

ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders Vol. 8 No. 3

Making Disciples



"New members must be surrounded by the influences most favorable to spiritual growth." E. G. White

Read the article: *New members and the extended family.*

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Primacy of Spirituality in Elder's Ministry

Joel Sarli

It is quite easy to be entangled in so many activities in the congregation and forgetting that a successful elder needs to keep himself in good relationship with the Lord.

This may be easier said than done for you, the elder. Just because you are about the Lord's work does not automatically mean that you are going to keep a spiritual freshness. And the solution is not as easy as the deodorant commercial where a brand swap will keep you fresh all day. You can't just swap a few Scripture verses to heighten your spiritual freshness. Consider and work on the following as you reach for spiritual well-being.

Spiritual failure

Economical failure means a situation where bills and debts greatly exceed your true ability to pay. It is being so far behind with absolutely no way of catching up. It may even include someone else taking over control of your income. It may mean a drastic change in lifestyle. Synonymous terms include financial failure, insolvency, defaulting, economic death, or financial disaster. Can the same happen spiritually? Yes! You can find yourself in a state of spiritual insolvency. It happens. Here are some ways to avoid finding yourself spiritually overdrawn.

Meditation

Devotion is not the same as preparation for a ministerial duty, like preaching or teaching. This is preparation for you. A few moments with God make your spirit ready for the battles ahead. It is a regular time of listening to God through Scripture and prayer. Out of your spiritual reserve from personal devotion you will find the resources to



minister because time alone with God builds your spirit to be more like Jesus. Your quiet time with God will help you maintain perspective in all the demands of life. You will find God's place in all that you do.

“Sometimes I shut the door on all the world
And go alone to that most secret place
Where there is only God—
Just God and I! Then
Together we go over subtle acts,
Mistakes, and small hypocrisies of mine.
I strip myself from shams, from shackles free,
And stand aghast at my duplicity.”

—Author Unknown

This is something that happened only in those quiet places.

Rest

There are two types of rest—physical and emotional. Both feed your spiritual well-being. Physically, to be in your spiritual best you must have adequate rest. Sleep allows your body time to rebuild and refresh. E. G. White indicates about seven to seven and one-half hours sleep is optimal to maintain your physical integrity.

The other type of rest is time away. Mark 6:31 tells of Jesus' admonition to come away for a time of rest. Make time to get away. The real ticking time bomb in the church or in a home is an explosive father/elder. It is not a cultural, denominational, or theological issue but the person of a leader crashing.

Time away from the “press of the crowd” will defuse this time bomb. Move away from a schedule of side calls, funerals, sermon preparation, counseling, and committee meetings to a time of spiritual

(Continued on page 29)

Preaching is Like Growing a Garden

Mike Stickland

People who take the trouble to enroll in a course on preaching usually want to know the answer to a basic and pressing question: "How do you actually make a sermon?" This lesson is the first step in providing an answer. It may not be the answer you had hoped for (if you were only looking for a quick source of sermons) but the principle suggested in this lesson provides an indispensable ingredient in the ongoing process of preparing sermons, not just for the immediate crisis but for the relentless demands for fresh sermons in the future.

Preparing to preach: A continuous study program

The art of sermon preparation has been likened to the art of horticulture. Imagine yourself with an allotment in which you plan to grow vegetables, grains, and fruits. There may already be soft fruits planted in the past or vegetables growing self-sown, which you could plunder for a quick return. Some people use that method of sermon preparation. They prepare little, sow little, but yet cream off the crop what has been previously established. What this lesson proposes is a system of preparing the ground, bringing on seedlings, transplanting and weeding, and careful crop cultivation, which will provide an ever-increasing supply of fresh produce.



- In preparing the land to yield crops, the "farmer" must plough the ground (see Hos. 10:11-12).
- Then he must harrow the soil to break it down and cultivate it (Job 39:10; Isa. 28:24).
- When the soil is prepared, the seed must be sown (Gen. 47:23).
- To avoid adulteration of the pure Word (Jer. 23:28), this seed must not be mixed (Lev. 19:19).
- He will want to avoid wasting the seed on trodden earth or amongst thorns (Matt. 13:19-22; Jer. 4:3).
- The good seed will yield a sure harvest when preceded by appropriate preparation (Matt. 13:23, 24).
- Then with practice, the farmer can expect to reap the fruits of his labor (James 5:7).

In the same way, a preacher must prepare the "soil" of his or her own mind and spirit. This lesson shows you how this may be achieved.

Preparing to preach: Using the talent of time

It isn't that we do not have the time. It is that we choose to use it one way or another, and it is up to us whether we choose to allocate time for this cultivation of the soul.

"Upon the right improvement of our time depends our success in acquiring knowledge and mental culture . . . Only let the moments be treasured . . . A

resolute purpose, persistent industry, and careful economy of time, will enable men to acquire knowledge and mental discipline which will qualify them for almost any position of influence and usefulness." E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 343, 344 .

Preparing to preach: First and foremost is the study of Scripture

Since the Scripture should be the source and inspiration of every sermon, it needs to be the book we study most. But we are talking here of general, continuous preparation—not specific, concentrated study in pursuit of a particular sermon. The preacher should find fulfillment in reading Scripture often, just for the pleasure of exposure to the Word of God. He or she should read whole books or sections of Scripture at a time, just to imbibe the influence of the Spirit. He or she should read often and at length.

"Those who stand before the people as teachers of truth are to grapple with great themes. They are not to occupy precious time in talking of trivial subjects. Let them study the Word and preach the Word." E. G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 151.

"It is a sin for those who attempt to teach the Word to others, to be themselves neglectful of its study." E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 249.

This is where modern, well-established translations of the Bible come to their forte, as well as individual works by men such as Dr. William Barclay and Dr. J. B. Phillips, which have similarly received wide approval. We should tend to avoid using paraphrases (of which *The Living Bible* is one example) except for occasional devotional reading.

Several profitable ways to study scripture:

Study by topic

Take a topic, theme, or word and trace every Bible reference you can find on it. In this case, a "study Bible" is very useful because it provides many leads and marginal references which will take you to related topics.

Study by book, chapter, or section

Sit and read a whole letter of Paul, a whole book of a prophet, or a whole Gospel at one sitting, or within one week. Read it often and from different translations.

Study by whole story or incident

Read John 7 through 10 to experience the interaction between Jesus and the people and the Jews during the visit to the Feast of Tabernacles six months before the crucifixion. Or read Matthew 12 and follow the actions and reactions of Jesus, disciples, and people to the miracle of healing the dumb and blind possessed man. Follow through into Chapter 13 and see how Jesus use of parables was brought about by the Chapter 12 incident. Always avoid the tendency to read a verse here and a verse there without reading the whole context.

Study by biography

The Bible has many biographies. Read the life of David, the life of Samuel, the life of Ezekiel, the life of Paul. Study how God spoke to them, called them, used them, blessed them, corrected them.

Scripture should never be studied without prayer. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired men to write. We need that same Spirit to disclose what He meant, so that we may avoid unsound or personal interpretation.

Let's say it again!

Let us repeat—what we are talking of here is personal study and reading of the Word with the purpose of generally widening and deepening one's personal grasp of the Scripture. This should be disciplined, purposeful reading and research during which you are seeking to expand your personal knowledge, but not necessarily with a sermon appointment in mind yet. You are ploughing and harrowing, sowing the seed, and nurturing it. You are not just looking for a quick cash crop.

At risk of sounding the drum once too often, keep reminding yourself that not all your reading and study of Scripture has to do with immediate sermon preparation. The great weight of Bible reading is for broadening your knowledge of God and the way He works with humankind. It is to create a deep pool from which your own soul is refreshed. Arising from that wide and deep reading, you will discover relevant lines of study to pursue for a variety of subsequent sermons.

Mike Stickland writes from Watford, England.

New Members and Their "Extended Family"

James A. Cress

Win and Charles Arn point out that involving new members in witnessing activities is not an optional, but an essential part of the process of effective disciple making. They point out that some of the most receptive people to the gospel are the "extended family" members of new believers—friends, relatives, and associates who are outside of Christ and a church. The Arns have also developed a six-step process for introducing these "extended family" members to Christ by teaching new converts to relate to their extended families by:

1. *Caring.* Personifying Christ's love. Attempting to meet the felt needs of those with whom the new believer has an acquaintance relationship.
2. *Strengthening Relationships.* Table-talk settings in which stronger relationships are built through casual and comfortable interaction.
3. *Involving Other Members of the Body.* Introducing extended family to other believers as a way of introducing them to the wide variety of ways in which Jesus works in the lives of people.
4. *Enhancing Personal Witness.* Using Scripture



appropriately to expand the understanding of God's will in various real-life circumstances. 5. *Providing a Variety of Exposures.* Special events, public meetings, or gospel presentations which move beyond one-on-one spiritual encounters, but to which the extended family members are brought by the new believer who becomes the catalyst for his/her extended family's increasing involvement with spiritual things. 6. *Developing Patience.* Remembering that each person in the extended family is at a different level of spiritual development. Not all fruit ripens at the same time. Consistency from the new believer toward

his/her extended family is more to be desired than quick results. 1

Expecting and enabling new believers to minister is obedience to our Lord's command and it is a necessary part of the process by which new believers become disciples. McGavran and Hunter, discussing "Training the Laity for Church Growth," argue that all three terms in the title are crucial: *For Church Growth.* The training must be for growth, the goal must be clear, and it must be

defended against multitudinous good things which obscure it.

The Laity. The laity must be trained. It might start with the clergy, but only as it surges out beyond these professionals and enrolls great numbers of your members will danger be averted.

Training. The process includes motivating, goal setting, instructing, exhorting, building up convictions, harnessing sociological data, practice (actually doing), feedback, and improvement. This is not a quick and easy gimmick. It is a costly venture with the unalterable purpose to seek and save the lost.²

Allan Hadidian approaches putting new members to work in ministry from a similar perspective. He says, "Three processes must be used: teaching, training and transforming. Teaching involves knowledge and emphasizes the principles a disciple should know. Training involves skill and emphasizes the practical things a disciple should be able to do. Transforming involves conviction and emphasizes the perspective a disciple should have."³ Notice the emphasis on "doables." Far too often new members are led to believe that they should be spectators rather than participants. In fact, spiritual strength and maturity will come only as they participate as "co-laborers" with Christ for the lost.

Actions confirm belief. By ministering, new believers live out Jesus' own life of service as He empowers them by the Holy Spirit. To paraphrase Peter Wagner, any scheme that separates ministry action from discipleship has built into itself its own destruction.

Lindgren and Shawchuck call this process of putting new members into ministry "spiritual empowerment." They say, "Our understanding of spiritual empowerment is that it is an ongoing pilgrimage involving an open search for, and sensitivity to experiencing, a growing relationship with God that expresses itself in behavioral action both personally and corporately."⁴

In other words, the process of conversion remains incomplete until new believers are involved in meaningful personal ministry as an integral part of a wider corporate strategy of utilizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit to their fullest potential for the salvation of the lost.

In reality, this is what many people are looking

for and longing to receive from the church. They need something more than just a friendly greeting, no matter how genuine or well intentioned such a welcome is. They need and expect involvement. Nelson Annan says, "Some churches welcome people the first time they visit, but no other interaction ever takes place. Newcomers are not challenged to get involved in the church. Eventually they begin attending some other church where they are not only warmly welcomed, but also encouraged to be an active part of the family."⁵

Appropriate balance is the issue. Calling, equipping, and sending must occur simultaneously within the body. While some are being trained, others are being deployed who are calling yet others to decision and discipleship. Dudley and Cummings say: "Church growth must involve all of this. Its insistence on quality balances its concern for quantity. The whole includes proclaiming the gospel, winning and baptizing converts, incorporating them into responsible membership, nurturing their spiritual development, equipping them for further service, motivating them to missionary tasks, and supporting them as they go out to exercise their gifts in bringing in still others. Unless the whole cycle is in place and functioning, the feverish attempt to add to the membership rolls by baptizing will soon break down for lack of a support system."⁶

James A. Cress writes from Silver Spring, Maryland. He is the Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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1. Win and Charles Arn, ed. *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, p. 95-109.
2. Donald McGavran and Gerge G. Hunter III, *Church Growth: Strategies that Work*, pp. 79-80.
3. Allen Hadidian. *Discipleship : Helping Other Christians Grow*, p. 81.
4. Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck. *Let My People Go: Empowering Laity for Ministry*, pp. 22.
5. Nelson Annan. *More People! Is Church Growth Worth It?*, p. 46.
6. Roger L. Dudley and Des Cumming. *Adventures in Church Growth*, p. 32.

Creative Ideas for Renewing

Worship Service

John Killinger

Elder's Digest file**Performed music**

1. Schedule some unusual instrument for the special item—a harmonica, saw, musical bottles, etc. Have the performer tell how he or she happened to learn to play that instrument.
2. Have an entire family provide the musical item.
3. Include the story behind how the song happened to be written.
4. Try the old-fashioned musical monologue—background music while the words are read or recited.
5. Try an “illustrated song.” An artist can do a chalk drawing or sketch while the song is sung. Or slides can be shown on a screen.
6. Have a group of singers lead a rousing praise service, providing an item or two themselves.

Congregational music

1. Feature a variety of instrumental accompaniments to complement the organ and/or piano. It can be stringed instruments one week, brass the next, etc. Any instrumental addition will help to raise the decibels and increase the quality of the congregational singing.
2. Conclude a moving sermon that features an appeal with a song of commitment, sung while the entire congregation holds hands as a symbol of commitment and unity.
3. Take 20 to 25 minutes to create an “entire-church choir.” Have the basses, sopranos, tenors, and altos all move to different quadrants of the church so they can learn their part. After a practice run or two, have the “choir” render the special item.
4. Learn a new hymn from the hymnal.
5. Sing one hymn’s words to another hymn’s

tune. The hymn’s meter is listed in the hymnal. If the meters match, the words and tunes are interchangeable.

6. Sing Scripture songs one week instead of hymns from the hymnal. Use an overhead projector so people can see the words.
7. Feature choruses for the young one week.
8. Divide the church into two or more groups and try some of the canons (rounds) in the new hymnal.
9. Have those who announce the hymns choose their favorite hymn and tell why it means something special to them. It will help the congregation to get to know that member better. It may even give the hymn new meaning for some of the others in the congregation as well.
10. Have two or more “support singers” sitting in the front row singing into microphones during the hymn singing. It helps to “fill out” the sound and encourages better singing.

Prayer

1. Have people from different groups within the congregation offer the prayer each week. Introduce the person as representing that group—grandparents, parents, youth, singles, young couples, university students, etc.
2. Use a written prayer for variation. Many books of prayers are available, offering a variety of beautiful prayers.
3. Have three people share the prayer. One can be responsible for praise, another for thanksgiving, and another for intercession.
4. Invite a child to offer the morning prayer. The words may be simple, but the impact may be great.
5. Instead of a person up front offering the entire prayer, he or she can invoke God, then suggest topics for the congregation to pray about silently. The prayer leader should

pause after each topic suggestion. Topics can include things to praise God for, things to thank God for, and various people and activities for which a blessing is sought. It is crucial to explain before the prayer begins just how it is going to proceed.

6. Try a responsive prayer, with a refrain from the congregation. Psalm 136 could be used as a prayer for this purpose. Or the prayer leader could compose a prayer with a congregational refrain, following the pattern of Psalm 136.

7. Have a family, Sabbath school class, children's division, etc., all pray, each offering only sentence prayers. Active participation is a crucial element to long-term enjoyment of the worship hour. Get as many people as possible involved.

8. On a special occasion plan a "season" of prayer, with several people praying. Be careful not to make it too drawn out or it will have a negative impact, particularly on the younger worshippers.

Scripture

1. Have a family read the Scripture, each taking a segment.

2. Try antiphonal Scripture reading, with young and old or male and female responsively reading segments of the Scripture.

3. Have a shut-in or isolated member read the Scripture. Videotape it, then replay it on Sabbath. Churches often make provision for the shut-ins to hear the sermon, but rarely provide for their active participation in the service. If video facilities aren't available, voice tape and photographic slides will work well.

4. Vary the people reading the Scripture—singles, couples, single parents, ethnics, etc. Reflect the diversity of the church through the participants.

5. Prepare an illustrated Scripture reading.

Many of the psalms lend themselves to illustration through nature slides, film, or video.

6. Provide a musical background to the Scripture reading.

7. Invite the congregation to read the Scripture responsively. If diversity of translations is a problem, put the verse on an overhead transparency.

8. Invite someone to paraphrase a well-known passage, showing how he or she perceives the passage and its message.

Offering

1. Have several families be responsible for collecting the offering.

2. If it is Christian Education Day, have children in school uniforms collect the offering.

3. Invite the congregation to "bring" their offering to God by actually coming forward and depositing it in a basket at the front of the church. It provides movement for the younger worshippers and has significant symbolism.

4. Sing a hymn while the offering is collected.

5. Read Scripture—i.e., the story of the widow's mites—during the offering collection.

6. Have someone read poetry while the offering is collected.

7. Invite each member of the congregation to offer a silent prayer on his or her offering before it is taken, rather than having the prayer from the front.

(To be continued)

Pastoral Prayer

Editor's file

1. Emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit

Dear Heavenly Father,

In this moment we bow before You in humble supplication. We understand that without You we can do nothing. So we pray for the special gift of the Holy Spirit today.

Come, Holy Spirit, Counselor and Defender.

Come as wind to clear our thick clouds of ignorance and unbelief that the eyes of our hearts may see without confusion your glory and your will for our lives.

Come as fire; make us shine with eagerness and joy as we obey your command to make disciples of all nations.

Come with eloquence for our tongues that we may be articulate witnesses to those before whom you would have us testify concerning the grace and glory of God Almighty.

Come with power, energizing our hearts with holy boldness so that we dare to display your love before anyone and everyone.

Come with your holy gifts of ministry so that as one body we can speak and interpret, discern and teach, heal and bless in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Come with blessing, so filling our souls with abundance that we delight to share our resources as freely and generously as did our ancestors in faith so long ago.

Come, renew us, transform us, train us and send us so that we can become vessels of your life-giving love, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. For Christmas season

Dear Lord Most Longed For,

To you, the mender of time and fulfiller of hopes, we lift the dreams and yearnings of our hearts. To you we offer the wisps of hopes we may not dare speak before others: We dream of being more than we now appear—stronger, wiser, truer, more accomplished.

You alone know our true potential.

You alone imagine the rich possibilities held within your will for us. Help us recognize and realize the goals to which you draw us.

From you come all good deeds and all worthy aspirations. But we confess that not all our desires for the future are either good or worthy.

We are the sort of people who can imagine revenge and long for it.

We can imagine winning great wealth and spending it on bloated luxury.

Pastoral Prayer

We can imagine getting the better of someone in business and find ourselves thirsting for the fiscal blood of our competitors.

This Advent season, fit us with new dreams.

In this season of hope and fresh beginnings, kindle our desire to soothe the wounded world with your gospel.

Fire us with a passion for justice, a commitment to mercy and a burning desire to work for reconciliation among those whose lives we are able to touch.

Supply us with both motive and means to fulfill your vision of what our lives are meant to be.

Let our obedience mirror that of Jesus, who though he was one with you, refused to seize his rightful status at the expense of your people's salvation.

Consecrate our dreams, that with all our heart and mind and strength we may honor you, now and forever. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

. Spiritual heritage and witness

Our Heavenly Father, God of History and Hope,

How good you have been to us, how generous to generations yet unborn!

You have given us great leaders and examples of faith and commitment.

We thank you for the witness of our mothers and fathers in faith, past and present.

In every time and place, you have raised up men and women whose devotion and integrity inspired others to follow you.

Thank you for the witness of prophets and apostles; for Mary, the first to proclaim the Good News of your resurrection; for Priscilla and Aquila, who opened their home as a center of mission and ministry.

We thank you for the millions of disciples whose names are known only to you, who led their children, their neighbors and their friends to follow you in faith.

Thank you for the courageous reformers and pioneers of the church, for Luther, Calvin, Wesley, William Miller, Ellen G. White, and other messengers you have sent to guide your people.

Thank you for the sacrificial love of those missionaries who have served the sick, the wounded, the hungry and the dying.

We praise you for the acts of grace and mercy you accomplished through those men and women dedicated to reach the Gospel of Jesus.

Give us the desire and the steadfast faith to be your willing witnesses, your helping hands, in the places where we live and work.

Continue the great Adventist heritage of faith through our children and our children's children.

Work through us and through them so that many may come to know the power of your love and we can be ready for the great day of the coming of Jesus, our Savior.

We pray through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen.

Halifax, Nova Scotia to host NET 2002

Revelation Speaks Peace

October 18-November 17, 2002

Are NETS still effective?

NET events have been one of the highs of evangelism since 1995 when Mark Finley was asked to hold the first evangelistic series to be up linked via satellite. The highly technical approach to evangelism, which remains unique to Adventism today, revolutionized the way in which the Adventist Church could reach the world with the gospel.

Satellite evangelism works for the global church because it is a strategically sound way to fulfill the gospel commission through one major effort and without excessive expense at every participating site.

Glenn Aufderhar, NET 2002 coordinator, noted that, "Technology is not the power in the NETs. The power lies in a large percentage of churches doing the same thing at the same time." Surveys show that the number of participating sites grew with the NETs.

NET '95 676 sites

NET '96 1,700 sites

NET '98 1,985 sites

Strategically, it looks like the thing to do, but does it work?

Robert Tomlin, assistant to the president for church ministries, Southeastern California Conference says: "Conference records show a direct correlation between satellite evangelism and church growth." But, he adds, "The value is not just in baptisms. NET '98 did so much for our young people. Students packed the University Church."

Does the concept work at the grass roots level?

Not every church finds the NETs to be effective, depending on the skill levels of the members and the attitude of the local community. And not every pastor feels called as an evangelist. Many pastors are relieved that there is such an exciting resource available to them. Church boards, particularly those with smaller congregations, find it difficult to put together an ample budget for evangelism, and their people resources are limited.

Multichurch pastors are grateful to turn sermon preparation and presentation over to seasoned evangelists.

Especially before the first NET event, many Adventists were concerned that guests would not be interested in attending meetings projected on a big screen. A survey performed after NET '95 showed that of the 23,000 non-members attending, only 105 (or about one half of one percent) expressed negative comments about the method.

Some pastors wondered if the TV evangelist's appeals would seem real and personal to those watching. The same survey showed that three out of four pastors reported that the response to Mark Finley's appeals met or exceeded their expectations.

Participating pastors were asked after NET '95, "Does satellite evangelism work for you?" Ninety-seven percent of them responded that it was either an "excellent" or a "useful" evangelistic tool.

The Church in Canada casts the NET

Though the method may not be perfect, NET events have had an astounding track record. More than 300,000 have come to know the Lord via satellite and now the Adventist Church has nearly twelve million members, due in part to global evangelistic efforts in recent years.

In the fall of 2002, NET evangelism returns, this time from Canada. There's an air of excitement in the Canadian Union as members attend *Re-igniting the Flame* workshops to prepare and equip themselves for successful evangelism.

Young adult to test the waters

Adventist Communication Network (ACN) will uplink the series live from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the prestigious Dalhousie University Student Union. Shawn Boonstra, a young, energetic and gifted speaker for *It Is Written Canada*, has been chosen to partner with Henry Feyerabend, an experienced evangelist and speaker also of *It Is Written Canada*.

"It's a special privilege for me to accept this invitation for it was at an *It Is Written* meeting that I met the Lord and felt called to devote my life to the ministry of evangelism," Shawn explains.

Shawn Boonstra grew up in a conservative Christian home anchored in the Dutch Reformed faith. His political aspirations to become the prime minister of Canada got derailed when he attended the *It Is Written* series.

Now as a young adult, Pastor Boonstra is inspiring people across North America with the prophetic gospel. As he preaches, listeners find themselves understanding more about the Bible in a few nights than some people learn in a lifetime. He's been likened to a twenty-first century HMS Richards Sr. in that he can seldom pass a bookstore without going in. Boonstra uses his voracious reading to enrich his Bible-based preaching.

"*Revelation Speaks Peace* will be much like any full-message series," assures Feyerabend. The twenty-one meetings will be every night except Monday and Thursday with one exception—Monday, October 21. In addition, a Sabbath morning, November 16 meeting will give many people their first opportunity to worship on the Bible Sabbath. All meetings can be downlinked by ACN sites that are properly equipped to receive it.

New approach to NET casting

"We're suggesting a whole new approach to NET evangelism in 2002," says Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the president of the North American Division. "It will allow congregations the freedom to create the evangelistic meeting and follow-up that best fits them."

According to Brad Thorp, director of Adventist Television Network (ATN), "Satellite evangelism is moving in a new direction. Unions and conferences are using it to conduct efforts that focus on a particular approach appropriate for their region." Thorp cites Romania as an example. Recently more than 25,000 people attended meetings live each evening.

Boonstra and Feyerabend have conducted several highly successful evangelistic efforts that have spanned generational and cultural diversity. More than 300,000 viewed a series live in Brazil, where leaders have identified it as one of the most successful satellite events ever.

Don Schneider, president of the North American Division, urges churches to begin planning. "The Lord wants to bless your efforts," reminds

Schneider. "Since *Revelation Speaks Peace* begins just after the first anniversary of September 11, people will still be thinking seriously about their spiritual relationship with God. It's a perfect opportunity to meet people's needs. Let's be prepared."

Written by Bernadine Delafield, she is the project coordinator at Adventist Communication Network.

Adventist Communication Network Introduces

Shawn Boonstra and Henry Feyerabend

Speakers

Net 2002: Revelation Speaks Peace

October 18–November 17



Shawn Boonstra and Henry Feyerabend in the studio where *It Is Written* reaches more than 35 percent of the Canadian population.

The dynamic duo of *It Is Written* Canada, will reach thousands as NET 2002 is downlinked in churches across North America.

Feyerabend's energetic preaching and his use of real-life analogies to convey present truth is complemented by Boonstra's ability to inspire people with his Bible-based preaching.

Already they have conducted several highly successful evangelistic efforts where the unique approach of youth and age, wit and wisdom have spanned generational and cultural diversity. More than 300,000 viewed their series live in Brazil, where leaders have identified it as one of the most successful satellite events ever.

Visit www.acn.info to hear Boonstra and Feyerabend preach.

Free registration: 800-ACN-1119
or www.acn.info



There is a Right Direction in Life

Margarida F. Sarli, editorial coordinator for this section.

Scripture reading

John 14:1-6

Suggested hymns

All the Way Hymn No. 516
The Lord is My Light Hymn No. 515

The purpose of the Christian traveler is to reach the heavenly city gates.

Thought for the day

God's ways are the best, and the only path of safety and happiness is found in obedience to His will.

"Looking unto Jesus" is ever to be our motto. And the assurance is: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 32:8.

"If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p.173.

Offering prelude

"The Lord designed to bring man into close relationship with Himself and into sympathy and love with his fellow men by placing upon him responsibilities in deeds that would counteract selfishness and strengthen his love for God and man. The plan of system in benevolence God designed for the good of man, who is inclined to be selfish and to close his heart to generous deeds."—*Testimonies* 3, pp. 393, 394.

Children's story

Don't compare gifts

Objects: Make up two "report cards" one good and one not-so-good.

Lesson

Don't think of some people as better than others just because they do more. God loves all of us.

Outline

1. Some make better grades in school than others. But that doesn't make them better people.
2. Some who make lower grades actually work harder than some to whom school work comes easily.
3. We cannot see inside another person to know how hard it was for him or her to earn a grade or give a gift. Only God can do that.

I want to tell you about our two girls when they were in elementary school years ago. Our older daughter made good grades in school and brought home her report cards with high marks. Our younger daughter earned report cards with low marks.—But did their mother and I think that our older daughter was better than our younger daughter?

No, of course not. We love both equally. In fact, we knew more than those report cards could tell. Our older daughter always found school work easy, and didn't work very hard at her studies. But our younger daughter worked very hard, spending far more hours each week reading and writing her homework. Her C's meant more to us than her sister's A's because we knew the hard work that went into them.

Only God can see into our hearts and know just how hard we work, even when others seem more successful. So don't think that some are better than others, just because they are richer, or smarter, or prettier. God loves us all just the way we are.

Going in the Right Direction

Text: John 14:6

A. Introduction

1. *Going down a one-way street in the wrong direction is a frustrating experience.* It happened to me during rush hour in a large southern city. Meeting irritated drivers and trying to turn around added to my misery. For the rest of the time I was in that city, I carefully noted each subsequent turn to see if I was going in the right direction.
2. *Jesus talked about the direction of His life. It involved a cross.* Yet, He taught the disciples that the cross was the way of life for the world. Thomas was not sure that he knew the right direction, so he asked, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"—John 14:5. Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"—v. 6.
3. *Going the right direction through your life is important.* It is a joyful experience. Let us learn the instructions of how to travel the pilgrimage of life.

B. Take the only way

1. *Thomas knew of many other claims to be "the way."* There have been many such claims. Philo called his philosophy "the Royal Way." Buddha claimed to be the discoverer of the "right path." Confucius called his teaching "the Way."
2. *Jesus' claim goes beyond the philosophies.* He says, "I am the way." He does not show or direct us to the right way. Jesus points us in the right direction and goes with us. He walks with us to lead us. He guides us as we travel. He does not tell us about the way. He is the way.

C. Believe the truth

1. *If we wish to go in the right direction, we must believe the truth.* Many people have told truths. There is an element of truth in the varied philosophies.
2. *Jesus said, "I am the truth."* This claim goes beyond the idea of a truth. Jesus did not just tell truths; He embodied the truth. Many truths can be conveyed with words only. Anyone can teach truths about love, forgiveness, and humility. But only Jesus embodies these truths.
3. *When we open our lives to Jesus Christ, we can live the good life.* He is the perfect pattern of what life should be. To be open to Jesus, the Truth, means we are going in the right direction.

D. Live the life

1. *Going in the right direction means more than mere existence.* Many philosophies offer an existence—style, not a real lifestyle. People search desperately for that which will make their days meaningful and worth living.
2. *Jesus gives life.* He gives more than the breath which animates our bodies. He makes existence worthwhile. He fills life with meaning.
3. *When a person encounters Jesus Christ he is introduced to God.* Other philosophies offer temporary solutions to life's great riddles. Jesus offers permanent solutions.

E. Conclusion

You can go in the right direction. On your journey, Jesus is the Way. To know the truth is to encounter Jesus. To experience the life is to have real life.

The Law of Love

Margarida F. Sarli, editorial coordinator for this section.

Scripture reading

Psalm 119:9-16

Suggested hymns

Cover With His Life

Hymn No. 412

Trust and Obey

Hymn No. 590

God's people that understand the nature of His love should come to the front and show their esteem and reverence for His commandments.

Thought for the day

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Heb. 2: 17.—*Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

Offering prelude

"This spirit of unsectional liberality should characterize the churches of today. They should continually keep the burden on their souls for the advancement of the cause of God in any and every place. Benevolence is the very foundation of the universe."—Ellen G. White, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 175.

Children's story

Perfect Peace

Lesson

"Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah 26:3.

Many years ago there lived a great man called Chrysostom. He was a good man, noted for the beautiful, kind words that he spoke. But one day he said something that offended the emperor. It was something true, but it was a truth that the emperor did not want to hear, so he decided to punish Chrysostom.

Consulting his great men, he asked, "What shall we do to punish Chrysostom?"

"Banish him from the kingdom," said the first counselor.

"Take away all his money," suggested another.

"Put him in prison," a third one said.

"Put him to death," came from another of the counselors.

Then the voice of another man was heard—a heathen man, but he had more wisdom than the others.

"All these men have given wrong advice," he said. "If you banish Chrysostom from the kingdom, he will not be unhappy. He will be glad that he can preach Christ to others. If you take away his money, you merely rob the poor, for all Chrysostom's money goes to help the poor. If you put him in prison, he will sing as some of the saints of his church sang. If you tell him you will kill him, he will have cause to rejoice, for happy are those, he says, who die for their Lord. No, there is no way to punish Chrysostom, the servant of Christ."

Chrysostom had the perfect peace that nothing could disturb. His happiness did not consist of the things of this life, but in the things of the life above, and that is why nothing could hurt him. He had the perfect peace that comes when our minds are "stayed on" God.

Do things upset and disturb you? Leave them with Christ and they won't worry you. You will have the peace of God in your heart.

It Pays to Observe God's Law

Psalm 119:10

A. Introduction

1. Psalm 119 is an artistic record of the psalmist's devotions and dialogues with God. The psalm contains many prayers that we could profitably pray as our very own prayers.

2. Look at the second stanza of this acrostic poem. It is composed of twenty-two stanzas.

It contains some prayers that each of us needs to pray.

B. Let me not wander from thy commandments—v. 10

1. *The psalmist recognized the human tendency to wander away from the proper path.*

a. He offers a prayer that he might be saved from a life of aimless wandering.

2. *Why does man wander away from God's truths?*

a. Perhaps it is because we have a fallen nature.

b. Perhaps it is because we are forgetful

c. Many of us are preoccupied with other things, and we find it easy to drift.

d. We can be tempted by the promises and the possibilities of what the world has to offer.

e. Some of us wander because of weariness.

The psalmist prays that God will so work in his life that he will be saved from wandering away, straying, from God's precious commandments.

C. Teach me thy statutes—v. 12.

1. Repeatedly throughout this longest psalm in the Bible, we hear the psalmist repeating this petition, "Teach me thy statutes."

2. Each of us should repeat this prayer and mean it with all of our heart.

a. In this petition the psalmist is saying, "I want what God wants."

b. God's grace had worked within the innermost being of this man to cause him to want to follow God's statutes.

3. We need to remember that our Savior was thought of as the great Teacher.—(Matt. 5:1-2; 7:28-29.)

4. Only as we understand the teachings of God through Jesus Christ can we truly walk in His ways and do the things that He wants us to do.

D. Putting feet on our prayers

1. For prayer to be meaningful and productive, we must do more than just talk to the Father God.

a. We must cooperate with Him as He works to bring about the fulfillment of the desires we have expressed in the petitions that we have offered.

b. We can keep our lives pure by bringing our thoughts and actions under the searchlight of God's Holy Word.—Psalm 119:9.

c. We can avoid a life of sin by storing up God's Word in our hearts that it might serve as both a restraint and as a challenge.—v. 11.

d. We can verbalize the great truths and the great insights that come to us from God's Word in our conversations with others.—v. 13.

(Continued on page 29)

Slices of Life

Henry Feyerabend

In His name

When my daughter Aimee was in nursery school, she'd come home each day with drawings, collages, and other projects. Next to her own name she'd scrawl the name of someone she loved—usually Mommy or Daddy, sometimes baby brother Ben. "I did this for you," she'd proudly say.

As I reflect on this, I remember the apostle Paul's exhortation, "Whatever you do . . . do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus" Col. 3:17. If Aimee could do every school project for me or for her Mom, surely I can do my "projects" for my heavenly Father. Now I often ask myself, Have I written my Lord's name on all I've done today?—Laura DuVall Bush.

See: Luke 24:47; Acts 3:6; Acts 16:18; Col. 3:17.

A heavenly shake-up

Sometimes your medicine bottle has on it, "Shake well before using." That is what God has to do with some of His people. He has to shake them well before they are ever useable. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee."—Vance Havner.

See: Isa. 48:10; 2 Cor. 4:7; Heb. 12:11.

Fulfillment lies in walk, not work

God didn't call me to find fulfillment in the quantity of my work for Him but in the quality of my walk with him.—Robert J. Morgan.

See: Eph. 4:1; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:6.



The mystery of motivation

The mysterious internal combustion called (motivation) is sustained when you know you are important to a worthy cause.—Roger Thompson.

See: Ps. 39:6; Prov. 22:29; Matt. 22:4.

Choosing your vocation

Choose that employment or calling in which you may be most serviceable to God. Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honorable in

the world; but that in which you may do most good, and best escape sinning.—Richard Baxter.

See: Eccles. 9:10; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:12.

Wood into marble

It was claimed for Augustus Caesar that he found Rome a city of wood, and left it a city of marble. The pastor who succeeds in changing his people from a prayerless to a prayerful people has done a greater work than did Augustus. . . . And after all, this is the prime work of the preacher.—E. M. Bounds.

See: 1 Kings 18:37-38; 2 Chron. 7:14.

Pray and post guard

After their long and weary exile in Babylon the people of Israel were set free to return to their own land. Spurred on by Nehemiah, they began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This aroused the hostility of the pagans around them, who threatened to undo their work. The people of Israel took two essential steps: they prayed to God, and they posted a guard day and night. Even as they prayed for God's protection and help, they did what they could. They knew

that prayer is not a way to avoid responsibility, it is not a shortcut to success without effort.—Ron Klug. See: 1 Cor. 3:9; Hag. 2:4; Neh. 4:13-14.

Fried chickens don't fly

If God did not bless, not one hair, not a solitary wisp of straw would grow; but there would be an end of everything. At the same time God wants me to take this stand: I would have nothing whatever if I did not plow and sow. God does not want to have success come without work, and yet I am not to achieve it by my work. He does not want me to sit at home, to loaf, to commit matters to God, and to wait till a fried chicken flies into my mouth. That would be tempting God.—Martin Luther. See: 1 Pet. 2:15; James 4:15; Rom. 1:10.

The more important work

One must not always think so much about what one should do, but rather what one should be. Our works do not ennoble us; but we must ennoble our works.—Meister Eckhart. See: Matt. 7:22-23; Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9.

Duty and love

Duty makes us do things well; but love makes us do them beautifully.—Phillips Brooks. See: Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 14:12; 1 Thess. 4:11.

One-track ministry

I suppose they say of me, "He is a radical; he is a fanatic; he only has one idea." Well, it is a glorious idea. I would rather have that said of me than be a man of ten thousand ideas and do nothing with them.—D. L. Moody. See: Mark 13:34; 1 Cor. 3:8.

Each one is needed to make the message known

A certain band of warlike knights had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valor and of indomitable courage and had subdued province after province for their king. But all of a sudden they said in the council chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior. Would it not be better if, leaving a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to rest at home? We should be much more at our ease, our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armor be bruised. Many would enjoy abundant leisure, and

great things would be done by the valiant few."

Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, as the rolls of fame can testify. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered. Then the champion spoke out, saying, "How did you think that a few men could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche and crushed him beneath our feet."

If we, as Christians, are to subdue the earth, every one of us must join in the fight. We must not exempt a single soldier of the cross, neither man nor woman, rich nor poor, but each must fight for the Lord Jesus according to his or her ability, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when all agree to this and put it in practice.—Charles Haddon Spurgeon. See: 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

Activity

Today, through an overplus of Christian activities, Jesus Christ is being dethroned and Christian wits and wisdom are taking his place—Oswald Chambers. We haven't the time to take our time.—Eugene Ionesco.

We hurt people by being too busy. Too busy to notice their needs. Too busy to drop that note of comfort or encouragement or assurance of love. Too busy to listen when someone needs to talk. Too busy to care.—Billy Graham.

Activity

The activities we do for God are secondary. God is looking for people who long for communication with him.

The depths of our spirituality does not depend upon changing the things we do, but in doing for God what we ordinarily do for ourselves.—Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (C. 1605-1691)

The people who are always desperately active are a nuisance; it is through the saints who are one with him that God is doing things all the time. The broken and the jaded and the twisted are being ministered to by God through the saints who are not overcome by their own panic, who because of their oneness with him are absolutely at rest, consequently he can work through them—Oswald Chambers.

(Continued on page 29)

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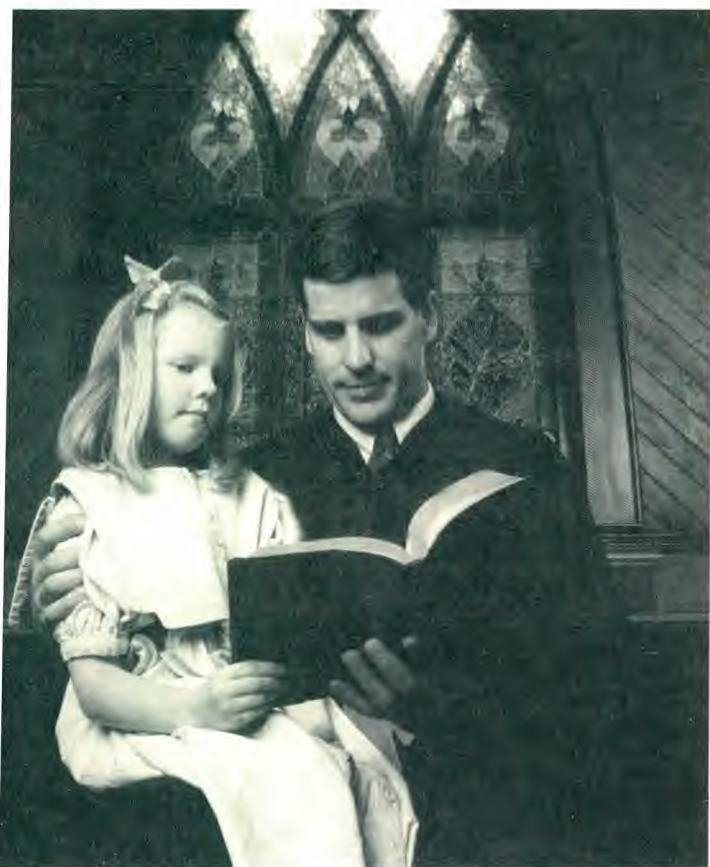
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(Continued on page 29)



entire nights were spent in prayer, that He might be braced to meet the wily foe in all his deceptive working, and fortified to do His work of uplifting and restoring humanity. The man who loves God does not measure his work by the eight-hour system. He works at all hours, and is never off duty. As he has opportunity, he does good. Everywhere, at all times and in all places, he finds opportunity to work for God. He carries fragrance with him wherever he goes.—*Testimonies* 9, p. 45.

He who by an unguarded act exposes the cause of God to reproach, or weakens the hands of his fellow workers, brings upon his own character a stain not easily removed, and places a serious obstacle in the way of his future usefulness.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 659.

“Take My yoke upon you,” Jesus says. The yoke is an instrument of service. Cattle are yoked for labor, and the yoke is essential that they may labor effectually. By this illustration, Christ teaches us that we are called to service as long as life shall last. We are to take upon us His yoke, that we may be coworkers with Him.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

Sympathy and sociability

In every department of the cause of God, there is need of men and women who have sympathy for the woes of humanity; but such sympathy is rare.—*Review and Herald*, May 6, 1890.

We need more of Christlike sympathy; not merely sympathy for those who appear to us to be faultless, but sympathy for poor, suffering, struggling souls, who are often overtaken in fault, sinning and repenting, tempted and discouraged. We are to go to our fellow men, touched, like our merciful High Priest, with the feeling of their infirmities.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 141.

As a people we lose much by lack of sympathy and sociability with one another. He who talks of independence and shuts himself up to himself, is not filling the position that God designed he should. We are children of God, mutually dependent upon one another for happiness. The claims of God and of humanity are upon us. We must all act our part in this life. It is the proper cultivation of the social elements of our nature that brings us into sympathy with our brethren, and affords us happiness in our efforts to bless others.—*Testimonies* 4, pp. 71, 72.

The Savior was a guest at the feast of a Pharisee. He accepted invitations from the rich as well as the poor, and, according to His custom, He linked the scene before Him with His lessons of truth.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 219.

Simplicity

When Christ said to the disciples, Go forth in My name to gather into the church all who believe, He plainly set before them the necessity of maintaining simplicity. The less ostentation and show, the greater would be their influence for good. The disciples were to speak with the same simplicity with which Christ had spoken.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

Thousands can be reached in the most simple and humble way. The most intellectual, those who are looked upon as the world's most gifted men and women, are often refreshed by the simple words of one who loves God, and who can speak of that love as naturally as the worldling speaks of the things that interest him most deeply. Often the words well

prepared and studied have but little influence. But the true, honest expression of a son or daughter of God, spoken in natural simplicity, has power to unbolt the door to hearts that have long been closed against Christ and His love.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 232.

Faith

God's workers need faith in God. He is not unmindful of their labors. He values their work. Divine agencies are appointed to co-operate with those who are laborers together with God. When we think that God will not do as He has said, and that He has no time to notice His workers, we dishonor our Maker.—*Southern Watchman*. Aug. 2, 1904.

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.—*Gospel Workers*. p. 262.

There is in genuine faith a buoyancy, a steadfastness of principle, and a fixedness of purpose, that neither time nor toil can weaken.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147.

Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, "Go forward." We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, "Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly," but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

Courage

A great work is to be accomplished; broader plans must be laid; a voice must go forth to arouse the nations. Men whose faith is weak and wavering are not the ones to carry forward the work at this important crisis. We need the courage of heroes and

the faith of martyrs.—*Testimonies* 5, p. 187.

When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name. God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless.

May the Lord help us to help one another, and to prove Him by living faith.—*Testimonies* 8, p. 12.

Hope and courage are essential to perfect service for God. These are the fruit of faith. Despondency is sinful and unreasonable.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess. Though apparent impossibilities obstruct their way, by His grace they are to go forward. Instead of deploring difficulties, they are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love, Christ had bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the Source of all power, shall be theirs. They are to have power to resist evil, power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master, power that will enable them to overcome as Christ overcame.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 39.

Consecration

True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished. He who lives to himself is not a Christian.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 48, 49.

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. This is not to be gained through education in the most scientific schools. It is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 249, 250.

It is not a conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian because he manifests spiritual ecstasy under extraordinary circumstances. Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to

God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51.

Whole-heartedness

God's people are to be distinguished as a people who serve Him fully, whole-heartedly, taking no honor to themselves, and remembering that by a most solemn covenant they have bound themselves to serve the Lord, and Him only.—*Testimonies* 9, p. 17.

It is whole-hearted, thoroughly decided men and women who will stand now. Christ sifted His followers again and again until, at one time, there remained only eleven and a few faithful women, to lay the foundation of the Christian church. There are those who will stand back when burdens are to be borne, but when the church is all aglow, they catch the enthusiasm, sing and shout, and become rapturous; but watch them. When the fervor is gone, only a few faithful Calebs will come to the front and display unwavering principle. These are salt that retains the savor. It is when the work moves hard that the churches develop the true helpers.—*Testimonies* 5, p. 130.

No man can succeed in the service of God unless his whole heart is in the work, and he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. No man who makes any reserve can be the disciple of Christ, much less can he be His colaborer.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 273.

They are not to engage in speculation, neither are they to enter into business enterprises with unbelievers; for this would hinder them in their God-given work.—*Testimonies* 9, p. 19.

The Redeemer will not accept divided service. Daily the worker for God must learn the meaning of self-surrender.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 113.

Loyalty

The Lord abhors indifference and disloyalty in a time of crisis in His work. The whole universe is

watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that they be loyal to the God of heaven? All through the ages, God has had moral heroes; and He has them now,—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to acknowledge themselves His peculiar people. His special blessing accompanies the labors of men of action; men who will not be swerved from the straight line of duty, but who with divine energy will inquire, "Who is on the Lord's side?" men who will not stop merely with the inquiry, but who will demand that those who choose to identify themselves with the people of God shall step forward and reveal unmistakably their allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Such men make their wills and plans subordinate to the law of God. For love of Him, they count not their lives dear unto themselves. Their work is to catch the light



from the Word, and let it shine forth to the world in clear, steady rays. Fidelity to God is their motto.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 148.

Dexterity

It is the duty of every Christian to acquire habits of order, thoroughness, and dispatch. There is no excuse for slow bungling at work of any character. When one is always at work, and the work is never done, it is because mind and heart are not put into the labor. The one who is slow, and who works at a disadvantage, should realize that these are faults to be corrected. He needs to exercise his mind in planning how to use the time so as to secure the best results. By tact and method, some will accomplish as much work in five hours as another does in ten. Some who are engaged in domestic labor are always at work, not because they have so much to do, but because they do not plan so as to save time. By their slow, dilatory ways, they make much work out of very little. But all who will may overcome these fussy, lingering habits. In their work let them have a definite aim. Decide how long a time is required for a given task, and then bend every effort toward accomplishing the work in a given time. The exercise of the will power will make the hands move deftly.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 344.

The service of Christ demands prompt obedience.—*Southern Watchman*, Aug. 9, 1904. The Lord demands that in His servants shall be found a spirit that is quick to feel the value of souls, quick to discern the duties to be done, quick to respond to the obligations that the Lord lays upon them.—*Testimonies* 9, p. 123.

Industry in a God-appointed duty is an important part of true religion. Men should seize circumstances as God's instruments with which to work His will. Prompt and decisive action at the right time will gain glorious triumphs, while delay and neglect result in failure and dishonor to God.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 676.

Maintain high standards

Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no great object for which to live, no high standard to reach.

One reason of this is the low estimate which they place upon themselves. Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 291.

Throughout His life on earth, Jesus was an earnest and constant worker. He expected much; therefore He attempted much.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

Those who are engaged in service for the Master need an experience much higher, deeper, broader, than many have yet thought of having. Many who are already members of God's great family know little of what it means to behold His glory, and to be changed from glory to glory. Many have a twilight perception of Christ's excellence, and their hearts thrill with joy. They long for a fuller, deeper sense of the Savior's love. Let these cherish every desire of the soul after God.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 274.

To our ministers, physicians, teachers, and all others engaged in any line of service for the Master, I have a message to bear. The Lord bids you to come up higher, to reach a holier standard. You must have an experience much deeper than you have yet even thought of having.

Treasure every ray of light. Cherish every desire of the soul after God. Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that His going forth is prepared as the morning. "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Having repented of our sins, confessed them, and found pardon, we are to continue to learn of Christ, until we come into the full noontide of a perfect gospel faith.—*Testimonies* 8, p. 318.



Ellen G. White, the Lord's messenger, was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Reverence with Children in Church, or Socialized to Sit and Wait



Virginia L. Smith, PhD

You know that front row family with their children who never make a peep, not even the youngest. Then there are the back row families. Everyone can hear what happens back there. Talking, crying, playing, going in and out of the

sanctuary, running down the church aisle. Why can't they all be like the front row family?

Actually the back row families are the real champions in the church. They are staying by despite the difficulties they face. Not just difficulties with energetic children, but also the daunting stares they receive from the saints around them. Less courageous parents—and they are many—head home after the children's Sabbath school ends. Divine service frustration has won over their adult need for another hour of spiritual nurture. Meanwhile the front row family has long since discovered that their children are less likely to be distracted from paying attention to the service. Therefore, parents and children together can reverently engage in worship.

On Sabbath morning in God's house we fellowship with the King of the Universe, the same God who visited with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Reverence does not demand total silence. If it had, Jesus would not have commended the children for shouting in the temple (Matthew 21:15, 16). Reverence does involve an appreciation of how special is the occasion and how important the God we worship who loves to be there with us.

How can we meet the needs of all three groups

gathered in the sanctuary for the divine service? Consider first the children. What goals do we hold for them? Do we want them to go away so they no longer bother us? It may well happen. Do we want them to be socialized to sit and wait for church to end? If so, the result will be the same. As soon as they have a choice, they will stop bothering us.

How much better to deliberately assist in socializing each one of the children to become an active member of the group, aware of what is taking place, and developing their spiritual life by reverent participation in the divine service.

Consider next their parents. This is the very age group we are trying to attract in order to have a growing church. If we allow the ones who are already attending to become discouraged and slip away, we are defeating ourselves.

Finally there are the others in the service who do not have personal responsibility for little ones. Their needs are also important. They have come for a spiritual blessing and should not go home disappointed.

What can be done to meet the needs of all?

I'll start with the most controversial idea first, because it is so important to the church attendance of the young parents: Many churches have training chapels where young families can sit. Too often this becomes a social room for the adults rather than a place to help children learn to reverent involvement in the church service. It would be better to organize a nursery for the babies up to three years old. You will be allowing the parents to receive uninterrupted benefits from the church service. Carefully choose two or more reliable people, maybe teenagers, who will provide a happy safe environment for an hour, ensuring that the children will not develop a negative attitude toward church going. The elders or deacons in charge can wander by frequently to see that all is well. Some

parents will not choose to leave their children in the nursery. Honor their choice.

Engineer the start of a parent support group where young parents can meet and share with each other their church service frustrations, what is working, and what is not. This is more tactful, and fun, than pointed statements from the pulpit or in board meeting about the behavior of children in church.

Recently I received a pamphlet entitled, "Feed the Lambs and the Giraffes Will Be Fed." Think about it. If the needs of the children in the service are considered, then the needs of the other groups will have been met.

Children's active minds can be attentive to church service if adults do not display the attitude that they are to sit and wait for the service to end. Any age group would fidget and squirm if that were their only responsibility. Instead, children can be socialized to view this hour as a time for them, as well as for the grown ups. The more participation they have, the more they will bond to the experience. Here are a few suggestions which may change the atmosphere in your church:

1. Have a child taking part on the platform each week; perhaps reading the Scripture passage, or calling for the offering, praying or giving the special music. This gives every child in the audience the message that they are wanted and needed. Encourage the deacons to include children in taking up the offering. Occasionally have larger groups of children participate up front in some way.
2. Encourage parents to help their children participate in singing the songs used during the service. Give parents copies of the prayer song and response that are used each week to memorize with their children, or have a little class at church to help the children memorize them.
3. Have a children's choir. A side effect is that relatives and friends of various persuasions will attend church when "their" child is performing. You will feed more giraffes.
4. Allow selected children to join the adult choir. Sitting in the choir loft, surrounded by adults, they will certainly pay attention to the service, as well as feel very important and needed.
5. Have a children's story to focus on their level of thinking, but you will find that all age groups give rapt attention. More evidence that if you feed the lambs, the giraffes will be fed.

Try to have the story content linked to the sermon of the day. Then children will be better prepared to listen to the sermon that follows.

6. Give children paper and pencils to use during the sermon. Educate the pastor to welcome them in his opening remarks, then give them a little assignment related to the sermon, such as, draw a picture of what they think the pastor is talking about, or keep track of how many times the pastor uses certain words. Older children can take notes on the sermon. Followup at the close of the sermon is important. Assign someone to collect the pictures to be displayed somewhere in the church; ask how many times they heard the particular words, etc. If the assignment is given then never mentioned again, the message goes to the children that it wasn't serious in the first place.
7. Occasionally have Children's Church. This may be a service for the children separate from the adults; however, it is refreshing for all age groups to have divine service where the children lead out with appropriate adult assistance.

Quite a few churches provide bags of drawing materials, books and other quiet toys for children to use during the service. This thoughtfulness is very commendable; however, without deliberate instruction, it teaches the children not to listen. It adds to the sit-and-wait socialization. Much better for the bag to contain what is needed to complete the pastor's assignment during the sermon for that day. Then it contributes to the children's sense of participation in worship.

The last two verses of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:5, 6) give God's goal for the focus of the Church just before Christ's return. Adults bonding with the children; children bonding with adults; not just parents; all in the context of paying attention to God's Word. What better place for this to happen than on the occasion when God Himself promises to meet with His people, all his people, all age groups; everyone attentively praising God; reverently worshipping together.

Virginia L. Smith, PhD, is the director of Children's Ministry Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

About Christmas?



Each year as Christmas draws near we receive a certain kind of questions. What shall we do about Christmas? Is it wrong to have a Christmas tree?

First, is it wrong to have a Christmas tree? Fortunately, we need not be in doubt on this question. Long ago Mrs. White, the messenger of the Lord, discussed rather fully the subject of our proper relationship to the Christmas season. She states explicitly what we, of course, all know from a study of history, that the date of our Lord's birth cannot be determined. No records of antiquity throw any sure or certain light on this point.

She goes on to say that "the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes." And she adds: "There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through the infinite sacrifice made for them, should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed [that is, as it has been observed by the world], the glory is turned from Him to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for Him to come to our world.—*Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1884.

After describing the true purpose of Christ's advent to the world, Mrs. White remarks: "Parents should keep these things before their children." But

she follows this almost immediately with the statement:

"As the twenty-fifth day of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose."

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

Applying this principle to the matter of a Christmas tree, she wrote in this same article: "On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing." Obviously, if a Christmas tree may properly be placed in the Sabbath school room, it may also properly be placed in an Adventist home. That much seems clear beyond all question.

Is it wrong to give gifts?

What Mrs. White goes on to say further regarding a Christmas tree in the Sabbath school carries us directly into the answer to the second question: Is it wrong to give gifts at Christmas time? "Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let every one remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another, be placed in the Lord's treasury.

. . . In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious

emblem, 'ever green,' suggest the holy work of God and His beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith . . ."

"Every tree in Satan's garden hangs laden with the fruits of vanity, pride, self-importance, evil desire, extravagance,—all poisoned fruit, but very gratifying to the carnal heart. Let the several churches present to God Christmas trees in every church; and then let them hang thereon the fruits of beneficence and gratitude,—offerings coming from willing hearts and hands, fruits that God will accept as an expression of our faith and our great love to Him for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Let the evergreen be laden with fruit, rich and pure, and holy, acceptable to God. Shall we not have such a Christmas as Heaven can approve?"

She writes at some length on this subject of making gifts to the Lord and then presents this earnest appeal to believers: "Now, brethren, let us on Christmas make special efforts to come before the Lord with gifts and grateful offerings for the gift of Jesus Christ as a Redeemer to the world. Let nothing now be spent needlessly; but let every penny that can be spared be put out to the exchangers. Satan has had his way in managing these occasions to suit himself. Now let us turn the current heavenward instead of earthward. Let us show by our offerings that we appreciate the self-denial and sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. Let God be brought to remembrance by every child and parent; and let the offerings, both small and large, be brought to the storehouse of God."

"You that have means, who have been in the habit of making donations to your relatives and friends until you are at a loss to know what to invent that will be new and interesting to them, seek to put your ingenuity to the test, as well as your influence, to see how much means you may gather to advance the work of the Lord. Let your skill and your capacities be employed to make the coming Christmas one of intense interest, paying your addresses to the God of heaven in willing, grateful offerings. Follow no longer the world's customs. Make a break here, and see if this Christmas cannot show thousands of dollars flowing into the treasury, that God's storehouse may not be empty."

"You may not be recompensed on earth, but you will be rewarded in the future life, and that abundantly. Let those who have so long planned for self now begin to plan for the cause of God, and you will certainly have increased wisdom. Let the conscience be enlightened, and the love of truth and of Christ take the place of idolatrous thoughts and love of self . . ."

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

These inspired words are vigorous, and heart-searching. But does she mean that we ought not to spend any money for gifts to loved ones at the Christmas season? We think not. Let us look again at the quotations just given.

Francis D. Nichol. Taken from *Questions People Have Asked Me*, pp. 52-54.

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(Continued from page 3—Editorial).

and emotional rest. You may find two hours during the week, one day away per month, and three to five days sometime during the year to listen to God, to reflect, and to anticipate your tomorrow.

Accountability

This may be difficult for elders. Strongly consider being accountable to someone. Developing accountability relationships will build you up, encourage you, and nurture your spiritual well-being. Find two or three men who will help you, and you them. Through prayer and counsel, decide areas of your life in which you want to be held accountable. Together you help each other develop spiritual well-being and ultimately total well-being. You may choose to be accountable in such ways as time with spouse, time with children, personal devotion, or exercise. Together you pray, seek God's answer, and decide to move.

Your spiritual well-being impacts your social, mental, and physical well-being. When you are at your best spiritually, you feel better physically and mentally, and you relate better to members of the congregation when your spiritual bank account has a surplus.

Adapted from and an article by Tommy Yessick, consultant, Pastor-Staff Leadership Department, Life Way Christian Resources, Nashville, Tennessee.

(Continued from page 19—Slices of Life).

Only a Little Pencil

Mother Theresa . . . and her sisters devoted their lives to God's service and are known throughout the world. When asked about her work, Mother Theresa's reply was: "I am just a little pencil in God's hands. . . . Doing something beautiful for God."—Kitty Muggerridge.

See: Mark 10:43-44; Mark 13:34; Gal. 6:10.

(Continued from page 17—Sermon).

E. Conclusion

1. If we would pray effectively, we need to delight ourselves in God's precepts, His ways, His statutes.—vs. 14-16.

2. Devotional Bible study can be the listening side of prayer.

3. God will speak to our needs through His Word if we study it with trust and with a willingness to be obedient.

4. Let us consider the prayers that the psalmist has given voice to in this stanza, and let us say, "Amen," from the heart to the prayers that we need to pray for our own spiritual good.

For Eternity

Since the beginning He has pleaded with us
To give Him our burdens
To give Him our trust
A constant presence at our side
To give us hope when we feel none
When dreams are shattered and despair overwhelms
He enfolds us into sheltering arms
There is no doubt of His love
For He died on Calvary
So when He bids us to follow Him
We know He'll guide us eternally.

Melisa A. Ríos
Melisa A. Ríos writes from Laurel, Maryland.

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