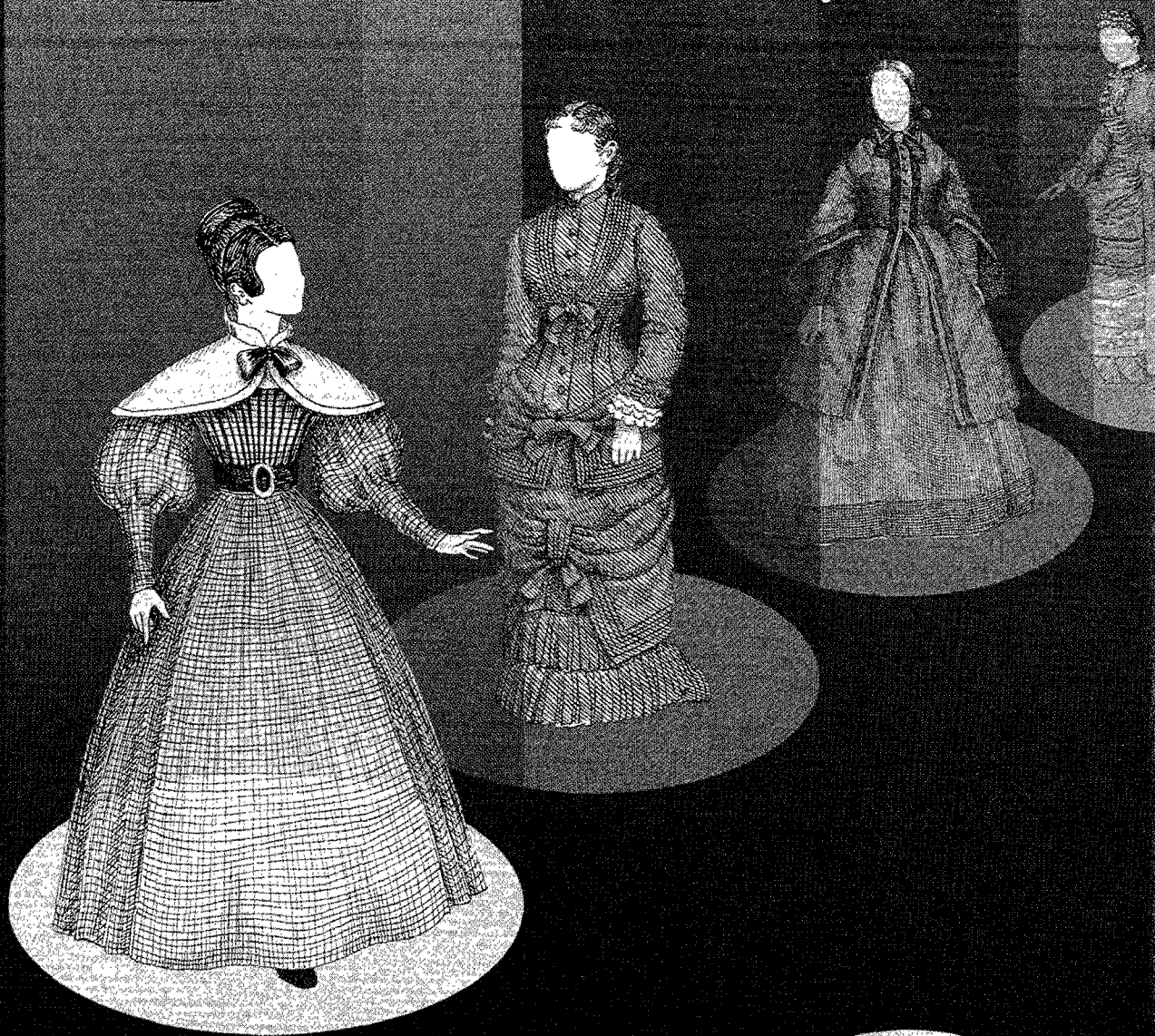


MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

August 2001



HISTORIC ADVENTIST

Women

IN
EVERY
ISSUE

Letters
3

Editorial
4

Pastor's Pastor
30

5

Historic Adventist women

An informative and inspiring review of women as ministers in the Adventist Church

Ardis Stenbakken

8

Evolving Adventist theological education (part 1): A historical perspective

The development of ministerial field education in the Adventist Church

Walt Williams

12

The ecology of generosity

Evaluating and enhancing our motives for giving

Victor Pilmoor

14

Is divorce the answer?

Are there justifiable reasons for divorce?

Gary Tolbert

18

The hardness of human hearts

Some specific concerns about divorce

Ekkehardt Mueller

22

"He lets the loser win"

The pastor's call

Mike Brownhill

24

A provocative study of tithing trends in Australia

Tithing trends and their implications

Robert McIver and Stephen Curow

MINISTRY

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HOWEVER, THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS THAT USE THE GREEK TERM PORNEIA SEEM TO REFER TO SEXUAL IMMORALITY IN GENERAL, NOT JUST PREMARITAL SEX.

The great controversy theme

I am very thankful for the article Dr. Douglass presented before us and the onlooking non-Adventist pastors ("The Great Controversy Theme: What It Means to Adventists," December 2000). It was so refreshing to see the overall portrait of our faith so aptly put and the way he blended the material into a recognizable blueprint of the faith of Jesus for non-Adventists. Truly we are a blessed people, and may God continue to use your magazine to present such timely material before the shepherds of the folds of Jesus.

—David L. Tripp, pastor, Rolla, Missouri.

Editorial note: Thank you for your letter. Dr. Douglass's article did not go to Ministry readers of other denominations. Our PREACH issues go out only on odd-numbered months (January, March, May, July, September, and November).

A Christian theology of divorce and marriage

As a pastor's wife, I enjoy reading about theological issues, and I appreciate *Ministry's* many thought-provoking articles.

In regard to Keith A. Burton's article, "A Christian Theology of Divorce and Remarriage" (April 2001), I disagree with the conclusions he has drawn from Matthew 19:1, 2 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-15.

Based on his interpretation of the Greek word *porneia* in Matthew 19:9,

Burton concludes that one of two circumstances in which divorce is allowable is "if it is discovered soon after marriage that the spouse has either impregnated or been impregnated." Burton applies *porneia* particularly to "fornication" or "premarital sex" and glosses over the more general definition, "sexual immorality" or "illicit sexual intercourse." He makes no allowance for infidelity after marriage. His assertion is that "if Matthew meant adultery, he would have used the correct term as he does further on in the verse . . ." However, the other New Testament texts that use the Greek term *porneia* seem to refer to sexual immorality in general, not just premarital sex. It is true that the exact meaning of *porneia* is debated, but Burton fails to give adequate evidence that Jesus' words here are limited to premarital sex. His argument that Matthew would have used the term "adultery" (*moicheia*) as he did later in the same sentence could be explained if Jesus meant that anyone who divorces his spouse for any reason other than sexual immorality (which could include both adultery and premarital sex) and marries another commits adultery (*moichatai*, which seems to indicate a more specific act of marital unfaithfulness). If so, Jesus could be clarifying Moses' allowance for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he has found something indecent about her . . ."

I agree with Burton's statement that

"no hurtful action perpetrated by a spouse is unforgivable—not even adultery." However, if after attempting reconciliation, the guilty spouse shows no desire to change his or her behavior, or, for example, it is impossible for the couple to remain married because of a dangerous situation such as incest, it would seem that the innocent spouse would be released from the moral obligation of the marriage bond and be allowed to remarry without committing adultery.

Furthermore, Burton's conclusion from 1 Corinthians 7:10-15 is that the only other circumstance in which divorce is allowable is "if a married person becomes a Christian and the non-Christian spouse decides to desert him or her." He also states that "only those Christians who fall in this category are free to remarry." I do not believe that Paul intended this by his statement in 1 Corinthians; that "a believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances" (7:15, NIV). In the context of the rest of this chapter, it would make more sense if Paul were saying that if the unbelieving spouse is not willing to live with the believer, it is permissible for the couple to divorce, or at least to separate; however, this would not necessarily mean that they would remarry. In Paul's discussion of marriage in Romans 7, he states clearly that a husband and wife are bound by law as long as they are alive and cannot remarry without committing adultery. (The Greek word translated "bound" here is different

continued on page 20

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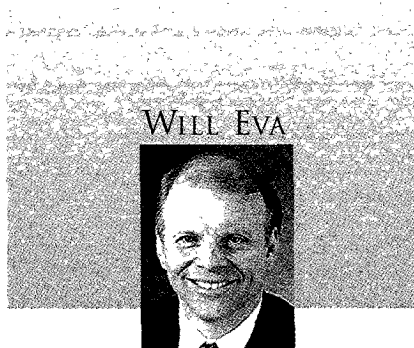
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Courage

Whatever you do," said Ralph Waldo Emerson, "you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to the end requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men to win them."¹

Anyone in leadership, even if only for a day (or two), knows how true these words are. It is not by chance that the phrase "having the courage of our convictions" has become a cliché (at least in English). A pastor can become miserable and ineffective if he does not stand for what he believes best. Of course we must listen, sincerely and completely, to those whom we are leading; and we must be willing to modify our positions if need be. But it is our prerogative as leaders—indeed, it is simply good leadership—to stand firm. At times, that stance will require courage because no matter our position, no matter our course of action, we can be sure—someone will oppose us.

By nature, many pastors avoid conflict. Many are natural peacemakers. The pastoral role calls us to be referees, experts in the art of conciliation and constructive compromise. Besides, we want to be liked. We



shun division and live to create an atmosphere of love and trust in our congregations. No wonder, then, that we sometimes find it hard to take a stand. Yet taking a stand for a well-conceived course of action is often just what a congregation needs, especially if contrasted against a wishy-washy, anything-you-say, leadership style. To hold firm takes courage, especially when we face the opposition of powerful, influential members whom we ourselves might even admire.

"There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right."² The moment we embark on our course of action, having left the harbor of traditional theory and practice, forging out into the high seas toward some new and noble destination—not only does fear cause us to think that we are not doing right, but "difficulties" (perhaps the very condition of the seas along the course we have plotted) have a seductive prowess that can,

at times, seem to side with our critics. It takes courage, born of divine conviction, to not turn back, but to stay the course, winning the awful battle against self-doubt and the desire to please and be popular.

"To map out a course of action and follow it to the end requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs."³ I've never fought in a military battle, but what will keep me fighting and advancing when everything in me says "stop" or "retreat" is the courage that comes from believing that my position is correct.

Sometimes, we have courageously stayed the course; we have fought and fought hard, and yet nothing gets us over the final hump. It is then—when we are emotionally and physically expended, when it seems impossible to continue—that we must muster the courage of a soldier.

We are all aware of the risks and pitfalls expressed here. We are also aware of the great wisdom required whenever we exercise Christian leadership. But we are all also instinctively aware of the immense rewards and advantages that lie hidden in the great struggle to stand firm and win the day with quiet, unassailable courage. ■

1 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Courage."

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Historic Adventist women

Ardis Stenbakken



Ardis Stenbakken is the director of women's ministry at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

What on earth would they do with Ellen White?" The listener asked in amazement. She had just been told that a certain Adventist church was not allowing women to stand in the pulpit or to preach.

Prophet, spiritual advisor, preacher, writer, church leader—the list is impressive. But when you add woman, wife, mother, it is amazing. Ellen G. White was all this and more. But somehow we think of her as an anomaly—and we forget that she was in fact one among many women who helped build our church. She was the only one with the gift of prophecy, but other women played important roles in almost all aspects of our early church life, including pastoral ministry and administration—and, yes, preaching and evangelism.

Sarepta Henry

One of them, Sarepta Myrenda Irish Henry, combined powerful preaching and administration. A temperance activist and national evangelist for the Women's Christian Temperance Union before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, she spoke to crowds across the United States. Once she was invited to speak in Shabbona, Illinois, for three lectures. "Instead she stayed for three weeks. "The community was stirred to its depths. At the close of the meetings Mrs. Henry conducted a special service for the 200 converts, most

of whom had never before held church membership, 73 of whom were . . . avowed infidels."¹

Sarepta's travel and heavy work load affected her health. By 1895 she was almost an invalid. She went to the Battle Creek Sanitarium for treatment. While there in 1896 she became a Seventh-day Adventist.² Sarepta sought Ellen White's counsel as to what she should do after her baptism and Mrs. White encouraged her to continue her work in temperance and to address the crowds.³ Shortly after her baptism, Henry did in fact speak in the Battle Creek Tabernacle to an audience of 2,500. Oliver Willard, editor of the *Chicago Post*, wrote after she spoke at Northwestern University that her speech was "one of the most beautiful pieces of word painting" to which he had ever listened.⁴

Sarepta became concerned about the state of Adventist women. Compared to the women with whom she had been working, Adventist women were apathetic, untrained, and uninvolved. Encouraged by letters from Ellen White, she began a "Woman's Ministry" for the General Conference, which granted her a ministerial license in 1898.⁵

Henry carried on this ministry⁶ until her unexpected and sudden death while attending a General Conference committee in Greysville, Tennessee, in January 1900.

Other women in ministry

With an increased interest in understanding the place of women in the church, especially in ministry, some "forgotten" women of the past are today becoming better known. In the one-volume Adventist encyclopedia, Ellen Lane warrants one significant sentence in an article about her husband, Elbert B. Lane: "During his illness, his wife, Ellen, took his place in the pulpit and in visiting, and from then on preached independently with marked success."⁷ In the revised two-volume edition she has an entry of her own, stating that she was the first Seventh-day Adventist woman to receive a ministerial license (1868). This was granted by the Michigan Conference and renewed in 1878.⁸ She worked with her husband in Pennsylvania and Virginia. One Sabbath morning in Virginia, Elbert spoke to 35 listeners and the next day 650 people gathered to hear Ellen speak.⁹

A ministerial license, or "preacher's license"

was significant for these women because it meant that they had been "examined by a competent committee in regard to their doctrinal and educational qualifications."¹⁰ In 1878-1879, the Kansas, Minnesota, and Kentucky-Tennessee Conferences also licensed women preachers. At the time of the 1881 General Conference Session, at least seven women held ministerial licenses.

Hattie Enoch held a preaching license, first granted to her in Kansas in 1879. Ellen White was present at the Conference proceedings and even spoke "at some length on the subject of licenses."¹¹ G. I. Butler wrote to Ellen White in 1881 that the Kansas Conference president, Smith Sharp, made full use of licentiates. He wrote, "Among these are Marshall Enoch and his wife who is a public speaker who labors with her husband. Elder Cook [Kansas minister, soon to become president of the conference] thinks she is a better laborer in such things than any minister in the state."¹²

Perhaps even more remarkable was the story of LuLu Wightman. She was licensed in 1898 and between 1896 and 1905 she raised up 12 churches in New York state. Her husband, licensed in 1904, and she established another five churches. S. M. Cobb, a minister and contemporary of Mrs. Wightman, wrote in 1897 that Sister Lulu "has accomplished more in the last two years than any minister in this state." The General Conference statistical report for 1903 reported that New York had 11 ministers and two Bible workers, but 60 percent of the new converts were won by the Wightmans and one Bible worker, a Mrs. D.D. Smith.¹³ Unfortunately, the Wightmans became disgruntled and discouraged and later left the Adventist Church.

Another outstanding preacher was Jessie Weiss Curtis in Pennsylvania. Dr. J. M. Hoffman, who was evangelist and director of the Times Square Center in New York City for 20 years working for the Jewish people, tells

how he was brought into the Church through her ministry. "She was quite a preacher, and the first time I went into church someone told her that a Jewish man was in the church with his wife. She changed her subject and preached on the 70 weeks. Jessie Weiss Curtis was a terrific preacher and she raised up the church in Drums, Pennsylvania, where I first became a member. My wife, Trudie, and I were both baptized at the same time."¹⁴

The fame of Mrs. Curtis as a preacher was such that in 1927, a newspaper reporter went to investigate what was happening in her tent. He reported, "Coming from a radius of twenty miles, there have been as many as 110 automobile loads at a single service."¹⁵ The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* says that she began her work as a Bible worker with some important early pioneers such as H.M.J. Richards of the Voice of Prophecy; Ned Ashton, later a pastor of Sligo church; and F. H. Robbins, later president of the Columbia Union Conference.¹⁶ She also had many important men work under her as interns, including N. R. Dower, who later became Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.¹⁷

Stories of courage

No story of women in ministry and administration would be complete without recounting the life of Anna Knight. Her accomplishments themselves are extremely impressive, but when you add the times in which she lived, and the challenges of belonging to two minority groups—women and Blacks—she was amazing.

Anna Knight essentially taught herself to read, and she read herself into the Adventist Church. After graduating from Battle Creek College with a degree in nursing, she returned to her native Mississippi to build a self-supporting school for Black children.¹⁸ Once while home on vacation she was ridiculed because on Sabbaths she took reading material, a dog, and a revolver out into the woods. "The

dog" she said, "was to fend off wild hogs. The revolver was to fend off people!"¹⁹

When she attended the General Conference Session as a delegate in 1901,²⁰ she became excited about missions and was soon on her way to India. After several years, she received word that there was trouble at home with her school. When the General Conference was unable to send someone to care for the problem, she asked for furlough. Eventually she was asked to start a sanitarium for Black people in Atlanta. Thus the first "colored" YWCA came into being there. At one point, Anna Knight served as Home Missionary, Missionary Volunteer, Education and Sabbath School secretaries all at once for two unions.^{21, 22}

Another woman of distinguished service was Minerva Jane Loughborough Chapman, a sister of J. N. Loughborough. She served for 26 years at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, nine as editor of the *Youth's Instructor*. She refused a salary during this time.²³

From 1875 to 1877 Minerva Chapman served as the Corresponding Secretary of the General Conference. In 1877 she was asked to serve simultaneously as treasurer of the General Conference, editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, secretary of the Publishing Association and secretary and treasurer of the Tract and Missionary Society, the predecessor of both the Publishing and Personal Ministries Departments.

Although well-known in her day, Chapman has almost been forgotten by the Church she served so well. In his four-volume history of Seventh-day Adventists, Arthur W. Spalding does not mention her, although he does mention 24 other women. LeRoy Froom does not mention her in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, nor does M. E. Olsen's *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*.²⁴

There are many more women: Maud Sisley Boyd, the first single woman missionary and assistant to both J. N. Loughborough and J. N.

Andrews; Maria Huntley, the only woman other than Ellen White to be invited to address the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis;²⁵ Anna Georgia Burgess, one of the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to India; Grace Agnes Clark, outstanding missionary and linguist in East Africa; Betty Haskell, missionary and teacher of Bible instructors; and Minnie Sype, evangelist, pastor, administrator, and missionary. The list goes on and on. Today, many more women are being rediscovered in the annals of Adventist history.

The history of our church would certainly have been very different without the ministry of these women. What a mistake we make when we ignore this history and when we stifle the ministry of women who even now offer their service of love, dedication, and distinction. ■

1 Margaret White-Thiele, *Whirlwind of the Lord* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), 179.

- 2 "Henry, Sarepta Myrenda (Irish)," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Second Revised Edition (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996).
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998) 130.
- 4 John G. Beach, *Notable Women of Spirit* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1976), 91.
- 5 Josephine Benton, *Called by God* (Smithsburg, Md.: Blackberry Hill Pub., 1990), 230.
- 6 In late 1899 Mrs. Henry reported, "I was absent from home five months; traveled over nine thousand miles; have spoken two hundred and fourteen times; was subject to nearly all conditions of living and climate which would test the strength of the most robust, and yet have returned in good working order. . . . After one day of rest I have taken up the work which is waiting for me in my office." White-Thiele, 285.
- 7 "Lane, Elbert B." *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1976.
- 8 "Lane, Ellen S." *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd revised ed., 1996.
- 9 Rosa Taylor Banks, ed., *A Woman's Place* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1992), 66.
- 10 Bert Haloviak, "The Adventist Heritage Calls for Ordination of Women," *Spectrum*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1985, 52.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., 53.
- 13 Banks, 67, 68.
- 14 Benton, 226.
- 15 Ibid., 223.
- 16 "Curtis, Jessie Weiss," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1976.
- 17 Benton, 118.
- 18 Banks, 61, 62.
- 19 Mervyn C. Maxwell, *Tell it to the World* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1976), 190. Maxwell further states: "As a child she had made her own bows and arrows and was reputedly able to hit a knothole at 100 yards."
- 20 Benton, 89, 90. Benton reports that Knight was asked to give a report of her work at the General Conference Session. She reported that in two years she had established a school of 24 pupils for Black children and built a comfortable school building free of debt. She conducted two Sunday Schools, and had given scores of lectures on health and temperance and treated the sick.
- 21 Maxwell, 190, 191.
- 22 Benton, 223. In her autobiography, *Mississippi Girl*, Anna Knight relates that "Since 1911 I have kept an itemized record of the work that I have done. I had to make monthly reports to the conference; therefore, I formed the habit of keeping a daily record. Thinking it might add interest in reporting, I am giving summary of four items herewith: I have held 9,388 meetings and have made 11,744 missionary visits. My work required the writing of 48,918 letters, and in getting to my appointments I have traveled 554,439 miles. This report does not include mileage to or from my mission field, India, nor does it include any miles covered in my travel there."
- 23 Maxwell, 185.
- 24 Beach, 23, 24.
- 25 Banks, 47.

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Evolving Adventist theological education (part 1)

A historical perspective

Walt Williams

What has the Church done in the past to properly train ministers? What mistakes and successes have we had? And, most importantly, what have we learned from both the successes and failures that can help us today give ministers the best possible training?

This article, the first of two parts, looks at this important topic from the perspective of history.

In the beginning

Ellen G. White wrote repeatedly and specifically regarding both the importance and particulars of ministry preparation.¹ It was, however, her husband James who in 1870 launched the first formal effort. He called it the Ministers Lecture Association of Seventh-day Adventists. For \$5.00 a year (women Bible workers could join for \$3), a member could attend a series of Bible lectures and receive grammar and penmanship instruction.

In 1881, a General Conference committee known as the Committee on Course of Reading for Ministers, established a six-year plan of required reading with the goal that "all our ministers, both ordained and licentiate, be required to pursue [it]." The plan called for the committee on credentials and licenses in each conference to examine ministers annually to be sure the reading was

completed. The program, interestingly enough, only survived four years.

Minutes of a 1919 Bible Conference indicate early Adventist educators needing "good counsel and some principles that would help them in their work" of training young pastors. A.G. Daniells, then President of the General Conference, confronted the problem directly when he challenged the "teachers (of pastors) to really change or greatly improve the class of preachers among us."²

Beginning in 1926, Adventist administrators worked to create a plan that would stimulate interest in, coordinate selection for, and train young men in pastoral work. During an April Annual Council meeting of 1929, Adventist leaders formalized a more inclusive method of training pastors entitled, "A Ministerial Internship Plan." The plan included financial assistance available to anyone involved in what was called "field training" under the supervision of a senior pastor.³ Interest in this new plan was led by J. L. McElhany, new President of the General Conference, who wrote a lead article in the *Review & Herald*, where he commented, "of all the questions considered by the Council, this one proved the most interesting."⁴

One month later, in the July issue of *Ministry Magazine*, editor A.G. Daniells prefaced his reprint of the spring Council's action with these words:

"A provision of far-reaching import was launched at the recent spring meeting of the General Conference committee, destined to have a profound bearing upon the future recruiting, training, and utilization of young men for the gospel ministry and of young women for Bible work in North America. Introduced by Elder J. L. Shaw, a Ministerial Internship Plan, shared jointly in its financial aspects by the General, union, and local conferences, had free and deliberate discussion by the Council at large. The item was given detailed study and development in the Finance Committee, and lastly was adopted by the full Council. It has therefore become operative for 1929, and the reaction from the field to date is most auspicious.

"The provision is designed to fill the depleted ranks of workers in the North American conferences, many of which have given to the point of exhaustion to our world mission fields. It will bridge the fatal gap that has hitherto existed between the training

Walt Williams, D.Min., is field secretary and liaison with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, for the InMinistry program for the North American Division.

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school and the field. And it will give ministerial training its rightful place in the eyes of your youth as well as in our denominational plans. It is a step big with promise."⁵

In light of the then current practice that placed young, inexperienced men directly over churches, often with disastrous results,⁶ Daniells quoted numerous conference presidents heartily affirming the action taken. By September of the same year, the program's success (60 young men and women placed) fueled an "enthusiastic assent" to its perpetuity.⁷

Ongoing internship developments

From these first administrative discussions regarding ministry preparation, specific pastoral tasks/skills were identified as critical to pastoral success. From the first list of eight tasks mentioned in 1919 by A.G. Daniells,⁸ the list grew to twenty-four by 1926,⁹ and to fifty by 1990.¹⁰

Several Ellen G. White statements regarding the advisability of placing younger men alongside older, more experienced men undoubtedly influenced the adoption by the General Conference of the Ministerial Internship Plan in 1929.¹¹ In 1932 the internship plan was structured so that field exposure would be accomplished under qualified supervision. "Local conferences benefitting by this plan shall assume obligation for direct supervision in training the interns . . . possibly by sending them out two and two or with experienced ministers who possess the ability and willingness to give the proper training to young ministers."¹²

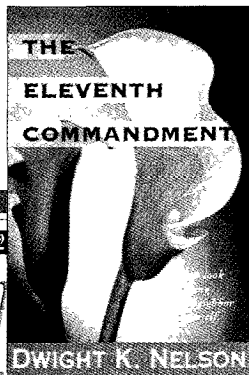
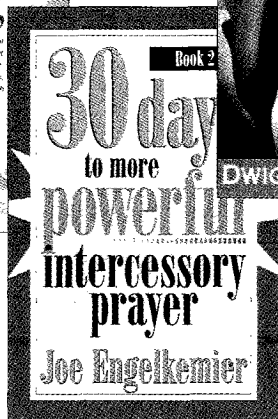
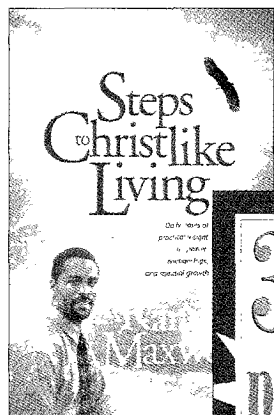
By 1964 a Ministerial Internship Guide "was prepared to address what is expected during the internship training period with intern and minister/supervisor."¹³ Rather than "being arbitrary, and recognizing that no two individuals were exactly alike," each minister was allowed to adapt

the suggestions to his own pastorate or mission program.

With the passage of time, and an increased emphasis on academic ministerial preparation, limitations of formal pastoral education became apparent. David Schuller pointed out that an "awareness of relationships between conceptions and life . . . cannot be developed in formal classroom settings alone. Practical contact with the changing world . . . is . . . envisioned as essential to education in theological thinking."¹⁴

John Sweetman also expressed concern that "a student is deemed ready for pastoral leadership when he or she has obtained a degree, rather than develop[ing] character and pastoral skills under a caring and competent mentor."¹⁵ This concern is evidenced in one religious journal of the 1970s reporting that four out of ten Protestant clergy "have seriously considered leaving religious life."¹⁶ By 1980 Adventist administrators and

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educators sensed the need for both "better training of supervisory pastors in the field, and more effective, continuing education programs for pastors (interns) who have completed their Seminary work."¹⁷

A 1982 research prepared for the Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University evaluated the post-seminary, field education its graduates experienced. One-hundred-twenty-four seminarians said their greatest need was for supervisors "who would spend more time with them modeling and training in all aspects of pastoral ministry." Similarly, 89 of the responding supervisors desired "more opportunity for supervision, modeling and reflection on progress." The research concluded, "in general, pastors did not do a great deal of showing interns how to successfully perform certain tasks vital to the ministry."¹⁸

A new approach needed?

To assist and enhance intern/supervisor interaction, the General Conference Ministerial Association, in 1990, prepared the *Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors*.¹⁹ This 116-page manual was intended to regularize and improve the internship experience for Adventist interns by exposing them to 50 ministerial skills/functions, which would be learned or reviewed while in a supervisory relationship with an experienced pastor.

Frequently, and for many reasons, this approach became either task oriented, superficial, or transitory. Presently, few supervising pastors or interns follow this equipping manual or have substituted a satisfactory alternative.²⁰ Inasmuch as a more relevant replacement is needed, the climate is ideal for implementing a new intern training attitude and tactic.

It was to address this void that union conference presidents in 1997 began considering an alternative option for theological education at Andrews University. The next install-

ment (to appear in the October issue of *Ministry*) will describe this new option. ■

- 1 For example, in her compilation, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring: Ministerial Association, 1995), 43, 44; "The times demand an intelligent, educated ministry, not novices . . . Our ministers must be men who are wholly consecrated to God, men of no mean culture; but their minds must be all aglow with religious fervor, gathering divine rays of light from heaven . . . The cause of God calls for all-round men, who can devise, plan, build up, and organize . . . Their education is of primary importance in our colleges, and in no case should it be ignored or regarded as a secondary matter . . ." See Appendix A for inclusion of several other EGW quotes regarding qualification and preparation of young pastors.
- 2 Official minutes of August 1, 1919, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conference, 1256.
- 3 Provision was made for up to 100 students, 15 of who were to be female Bible workers. Further evidence for female inclusiveness is found in the 1932 Autumn Council minutes: "Young men and women in our training schools desiring to make application for ministerial internship shall fill out completely the application blanks provided."
- 4 *The Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, June 9, 1929. Also very positive review by Joseph M. Ramsey, ed. "Reviews" *The Expositor* (Cleveland, Ohio: F. M. Barton Co., 1929), 1178.
- 5 *Ministry Magazine* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Pub. Assn., July 1929), 6.
- 6 Ibid. Minutes indicate much concern voiced over the lack of field education. For example, E. K. Slade, President of Atlantic Union responded from the floor of the GC Council: "There is no branch of our organized work (pastoral implied) where there is more uncertainty. . . . Our present policy is to place inexperienced men in charge of districts, making them pastor of churches, or perhaps we might call them president of little conferences placing them in these positions right from the start. Consequently, these young men are coming up against problems which they are not prepared to handle."
- 7 General Conference Committee Official Minutes of April 30, 1929. As the primary design was to service candidates under the age of 30, exception was made for those who "in later life have had to postpone the advantages of a Christian education, and who may be accepted up to thirty-five years of age."
- 8 Ibid., 1919. These include: (1) Honesty, sincerity, true to their consciences, (2) The importance of studiousness, (3) Regularity in their habits of study, working and living, (4) The importance of Bible study and constancy with the Bible, (5) The appearance, the manners, the deportment of the minister, (6) The use of chaste, select language, (7) Methods in public—his conduct, (8) Pulpit manners.
- 9 Ibid. General Conference Autumn Council Minutes of 1926.
- 10 *Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors* (Washington, DC: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1990).
- 11 "In gaining a preparation for the ministry, young men should be associated with older ministers. Those who have gained an experience in active service are to take young, inexperienced workers with them into the harvest field, teaching them how to labor successfully for the conversion of souls" (GW 101). "It is God's desire that those who have gained an experience in His cause shall train young men for His service" (GW 102). "Brethren of experience . . . should feel a responsibility upon them to take charge of these young preachers, to instruct, advise, and lead them, to have a fatherly care for them" (1T 443).
- 12 General Conference Autumn Council Minutes of 1932, 8.
- 13 General Conference Autumn Council Minutes of 1964, 12.
- 14 David S. Schuller, "Part I: Theological Education at Level II," *Theological Education*, Spring 1968, 675, 676.
- 15 John Raymond Sweetman, "The Assessment of a Self-Study Course Designed to Develop Mentoring Commitment and Competency among Australian Baptist Church Leaders," D.Min. diss., Denver Seminary, 1999, 4.
- 16 Theological Education 9, (autumn 1972) 33, 34.
- 17 Philip Follett, "Training of Pastors," March 11, 1980 transcript.
- 18 Roger L. Dudley, Kim White, and Des Cummings, Jr. *A Study of the Ministerial Internship as Perceived by Seminary Students and their Former Supervisors*. A report prepared for the office of the Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, May 1982. The report concluded "that the major weakness of the internship program is the lack of experiences in which the supervisory pastor models ministerial behaviors for the intern and in which the pastor observes and critiques ministerial behaviors performed by the interns," 19. A contrary opinion can be found in Earlington Winston Guiste's Ph.D. thesis, "An Assessment of Practicing SDA Ministers' perceived Administrative Skills: Implications for Curriculum in Ministerial Training" (Michigan State University, Ann Arbor, Michigan). "SDA ministers are not academically prepared to adequately assume the administrative responsibilities of the local churches, and they are victims of the church's educational system," 2.
- 19 *Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Interns*, op. cit.
- 20 Worthy exceptions and adaptations occurred in some conferences and unions. See David VanDenburgh, "The Intern Supervisor Training Event," an article in *Ministry*, October 1995, 20. The author advocates a certified training course focusing on developing persons rather than skills and promoting relationships between intern and supervisor. The training combines mentoring, spiritual friendship, and teaching via the use of critical incident.

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The ecology of generosity

Victor Pilmoor



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Natural ecology is often depicted as “lion eating lamb.” Kingdom ecology is about a future in which the lion eats with the lamb. It is a shift from predatory selfishness to symbiotic inclusiveness.

Ecology is a picture of birds and bees, food webs and life cycles, and growth and energy created by a God of generous abundance. It is the science of “living together”—the interdependence between the diversity of life forms and the environment. It is a cycle of wheels, in which every wheel turns the next wheel. It is also an illustrative analogy for the flow of spiritual generosity and moral energy in our communities.

How genuine is our generosity

Generosity is often thought of as a willingness to be substantially philanthropic. In a greater sense it is a mind-set in which people willingly embrace other people in need of acceptance or support, regardless of identity.

Is our theology of generosity adequate? Is it in proper tension with our stewardship? Is our church managed with a generous mind-set?

Professor George Newlands of Glasgow University tries to “image generosity, as a shape for the unfolding of a self-giving, creative, responsive love in the contemporary world. The generosity of the resurrection of the crucified Christ is suggested as a central paradigm for the Christian life in society.”

In essence, Newlands is addressing the tendency of the Christian church to segment into exclusive groups based on ethnic, cultural, behavioral, doctrinal, and even personality preferences. He says: “A theology of generosity may assist us in avoiding a move from one sort of limited tribalism to another.”

In essence, a spirit of generosity is a quality critical to our church as we seek unity within our increasingly diverse community. An ecological perspective is useful because it gives us the means to think about the whole church, rather than the intense wants of our own community. It gives us the ability to evaluate our humanity in a world in which resources and opportunity are not equally or fairly distributed.

Motivation: Duty or joy?

This is not a philosophical mystery tour. Recent world statistics show that the ratio of mission giving to tithe has decreased in real terms over the last 30 years. There is also congregational pressure to retain more funds, with competition between the eschelons and institutions of the Church for existing resources; this in the face of rapid member growth in parts of the world most economically challenged. We need to talk more about creating a large pie rather fighting over our slice.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, our stewardship concentrates on the theme “all that we have is Thine alone.” Tithe is the return to God of what is rightly His, and correctly so. The downside of this emphasis is that our giving tends to be motivated by duty rather than joyful response. This partly explains the relative decline and disparity in mission and local church giving. Systematic giving is to be commended, but to a significant extent it is just not happening as it could.

Our emphasis on personal salvation encourages us to look for a causal relation between our faithfulness and our being blessed. Our focus is on a two-way relationship with God, rather than a dynamic relationship that includes the world that God so loved through Jesus Christ His Son. A wider ecological interdependent view projects responsiveness to God’s generosity as necessary for the mutuality of blessings we all receive through being a community in Christ.

Further, use of tithe in “ministry” concen-

trates on God's endowment for His chosen leaders and their service. The use of tithe is too easily seen as a levitical birthright flowing from the givers rather than God. The role that ministry has in keeping the wheels turning in an ecological dynamic is critical. Does our ministry encourage and embody the giving of ourselves and our means so that a spirit of generosity flows on?

The mystery of the flow between the givers and the recipients of resources in the Church is the domain occupied by administrators and treasurers. In practice "storehouse" activities are predicated more often by policy and practicalities than clear theology and divine value systems. Treasurers in particular are schooled in the economic doctrine of the "scarcity principle."

Are ministers an impediment to the flow of generosity? How do we avoid introducing reverse spin in the cycle of wheels? To some extent the decline in giving to world mission, is a systemic reprimand. Clearly we can do better. Managing with an abundance mentality is a challenge for every treasurer.

God and agency

Philanthropy as such is literally a humanistic response to the needs of humankind. In the best sense it is an application of "the golden rule." Our difficulty is that we struggle to expose the appropriate need to the appropriate people, in the appropriate place, at the appropriate time. People therefore exercise philanthropy through charitable agencies. The merits of charities are promoted by fund raisers who educate us about needs, and goad us to good works, often by massaging our egos with recognition if we respond benevolently.

In an ideal world this might be sufficient to maintain the ecology of giving. In practice people do not care enough. People who operate benevolent agencies are also selfish, and the range of concerns they satisfy reflect their own preferences. To make the

situation worse there is a tendency for those who benefit from the agency to develop dependence, which brings the flow of philanthropy to a halt. In short, humanistic philanthropy tends to offer visible symptomatic relief rather than lasting care.

We have become somewhat coy about these matters. Many preachers

shy away from stewardship talk, perhaps because they find the apparent conflict of self-interest hard to handle. Likewise, members have become resistant to overt promotional preaching and cynical about indirect approaches.

Unlike philanthropy, genuine generosity is an altruistic response to the needs of humankind through God's love. It's a fundamental life orientation toward real people. It is a consequence of God working in our lives. It's about offering ourselves beyond the liberality of gold and goods. Our role is to ensure that the flow of generosity whose origin is God, cascades throughout the community. This model does not depend on the eloquence of a motivator. It is not stifled by self-interest. It recognizes that the source and destination of bounty is God Himself, in the process of which we too are blessed.

Designing more effective stewardship materials

In all of this, we must begin with our own hearts as ministers. But inwardly and outwardly our stewardship materials need to speak more clearly of God, His love and His abundant generosity. Currently, many of the materials in the hands of most members shout "Agency," "Formula," "Function," "Duty." Wrappings do not cause us to give gifts and neither

do they create generosity. But they are a vehicle for encapsulating and reinforcing our motivating spirit. They at least need to be designed to do that.

Here are some principles that can go into the design of something as visible and basic as the stewardship envelopes that we place in the hands of our people week by week.

WE STRUGGLE TO EXPOSE THE APPROPRIATE NEED TO THE APPROPRIATE PEOPLE, IN THE APPROPRIATE PLACE, AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME.

- ◆ Focus on the generosity of God.
- ◆ Make them visually attractive.
- ◆ Offer variety in mood and message.
- ◆ Facilitate confidentiality.
- ◆ Do not overload with too many offering titles.
- ◆ Use titles that focus on the mission rather than the event. (What does "Sabbath School" mean on an envelope?)
- ◆ Do not mix motives. (Do we need to contemplate our mortality every time we give?)
- ◆ Systematic percentages are only meaningful if practiced and promoted. (They look greedy to the uninitiated.)
- ◆ People are not in love with church hierarchy—keep it subtle.
- ◆ Size should facilitate local notes and checks.
- ◆ Color printing adds just a little to the cost of each envelope.
- ◆ Development costs are charged to stewardship promotion. (It's cheaper than driving around the country offering seminars to the converted!)

Paul's treatise in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is pretty persuasive: "Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness and in the love which went out from you to come to rest in us—I urge you to excel also in this act of generosity." ■

Is divorce the answer?

Gary Tolbert



Gary Tolbert is senior pastor at the Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist Church, Hendersonville, North Carolina.

God created marriage to provide friendship, companionship, help, and love for our lives. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" (Gen. 2:24).^{*} Unfortunately, some of us have suffered pain and loss in marriage. Love that was meant to provide power and life in a marriage relationship is not always enough to keep that marriage alive. Sometimes we cannot live with the person any longer. We may still love them, but we cannot live with them. But is divorce the answer?

Jesus' statement

Deuteronomy 24:1 says among other things that a man can divorce his wife if he finds "something indecent about her." What is "something indecent"? In answering this question there were two basic schools of thought. Rabbi Shammai felt the phrase referred to a sexual sin. Rabbi Hillel held that it referred to anything the husband did not like in his wife, even if she burned the supper.

What did Jesus say? His answer is found in Matthew 19:3-9. Jesus doesn't start with Deuteronomy, but goes back to Creation. "Haven't you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they

are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Then the Pharisees countered. "Why then," they asked, did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matt. 19:7) Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt. 19:8, 9).

Notice the slant of the Pharisees' question. They used the word "command" when describing Moses' approach in speaking of divorce. But Jesus countered their use of that word with the word "permit." According to Jesus, divorce was permitted because of people's hardness of heart. But then in verse 9 He says that the only ground for divorce is adultery. Jesus first shows us the ideal for marriage then makes the exception. We often emphasize the exception and neglect the ideal that Jesus emphasized.

Many today do not even seem to want to look at the ideal; in many cases they want to divorce, for almost any reason. There seems to be little desire to exercise what is basic to any long-term relationship: patience. If a couple could only find it in themselves to expend half the energy they do in arranging a divorce, working on the relationship before they make the move to divorce, there would be fewer divorces. Some might dismiss this statement out of hand, but it is persuasively illustrated by columnist and minister George Crane who tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. "I want not only to get rid of him," she said, "but get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me."

Dr. Crane suggested to the woman that she "Go home and act as if you really loved your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, drop the bomb. Tell him you are getting a divorce. That will really hurt him."

With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful! Beautiful!"

And so she left to fulfill her assignment

with enthusiasm. For two months she showed love, showed kindness, listened, gave, shared. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?"

"Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I've discovered I really do love him."

Reversed as it may seem to many contemporary minds, the woman's actions had changed her feelings. The ability to love is established not so much by fervent promise as by often repeated deeds.

It is no surprise that God doesn't like divorce. Though speaking of His relationship with Israel, His words are nevertheless true in the case of human marriage and divorce: " 'I hate divorce,' says the Lord God of Israel" (Mal. 2:16).

Other reasons for divorce?

People offer two other reasons for divorce, many assuming they are biblical.

First, abandonment. Paul speaks

about the problem of abandonment. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 says "To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. . . . For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace."

Putting these passages together, some conclude that if a person abandons or severely neglects his or her family, he or she is considered an unbeliever. The abandoned spouse,

like the believing one, is free to divorce and remarry.

It is true that there are all kinds of abandonment. Forgetting to remember important things is not abandonment. Failing in business or child rearing is not abandonment in itself. Abandonment is severe neglect of the family. It's more than just being too busy or being irresponsible. It's neglecting and above all simply not being there. It means a spouse has given up claim for their family.

Another reason given for divorce and remarriage is abuse. Here we are thinking of physical abuse, which could transcend sexual maltreatment. The spouse who is physically abusing his or her family is by all means far from showing a Christian response, but rather demonstrating a lack of love and evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life.

The Old Testament had the law of retaliation: "If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to

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death. Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution—life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 24:12-22).

It is interesting that Jesus explicates this law differently: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38, 39).

When a person lives with someone who abuses them, they can turn the other cheek only so many times. It may, in fact, become mortally dangerous to do so at all. Is Jesus suggesting that someone in a seriously physically abusive marriage possibly sacrifice her or his life after presenting the other cheek for further abuse? I don't think that is what Jesus had in mind. He was talking about relating to the heavy politically motivated abuse suffered by the people of His day. The Romans, for example, seemed to take pleasure in treating Jews abusively. Jesus is saying that if under such circumstances the Jew treated the Roman with kindness, it would tend to impress the abuser and ultimately lead to better treatment.

There are all kinds of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, mental, and verbal. There are even legitimate examples of spiritual abuse carried on by churches and church leaders.

But the question is, Is abuse grounds for divorce and remarriage? If a spouse is abusive, should the couple still stay together? Is staying in a relationship more important than saving oneself from continuous abuse? No one needs to take abuse. Ask for help. Our church has not yet

taken a definitive stand on abuse and its relationship to marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

When a marriage is shaky

Divorce is a profoundly painful experience. People who consider it often have little idea of its difficulty. It is seen as a relatively simple solution to the anguish being experienced in marriage. Divorce rates are twice as high for second marriages and the percentages go up from there. In and of itself, divorce and all that comes in its train is often even more painful and destructive than the problems in the marriage that precipitated the divorce in the first place. Divorcing couples, especially those who move quickly to divorce, tend to carry the problems that precipitated their divorce into their next marriage. There is also all the attempted readjustment that must be initiated when it comes to children and other family members who stand in the wake of a divorce and a remarriage. So even though one may have biblical grounds for divorce, one may still by all means attempt to avoid it. Even when there has been adultery, mar-

riages can be saved, and life can go on with a degree of satisfaction, perhaps higher than if a divorce is sought.

Marriage counselor Lindsay Curtis often hands his clients a calling card that lists seven warning signals of a sick marriage:

1. When common courtesies are abandoned;
2. When couples begin to think in terms of "I" instead of "we";
3. When they stop complimenting each other;
4. When stubborn silence replaces common-sense communication;
5. When they fail to sense and meet the needs of each other;
6. When they fail to express love;
7. When they stop praying with one another.

In enriching our own marriages and those of our parishioners we can improve our own sense of what is healthy and unhealthy in relationships. By the grace of God we can move to intervene and to be of real help, both to ourselves and to those God has given us to serve. ■

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

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The hardness of human hearts

Jesus speaks out on divorce

Ekkehardt Mueller



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Divorce and remarriage is a very real issue for today's society and church. Jesus addressed the issue in a number of places, such as Matthew 5 and 19, Mark 10 and Luke 16. In this article, we will focus on Matthew 19.

The Pharisees asked Jesus about grounds for divorce (19:1-12). Jesus stressed the indissolubility of marriage. He upheld God's ideal as instituted in the beginning. In this statement, Jesus alludes to the beauty of marriage. In the way he answered the Pharisees' questions He seeks to turn us away from dwelling on the problems in our marriages. This is seen in the context in which the report of Matthew 19:1-12 is found.

The context of Matthew 19:1-20:16

Matthew 19:1 to 20:16 records a series of Jesus' discourses. First, He talks to the Pharisees (19:3-9). Then He speaks to the disciples (19:10-15). In 19:16-22 He dialogues with the rich young ruler, and finally He tells the parable of the laborers (19:27-20:16). These various segments¹ are connected to each other by several literary links.

Father and mother, but not spouse. "Father and mother" is one of the literary connections. In 19:5 Jesus talks about a man leaving father and mother when he marries. In 19:19 He mentions the fifth commandment—honoring father and mother. In 19:29 He states

that His disciples may sometimes be forced to leave father and mother for His sake. To leave father and mother in order to marry does not violate the fifth commandment. Neither does leaving father and mother for Jesus' sake.

Matthew 19:29 is particularly interesting: "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life." Here Jesus talks about leaving siblings, parents, and even children, but He leaves out the possibility of leaving one's spouse. In omitting a reference to the spouse, the message seems to be: Even for Jesus' sake we are not asked to leave our husband or wife, to be separated from him or her, or to divorce our partner.² Marriage is good, it is indissoluble. Jesus does not break apart marriages when He asks people to follow Him.

In 19:9 Jesus discusses divorce, adultery, and remarriage. In 19:18 He quotes the seventh commandment "You shall not commit adultery." Again in this passage Jesus shows how permanent marriage is in His eyes. Obviously, His statements in Matthew 19:9 and in Matthew 5:27-32 are related to the seventh commandment and therefore to the Decalogue.

Here Jesus argues against the position of the Pharisees by going back to the Creation account and by referring to the Ten Commandments. Jesus' position expands and substantiates the commandments, particularly the seventh commandment in this context. The law is independent of changing cultures and value systems. It is good. God's gift of marriage and His protection of this gift are clearly confirmed by Jesus.

The most important connection between the different parts of Matthew 19 and 20:1-16 is the theme of the hard heart and the related motif of the evil eye.³ The Pharisees showed clear evidence of possessing a hardness of hearts. They looked for ways of interpreting the law that would give them a licence to put away an undesirable wife. They did not understand God's gift of marriage. In doing this they destroyed it by their attitude and behavior (19:3,7). When they thought about marriage, they seemed to have divorce in mind.

But even Jesus' disciples had difficulty accepting His teaching on marriage. They suggested staying single and not marrying if marriage was indeed insoluble (19:10). They

clearly understood Jesus' view, and seemed to lean to the side of the Pharisees. They too found it hard to hold a concept of marriage void of divorce. This showed a hardness of heart in them; the same kind that was manifested later when they encountered the children brought to Jesus for His blessing (19:13).

The same kind of hardness was displayed in the rich young ruler who was not willing to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. Because of this hardness of heart it was difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (19:21-23). Again the disciples seemed to understand more readily those who did not make it into the kingdom of God (19:25).

Finally, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, those who worked all day were not content with their wages. They complained about the generosity of the landowner. Their problem with the master was not that he did not pay them the fair wages agreed upon earlier. Their complaint

came when they saw that those who did not have the chance to be employed all day long received the same amount of money as they did, who had worked the whole day. Instead of being moved by gratitude for what had happened to the latecomers, they concentrated on themselves and the alleged injustice done to them. The landowner responds: "Is your eye evil because I am good?" (NKJV). They had an "evil eye." Their hardness of heart did not allow them to see the goodness of God.

Thus, the entire section of Matthew 19:1-20:16 challenges the reader to appreciate the extraordinary gifts of God, one of these being the gift of marriage, and to decidedly turn away from any consideration of divorce.

In summary, it can be seen from this passage that:

♦ To a certain degree, Jesus' relationship with His disciples may be compared to the relationship between husband and wife. For the sake of this relationship one may need to leave

other persons and possessions. The benefits are immeasurable.

♦ To follow Jesus does not mean to separate from or divorce a spouse. Marriage is indissoluble.

♦ Jesus' statement on divorce is connected to the seventh commandment. This commandment is binding and is independent of changing times and cultures.

♦ In quoting Jesus, Matthew challenges readers and hearers to repent of hardness of heart and an evil eye, to turn away from any toying with the idea of divorce, and to treasure the wonderful gift of marriage.

More on the hard heart issue

In spite of the different geographical locales, Matthew 18 and 19 are strongly connected. Matthew 19 is preceded by a Matthew 18 conversation between Jesus and His disciples in Capernaum.

At the beginning of chapter 18, the disciples ask, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (18:1).

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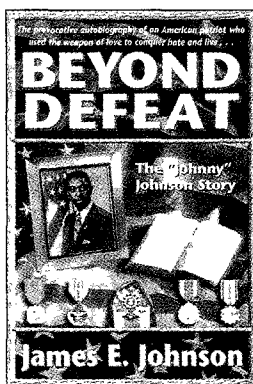
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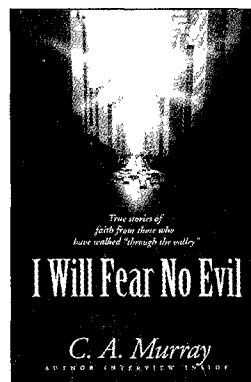
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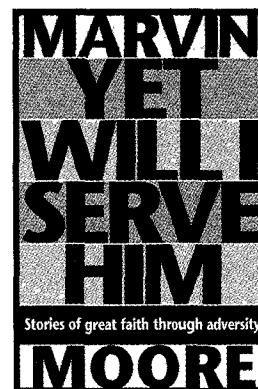
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Jesus' answer dealt with a child and the sin of a brother (18:2-20). After His response Peter asks another question, dealing with the issue of forgiveness (18:21). Jesus replies with a short statement and the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:22-35).

Although the disciples have been warned not to despise the little ones and not to scandalize them (18:6, 10), they had not learned their lesson, as 19:13 demonstrates. Instead of welcoming the children in the name of Jesus, they rejected them. While warned against hardness of heart in Matthew 18, the disciples exhibited precisely that behavior. Chapter 18 ends with the warning that the heavenly Father will hand over to torture those who do not forgive their neighbors from their heart (18:34, 35). "From your heart." The motif of a hard heart is already present in chapter 18, although the exact phrase will not appear until 19:8. The unforgiving servant was an example of hardheartedness, and again, it is interesting that this motif is developed in the following passage dealing with divorce and remarriage.

Instead of forgiving their spouses, there are people such as the Pharisees who look for loopholes to get out of their marriages and rid themselves of their partner. They seem not to care for their spouse. They forget the immense debt God has forgiven them as they concentrate on the mistakes of their marriage partners against them. Forgiveness is not practiced. Apparently, it is not even considered. Claiming to fulfill the law they attempt to interpret the law to their advantage and thus they end up being judged by it.

We are called to fight against all sin including sexual sin, especially as such sin relates to our marriages, as in the case of the sexual sin of adultery. But even in the case of adultery, after repentance, the highest Christian response is to grant forgiveness. Our marriages live from forgiveness. We live from forgiveness. Therefore, we

extend our forgiveness to our spouses. Such matters are not settled by divorce. The issue is to forgive each other, thus letting go of the hard heart.

Let us summarize:

1. Matthew 18 with its parallel in Matthew 5:29, 30 prepares the way for the discussion on divorce and adultery in chapter 19. Jesus' statements in Matthew 19 are based on the Creation account, and yet they also contain an exposition of the seventh commandment. Marriage by its very nature is indissoluble.

2. Again we are challenged to turn away from hardness of heart and to freely and graciously forgive each other (18:35; 19:8).

3. Instead of seeking a divorce and seeking the chance to be "free," we are challenged to grant forgiveness and stop counting mistakes. Forgiveness is limitless.

4. Following Matthew 18:15-20, church members are called to forgive their erring fellow believers.

Conclusion

Although this article has not exegeted the passage on divorce in Matthew 19, we see how the context contributes to the understanding of this scripture. We notice the profound respect and appreciation Jesus has for marriage. He as Creator has instituted it. He as Lawgiver has protected it. Marriage is a gift from paradise, and Jesus wants us to recognize and live by this fact. He challenges our hard hearts and calls us to live in relationships of forgiveness. ■

1 Marriage, divorce, and staying single (19:1-12), (2) blessing of the children (19:13-15), (3) "the rich young ruler" (19:16-26), (4) rewards of discipleship (19:27-30), and (5) parable of the laborers in the vineyard (20:1-16).

2 Here we may find a certain connection to 1 Corinthians 7:10-15. The Lucan parallel to Matthew 19:29 does not have as strong a connection to divorce as Matthew and Mark have. Paul mentions the leaving of a spouse, which, however, according to the New Testament record was a separation for a limited time only.

3 See Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 261-280.

Letters

continued from page 3

from the word used in 1 Corinthians 7.) Paul gives no exceptions in Romans; thus, I find it difficult to believe that he would make an exception even for a Christian married to a non-Christian. However, since it is unclear exactly what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 7:15, the evidence does not warrant Burton's conclusion.

Finally, if Paul were making an allowance for remarriage in this situation, he would be contradicting Jesus, who . . . made an allowance only for sexual immorality. Therefore, Burton's conclusions do not seem justified by the biblical evidence.

—Kristine Stuart, Jamestown, North Dakota.

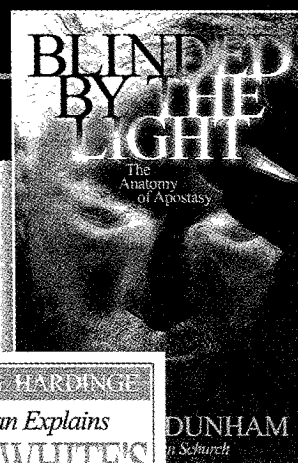
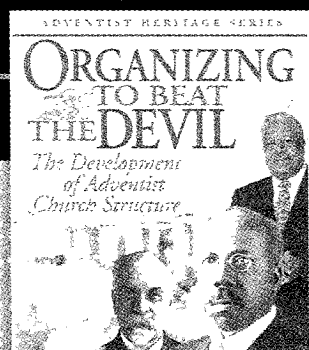
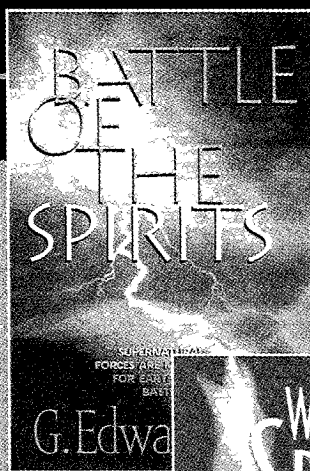
Keith Burton does well to emphasize the permanence of marriage in an age of easy divorce. However, his method was not altogether satisfying.

Can he really defend his narrow translation of *porneia*? A quick look at some reference works confirmed my understanding that it can refer broadly to immoral sexual behavior. Thus it cannot refer only to premarital sex that breaks an engagement.

Who is the "unbeliever"? And why are his or her actions so different from a "believer's"? Is a nominal Christian who abuses or abandons a spouse really a "believer"? If the union of husband and wife is taken seriously, why is that changed by marriage to an unbeliever? —Gordon R. Doss, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Editorial note: In publishing Dr. Burton's article we hoped to contribute positively to a dialogue that is ongoing among Seventh-day Adventists. The article itself, entitled "A theology . . ." says a lot about Dr. Burton's and our recognition of its partial role in the ongoing discussion. While no one article in *Ministry* is "the denomination's stand," Dr. Burton's is certainly within the pale of denominational thinking. ■

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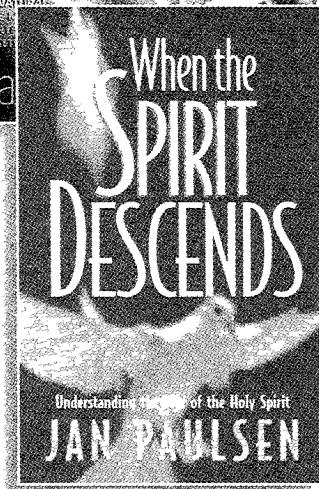


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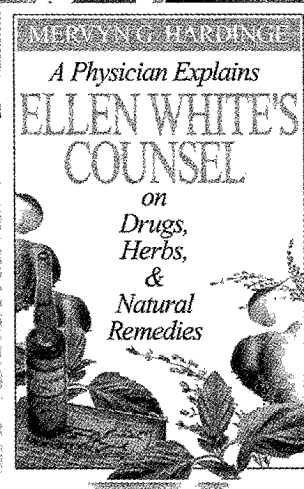
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"He lets the loser win"

Editorial Note: This article marks the start of a new Ministry column featuring the personal stories of pastors' calls to ministry. For details, please see the Note to potential writers found at the conclusion of the article.

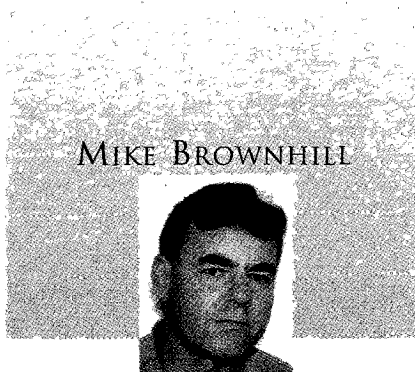
Insecurity, guilt, fear, loneliness, rejection, alcoholism, drug abuse—the litany of woes could go on, but with passing years it seems that the vast emptiness, tragedy, and pain of my pre-Christian life is increasingly more difficult to recall. And that's a relief. It is not that I could ever forget completely, or that I would want to deny the deep, dark pit of my former life, for we always carry with us the potential of falling back.

Coming from an Irish Catholic working class background, I probably had the odds stacked against me as far as a disposition toward alcoholism was concerned. One doesn't have to come from that background to be an alcoholic; it just helps!

It was Augustine who wrote something in the fifth century A.D. about a "God-shaped void" in every person's heart that cries out for fulfillment. Until it is filled, we often indulge in hollow, self-destructive behavior. In this I was no exception.

Early events

When, as a drunken teenage passenger in a speeding car, I was slammed into a telegraph pole. I came away with an aortic aneurysm and permanent partial paraplegia that confined me to a wheelchair for a year or so. Great introduction to adulthood! Still running from that narrow little dungeon of my own self, I would go another six years, which included a marriage, the birth of a son, and a divorce, before I stopped slamming my head against the wall and



waved the white flag of surrender before my God.

It happened this way. I tried filling that "God-shaped void" with Hindu meditation and yoga, attempting to discover the "god" within, and develop my own "god-consciousness." Such an egocentric approach to spirituality is, of course, doomed.

I teamed up with Lyn, a lost little hippie from a wealthy Jewish background who, like me, was trying to get her head together and find the inner spiritual peace we desperately wanted.

Next followed fasting, then a wholemeal, stone ground, "don't-panic-it's-organic" dietary regime, long sessions of Hindu meditation with the Ananda Marga devotees, all accompanied by an intense earnestness on our part to be clean, holy, and spiritually mature.

Even though Jesus said "'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled'" (Matthew 5:6, NKJV), the evidence of that eluded us as we searched in the wrong places. Instead of looking to a universal Savior-God outside us, whose Spirit also loves to dwell within, we were trying to make ourselves into gods.

An early encounter with Adventists

When I was ready, God acknowledged my yearning for wholeness, and

through an intriguing set of circumstances helped me overcome my prejudice against Christianity and led me to hear a Seventh-day Adventist preacher expounding on the biblical prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

I was blown away by the incredible pattern of predictive truths the Bible contained, most of it verified by history, the remainder waiting its ultimate fulfillment in the events associated with the end of this world and the second coming of Jesus. Thus began a titanic struggle between the inner mystical appeal of Hinduism and the powerfully appealing prophetic/doctrinal package of Seventh-day Adventism.

This struggle led me from an Ananda Marga ashram into the tropical rainforest of North Queensland, where I spent 31 days alone in prayer and fasting on water only in a do-or-die effort to find the peace of God (Lyn, meanwhile, was following her own spiritual journey in the Philippines where she underwent psychic surgery from a so-called "faith-healer," a fateful and fatal encounter).

Emerging an emaciated wreck from the rain forest a month later, I met my first humans in a health-food store run by a Seventh-day Adventist Christian couple. Although total strangers, this young couple recognized my soul hunger, took me into their home, and modeled Christian love and truth. God was leading my life, though I could not have recognized it then.

By the time Lyn returned from the Philippines, we'd both decided on our respective spiritual pathways. I had determined to follow Christianity while Lyn would follow Hinduism and join the Ananda Marga organization. Thus came a parting of our ways after eighteen months of intense spiritual searching together. Lyn, eventually, took 20 liters of gasoline and, in an act of futile protest

at the lack of spirituality in the Western World, burned herself to death outside the United Nations building in Geneva, Switzerland, in October 1978.

I quickly discovered that mere intellectual conviction of spiritual truth falls far short of the deep inner conversion of the heart yielded to God's sovereignty alone. My most earnest resolves to overcome my drug and alcohol habits were like ropes of sand. I was still a Hindu at heart, relying on my own strength for victory instead of leaning on the powerful arm of God, a recipe for continuous defeat and despair.

Turning point

One winter evening on the Australian Gold Coast I made a cold-blooded, deliberate decision to turn my back on God. Just for that night I would "party-on" with some heavy duty heroin and mescaline, combined with liberal doses of tequila and beer—a mind-altering concoction of potentially deadly drugs. I would put Jesus on the shelf for the night, and come back to Him tomorrow.

Hallucinating out of control that night, I suddenly became immersed in detailed cinemascopic and quadraphonic sights and sounds depicting the events described in Revelation 20—the resurrection and final destruction of those who have judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. This was no passive observation from a safe distance. As far as I was concerned, it was actually happening—to me! I had rejected God for the last time. I had lost my eternal salvation. Words cannot describe the stark horror of those hours. My overwhelming sense of guilt and shame were indescribable as my unconverted life played out before me and my spiritually naked self stood broken and despairing before God.

God didn't need to judge me; my own sense of self-condemnation was crushing, and I actually longed for my immediate destruction. Every negative emotion the human mind can possibly conceive, passed through my soul that night—until I finally fell into the oblivion

of alcohol-induced unconsciousness.

I can only understate the overwhelming waves of relief that flooded my soul the next morning when I awoke to find myself still here. The hell that I'd experienced hadn't really happened. Nevertheless, it was a dreadful warning from God, and in that moment of dawning consciousness, I heard the clarion voice of God speaking as never before in an unmistakable message that drove itself clear into my psyche: "That's the last warning you're ever going to get. If you ever touch alcohol or illicit drugs again—you've already had a foretaste of your fate!"

Conversion and call

In the next few days, while still recovering from alcoholic poisoning, and as I recalled in vivid detail the events and the emotions of that hellish experience, my body involuntarily shuddered from shame and guilt. It was then that I fell broken at God's feet, yielding my miserable life to Jesus in its totality, nothing held back. I prayed, "If there's anything You can do with a mongrel like me, then take me, I'm Yours."

From condemnation, shame, and guilt, my life suddenly became filled with an overwhelming sense of accept-

ance. Joy and peace captured and kept me in a delightfully wonderful way for the first time in my life. The peace for which I had hungered and thirsted for so long now flooded my soul.

God had reached down and touched me in my absolute need, in my time of brokenness, and now I was in love with Jesus and on a full-on honeymoon with God. I knew there and then I'd be spending the rest of my days sharing what Jesus had done for me with anyone who would listen. And I've done just that since my conversion in August 1976.

And as for alcohol and drugs, I've never tested God to see if He meant His warning. Though still working on other areas of my life, He removed all desire for those things at the time of my conversion.

Now my life is put together in all of the essentials. I find ongoing and ultimate meaning in fulfilling the far-reaching call God gave me at the time He summoned me to Him to share the good news of His love and power as the pastor of a challenging congregation. ■

Mike Brownhill is the pastor of the Pine Rivers Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kallangor, Queensland, Australia.

Note to potential writers

This article represents the kind of story *Ministry* is inviting its readers to contribute. These accounts will make up a new *Ministry* feature entitled "The Pastor's Call." This feature will take the place of "The Pastor's Day" column, which is presently intermittently published in the magazine.

We are looking for crisp, well-written, and particularly meaningful articles which tell the story of pastors' calls into ministry. We are especially interested in manuscripts that expose in story form, the underlying dynamics and divine implications of the call to ministry. The intent of this feature is to inspire readers and confirm our sense of divine calling.

Please keep manuscripts to 1,000 words or less. Writers whose submissions are accepted for publication will be paid U.S. \$100.00. Please follow the instructions for submission of articles outlined under the heading, "To Writers," found on the masthead page of each issue of *Ministry*.

A provocative study of tithing trends in Australia

Robert McIver and Stephen Currow



Robert McIver, Ph.D., is senior lecturer in Biblical studies at Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia.



Stephen Currow, D.Min., is senior lecturer in ministry and mission, Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia

If tithe receipts in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are going up each year as they are, how can this be bad news? It is if tithe does not go up as fast as wages and costs. In the Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church, tithe has actually declined about 45 percent in the last 20 years when compared to wages that are earned by church members. A similar decline may be noted in the Adventist Church in many other western nations, including the United States.

Our research shows that a large number of faithful tithe returners in all age groups attend church, including the young. Yet, the younger you are, the less likely you are to return tithe. Further, the tithe-giving behavior of those over 50 is markedly different from that of the under 50 member. Approximately 59 percent of tithe comes from the over 50 group, who earn about 34 percent of the total income realized by church members as a whole. So, as the over 50 group ages, the downward trend in tithing practice is likely to continue.

Our research further shows that a considerable amount of tithe ends up in places other than the conference office treasury. Should these trends continue unchanged, the worldwide Church will be greatly restricted in its ability to perform its mission.

This article will set out the evidence for each of the above statements. It will begin

with data gathered in Australia, and will then briefly analyze American tithing figures before moving on to consider the implications that this data might have for the world Church.

Tithing data in Australia

Tithe has fallen approximately 40 percent in the last 20 years relative to the income of Australian Adventists. Early in 1999, the youngest member on the executive committee of the North New South Wales Conference (NNSW) made a short speech along these lines: "My age group is not giving tithe. We need to do some research into the future financial viability of our Church." As a result of the discussion flowing from this observation, the NNSW executive committee took the initiative to fund research into the age-related demographics of tithe giving, and invited us to coordinate this research.¹

To date, data has been gathered from four different sources: local church tithe receipts, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), a church-attender questionnaire, and conference records. Although the actual research started with the analysis of tithe receipts, the data from the Bureau of Statistics is a more logical place to begin a presentation of the research findings.

The quinquennial Australian Census seeks to assess denominational affiliation. Since 1971 there has been a separate item box for Seventh-day Adventist. The Australian Bureau of Statistics provided the number who identified themselves as Adventists on the census, broken down by their incomes and their age. These were obtained for both Australia as a whole and the territory of the NNSW Conference. These details were only available for censuses conducted since 1976, but they have made possible a comparison between income earned by church members and actual receipted tithe for a period of over 20 years.

While those who identified themselves as Adventists on the census and those who attend church are not exactly the same group of people, there is considerable overlap, and their numbers track each other closely. The census figures provide the best estimate available of Seventh-day Adventist income. One can therefore estimate what tithe returns might be if every church attender contributed 10 percent of their income. For Australia the results are shown in Graph 1.

Although church figures for tithe are available since the church began in Australia, it proved convenient to graph tithe receipts back to 1951. Tithe receipts have shown a continuous upward trend, and the Australian church has been rightly proud of the faithful tithe stewardship of its members. Yet, if one fully assesses the 10 percent of actual income earned by church attenders since 1976 it is clear that this income has been increasing faster than tithe receipts. In 1976, the actual tithe was about 86 percent of what might have been estimated to be 10 percent of the church attender's income. By 1996 this had dropped to 50 percent. It is easier to see the real state of affairs if one keeps the 10 percent income constant, and draws a graph of receipted tithe as a percentage of that figure. Graph 2 illustrates this.

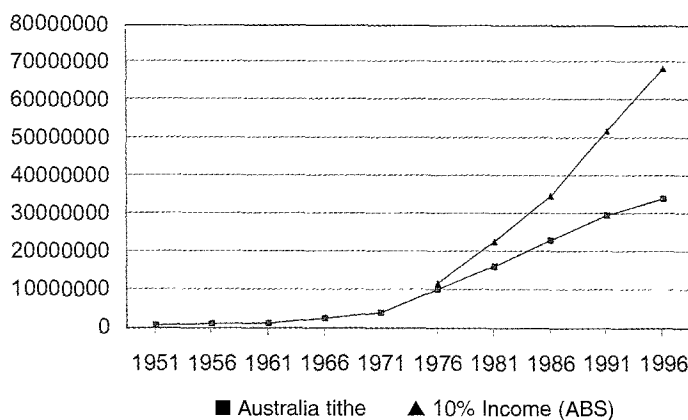
In other words, during the last 20 years there has been a steady decrease in the percentage of Adventist income that is returned to the Church in tithe. This decline is in the order of 40 percent. As almost all tithe is used by the Church in wages, this has meant that the Church has been unable to employ the same number of Church workers per church attender.

Age-related tithing patterns. There are any number of factors which might be put forward to explain why tithe receipts have fallen so markedly against actual incomes, but the analysis of tithe receipts show that one of the significant contributing factors is that there is an age-related difference in tithe giving patterns.

It was clear from the first that tithe receipts held by the various churches would provide valuable insights into the patterns of tithe return. Yet, a procedure had to be implemented to ensure the tithe-giver's continued confidentiality. As a result of widespread consultation and a submission to the Avondale College Human Research Ethics Committee, it was decided that the best way to do that would be to have local church treasur-

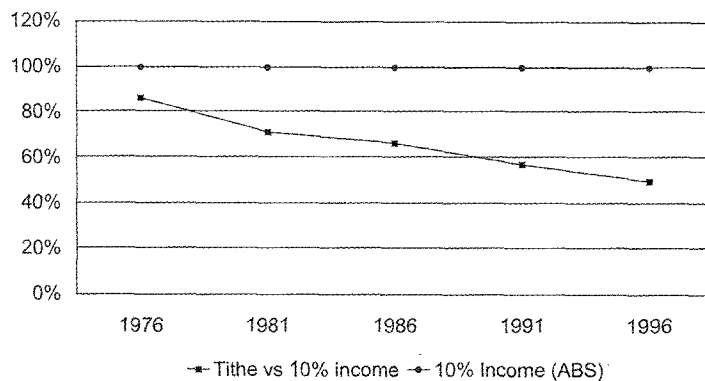
Graph 1

Tithe Compared to 10% Income: Australia



Graph 2

Tithe as a Percentage of 10% of Income: Australia



ers perform the actual analysis, given that they already knew the identities of tithers.

Peter Colquhoun, the conference president, wrote to church boards requesting permission for the church treasurer to provide this data. Where permission was given, the church treasurers used a list put together by the pastor of those who attend church twice a month or more, together with their ages. They then reported how many from each age group on that list returned tithe and totaled up the amount of tithe that came from each age group.²

Church treasurers are volunteers, and the analysis they were asked to do was time consuming and tedious. Nor was the task a trivial one for pastors of larger congregations. The data provided represents the tithe-giving

behavior of those attending 23 churches. Between them are 5,152 members on the church rolls. These represent 53 percent out of the total conference membership of 9,760. At the time of the study, more than 2,529 worshipers attended these churches at least twice a month,³ with between 270 and 459 in each ten-year age bracket. Nineteen of the churches reported tithe totals from the various age groups. These totals amounted to 43 percent (\$1,697,674) of the \$3,955,877 tithe that was receipted through local churches in the NSW Conference.

We thus had access to figures that gave an age-related breakdown of receipted tithe, as well as percentages of those in each age group who attend church. The most significant finding arose from a comparison between the

Table 1**Comparison of Tithe & Income by Age Group, NNSW Conference**

Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Income (ABS)	17.1%	22.9%	25.2%	15.0%	9.1%	10.7%
Tithe (NNSW Survey)	7.3%	13.6%	19.4%	21.7%	17.9%	19.6%
Difference	-9.8%	-9.3%	-5.8%	6.7%	8.8%	8.9%

Table 2

Age	<15	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Number	9	76	132	98	135	133	107	100
Percent	1	10	17	12	17	17	13	13

percentage of total tithe contributed by a particular age group, and the percentage of total income earned by that age group. We compared the two numbers by subtracting the two percentages. This procedure would produce a zero if that age group was contributing an amount of tithe that corresponded to its income. The results are as follows (see Table 1).⁴

This graph reveals a striking difference in tithe-returning behavior between the under 50 group, and that of the over 50s. The results show that the younger a tithe payer is, the less likely he or she is to return tithe. This difference shows in the percentage of tithers in the two age groups as well: Under-50-year-olds, 42 percent. Age 50 and above, 62 percent.

While these results are significant for the whole group of church attenders, they do not provide us, of course, with the ability to predict who individually returns tithe. This age-related difference in tithe-returning behavior explains why tithe receipts have decreased against wages earned for the last 20 years. The group now aged between 40 and 50 have most likely always contributed less tithe than their elders, as has each younger group. As these groups represent more of the salary and wage earners in the Church, tithe has declined compared to wages.

Is the news all bad? No, indeed not. There are still a large number of faithful tithe returners in the younger age group. Moreover, while our survey analysis supports the conclusion that there is an age-related difference, it also reveals many aspects of church

attenders' beliefs and attitudes that give hope that there still remains some basis on which an appeal can be made to reverse this downward trend in the matter of tithe returns.

Hopeful indications from surveys of church attenders

The third set of data is not yet complete. This survey is designed to discover what is motivating church members to contribute tithe. So far, we have developed a theoretical model, completed and analyzed a pilot survey, and developed a final version of the survey. We hope to get about 1,500 church attenders to complete the survey by the time we finish. To date there are about 800 of the final versions of the surveys that have been entered into our database, which are yielding between 690 and 780 usable answers to questions. About equal number of males and females answered the usable surveys, and the age distribution is illustrated in Table 2.

The surveys reveal a number of interesting preliminary results. These results again tend to support the observation that there is a difference

in tithing behavior between the under 50 and the over 50 groupings. The following tables report on how much of a respondent's income is given as tithe. They also report the tithing behavior as subdivided into three other age bands: 20-39, 40-59, 60+ years (see Table 3).

The trends are clear. The older groups are more likely to tithe, and they tend to tithe a full 10 percent. Among the younger groups, while many still tithe, they frequently do not tithe the full 10 percent.

Another question that suggests interesting and significant results is where tithe has actually been directed by those who return it. The data so far is showing that the practice of directing tithe to places other than official church channels is not age related (see Table 4).

Perhaps the most significant statement on the survey was the following: "I do not currently contribute a full 10 percent tithe or do not tithe. The following changes would need to happen in the church before I would consider returning a full tithe." The following responses to this query were given, and have been ranked by placing the most frequently occurring responses first. This time, the percentages given are based on those who answered this question and are not currently returning a full 10 percent tithe (see Table 5).

Some responses to this question reveal what all pastors know already: that congregations have within them mutually exclusive expectations. How one might make "worship more relevant to today's youth" and stop

Table 3**Percent of income as tithe, NNSW**

	All	20-39 yrs	40-59 yrs	60+ yrs	<50 yrs	50+ yrs
0 percent	72	23	22	7	61	11
Percent	10	11	10	4	15	4
1-9 percent	161	74	43	17	123	38
Percent	23	34	19	10	31	13
10+ percent	458	121	166	148	212	241
Percent	66	56	72	86	54	83
Column Total	691	218	231	172	396	290

“experimenting with worship” at the same time is problematic, to say the least. Nor is it always clear what “relevant to today’s youth” means.

But there is one response that stands out above the rest in terms of the number of people who chose it, and this response is one about which it is possible to make some changes. Fifty-seven percent (137) out of the 241 respondents who do not tithe a full 10 percent of their income said that they thought that they should tithe, while at the same time they have not established the habit of doing so. In other words, well over half of those who are not currently tithing a full 10 percent of their income indicated that they are already persuaded that they should do so, and only need to establish a consistent way of actually tithing. Thus, while there may be need of some extended and more traditional persuasion that tithing is a biblical practice that brings blessing to the giver, perhaps more attention should be given to how the Church might facilitate tithing as a regular part of everyday life in the Church. For instance, is there a brief reminder about tithing given frequently through the year with clear information as to how to actually return the tithe? Do we allow for inspiring stories of those who have been blessed through their tithing? Further, in a society where we now have a variety of methods for conveying money between us, have we made it possible for people to contribute their tithe in as many of these ways as it is possible for us to properly facilitate? Are we well prepared for cash contributions? Are credit card or Internet facilities available? Has the local church or conference made payroll contributions possible?

Trends in North America

While there is a serious decline in tithe returns for the Australian church, Australia is not unique. The Australian experience probably represents trends that are already affecting the worldwide Church. Take, for

Table 4

In the last 12 months, I have given tithe to:

	All	20-39	40-59	60+	<50	>=50
Tithe envelope	481	143	160	137	253	223
Percent	65	66	63	74	60	72
Budget/offering	238	73	81	64	132	104
Percent	32	33	32	35	31	34
SS Offering	186	63	53	45	114	70
Percent	25	29	21	24	27	23
ADRA	144	40	44	44	78	64
Percent	19	18	17	24	18	21
Red Cross, etc.	95	20	33	29	49	44
Percent	13	9	13	16	12	14
Mission	51	13	22	14	24	27
Percent	7	6	9	8	6	9
Youth Volunteer	42	7	20	12	22	20
Percent	6	3	8	6	5	6
Independent Ministry	29	14	7	3	20	8
Percent	4	6	3	2	5	3
Not answering	741	218	254	185	423	310

Note: The columns do not add up to 100 percent because there were often multiple responses to this survey question.

example, tithe returns in the North American Division. Graph 3 shows the per member tithe in North America. Per member tithe is calculated by dividing the total tithe by the number of members in the division. On the same graph are shown two other lines: one for what the graph would have looked like if tithe grew at the same rate as the cost of living (CPI⁵), and the other graph depicting tithe income if the tithe had grown at the same rate as the average North American wage.⁶ Graph 3 is drawn from 1976 so that a direct comparison may be made with the Australian graphs of the same time period.

Thus it appears that in North America, total tithe has increased, but per-member giving has declined significantly compared to wages earned. In terms of the average wage, tithe has declined to 51 percent of what it was in 1976. When compared to the cost of living, it has declined to 68 percent of what it was in 1976.

No doubt there are a number of

explanations that would show that these figures over-estimate the decline in per-member tithe giving. For example, not everybody on the official church rolls attends church each Sabbath, and perhaps a smaller percentage of “official members” now attend when compared to 1976. This would mean that the figures are underestimating per-attender tithing that is taking place. Perhaps wage figures for the general population do not correctly represent Adventist wages. Yet such explanations, even if true, would not account for all of the drop, and it appears quite likely that tithing per member in the U.S. has experienced a decline similar to that observed in Australia. There is no equivalent published research to that reported here, which investigates the age-related tithing patterns from North America, but anecdotal evidence supports the thesis that there is a similar age-based difference in tithing behavior in North America to that observed in Australia.⁷ Again, the

older groups are more likely to tithe, and more likely to contribute a full 10 percent of their income. Thus, as in Australia, the observed downward trends are likely to continue, unless there is dramatic change.

This is particularly important because of the financial contribution made by North America to the world Church. In 1998, the year for which the latest figures were available at the writing of this article, the North American Division accounted for only 9 percent of the world membership, but it contributed 59 percent of the total tithes and offerings received by the world Church. Thus any decline in giving in North America has a disproportionately strong effect on the world Church. Furthermore, there is evidence that many of the other parts of the Church based in the developed Western countries are experiencing a similar decline in per-member tithing.⁸

Implications for the world Church

Hence, it is quite legitimate to ask the question, "Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church facing a financial crisis?" Curiously enough, the answer is "no;" well at least, "not yet." This is because, while the per-member tithe has fallen with respect to wages and

cost of living, the total number of members in North America and elsewhere has been growing. While individual members may be contributing less on average, there are more individual members contributing. Total tithe from North America has, in fact, done slightly better than the cost of living: tithe in 1998 represents 116 percent of what might be expected if it had increased as fast as the cost of living since 1976. Tithe has fallen slightly behind wages, though: in 1997⁹ it was 83 percent of what might have been expected if it had grown as fast as the average wage. The Church, then, has experienced a monetary squeeze but it is not yet experiencing a crisis, especially since in the last few years the American dollar has been as strong as it has been against almost all other world currencies. The financial squeeze combined with the growth in membership has meant, however, that the needs of more church members have had to be met by fewer full-time workers. All indications are that this trend will continue.

Is this the only implication for the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church? Probably not. Many other countries throughout the world are developing more mature economies, and very significant Church growth is

occurring in many parts of the world. The Adventist Church is being successful in retaining its membership through several generations, while catering to their needs with a growing network of educational and other institutions. This means that the kinds of attitudes that have led to a relative decline in the tithe in western sectors of the Church may be moving in the opposite direction in other parts of the world, just at the time when they need to be taking more responsibility for their own financial futures. All of this has important implications for the Church.

Some preliminary conclusions

All kinds of further implications might be seen in the research represented here. Perhaps the most important is that, with the downward trends in tithing practice, there are some indications of the potential to reverse, or at least slow. Amongst Adventist congregations there is a surprising and heartwarming reservoir of positive attitude towards the Church and its need of financial support. Particularly important is the evidence that there is still a widespread conviction and even willingness to tithe amongst non-habitual titheers. There is the potential that many will generously respond if approached in the right manner. This is genuinely encouraging.

Yet the basic trend is still something that will prove hard to reverse. In other words, the Church will need to fulfill its mission with less resources per member than it has had available in the past. We rejoice that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is expanding, but this expansion is often in those areas least able to support the Church financially. Indeed, one has to wonder, if the present trend continues, whether, as in the past, the Church will have to reduce even further its full-time work force. The challenge to Church administration is to ensure that any cutbacks in employees take place from less productive areas, and that essential roles

Graph 3

US per Member Tithe Compared to Wages and CPI

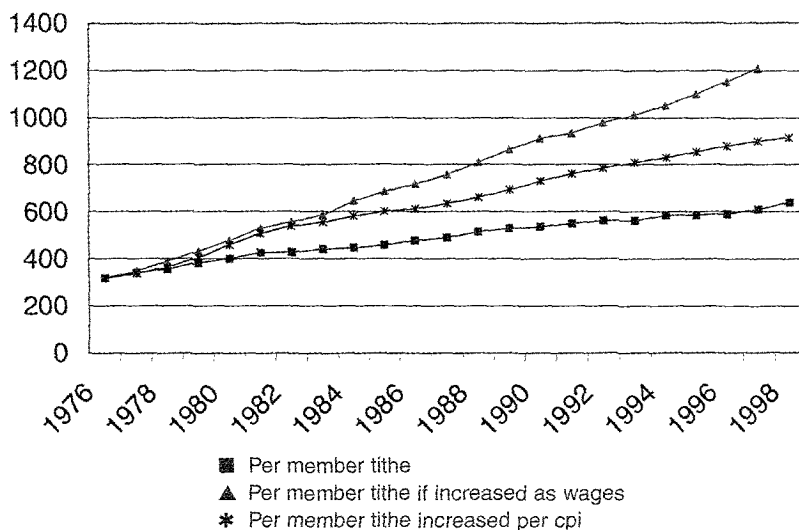


Table 5

	<50	>= 50	Total
I think I should tithe, but I need to get into the habit of tithing regularly	117 (62%)	20 (39%)	137 (57%)
Church needs to make its worship relevant to today's youth	50 (26%)	22 (43%)	72 (30%)
I need to be fully financially secure before I give any money to church	60 (32%)	10 (20%)	70 (29%)
Adventist Church needs to bring its doctrines & ideas into 20th century	41 (22%)	16 (31%)	57 (24%)
Adventist Church should make it possible to ordain women to ministry	33 (17%)	21 (41%)	54 (22%)
Adventist Church needs to return to sound doctrine	13 (7%)	16 (31%)	29 (12%)
Stop experimenting with worship and restore proper reverence	15 (8%)	14 (28%)	29 (12%)
Nothing would change what I do about tithing	11 (6%)	14 (28%)	25 (10%)
We need a competent pastor in our church	9 (5%)	11 (22%)	20 (8%)
I need to be convinced from Bible that Christians should tithe	13 (7%)	4 (8%)	17 (7%)
I think I should tithe, but my spouse is very strongly against giving tithe	5 (3%)	3 (6%)	8 (3%)
I tithe a full 10 percent of my income (Yes/No)	233/190	228/51	461/241

are maintained. Along with this, while the Church has begun to harness the untapped resources of volunteer service and begun to make use of the modern media, it will need to do more creative thinking about how best to perform its mission in the light of dwindling resources.

Another conclusion is the serious need for vigorous, well-conceived, and thoughtful promotion of stewardship principles and applications. This must be done not only in the traditionally wealthier countries. It is not as though the world Church has overlooked this, but every sector of the Church must find ways of improving when it comes to these things. This concern is at the heart of the self-reliance strategy adopted in the Annual Council in Bangalore in the early 1990s.

Finally, it is essential to be reminded of the words of Jesus: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Matt. 23:23, RSV). There are many important things on which the Church should concentrate its efforts other than on an overconcern with tithe receipts. It has an urgent message to proclaim that Jesus will soon return.

Furthermore, the need of humankind to find salvation in Jesus should be our constant concern, and for that matter, the essential motive for our giving patterns. If we were concerned about doing the right thing, then, as Jesus so correctly says, we should concern ourselves with justice, mercy, and faith, without, of course, neglecting to tithe. Indeed, tithe provides the means by which the Church can accomplish its mission, and viewed thus, can be seen as our response to the great things that Jesus has already done for us. Tithing is a practical way to show commitment to Christ and to the great gospel commission. ■

- 1 The executive committee set up a research group consisting initially of Rob McIver (Avondale College), Steve Currow (Avondale College), Peter Colquhoun (President, NNSW Conference), and Hank Penola (Secretary-Treasurer, NNSW Conference). At the time of writing, Hank has been replaced by Bob Dale (Secretary, NNSW Conference) and Graeme Moffitt (Treasurer, NNSW Conference). Regular progress reports are given to the executive committee.
- 2 In actual practice the procedure was a little more complex than this. For example, denominational employees in Australia usually contribute tithe directly from their wages; their tithe does not appear in the books of local churches, and the figures relating to the number of denominational employees of each age group that attended had to be collected so that the correct adjustment to the final figures could be made. A *tither* was defined as one who contributed tithe six or more times a year, or who contributed significant amounts once or twice a year, such as might be the practice of a tithe-paying farmer or businessman.
- 3 Two large churches in the conference have over 1000 members on their rolls. The figures from both these churches were derived only from names which

appeared on their church rolls. They both have many regular attenders whose names do not appear on the roll, especially College Church at Avondale College. So the number of actual attenders is under-reported. It is the behavior of the 2,529 known worshippers that is reported in this article. A better estimate of attendance may be made from the data from the 17 churches, which were able to give a reasonably accurate accounting of the numbers from various age groups on their rolls and the numbers of those groups that actually attended twice a month or more. From their figures, it appears that about 63 percent (1,794 out of 2,830) of those whose names appear on church rolls in NNSW attend church regularly. If one takes account of members who have their membership in other churches and nonmember attenders, then this figure becomes 74 percent (2,091 out of 2,830). If one considers only those over age 20, then this becomes 70 percent (1,892 out of 2,713). Probably this last figure is the most reliable.

- 4 Those less than 20 years of age have been excluded from this table: they earn 2.3 percent of the income, and contribute less than 2 percent of the tithe. Furthermore, the figures from several churches on numbers from this age group who attended church and who tithed appeared less reliable.
- 5 The U.S. CPI figures were found on the Web at <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/economy/calc/hist1913.html> (9 January 2001) Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.
- 6 The U.S. average wages were found at <http://www.econ-line.com/tables.html> (15 January 2001) Bureau of Economic Analysis.
- 7 Conversation with Gordon Botting, Stewardship Director for the Pacific Union Conference, which took place at the mid-2000 General Conference session, Toronto, Canada. Interestingly enough, when asked for the age at which a dramatic difference in tithing behavior occurs, Gordon immediately said 50 years of age. Ask almost any informed Australian and they will say 40 years of age. It turns out, for Australia at least, 50 years of age is correct.
- 8 Reinder Bruinsma of the Trans-European Division was kind enough to share figures that he has developed for giving patterns in Europe. It varies by country, but most western countries in Europe have experienced significant drops in per-member giving.
- 9 Figures were not available for the average American wage in 1998.

Wisdom for young pastors

A few months ago I was asked to email a brief philosophy of ministry to be shared with seminary students. The request directed that my submission should be short enough to be read aloud as part of a worship service.

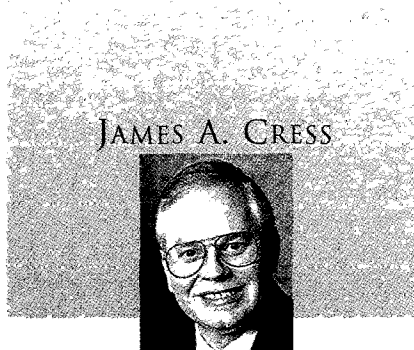
Convinced that brevity usually enhances retention, I kept my counsel to three short statements. (1) Love your Lord and His people. (2) Love your spouse. (3) If you have any other questions, call your conference president.

Before you dismiss this as too simplistic or too overly-dependent on judicatory leadership, allow the prioritization to sink in. Jesus—Himself and His body. Your partner who is your own flesh. Cooperative engagement with your supervisor. Most trauma that we experience as pastors is the result of following different priorities than these.

As a result of that request, I began to wonder about the advice that others might give to beginning ministers. So when Sharon recently met with a group of retired pastors, I asked her to brainstorm with them about the good advice they would share with young pastors. I believe you will find some practical help from their combined wisdom, regardless of your age, and especially if you are young in ministry.

Be assertive, not aggressive. Churches today are looking for leaders; not seeking dictators. Your members expect you to have an opinion and to forcefully express your convictions. They do not, however, want you to push your agenda to the point of destroying their ability or desire to move forward with you. Involving members in establishing the congregations priorities is a sure way to develop plans that will bear fruit through implementation.

Pastor within the framework of your congregations needs. For



example, small churches need different things from their pastor than medium-sized or large churches. Young pastors of small churches will likely never become the leader of a church family (read all related kinfolk) where real patriarchal or matriarchal leadership has been long established and is unlikely to change. In fact, your pastoral tenure probably will not last long enough to become the leader of the small church. So you will likely pastor more effectively by coaching, caring, and calling new believers than by attempting to wrest control from the established power base.

Know your members. Visit them. Invest talking and listening time with them. Relax with them and relate to them. People are best pastored by someone whom they know and trust. Loyalty and trust are developed over time as your members see that you have their best interest at heart. Remember, they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Preach practices. Your best sermons will clearly show what you want your members to do about the message next Tuesday. Prepare each sermon with a specific application expectation in mind. Your theology should be sound, your delivery may be dazzling. But real life implementation in the experience of your listeners tells whether you have really preached.

Pastor inclusively. Be especially eager to meet nonmember spouses and children. Encourage closed circles and cliques to force themselves to include newcomers. Legitimize only those small groups who intentionally target potential members and actively seek to multiply disciples more than merely to nurture and maintain the establishment.

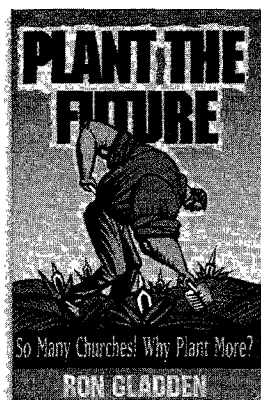
Avoid reactive ministry. By all means respond to requests from your members, but within the framework of your proactive design for ministry. Establish specific, prioritized objectives and permit only dire emergencies to drag you away from your plan. You will accomplish very little if you wait until someone telephones you to determine your next course of action. Such reactive processes care for the urgent at the expense of the essential.

Master technology. Is technology your servant or master? Limit your computer time. Computers may have replaced television as the great pastoral time waster. Previously effective ministers spend too much time with their computers and too little time with their spouses, their parishioners, or their Lord. Online pornography is not the only curse of the Internet. Consuming too much tech time—even with worthy activities—deprives you of essential opportunities for spiritual development and marital or social relationships.

Keep a spiritual perspective. As the old verse says, there is no indispensable man. Ernie Bursey, chair of the religion faculty at Walla Walla College, says, If you are a strong personality, remember that you are not in charge. The church will be there after you leave; prepare them for your absence. Find people who will tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear. Don't punish or ostracize those who tell you the truth! ■

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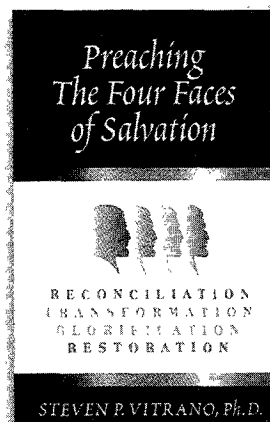
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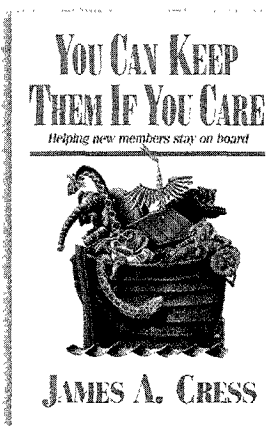
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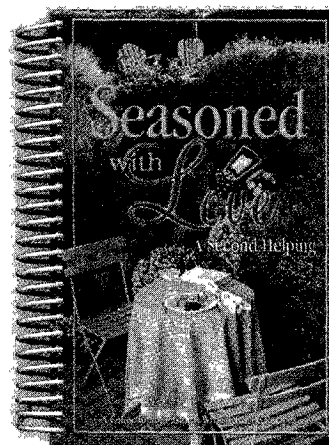
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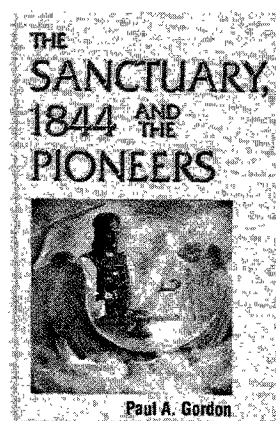
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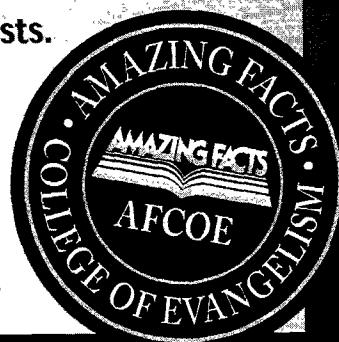


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