



ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 6 No. 3

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INVOLVED!**

**GOD NEEDS
YOUR BRAIN!**

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“He Was Glad”

Joel Sarli



Research reveals that the Seventh-day Adventist Church on average is losing about 40 percent of its yearly growth. This means that for every 100 people who join the Adventist Church, 40 go out during that same period of time.

Can an elder help in closing what Elder Cleveland called “the back door”? What can an elder do to help prevent new members from falling away?

As leaders of local congregations, we need to have the feeling a father has for his family. He cares for the well being of every single one. And is concerned with the ones who are his responsibility.

Consider the significant statement made by Dwight L. Moody in relation to Acts 11:21-24. This scripture speaks of a great work being done in Antioch. A great number believed and turned to the Lord. When the Church of Jerusalem heard about of these things, they sent Barnabas to visit the Church at Antioch. When Barnabas arrived and saw all that had been done, he “was glad, because he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” Mr. Moody points out, “It goes without saying that Barnabas must have been a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, for he was able to rejoice in another man’s success.” In other words, it takes an infilling of the Holy Spirit for a leader in the gospel ministry to see great numbers turn to the Lord, and be truly glad when this is the result of another person’s labor.

Barnabas was happy in upholding the work of another worker, and did his best to conserve what was gained. In studying the example of Barnabas, we learn that a newly elected elder can rejoice in continuing the work started by a fellow elder who just left that position.

Once an elder told me his experience of start-

ing some evangelistic meetings which, because of a call to another city, he was not able to complete. However, before he left, he gave his successor the names of about fifty interested people. But later he was saddened to learn that the local leaders in that church had paid no attention to these interested people. Because of lack of continuity, they were lost to the message.

Our Lord and Master takes a special interest in these “little ones” or “babes in truth,” and launches a strong indictment against those who fail to care for them. In Matthew 18:6 we read, “Who shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” It seems that this text refers to new converts, as it speaks of the “little ones which believe in Me.”

If we are in any way responsible for the falling away of any of these “little ones,” Christ is very displeased with us. Seldom in all His utterances does the meek and lowly Savior use words that expresses such tremendous concern for a single, struggling soul as He does on this occasion. What stronger language could He possibly employ than to say it is better for the offender to have a millstone hanged around his neck, and be drowned in the depth of the sea?

These words of Christ should cause every one of us, elders as well as other leaders in His Church, to pause and seriously consider our responsibility when there is the slightest temptation to allow any new convert to fall away from the faith because of our neglect.

It would be profitable for us to reflect often on the example left to us by Barnabas in this important matter. He was “glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

■

Sacred and Secular

Harold B. Hannum

The Bible teaches clearly that there is a distinction or difference between the sacred and the secular. Many examples might be cited, but a few will illustrate our statement: the days of the week and the Sabbath, Exodus 20:8-11; 31:14, 15; 35:2; the garments of the priest, Exodus 29:29; the tabernacle, Exodus 40:9, 10; the house of God, Psalm 93:5; 11:4; Habakkuk 2:20. There are certain things that God has declared to be holy, and we are instructed to recognize this distinction in our attitudes and our relation to these things.

One of the sins of Israel was their neglect to recognize this difference between the holy and the common. Many of the problems of today arise from this gradual mixing of the common and the holy to such an extent that some say there is no difference, that everything is holy if we so consider it. Some treat the Sabbath as if it were just another day of the week. There is a shockingly common treatment today of many things that traditionally were considered sacred and holy. The marriage relation, the house of worship, the services of religion, the tithe, and many other once-revered things have lost their significance for many. The dress and deportment of some who come to worship in the house of God indicate that they think lightly of the real meaning of holiness, reverence, and the sacred nature of God and our approach to God.

This secularization can be heard in some of the styles of music that have crept into the church. We do not maintain that music or the elements of music are intrinsically secular or sacred or that some instruments are secular and some holy. The Bible does not make any such claim. And there are many cultures in the world where altogether different music has been developed from that which we know in the European or Western culture. This is not the point at issue. No matter what the culture or style, there should be a distinction between that which is considered sacred or religious, and that which is common or secular. This is recognized in many cultures throughout the world.

In the music of the European tradition there have developed certain techniques that characterize the se-

rious or the "classical" music as distinguished from popular styles. The music of Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Liszt, Mozart, Haydn, and composers in this tradition is played by symphony orchestras and musicians in a style that is clearly recognized by competent individuals as belonging to this music. The music of this group of composers is intended to be performed within definite style characteristics. The same music performed by a jazz combo or a rock combo would be recognized by listeners as not in the tradition that is appropriate to this kind of music.

There is another class of styles that is used by the entertainment industry. It goes by various names such as jazz, popular music, rock 'n' roll, boogie-woogie, ragtime, and blues. These various styles have one thing in common—they are popular expressions of different segments of the population, and many of them belong in the dance hall or in theatrical entertainment rather than in serious or "classical" music. One thing is true of these styles—they have all been considered secular in nature and therefore have not until recently been used for religious music in sacred services. There is a serious question among many whether or not these styles should be accepted for use as sacred music. These are the kinds of music to which we refer as secular styles. We will not enter into the question of whether any of this music is acceptable for our secular enjoyment. We will confine our discussion to the use of this music in religious services and in the cause of evangelism.

Some believe that any music that has religious words should be considered religious music. For individuals whose life-style has included jazz, rock n' roll, and this type of music, it may be that this music with religious words may have a religious appeal. Some evangelistic groups seek to reach groups with the popular music of the day. But to those whose background has included the music of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms, and this style of music, it is difficult to have any religious associations with music that is used chiefly for the theater, the dance, the night club, and secular entertainment, often of a questionable kind. An individual who has heard the symphonies of

Beethoven, the piano music of Chopin and Schumann, the songs of Schubert, and the music of Brahms, Vaughan Williams, and others, will not be easily persuaded that the theatrical and popular idiom is appropriate for religious use.

This is not necessarily due to a reactionary conservatism, or an unwillingness to accept new musical language. Some of the greatest religious music was written by composers such as Palestrina, Handel, Bach, Des Prez, Byrd, to name a few. Simply because it is new does not make new or contemporary music surpass the great religious music of the past. On the other hand, we need excellent music for today in contemporary styles. But it is not necessary for new religious music to borrow the contemporary secular styles. There must be a clear distinction maintained.

One need not quibble over the fact that some secular music of the past has been arranged and adapted as religious music today. This music has lost its secular associations and now has the characteristics of religious music. One should be more concerned over the present associations of any music contemplated for religious use.

To be specific let us point out some of the secular styles that we believe should not be used in our sacred music.

1. *Technical devices that are borrowed from the theater.* The kind of organ known as the theater organ produces tonal effects and qualities that do not belong in the church. The excessive tremolo, glissando or gliding effects, peculiar tone qualities, too-prominent rhythmic effects, these are natural effects on the theater organ.

2. *Sentimentalism.* Sentimentality is an emphasis on emotion for the sake of emotion. It is excessive emotion. It is insincere expression. It is adding sweetness and luscious effects where they become overly emphasized. Certain types of melody and harmony will have this effect. The crooning of the popular singer is a good example.

3. *The untrained vocal tone.* This is borrowed from the popular way of singing folk songs. It shows a lack of good voice training. Sometimes it becomes unpleasantly raucous. Instead of depending on beautiful vocal

tone, the singer depends on facial expressions, sometimes quite distorted.

4. *Embellishments.* Cheap, trivial types of embellishments and elaboration in piano and organ playing display a lack of good musical taste. Highly decorated piano playing with runs, scales, arpeggios, and other hackneyed devices do not appeal to good musical taste. There is a time and a place for proper embellishments, but it takes one with good artistic taste to know when and how much to use these devices.

5. *Lack of simplicity, directness, and unadorned beauty of music.* Great music is not adorned with needless effects and musical devices to make a showy impression. Excessive elaboration often hides a poverty of real musical value.

Characteristics that good religious music of today will have are:

A. *Beauty of tone, both vocal and instrumental.* Artists work for years to obtain a beautiful piano tone, or a beautiful quality in the singing voice. The beauty of the violin tone of Heifetz was not obtained in a day, but is the result of years of careful and intelligent practice. We should expect no less in the beauty

of tone for religious music.

B. *The melodies should have originality, strength, and beauty, instead of sentimental, trite, and obvious emotionalism.* A study of the melodies of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and others will show what beautiful melodies are like. Contemporary religious music should also have melodies of beauty and emotion.

C. *Rhythm that is strong and intrinsic to the music, rather than a dominating and hypnotic force that is imposed on the music to make it appeal to the untrained ear.* The rhythm should arise from the nature of the melody and the harmony. It should not be added simply to make a strong physical appeal. Rhythm is most elemental in physical appeal, and it is easily debased, making an appeal to the basest passions. The rhythm of sacred music will be refined in character.

D. *Skillful technical performance should characterize all religious music.* No slipshod, careless performance without adequate preparation should be allowed. Sacred music needs to be performed as carefully and

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is even more insidious and powerful
in the realm of the emotions.*

beautifully as secular music. It should not depend upon religious emotion to make it acceptable. The fact that it pertains to sacred subjects does not excuse it from meeting exacting technical standards.

We recognize the attack that Satan has made on the Sabbath and the significance of the Sabbath as a recognition of the true God. The attack of Satan in these last days is even more insidious and powerful in the realm of the emotions. He is using such words as love and peace to cover up a breaking down of principles that are as eternal as God Himself. By weakening the distinction between the sacred and the common in the field of music, which deals strongly with our emotional nature, Satan can eventually weaken our respect for other Biblical truths. We should be aware of this and seek to make our musical offering as pure and

above reproach as we are capable of doing.

It is not necessary to make our music either difficult or unattractive to attain this goal. But it may mean that we will have to give up some of our cherished physical delights in certain types of music in order to offer a more perfect offering of sacred music. Just as one must sometimes learn to like foods that at first are not so attractive to the taste, so in music one may have to learn to like the simple, the beautiful music that is not tainted with the world and the theater, but which with prove in the end to be more beautiful than anything the world has to offer. Let us not compromise with the world in our sacred music. E

Harold B. Hannum was professor of music at La Sierra University when he wrote this article

F E E D I N G L A M B S



Caring for the Lambs

V. W. Becker

When Jesus said, "You must let little children come to me, and you must never prevent their coming," (Luke 18:16—Phillips), He emphasized an important truth which was never to be forgotten. He did not want His followers to become so engrossed in their many responsibilities that they would forget the children. He even suggested that if one offends or leads astray a little child who believes in Him, he would be better off thrown into the sea with a millstone around his neck. Punishment for neglecting the children is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom (Lam. 4:6).

A man was playing with his boy. The exercise was a bit strenuous, and someone suggested that he might get a backache after working so hard all day. He replied that he preferred to have a backache than a heartache later on. Homes and churches will be heartbroken if they neglect their youth.

We hear the expression "boys will be boys," but

there is more to it than that. Boys will be men. If these lads and lassies are properly guided now, they will carry high the banner we once unfurled. Young Bobby of 2000 will be Robert of 2010. He may become a college president, a doctor, an evangelist, or the president of a conference.

What can we do for the boys and girls? We can live the right example before them, we can form close friendships with them, we can be sympathetic with them in their joys and in their sorrows, we can be certain that they attend a Christian school, and we can put them to work for Christ.

There is a lot we can do for the boys and girls if we begin soon enough.

Charles Spurgeon was right when he said, "Building boys is better than mending men." E

V. W. Becker, Secretary, Department of Education, Southern Union Conference

Making Your Sermons Live

Orley M. Berg

A great hazard in preaching is that the one to deliver the message may become self-sufficient, feeling that once the sermon is prepared he or she can relax in the assurance that it will accomplish its purpose. The sermon may be well developed with a proper outline, illustrations, and content, but to assume that because of these factors it will arrest the attention and meet the needs of the people is a tragic misconception. Beyond the preparation is the delivery. To be effective in its delivery the sermon must live in the mind and heart of the speaker and be proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must never depend upon the sermon itself, no matter how masterly the preparation. The best sermon, of itself, may be as dry as the valley of dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel 37. No doubt every preacher has had experiences when his best-prepared sermons have seemed most ineffective. As in Ezekiel's vision, the dry bones need to be clothed with the Holy Spirit. It is this that makes them live.

There are certain assets that one may possess that could be an advantage in his work for the Lord. These would include a good education, a keen intellect, special talents, the ability to speak well, even good looks and a pleasing personality. It is equally true, however, that if these qualities could increase one's usefulness, they may also become his greatest handicaps. The danger is that one will be led to depend on these advantages for success, thus feeling less and less dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

According to the Scriptures there are certain categories of persons who are not going to reach heaven in large numbers. The odds are against them. Jesus put the rich in this category. Not because they are wealthy, but because they permit their wealth to stand between them and their salvation.

Paul declares that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). The reason for this is that the wise trust in their own wisdom, the mighty in their own might, the noble in their nobility. This being so, God has chosen the foolish, weak, and base things of the world "that no

flesh should glory in his presence" (verse 29).

This is not to discount the importance of a good education. God places no premium on ignorance. This is not to minimize the advantages of special gifts or talents one may possess. These should be improved upon. But it does show up the danger of permitting these to become a substitute for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life.

Jeremiah declares, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord" (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Spiritual Leadership

The most important qualification of the one who stands before the people as a leader is his own intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Above all, he must be a spiritual leader, and the message he bears from the pulpit must come from a deep sense of His own unworthiness and a recognition of his dependence upon the Holy Spirit for its effectiveness. Otherwise, no matter how clever the sermon or how personable the speaker or how fluent his delivery, it will be nothing more than dry bones to the hearers.

A man may spend all week working in a bank, handling money and figures, but this of itself does not qualify him to be the treasurer of the church. Another may have a degree from the conservatory of music and have a thorough understanding of the musical art, but this alone will not qualify that person to lead the church choir or to be the church soloist. Even so, another may be very successful in his business or professional career, and understand the processes of leadership and management, but all of this of itself will not qualify that person to be the local elder of the church.

Ellen White says: "The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 250.

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The Secret to Spiritual Renewal

I. Introduction

It is God's will for the church to be renewed and transformed. Is there a secret to renewal? Two truths answer this question.

II. Yield yourself to God

The key word to spiritual renewal in the Christian life is "yield." It is the same word translated "present" in Romans 12:1. It is the word that is used to describe the "presenting" of an offering in the sacrificial system in the temple. It is an act of worship whereby we personally acknowledge that we belong to God. This act is the secret of renewal of life. Notice three things about this act.

A. *It is a realistic act.*

1. It is a definite act. In Romans 6 the second use of the word *yield* according to the original language. There must be a time in my life when I present myself to God and consider my whole life belongs to Him.
2. It is a transfer of my life to Him.
3. It is an act of the will.
4. It is a surrender.
5. It is an act of obedience.

B. *It is a reasonable act.* This is what Romans 12:1 indicates. The lost person has only one nature, "the old man." But then something happens when a person is born again. A new life comes in, Christ's life, in the person of the Holy Spirit. The new believer now has a new nature. The self-life and the Christ-life. These are enemies and they struggle for full control of one's life. How we choose—this is the secret to victory!

C. *It is a resisted act.* The flesh resists the Holy Spirit in us (Gal. 5:16-26). Surrender becomes the key to victory. What is it that stands between you and renewal? Jesus must be Lord of our lives!

III. Yield your members unto God

The word "members" refers to the parts of your body, thus the areas of our lives. We are to yield ourselves and our members to God. This makes Romans 12:1 clearer, where it says "present your bodies." Present them to God!

- A. Yield your eyes to God.
- B. Yield your ears to God.
- C. Yield your speech to God (see Col. 4:6).
- D. Yield your mind to God.
- E. Yield your hands to God.
- F. Yield your feet to God.
- G. Yield your knees to God. This represents how you worship.
- H. Yield your lungs to God. This involves what you breathe and take into your body.
- I. Yield your stomach to God.
- J. Yield your face to God. This speaks of your countenance, whether sad or cheerful.

IV. Conclusion

This is the secret then. Yield yourself and your members to God. Build an altar and place yourself and the areas of your life before God.

V. Quotations

Giving to God of the Best: Let us give up our work, our plans, ourselves, our lives, our loved ones, our influence, our all, right into God's hand; and then, when we have given all to Him, there will be nothing left for us to be troubled about.—Hudson Taylor.

Ellen G. White quotations:

The Secret to Renewal: "Through the Holy Spirit the character is transformed and the mind and will of the human agent are brought into perfect conformity to the divine will."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 162.

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' This is a self-denying way. And when you think that the way is too strait, that there is too much self-denial in this narrow path; when you say, How hard to give up all, ask yourselves the question, What did Christ give up for me? This question puts anything that we may call self-denial in the shade."—*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:240. E

Light and Wisdom from the Wise Men

I. Introduction

- A. *There was a scurry in heaven.* There was a commotion caused by the fact that the Christ was coming for His humiliation. God sent an angel to announce Jesus' birth. God sent an angel to speak to Mary; He sent an angel to speak to Joseph. God also had intervened through the parents of John the Baptist. God sent an angel to shepherds to tell them of this marvelous event. God even sent an angelic choir to announce the glory of the birth. During this great commotion in heaven, God decided to speak to some Gentile men. The Bible does not tell us who they were. They may have been Persians. These men were students of the stars. They probably were some of the wisest men of their time. They had discovered that events could be known by studying the Creation of God.
- B. *If we will stay with the truth of God, we have a marvelous revelation.* Some theologians tell us that when Paul went on his first missionary journey, or when Peter went to Cornelius to preach, the first Gentiles were converted to Christianity; but that is not quite accurate. The first Gentile converts were these Wise Men who came when Christ was born. They worshiped Him. There are two lessons for us to learn. I would like for us to gather light from the star and wisdom from the wise men.

II. The Light of the Star

- A. *It was an unusual creation.* The star may have been a comet, as many have claimed. It may have been a special creation. Whatever it was, it revealed to the Magi that the Jewish Messiah was born. God had told Israel to be ready for the coming of the Messiah. They were ready neither to receive Him nor to share His message, so God revealed the coming of the Messiah through science. If

people do not do His will, He uses other people.

- B. *It was a leading light.* This star led to Christ. It told the Magi that the Christ had been born. First they went to Jerusalem. Then as they proceeded toward Bethlehem, the star appeared, leading the way to the Christ. We ought to be like that star leading people to Christ, always showing the way to Him. The star became a witness. It showed the wise men that the Messiah was born. Then it led them to the Messiah. That is the kind of light the church must have in the world today.

III. The Wisdom of the Wise Men

- A. *God's message is revealed in nature.* God spoke loudly through nature to those ancient scientists.
- B. *God's message is in His Word.* He reveals Himself in a general way in nature, but for details, one must turn to God's Word. That is exactly what these Wise Men did.
- C. *They persisted.* When the men saw His star, they wanted to know Him; so they traveled across the desert. They went through wild, rugged country filled not only with physical hardship but also with bands of robbers. They journeyed by camel or on foot. They persisted in their search. They were not discouraged when they got to Jerusalem and found uninterested people. Many today are discouraged by lesser things in their search for Christ.
- D. *They rejoiced.* As they traveled, the Wise Men rejoiced. We could return to a rejoicing search for God!. We ought to rejoice as we come into the presence of God.
- E. *They worshiped.* They finally arrived at the house where Jesus was. They came to Jesus. They did not hesitate; they immediately came to Him and fell down before Him and worshiped Him. They had found the revelation of God.

IV. Conclusion

They worshiped Him. Theirs was not curiosity gratified, but devotion exercised. We, too, must

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The Ministry of The Elder

You may be reading this because you have been asked to serve your local church as an elder. Or perhaps you serve on a church nominating committee and are wondering what an elder is expected to do. In either case, if you understand the church as the body of Christ, and understand the call to ministry as experienced by each member, this will help you see the role the elder fills within a local church.

Bible Principles

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship, continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as "his body, the fullness of him who filleth every thing in every way." (Eph. 1:22)

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church. Thus, the church is a creation of the Spirit.

The symbol of water baptism marks our entrance into the body of Christ and also marks the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by a new disciple. "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of the water and the Spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) The Holy Spirit is the vital life force of the church. When you come to Christ, you are prepared by the Holy Spirit, who has already led you to repentance, for service.

When a church serves the world it is an expression of the love of Christ to the world. It is the body of Christ serving the world's needs and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation.

Thus the church is a servant body. It was created for service. It serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to

minister for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. An elder, like any other church officer, is a ministering servant of God. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry (Eph. 4:11, 12).

It was during the middle ages that the clergy became distinct from other members as a superior element in the church. The biblical concept of laity includes all believers as ministers in the body. In actuality, however, the church today still has a great distance to go before effectively applying this concept. You should view the work of an elder as a ministry to which God calls people; it is His will operating in their life.

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God's character, and spiritual gifts. An elder is equipped for ministry by the gifts received from the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to make his or her ministry effective and build up the body of Christ.

The Role of the Elder

A local elder is an undershepherd for the church. The elder works in close relationship with the pastor and reports to the pastor and church board. He or she is a member of the church board and is usually assigned to one or more planning groups, such as an evangelism council, worship committee, Sabbath School council, or youth ministry committee. As an extension of the pastor, an elder should be open to his counsel, sensitive to the pastor's vision for the church, teachable, and ready to communicate with him. The relationship between pastor and elders can be built up by regular weekly or monthly meetings that focus on spiritual and personal growth and the needs of the congregation.

Time Commitment

All these functions may cause you to wonder just how much time it takes to be a local elder! There obviously should be enough time committed for involvement in outreach ministries, visitation, and ad-

ministration of the church. But an elder needs to be a person who can manage his time wisely and balance priorities. Generally two to four hours a week represent an appropriate commitment of time for ministry. Any elder will want to maintain enough time for personal spiritual growth, family, and personal recreation in order to maintain a balanced Christian lifestyle. It is possible to be so busy in the service of the Lord that one's own spirituality suffers! At the same time, to give less than two to four hours of ministry per week would not represent a sincere commitment to the Lord in ministry.

Appropriate Spiritual Gifts

It will be helpful to review the spiritual gifts that can be employed. They include exhortation, pastor/shepherd, administration, leadership, hospitality, and extraordinary faith.

1. *Exhortation* is a special ability God gives some to bring encouragement and comfort to others. It is a helping and healing ministry. The literal meaning of the Greek word translated exhortation is "to call to one's side." In Acts 16:40 and 20:1 Paul is spoken of as giving encouragement to the churches. This ministry may be exercised with the bereaved, lonely, or discouraged. It is also employed in the spiritual counseling brought to persons in the process of normal church visitation.

2. The gift of *pastor/shepherd* is the ability to carry a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers and act as a shepherd, overseer, protector, and guide to the church. (I Peter 5:1-5) "When he ascended on high, he . . . gave gifts unto men . . . , some to be pastors" (Eph. 4:8-11). You may be surprised to realize that the professional pastor is not the only member of the church with this gift. Any church has a number of members who can employ the spiritual gift of pastor/shepherd voluntarily in the feeding, attending and nurturing of people.

3. *Administration* is referred to as a spiritual gift in I Cor. 12:28. The Greek word for administration describes the service of directing or steering something. In Revelation 18:17 and Acts 27:11 the word is used to describe a ship master. An administrator guides the church in its progress toward its destination. The members of the church trust a person with administrative gifts to serve the church with love and selflessness while helping it accomplish its goals.

4. *Leadership* describes the ability to (1) help a congregation set goals in accordance with the purpose of God for the church, and (2) communicate those goals to others in such a way that they harmoniously work together to accomplish them to the glory of God. Romans 12:8 speaks of the spiritual gift of leadership, stating that in his ministry a leader should exercise diligence and faith.

5. *Hospitality* is an ability to provide an open house and a warm feeling to people. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (I Peter 4:9,10). An elder should be quick to offer hospitality, not only to members of the church but to visitors and community people as well.

6. *Extraordinary faith* provides an elder with confidence in discerning God's will. The special gift of faith is a specific perception of God's will in a particular situation and extraordinary confidence that God will act on behalf of the church.

Activities and Events

You may already be a church elder and feel somewhat underused. What further service can an experienced elder do to contribute to the church? A good place to start is to ask another elder or a deacon or deaconess to accompany you as you visit members of the church on a regular basis. Call ahead for an appointment to visit the members in their home. Listen to the background of their life story and conversion, read scripture with them, and pray for them. It is amazing what such a spiritual visit can do!

Another contribution you can make involves giving attention to the worship service of your church. Read books on worship. Rather than criticizing the staleness that may exist in your current worship service, together think creatively about what you could do. Consider what activities would develop an atmosphere of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, affirmation, and fellowship in your worship service. Perhaps you can work on an "experimental" plan to bring improvement in the worship service. You may be surprised to discover how eager others, especially your pastor, are to improve the worship service.

Every church has a number of inactive members. An elder could begin to visit these people. You may hear a great deal of anger and bitterness expressed but, remember, their anger is at the church and not at you

personally. These may be people who are hurting from some past experience in the church. By carefully listening, asking for forgiveness for the entire church, and encouraging these people, a great deal of good can be done. As long as you maintain the qualities of Christ, and simply listen, you will not hurt the person's experience. Your friendship and caring may help the person return to an active relationship with Jesus and participation in the church.

An elder also can contribute by visiting non-members who have some interest in the church. Make a visit to the non-members in your community who have relatives in the Adventist Church. Check for names of people who may have visited the church or attended an evangelistic activity in the past year. Visit these people and invite them to return. With some training, you can learn to discern interests for Bible studies. Not all elders have the gifts of evangelism and teaching, however, so you may wish to invite someone else to go with you to lead out in the Bible study.

Training

The Holy Spirit equips a Christian disciple by bestowing spiritual gifts to accomplish ministry. But those gifts need to be developed. An elder needs to be aware of the training resources available and make use of them. The first such resource is the pastor. God places a pastor within the church to train and develop its members for ministry. The local pastor in many cases will train elders for visitation, personal Bible study, administration, and worship leadership in the context of ministry. Going two-by-two with your pastor will develop your gifts for ministry as an elder. The fellowship with your pastor while visiting members, giving Bible studies, and working on church projects together is irreplaceable.

Your conference probably has a training program established for elders which includes instruction in worship planning, preaching, and church administration. God has called you to minister and provided gifts to you, but your commitment to that call should include attendance at events designed to develop your gifts for His service.

There are many training seminars that offer help to an elder. Perhaps the best known is the "Calling and Caring Ministry Seminar" (Lab I). Many Adventist pastors are equipped to conduct this seminar, or your conference office can help you enroll for such training.

It is an experience that will dramatically improve your skills as a listener and a visitor. This seminar is helpful not only in working with active members, but in caring for the inactive church member as well. This training is a must for every elder.

Resource Materials

You may wish to do some further reading regarding the work of the elder. If you are asked to preach—and many elders are—you may want to get some help in that area. Either of the following books would be helpful to an elder who preaches: *Preaching to the Times* by Charles E. Bradford; *Successful Lay Preaching* by Floyd Bresse. All elders should enhance their knowledge regarding administration and leadership. Two good recommendations are *Perils of Power*, by Richard Exley, and *So You want to be a Leader*, written by our beloved former General Conference President, Robert Pierson. Of course you cannot forget *Elder's Digest*, *Elder's Handbooks*, and *Elder's Guide*, excellent tools that help elders to be very effective in their function.

The Caring Church Strategy

The ministry of the elder is vital to accomplish the mission of your local church.

A balanced church program is just as important as any of the individual offices or functions of the church. Your ministry is given meaning and effectiveness as you fit into the overall mission that Christ has for your congregation. The Holy Spirit calls you to teamwork and cooperation with the other leaders in your church, according to a united plan of action.

What are the essential elements of a healthy local church? There are at least four fundamental activities that must be present in any church for it to be successful:

1. *Reaching the community.* Healthy churches discover the kinds of people who live in their area and understand the needs of the people, so that they can provide activities designed to meet these needs and create a strong public awareness of the church.

2. *Winning people to Christ.* Healthy churches cooperate with the Holy Spirit in establishing meaningful relationships with those attracted to Christ, provide opportunities for them to become acquainted with His Word and His fellowship, and challenge them to be-

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The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses

You may be reading this because you have been asked to serve your local church as a deacon or deaconess. Or perhaps you serve on a church nominating committee and are wondering what a deacon or deaconess is expected to do. In either case, if you understand the church as the body of Christ, and understand the call to ministry as experienced by each member, this will help you see the role the deacon and deaconess fill within a local church.

Bible Principles

As Jesus gives insight into the nature of His Church using the symbol of the body in 1 Corinthians 12, so it is that when we join the Church we become “members” of the body of Christ and are equipped for specific functions by the Holy Spirit. God wills that the various “body parts” (members) function effectively toward the common goal of the Church; making disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is an erroneous concept that the clergy have a “sacred calling” and the general membership only a “secular calling.” This concept impedes the progress of the church by leading some to believe their contributions are less important. In fact, the New Testament teaches that all members of the body of Christ are ministers of Jesus Christ. There are necessary differences in function, but the status of all leaders is the same.

You have been called to function as a deacon or deaconess in your congregation. The God who calls is able to sustain you as you cooperate with Him.

While in many instances the work of the deacon and deaconess overlap, distinctions will be described. Though deacons have traditionally been men and deaconesses have been women, in some Adventist churches today both men and women serve in both roles.

The Role of the Deacon & Deaconess

Deacons and deaconesses are concerned with the material needs of the congregation, including the comfort of worshippers; security and upkeep of church

property; ministry to the sick, shut-ins, widows, and orphans; and specific responsibilities during the Communion Service and Baptismal Ceremony.

The head deacon and head deaconess supervise the work of the two groups and report to the church board. The deacons and deaconesses, as a team ministry, report to the head deacon or head deaconess.

Time Commitment

Including Sabbath duty, most deacons and deaconesses will need to plan on two or three hours per week to carry out their duties. Another one to four hours a month are needed for visitation and special projects. Head deacons and deaconesses will need to invest more time.

Appropriate Spiritual Gifts

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God’s character, and spiritual gifts. While no one should feel that they must exhibit all of the spiritual gifts mentioned here to be considered qualified to perform the ministry of a deacon or deaconess, these gifts are related and helpful:

Helpfulness or Service: The ability to unselfishly meet the needs of others through practical help. The exercise of this gift often assists people with a gift of teaching or evangelism and releases them to minister the Word of God.

Administration: The ability to organize and manage, working with and through others to achieve goals.

Hospitality: The capacity to provide an open house and graciousness to those in need of food, lodging or fellowship, so that guests are refreshed both physically and spiritually.

Mercy: The capacity to feel sympathy with those in need (especially those who are suffering and miserable), and to manifest this sympathy in some practical way with a cheerful spirit so as to encourage and uplift the downhearted.

Activities and Events

The deacon and deaconess ministry is a particularly effective way to train younger members in your congregation for wider church responsibility. As they team with individuals who have carried out the duties of deacon and deaconess in the past, the church continues to be enriched with the experience and tradition of what has gone before while at the same time it is imbued with the vigor and freshness of the young.

The deacon and deaconess ministry helps to bring growth to the congregation by providing a clean, orderly, attractive and warm, personable atmosphere in and on church property, as well as helping to visit the members and care for their practical needs. This ministry exerts a powerful influence on individuals making decisions for Christ and His church.

This ministry may take you to the homes of sick members or shut-ins to help with housework or the children, or to bring encouragement by your fellowship.

Maybe there are senior citizens in your church family who need small home improvements done that you can care for or arrange to have done.

The "widows" in the early Christian church were mentioned as needing special help and attention. And this ministry is still needed for those who are left alone and need the love and care of the church family. But our churches today have another group who need special attention and care. They are the individuals who are struggling in one-parent households who need the support of their church family to include them in Sabbath afternoon activities or the sharing of hobby skills and friendship during the week.

The organization and leadership of a "work bee" at the church is another service you can perform. Your tools and experience will be needed, and if you are not skillful with mechanical things, your enthusiasm and presence will help make the event successful.

Not only is there a need for the physical plant of the church to be kept in repair, but the finer elements of interior decorating will need to have attention from this group. Arranging for flowers each week and over-

seeing the special effects needed for various programs and events is a role you might fill.

Many congregations have the custom of "sitting with" and helping those who are bereaved. Your ministry to individuals in the congregation will not only reflect the love of the church family for them, but will offer helping hands to lighten the burdens they carry.

The deacons have also, as a general rule, been responsible for receiving the church offering and working with the treasurer to guarantee the security and proper handing of the money on Sabbath. Churches are, however, free to work out the most appropriate procedure to suit the size of their congregation and the personnel available.

How to Plan

In order to have an organized ministry that runs smoothly, it is essential that the deacons and deaconesses in a congregation meet together in planning

sessions. This is also an opportunity to clarify the understandings of individuals and develop agreement about specific assignments. Many congregations hold monthly or quarterly meetings of a Board of Deacons and a Board of Deaconesses for this purpose; small churches may have only one meeting a year. Your church

may want to consider the plan of having a yearly Sunday morning prayer breakfast soon after the church elections. At this event new workers can be introduced, the pastor can bring a spiritual message, visitation teams can be formed, a schedule devised, and a "walk-through" of church property and equipment completed.

In planning for specific events, decide what needs to be done to make the event successful. Determine the order of preparations and write these items on a calendar. Assign a person to be responsible for seeing that each task is carried out and to report to the group. Follow this procedure through to the conclusion of the event.

In planning the weekly duty schedule, the deacons and deaconesses should agree on the various tasks to be performed. A team can be established, correspond-

The New Testament teaches that all members of the body of Christ are ministers of Jesus Christ. There are necessary differences in function, but the status of all leaders is the same.

ing with the number of tasks to be performed, and deacons and deaconesses divided into teams. Each team serves in a regular rotation every four to six weeks, on a schedule which should be agreed upon by the persons involved. With the head deacon and head deaconess serving as general coordinators, team leaders can be selected for each Sabbath.

Communion Helps

One of the responsibilities of the deaconesses is to prepare the grape juice and unleavened bread used in Communion. See sidebar for a recipe that can be used for baking unleavened bread.

Suitable, unfermented grape juice can be purchased in most grocery stores. It should be of the highest quality available, and under normal circumstances it should not be diluted.

It is also the responsibility of the deacons and deaconesses to care for the bread and grape juice after the Communion Service is over. Often the pastor or elders will need a small portion to take to shut-ins so they can have the communion experience in their homes. Any grape juice remaining from that which was blessed is to be poured out. Any bread remaining of that which was blessed should be burned.

The Caring Church Strategy

The ministry of the deacon and deaconess is vital to accomplish the mission of your local church.

A balanced church program is just as important as any of the individual offices or functions of the church. Your ministry is given meaning and effectiveness as you fit into the overall mission that Christ has for your congregation. The Holy Spirit calls you to teamwork and cooperation with the other leaders in your church, according to a united plan of action.

What are the essential elements of a healthy local church? There are at least four fundamental activities that must be present in any Adventist church for it to be successful:

1. *Reaching the community.* Healthy churches discover the kinds of people who live in their area and understand the needs of the people, so that they can provide activities designed to meet these needs and create a strong public awareness of the church.

2. *Winning people to Christ.* Healthy churches cooperate with the Holy Spirit in establishing meaningful relationships with those attracted to Christ, provide

Communion Bread

1 cup finely-ground flour (preferably whole grain)

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 Tablespoons cold water

1/4 cup olive or other vegetable oil

Sift flour and salt together. Pour the water into the oil. Add to the dry ingredients and mix with a fork until all the flour is dampened.

Roll out between two sheets of waxed paper to the thickness of thick pie pastry. Place on an ungreased, floured baking sheet. Mark off into bite-sized squares with a knife, being careful to prick each square to prevent blisters during baking.

Bake at 450° for approximately 10 minutes. Watch carefully and do not brown.

Makes bread for about 50

opportunities for them to become acquainted with His Word and His fellowship, and challenge them to become His disciples.

3. *Nurturing the members.* Healthy churches provide for the continuing spiritual growth of all their members through enthusiastic worship, interesting Bible study, supportive friendships, and opportunities for significant service.

4. *Inspiring leadership.* Healthy churches have pastoral and lay leaders that help the congregation to identify the needs in the church and the community, clarify goals, gather the necessary resources and implement effective action.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143.) **E**

(Reprinted from the NAD Church Ministries Manual, 1988.)

Pastor-Elder Relationships

W.A. Townend

The first leader of Israel on the march was God's minister. God planned it that way. And right down through Bible times the ministry was expected to lead the church.

Today we find a similar situation. The leaders of the General Conference are ordained ministers, as are almost all the committee members. Such is also the case on division, union, and local conference levels. God intends that the ministry shall lead.

In Moses' day, close alongside him one finds the elders. And most certainly elders were close to the ministry in the church that Christ founded and that His apostles later built up for Him.

Christ's true church has not changed. Today's elders associate with the pastors in our churches. They are an honorable group among us. They verily stand at the side of the ministry. Relationships affect work. The best work is usually done where the relations are the best. Poor work is often the by-product of poor relationships.

Five Important Questions

1. *What are the relationships between pastors and elders?* They are, first and foremost, brothers and sisters. Organizational relationships can never be properly worked out until the relationship of blood-bought brothers and sisters is understood. We are all brothers in Christ Jesus. That strengthens our relations. But, having Adam as our common father, we also are brothers and sisters in Adam. That could tend to weaken our relations, for we thus all have weaknesses and failings.

Brothers and sisters in Christ and brothers and sisters in Adam: to forget this is fatal. To remember the

spiritual relationship only and thus forget the carnal connection between us all can be almost as fatal. The reality of the situation is simply that as developing Christians we are all strong in Christ and weak in Adam. We must never forget that, either of ourselves or of our associates.

We come now to the tasks we do for God in the local church. We have three alternatives: dictatorship, confusion, or harmonious competency. Wise pastors and wise elders strive for the last-named state, harmonious competency. It is ever their goal, and this goal is frequently attained, but not by mere chance. There must be understanding. Remember, understanding is not a nebulous thing—it is real! It is there because the parties concerned went to the trouble of putting it there, and usually

when it is missing, it is missing because little, if any, intelligent, sustained effort has been made to bring about understanding.

Strained relations, when investigated, will frequently result in somebody's admitting something like this: "All along I had a question on that point." Doubtless we have all discovered this to be the case. Then let us pose a few questions on the relationships between church pastors and elders. Asking questions promptly at the right time may help to lessen the deadly peril of having them asked only in the gloomy echo of some wounded heart. When that happens, good relations are in grave danger.

2. *Because a church has a pastor, are the elders thereby relieved of the work of visiting members of the flock in their homes?*

No is the answer. But unplanned visiting will never accomplish a tithe of what planned visitation will do.

Relationships affect work. The best work is usually done where the relations are the best. Poor work is often the by-product of poor relationships.

This is particularly true in working for the backslider or near-backslider. It is always wise for elders to discuss their visiting plans with the pastor. Of course, unswerving loyalty must prevail on the occasion of every visit. Loyalty pays—all ways and always.

3. *Who should prepare the agenda for church board meetings—pastor or elder?*

Because the pastor is the ranking officer, you may be inclined to say that he should do it. Technically that may be correct. But our answer is—both pastor and elders. We have found that an elders' meeting, called by the pastor for the purpose of together building the board agenda, is a very good arrangement, which usually results in smooth-running and efficient board meetings.

4. *Who should convene church board and/or business meetings?*

Again you will probably say the pastor, for he is the ranking officer of the church. Naturally that is the correct procedure. But though it is obvious that the pastor should initiate the call for such meetings, it is

nevertheless desirable that, as a general practice, the dates and times for these gatherings be discussed in the elders' meeting. Of course it hardly need be mentioned that board and/or business meetings are never convened without the pastor's being aware of them.

5. *When a member has a matter he wishes the board to consider, to whom should he go—the pastor or the elder?*

We suggest either, provided the elders' meeting plan is working in the church, for then all the elders and the pastor are acquainted with agenda items.

"If in doubt, ask." This would be a good slogan for elders and pastors. Let questions such as we have suggested be wholesomely discussed when the pastor convenes his elders' meetings, rather than have such queries pop up in a wider circle. Where such meetings are held, relationships will be steered away from either a dictatorship or a muddle, and toward our mutual goal, harmonious competency. **E**

W. A. Townend writes from Cooranbong, Australia.

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A Church That's Moving

George E. Knowles

A little boy, travelling with his father in the car, suddenly cried out in great excitement, "Look, Daddy, I see a church moving!" Sure enough, a church building was being moved to a new location.

There is something exciting about a church that is moving, and there's something exciting about a movement that is nearing its destination. Both of these reasons for excitement exist in Adventism today.

How about your church? Is it moving? Is it growing? What is its rate of growth, and what are some of the things that could be done to help it grow faster?

When a church is moving, it not only brings excitement, it stimulates research into factors responsible for the growth. In this article we shall look at conditions that cause church membership figures to move upward. You will catch the inspiration of relatively simple things you can do to help your church grow.

Perhaps you're saying, "Now, look, I'm not a pastor. I'm not even a church officer. I'm just a layman. I want to see the church grow as badly as anyone does, but what can I do about it?"

Read. Because if your reading might trigger some ideas and inspiration, then you can take another step. You can engage in a personal experiment in soul winning. Let me tell you about some other church members who did just that.

Follow-up

John and Ruth, both in their early 30s, are members of a growing suburban church with a membership of 150. A number of young couples have recently been baptized. John and Ruth have invited several of these new members for Sabbath dinner on different occasions. Conversation invariably included the question, "How did you first become interested in our church?" A pattern began to develop out of these answers that fascinated John and Ruth. The stories told by the new members revolved around friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues at work or at school. Others told

of their first contact as being through Adventist literature or one of our radio or TV programs.

John was especially interested because he is the lay activities leader of his church. The lay activities council had been looking for a project to involve a greater percentage of the membership, some type of activity in which the new converts could also participate.

The council decided to encourage church members to make friendship visits with people whose names were in the interest file. In preparation they updated the file and added other names the members could supply, including neighbors, relatives, friends at work, and others who had shown interest, as well as former members. This was the logical way to begin a visitation program because these people had shown signs of interest.

At the door introductions varied to fit the background: "We're representing the *It Is Written* telecast;" "You requested study guides from *Breath of Life*, and we're here to deliver them;" "We're calling at the request of the *Voice of Prophecy*;" or "We're from the company you purchased the *Bible Story* books from."

The visits were warm, friendly, and relaxed. People responded. Those showing the highest interest were invited to a Saturday morning Bible class taught by a warm-hearted physician. (The pastor has two other churches to look after and can't be present at this church every week.)

People on the next level of interest were offered reading guides or audio-visual studies. Others were listed for future friendship visits; still others were coded to receive notification of stop smoking seminars, nutrition classes, socials, musical programs, or other activities in which they showed some interest.

Let me tell you what happened in the number one category—those invited to the Saturday morning Bible class. One month into the visitation program there were seven new adults attending the class. By the end of the second month there were fourteen. After three months there were twenty-one.

After the third month the growth rate fell off. There was a logical reason: the members visited the best prospects first; after three months they had contacted the most promising names in the interest file. From this point growth came largely from new names coming in from regular seed-sowing sources and referrals from enthusiastic people already attending.

After six months 30 interested adults were attending each Sabbath. Many of them were bringing their boys and girls to the children's divisions. Evangelistic meetings were held and 50 were baptized, including the 30 in the Saturday morning Bible class.

As John and Ruth watched the candidates coming up out of the baptismal waters one by one, John whispered, "Just think, all these jewels were buried in the interest file! What if we hadn't launched our friendship visitation program?"

Lay Bible Instructors

Clara Miller and Sue Jackson were middle-aged members of a rural church of about thirty members. You could stand on the front steps of the little church building and see only one house—the one where Sue, a recently reclaimed member, lived with her non-Adventist husband. The membership of the church was declining because families were moving from the country to the city.

Sue had regained her first love for Jesus and His message. Now she felt a compulsion to share this love with others. She wanted somehow to make up for the years of service she had wasted while out of the church.

In Clara Miller she found a kindred spirit. Clara had been dangerously ill; physicians had despaired of her life. But the members of the little church had prayed and God had performed a miracle of healing. In appreciation for God's goodness, Clara made up her mind to give herself to Him for service. She and Sue set aside one day a week to work for the Lord.

They began visiting the farm homes sparsely scattered throughout the surrounding countryside. In an age when most people say they're too busy for old-fashioned neighborly friendship, these visits were received with great appreciation.

The two women invested in clubs of missionary journals. As they became acquainted with the various families, they gave careful thought to their interests and left the magazine that seemed to be the most ap-

propriate: *Signs of the Times*, and so on. The journals seemed to strengthen the friendships. The articles provoked questions and provided a basis for spiritual discussions. Monthly visits became regular because of the delivery of each new issue of the magazines.

After about a year Clara and Sue offered gift-Bible reading guides to their farm-family friends. Now they had a reason for weekly visits. This required more time, but the rewarding experiences they were having made them more than willing to devote extra time to their project. As interests deepened, they found opportunity to involve their pastor in the friendship circle. Invitations were given to the friends to attend the pastor's Bible class. In less than three years the two women were responsible for the baptism of seven persons—very good fruitage, we would agree, from the labors of two members in a small country church. Think of what the growth could be if even 50 percent of the members had such active soul-winning projects.

As we review the experience of Clara and Sue, we see four important steps: (1) friendship; (2) literature; (3) Bible studies; and (4) the pastor's Bible class.

These soul-winning experiences began when two members decided to do something about their burden to reach the families in their community.

If you were to talk to Clara and Sue they would tell you that they felt very inadequate when they began. Neither had given Bible studies. But, you remember, that is not how they started out. They started by giving friendship. Then they gave a sequence of beautiful missionary magazines. By the time the need for Bible studies arose, two factors encouraged them that they could do it. First, the people were now their friends; they were not dealing with strangers. That fact alone took away much of the fear. Second, the gift-Bible lessons provided virtually a do-it-yourself method. To become acquainted with the material, Clara and Sue did the lessons themselves. Then they enthusiastically told their friends about the reading guides. "We're doing them, and if you would like to have them too, we could get together once a week and compare our answers," they suggested. They were not saying, "We'll come and teach you," but rather, "We'll learn together." This approach was not threatening to our lay workers or their prospects. And best of all, it worked. E

George E. Knowles writes from Chula Vista, California.

Is God to Blame for Pain and Evil?

Frank Breaden

Introduction

When we considered the marvels of creation which point to an all-wise and all-powerful Creator, we called these evidences "The Footprints of God." In this lesson we are going to study the other side of the picture, for the world abounds with "footprints" of a vastly different kind! Consider these examples: Fear, pain, poverty, waste, filth, ugliness, cruelty, accidents, hatred, war, disease, death.

Are these the footprints of God? If not, whose footprints are they? And why are they present in a world that is supposed to be governed by a wise and loving God?

Does the Bible shed any light on these questions? It certainly does. It explains how evil began, why God has permitted evil, and how it will end. The Bible's answer is concentrated in two verses found in the 13th chapter of Matthew.

Verse 28: "An enemy hath done this."

Verse 39: "The enemy is the devil!"

The Bible traces all the evil in the world to a malignant, super-human personality called the Devil, or Satan, who was originally created as a perfect angel, but fell from his high position, and now lives in a state of hardened rebellion against God.

Discussion

1. The History of Satan

Here is a brief summary of the Bible's history of Satan:

- ◆ Lucifer created perfect (Ezek. 28:12-15).
- ◆ Lucifer's heart lifted up (Ezek. 28:17).
- ◆ Coveted the throne of God (Isa. 14:12-14).
- ◆ Lied about God. Deceived angels (John 8:44).
- ◆ War in Heaven. Lucifer cast out (Rev. 12:7-9).

- ◆ Invaded this world. Usurped man's kingdom (Gen. 3:1-6; I John 5:19).
- ◆ Final victory over evil promised (Gen. 3:15).
- ◆ Satan's doom sealed at Calvary (John 12:31).
- ◆ Great wrath in last days. Knows he has only a short time (Rev. 12:12).
- ◆ Arrested and chained for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).
- ◆ Destroyed in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

2. The Mystery of Satan

The mystery of Satan can be summed up in four puzzling questions:

a) *How could a perfect, sinless angel become a devil?*

Answer: Lucifer made himself into a devil by the wrong use of his freewill. There was no external tempter. He became his own tempter. Honoured and loved by God and his companions, with every incentive to do right and with no excuse for sinning, Lucifer chose to withdraw his affections from God and focus them upon himself. Little by little, by welcoming these selfish thoughts and repeating these selfish actions, he at length became infatuated with himself. His whole existence became self-centered instead of God-centered. He came to live in one narrow dimension. Thus, by a long succession of selfish choices, Lucifer, the Archangel, debased himself into Satan, the Devil.

(b) *Why didn't God make Lucifer without freewill, so that he could not sin?*

Answer: God could have made Lucifer without free-will—like a piece of clockwork, a puppet, or a machine. In this case, Lucifer would have been incapable of choosing evil, but he would also have been incapable of choosing good. Voluntary worship and obedience, and the development of character, would have been impossible. God did not want mechanical angels, any more than we would want mechanical children. God

wanted beings who could give Him spontaneous, chosen love and affection. This could be possible only among creatures endowed with freewill.

(c) *Why didn't God kill Lucifer at the very beginning of his sin?*

Answer: If God had done this. He would have nipped Lucifer's sin in the bud, but He would have been misunderstood by the other angels. No satisfying explanation of sin and its consequences could have been given to them at that early stage. They loved and trusted Lucifer, and his sudden and unexplained disappearance would have given rise to uneasiness, suspicion, and alarm. Other angels would have asked: "Who will be the next to disappear without explanation?" God would have killed one rebel, but He would have aggravated the spirit of distrust and discontent. So He chose the wiser course—to give sin time to grow, like a seed, and produce its own baleful harvest. Thus Lucifer would publicly expose his true character and condemn himself.

(d) *When Satan is finally destroyed, can we be sure that sin will never rise up again?*

Answer: Yes, we can be absolutely sure. At the final judgment day, when Satan is about to be cast into the lake of fire, the universe will be in a totally different position from what it was at the beginning. Then, sin was a masked intruder—a dark, inscrutable mystery—and even God could not fully explain its nature or consequences. But at the judgment day, the universe will have seen sin develop, mature, produce its fearful harvest, and thus unmask itself.

Every question concerning the love and justice of God will have been finally answered. Every false accusation of Satan's will have been successfully met. Every shadow of suspicion will have been allayed. Every doubt will have been dispelled. Sin will have given birth to its own antidote—Calvary's Cross—and Calvary will have proved the monstrous cruelty of Satan, on the one hand, and the boundless love of God on the other.

God wanted beings who could give Him spontaneous, chosen love and affection. This could be possible only among creatures endowed with freewill.

Because of this public demonstration of the true nature of sin, in stark contrast with the true nature of God, the universe will be forever secure.

3. The Mastery of Satan

One question remains to be answered—an urgent, personal question: "What about us? Has God left us to fight the battle with Satan single-handed?"

We have been born without option into a world where Satan is master. What chance have we got against such a crafty, super-human foe? Are we just helpless pawns on the Devil's chessboard?

No, thank God! He has provided us with a supernatural armour which makes us impregnable against the assaults of Satan.

Eph. 6:10-17: "The whole armour of God."

Luke 10:19: "Over all the power of the enemy."

I John 4:4: "Greater is He that is in you."

Conclusion

In view of what we have learned in this lesson, our deepest concern should be: "Have we got the armor on? The whole armor? Have we availed ourselves to the full of God's provision?"

No Christian author has written more wisely or positively on this subject of personal victory over Satan than Ellen G. White, in her well-known book, *The Desire of Ages*. Her words are worth memorizing:

"There are Christians who think and speak altogether too much about the power of Satan. They think of their adversary, they pray about him, they talk about him, and he looms up greater and greater in their imagination. It is true that Satan is a powerful being; but thank God, we have a mighty saviour, who cast out the evil one from heaven. Satan is pleased when we magnify his power. Why not talk of Jesus? Why not magnify His power and His love?" (p. 493). Revelation 12:11 says, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." **E**

Frank Breaden writes from Australia.

Explanation of Difficult Texts in the Bible

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee. To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—Luke 23:43

Some have assumed from this verse that souls go to their reward immediately after death, quite contrary to scores of other Bible texts. But notice two things wrong with this assumption. First: Even though Jesus told the thief “Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise,” three days later He told Mary that He had not yet ascended to His Father. Here is the evidence that His Father was in Paradise, Revelation 2:7 says the tree of life “is in the midst of the paradise of God,” and Revelation 22:1, 2 describes the tree of life by the side of the river of life which flows, in turn, from the throne of God. So there is no question about Paradise being where the Father’s throne is located. The question is How could Jesus tell the thief that He would be with him in Paradise that day, when He did not go there until three days later?

In the second place, Jesus and the thief did not even die on the same day.

When the soldiers came, just before sunset, to take the bodies off the cross, Jesus was already dead (John 19:32-34). The thieves were very much alive, and their legs were broken to hasten death and to prevent them from escaping. They undoubtedly lived past sunset into the hours of the Sabbath and possibly longer. So how could Jesus assure the thief of being with Him in Paradise that day when they did not both die on “that day”?

The apparent contradictions clear up when we consider that the punctuation of Luke 23:43 was added by uninspired men when our English Bible was translated. They placed a comma before the word “today,” when in reality, it should have been placed after “today.” Then

the verse would correctly read “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” In other words Jesus was saying “I give you the assurance today, when it seems I can save no man; today when my own disciples have forsaken me and I’m dying as a criminal dies—yet I assure you of salvation right now.”

Please notice that the thief did not ask to be taken to paradise then. He asked, “Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” That’s exactly when he will be remembered and taken into that kingdom.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.”—Exodus 4:21

It is a fascinating fact that the Hebrew word *chazag* is translated as *hardened* in almost every account of God’s dealing with Pharaoh. But when Pharaoh *hardened* his own heart, the Hebrew word *kabed* is used. Why this difference?

Actually the word *chazag* has a literal meaning *strengthen, courage*. For example, we read in I Samuel 30:6 that “David encouraged himself in the Lord,” but the word translated *encouraged* is *chazag*—the same word which is translated as *encouraged* instead of *hardened*, I Samuel 30:6; Deuteronomy 1:38; II Samuel 11:25; II Chronicles 35:2; Psalm 64:5; Isaiah 41:7; Deuteronomy 3:28; Judges 20:22; II Chronicles 31:4.

When we take the true meaning of the word, we find that God actually encouraged Pharaoh’s heart to let Israel go. But when Pharaoh hardened his own heart, the Bible uses a word which means “to make heavy, harden” (Exodus 8:15).

But why did the encouragement of the Lord have the effect of hardening Pharaoh’s heart? We might just as well ask why the same encouraging, inspiring ministry of Jesus could produce a loving John and a traitorous Judas. One was softened; the other was hardened.

But why did the *encouragement* of the Lord have the effect of hardening Pharaoh's heart? We might just as well ask why the same encouraging, inspiring ministry of Jesus could produce a loving John and a traitorous Judas. One was softened; the other was hardened. The same sun can soften the wax and harden the clay. Every man is exposed in some degree to the grace of Christ (John 1:9). The Lord is spoken of as a sun (Psalm 84:11) who lightens every man. Some reject the light and grow hard (Zechariah 7:12). Some accept and are softened. It's all in the response of the material.


"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."—Acts 10: 37

This chapter gives the interesting account of the Gentile Cornelius who prayed for the truth. God appeared to him in verse 3 and told him to send men to Joppa and invite Peter to come and teach him.

As the servants of Cornelius approached Peter's house, he fell into a trance on the housetop, and saw a sheet let down from heaven. In the sheet were all manner of beasts and creeping things and fowls, moles, bats, buzzards, etc. A voice invited Peter to eat them, but he said "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (verse 14).

Some people contend that Christ cleansed all food when He was here, but, if so, Peter knew nothing about it. He had spent three and one-half years with the Master and listened to his instructions. Yet Peter had gathered no intimation that those unclean animals could be eaten. Peter did not know what the vision meant. Verse 17 says, "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men . . . stood before the gate." He was pondering it. Again in verse 19, "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee."

Apparently, on the way back to Cornelius' house the Lord answered Peter's ponderings and showed him the meaning of his vision. When he entered the house full of Gentile friends, Peter said, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (verse 28).

The meaning was now clear. It had nothing to do with diet. The gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles from henceforth. 

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Righteousness by Faith

Ellen G. White

The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation. That simple faith which takes God at His word should be encouraged. God's people must have that faith which will lay hold of divine power; "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Those who believe that God for Christ's sake has forgiven their sins, should not, through temptation, fail to press on to fight the good fight of faith. Their faith should grow stronger until their Christian life, as well as their words, shall declare, "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin." If we would have the spirit and power of the third angel's message, we must present the law and the gospel together, for they go hand in hand. As a power from beneath is stirring up the children of disobedience to make void the law of God, and to trample upon the truth that Christ is our righteousness, a power from above is moving upon the hearts of those who are loyal, to exalt the law, and to lift up Jesus as a complete Saviour. Unless divine power is brought into the experience of the people of God, false theories and ideas will take minds captive, Christ and His righteousness will be dropped out of the experience of many, and their faith will be without power or life.

Ministers are to present Christ in His fulness both in the churches and in new fields, that the hearers may have an intelligent faith. The people must be instructed that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness.

It is Satan's studied purpose to keep souls from believing in Christ as their only hope; for the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin is efficacious in behalf of those only who believe in its merit, and who present it before the Father as did Abel in his offering.

The offering of Cain was an offense to God, because it was a Christless offering. The burden of our message is not only the commandments of God, but the faith of Jesus. A bright light shines upon our pathway today, and it leads to increased faith in Jesus. We must receive every ray of light, and walk in it, that it may not be our condemnation in the judgment. Our duties and obligations become more important as we

obtain more distinct views of truth. Light makes manifest and reproves the errors that were concealed in darkness; and as light comes, the life and character of men must change correspondingly, to be in harmony with it. Sins that were once sins of ignorance, because of the

blindness of the mind, can no more be indulged in without incurring guilt. As increased light is given, men must be reformed, elevated, and refined by it, or they will be more perverse and stubborn than before the light came.

Faith

The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the result of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power.

True faith and true prayer—how strong they are! They are as two arms by which the human suppliant lays hold upon the power of Infinite Love. Faith is trusting in God,—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own

Faith is trusting in God,—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good.

way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 1:7). It is faith that enables us to look beyond the present, with its burdens and cares, to the great hereafter, where all that now perplexes us shall be made plain. Faith sees Jesus standing as our Mediator at the right hand of God. Faith beholds the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him. Faith sees the robe and crown prepared for the overcomer, and hears the song of the redeemed. Perfect faith, the surrender of self to God, simple trust in His pledged word, should be a part of every minister's experience. Only as a minister has this experience can he make the subject of faith plain to the doubting and distrustful.

Faith is not feeling. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (1 John 5:4). True faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption, for presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith.

Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequences of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.

To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul-hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith, cannot receive blessing from God.

It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.

Unbelief and Doubt

Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come. But there are many who have little faith. They are always fearing and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded by the tokens of God's love, every day

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they enjoy the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these blessings. And the difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, separate them from Him, by arousing unrest and repining.

Do they well to be thus unbelieving? Jesus is their friend. All heaven is interested in their welfare, and their fear and repining grieve the Holy Spirit. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust His promises. When we come to Him in faith, we should believe that every petition enters into the heart of Christ. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be sent when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceeding abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory," and "the working of His mighty power" (Heb. 11:1).

Often the Christian life is beset with dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage and death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, Go forward. Let us obey the command, even though our sight cannot penetrate the darkness. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey. Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence, therefore it cannot be baffled. Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency.

The worker for God needs strong faith. Appearances may seem forbidding; but in the darkest hour there is light beyond. The strength of those who, in faith, love and serve God, will be renewed day by day. The understanding of the Infinite is placed at their service, that in carrying out His purposes they may not err. Let these workers hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, remembering that the light

of God's truth is to shine amid the darkness that enshrouds our world.

There is to be no despondency in connection with God's service. The faith of the consecrated worker is to stand every test brought upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need, and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfil the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him.

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not

leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper" (Psa. 72:12).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. 26:3). The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name's glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph gloriously. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

God never leaves the world without men who can discern between good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. He has men whom He has appointed to stand in the forefront of the battle in times of emergency. E

Ellen G. White, the Lord's Messenger and one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This article was taken from Gospel Workers, 161, 162.

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Questions & Answers

Again the 144,000

It seems that sometimes we are puzzled in regard to the 144,000 referred to in the book of Revelation. I have just replied to one man who talked to me asking if the martyrs of the Dark Ages will not be included in the 144,000, and if not, why not? Another question he put to me is, 'Will the 144,000 be the only ones living when Christ comes?' Can you give me some light?

The only sources of information regarding the 144,000 are a brief passage in the book of Revelation and certain limited comments in the writings of Mrs. White. These comments are neither extensive nor precisely definitive in their nature. It is this very fact that has led to differences of views among us concerning the nature of this special company of saints.

It is proper to have an interest in any subject mentioned in the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy. However, the interest should be confined within the limits of the information that Inspiration has given us on the subject. If those limits are small, we should be content with them, awaiting the day when God will enlarge the borders of our understanding of spiritual mysteries.

The trouble is that some devout souls feel restive when they are in a very restricted area in their Bible study. Finding no Bible texts that they can use as tools to break down the limiting walls of their knowledge, they are tempted to call on brooding speculation to do the task. It must be admitted that speculation can most effectively remove boundaries and enable the mind to soar east and west and north and south and up to the illimitable spaces above. Unfortunately, speculation lacks chart and compass—the speculator is freed from the shackles of confining space, only to discover that he has no base for his feet.


I have no new light to offer on the nature and status of the 144,000. I would refer you to the brief inspired declarations on the subject and leave the matter at that.

Speaking personally, I have never felt tempted to spend extra hours exploring a subject like the 144,000 and for this reason: I have always been able to find in the Bible innumerable subjects that can be explored with the light of related passages of Scripture, so that I

can keep enlarging the borders of my understanding without drawing on the false light of speculation. Thus my mind is enriched, my spirit strengthened, and my understanding of the will and purposes of God ever increased. Why, therefore, should I consume in speculation the hours that could be so profitably used in exploring the numerous clearly understandable portions of Holy Scriptures?

What all of us need to do is to spend more time on the great elementary teachings of the Holy Word regarding salvation, so that we can be sure of entrance to heaven. If we can but enter and be seated on the last row, let us thank God and be content. Then, if our Lord graciously calls on some of us to come forward to a special, favored status, we can go forward and hear from His lips the explanation of why we have been thus chosen. Until that day, let us content ourselves with thanksgiving to God for the clear and unmistakable declarations of Holy Scriptures that all of us have been chosen for salvation if we are but willing to respond to the invitation.

However, this emphasis on the danger of speculation and on the value of a simple striving to enter in through the heavenly gates does not warrant the conclusion that we should not solemnly study what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy specifically say regarding the 144,000. If we confine ourselves to those statements, and to their practical implications for our lives, we shall be edified. Certainly we may properly seek to measure up to the requirements of those who shall belong to that select company. We read of them: "In their mouth was found no guile" (Rev. 14:5).

How much of sorrow and tragedy would be removed from our homes and our churches if our lips spoke only those words that were true and uplifting. How much nearer heaven we would be every day of our lives. It is in the sense of striving to measure up to Heaven's highest standards that the messenger of God makes the statement: "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand."—*Ellen G. White in The Review and Herald, March 9, 1905.* 

Slices of Life

Henry Feyerabend

No Compromise. Man of Integrity

Joseph Stowell tells of a conversation he had with a pastor in the former Soviet Union. "Stalin's reign was the worst time," said the pastor. "I had two KGB agents come to me and say, 'We'll take care of you. You stay the pastor of that church, but once a week give us a report on every one of these Christians. Work for us.'"

"I can't do that to God, and I can't do that to this flock," he replied. So they sent him to a prison camp in Siberia. He endured the forced labor and the cold for ten years. But he did find other Christians in the camp, and God used these believers to fulfill his purposes.

"I was a carpenter building towns for Stalin," said the pastor. "We'd go out in sixty-mile radiuses, and there we would fellowship together. Today there are hundreds of churches in Siberia as a result of these small prisoner fellowship groups."

When men refuse to compromise, they may lose much, but through them God will fulfill His higher eternal purpose.—Joseph Stowell, *Men of Integrity*, 1:1.

More than Seasoning

As every Scot knows, salt must be put into the oatmeal from the start, before cooking, not afterward. In a similar way, Christ can never be added as an afterthought to an already full and committed life. It's possible to attempt to use the Master and His power to fulfill our desires and plans for the people we love and still give Him the one position He will not accept: second place.—Lloyd John Ogilvie, "The Heart of God," *Christianity Today*, 39:8.

Submitting to the Divine Will

O Lord, grant that I may do thy will as if it were my will; so that thou mayest do my will as if it were thy will.—Augustine, *Leadership*, 9:1.

God's Sovereignty and Man's Will

In *Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer attempts to reconcile the seemingly contradictory beliefs of God's sovereignty and man's free will:

"An ocean liner leaves New York bound for

Liverpool. Its destination has been determined by proper authorities. Nothing can change it. This is at least a faint picture of sovereignty. On board the liner are scores of passengers. These are not in chains, neither are their activities determined for them by decree. They are completely free to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port. Both freedom and sovereignty are present here, and they do not contradict. So it is, I believe, with man's freedom and the sovereignty of God. The mighty liner of God's sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history."—Douglas G. Gerrard, *Leadership*, Vol. 6:4.

A God of Variety

Someone has imagined the carpenter's tools holding a conference. Brother Hammer presided. Several suggested he leave the meeting because he was too noisy. Replied the Hammer, "If I have to leave this shop, Brother Screw must go also. You have to turn him around again and again to get him to accomplish anything."

Brother Screw then spoke up. "If you wish, I will leave. But Brother Plane must leave too. All his work is on the surface. His efforts have no depth."

To this Brother Plane responded, "Brother Rule will also have to withdraw, for he is always measuring folks as though he were the only one who is right."

Brother Rule then complained against Brother Sandpaper, "You ought to leave too because you're so rough and always rubbing people the wrong way."

In the midst of all this discussion, in walked the Carpenter of Nazareth. He had arrived to start His day's work. Putting on His apron, He went to the bench to make a pulpit from which to proclaim the gospel. He employed the hammer, screw, plane, rule, sandpaper, and all the other tools. After the day's work when the pulpit was finished, Brother Saw arose and remarked, "Brethren, I observe that all of us are workers together with the Lord."

God is a God of variety. In nature, what a diversity of animals! Every snowflake is different, every fingerprint, every face. Likewise, God is a God of variety in His church. What a diversity of gifts He has bestowed on believers to equip them for service! —James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, pp. 231-232.

I Know Who Holds Tomorrow

A few days before I left home to prepare for the ministry my gray-haired pastor, Rev. Temple, told me this story. I have told it many, many times since, especially in connection with the song, "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow."

"When my son was small, we often walked together out through the fields and neighboring pasture behind the parsonage. At first the little fellow would hold onto my little finger, but he found that when he stepped into a hoof-print or stumbled over something, his grip would fail and down he'd go in the dust or snow. Not giving it much thought, my mind on other matters, I'd stop and he'd get up, brush himself off, and grab my little finger again, gripping a little harder this time.

"Needless to say, this occurred frequently until one day as he was brushing himself off, he looked at me and said, 'Daddy?' I replied, 'Yes, Son, what is it?' He said, 'I think if you would hold my hand, I wouldn't fall.'"

Pastor Temple turned to me and with a tear in his eye said, "You know, he still stumbled many times after that, but he never hit the ground. Now, as you walk with God, don't try to hold on to Him, let Him hold on to you. You may stumble but He'll never let you fall."—James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, 244.

Despite Blindness

George Matheson was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1842. Before he reached the age of two, it was discovered that his eyesight was defective. He, his parents, and the specialists fought a heroic fight, but before George had finished his course at Glasgow University he was completely blind. With courage and faith he graduated with honors in philosophy, studied for the ministry, and in a few years' time became the minister of one of the largest churches in Edinburgh, where he carried on a memorable ministry. In addition to his laborious preparation of his services he did a great deal of parish visitation, wrote numerous articles and twelve books, and continued his own studies throughout his life.

It must have been heartbreaking for George Matheson's parents to have a strange infection in their baby's eyes lead to his blindness. Yet, in that tragic situation George Matheson found God's resources available for him. God poured into his heart the courage, resourcefulness, and grim perseverance that gave him victory over his handicap. Through it all his faith grew stronger, and after twenty years of blindness he wrote:

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee!
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

—James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, 273, 274.

Struggle

A man confined to bed because of a lingering illness had on his sunlit windowsill a cocoon of a beautiful species of butterfly. As nature took its course, the butterfly began its struggle to emerge from the cocoon. But it was a long, hard battle. As the hours went by, the struggling insect seemed to make almost no progress. Finally, the human observer, thinking that "the powers that be" had erred, took a pair of scissors and snipped the opening larger. The butterfly crawled out, but that's all it ever did—crawl. The pressure of the struggle was intended to push colorful, life-giving juices back into the wings, but the man in his supposed mercy prevented this. The insect never was anything but a stunted abortion, and instead of flying on rainbow wings above the beautiful gardens, it was condemned to spend its brief life crawling in the dust. That gives me the idea that God knows what He is doing. It's a fact that you can depend on Him—even when it seems the struggle is hard and meaningless.—James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 20.

The Skilled Blows of God

Many years ago, there was found in an African mine the most magnificent diamond in the world's history. It was presented to the king of England to blaze in his crown of state. The king sent it to Amsterdam to be cut. It was put into the hands of an expert lapidary. And what do you suppose he did with it? He took the gem of priceless value, and cut a notch in it. Then he struck a hard blow with his instrument and—lo!—the superb jewel lay in his hand cleft in two. Did he do this

out of recklessness, wastefulness, and criminal carelessness? Indeed not! For days and weeks that blow had been studied and planned. Drawings and models had been made of the gem. Its quality, its defects, its lines of cleavage had all been studied with minutest care. The man to whom it was committed was one of the most skillful lapidaries in the world.

Was that blow a mistake? No! It was the climax of the lapidary's skill. When he struck that blow, he did the one thing which would bring that gem to its most perfect shapeliness, radiance, and jeweled splendor. That blow which seemed to ruin the superb precious stone was, in fact, its perfect redemption. From those two halves were wrought two magnificent gems which the skilled eye of the lapidary saw hidden in the rough, uncut stone as it came from the mine.

Sometimes, God lets a stinging blow fall upon your life. The blood spurts; the nerves wince. The soul cries out in agony. The blow seems to you an appalling mistake. But it is not, for you are the most priceless jewel in the world to God. And He is the most skilled lapidary in the universe.

Let us beware of questioning the methods and approaches of almighty God. We lie in His hands, and He knows just how to deal with us.—James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 15.

Shepherds

William Barclay notes the following about shepherds: the life of the shepherd was very hard. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd, and he was never off duty. There being little grass, the sheep were bound to wander, and since there were no protecting walls, the sheep had constantly to be watched. On either side of the narrow plateau the ground dipped sharply down to the craggy deserts, and the sheep were always liable to stray away and get lost. The shepherd's task was not only constant but dangerous, for, in addition, he had to guard the flock against wild animals, especially against wolves, and there were always thieves and robbers ready to steal the sheep. Sir George Adam Smith, who traveled in Palestine, writes: "On some high moor, across which at night the hyaenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, leaning on his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice." Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock, were the necessary characteristics of the shepherd.—William Barclay, *Gospel of John*. E

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Making Your Sermons Live

continued from page 7

The question for us is not how great are our talents or gifts or formal training, but how thoroughly we are permitting what we have to be used to glorify God? The sincere church leader will seek ever to improve his or her knowledge and abilities, but these will never serve as a substitute for consecration. The one supreme need is very well expressed in the promise: "There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."—*Ibid.*, pp. 250, 251.

If this is our experience, our preaching will be more than dry bones to our hearers. "Breath came into them, and they lived" (Eze. 37:10). **E**

Orley M. Berg worked at the General Conference as Associate Editor of Ministry when he wrote this article.

The Ministry of the Elder

continued from page 12

come His disciples.

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North American Division Local Church Officers Manual, 1988.

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Light and Wisdom from the Wise Men

continued from page 9

worship the Savior, or we shall never be saved by Him. He is God over all, blessed forever. Adore Him.

V. Illustration

William Temple said: "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God."

Ellen G. White Quotations

Light and Wisdom from the Wise Men. "He who is infinite in wisdom has given explicit directions in regard to his own worship, and all who desire to serve him should follow the exact course he has prescribed. God will teach all his creatures that he means just what he says."—"Necessity of Temperance," *The Signs of the Times*, July 8, 1880.

The Teacher from heaven: "No less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation."—"The Teacher of Truth the Only Safe Educator," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 17, 1891. **E**

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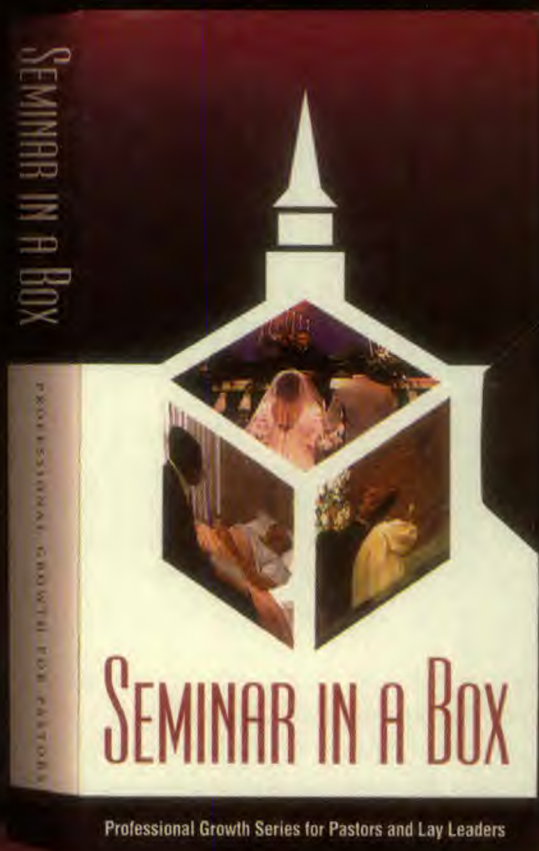


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