

ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 9 No. 1



"Morning by morning, as the heralds of the gospel kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power" E. G. White.

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Elders, beware of the trap of sexual misconduct

Joel Sarli

We are living at the end of the times. The church of Jesus Christ needs more than ever all the strength available to fulfill the Gospel mandate. (Matthew 28:18-20.)

Satan is doing everything possible to destroy the credibility of the channels through which Jesus wants to spread the knowledge of His plan of salvation in the world today.

We are in the frontline of the great battle going on between Jesus and Satan in this generation and we need to beware of the strategies Satan uses to reduce our effectiveness in doing the great work so decisive in these last days of human history.

There are some people today who want to minimize the importance of the personal influence of the one that exercises leadership among God's people. But the reality is that God still continues using people to reach people with the message of salvation. God still needs human instruments in His program to rescue people from Satan's territory.

Only a few things can destroy the strength of your ministry as a leader. Sexual misconduct is definitely one of them. What begins as a friendship or counseling relationship can become a sinful affair. Even if the relationship never actually becomes adulterous, an inappropriate sexual relationship can destroy your influence, hurt your family, and damage your church. Here are a few tips to help elders to avoid the trap of sexual misconduct.

1. Don't put yourself in a dangerous situation.

The attention of an attractive person may be flattering, but even the best of people can do the worst of things.

2. Minimize the risk.

Never counsel someone alone. Try to have somebody in the place or in an adjacent area when counseling. Perhaps you could ask a senior officer to be present while you counsel.

3. Know when to refer.

Limit your counseling to one or two sessions and for no longer than one hour in duration. If someone needs more counseling, you should probably refer him/her to your pastor or a Christian professional.

4. Keep your spiritual life strong.

Spend time with God every day.

5. Watch out for some warning signs such as:

* You find yourself looking forward to someone's visit, thinking: *What shall I wear today? Will she/he like this?*

* You rearrange your schedule to accommodate time spent with a woman, even for "legitimate church business."

* You meet in inappropriate locations, at lunch, in his/her home, in your office after hours.

* You find yourself nurturing fantasy. When someone falls, that fall is never sudden. Only the discovering of the fall is sudden. The fall is the result of wrong thinking that began well in advance of the affair.

* You begin to withhold information about your activities from your spouse.

A survey by *Leadership* magazine revealed that almost one clergyman in four admits to engaging in inappropriate sexual conduct.

Some spiritual leaders think they are safe because they do not perceive that they are "handsome" or "attractive." Remember, people are attracted to others for many different reasons, including power, influence, prestige. Elders must constantly be on guard against this temptation.

Giving in to sexual temptation can cost you and your congregation dearly. Your family will be hurt. Your reputation will be destroyed. Your role as leader will be greatly damaged. The other person and his/her family will be deeply hurt. Ask any one who has fallen. It's a trick from Satan. It's not worth it.

There are strong reasons for avoiding sexual misconduct. But there is a more powerful reason. Sexual misconduct is sin. Your ethical, moral actions must please Jesus, the One before whom you will one day stand to give account. **E**





Time:

The unrenewable resource

Aurelio Capingala

Time respects no one and waits for no one. We each count the minutes, hours, or days with anticipation of a delicious event. It comes and passes in a moment flashing into memory, often leaving a vacuum of emptiness. Not one of us knows the allotted quantity of time in life. We only know that each day we possess the same amount. We invest or spend it all.

Time governs every facet of our meager existence. Night and day, rest and activity, weeks and months, summer and winter, years and decades—all mark the cycles of every life.

In this boundary of time, our surrender to the lordship of Christ is tested daily. The test comes in the simple words patience and waiting.

Often the lordship of Christ is tested in the crucible of waiting: waiting for a mate, waiting for maturity, waiting for answers to prayer, waiting to find a job, waiting for a rebellious son or daughter to repent, waiting for health to improve, waiting for relief from pressure, waiting for a conflict to end, waiting for improved finances, waiting for a baby

to be conceived, waiting for tomorrow or next week or next year, waiting for suffering to end. Waiting patiently, without ulcers, without anger, with peace, with assurance—knowing only that God will work, but not how or when He will work.

God's list of heroes and heroines is filled with people who waited. King David waited in the cave of Adullam as he fled from Saul. Moses spent forty years in the desert before he returned to lead Israel out of Egypt and another forty years of wandering in the wilderness—and still brought the people only to the border of the Promised Land. Job waited for God as his health and all he held dear disappeared before his eyes. Elizabeth and Zacharias waited until old age to bear the special child, John the Baptist. Paul the apostle waited in prison, hoping for deliverance which never came, while he wrote letters that are now a part of the New Testament. God waited for the "fullness of time" to send Jesus to die for the sins of the world.

Waiting is part of God's plan in many circumstances of life. I remember many times of impa-



tience in waiting. Waiting—for high-school graduation, for college graduation, for my wedding day, for a check to come in the mail, for news of a new job, and for countless events, great and small. As I grew older, I controlled my impatience better. Yet the old feeling lay just below the surface of my mind—and it still does.

Time and patience are intricately related. Patience is waiting on God's timing. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Isaiah said: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, KJV). Patience, waiting, hope, faith—they weave that unique pattern of a person living under the lordship of Christ.

Of course, often there is no real choice but to wait; God sees to that. How we wait is all important. Some wait with fretting and worry, impatiently counting the hours or days, or anxiously anticipating an expected event. Some wait with stolid resignation, knowing God cannot be hurried, expecting the worst, hoping for the best. They live with a fatalistic view of life, devoid of joy and expectation. Some wait with a deep conviction of faith and a sure sense of God's good plan, joyfully certain that the outcome will bring glory to God.

How do you wait? In waiting you reveal the extent of Christ's lordship in your life. He is Lord of every event, and the timing of every event.

Not all waiting is for an event or a point in time. Some waiting, often the most difficult, is endurance on the midst of hard circumstances. "For you have need of endurance [patience], so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Hebrews 10:36).

Endurance during trials and difficulties expresses

faith and patience in a far deeper way than mere waiting for an expected event. Endurance produces character.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

In Christ's lordship we wait for trials to end with no assurance that they will. So we endure with joy and confidence that He will supply the strength to endure. "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:1-2). We wait and endure, knowing our times are in His hands (Psalm 31:5).

There is an appointed time for everything.

And there is a time for every event under heaven—

a time to give birth, and a time to die;
a time to tear down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-4).

At all times Christ is Lord. **E**

Aurelio Capingala writes from Huambo, Angola. He works in Bongo Adventist Secondary School.

Sensitivity in witnessing

Jonas Arrais de Matos

Pastor Jonas Arrais, Associate Secretary of the Ministerial Association for the South American Division, held this interview during a meeting of elders and pastors at Várzea Grande (next to Cuiabá), in the Mato Grosso Mission. Those interviewed are leaders of Adventist congregations and residents of the State of Mato Grosso.

Elias Frederico Alves was born into an Adventist home and is an elder of the Central Cáceres church.

Ercy Nascimento Nachado has been an Adventist for at least ten years; she is vice principal of the group in Chapada dos Guimarães.

José dos Santos has been an Adventist for 45 years and serves as an elder in the church of Cohab Canela, in Várzea Grande.

Manuel T. Nieves has been an Adventist for 10 years and is an elder in the church of Planalto, in Cuiabá.

They speak about the challenges faced and the strategies employed by their congregations in their neighborhoods.

Question: What does it mean to be a church elder?

Elias: It means to be called to do an important task for God and His church. I believe it means to be a friendly person, humble, who knows how to lead by sharing responsibilities in the church.

José: To be a leader is a great privilege, it carries a great responsibility.

Manuel: It's being a privileged person. To be able to cooperate with the work in the church and to be involved in winning souls is something fantastic!

Question: Which is the most important characteristic of a church leader?

Elias: Consecration and a good example. It is to know how to teach and to delegate responsibilities.

Ercy: Integrity, capability and responsibility.

José: Sincerity and having the Spirit of Christ.

Manuel: Organization, humility, love for the members, and love for souls.

Question: Which are the greatest challenges facing the church today?

Elias: Preaching the Gospel and getting the members ready for Christ's return. There is something preventing the proclamation of the Gospel today, the newly baptized members are not being prepared to become disciples.

Ercy: The preaching of the Gospel and a firm adherence to the principles of the church.

José: The greatest challenge is the spiritual growth of the members and their pledge for the mission of the church.

Manuel: Help the church continue to grow and to advance spiritually and numerically.

Question: How can a leader help to fulfill the church's mission?

Elias: The leader must be in agreement with the goals of the church, also advising, inspiring and preparing the members for the task.

Ercy: Guiding the members to pledge cooperation in the preaching of the Gospel according to the spiritual gifts given to each member.

José: Building new churches and working to fill them up.

Manuel: Working, organizing and training the members of his congregation. Establish goals in harmony with the guidance of the district pastor.

Question: What strategy is being used by your church to promote evangelism?



Elias: We follow the leaders of the Mato Grossense Mission's plan and use the program "Messengers of Hope." We get 25 kits containing a Bible, a Bible course, 50 pamphlets and instructions on how to give Bible studies. In this work we try to involve leaders and members.

Ercy: Small groups with a double task: to visit the homes and Bible groups.

José: The strategy for 2003 is to work with small groups.

Manuel: Teaching the membership and their preparation to form a strong army of members to work in the project: "Messengers of Hope." We use Bible classes in Sabbath School and during Sunday night meetings.

Question: How important is the family in the life of a leader?

Elias: It's a great asset and an inspiration.

Ercy: It's a powerful inspiration that helps us work in close harmony.

José: There is nothing more important than family support.

Manuel: It's fundamental for a leader to receive material and psychological support from the family in church work. It helps all the time.

Question: As a leader of your local church, what do you expect from your pastor?

Elias: I hope that the pastor is a faithful friend. I believe that he should train the members for their jobs and be zealous about the principles established by the church.

Ercy: The pastor should have a positive influence on the membership through his leadership and his preaching.

José: I expect the support of my pastor to accom-

plish the work that, as a leader, I'm doing in the church.

Manuel: Partnership, friendliness, motivation and help.

Question: What's your opinion on women's roll in the church?

Elias: Women have always done a great work for the church. The Lord gave women the responsibility of being mothers and thus they are qualified to work for the church. Ellen G. White said: "that her work at home was the same as that of the pastor in the pulpit."

Ercy: Women do a marvelous work and are a strong arm in the church. Things that men are unable to obtain, they are able to accomplish.

José: The women's roll in the church is very important, and uniting their strength to ours we can haste Jesus' return.

Manuel: It is of extraordinary importance; they possess tact, creativity, and sensibility that can guarantee the success of any work. That has been observed in the work that they do through the Women's Ministry in our church.

Manuel: It's a great privilege to get involved in soul winning.

Ercy: The challenges are the preaching of the Gospel and keeping a close relationship with the principles of the church.

Elias: It's necessary for the leader to be in tune with the purpose and the reason for the existence of the church.

José: Our strategy for 2003 is to work with small groups. **E**

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Trumpeting the Good News

Jesus Is Coming Soon!

The beatitudes of the preacher

Horne P. Silva

- Blessed be the preacher who knows how to preach.
- Blessed be the preacher who shortens his introductions.
- Blessed be the preacher who modulates his voice and never shouts.
- Blessed be the preacher who knows how and when to finish.
- Blessed be the preacher who includes himself among the listeners.
- Blessed be the preacher whose sermons are enunciated and logical.
- Blessed be the preacher whose sermons constitute one unit, have a definite purpose, so that each word is well chosen and meditated upon.
- Blessed be the preacher who allows his congregation to sing a hymn without omitting one single stanza. (If it's a matter of time why not shorten the sermon?)
- Blessed be the preacher who rarely uses the pronoun me.
- Blessed be the preacher who knows that God called him.
- Blessed be the preacher who knows and preaches the Word.
- Blessed be the preacher who lives the message he preaches.
- Blessed be the preacher who is Christ-centered.
- Blessed be the preacher who knows of his need of the Holy Spirit.
- Blessed be the preacher who has completely given his life to God; is inspired by the Holy Spirit; has been anointed with His power to reach souls that may be won to God, and to train them for service while being guided to the feet of the Savior.

Horne Silva writes from São Paulo, Brazil. He is former professor of *Preaching* in Brazil College.

Include everyone in Sabbath School

By Osmar Reis



Discover why the members do not attend their classes and what can be done to improve attendance and participation.

Research has shown that attendance at Sabbath School has declined from 80% of the members to 40% during the last years.

What motivates the absence of the members from Sabbath School?

1. Programs that do not meet the expectations of the members.
2. Lack of better relationship among the members.
3. Little participation and involvement.
4. Lack of motivation.
5. Little cooperation and support.
6. The way in which the professor performs his job.
7. Spiritual problems.

1. Why the programs do not meet the expectations of the members?

- The programs have not been planned before hand or are a last minute preparation.
- Lack of proper preparation on the part of the participants.
- Musical messages chosen at the last minute.
- The mission report is read and very long.
- No consideration is given to the hour in which to begin or end the program.
- Many units do not follow the official program.

Solutions

- Prepare dynamic and inspiring programs.
- Choose the participants in advance in order to allow them time to prepare.
- The report must be presented on a dynamic and attractive manner.

- Observe the hour in which to begin and to end the program.
- Follow the official program.

2. Lack of better relationship among the members

- There is almost no friendship and support among the members of the unit.
- Lack of love. People need God, but also one another. "That you love one another" (John 13:34).
- "We loose much, as a people, for lack of sympathy and fellowship." *Christian Service*, p. 233.
- Many do not feel that they have been accepted as part of the group.
- Large classes became impersonal.
- Lack of unity, the spirit of criticism and competition causes disappointment among many.
- Closed groups within themselves.
- Conflicts produce discomfort thus people tend to draw away.
- The majority of teachers do not promote friendship among the members.

Solutions

- A good number of the members remain in the church because of friendship.
- The teacher must promote friendship among the members.
- Take advantage of those moments of socialization to develop relationships and friendliness among the individuals.
- Periodically promote social activities with the unit: lunches, anniversaries, outings, etc.
- Organize classes of 6 to 10 members in order to facilitate their relationship.
- Produce a secure environment where every one can participate freely.
- Resolve any misunderstanding as soon as it

presents itself.

- Show love and sympathy toward each other.

3. Little participation and involvement

- Many members do not take active part because they are timid and introvert.
- Some teachers control the discussion and give no opportunity for student's participation.
- Some members don't have the Sabbath School quarterly.
- On some occasions some of the older members become jealous if some of the new members wish to participate in the discussion.
- Lovers of themselves, there are selfish individuals who do not become part of the group, because they feel that everything in the church must rotate around them (2 Tim. 3:2-3).

Solutions

- The teacher must request the participation of those who are more timid.
- He must not talk all the time, but should stimulate class participation.
- Provide the Sabbath School quarterly to those who don't have it.
- Unite the new members with the older ones.
- Help everyone to develop unselfishness and brotherly love.

4. Lack of motivation

- The students are not motivated to study the lesson or to be present.
- Recognition. People are saddened when they work for the church and receive no recognition from the leaders.

Solutions

- Praise the students efforts by:
 1. Punctuality and study of the lesson.
 2. Their participation, even if it's in a small way.

5. Little support or reinforcement

- In very large churches where people don't know each other.

- Little association with the members.
- Lack of visitation of the absent members.
- Lack of help in times of crisis.

Solutions

- Keep an updated list of all the members.
- Register all members in the Sabbath School.
- Visit the absentees.
- Show special regard for the new members and help them in their moments of distress.

6. The way in which the teacher performs his duties

- He doesn't know the majority of the students.
- Doesn't worry about why the student is absent.
- Doesn't help him in time of need.
- Produces restraint on the student with direct questions during the study of the lesson.
- He hinders the participation of some of the students.
- He calls the attention of those who don't have the quarterly or don't study.
- Does not recognize the students of the group.

Solutions

- The teacher must know the students and the kind of work they do.
- Know where they live.
- Know their parent's names.
- Visit them in their homes.
- When members are absent, find out the reason for their absence.
- Pray for them and place the names of the absentees and former members on the prayer list.
- Each time a member is absent, somebody should be appointed to visit him.
- Discover the needs of the absentees and do what you can to help them.
- The teacher must help the student to be sensitive of the needs of others.
- Present the lessons in an interesting manner and incite total participation and not coerce the student with direct questions and with observations on his attitude.
- Fraternalize with the students out of the unit and promote social activities with them.

(Continued on page 29)

A roadmap for sermons

Dwight E. Stevenson

An explanation

This is a guide to help preachers in the creative preparation of sermons. It is not a stereotype. Nor is it a crutch. Rather it is designed as a map to indicate the best homiletic highways, and to invite preachers out into the open road of their own freedom and power.

A road-map for sermons

A sermon is the art of homiletics in a highly concentrated and ready-reference form. It endeavors to put at the disposal of young preachers the best principles of sermon preparation, and to refresh the memory of older preachers about forgotten or unexplored realms of preparation. And it aims to do all of this in such a brief compass that it can be spread out on a study desk like a road-map.

The usefulness of the chart will depend upon the degree of seriousness with which its user fills in and observes the specific schedule of days and hours in the two sections: "Preparing the next sermon: Step by step," and "Long-range preparation: Step by step." These schedules are keyed to numbered sections which explain each step in sharp outline. We are confident that any man who takes the trouble to follow the guide week after week will find himself preparing and preaching better sermons.

Before filling in the "Step by step" schedules, read the chart through to the end. At the beginning adopt a schedule provisionally; later on you can revise it in the light of experience, until you have found your own individual pace.

A. Preparing the next sermon

Step by step

- I. Select the idea. (See #1)
- II. Begin "brooding." (See #2)
- III. Write proposition. (See #3) Continue brooding.
- IV. Phrase the title. (See #4) Continue brooding.

- V. Decide on sermon plan. (See #5) Continue brooding.
- VI. Outline the sermon. (See #6) Continue brooding.
- VII. Plan the conclusion. (See #7) Revise outline.
- VIII. Plan the introduction. (See #8) Revise outline.
- IX. Choose illustrations. (See #9)
- X. Write the sermon in full. (See #10)
- XI. Rewrite for style. (See #11)
- XII. Make a preaching outline for the pulpit. (See #12) Rewrite for style. (See #11)
- XIII. Read manuscript aloud 3 times. (See #13)
- XIV. Reconstruct sermon using preaching outline alone. (See #12)
- XV. Outline sermon from memory.

B. Long range preparation

Step by step

- I. A weekly schedule of study (See #14)
 1. Bible study
 2. Reading of books
 3. Research and writing on special projects
 4. Current periodicals
- II. Files of materials to be built up (card index, or letter folders, or journals, or loose leaf note books)
 1. Specific human needs and problems demanding Christian answers (See #17)
 2. Sermon ideas (See #15)
 3. Texts and expository passages
 4. Illustrations (See #16)
 5. Quotations (See #16)
- III. A minimum bibliography on preaching
 - * Bradford, Charles E. *Preaching to the Times*. Ministerial Association Resource Center, General Conference.
 - * Stickland, Mike. *Heralds of God's Word*. Ministerial Association Resource Center, General Conference.
 - * Bresse Floyd W. *Successful Lay Preaching*. Ministerial Association Resource Center, General Conference.

- * Hunt, Marvin. *So You've Been Asked to Speak*. Ministerial Association Resource Center, General Conference.

1. Selecting the idea

- * Leaf through the file of sermon ideas you have been gathering. Select the one that seems most "alive." (See #15)
- * Or seize upon a recent "inspiration" that seems to cry to be preached upon.
- * Make this choice early in the week, not later than Tuesday noon, preferably by Monday evening.
- * Forsaking all other ideas, keep yourself only unto this one the rest of the week. Do not divide your concentration by flirting with other ideas.
- * Write out the idea at the top of a blank sheet of paper—your work sheet.

2. Brooding

- * Brooding—creative waiting or "yeasting." It is known and used by all artists, musicians and creative writers to tap hidden powers of the mind.
- * It is using a number of short periods of concentration over a long span of time to stir the unconscious mind into creative labor.
- * Get time on your side. Start early in the week, not later than Tuesday noon. Brood each day. One-half hour each day is better than four hours at the end of the week.
- * Brood with a pencil and paper. "Tack down" all thoughts using key words and phrases. Save these sheets of "free association" until the sermon is prepared.
- * Let the sermon be the product of your own maturing thought. Avoid running to books now. This is not the time for reading, but for creation.
- * When it will, let free association suggest the organization of the sermon. Never try to force the form early in the week.
- * You can have several sermons in the brooding process at the same time, thus preparing for the future.

3. The proposition

- * The proposition is the whole sermon boiled down to one sentence.
- * The purpose of the proposition is to give unity to the sermon by excluding the irrelevant and drawing in

the relevant.

- * It may be stated or implied in the finished sermon, as delivered. If stated, it may be used most advantageously in the introduction. Other good places for it are in the conclusion and at the transitions between the main points.
- * It should be written out in full on the work sheet early in the week. Never omit it in sermon preparation.
- * Labor to make your proposition say exactly what your sermon says. Make it accurate.
- * It should be worthwhile and important, therefore, more specific than general, but not trivial.
- * Make it clear and interesting.

4. Phrasing the title

- * A good sermon will be better for a suitable name.
- * Avoid making it too general, or technical, too revealing, or sensational.
- * Make it accurate, clear, interesting, and suggestive.
- * Use verbs and colorful picture-nouns for action and for concreteness.
- * Prefer a phrase to a single word.
- * State it in up-to-date terms (ill.—Night Flight).
- * Arrive at it by trial and error. Write out several possibilities and choose the best.

5. The plan

- * The plan is the type of outline found in the main body of the sermon.
- * The purpose of the outline is to impart progress or movement of thought to the discourse.
- * The reason for varying types of outline from sermon to sermon is to supply freshness and vitality to the pulpit message over a span of time.
- * Seek variety in your sermon plans:
 1. Proof. "It is true because . . ." Reasons for upholding a position.
 2. Rebuttal. Reasons for rejecting a belief or position.
 3. Implication. "If . . . then." An insight and its implications.
 4. Jewel. The many "facets" or applications of a truth displayed one after another.
 5. Ladder. Each new point becomes the platform for ascending to the text.—John Wesley's sermon "Money":
 1. Earn all you can . . .

II. Save all you can . . .

III. Give all you can . . .

6. Antithesis. The Wrong and the Right Way.
7. The Chase. The quest of the right way through examining and rejecting a number of proposed ways.
8. Analogy. Framing the whole sermon on an illustration. ill—The church as a ship, with special attention to captain, crew, cargo, port, etc.
9. Dialectical, thesis, antithesis, synthesis.
10. Problem Solving. Move from a problem through its analysis to its solution.
(A number of other plans are possible. Work out some of them for yourself.)

6. Outline

- * Arrange your points with a view to an ascending order of importance.
- * Try to achieve an equal proportion of space or time devoted to each point.
- * Test the points for unity by holding them up against the proposition. Do they all belong to this sermon?
- * Phrase your main points in parallel structure.
- * Work to make your statement of points concrete and memorable.
- * Keep the number of points down to five as a rule.
- * In developing sub-points, do not treat illustrations as points. Use a separate symbol for them.
- * Do not force the outline too early in the week. Normally it will appear about Thursday or Friday.
- * Outline fully before you write.

7. Conclusion

- * In planning conclusion always think of the aim of your sermon. What do you hope to achieve?
- * Conclude on the positive note.
- * Bring the sermon to its climax. Round out and complete the sermon.
- * Make it brief—not longer than one-tenth of the whole sermon.
- * Seek variety by using different types of conclusions, or by combining them:
 1. Recapitulation and summary
 2. Application
 3. Challenge to action
- * Seeking variety by using different elements: poetry, quotations, stories, questions. Avoid a stereotyped manner of concluding all sermons.

8. Introduction

- * Relate your whole sermon to human need. (See #17B)
- * Get attention and create interest, but be sure to tie this interest into the sermon itself. Do not tell stories merely to entertain. Create interest, do not satisfy it.
- * Work for brevity. Make it short.
- * Begin at a level from which you can soar. If you begin at the climax, you will have no place to go but down.
- * Present no more than a single thought.
- * Work especially hard on that first sentence. Make it short and interesting.
- * Include a statement of your proposition and of your plan occasionally.
- * Work for variety in types of introduction:
 1. Make a striking statement and amplify it.
 2. Begin with a good quotation.
 3. Question the validity of the subject. Challenge an ancient truth.
 4. Tell a story.
 5. Read a newsclipping or a letter.

6. Relate an interview.
7. Make a direct statement of purpose.
8. State a problem.

9. Illustrations

- * See that every sermon is supplied with illustrations.
- * Illustrations are the windows of sermons, but do not flood your sermon with too much light.
- * Make them "real." Avoid morbid, sentimental stories.
- * Do not cull them from books of illustrations.
- * Vary the types and sources of illustrations:
 1. Vivid words—picture words
 2. Metaphors and similes
 3. Historical stories, including Bible stories
 4. Current events
 5. Parables and allegories
 6. Descriptions
 7. Anecdotes
 8. Dialogue
 9. Humor and sarcasm

10. Writing the sermon

- * Write only after careful outlining.
- * Reserve a period sufficiently long to enable you to write the whole sermon at one sitting. Make this a habit.
- * Do not become critical of your style at this stage. Create; you can criticize later.
- * Never be satisfied with what you have written in the first draft; go over it for possible improvement.

11. Rewriting for style

- * Take out word padding. Boil it down.
- * See how many adjectives and adverbs you can eliminate without loss of force.
- * Look at each verb. Is there another verb that is more exact, more active, or more concrete?
- * Use specific nouns in place of general ones: "schools" instead of "education," "ballot" in place of "democracy," etc.
- * Kill overused stock phrases.
- * Strive for variety in the length and type of sentences:
 1. Simple declarative
 2. Compound
 3. Complex
 4. Imperative
 5. Question
- * Use some of the devices of style:
 1. Periodic sentences
 2. Balanced sentences
 3. Rhetorical questions
 4. Repetition

12. Preaching outline

- * Write out only key words and phrases.
- * Pare it to the bone. Write down only what you need to aid your memory of the original outline.
- * Test the adequacy of the outline by using it to "run over the sermon in your mind." Make necessary revisions.
- * If you desire to preach without notes, commit this outline to memory. Test your memory by "running over the sermon in your mind" without notes.

(Continued on page 30)

(This is a suggested worship service with all the needy elements)
Margarida Ferreira Sarli, Editorial Coordinator for this section.

Renew my church

Joshua de Castro Filho

Scripture reading

Romans 12:1-6

Suggested hymns

Rejoice, ye pure in heart!

Hymn No. 27

Rejoice, the Lord is King

Hymn No. 221

Offering prelude . . . *His peculiar people*

In 1 Peter 2:9 God designates His people as a "peculiar people." The marginal reference reads, "a purchased people." We have been bought by the precious blood of Christ. We are to be peculiar in that we do not visit the questionable places many people of the world frequent. We do not read the same literature, eat the same diet, follow the same practices.

The word *peculiar* comes from the Latin word *peculium*, which means "belonging to." In the English dictionary one definition of the word peculiar is "private property," or "privately owned."

God's people are a purchased people. They belong to Him because He has bought them. They are His "private property." They are "peculiar," or "different," because they are His and because they seek to serve Him, return the tithe, and keep His commandments. This, in a world of disobedience, makes them "peculiar," or different from those about them.

Children's story . . . *Found the true church*

Lesson: The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17.

"Margaret, I am certain that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord and that God wants us to keep it holy," Louis Rondeau spoke with conviction. "Yes," agreed his wife. "But I don't know any church that keeps Saturday, do you?" "No, but there must be one, and God will lead us to it."

One day Louis felt impressed to take the phone book and go down the list of ministers in the yellow pages and ask them to help him. Picking out a name he dialed the number.

"Hello. This is Louis Rondeau. My wife and I are looking for the church that keeps all the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath. Do you know of such a church?"

"No", the minister said. After several more calls, Louis was given the name of Peter Uniat, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Louis phoned immediately. In his home, Elder Uniat picked up the receiver to hear a man's voice say, "I am looking for a church that keeps the seventh day holy. Can you help me?"

"Yes," Elder Uniat replied. "I surely can."

Studies were soon arranged and Louis and Margaret were thrilled with the beauty of the message that was unfolded before them. Every piece of truth harmonized with the whole. Here indeed was the church for which they had been searching.

On Sabbath, February 17, 1973, Louis and Margaret were baptized in the Edmonton South Church, Canada, and they walked out of the water as members of God's remnant church.

Louis and Margaret didn't have to search any longer. They had found God's remnant people. They had found the church that keeps all the commandments of God, including the seventh day Sabbath. They had found the church of Revelation 12:17.

What about you? Have you been baptized yet? Have you made your decision to join God's remnant church? If not, there is no better time to decide than right now. Why not phone your pastor and tell him that you want to join the baptismal class? He will be happy to help you.

RENEW MY CHURCH

John 13:34

Introduction

Special thoughts

1. Extraordinary power from God must take hold of Seventh-day Adventist churches. Reconversion must take place among the members, that as God's witnesses they may testify to the authoritative power of the truth that sanctifies the soul.—E. G. White, *7th Manuscript Release*, p. 262.

2. This labor of purifying the church is a painful work, but one that must not be neglected, if the church would have the commendation of God. But repent, because thou hast left thy first love. Here is plainly presented before us our work as members of the church of Christ.—RH -PT- *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, *Losing Our First Love* -PR- 17.

3. The church is struggling for renewal today. It is the struggle of Romans 12, conformity to the world or transformation by the will of God. It is the struggle of the Corinthian church between the carnal man and the spiritual man. It is the struggle of Laodicea between the cold, the lukewarm, and the hot.

The burning question today is: What shall we do with the church?

What is our response? Our prayer should be the prayer of Francis of Assisi, "Renew my church!" If that prayer is to be answered, three truths must be steps to the survival of the church.

I. Admission that the church is in trouble

Jesus promised only three things to those who follow Him: They would be absurdly happy, entirely fearless, and always in trouble. The trouble I refer to, however, relates to the church's effectiveness. Church leaders list several areas where the church is in trouble.

A. *The problem of divisions.* Only Christ Jesus could give unity to the church for Jews and Gentiles. The divisions of the church today are between activists and pietists, the social gospel versus the personal gospel, evangelism versus discipleship, and evangelism versus the deeper life. In all of these we need both! We need balance, yet we need priority.

B. *The problem of inconsistency.* There is a gap between what we profess and what we produce. The Christian life is "the way of life," yet there is inconsistency in the way we walk in comparison to the way we talk. Christians ought to be leading the way!

C. *The problem of irrelevancy.* The outside world says the church is concerned with programs, not people, and that even the programs are irrelevant. If the church, possessing salvation and hope, does not witness by life and word, then its existence becomes irrelevant.

D. *The problem of inability.* We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, yet we do not have the power to preserve society and dispel moral darkness. And it is getting worse!

E. *The problem of isolation.* The church is isolated geographically, to a particular place, a building. It is isolated temporally, to a particular time, 11:00 AM Sabbath. It is isolated in personnel, limiting responsibility to professional clergy, to the staff. We have lost contact with the people.

F. *The problem of irreverence.* The church lacks reverence for the Lord of the church, and for His plans for the church. There is irreverence for the Bible and its basic truths for life.

In the light of its problems, our prayer is, "Renew my church!"

II. Affirmation that there is hope for the church

There are some powerful Scripture passages that proclaim the victory of the church.

A. Matthew 16:18. "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is a promise for the life and victory of the church.

B. Matthew 18:20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

(Continued on page 31)

12

Twelve Great Signs of JESUS' RETURN

Introduction:

In this lesson we will study "The Signs of Christ's Coming", and the obvious place to begin is with the pointed question which the disciples asked Jesus about this subject.

Matt. 24:3: *"What shall be the sign of thy coming?"*

Discussion:

When we open the Bible to look for the answer to this question, we discover three significant facts about the signs of the coming of our Lord.

Fact 1—Jesus wants us to “watch” for the signs of His coming

How do we know this? Because, immediately following the disciples' question in Matt. 24:2, Jesus devoted nearly 100 verses to the "signs" of His coming, and the attitude His people should adopt toward these signs (see Matt. 24 and 25). These two chapters are punctuated by the solemn warnings "watch" and "be ready" (see Matt. 24:42, 43, 44; 25:13). Obviously, these warnings would be pointless if there were no signs, or if we could not recognize them!

Fact 2—Jesus expects us to “discern” the signs of His coming

Matt. 16:1-3: "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (To "discern" means to see, to perceive, to recognize, to interpret, to understand.)

Heb. 10:25: "As ye see the day approaching."

Matt. 24:32, 33: "Know that it is near, even at the doors."

Fact 3—Jesus has made it as easy to tell when His coming is near as it is to tell the time of day

When we see the minute hand, "World conditions," coming nearer and nearer to the point of agreement with the hour hand, "Bible signs," we can know by that sure token that our Lord's return is near! Consider these twelve great signs of the return of Jesus, which are being fulfilled in our day:

The "Scoffers" sign (2 Pet. 3:3, 4)

Peter predicted that the prevailing mood of the "last days" would be one of open skepticism about the signs of Christ's coming. This is certainly true today. Every modern scoffer is a walking, talking sign of the coming of the Lord. The Christian can say to the scoffer: "Friend, Peter made a prediction about you. You are the latest sign I've seen!"

The "War" sign (Matt. 24:6, 7)

The 20th century has witnessed the two greatest wars of all history (1914-1918; 1939-1945. Total of over 70 million killed, wounded or missing). The years 1900-1970 have been the most bloodstained 70 years on record.

The "Famine" sign (Matt. 24:7)

Our century has witnessed four of the greatest famines of all history (Russia 1921, 1933; China 1928-1930; Bengal 1943-1944. Estimated deathroll totalled over 20 million).

The "Pestilence" sign (Matt. 24:7)

Our century has witnessed one of the greatest pestilences of all history ("Spanish Influenza" epidemic, 1918. Estimated 21 million victims).

The "Earthquake" sign (Matt. 24:7)

Our century has witnessed two of the greatest earthquakes of all history (China, 1920. Killed 180,000 people. Japan, 1923. Total casualties 1,500,000, of whom 200,000 perished). The Japanese earthquake was described at the time as "The greatest single disaster since the Flood!"

The "Knowledge" sign (Dan. 12:4)

Today we are witnessing "an epidemic of human inventiveness". Man has made more spectacular advances in science, inventions, medicine, transportation, communication, and in almost all other areas of knowledge in the past century, than in all previous centuries put together!

The "Speed" sign (Dan. 12:4)

Never in all history was there such an unparalleled "running to and fro" as there is today. Never were there such amazing facilities for rapid and easy travel. Never was there such an obsession with speed. Never were such fantastic speeds achieved, or dreamed of.

The "Perilous Times" sign (2 Tim. 3:1-3)

In spite of the most ingenious and costly equipment for fighting crime—violence, murder, robbery and rape are increasing at an alarming rate. Law enforcement agencies can curb, but they cannot cure.

The "Fear" sign (Luke 21:25, 26)

Since the advent of the atomic bomb, our dream of peace and security has turned into a nightmare of terror! At the very time when man's mastery of his environment ought to guarantee freedom from fear, "Stark fear has the world by the throat!" says one observer.

The "Noah's Day" sign (Matt. 24:37-39)

In Noah's day advanced civilization and great learning were marred by unbridled violence and scandalous immorality. So it is in our day. But the most alarming aspect of the current moral landslide is the fact that it is occurring in spite of the most superb enlightening and civilizing agencies ever available to man!

The "Gospel" sign (Matt. 24:14)

During the past 75 years, through the magic of the

printing press, the aeroplane, radio, television, and—latest of all—Communications Satellites, the preaching of the Gospel on a world wide scale has become an actual possibility. One man can now address an audience of tens—even hundreds of millions of people! The Bible is translated into over 1,300 languages, and is being distributed at the rate of 100 million copies every year.

The "All These Things" sign (Luke 21:28-32)

When confronted with this impressive list of signs, some people argue: "But crimes, and wars, and earthquakes, and pestilences have always been happening. There's nothing abnormal about these things; so how can you treat them as signs? Besides, sincere people in the past have expected the Lord to return in their day, and have been disappointed. They misinterpreted the signs. Couldn't we be making the same mistake?"

Those who raise this objection overlook one immensely significant difference between our generation and all past generations. It is simply this: Today, for the first time since the risen Lord ascended to heaven, all the predicted major signs of the end of the age are synchronizing! One or more of these signs may have occurred in earlier generations, but never have they all occurred simultaneously, as we see them today!

Jesus has never asked us to believe in the nearness of His coming on the strength of one sign alone. One solitary snowflake does not make an avalanche. But when all the rapidly multiplying signs are allowed to bear their accumulated testimony, they make an avalanche of irresistible power. So unmistakable are the signs of Christ's coming that no intelligent person should fail to recognize them. They are as plain as if God were to speak in thunders from heaven, or to write in giant, blazing letters in the skies!

Conclusion

Why do you think God has given us a chance to hear these tremendous tidings? So that we might "discern the signs of the times" and be ready to welcome Jesus with eagerness and joy.

Luke 21:28: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh!" **E**

Frank Breden writes from Melody Park, Australia

Suffer the little children

Karen Holford

Making our church services appealing to children is basic evangelism

Jesus has just entered Jerusalem on a wave of triumph and rejoicing. Little children and their parents run down the roads, carpeting them with olive branches. Praises rend the air! As the procession nears the Temple, a sense of expectation, of hushed excitement, marks the moment of joy. Will He declare Himself king now? What's going to happen?

Later Jesus enters the Temple. Here they are again: the money changers, the peddlers, the businessmen. Will they ever learn? Will they ever understand? One look from Jesus and they beat a hasty retreat. The atmosphere of peace takes over from the din of commerce. Shattered bodies and broken hearts surround Jesus, expecting healing. But the children come without any fear or hesitation, but with a lot of excitement. Now they have Jesus for themselves. They love Him. They love His stories, the way He listens to their secrets and their sadness, the way He touches their hair and the bumps on their knees. He tells them things in ways they can understand, with pictures painted in words that fire their imagination and their desire to discover things for themselves. Their joy overflows and they sing as they have never sung before. "Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna! Hosanna! Then the chief priests and the doctors of the law turn to see what's going on. Horrified at the carefree tumult, they turn to Jesus indignantly. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" "Yes," replies Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?' " (Matt. 21:16, NIV). That was long ago. Consider today. What about the children in your church? Are they to be "seen and not heard?" Do we discourage them from getting close to Jesus? Do we have well meaning but short sighted people shooing them away from a Savior who is longing to have them pull on His clothes, rumple His hair, whisper in His ear, and offer Him handfuls of wilted weeds? Are the children welcome as much in church as in Sabbath school? Can they worship as easily in the sanctuary the Jesus they have learned to love in cradle roll?

A strange dichotomy

Observe here a strange dichotomy. On the one hand the Adventist Church preaches strong family values. We believe that teaching a child to love God starts in the nursery. We have a thorough and excellent system of instilling them with biblical knowledge. On the other hand, when it comes to divine service children are hushed into corners, and forced to be quiet through more than an hour of proceedings that may be as understandable to them as Latin is to the rest of us! If they are really lucky, they might have a special story. "Suffer the little children" takes on a new meaning when we consider just how much they have to suffer us!

There is a grave danger here. Children quickly learn that there is nothing for them in the second service. It's not even worth making the effort to listen because they feel that they can't understand. There is nothing interesting to look at. They probably don't know the hymns. The prayers seem to last an eternity. And there is no part in the service for child participation, except for a well-defined story slot that usually requires only the passive involvement of the child. And with ValueGenesis ringing loudly in our ears, we need to ask ourselves where all this is going to lead our children a few years down the line.



I don't know if these struggles are exclusive with Adventists. Many churches around us have found creative ways of involving children in their special family services. Last Christmas morning at our local twelfth-century Anglican parish church, children were found on their hands and knees under the pews looking for red parcels tied with green bows. They opened these presents with great excitement and found the figures for the Nativity scene, which they then helped to complete. As each figure emerged from the ripped paper, the vicar told of the importance of that character in the First Advent story.

Every family service centers on the fact that children will be there. The songs and hymns are ones the children will know or will enjoy learning quickly. Children can help collect the offerings. The prayers are simple and short. The sermon is brief—never more than 20 minutes—and full of illustrations, visual aids, drama, experiments, and active child involvement, pressing home a simple point with clarity, leaving the parents as richly blessed as twice as many words told in a less creative manner.

Questions of concern

Before you think about all the ways your church could welcome children with more open arms, you need to ask yourself a few basic questions.

Does your church take so much pride in its perfectly choreographed, polished and professional divine services that the involvement of children could prove calamitous? Children are, after all, prone to mishaps, stage fright, and mumbled words, and are capable of creating utter chaos out of thin air. If you are afraid that children might ruin your image, maybe your image needs a little rumpling!

Second, do you need to change the church's attitude toward children? Do children really feel welcome in your church, or are they always having to worry about Mrs. Soandso offering a free weekly lecture on reverence to any child who gets within an earshot? Maybe some of the adults will need educating in the whys and hows of welcoming a child into the church. Maybe some of them will need a gentle hint to be silent and to smile rather than glare and shake long fingers.

Third, think about the church environment. Is your church parent-friendly and child-safe? Has care been taken to provide thoughtful design features? Is there a comfortable, well-equipped parent's room for those who need it? Is there privacy for nursing mothers (and no, a washroom cubicle is not a wonderful place to nurse a fretful baby for a half hour—it is uncomfortable and you would not like to eat your dinner there either! Are floor coverings comfortable and safe? In one cradle roll room the carpet grazed the children's knees whenever they knelt to pray! Do you have child-height toilets in the washrooms, and sinks at an appropriate level with easy-to-manage taps? Can a child reach the towels or hand dryer?

It is amazing how designers of public places seem to neglect these finer points of ergonomics! Check to see that children cannot fall over the sides of stairs and over unprotected precipices. Is your heating system safe for children? Are all fires well guarded? Even hot pipes can give a child a severe burn. Are the church grounds checked before each Sabbath for broken glass and cleared of animal droppings? If you hold regular potlucks, do you have low tables and chairs for children and high chairs for babies?

Fourth, are you willing to spend a little extra time planning for children in your services? There are a

lot of simple ways to help retain their interest in almost any service without making any radical changes. Even planning a family style service once a month or once a quarter could help families and children feel more comfortable about coming along. You could sing at least one child's hymn chorus. If the words aren't in your songbook, write them out for an overhead projector or on a large poster board so everyone can join in. Let any children who know the song come up to the front to help teach it to others, and let children bring their musical instrument from Sabbath school. It will certainly be "a joyful noise unto the Lord!"

Family involvement

Perhaps we need to plan deliberately to include children and family in many areas of divine service. Have children help in collecting the offerings, and rotate the children to give everyone an opportunity. Even if you can't do this every Sabbath, try it for the family service week.

Ask a family to take the morning prayer. Give them plenty of notice so that parents may help children compose parts of the prayer. Parents themselves may open and close the prayer. Older children may want to write a prayer of their own.

As a pastor, you can do a lot to hold the children's interest. Tell a child's story as an illustration in the middle of your sermon. That will break the monotony for the younger listeners. Ask children to count the number of times you use a key word in your sermon. Your pockets can hold special surprises for the kids who participate. Accuracy is not important—and you are unlikely to know exactly how many times you used the word anyway.

If you find that children like to draw during the sermon, ask them to draw you a picture about something in your message that they find interesting. Or you could be more specific: if your sermon is on the parable of the great banquet, ask the children to design an invitation to heaven. Some churches have developed work sheets based on Bible topics that provide creative ideas for keeping children involved during family services.¹

Preaching with children

Better, explore different preaching methods that allow active child involvement. You don't need to involve every child: as long as one child is involved, the others will prick up their ears and watch what

you will do next. Be sure to allow the children to take turns in helping you so that over a period of time no one is left out. Children can be placed in a tableau, even dressed for the parts, to help you tell a story. Coach them through the movements and talk about the roles of the different characters. The children will never forget such involvement. And the adults too will get a fresh insight.

Children can help you perform scientific experiments that illustrate your sermon. Or you could adapt a simple game. One pastor hid objects around the church that were symbolic of the importance of the Bible in our lives: a candle or flashlight (light for our way), a jar of honey (sweet, leaving us longing for more), milk (food to help us grow), etc. During the sermon he read out rhyming clues to help the children locate the items, from which he then drew lessons.

Using visual aids is a good idea. Most of us will remember a sermon better if there is something relevant to look at. Try using your overhead projector creatively with overlays and pictures during the sermons. In one sermon I will never forget, a pastor opened his suitcase and showed his audience the things in there that helped him on his travels, and drew spiritual lessons from them. He had a map, flashlight, passport, ticket, mirror, sponge bag (a container for a bath sponge and toiletry articles), money, food, and outreach cards.

Perhaps you could ask the children to create a visual collage for you that illustrates your sermon, or make a large banner to be displayed in the family services that illustrates the importance of children in corporate worship.

To stimulate your thinking along these creative lines, visit your local Christian bookstore. *For All the Family*, compiled by Michael Botting,² an excellent starting point. Even if you choose not to use the suggestions there, you'll find yourself thinking up new approaches to present the Word of God that will appeal to far more of your congregation than just the children. Exploring different Bible characters and the parables will provide you with a wealth of ideas that can be made visual and interesting for wriggling young minds. Keep the services short and varied with a change of activity or a new, vibrant illustration every so often.

If you have a large church, you probably have a pastoral team. Allocate the responsibility of family services and ministering to children to a member

of your team. If you feel that a family service wouldn't be appropriate because of the church's size or the layout of the sanctuary, or because your services are broadcast, consider running family services in a separate room or building that is more suitable.

Beyond the service

Does your responsibility cease with the divine service? Have you ever gone to a home purely to visit a child? Maybe you should start a child visitation program. Have a plan to visit the children on their birthday. Take a small gift or a card, and be sure to pray with them. Take time to build the trust and friendship of the children. Listen to what they have to say and what they think about your preaching in divine service!

Does your church have a lending library of Sabbath videos, audio cassettes, and Sabbath games for families to borrow? You could have a group that shares ideas on or plans for special family events on Sabbath afternoons, such as walks along nature trails, or perhaps you can organize a series of activities celebrating the days of Creation. The first week the children could explore air by blowing bubbles, letting off balloons with Bible texts or outreach cards tied to them, etc. The second week they could go to a lake or waterfall or explore different uses and properties of water, etc. These families-centered Sabbath activities will also help parents provide appropriate enjoyment for their young children, and can help stimulate ideas for creative Sabbaths between new members and their families who will not have had previous experience of how joyful and a meaningful Sabbath can be with children.

When children visit your home, are they sent to play in another room while the adults talk? Could you plan a special activity for them? Write a rhyming treasure trail around your home on which a letter of each of the clues will eventually make up a Bible name or text, with a small gift at the end. Write the

clues on study cards and you can retrieve them at the end for future use. At the table provide Sabbathplace mats to color. While adults are chatting, children can have crayons to complete a picture.

Is all this just a gimmick? Is it bringing show business into the church? Does it sound ridiculous? Making our church services appealing to children is a much more serious matter than that: It is basic

evangelism. Untold hundreds, maybe thousands of young people leave the church because they feel that it has nothing to say to them, that it doesn't meet their needs, and that it is boring. The attitudes and feelings develop in children from a toddler hood! By the time they are teenagers they feel so alienated from the church that it is hard to keep them interested.

What would Jesus do in our day? Jesus, who turned out the grown-ups with their self-centered, legalistic, and greedy attitudes toward the church, and filled the Temple courts with happy, singing children? Jesus, who welcomed the little ones even when He was exhausted, and gladly spent time building relationships with them and finding ways to explain His loving truths to them so that their developing minds could comprehend? If He came to your church this Sabbath, would He preach an intellectual sermon to thrill the theologians? Would He rave about relatively insignificant points? Or would He, as He always did, tell stories, employ strong visual images, and use the familiar word to explain spiritual truths and maintain the interest of every child, teen, and adult in the entire congregation? **E**



Karen Holford writes from England.

Notes

1 *Instant Art for Bible Worksheets* (Rattlesden, Bury St. Edmunds, U.K.: Palm Tree Press, 1989-1990), books 1-3.

2 Michael Botting, ed., *For All the Family* (Eastbourne, U.K.: Kingsway Publications, 1984).



DO
YOUR
BEST *To*
PRESENT
YOURSELF
APPROVED

E. G. White

Success does not depend on outward display

Some ministers make the mistake of supposing that success depends on drawing a large congregation by outward display, and then delivering the message of truth in a theatrical style. But this is using common fire instead of the sacred fire of God's kindling. The Lord is not glorified by this manner of working. Not by startling notices and expensive display is His work to be carried to completion, but by following Christlike methods. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." It is the naked truth which, like a sharp, two-edged sword, cuts both ways, arousing to spiritual life those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Men will recognize the gospel when it is brought to them in a way that is in harmony with God's purposes.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 383, (1915).

Never bring truth to a low level

Never bring the truth down to a low level in order to obtain converts, but seek to bring the sinful and corrupted up to the high standard of the law of God.—*Manuscript 7*, 1900.

Refrain from all theatrical display

I have a message for those in charge of our work. Do not encourage the men who are to engage in this work to think that they must proclaim the solemn, sacred message in a theatrical style. Not one jot or title of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work. God's cause is to have a sacred, heavenly mold. Let everything connected with the giving of the message for this time bear the divine impress. Let nothing of a theatrical nature be permitted, for this would spoil the sacredness of the work.

I am instructed that we shall meet with all kinds of experiences and that men will try to bring strange performances into the work of God. We have met such things in many places. In my very first labors the message was given that all theatrical performances in connection with the preaching of present truth were to be discouraged and forbidden. Men who thought they had a wonderful work to do sought to adopt a strange deportment and manifested oddities in bodily exercise. The light given me was, "Give this no sanc-

tion." These performances, which savored of the theatrical, were to have no place in the proclamation of the solemn messages entrusted to us.

The enemy will watch closely and will take every advantage of circumstances to degrade the truth by the introduction of undignified demonstrations. None of these demonstrations are to be encouraged. The precious truths given us are to be spoken in all solemnity and with sacred awe.—*Manuscript 19*, 1910.

Danger of sensational teachings

You may be sure that pure and undefiled religion is not a sensational religion. God has not laid upon anyone the burden of encouraging an appetite for encouraging speculative doctrines and theories. My brethren, keep these things out of your teaching.—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, March 15, 1904.

Not to ape the world

We are handling subjects which involve eternal interests, and we are not to ape the world in any respect. We are to follow closely the footsteps of Christ. He is a satisfying portion and can meet all our wants and necessities.—*Manuscript 96*, 1898.

Our success will depend on carrying forward the work in the simplicity in which Christ carried it forward, without any theatrical display.—*Letter 53*, 1904.

Preparing the soil for the good seed

Remember that great care is to be exercised in regard to the presentation of truth. Carry the minds along guardedly. Dwell upon practical godliness, weaving the same into doctrinal discourses. The teachings and love of Christ will soften and subdue the soil of the heart for the good seed of truth.—*Letter 14*, 1887.

Do not arouse controversy and opposition

Learn to meet the people where they are. Do not present subjects that will arouse controversy. Let not your instruction be of a character to perplex the mind.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 58 (1900). Do not arouse opposition before the people have had opportunity to hear the truth and know what they are opposing.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 36 (1900).

Do not drive people from the truth

Upon us there rests the solemn responsibility of

presenting the truth to unbelievers in the most forcible manner. How careful we should be not to present the truth in a way that will drive men and women from it. Religious teachers stand where they can do great good or great evil . . .

The Lord calls upon us to come to the banquet of truth, and then go out into the highways and hedges, and compel souls to come in, by presenting the great and wonderful offering that Christ has made to the world. We are to present the truth in the way that Christ told His disciples to present it, in simplicity and love.—*Letter 177*, 1903.

Dignity of the messenger

Decorum is necessary in the desk. A minister of the gospel should not be regardless of his attitude. If he is the representative of Christ, his deportment, his attitude, his gestures, should be of such a character as will not strike the beholder with disgust. Ministers should possess refinement. They should discard all uncouth manners, attitudes, and gestures, and should encourage in themselves humble dignity of bearing. They should be clothed in a manner befitting the dignity of their position. Their speech should be in every respect solemn and well chosen.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 648, 649 (1868).

Platform conduct

But things that are wrong often transpire in the sacred desk. One minister conversing with another in the desk before the congregation, laughing and appearing to have no burden of the work, or lacking a solemn sense of their sacred calling, dishonors the truth, and brings the sacred down upon the low level of common things.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 612, 613 (1871).

An offense to God

Sometimes the assemblies of God's people have been treated with a commonness which has been an offense to God and has robbed the sacred work of its holiness and purity.—*Letter 155*, 1900.

Waste no time with apologies

Many speakers waste their time and strength in long preliminaries and excuses. Some use nearly half an hour in making apologies; thus time is wasted, and when they reach their subject and try to fasten the points of truth in the minds of their hearers, the people are wearied out and cannot see their force.

HEBREWS

Understanding the book of Hebrews

Elder's Digest explains passages of the Bible

Hebrews 10:8, 9

“Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”

Dispensationalists believe that the ten-commandment law was a part of the law of Moses, which disappeared with the old covenant. These verses are used to support that false premise. The “law” of verse 8 is undoubtedly associated with the “first” covenant which is “taken away” in verse 9. But did that law include the ten commandments? Those same sacrifices and sin offerings are described in 2 Chronicles 8:12, 13: “Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord . . . even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses . . .”

This makes it very plain that the law concerning those burnt offerings—the one mentioned in Hebrews 10:8—was called the commandment or law of Moses. It was a part of the old covenant system that was taken away by “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (v. 10).

But please note this important fact: the ten-commandment law was not a part of that

which was done away. Christ is quoted in verse 9: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.” But let's get the full text of what Christ said from Psalm 40:7, 8: “Lo I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

Don't miss this point: the law within the heart of Christ is tied to the second or new covenant that was to be established. This is why in verse 16 the new covenant is described in these words: “This is the covenant that I will make . . . I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” The law that was in the heart of Jesus and which did not end with the old covenant is the ten-commandment law.

Magnified by Christ (Isaiah 42:21) it was transferred from the tables of stone to the fleshly tables of the heart.

Hebrews 12: 22-24

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

According to verse 24 Paul is here talking about the glories of the new covenant relationship as compared to the old covenant idea of human effort alone. Sinai (v. 18-21) is used to represent the old covenant, and in the New Jerusalem.

In Galatians 4:24-26 the very same parallel is made symbolizing the two covenants by Sinai and Jerusalem. Some have interpreted these verses to mean that souls go immediately into the heavens at death to appear at the judgment bar. But please notice that these people come "to Jesus the mediator of a better covenant." Those who are saved in heaven will no longer need a mediator such as is described here. Sin will have ceased for them. Paul is actually describing the life of a Christian here in this world, as he begins to experience the joys of the new covenant relationship. Such a Christian comes to:

1. Mount Zion . . . the city of the living God." Peter speaks of the church in similar language, "lively stones . . . a spiritual house". . . (1 Peter 2:4-6).

2. "An innumerable company of angels"—descriptive of the angel ministry for the saints mentioned in Hebrews 1:7.

3. "The general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven"—another description of the body of Christ on this earth. Paul spoke of his fellow laborers as those "whose names are in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3).

4. "God the Judge of all." This is parallel language to Hebrews 4:16, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace," and Hebrews 7:25, "them . . . that come unto God by Him."

5. "The spirits of just men made perfect"—not disembodied spirits as some imagine, but the kindred spirit of Christian with Christian. Paul contrasts those who walk "after the flesh" and those who walk "after the spirit." But these are real people who have spiritual natures which are sanctified through the blood of the new covenant. Compare Hebrews 10:14: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."—The Editor **E**

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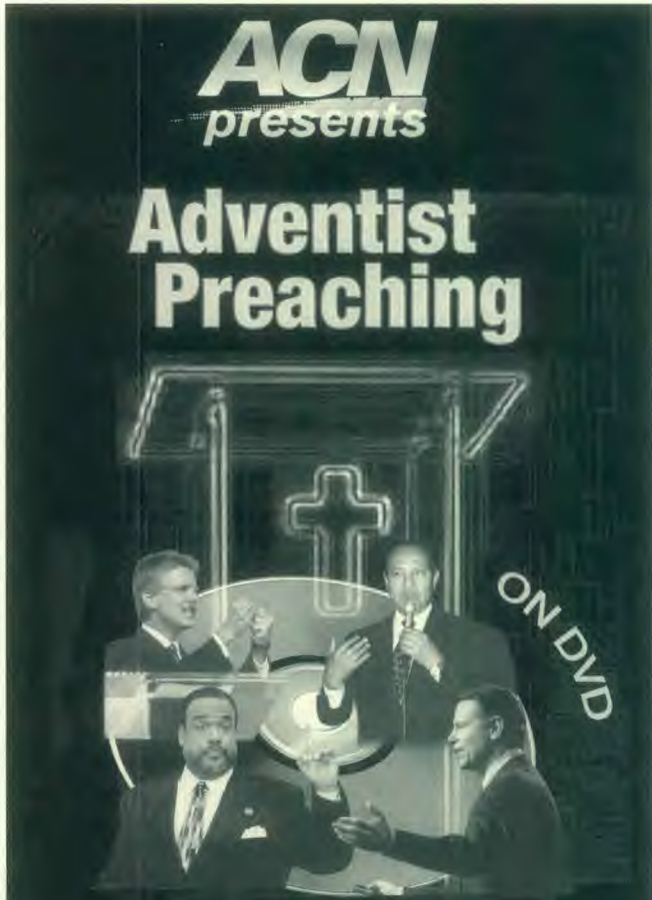
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(Continued from page 25—Do your best. . .)

Instead of apologizing because he is about to address the people, the minister should begin as if he knew that he was bearing a message from God.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 168 (1915).

The public prayer

The prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. God does not require us to make the season of worship tedious by lengthy petitions. . . . A few minutes is long enough for any ordinary public petition.—*Gospel Workers*, p.175 (1915).

Pray with heartfelt simplicity

We need not make long public prayers. With heartfelt simplicity we should state our needs to the Lord, and claim His promises with such faith and confidence that the congregation will know that we have learned to prevail with God in prayer. They will be encouraged to believe that the Lord's presence is in the meeting, and they will open their hearts to receive His rich blessing. Their faith in your sincerity will be increased, and they will be ready to listen with willing ears to the instruction given by the speaker.—*Manuscript 127*, 1902.

Hurried, rush movements

The Lord gave you your work, not to be done in a rush, but in a calm, considerate manner. The Lord never compels hurried, complicated movements.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 189 (1904).

Avoiding the grotesque

We cannot be shepherds of the flock unless we are divested of our own peculiar habits, manners, and customs, and come into Christ's likeness. When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, then the element of eternal life will be found in the ministry. There will not be a fund of stale repeated ideas, there will be a new perception of truth.

Some who stand in the pulpit make the heavenly messengers in the audience ashamed of them. The precious gospel, which it has cost so much to bring to the world, is abused. There is common, cheap talk; grotesque attitudes and workings of the features. There is, with some, rapid talking, with others a thick, indistinct utterance. Everyone who ministers before the people should feel it a solemn duty to take himself in hand. He should first give himself to the Lord in complete self-renunciation, determined that he will have none of self, but all of Jesus.—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 339 (1896).

Discard uncomely gestures and uncouth speech

The workman for God should make earnest

efforts to become a representative of Christ, discarding all un-comely gestures and uncouth speech. He should endeavor to use correct language. There is a large class who are careless in the way they speak; yet by careful, painstaking attention, these may become representatives of the truth. Every day they should make advancement. They should not detract from their usefulness and influence by cherishing defects of manner, tone, or language.—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 238 (1913).

Evangelist's personality

The position of our ministers calls for health of body and discipline of mind. Good sound sense, strong nerves, and a cheerful temper will recommend the gospel minister anywhere. These should be sought for, and perseveringly cultivated.—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 466 (1875).—Taken from the book *Evangelism*, pp. 136-147. **E**

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

(Continued from page 11—Include everyone in SS).

7. Spiritual problems

- Formalism. Many Christians simply take the name, but their hearts remain carnal (2 Tim. 3:5).
- Worldliness. "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).
- Lack of prayer, daily study of the Bible and of the Sabbath School lesson.

Solutions

- Review with the students those things that relate to the Christian lifestyle.
- Pray with them.
- Motivate them to study the Bible, the lesson and the Spirit of Prophecy.
- Help them obtain a real experience with Christ.
- Time has come for us to do a special work in favor of the members through the Sabbath School. **E**

Osmar Reis is director of Personal Ministries in the South American Division.

(Continued from page 15—A roadmap. . .)

13. Reading the manuscript

- * Read the manuscript aloud several times, as near to the time of delivery as possible, preferably early Sabbath morning.
- * Read the manuscript aloud first to recreate the sensual images which lie back of the words. Try to taste, smell, hear, see and touch what you are talking about.
- * When your words are general, supply concrete imaginative symbols for them. ill.: For "democracy" see an election booth or the Capitol dome.
- * Read the manuscript aloud a second time to convey the main units of your thought. Give special attention to peaks of emphasis and to transitions.
- * Read the manuscript aloud a third time, visualizing the persons to whom you are to deliver it, trying also to preserve the values of your first and second readings.
- * Lay the manuscript aside an hour before delivery and do not think of it again until you deliver the sermon. Do not carry the manuscript into the pulpit.

Long-range preparation

14. Reading and study

- * Read the Bible each day at a regular time.
- * Always keep some part of the Bible under systematic study—using commentaries and dictionaries.
- * Keep a good book "going." When you finish one, start another.
- * Read by fields, i.e., read several books in each field, and group by fields. Strive for some competence in each field: Theology, Social Ethics, Pastoral Psychology, Philosophy, Science, Literature, etc.
- * Read two or more current magazines of real merit.
- * Get your own private research project, and become an authority on the subject.

15. Gathering ideas

- * Ideas "hit you" as you read, study, converse, do your calling. Do not strain for ideas. Receive them.
- * Write each idea down at once. Do not depend

upon remembering it. A few sentences should suffice to indicate the essence of the idea.

- * File written ideas in a special folder, card-index, or notebook. These ideas will accumulate by the score.
- * Look through these ideas occasionally, adding a few sentences as they occur. You may want to discard some. Keep the file "alive."

16. Gathering illustrations and quotations

- * Let them rise of themselves out of your reading and observation. A good illustration or quotation should "ache to be remembered."
- * Carry small notebook or card case for writing these down and noting their source. Do not depend on remembering them.
- * Transfer these cards or notes to some permanent file.
- * Look through these occasionally to keep them familiar. Discard those that are out of date.
- * Work out your own system of indexing or use no system at all.
- * Note date of use on each as it becomes a part of a sermon. Do not repeat for seven years!
- * Do not subscribe to magazines of quotations or buy books of illustrations. They are crutches that will make you weak.

17. Areas of preaching

A. Christian truth about:

1. God
2. Jesus
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Man
5. Evil: a. Sin
b. Suffering
6. Salvation
7. The Church
8. The Kingdom of God
9. Prayer
10. The Bible
11. Immortality

B. Human problems:

1. Personality difficulties which produce futility, inadequacy, anxiety, loneliness, worry.
2. Life adjustments and decisions that must be made: vocation, Christian life, life partner.

3. Economic distress
4. Moral problems
5. Social injustice
6. Expanding individual interests
7. Church problems
8. Family conflicts
9. Misfortunes
10. Child training
11. Thwarted ambitions
12. The meaning of religion

C. Human needs:

- a. Physical needs: Food and drink
Relaxation
Sex
- b. Social needs: Affiliation
Love
Nurturance
(helping others)
- c. Egoistic needs: Dominance
Autonomy
Achievement
Acquisition
Retention
Knowledge
Attention
Destruction

18. Sermon types

1. Textual. A short passage of scripture is used— one verse or part of a verse. All the divisions of a sermon are drawn from the text.
2. Expository. A paragraph, chapter, or book of the Bible is used as a text, and all the divisions of the sermon are drawn from it.
3. Topical. The topic is developed in its own way. A text may be used for background or emphasis, but not as the source of the sermon's structure. **E**

(Continued from page 17 — Sermon)

C. Revelation 2 and 3 contain these words. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." So long as these words exist, there will be salvation and survival for the church.

D. Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

E. John 12:24 (RSV). "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies." Death to our will, to our goals, to our ways, to our plans, to our self-existence. He then gives life!

IV. The awareness that the time is short

The time is short for this generation, the time is short because the church is losing its spiritual sensitivity, the time is short because Jesus is coming again, the time is short because people die without the gospel in their hearts, and the time is short because "night comes, when no one can work."

V. Conclusion

I have hope for the church because our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. As He is, so are we in the world. The time is now when we are to present ourselves to Him for His usefulness. If we build the altar, He will send the fire!

VI. Illustration

What to bring to church?

Bring yourself and your spirit of worship.

Bring reverence for God and His house.

Bring your offering (the tithe plus).

Bring a spirit of love and fellowship.

Bring a hearty handshake and a smile.

Bring a kind word and helpful thoughts.

Bring your willingness to help sing, and sing out of your heart.

Bring a friend or relative, be sure to bring your visiting friend.

Bring your best each Sabbath to church, and get the church-going habit. **E**

Special contribution to *Elder's Digest* from Leo Ranzolin, Vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Josue de Castro writes from São Paulo, Brazil, where he works as pastor.

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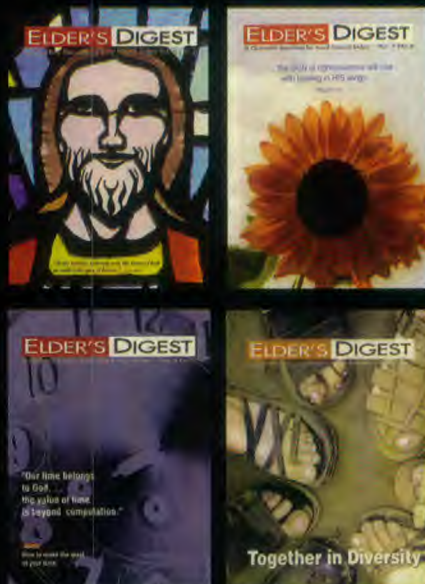
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