

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

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WATCH!



Elder's Digest

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Healthy Attitude Toward Truth

Joel Sarli



An elder's attitude in relationship to the truth is a life-and-death question, both in his leadership and for his congregation. Our very destiny depends upon the attitude the leaders assume. Differing attitudes prevail, finding their ultimate expression in two extremes.

These extremes represent small a minority in terms of numbers but not always minorities in terms of peril for the ones who are related to them.

The first group takes pride in stressing its orthodox conservatism, which when stripped of its assuring phraseology is often just plain reactionism, however harsh the term may sound. They look upon any change or revision as perilous, principally because it is different from what they use to know or do.

Some cleverly contrive to place themselves in a strategic position of the ultimate defenders of the faith delivered once and for all, the last stand of loyalty. They classify, by implication if not by declaration, all who differ from them as dangerous innovators. Their penchant is to maintain a *status quo* which supports their own rigid views. They condemn openly, or by implication, equally loyal, self-sacrificing, truth-loving heralds of this message who differ from them. This group is represented by some independent ministries today. Easily they mix truth and criticism in attacking the leadership of the church in general.

Dear elder be perceptive. Don't fall in the devil trap. The Lord Himself is the One who ultimately takes care of His own church. Just stay in the side of God's people and be loyal to your denomination.

On the other end of the pendulum, stressing its liberal progressivism, stands an opposite group ready to press views that are seriously revolutionary, perilous, and disruptive. Some are retired pastors, theology professors, and administrators. A few of them are saying, "Now we can speak out on what we believe because we are retired."

On this side of the pendulum's swing lies the peril of abandonment of our distinctive advent movement prin-

ciples, rooted in Scriptures and confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy, through the acceptance of specious principles that simulate light, but contradict or neutralize the soundly buttressed historic positions which have made us separate people. Such usually touch either the sanctuary truth or the Spirit of Prophecy, which constitute the distinctive and separating features of this movement, and stone of stumbling to all critics and apostates. Here again we must watch and stand by revealed truth no matter who may be the innovator, what his standing may be or his record.

These two opposite groups, each appealing to a partial set of principles of commonly acknowledged truth, make more difficult the sound, reverence, and loyal stand of the majority who reject upon principle the position and perils of both extremes. It is essential for elders to clearly understand the situation in order to intelligently and properly protect the congregation.

The guidance of the Holy Spirit is needed in having sound judgement, spiritual discernment, and unswerving fidelity to God's ever-expanding truth, revealed in His Word and buttressed by the confirming witness of the Spirit of Prophecy. Any thing else, or any thing less will prove disastrous. At the same time we should not permit ourselves to be forced into situations that are intolerable and unnecessary. There is no need of permitting a few reactionaries to blockade all legitimate advance. Let us not permit the devil set the agenda for our congregation. The voice of God speaking to us through the representative body of the church, should prevail.

Dear elder, avoid any extremes in your attitude as a leader. The pathway of the advent herald is beset with perils today. Our only safety lies in ceaseless, progressive study of the Word, individually and in groups, invoking the promised presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit ("but when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth." John 16: 13), and the matchless counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy. The elder who follows this divine program of guidance and protection has the assurance of divine keeping from pitfalls in leading his congregation. **E**

Priorities in Elder's Ministry to the Flock

Harold E. Fagal

It is a good thing for an elder to give study from time to time to his role in the work of the church and to the relationships that exist between elder and members. Why in our church do we have elders? What is the work of elders? What do the members have a right to expect from their elders?

According to the New Testament elder is "a spiritual overseer," "one who is in charge of a church or parish." The work of an elder is that of overseeing the flock of God. He is the one, along with pastors, who has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading the church members along the pathway toward the kingdom and feeding them the words of life that will nourish their souls.

Preach the Word

Of His own ministry, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:10, 11). The elder is interested in leading his people into the more abundant life. He is interested in his people to such an extent that he will give his life in service for them. In his charge to the young pastor, Timothy, Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). This is the first work of the elder. He is to "preach the word." Jesus, when He commissioned His disciples, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: (Mark 16:15).

The word "preach" comes from a Greek word meaning "to herald." A herald was an official messenger who proclaimed publicly the decrees of a king or government official. Paul compares a gospel preacher with such a messenger. The elder is to proclaim the good news of salvation from the King of the universe.

Many things are expected of an elder today. He must help in administrating. He must be a good social mixer, a good visitor; but above all his other duties he must be

a preacher. This is his chief work. His primary responsibility is not to gather funds, to raise goals, to lead financial drives, to promote special projects, or to be an entertainer. His main work is to preach. Other things have their place in the overall program of the church, but they must be secondary to the work of preaching the gospel. Jesus did not commission His disciples to go into all the world and raise money, build buildings, conduct campaigns, or promote some new program. He commissioned them to preach in all the world.

Ministry more than a profession

We say correctly that the ministry is not just a profession, but a calling. By that we mean that the man does not choose the work of eldership. God chooses the man. It is a work for which men are ordained. When a man is ordained he is ordained to preach the Word. This is God's way of communicating truth to mankind. To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:17-21). In the eyes of the world, preaching is foolishness, but to those who are saved it is the power of God.

The preaching that saves is the preaching that is Christ centered. Paul did not win people in his day by preaching a fanciful message based on sensational disclosures or ear-tickling doctrines. He preached the cross of Christ, repugnant though the thought of it was to many of his hearers. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23,24).

Meet needs of flock

To preach the Word means to preach a message that is adequate to meet the needs of men and women who are wrestling with sin day by day. People come to church from all walks of life, with all kinds of problems pressing in upon them. They face problems that run the gamut of human experience. Some are wrestling with temptations that are overpowering; some are burdened with guilt that keeps them from feeling accepted with God; still others have home and family problems. The preaching of the Word is to help them meet the problems of life in God's way. It is to help them gain spiritual strength, new insight into themselves and their problems, and to receive the assurance that God cares and understands and is willing to forgive all manner of sin. In preaching such a message there is no place for levity, storytelling just for the story's sake, or words that please but do not reach the heart. The elder is a living link between the all-sufficiency of God and the needs of men. His sermons will not only be pleasing but they will lead the hearers to the Word of God which contains the answer to all men's needs.

Timothy was admonished to be "instant in season, out of season." He was to be ready to minister the grace of Christ at all times. The elder is not only to preach at the designated hours of worship but he is always to be ready to minister to the needs of his people. He is on call at any time his services are needed.

The elder is a counselor on many subjects, but he is not just an information service. Routine calls for information about church members should be directed to the church clerk, or someone designated to provide such information, and elders should spend their time in a spiritual ministry of helping people who need his unique contribution to their spiritual growth and well-being.

Ministering in times of sickness and trouble

The elder also stands by the side of his members in any crisis experience in which his presence as a repre-

sentative of God can be of help. He likes to share their experiences of joy that call for giving thanks to God. He is happy to talk with people about their personal problems and provide a sympathetic, listening ear when they feel they must share their innermost feelings with someone who will understand them.

The elder calls on those of his flock who are ill. Illness is a traumatic experience that can cause great anxiety. A person who is confined to his bed has a lot of time to think about the meaning of life and its ultimate values. Sometimes his thoughts are not healthy thoughts. His past sins and mistakes rise up to haunt him, and he is filled with guilt and remorse. He wonders whether this illness is in punishment for his sins. He needs to hear the assurance from someone he trusts

about God's forgiveness and remember them no more. He needs the opportunity to talk out his anxiety and remorse, and this in itself is often a healing process. Every elder has had the experience of being thanked for the help he was to a person, when in reality the only thing he did was listen. There is an art to listening at the proper time and with the proper feeling. The elder should visit people who are going to have surgery. It is

helpful for him to visit before an operation as well as after.

Our old world has never been so full of sorrow as now. Among the throng next Sabbath morning, how many hearts will be free from grief and fear? How many will simply be existing from hour to hour, filled with all sorts of suspense? How many will spend the rest of their lives without the support of loved ones dearer than all else on earth? Whatever the other needs of the parish, nothing except soul-winning can be so vital as comfort for friends in sorrow.

Does every elder know that grief lasts on through many years? Take a concrete example. During the War Between the States, the eldest son of the Watterson family went away as a soldier. All at once he ceased to write home, and his loved ones could only surmise what had befallen their boy. Years later, long after the peace of

We need to be sure what we believe. Do not make the mistake many are doing today. Many can speak much more convincingly about the "nature of man" than about his "destiny."

Appomattox, they learned that he had been taken prisoner and had died at Andersonville. He had been the pride and joy of his mother's heart. During those years of suspense she contracted "shaking palsy." For a whole generation after the war she went to church every Sabbath Day. What did she wish most of all? Comfort! When her pastor went to the home, she wanted to hear about heaven.

1. The hope of heaven

In the past the typical spiritual leader dealt much with heaven. To this Biblical truth we all should now return. In time of stress the church is the depository of comfort, and the elder is its agent. The elder presides over the one altar to which the sorrowing can flee. I am disturbed when I hear preachers indulge in a flippant contrast about being more interested in good tenements on earth than in many mansions in heaven! Why set in opposition things that belong in one Gospel? It is simply dreadful to drop the eternal note. A Gospel for this world is only a tiny fragment, if Jesus spoke truly. Gibbon was right when he declared that one of the reasons for the spread of our faith was its glorious dogmatism about the eternal life.

My dear professor of preaching, in a stirring way, used to call for more of the burning heart in public worship, including the sermon. When people come to church today they need hymns and prayers full of Christian feeling. The same holds true in sorrow at home, when the elder brings the consolations of God. The heart of the whole matter proves simple: except for evangelism, nothing in the elder's work these days ought to bulk so large as comfort. That means to strengthen hearts in God.

The defection of many members today usually springs from lack of care, especially in times of stress and sorrow. Why are some congregations not affected by such falling away? Is it not because elders and pastors mingle with the people day after day until they know the needs of breaking hearts? Then on the Sabbath morning the services in the sanctuary show the people how to get right with God even when they must walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

2. The kindness of the shepherd.

How can an elder help members who are passing through experiences he has never known? For one of various answers let him read *The Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*. How could that Boston clergyman—well, strong, and unmarried—enter into the spirit of Helen Keller, a blind girl ten years of age? At any rate, Brooks did so enter. He put himself in her place; he looked out on her little world as she should have looked; and thus he led her to God as a Heavenly Father. In much the same fashion we the elders must often have deal with people, one after another, when their eyes are blinded by sorrow. In short, the elder who wishes to excel as a comforter must know God and love people.

We need to be sure what we believe. Do not make the mistake many are doing today. Many can speak much more convincingly about the "nature of man" than about his "destiny." The New Testament deals more fully with the destiny of men than with the nature. Why not rest content with recent erudite speculations about man's soul, and take time to discover what the Savior and His apostles teach about the resurrection and the life everlasting? True comfort can be found only the in the words of our Lord. **E**

Harold E. Fagal was the pastor in Miami Temple when he wrote this article.

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The Joy of Memorizing Scripture

Webb Garrison

One evening a few years ago I returned home from summer vacation ahead of my wife and children. Unlocking the door, I flipped on a light switch—and nothing happened. Strange, I thought. I must have forgotten to pay the bill.

I found matches, lighted a candle, and went to the telephone to call the light company. As I reached out to pick up the receiver I noticed the upholstery on the chair in which I sat had been slashed. Startled, I looked toward the window and saw the draperies hanging in shreds.

Candle in hand, I moved from room to room. The farther I went, the worse it got. Great gashes in all the living room furniture. Curtains cut in half. Bedspreads, sheets, and mattresses slashed. My wife's costume jewelry cut, broken, and dumped into the middle of the floor. An entire rack of ties cut in half. Suits, dresses, coats, and shirts still neatly on hangers seemed all right—until I lifted them out of the closets.

After notifying the police, I called my wife. She choked for a moment, then said: "Nothing else makes any difference, if you're all right. I'm so glad you didn't walk in on them."

Detectives and photographers spent an hour going over evidence, and concluded that we had been visited by juvenile vandals. "I hope you have the right kind of insurance," the detective said as he left.

"You're well protected for fire and windstorm damage," my insurance agent assured me. Then he cleared his throat a couple of times and said he guessed he had failed to give me one of the new all-risk policies. "Afraid you aren't covered for burglary or vandalism," he said. "I'm sorry."

Alone in that ripped-up, slashed-up house, I went upstairs to go to bed. With my nerves screaming, I turned back the bedspread and sheet in which a huge X had been cut. As soon as I lay down, I felt the rough edges where the mattress had been slit.

I closed my eyes and speaking each word aloud slowly, began repeating Scripture I had memorized: Psalms 1, 8, 23; 1 Corinthians 13; John 14; Psalms 46,

90, 91; Revelation 1; Psalm 121. I had to go through my repertoire twice, maybe three times. But then I fell asleep and slept soundly till dawn.

This bizarre experience points to one of several delights that stem from memorizing and repeating Scripture passages. So exalted are these delights that they are "unspeakable"—incommunicable. But let me try to point out a few.

1. Memorizing Scripture makes sleeping pills superfluous.

Medical magazines are crammed with advertisements for products offering chemical solutions to life's stresses.

According to drug manufacturers, there are three forms of insomnia. Some people find it difficult or impossible to fall asleep. Others go to sleep easily but are awakened by the slightest noise and then lie tossing for hours. Still others sleep well for a few hours and then become fully alert, beginning to relax a bit only about the time they have to get up.

Whatever the variety, insomnia can be overcome by learning several sublime passages of Scripture and repeating them before tension and restlessness take over. Many persons who have tried this report that the period devoted to calling God's great promises to mind grows shorter and shorter, so that with practice sleep comes soon under almost any conditions.

2. Shorter selections as brief as a single verse or even a phrase can be used as powerful weapons in the ceaseless battle against temptations from the outside and urging from within.

There is a splendid precedent for this: Jesus himself quoted Scripture in order to vanquish Satan.

Powerful psychological and spiritual forces are involved here. To focus my mind upon a verse so that I can retrieve it from the marvelously complex storage system of the brain, I must at least momentarily push everything else aside. I cannot succumb to impatience at a stalled car ahead of me in traffic and at the same

time dwell intently upon the injunction, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

Take time to make a careful and honest appraisal of your military position in the spiritual struggle. Note those points at which your defenses are weak. You may be sure that the Evil One has already discovered these vulnerable points and is trying to make good use of them. You can strengthen your position by searching for Scripture passages that deal directly with these matters. Even a few memorized verses that direct your mind away from temptation and toward God can give you a strong defense.

3. One cannot spend time memorizing Scripture without gaining a whole set of fresh ideas. Words and phrases are likely to "come to life" and give new and thrilling insight.

Although this is more vivid while one is in the process of learning a passage, it also takes place as long-familiar verses are repeated. Sometimes there is a totally unsought "revelation" from a single line. At other times an insight comes from an unexpected cohesion of elements from two or more memorized passages.

4. A "mind set" is slowly molded by Scripture that is memorized and often repeated. Anyone who devotes as much as fifteen minutes a day to this process for several years undergoes subtle changes.

Most occur so gradually one hardly notices them. Occasionally there is an exception, a forceful impact upon values, goals, and philosophy of life.

Romans 8 provides a good example of this effect. By the very act of committing Paul's analysis of life and the universe to memory, and then repeating it often enough to keep it vividly in mind, one is forced to grapple with the issues of time and eternity, the world

and judgment, life's stresses, and the incredibly dramatic redemptive work of God through Christ. One may read Romans 8 over and over, preach many sermons on it, and yet fail to make its sublime ideas bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. I think in a strange and thrilling way, memorized material becomes part of a person in somewhat the same way digested food does. And as one's eating habits have a great effect upon his body, so mental-spiritual ingestion of Scripture cannot fail to be a major directive force in the unfolding of the total self.

5. An sense of radiant joy—delight unspeakable—sometimes floods one's soul after devoting perhaps half an hour to repeating memorized Scripture, with full attention focused upon it.

This effect is not automatic, and I doubt whether it can be cultivated. It comes unbidden. But in the rare times that it does come, one feels lifted into the suburbs of heaven.

Dare I say it? . . . I wonder whether perhaps more Kingdom work would be done if all churchmen (paid and volunteer) would divert half an hour a day away from activities that produce results on the statistical tables and zealously spend it memorizing and repeating Scripture.

Whether such a redirecting of time and energy (countless millions of hours a year, if practiced only by active churchmen in the United States) would have tangible effects upon the visible church, I do not know. But of this I am very sure: it would profoundly alter the life of every person who participated. If you would like to know whether this is true, there is only one way to find out. Try it! **E**

Webb Garrison wrote this article when he was pastor of the Central Methodist church, in Evansville, Indiana.

Take time to make a careful and honest appraisal of your military position in the spiritual struggle.

Note those points at which your defenses are weak.

HONESTY

A troubled man sought counsel from a therapist: "Doctor, everyone calls me a liar."
"Oh, come on now," said the counselor. "I can't believe that!"—*The Light* (issue 11)

Effective Health Evangelism in the Local Church

Elvin E. Adams

The local church should be the focal point for health-evangelism activities in any community. Regardless of the institutional setting in which one's interest in health and spiritual matters is awakened, it is finally the local congregation that provides the spiritual home which our neighbors find fellowship. It is the quality of the experience and labor of church members that will sustain or extinguish the process of total restoration, which for many begins in a program of health evangelism.

For optimum success, any program of health evangelism, whether based in a hospital, urban living center, or rural conditioning center, should be tied very closely to a local church and its members. Ideally, most health-evangelism programs should be conducted for the most part by the trained membership of the local church. I believe the following steps are essential in developing a successful soul-winning program of health-evangelism in a church and the sequence in which the steps are taken is critical.

1. *Get close to God.* Health-evangelism programs can be cleverly designed, widely advertised, well attended, and favorably received by the community without being successful in God's estimation. Only working with God will bring the kind of success He promises (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362).

2. *Get close to the members of the team.* If the health professionals in the church, elders, and the pastor are not completely united in conducting health programs, division will arise in the church. I want to tell you that when the gospel ministers and medical missionary workers are not united, there is placed on our churches the worst evil that can be placed there."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 241. Whenever discord and misapprehension arise there is loss of souls.

3. *Get close to church members and train them.* As leaders, learn the needs, fears, and the quality of the Christian experience of the church members. Study ways of reaching out to friends, relatives, and neigh-

bors in the community. Pray together. Practice doing the simple things that are so often neglected. Share your successes and failures. Give your church members sufficient technical and scientific information to help them thoroughly understand the health material that will be presented in the public program. This will motivate them to practice right principles themselves and prepare them to explain poorly understood points to participants in the program.

Remember that the value of a church member's assistance in a health-evangelism program is best measured by the depth of friendship offered to those attending, the genuine concern exhibited, and availability in time of need. Church members are trained in this loving service by coming close to Christ, carefully studying His methods, and longing and praying for a measure of His Spirit. Only members who practice this type of fellowship will be effective health evangelists.

4. *Get close to the community.* Every health-evangelism program should be conducted in such a way as to bring close involvement between church members and those who are seeking help. Programs conducted from the front by professionals are limited to communicating information. Programs that are also designed to bring about involvement between church members and the community provide, along with the health information given, a model of healthful living to follow. Hopefully the church member will be available twenty-four hours a day with support and encouragement. Health education is most effective in changing behavior when a personal supportive relationship is developed with one who is a model of the sought-for behavior. Church members can be used as buddies, group leaders, and counselors. This fellowship is a foretaste of the fellowship a community member will enjoy when he joins our church fellowship. **E**

Elvin E. Adams, M.D., is a physician in private practice in North Carolina, specializing in internal medicine.

Spiritual Significance of the Imposition of Hands

G. C. Tuland

A careful reading of this article may enlarge your concept of an Old Testament sanctuary ritual. It gives deeper meaning to the act of confession.—The Editor

This study is dedicated to one of the great rituals of Old Testament times—the imposition of hands and its spiritual significance. While the laying on of hands in both the Old and the New Testament was used on many different occasions and for many different purposes, this study is limited to its use for the presentation of sacrificial offerings. What did the laying on of the hands of the sinner upon the head of the sacrificial animal signify? When was it practiced and what was its purpose? The concept of our denomination from its inception seems to be quite uniform and in agreement with traditional interpretation.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church on account of their specific teachings of the sanctuary have always entertained the “typical exposition,” i.e., they have taught that the Old Testament rituals have found their deepest spiritual meaning and historical fulfillment in the life and ministry of Christ. Much of our literature was and is dedicated to this subject of the sanctuary and its services, consequently touching upon the meaning of the imposition of hands. The problem was discussed by Stephen N. Haskell. He said concerning the imposition of hands: “The sinner, with his hands laid upon the head of the lamb, confessed over it all his sins, and then with his own hand he killed it. Lev. 4:29; Numbers 5:7. . . . The sinner, by confessing his sins over the lamb, in type and shadow transferred them to the lamb.”—*The Cross and Its Shadow*, p. 124.

“The individual making the offering [whole burnt] laid his hands on the head of the animal, confessing his sins, Lev. 1:4; Num. 8:12.”—*Ibid.*, p. 134. Haskell is not quite exact in the interpretation of these texts, for Leviticus 4:29 speaks only of an imposition of hands, without mentioning confession of sins. Numbers 5:7

does not refer to the sacrifice but to the confession only resulting in restitution.

The Denominational Position

The idea of the transfer of sin by the laying on of hands is firmly accepted by this (the Seventh-day Adventist) denomination. M. L. Andreasen who ably presented the meaning of Old Testament rituals in the light of New Testament fulfillment, also repeatedly discusses the transfer of sin: “The laying on of the hand was an old custom in Israel, a symbolic act whereby something possessed by one was conveyed to another.”—*The Sanctuary Service*, p. 146. “He [man] has already by confession placed his sin upon the innocent animal.”—*Ibid.*, p. 144. “He lays his hand upon the head of the animal, and by this act conveys his sin to the innocent lamb, who now bears his sins.”—*Ibid.*, p. 147. There are a number of statements in the writings of Ellen G. White expressing the same thoughts. “The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and placing his hand upon the victim’s head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354. Similar statements are found on pages 374, 376, and 378 of the same book.

No Uniformity

A comparison of this position with texts relevant to our subject presents the opportunity for deeper study. It seems that our interpretation follows, to some extent, rabbinical thought which presupposed or implied that one part of the ceremony—the imposition of hands, included always the other, i.e., the confession of sin, although the individual texts do not clearly state this concept. Another striking factor is the complete absence of a “pattern” that would justify a rigid inter-

pretation of the manner in which sin was transferred. There was apparently no absolute uniformity, but a diversity of ceremonies indicating the transfer of sin. Finally, to limit the imposition of hands and its significance to the transfer of sin fails to express the depth and spiritual significance of the ceremony.

The Mosaic system presents a variety of sacrificial offerings, each with a significance of its own, each one having its specific form, and each one representing a specific form, and each one representing a specific phase of the ministry of Christ. There were holocausts, expiatory and eucharistic sacrifices which we know as burnt-, sin-, trespass-, peace-, drink-, meat-, and other offerings, some of which involved sin, while others did not. The surprising fact is that there was imposition of hands, although the sacrifice did not involve sin, and there was transfer of sin in other cases, but no imposition of hands. The burnt offering which was originally not a sin offering required the laying on of hands (Lev. 1:4). The evening and morning sacrifice belonged to the same type of offerings, yet there was no imposition of hands (Exod. 29:38-42). The peach offering involved no sin, yet there was laying on of hands (Lev. 3:1, 2, 8, 12). In the case of sacrifices for sin in their different forms again the ritual does not follow a fixed patterns. Although sin is involved in every case there is only laying on of hands, but never a confession of sin (Lev. 4:4, 15, 24, 29). When it comes to the trespass offering, which involves sin, there is confession of sin, but no laying on of hands (Lev. 5:5).

These facts preclude a uniformistic or mechanical interpretation of the ritual. It is probably for this reason that Bible interpreters followed rabbinistic reasoning and thought according to which the laying on of hands and confession belonged together, although it is not stated in the Scriptures. The rabbis had their troubles with this problem, offering different explanations. Aaron Ben Chajim said: "Where there is no confession of sin, there is no imposition of hands; because imposition of hands belongs to confession of

sin."—*Dissertation on Sacrifice*, pp. 182, 184, from *Ad Siphra in Dibur*. Hatchet. fol. 95, Edit. Venet. Yet his position is not tenable, since there was laying on of hands without sin being involved, as has been shown above. The same can be said about Maimonides who likewise lacks the support of the Biblical text: "Every person places both his hands between the horns of the victim, and makes confession of sin over a sin offering, and of trespass over a trespass offering; and over a burnt offering he confesses those things which have been against affirmative precepts, or against negative precepts which are inseparable from affirmative ones." Maase Korban, c. 3. Maimonides merely states Jewish tradition but not Biblical exegesis for there is not one sacrifice that required simultaneously imposition of hands and

confession of sin. There is but one case when the service in the Old Testament sanctuary required this in order to realize a transfer of sin, but that was not a sacrifice. The occasion was the ritual on the Day of Atonement when the high priest transferred the sins of Israel on the goat for Azazel (Lev. 16:10, 21).

The ritual attains its deepest and widest significance in the light of the New Testament and the ministry of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all types of sacrifice.

The Spiritual Significance

It seems that no adequate explanation has been found to elucidate the meaning of the formal differences of the ritual, if such differentiation was intended at all. It also seems to be much more important to comprehend and to apply its spiritual significance in relation to our religious experience, without excluding our denominational concept according to which the laying on of hands in certain sacrifices denoted transfer of sin, a position that is supported by its frequent use at other occasions. Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:14), Moses transferring his office and spirit to Joshua (Num. 27:18-20, 23; Deut. 34:9), and many references in the New Testament attest its wider meaning. In many cases it has the significance of a gift be it a blessing, power, office, healing, or some kind of present. Inasmuch as sacrifices were offered to God, they, too, expressed a gift by transfer. When a man placed his hands upon the victim's head he enacted the presentation of the whole man, individual,

or congregation, independent of his condition, to God. Thus the ritual became the symbol of a total surrender of man unto God, and a complete dedication of the entire being, eliminating our present problems of interpretation for the different types of sacrifice or the specific meaning of the laying on of hands in each case. Then the symbol becomes more meaningful for him who offers the sacrifice, be it as a repentant sinner or as a justified believer. The ritual is thus understood in the following terms: when a man approached God with a sacrifice as a sinner he not only asked for the forgiveness of his sins but he also expressed the surrender of his whole sinful life under the judgment and mercy of God: "I give myself, my all, my everything, with my sins, to thee, almighty God." And when as a justified believer he placed his hands upon the head of the offering after his sins were forgiven, he still expressed the same desire of a complete surrender: "I dedicate myself anew, my all, my cleansed heart, my mind and my body, freed from sin, to thee, my God and my Redeemer." This concept makes it understandable why there was an imposition of hands in the sacrificial system of the Old

Testament, even when there was no sin involved.

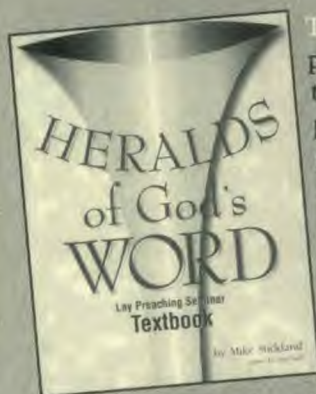
Justification and Sanctification

The ritual attains its deepest and widest significance in the light of the New Testament and the ministry of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all types of sacrifice. His vicarious death is for the justification of the repentant sinner who has placed his sins upon the Lamb of God. But the work of redemption does not end here. The same offering that justifies man from his transgression is also the one through which he is sanctified, "By that will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). It is therefore suggested that the imposition of hands in the Old Testament cult was a ritual that expressed in our New Testament interpretation two successive phases of our Christian experience—the justification and the sanctification of every soul who accepts by faith the gift of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. **E**

G. C. Tuland wrote this article as pastor of the Illinois Conference.

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Children— God's Probe

I. Introduction

God's infinite wisdom decrees that certain families should be blessed with children, while others should be blessed without them. When a parent experiences extreme rebellion or hardships in the life of his child, in a weak moment he may question the wisdom of ever having had children. Whereas those without children may give rise to doubts as to why God did not allow these blessings into their lives. God is all-wisdom. Mankind is very finite in wisdom. It therefore becomes necessary for a person to accept God's plan for his life by faith, without any doubt. A child will definitely prove the parent in many areas.

II. The development of children

The parents' role diminishes while the task of the child intensifies in the development process.

- A. *Birth-infancy.* An infant is not born in accordance to its own will. Rather, the parents bear the child because it is their desire. This is a fact that the parent must always keep in mind.
- B. *Education.* The future of the child's responsiveness to the larger world is dependent upon his formal education. From preschool through college, the wise parent guides his offspring from one point of advancement to the next.
- C. *Puberty.* The child's body develops into potential adulthood while he still possesses the mind of immaturity. It is absolutely essential for the parent to have the right attitude about sex and be willing to face the realities of life with the child.
- D. *Teens.* The patience, wisdom, love, and ability of the parent are placed under deep stress. But

there is no alternative plan other than that the parent maintains guidance and leadership during this period.

- E. *Young adults.* A parent should guide his young adult offspring through this period with much love and wisdom. It is a challenge to guide young adults on the road of honor and personal integrity.

III. The decisions by children

The role of the parent in the life of the child is awesome, but the child must assume the responsibility of decision-making. The life of the child is directed by his personal decisions—right or wrong.

- A. *Concerning salvation.* A parent may serve as an excellent example with his Christian life. But the actual choice of salvation is left up to the child. It must be a personal decision.
- B. *Concerning education.* The wise parent sees value in education. He may guide his child to a potential career. He may associate himself with institutions of learning. He may offer to finance all of the costs of education. But, if the child does not have an inner desire and motivation, time and money on the part of the parent will be wasted.
- C. *Concerning society.* It is natural for a parent to be concerned with the friendships developed by his child. Are they moral? Do they have good or bad influences on my child? The child will, however, seek out the quality and quantity of friends that he desires. Each person determines his own personal society.
- D. *Concerning morality.* The development of sexual awareness is the concern of most parents for their children. The parent must be straight forward in these matters for himself. Then, he must teach his child the way of biblical morality. Again, the final decision is up to the child.

IV. Directions for children

Though the home is very dependent upon the school (teachers) and the church (ministers) for guidance and direction in the life of the child, the parent is the key. The parent must retain his leadership in the life of the child.

- A. *Personal worth.* Therefore, it is necessary that the parent drills into the heart of the child a sense of personal worth and usefulness. Though other institutions may attempt to do so, the family unit is the ideal place for a child to get the feeling that he belongs.
- B. *Example.* A child learns by example, and parents can be the very best or the very worst. A child needs a real hero to imitate. Blessed is the parent who is willing to pay the price to be his child's hero.
- C. *Teaching.* The education of the child should not be left totally to an institution outside of the home.
- D. *Guidance.* Authority is a must in the life of the child. If a parent does not fulfill his role in this matter, then legal and social authorities may have to do what the parent would not do.

V. Conclusion

Children are valuable to our society and our churches. God uses the child in the home to strengthen its weak points. The parent must be alert to problems and seek to correct them.

VI. Illustration

*I took a piece of plastic clay
And idly fashioned it one day,
And as my fingers pressed it still,
It moved and yielded to my will.
I came again when days were past -
The bit of clay was hard at last;
The form I gave it, it still bore,
But I could change that form no more.
I took a piece of living clay
And gently formed it day by day,*

*And molded with my power and art
A young child's soft and yielding heart.
I came again when years were gone—
It was a man I looked upon;
He still that early impress wore,
And I could change him nevermore.*

E

Jose Miranda Rocha is professor of theology in Brazil College.

Testing God's Guidance

I. Introduction

God's guidance is available in His book, the Bible. We can check our understanding through the "Faithful Guide" who is present to instruct us. We can develop a submissive spirit to His guidance through prayer. But having followed these steps we can still lack confidence and clarity in doing God's will.

Confusion can reign. Some of it stems from differing interpretations of the Truth.

Such confusion may result from untested principles.

How shall we overcome confusion and respond to God's guidance with clear obedience to His will?

II. We will walk in the light we already have Read Eph. 5:8.

We must develop a curious and quick mind in Him. We must know we do not have all of the answers, but that we are committed to Him who does. Otherwise we'll be deceived by our adversary, the Devil.

Walk in the light that you have. If one wishes to become a long-distance runner, doesn't his first running begin with short distances? If a goal is to be able to speak a language fluently, shouldn't one first learn to speak a sentence?

No, our walking in the light does not mean we always walk with as much stability as we might. But the little child learning how to walk

doesn't stop if some of the walking means falling down. In walking poorly we begin to walk with stability.

III. We will test in order to approve what is acceptable unto the Lord

The purpose of the test in any school is to aid the approving process. Confusion about knowledge is eliminated. Our conduct is to be subjected to the testing process for the purpose of being acceptable to the Lord. By this testing, we experience clarity in guidance.

Where does this happen? Right out in the world where there is darkness. Out in the world, we are to rely upon all of the testing devices we can, beginning with the Bible and with the Holy Spirit's guidance. Read Phil. 2:13. In addition to the Word and the Spirit, there are at least four other testing devices.

- A. *The conscience of the person being tested.* This inner computer stores information we have received from other resources about what is right and what is wrong. As we make decisions, our conscience either affirms or puts down the attitudes or actions we are about to take. Though the conscience that has been exposed to the darkness is not fully trustworthy (see Titus 1:15), yet when we have been taught the truth, the conscience bears witness to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1).
- B. *The counsel of other Christians.* Believers are instructed to teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). No believer is to become our highest authority on truth, yet more experienced believers who show by their lives obedience to the Word should be sought for advice in these confusing issues.
- C. *Common sense.* Titus 2:12 tells us to "live soberly," which means sensibly, or having a sound, healthy mind. Common sense is never to be accepted as complete sense. God frequently leads us in ways that do not seem sensible. At the same time we ought to use these minds in the testing ground.

- D. *Circumstances.* Let's say from your relationships with your children and with children in the church that you think you should be a school teacher. Yet your education has not equipped you to teach. You cannot get a teaching certificate because of it. Your circumstances show you that you either have to go to school again or forget this vocational choice. Yet circumstances alone are never sufficient as a testing device.

Putting these four aids together plus the inspiration of God's Word may verify and clarify God's guidance.

IV. We will reprove the unfruitful works of darkness

To reprove means to rebuke or to silence so as to bring out conviction or confession of guilt. We may do this by our words, but more significantly by our conduct. God's guidance is offered to show us how to live and influence people in an evil world.

A minister's portrait given by John Bunyan has "his back to the world, his face toward heaven, and a Book in his hand." However, it would seem a bit more precise to say in the light of this text, "He has the Book in his mind, his eyes on Jesus, and his body with the world." In this manner we demonstrate the truth and call others to it.

V. Conclusion

We discover God to be our refuge. Likewise, we discover the church in togetherness serves as a shelter from the storms.

But God's guidance must be tested out in the world. This is where the light and the darkness meet. We may be frightened by the conflict, but all that God provides is more than enough as we walk in the light we have, as we test for the purpose of approving what is acceptable to God, and as we reprove the unfruitful works of darkness by our words and deeds. E

Elbio de Meneses is a pastor in the South Brazil Union.

How to Understand the Bible

Marshall J. Grosboll

Introduction

Some people think that the Bible is so difficult to understand that they are afraid to even try. Others wonder why, if the Bible really can be understood, there are so many different churches, all claiming to believe the Bible yet teaching different concepts. The reason for so many different beliefs is that they have not studied it *the way God has instructed them to*.

God has told us how to understand the Bible. If, we will just follow the method He has outlined, we can know exactly what it means. We can know truth! We can have eternal life! In this lesson we will learn how God shows us to study the Bible.

1. What claim does the Bible make about itself? 2 Tim. 3:16 [Note: Faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God is developed by studying it. In these lessons we will witness how the Bible accurately reveals future events, and we will experience how it meets the needs of every human being. The further-study verse is 2 Peter 1:20, 21]

2. Why were God's people in ancient times destroyed? Hosea 4:6 [Isa. 5:13]

3. What portion of God's Word is needed for real spiritual life? Matt. 4:4 [Deut. 8:3]

4. What did Jesus say was the basic theme of the Scriptures? John 5:39 [Note: The only part of the Bible written at this time was the Old Testament. [Luke 24:44]

5. What did Jesus call those who do not believe all that the Bible says? Luke 24:25 [Matt. 22:29]

6. Why did Paul commend the Bereans? Acts 17:10, 11 [2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Chron. 20:20]

Thus, as we have just seen, if we are going to understand the Bible we must recognize that all of it is important and none of it is to be neglected. If we will study the *whole* Bible exactly as God instructs us to, we will find the truth. Even children and those who are poorly educated can understand it. God gives us six principles for studying the Bible correctly. Let us look at these six principles.

7. What is first principle that God sets forth for understanding the Bible? Matt. 11:25 [Ans: We must be humble and teachable. 1 Cor.1:21, 26-31]

8. What is the second principle that God gives for understanding the Bible? Isa. 28:9,10 [Ans: We must let the Bible interpret itself by comparing Scripture with Scripture. We should study everything the Bible says on a subject to make sure we are not misinterpreting a given passage. 1 Cor. 2:13; Luke 24:27, 44]

9. What is the third principle for understanding the Bible? 1 Cor. 2:7, 10-14 [Ans: We must ask that the Holy Spirit guide us. John 16:13]

10. What is the fourth principle God sets forth for understanding the Bible? 2 Thess. 2:9-12 [Ans: We must really *want* to know truth. Some people are looking for excuses not to believe the truth. If they look hard enough, God will allow them to be deceived, but they will still be lost! Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:28]

11. What is the fifth principle God gives for understanding the Bible? Jer. 29:13 [Ans: We must really *search* for truth. Even if we have all the true principles for studying the Bible, if we do not spend sufficient time studying, we still will not find God's truth for today. Matt. 13:45, 46; Isa. 44:3; Matt. 5:6]

12. What is the sixth principle for understanding the Bible? John 8:31, 32 [Ans: We must follow what we already know to be truth. Why should God reveal more truth to us if we are not following what He has already revealed to us? [John 7:17; Matt.13:12; 7:24-27]

Commitment: Is it your desire to let Jesus teach you truth through His Word? Will you endeavor to study His Word every day in the way God has told us to study it?

My response to Christ is _____ **5**

Marshall J. Grosboll is the author of this series of Bible Studies.

Happy Endings For Small Groups

Diego Pfiffer

Few small groups go on forever. When the time comes for your group to end, the following tips will help you finish well.

Remember the past. Take time to retell ways in which Christ worked in your lives through your small group, such as answered prayers, transformed attitudes, or an increased understanding of the Bible. What was the happiest moment in the group? When did you laugh the most? What challenges did you overcome?

Release people to future ministry. Celebrate future plans for ministry to form another small group, to get more involved in the community, to volunteer at church, to move to a mission field, and so on. Reinforce that the end of your small group is not the end of personal and ministry growth.

Acknowledge accomplishments. I remember completing the 12-week study "Experiencing God." I was elated to have finished what I started. Reminisce with your group about what you've accomplished together, studies completed, outreach projects, relationships, building events, and give one another some well-deserved applause.

Evaluate. If you spend time discussing the good and bad of your group experience, you will leave with a

clearer idea of what you want your next small group to be like. Was your group caring? Loving? Was the curriculum too challenging or too easy? Look at your group covenant: Did you accomplish the goals and objectives you set as a group?

End with a bang. Don't end your group without a party. Perhaps you'd like to create personal collages at your celebration. Provide glue and poster or construction paper—one sheet per group member. Ask people

ahead of time to bring cut-outs from magazines or newspapers that remind them of fellow group members. After you present each other with the images you've chosen (and explanations!), make collages. Each person makes his own collage by pasting the images people have given him to poster paper. Everyone leaves the party with a collage of memories. At the end of the celebration,

close with prayer for one another. Ask group members to complete the prayer sentence, "I ask that God grant you. . . ." One of my former small groups sealed out time together with a communion service I will never forget. We had a happy ending. So can you. **E**

Diego Pfiffer is an elder in Lavras, Brazil.

Remember the past. Take time to retell ways in which Christ worked in your lives through your small group, such as answered prayers, transformed attitudes, or an increased understanding of the Bible.

RECONCILIATION

While integration was a political concept, reconciliation is spiritual. Integration forced some people to change their behavior. Reconciliation invites the changing of hearts.

—Spencer Perkins, author of *More Than Equals*

Building Prayer Meeting Attendance

Jan G. Johnson

One problem many churches have in common is dwindling prayer meeting attendance. The prayer meetings in my district were no exception. I tried several ways to build attendance. I taught a series on tongues, usually a sure crowd pleaser. I covered several Spirit of Prophecy books. I even formed a health club, all of which had very little effect on attendance.

Then I began a "Through the Bible" program which has brought prayer meeting attendance to 35-40 percent of my church membership.

Each meeting we cover 28 chapters of the Bible, which each person was encouraged to read at a rate of four chapters a day. At this pace the Bible was completed in forty prayer meetings, or in just ten months!

Since we make such rapid progress, I have found it best to concentrate on a theme and follow it through the Bible rather than trying to cover every verse or subject. Of the many themes that could be used, I chose "God, His covenant, and His People." Each prayer meeting I endeavored to show how the twenty-eight chapters under study related to the theme.

I then arranged the books for study with the theme in mind. For instance, after reading about the covenant and sanctuary in Exodus and Leviticus, we studied Jesus, the Messiah, and how He fulfilled the sanctuary, by reading Matthew and Hebrews. In this way, two of the most difficult books in the Bible were brought together and tempered with a beautiful Gospel. Obviously, I could not spend time explaining the bells and fringes on the priestly garments. But I did show the great theme of salvation through blood alone.

The following is the outline I used. It can be adapted or altered, depending on the theme used:

1. The Covenant Promised

- a. Covenant Promised—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus

- b. Covenant Fulfilled —Matthew, Hebrews
- c. Covenant Conditions—Numbers, Deuteronomy

2. Working the Covenant

- a. Story of Job
- b. Story of Settling the Land—Joshua, Judges, Ruth
- c. Story of David—I Samuel, 2 Samuel, Psalms
- d. Story of Solomon—I Kings 1-11, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- e. Story of Israel—Jonah, Nahum, Hosea, Amos
- f. Story of Judah—I Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Micah, Joel, Jeremiah, Lamentation, Habakkuk, Zephaniah
- g. Story of Exile and Reconstruction—Daniel, Obadiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

3. New Testament

One of the problems of a series such as this is its length. A preacher cannot always set aside a ten-month block. But this program can easily be divided into three-month blocks and used as the preacher desires. For instance, it would make an excellent series for the first three months of each new year. It could also be adapted to a September through November series, as well.

I believe the reason this program has received such sustained interest from my congregation is that people are truly hungry for God's Word. If "meat in due season" is offered, those earnestly seeking will come. **E**

Jan G. Johnson wrote this article from Brookings-Gold Beach, Oregon Conference.

The Elder and Church Problems

Orley M. Berg

One of the finest compliments an elder can receive is one I recently overheard concerning a minister friend: "He is a person we know we can go to and be received with understanding. He is so easy to talk with, so approachable, and he always brings encouragement and hope."

This relationship between the elder and his congregation is becoming increasingly important in these days crowded with cares, concerns, and anxieties. Group polarization's are developing on every hand. It is becoming more and more difficult to get through. There are serious gaps, between husbands and wives, parents and children, the home and the church, elders and people.

Statistics reveal that the chances for happiness in marriage, even within the church, are constantly diminishing. Also, a growing number of youth brought up in Seventh-day Adventist homes are leaving the faith. The significant role of the elder in this distraught picture is worthy of serious consideration. He is to stand as a vital link between the members and the Lord. He is to represent the church and what the church has to offer. Through him Christ and His church are to be set forth as providing ample resources to cope with all the exigencies of turbulent times.

If he is to do this effectively he must, first of all, come to know those under his care. He must know them in a far more personal way than simply being able to address them by name as they leave the worship service on Sabbath morning. He must know them as individuals, persons with whom he is intimately involved. He must become one with them in their interests, their joys, and their fears. He should be able to sympathize with them in times of sorrow or tragedy. They must know that his heart beats with theirs and that he stands as a tower of strength and encouragement to them.

This close relationship cannot be developed or sustained from the pulpit alone. Preaching occupies a place of pre-eminence in the mind of many, but much of its relevance and effectiveness comes through parish visitation. It is in the homes of the people that the elder comes to know them. It is there that he wins his way

into their hearts and gains their confidence and trust.

The relative merits of preaching and ministry visitation are not to be considered on an either-or basis. Both are important. Each supplements the other. Neither can be carried on successfully in a program without the other. Someone has said, "The elder builds up his congregation by wearing out automobile tires and shoe leather, and holds the congregation together by worthy preaching." Without visitation, sermons often fall on deaf ears. Too many of the modern generation cop out on the preacher because they think he is a phony. They listen to his pleasing platitudes and nice ties but question his sincerity. The fact may be that they just don't know him. Visitation can help to break down this barrier.

In pastoral visitation not only does the elder come to know his people but his people come to know him. This is equally important. In the home he will demonstrate a sincere interest in every member of the family, from the tiny tot in the crib to the grandmother in the wheelchair. He will ask the young students how things are going at school. He will inquire about the work in which the members of the family are engaged. He will identify with all, not in a superficial or professional way, but as one who is genuinely interested in their welfare. All the while he will manifest a healthy, radiant, Christlike bearing, so he will be thought of as a deeply spiritual and genuinely sincere person. He will be remembered most for his prayers, the faith he inspires, and the wise counsel he offers.

These meaningful visits in the home can be supplemented by various other thoughtful considerations. This will, of course, be true when illness comes, whether to a child or adult. A birthday card or a special visit just before Henry goes off to college can be very significant. An appropriate card for graduation, a letter of appreciation for some special work done in the church or school or community, a word of congratulation at the time of a promotion at the office, or a few words of understanding during a period of crisis or difficulty can contribute much toward establishing a close relationship that can be so rewarding.

Preventive Medicine

Trouble is always just around the corner, and sooner or later it comes to all. If the right relationship has been established, the pastor enters naturally into these situations and becomes a balm in Gilead, whose wise counsel is sought out and welcomed. However, the elder will be more than one who stands by to give first aid or emergency care in time of disaster.

The greatest service the elder can offer is in the area of preventive medicine. By having established the relationship suggested here, he will accomplish much through his kindly ministry and the over-all program of the church either to prevent many of the situations from developing into crisis proportions or to help members know how to face such periods of stress with the inner resources Christ has to offer.

Successful Lay Preaching

W. Floyd Bresee, Ph.D.

Written by one of the church's top ministerial leaders, this new book assists lay leaders in the great art of preaching. Besides giving broad principles on how to develop interesting, pertinent, and inspiring sermons, the book even has a section with sermon outlines. Anyone interested in better preaching will find this book useful.



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Most of our problems center around home relationships. Some threaten the marriage vows, others have to do with children who are drifting away from parents and the church. This being so, it is at once apparent that it is in the areas of marriage counseling and parent education that guidance is often needed. The alert elder recognizes this and seeks to do something about it.

Fortunately, God has provided us with ample resources in these areas. Our problem is not the lack of instruction, but rather a strange indifference toward the instruction we have. The books the *Adventist Home* and *Child Guidance* are particularly important in giving the direction so desperately needed today. The *Ministry of Healing* and other books also have passages that can help carry many a soul through a time of trouble. The wise counsels given here are more up to date than the latest works on psychology and education. The elder who carries his congregation on his heart will recognize the great need for more serious attention to these valuable counsels.

With good materials available, a program of parent education can be successfully carried on in every church. As to its importance, Ellen G. White has said, "We are sustaining terrible losses in every branch of the work through the neglect of home training."—*Child Guidance*, p. 303. Again she declares, "Home religion, home training, is what is now more needed."—*Sign of the Times*, April 8, 1886.

Present conditions in our society, in our churches, and in our homes should awaken a new desire to do more in this very important area if our families are to be saved in the kingdom. Bringing children into this world of sin has always been a solemn responsibility, but never has it presented a greater challenge to parents than now. Without divine instruction training children is an impossible task. Fortunately, the divine instruction is available, but in too many cases it has been given but slight attention. What excuse will avail in the day of judgment for such laxity? The challenge is one that faces every elder and congregation. It would be well if some carefully planned program of parental and home education could be offered at least once each year in every church. This, together with meaningful visitation and Spirit-filled preaching, will help save many a family for the kingdom. **E**

Orley M. Berg was associate editor of Ministry when he wrote this article.

The Beatitudes for Elders and Congregation

R. R. Bietz

The elders and the congregation should be a blessing to each other. Unless they are a source of blessings, they can hardly be a blessing to the neighboring community. I want to mention some of these blessings and bring them to you in the form of nine beatitudes. The first five blessings come to the congregation as the result of the elder's life and work, and the next four blessings come to the elder as the result of the congregation's life and work. The beatitudes read as follows:

Blessed is the congregation whose elders know they are called of God, for they shall hear positive, soul-stirring sermons.

No man can truly be a preacher of God unless he knows that he is called to God. Like Paul, we should be able to say, "for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16), and like Jeremiah, "there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jer. 20:9, RSV). Elders are not called or chosen by well-meaning parents, nor by fellow members, nor by respected teachers, nor by nominating committees or conference officers. They are called of God. They are men sent from God. Some are called, like Saul, while fighting the church; others are called from among the herdsmen like Amos; then again there are those who are called like Moses while out in the desert by a burning bush; some are called in a vision, like Isaiah. No matter how or when or where they are called, they must be sure that the call is of God.

Speaking on this point, Ellen G. White says "God has repeatedly shown that persons should not be encouraged into the field without unmistakable evidence that He has called them. . . . God knows the heart, and He knows whom to select."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 209.

God calls men, first of all, not to do something but to be someone. It is true that the preacher is called to preach, but to be a preacher means more than being a

fluent speaker. The question is not whether the preacher can say the preaching of the gospel is urgent, but whether he is experiencing an urgency in his own heart. The question is not whether they can quote from the Church Manual as to what authority he has, but whether he knows himself to be an instrument of God's authority.

An elder is God's man, to do God's work in God's time, by God's method, in order to bring men into fullness of God's salvation and to keep them there. If the elder knows he is called of God, he will also know he has a message from God, and he will preach it with passion and conviction. By this I do not mean there must be fuming and frothing, ranting and raving and beating of the air. God would look with disfavor upon such misbehavior. There should be a holy emotion under the control of the Holy Spirit, and this may be revealed in a quiet-mannered preacher as well as in one who has majestic eloquence. Genuine preaching is not necessarily measured by the volume of the voice, but rather by the volume of the heart. Anyone preaching the great doctrines of Christ and not feeling his own heart warmed and touched should never enter the pulpit. To preach the doctrines of Christ without a holy feeling and a positive conviction is a dangerous undertaking.

Blessed is the congregation whose elders preach the doctrines, for they shall be built up in the faith.

The outstanding preacher Paul says, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Blessed indeed is the congregation whose pastor and elder preach doctrine.

Blessed is the congregation whose elders diligently study the Word, for they shall be spiritually fed.

Many congregations have been greatly strengthened through the years because of ministers who have been deep students of the Word. In a day when there

are so many divisive forces and when some run after the so-called new light, it is more important than ever to diligently study. Some ministers and elders do not have time to study because they are using most of their time looking after so many bureaucratic and administrative affairs of the church. Some do not have time to study because they do not know how to improve their time. Some do not take time to study and pray because they feel that they are working for God only when their legs or the wheels of their cars are in motion.

A young Canadian minister remarked one day, to a friend of his, that preaching was no problem to him. He said, "I have often written a sermon and caught a salmon before breakfast." His friend replied, "All I can say is that I had rather eat your salmon than listen to your sermon." Evangelist Torrey said, "Study, study, study the one Book and preach, preach, preach the one Book and teach, teach, teach the one Book, the Bible, the only book that has power to gather, and hold, and bless the crowds for any great length of time." —Quoted in Harold L. Calkins, *Master Preachers*, p. 97.

Blessed is the congregation whose pastor or elder studies the Word, for his congregation will be fed.

Blessed is the congregation whose elders have a sensible and consecrated wife, for they shall be glad in her presence.

Many an alder has had more than ordinary success because of his wife's dedication, devotion, and good judgment. Others have done below-average work because the wife did not manifest an interest in her husband's calling, nor was she interested in the people.

The elder is a leader and a shepherd. There are a variety of sheep in every flock. Some are lame and cannot walk. Some are healthy and others are sick. Some are young and foolish, others are old, and set in their ways; yet the elder—the shepherd—loves them all and never shows partiality to any specific group. The wife,

too, must keep this in mind and never show preference to any sheep. She should not associate with the healthy sheep only. The surest and quickest way for the wife to ruin her husband's influence, and hers too, with the congregation, is to attach herself to a certain kind of sheep, commonly known as a church clique.

Incidentally, I wish to state here that an elder has an obligation to his wife and family. Many times we are so anxious for success that we fail in the most important part of our work—the work in our own homes with our own families. This is our first responsibility, and we cannot wave it aside lightly saying we are too busy. This excuse will hardly stand up in the day of judgment.

If we are too busy to give attention to our own companions and children, we probably should never have stood at the alter promising to "cherish and love." Let's keep that promise. Blessed is the congregation whose elder has a dedicated wife, for certainly they will be glad in her presence.

Blessed is the congregation whose elder is a shepherd, for they shall receive loving and tender care.

There are experiences in the eldership that have a

tendency to make us act like wolves rather than sheep. If we are not careful, we might become revengeful. There are times when we meet with stubborn people. There will be obstinate church councils. We will come in contact with church politicians. There will be members who seem to have only one goal in life, namely, to vex our soul and test our patience to the limit. But be of good courage; there are very few of these. In spite of these ministerial afflictions, we must exhibit the spirit of the shepherd. We must love. Remember that "love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen" (1 Cor. 13:7, 8).*

Henry Drummond said in the book *The Greatest Thing in the World*:

There are a variety of sheep in every flock. Some are lame and cannot walk. Some are healthy and others are sick. Some are young and foolish, others are old, and set in their ways; yet the elder—the shepherd—loves them all and never shows partiality to any specific group.

Where Love is, God is. He that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God. God is Love. Therefore love....Lavish it upon the poor, where it is very easy; especially upon the rich who often need it most; most of all upon our equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom perhaps we each do least of all. There is a difference between trying to please and giving pleasure. Give pleasure. Lose no chance of giving pleasure. For that is the ceaseless and anonymous triumph of a truly loving spirit.—Pages 31, 32.

We must be more than cold, calculating administrators; we should be warmhearted, lovable men of God. We must be more than high-powered go-getters; we should be God-powered soul winners. We must be more than good loyal committeemen; we should be God's loyal committeemen. We must be more than strong, efficient churchmen; we should be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Andrew Bonar was one of three brothers, all Presbyterian ministers. They did their work about a hundred years ago and left an enviable record for future generations. Long after Mr. Bonar's death someone decided to write a biography of him. The author went to Bonar's daughter, now an old lady, and asked what her earliest recollections were of her father as a pastor. She then told him how, when she was a small child, her father took her along to church one day, placed her in the back pew with her dolls, and told her to keep them quiet because she was in the house of the Lord. After some time she got restless, looked around, and saw her father at the front of the church. He had just gotten up from his knees; tears were running down his cheeks; and he came toward the rear of the church and looked for a name. Evidently he found the name he was seeking, for he stepped into one of the pews again, dropped on his knees, and prayed. The daughter said, "I dared not speak. It seemed God was in the place." She went on to say that her father did this many times that morning. She forgot to play with her dolls and watched her father. She said, "That day I got my first and real impression of him as a pastor. I had heard him preach many times, but then I was see-

ing him weep over the erring ones of his flock, for my father was a shepherd." Blessed is the congregation whose leader is a shepherd, for they will receive loving and tender care.

Blessed is the elder whose congregation consists of members who have a burden to share their faith, for this will keep him busy baptizing.

The single greatest blessing a congregation can be to the elder and pastor is to keep busy for God. This will keep them happy and minister too. There are those who still think the church is a sort of orchestra society where they pay their dues, go and hear the orchestra play, and if they do not play well, stop the dues and

look for another society.

However, the church is not an orchestra society. The church is the orchestra. Every member belongs to it and each one has a part to play. We may not all be able to play the violin or cello, but there are other instruments that all can play. The leader is the conductor. It is his responsibility to see that everyone plays, or partici-

pates. The elder who has a working congregation is blessed indeed.

Blessed is the elder whose congregation does not engage in gossip and criticism, for he shall be spared many an ulcerating experience.

Criticism, of course, can be a great blessing if it is given at the right time, to the right person, in the right spirit, and with the right motive. Criticism given in kindness and with a sincere desire to help should always be welcome. Perhaps we do not like criticism any more than we do bad-tasting medicine, but it must be taken at times. It usually proves helpful.

The preacher, Clovis Chappell, relates an experience that he had when he was a young minister, which is rather to the point. He said he was sent out to be a pastor of a university church. His first service was absolutely terrifying. His oldest brother, a choice and scholarly man, was present. This brother's heart was already bleeding for the young man, and young Clovis did not want to make it bleed any more by mistakes he

The leader is the conductor. It is his responsibility to see that everyone plays, or participates. The elder who has a working congregation is blessed indeed.

might make. The president of the university was also there. He had the habit of looking down at his shoes. He did this morning. Never once did he lift his eyes unto the hills from which the young preacher tried to bring him help. To make matters worse, there also was present that morning the pompous bishop. The chariot wheels drove heavily all during the sermon. This was indicated by the fact that at the close of the service one of the saints came forward and told him how many times he had scratched the left side of his head with his right hand. Said Chappell, "I don't know how many times it was, but I do know that the number was out of all proportion to the way my head was itching. I did not enjoy the criticism but since then I have sought to reduce pulpit scratching to a minimum."—*Anointed to Preach*, pp. 32, 33.

There is, of course, another kind of criticism that has as its motive to destroy the influence of the minister. This kind comes from beneath and is classed as cannibalism. Blessed is the elder whose congregation does not engage in this evil and satanic traffic. This kind usually parades itself in the presence, not of the elder but of others. Quite often it appears around the dinner table when children are present. If any of us are guilty, let us hang our heads in shame. What a great blessing to the elder if gossip and criticism are foreign to his congregation.

Blessed is the elder whose congregation continually prays for him, for this will be worth more than many words of commendation and praise.

One of the greatest helps a preacher can have is a praying congregation. Some of the greatest sermons which have ever been preached were great because there was great praying by the congregation. Many a meeting has been declared a wonderful success, not because of great preaching but because of great praying.

There are times when certain congregations feel they ought to have a change of elder. Bishop Gerald Kennedy, of the Methodist church, makes certain suggestions as to how a congregation can get rid of their

elder (1) Get the entire congregation to unite in prayer for him. He will become so effective that some larger church will certainly be glad to take him off your hands. (2) Say "Amen" once in a while and he will preach himself to death in a few weeks. (3) Pat him on the back and he will work himself to death. (4) Rededicate your own life to Christ; then ask the preacher to give you a job to do. He will probably die of heart failure.

Blessed is the elder whose congregation studies the Bible daily, for this will give him more time to do the work of an evangelist.

An elder must, of necessity, spend many hours counseling people. We are living in a world full of many problems, and there are more on the way. I wonder, however, whether we do not tax the elder with too many petty and trivial matters. It is my personal conviction that if we would study and pray more, many of our problems could be solved on our own knees in our own homes with our own Bibles. If the people today would still spend as much time with the Bible as they did a generation ago, many of the personal problems would not exist.

There are too many hours spent before television sets, and this is a poor substitute for the study of the Word of God. Television and radio solve few, if any, problems for us. In fact, they create problems. Let us all determine to study the Bible more. We should say with the prophet Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts" (Jer. 15:16).

Conclusion

Blessed are ye, congregations, elders, and ministers, if ye will work together for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. E

R. R. Bietz was vice-president of the General Conference when this article was written.

Interestingly, of all the songs in the book of Revelation, not one is a solo. The 24 elders sing and cast their crowns before His feet, the united voices of countless angels resound, every living creature in heaven and under the earth and all that is in them are joined in one song. Those who are victorious over the beast are given harps and a song to sing. In every case multitudes of people or angels unite in the same song with absolute unity.—*Graham Kendrick*



“The Minister and the Children”

Archa O. Dart

It is an inspiring sight to see a church with a large number of children in it. “Less time and effort are necessary for the winning of twenty children to Christ than one adult,” declared Dr. George Bailey in the *Vacation Bible School Manual*.

Childhood is the age of conversion. Far more children give their hearts to God at the age of twelve than at any other period in life. Practically everyone who is ever converted makes the decision sometime between the ages of eight and sixteen. Ask for a show of hands in any congregation and note the difference between the number who were converted before sixteen and those who were converted after. “A careful investigation discloses that of those who reach the age of twenty-three years, having never made any profession of Christ, only two out of one hundred will ever do so, leaving ninety-eight who never will” (Clarence C. Benson, *The Sunday School in Action*, p. 177). Seldom indeed does an adult convert ever become a minister or an active worker in the cause of God.

The vast majority of our adult converts were members of a church before learning the doctrines of the Adventist faith. The most productive field in which any evangelist can work is with the children of the church and the next most productive territory is the children of the neighborhood. The messenger of the Lord says, “We may bring hundreds and thousands of children to Christ if we will work for them” (*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 172).

The Children Sermon

The good shepherd feeds his lambs as regularly as he feeds his sheep. Every Sabbath he has a story, or an object lesson or a Bible drill for the children. One pastor I know was called to certain church that was showing very little signs of life of any kind. The meetings were dull, the attendance poor, and the soul winning—well, the membership was dwindling steadily. The situation

was enough to dishearten any newcomer. But he began working with the children—what few remained in the church—and that sleepy church woke up. More children came and more parents came with them and still more children and more parents. Every Sabbath without fail he had an interesting, inspiring, thought-provoking story for the children. Of course, it took time. He spent as much preparation on his junior lesson as he did on his adult sermon, but it paid. It paid in increased attendance, in attention, and in results. Today that same church building is taxed to capacity to hold the crowds.

Different preachers have different methods of conducting these children sermons. Some invite all the children to come forward and sit on the carpet in front of the pulpit for their story. This has the advantage of giving some of the restless ones an opportunity to move about and also enables the minister to remind the children to sit with their parents after the story. One has to watch, however, that small children do not try to race to go to the front and then fight over choice positions. This confusion can be avoided if some of the older children are appointed as monitors and if the pastor, when inviting them to the front, suggests that they come quietly and slowly. Some pastors in small churches have had very good success in maintaining proper order and in developing excellent relationships with the children in this manner.

Many ministers allow the juniors to remain with their parents but have a special service for them before the senior sermon. This junior story is listed right in the church bulletin and is a definite part of the service.

But whatever method is used reserve a little corner in every sermon for the children. It will pay rich dividends.

Archa O. Dart was assistant secretary of the former Home and Parent Education at the General Conference.

Be Approved as Ministers of God

Ellen G. White

In order for a man to be a successful minister, something more than book knowledge is essential. The laborer for souls needs consecration, integrity, intelligence, industry, energy, and tact. Possessing these qualifications, no man can be inferior; instead, he will have a commanding influence for good.

Christ brought His desires and wishes into strict abeyance to His mission,— the mission that bore the insignia of Heaven. He made everything subordinate to the work that He came to this world to accomplish. When in His youth His mother found Him in the school of the rabbis, and said to Him, “Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing,” He answered,—and His answer is the keynote of His lifework—“How is it that ye sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:48, 49).

The same devotion, the same consecration, the same subjection to the claims of the word of God, that were manifest in Christ, must be seen in His servants. He left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe, and went forth, a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood the seed of life for a lost world.

His servants in like manner must go forth to sow. When called to become a sower of the seed of truth, Abraham was bidden, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 12:1). “And he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8) as God’s light-bearer, to keep His name alive in the earth. He forsook his country, his home, his relatives, and all the pleasant associations connected with his earthly life, to become a pilgrim and a stranger.

So to the apostle Paul, praying in the temple at Jerusalem, came the message, “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21). So those

who are called to unite with Christ must leave all in order to follow Him. Old associations must be broken up, plans of life relinquished, earthly hopes surrendered. In toil and tears, in solitude and through sacrifice, must the seed be sown.

Those who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to God, will constantly receive a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth His highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ, they are made complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence.

The Redeemer will not accept divided service. Daily the worker for God must learn the meaning of self-surrender. He must study the word of God, learning its meaning and obeying its precepts. Thus he may reach the standard of Christian excellence. Day by day God works with him, perfecting the character that is to stand in the time of the final test. And day by day the believer is working out before men and angels a sublime experiment, showing what the gospel can do for fallen human beings.

When Christ called His disciples to follow Him, He offered them no flattering prospects in this life. He gave them no promise of gain or worldly honor, nor did they make any stipulation as to what they should receive. To Matthew as he sat at the receipt of custom, the Saviour said, “Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him” (Matt. 9:9). Matthew did not, before rendering service, wait to demand a certain salary. . . . Without question or hesitation he followed Jesus. It was enough for him that he was to be with the Saviour, that he might hear His words and unite with Him in His work.

So it was with the disciples previously called. When Jesus bade Peter and his companions follow Him, they immediately left their boats and nets. Some of these disciples had friends dependent on them for support; but when they received the Savior's invitation, they did not hesitate, inquiring, How shall I live, and sustain my family? They were obedient to the call; and when afterward Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?" they could answer, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35).

Today the Savior calls us, as He called Matthew and John and Peter, to His work. If our hearts are touched by His love, the question of compensation will not be uppermost in our minds. We shall rejoice to be co-workers with Christ, and we shall not fear to trust His care. If we make God our strength, we shall have clear perceptions of duty, and unselfish aspirations; our life will be actuated by a noble purpose, which will raise us above sordid motives.

Many whom the Lord could use will not hear and obey His voice above all others. Kindred and friends, former habits and associations, have so strong an influence upon them that God can give them but little instruction, can communicate to them but little knowledge of His purposes. The Lord would do much more for His servants if they were wholly consecrated to Him, placing His service above the ties of kindred and all other earthly associations.

Deeper consecration needed

The time demands greater efficiency and deeper consecration. I cry to God, raise up and send forth messengers filled with a sense of their responsibility, men in whose hearts self-idolatry, which lies at the foundation of all sin, has been crucified; who are willing to consecrate themselves without reserve to God's service; whose souls are alive to the sacredness of the work and the responsibility of their calling; who are determined not to bring to God a maimed sacrifice, which costs them neither effort nor prayer.

The Duke of Wellington was once present where a party of Christian men were discussing the possibility of success in missionary effort among the heathen. They appealed to the duke to say whether in his judgment such efforts were likely to prove a success commensurate to the cost. The old soldier replied:

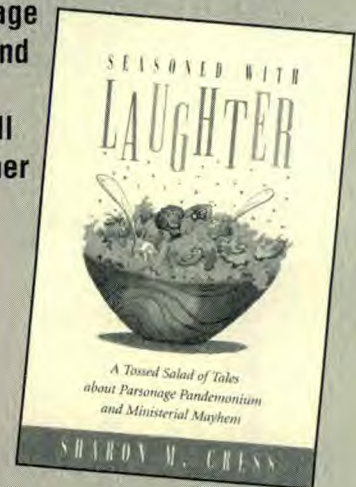
"Gentlemen, what are your marching orders? Success is not the question for you to discuss. If I read your

orders aright, they read thus, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' Gentlemen, obey your marching orders."

My brethren, the Lord is coming, and we need to bend every energy to the accomplishment of the work before us. I appeal to you to give yourselves wholly to the work. Christ gave His time, His soul, His strength, to labor for the benefit and blessing of humanity. Entire days were devoted to labor, and entire nights were spent in prayer, that He might be braced to meet the

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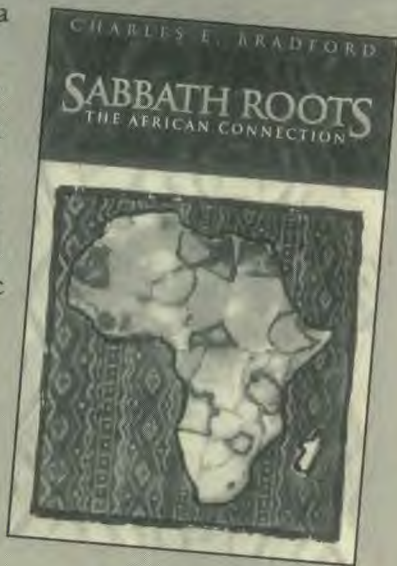
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foe and fortified to help those who came to Him for relief. As we trace a stream of living water by the line of green that it produces, so Christ may be seen in the deeds of mercy that marked His path at every step. Wherever He went, health sprang up, and happiness followed where He passed. So simply did He present the words of life that a child could understand them. The youth caught His spirit of ministry, and sought to pattern after His gracious ways by assisting those who needed help. The blind and deaf rejoiced in His presence. His words to the ignorant and sinful opened to them a fountain of life. He dispensed His blessings abundantly and continuously; they were the garnered riches of eternity, given in Christ, the Father's gift to man.

Workers for God should as surely feel that they are not their own as if the very stamp and seal of identification were placed upon their persons. They are to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ's sacrifice, and in the spirit of entire consecration they should resolve that by the grace of Christ they will be a living sacrifice. But how few of us regard the salvation of sinners in the light in which it is viewed by the heavenly universe,— as a plan devised from eternity in the mind of God! How few of us are heart to heart with the Redeemer in this solemn, closing work! There is scarcely a tithe of the compassion that there should be for souls unsaved. There are so many to be warned, and yet how few sympathize with God sufficiently to be anything or nothing if only they can see souls won to Christ!

When Elijah was about to leave Elisha, he said to him, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:9). Elisha did not ask for worldly honor, for a place among the great men of the earth. That which he craved was a large portion of the spirit given to the one whom God was about to honor with translation. He knew that nothing else could fit him for the work that would be required of him.

Ministers of the gospel, had this question been asked you, what would you have answered? What is the greatest desire of your heart, as you engage in the service of God? **E**

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church.

Illustrations

Henry Feyerabend

They say I tell a great many stories; I reckon I do, but I have found in the course of a long experience that common people, take them as they run, are more easily informed through the medium of a broad illustration than in any other way, and as to what the hypercritical few may think, I don't care." *Abraham Lincoln*

We know that Jesus lived

He was a man in history, as well as a man for all times. Tacitus, perhaps the greatest Roman historian born in the first century, speaks of Jesus. Josephus, a Jewish historian born A.D. 37, tells of the crucifixion of Jesus. A contemporary Bible scholar said that "the latest edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica uses 20,000 words in describing this person, Jesus. His description took more space than was given to Aristotle, Cicero, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed or Napoleon Bonaparte."

Abiding In Christ

Dr. Howard A. Kelly had a unique and effective way of "witnessing". He was never seen in public without a beautiful pink rose in his lapel. This practice gave him many opportunities to witness about his relationship with the Lord Jesus. Someone meeting him on the street might remark, "That's a lovely rose, Dr. Kelly." "Yes, it is," he would reply. "Actually, it's a 'Christian rose!'" "Why do you call it that?" he would be asked. The well-known physician would then turn back his lapel and display a tiny water bottle which held the stem of the flower and kept it fresh and sweet. "It's a 'Christian rose,'" he would explain, "because it has a hidden source of life and beauty. When our Savior pardons our sins, He also unites us with Himself and thereby nourishes and strengthens us. He becomes the secret reservoir of our joy, and any fragrance of testimony we exhibit to the world comes from Him."

Authority of Christ

Napoleon (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *The Reason for Our Hope*) said: "I know men; and I tell you that

Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity...Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, His manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things...The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me—everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man One can absolutely find nowhere, but in Him alone, the imitation or the example of His life I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary.

The yellow gospel without blood

Some years ago a terrible railroad accident occurred, killing many people. A commuter train had stalled on the tracks just a few minutes before a fast freight was due to arrive. A conductor was quickly sent to flag down the approaching "flier." Being assured that all was well, the passengers relaxed. Suddenly, however, the speeding freight came bearing down upon them. The crash left a ghastly scene of horror. The engineer of the second train, who escaped death by jumping from the cab, was called into court to explain why he hadn't stopped. "I saw a man waving a warning flag," he said, "but it was yellow, so I thought he just wanted me to slow down." When the flag was examined, the mystery was explained. It had been red, but because of long exposure to the sun and weather it had become a dirty yellow. Dr. Harry Ironside commented on this incident: "How many lives can be eternally wrecked by the 'yellow gospels' we are hearing today—the bloodless theories of unregenerated men that send their hearers to their doom instead of stopping them on their downward road!"

Dear friend, only Christ and His sacrifice on the cross can redeem your soul (see Romans 5:8, 9). Don't

be deceived by an anemic “yellow gospel” of works that is powerless to save you from everlasting destruction.

The cross of—pledge of forgiveness

I read the story recently of how Louis XII of France treated his enemies after he ascended to the throne. Before coming to power, he had been cast into prison and kept in chains. Later when he did become king, he was urged to seek revenge but he refused. Instead, he prepared a scroll on which he listed all who had perpetrated crimes against him. Behind every man's name he placed a cross in red ink. When the guilty heard about this, they feared for their lives and fled. Then the king explained, “The cross which I drew beside each name was not a sign of punishment, but a pledge of forgiveness extended for the sake of the crucified Savior, who upon His cross forgave His enemies and prayed for them.”

Blood of Jesus—The invulnerable covering

The great English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, told of a man who had been sentenced to death by a Spanish court. Because he was an American citizen but also of English birth, the consuls of both countries decided to intervene. They declared that the authorities of Spain had no right to take his life, but their protests went unheeded. Finally, they deliberately wrapped the prisoner in their flags — the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack. Defying the executioner, they issued this warning: “Fire if you dare! But if you do, you will bring the powers of two great nations upon you!” There stood the condemned. But the rifleman would not shoot. Protected by those flags and the governments they represented, the man was invulnerable.

Greatness of Jesus

An anonymous author made this striking comparison: “Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, and Jesus for only 3. Yet the influence of Christ's 3-year ministry infinitely transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teaching from these men who were among the greatest philosophers of all antiquity.

Jesus painted no pictures; yet some of the finest paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci received their inspiration from Him. Jesus wrote no poetry; but Dante, Milton, and scores of the world's greatest poets were inspired by Him. Jesus composed no music, still Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, and Mendelssohn reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies, and oratorios they composed in His praise. Every sphere of human greatness has been enriched by this humble Carpenter of Nazareth.

The tiger and the lamb

In a collection of Negro folk tales, William J. Faulkner relates the story of a disobedient lamb. A mother sheep had warned her little ones, “Do not go near the river, for a bad tiger lives there, and he will kill and eat you.” One lamb kept toying with the thought that the grass near the river seemed to be greener than elsewhere and that his mother must be mistaken about the tiger. Finally, his curiosity and desire for greener grass led him near the river bank. After grazing for some time on the luscious grass, he scampered down to

the water for a drink.

Suddenly he heard a gruff voice saying, “What are you doing, drinking from my river and muddying my water?” The disobedient lamb began excusing himself, but the tiger came closer, saying “I'm going to kill and eat you.” As the tiger sprang toward the helpless lamb, the mother sheep ran between them, taking the death-dealing blows of claws and fangs in her own body. Thus, the disobedient lamb was spared and scampered up the river bank to safety.

It was Christ's willingness to lay down his life that has brought us salvation and life.

Cornerstone

David Livingstone once wisely remarked: He is the greatest master I have ever known. If there is anyone greater, I do not know him. Jesus Christ is the only master supremely worth serving. He is the only ideal that never loses its inspiration. He is the only friend whose friendship meets every demand. He is the only

“Anything that one imagines of God apart from Christ is useless thinking and vain idolatry.”

Savior who can save the uttermost. We go forth in His name, in His power, and in His Spirit to serve Him.

God putting His arms around our neck

A Sunday school superintendent read this text. "Who can tell me what a yoke is?" he asked.

"Something they put on the necks of animals," answered a ten year-old girl.

"Then," asked the leader, "what is God's yoke?"

There was silence until a four-year-old raised his hand and said, "God, putting His arms around our neck."

The Oriental shepherd was always ahead of his sheep. He was down in front. Any attack upon the sheep had to take him into account. Now our God is down in front. He is in the tomorrows. (F. B. Meyer)

Love came down (a Christmas parable)

A man is climbing a mountain, at the top of which he hopes to find God. By ascending the heights, the

seeker expects to leave all the cares and miseries of life behind in the valley. But while he climbs, God is coming down the mountain into the toil and grief. In the mists of the mountain God and the man pass one another. When the man reaches the mountaintop, he will find nothing. God is not there. What then will he do? He knows the climbing was a mistake, but in agony of that recognition, will he fall down and despair? Or will he turn to retrace his path through the mists and into the valley to where God has gone seeking him?

Love came down at Christmas, but only a few perceived its coming.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther once said, "Anything that one imagines of God apart from Christ is only useless thinking and vain idolatry." **E**

Henry Feyerabend is the speaker-director of It Is Written for Canada.

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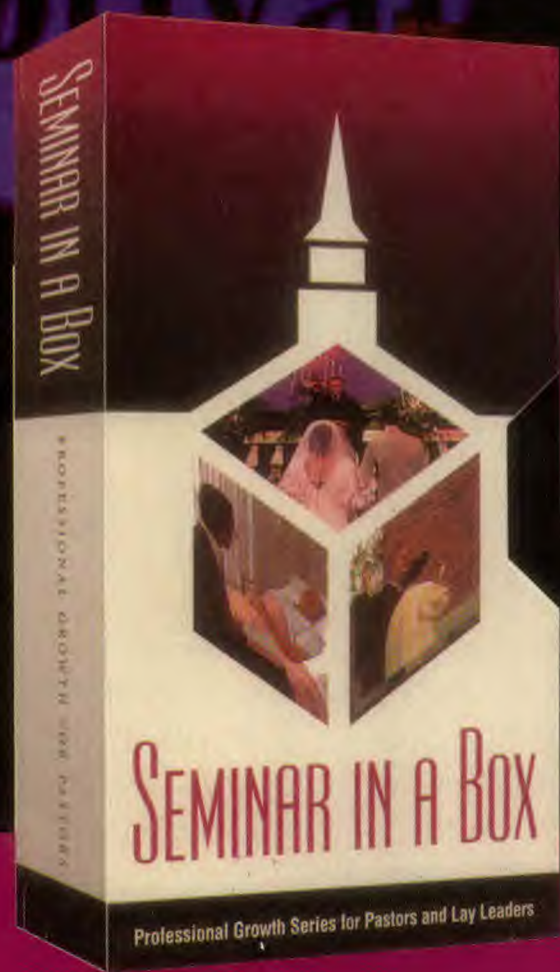
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