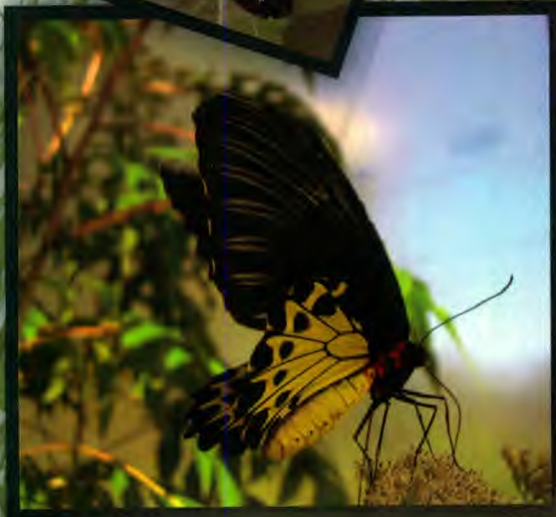


ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 10 No. 1



NATURE and REVELATION alike testify of GOD'S LOVE

Steps to Christ, p. 10.

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Joel Sarli

The greatest evidence of true leadership

What a man! What an elder! Who can read the story of Moses without being deeply moved by his love and devotion to the great congregation that was his? What an encouragement it is to leaders of God's Church today. Within Moses' flock were all sorts of people: unappreciative, critical, faithless, but like the Chief Shepherd, he loved them with a love that never failed.

At Kadesh-barnea, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, emulating Lucifer before the God of creation, accused Moses and Aaron of assuming too much authority. Moses reasoned with them openly and frankly and then gave them until the next day to think it over and to pray about it. But the sore festered and they became only more determined in their ways. Because of this and for the good of the people, drastic measures became necessary.

Through their supernatural deaths, it became evident that they had been fighting against God. It would seem that the leadership role of Moses would now be forever fully justified in the eyes of the congregation. Instead, "The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled

against Moses and Aaron. 'You have killed the Lord's people,' they said" (Numbers 16:41). Then God called Moses and Aaron, saying, "Get away from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once" (Numbers 16:45). But Moses would not resign his people to such a fate. His love for them and the cause they represented was much more meaningful to him than any personal abuse. Allowing no time for reflecting on his own hurt, he had Aaron take the censor "to make atonement for them" (Numbers 16:46). Already 14,700 had died of the plague, but through the forgiving, compassionate intervention of Moses and his brother "the plague stopped."

The greatest evidence of true, dedicated leadership on the part of an elder is perhaps willingness to carry on loving ministry in behalf of the people when he is misunderstood, his true motives questioned, and his work seemingly unappreciated. How many elders through the years have desired to leave their responsibility to others or become discouraged and quit because of thoughtless, over-talkative or even conniving souls whom Satan has used to hinder rather than help. But this need not be. Read again the account of Moses or Paul and, above all, that of Jesus Christ. Having done this, what else can we do but carry on in the same self-sacrificing, forgiving spirit, trusting in the grace of Christ.



During the first meeting of the wives of the elders of the Ecuador Union, Pastor Jonas Arrais, Ministerial Associate of the South American Division spoke with six ladies. They are: María Lucinda Tulmo Jácome, from the Playas Satacunga Church, wife of Luís Patricio and mother of three children; Pilar Sebasthianouska Calderón Jurado, from the South Quito Church, wife of Diego Fernando, and mother of two little girls; Vicky Rivas de Cárdenas, from the South Guayaquil Church, wife of Abraham and mother of two girls; María Nieves Tulmo Jácome, from the Yanahusko Church, wife of José Ricardo and mother of four boys; Teresa Karolys e Reyes, from the La Merced Church, wife of Juan Miguel and mother of five boys; and Laura Fustillos de Ortíz, from the Cinco de Junio Church, wife of Jorge and mother of one boy.

By the Elder's side



Elder: What does it mean to be an elder's wife?

Lucinda: To uphold and help her husband so that he may feel motivated.

Pilar: I believe it's a privilege and a great responsibility.

Teresa: It means love, understanding, patience and much dedication.

Vicky: It's a privilege and at the same time a challenge. Privilege because I have the opportunity to serve God in almost all the departments of the church. A challenge because one has to dedicate the family and thus go out and help the husband as an elder.

Nieves: It's a reason to be proud. After I was given that responsibility six years ago, my life improved.

Laura: It's a privilege that I received from God, and also a responsibility that must be fulfilled within and without the church. She must understand where her help is necessary; so that her prayer, help and understanding to the ministry of the husband will be successful.

Elder: What importance does the role of the wife play in the life of a man who is in charge of a church?

Lucinda: To obey the Word of God and maintain a special communion with heaven.

Pilar: Since we are closer to them, we can discuss more personal issues and be better partners.

Vicky: The importance is fundamental because the wife must be a help and not a hindrance. She must be always ready to be a help wherever it's necessary.

Nieves: The most important role is to support him through prayer and the study of the Bible, besides taking care that his clothing is always in order.

Teresa: Walking together, supporting and praying much in order to obtain the necessary strength to go forward.

Laura: Her role is fundamental for team work. In other words that her abilities and gifts added to those of her husband must be placed in God's hands for the proclamation of the good news of salvation.

Elder: What type of support can the wife give her husband?

Lucinda: Work with him so that the message may be given to others.

Pilar: The most important thing is to be his companion, understanding him, supporting him in the

spiritual as well as in the emotional, sentimental and physical well-being.

Vicky: That support must be total. In the first place, leaving him free to look after the needs of the church, the wife must be responsible for the children, when they are small; and at church, when her services are required she must be willing to participate, including to pray if that were the case.

Nieves: Teach the brethren that in the first place we must have our personal worship before any other activity and help him consider the Lord's business of greater importance than anything else.

Teresa: Much praying and unconditional support.

Laura: The support that the elder's wife must give her husband is unconditional, being at the same time loving and understanding.

Elder: How do you evaluate the first meeting of the Union's elders' wives?

Lucinda: I feel very happy to be in this place, and at the same time being preoccupied about my little girls.

Pilar: Very well. These have been days of great benefit for reflection and motivation, and to realize that we are not the only ones with problems concerning the time and obligations of our husbands.

Vicky: This meeting of elders' wives was fabulous; it greatly contributed to my recognizing responsibilities. Our husbands are not the only ones responsible. Here we learned what our role is within the church. Other countries should do likewise.

Nieves: I feel very happy to have taken part in this seminar. I also feel that God has His values and wishes us to use them.

Teresa: Marvelous. Let there be more togetherness.

Laura: It was a very interesting and spiritual meeting. Above all its purpose was to teach us how to help our husband's labor so that their work is more fruitful in the church.

Elder: In your opinion what are the three main attributes of a church elder?

Lucinda: Promote communion with God, Bible study and guide the members.

Pilar: The Word of God says that they must be faithful husbands. Not given to wine or worldly passions, and without reproach, besides being leaders emotionally balanced and capable of transmitting the divine teachings.

Vicky: The elder's characteristics: be God's servant, be about the church's business and always



be an example.

Nieves: Give a good testimony, encourage those who are weak and be punctual.

Teresa: Humility, patience and be conscious of his need of God.

Laura: His congregation. Be connected with God 24 hours a day, and his desire to cooperate and do well in everything for the church. Be a missionary and contribute with new ideas for the growth of the church.

Elder: How can the elder's wife contribute to the fulfillment of his mission?

Lucinda: I help by participating in my husband's activities, and when possible I accompany him on his trips. Together we visit places and I always try to have his clothes and food ready.

Pilar: We can help them by suggesting ideas and work strategies, being their aids without impairing their work.

Vicky: As I said, the elder's wife must take active part in church activities helping and being always ready to give her opinion and her time.

Nieves: Sharing God's word and helping the sisters so that they can understand it.

Teresa: Being a helper on the side and understanding that I also have the responsibility for souls.

Laura: Being an unconditional helper, and above all, praying for the husband's ministry.

Elder: What is the greatest difficulty of the elder?

Lucinda: I believe it's work, since he needs to travel to town, work for a living, and during his absence he cannot support the church's activities.

(Continued on page 19)

deacons

take care of almost everything

Their work is indispensable to the church



Eurico Tadeu Xavier

The work of the deacons originated with the controversy around the care given to the widows of the church in Jerusalem; therefore, it was required of those men who were invested with high spiritual qualifications to show us that the material work was not the only responsibility for which they were chosen.

The *Church Manual* presents the different activities inherent to the deacon's and deaconess' office as follows:

Care of the sick and the poor. An important responsibility of the deacons is to care for the sick, help the poor and the suffering. ADRA works in close cooperation with the deacons and deaconesses of the church. The funds for that work must be provided from the church funds for the needy. The church must be totally informed of the needs, so that the participation of the members may be enlisted.

Help to prepare the baptismal service. The deacons and deaconesses must play their part in the needed preparation for that ceremony, in order to prevent confusion or delay. The deacons must help during the baptismal service, making sure that the place is ready and that the male candidates will be taken care of before as well as after the service.

The deaconesses help during the baptismal ceremony making sure that the female candidates are prepared before and after the service. They counsel, as well as help, where necessary concerning the appropriate robes for the ceremony. These should be made of adequate material.

In churches where the robes are used, the deaconesses must see that they are washed, pressed and carefully stored in the place assigned for them for future use.

Help in the communion service. During foot washing the deacons or deaconesses provide everything necessary for the ceremony, such as towels, basins, water (at a comfortable temperature such as the occasion will require), buckets, etc. After the ceremony, they must ascertain that all the implements have been washed and kept in their proper place.

After the Lord's Supper, extreme care must be given as to what will be done with the remaining portions of the bread and the wine. The remainder of the wine that was blessed must be poured on the ground. The remainder of the bread that was blessed must be burned.

The deaconesses will help in the foot-washing ceremony, helping especially women visitors or the sisters

who had recently joined the church. Besides, it is their duty to provide all that is necessary for this ceremony, such as taking care that the tablecloths, towels for the feet, etc. used during the service, be washed and ironed and carefully stored in their respective places.

The deaconesses are responsible for the communion table. Prepare the bread, the wine, set the table, serve the wine, place the plates of unleavened bread and cover them with a tablecloth designed for that purpose. All this must be done before the ceremony begins.

The communion service must be presided by an ordained pastor or by the church elder. The deacons, although they have been ordained, cannot preside in the ceremony, but can help to distribute the wine and the bread to the members. After the ceremony the deacons and deaconesses clear the table, collect the glasses and take the remaining bread and wine and burn or bury the bread and pour the wine on the ground.

Communion for the sick. If a member happened to be sick, or if for any other reason could not leave home to attend the communion service, a special service may be performed at his or her house. This service may be performed only by an ordained minister or the elder of the church who may be accompanied by deacons or deaconesses who helped during the regular communion service.

To help during worship and other meetings. During church meetings, the deacons are generally responsible for greeting the members and visitors arriving at the temple and help them, if necessary, to find a place to sit. They must also be ready to cooperate with the pastor and the elders in order to improve

the meetings being held in the church.

Care and up keep of the church. In some churches, where the responsibility to take care and maintain the property of the church is not assigned to a construction committee, the deacons take on that responsibility. The deacons are responsible for taking the necessary steps to see that the building is kept clean and in good condition, and that the land on which the church was built be kept neat and as attractive as possible. This includes being a watchman. The deacons should recommend to the church committee a capable person, and it's the committee who decides, by vote, to employ such help. Or the church committee may authorize the deacons to hire a watchman. Authorization from the church committee must be obtained for all expenses involved in maintenance of the church. All expenses for repairs, water, light, oil, etc., are given to the church treasurer for payment.

Visitation of members. One of the most important responsibilities of the deacons is to visit the members in their homes. In many churches this is done by distribution of the members by districts and assigning one deacon per district. He must visit each home at least once every quarter. The deacons must concentrate their attention on the elderly and those who due to some limitation have been absent from church.

Counting the offering. All loose offering must be counted by the treasurer in the presence of another church officer, preferably a deacon and give him a receipt. **E**

Eurico Tadeu Xavier is district pastor in Santa Catarina, Brazil. Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

Venturesome leadership

Orley M. Berg

Israel had come to the borders of the Promised Land. The hopes of months of wearisome travel were now to be realized. Israel would soon be in the Land of Promise. The dream of centuries, the vision of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was finally to meet fulfillment.

In this last hour, however, one thing was yet needful. The people must know more of the land they were to enter and of the demands that would confront them. To this end twelve representative men, one from each of the tribes, were selected and sent on ahead as spies.

The story is a familiar one. Their report spoke of grave danger. The enemy was a formidable foe, far greater it seems than had been anticipated. The cities were great and walled. And the inhabitants were giants, before whom they appeared as grasshoppers.

In this report thus far rendered all twelve of the spies agreed. Surely the enemy was great. Seven powerful heathen nations were spread over the land. Their fortifications were such as to withstand the most daring adversaries.

But at this point a sharp difference arose. Ten of the twelve, a convincing majority, reviewing the situation, quailed with fear: "The situation is impossible. Before them we will be doomed to certain destruction, there's only one thing to do—return to Egypt."

To the multitudes this seemed a logical conclusion. In the light of the report and recommendation of their representatives, there was no alternative.

The missing factor

But Caleb and Joshua saw things differently. Although recognizing fully the dangers before them and the strength of the enemy, they recognized also another factor seemingly forgotten by the others. After all, it was God who had brought them thus far. It was He who had given the command to go in and possess the land. It was He who had promised to fight their battles for them. It was He who had promised them victory over every foe.

These two men of faith now rose to the occasion. Looking beyond the seemingly forbidding circumstances, above the towering walls and the boastful giants, discounting the grasshopper complex of the masses, they saw only the commands and promises of God.

A little more than a year before they had seen God's power displayed at Sinai. They had heard His voice amid thunder, earthquake, and lightning. Before the holy mount all Israel had entered into a sacred covenant of obedience. To Caleb and Joshua it had been a solemn and meaningful occasion. To them the covenant entered into was genuine. With God's help they would be loyal and obedient.

Now in this hour of trial and test they stand forth as mighty men of faith and courage. The cowardice and fear of the multitudes meant many

years of needless delay in the conquest of the land. But the faith of these two never faltered. Finally they alone of all who had left Egypt were privileged to enter in.

History repeated

Today the story of the twelve spies is often repeated at the council tables where the work of the Lord is under study. Once again we stand at the borders of the Promised Land. Now, as then, the divine assignment to reach all the land with the gospel seems an impossible task. The opposition is great and our numbers and resources are small. It is easy to determine statistically that actually more people are being born every day than are being reached with the divine proclamation. In our own cities we can look upon untouched multitudes. The enemy has monopolized the TV, radio, newspaper, and every other means of communication. Major evangelistic campaigns come and go, and even they pass unnoticed by the masses.

In committee meetings at every level of our church organization, from the General Conference Committee down to the local church board, it is easy to join our sentiments, voices, and votes with the faithless ten of that bygone day. But the experience of Caleb and Joshua directs us to the better way. These two men who led ancient Israel into Canaan represent the kind of venturesome leadership needed in our churches today.

To us come the same words of command and promise spoken to Joshua as he assumed the leadership role laid down by Moses, "Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River, into the land I am about to give to them . . . Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:2-9). **E**

Orley M. Berg, former associate editor of *Ministry*.

ACTS 100



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acknowledgement • communion • training • service

Start Small and Build

God's people need to join their leaders in praying for success (Esther 4:16).

Don't worry if every member doesn't immediately participate in your organized prayer groups.

Begin with just a few and build toward prayer strength.

Mary Barrett, who partners with her husband in urban ministry, says: "When we first began ministering in Central London, sometimes there was just one woman and myself meeting for prayer.

"We prayed that God would develop an intercessory prayer group and now we have about 35 people who pray every month for baptisms, for members, for our church to become a magnet to draw unchurched people to God, and for our congregation to value His holiness and righteousness."

"As a team, we are praying together for God to do amazing things."

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The historicity of the Bible

Enio dos Santos

To clarify why some books were not accepted as part of the sacred canon.

The Holy Scripture is called the Bible, a great work that means “books” because it compiles a group of inspired books, known as canonical books. “Biblical Canon,” what is it? Canon is a Latin word meaning “model.” The Latin word is derived from the Greek *kanon* from “cana.” A measuring instrument used in biblical times in place of our “meter” today. Therefore, the biblical canon is the list of inspired books that make up the Bible, which give an authorized testimony of God’s revelation, serving as a Christian pattern of procedure, and as criterion or rule through which a thought or doctrine is measured or judged (Gal. 6:16; 2 Tim. 3:16). *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, pp. 122-123. Editora Vozes e Santuario, 1994 edition.

The inspired books, as an expression of God’s word, which comprise the original biblical canon, as a rule of faith and doctrine, are 39 in the Hebrew Scripture of the Old Testament, and 27 of the New Testament, totaling 66 canonical books which, possessing infallible and eternal truths became a court of last resort.

Uninspired books

The Bible that contains seven additional books was taken from the “Greek Bible,” or “Septuagint.” Translated from the Hebrew Bible into Greek in 250 B.C. Seven books were included which were not part of the inspired books of the original Hebrew Bible. They are Tobias, Judith, I and II Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus and Baruc. (Frei Mauro Strabeli, *Biblia, Questions People Ask*, pp. 16, 17. Pauline edition.)

At the time, Greece dominated the world, and it was king Ptolemy Philadelphus, of Egypt, who

ordered the translation of the Septuagint. Probably the seven books were added to it, at his request at that time or later on.

Why should those seven books not be accepted as inspired or canonical?

1. As Frei Mauro Strabeli reminds us, “The Old Testament Scriptures, considered as original, is the Hebrew Bible whose books were accepted as ‘canonical’ from the beginning and without discussion.” (*Ibid* p. 16.)
2. Prophets did not write those books, since it was a time of interruption in the prophetic succession. Thus, only the 39 books were considered divine or inspired, says the much-respected Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, born shortly after Christ’s death. (*Answer to Apion*, Book I, p. 8.)
3. According to Josephus the Old Testament Canon with 39 books was dated between 465 and 425 B.C. In 90 A.D., the Jewish Council of Jamnia analyzed the remaining seven books, but rejected them. (*Answers to Those Questions*, p. 53. Editora Candeias.)
4. Besides those seven books not becoming part of the original canon, their inspiration was considered only by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent on April 8, 1546 and called “deuterocanonical” (or canonical of the second period). (*Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, p. 124. Editora Vozes, 1884 edition.) The Catholic Church made them official in order to stop the movement of the Protestant Reformation.
5. The Jews, to whom God appointed depositaries of the Scriptures and His oracles (Rom. 3:2), “accept as inspired only the 39 books of

the Hebrew Canon. They reject the seven books considered deuterocanonical." (*Bible of the Pontiff of Rome*, p. 6.)

6. Jesus and the apostles used the 39 original Hebrew books; they quoted the Old Testament 1,378 times, but not once the seven books. Therefore, Josephus was right when he affirmed: "We only have 39 books for which we have enough reason to believe that they are divine." (*Answer to Apion*, book I, p. 8.)

7. The Christian church rejected them as inspired and canonical allowing them to be read only as books of historical importance. (*Biblical Manual*, p. 358.)

8. The Church Fathers such as Athanasius, Gregory, Hilarius, Rufinus and Jerome adapted the 39 Hebrew books. (*Biblical Manual*, p. 358.)

9. Jerome, who translated the Hebrew Bible into Latin between 382 and 404 A.D., the so-called Latin Vulgate became a defender of the 39 Hebrew books and translated only the uninspired book of Tobias for the "Vulgate" by order of the bishops. (*Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, p. 124. Editora Vozes.)

10. They teach doctrinal and historical errors according to what follows:

Such errors and contradictions reveal that these seven books do not pass the incontrovertible test of "biblical inspiration" of sacred and canonical books, inserted in the "dogmatic constitution of the catholic faith," during Vatican Council I, which says: "The books of the Bible are declared sacred and canonical, not because they have been received by her (the Church) approval and authority: not only because it contains the revelation without mixture of errors, but because having been written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have as the author the true God and as such they were given to his church." (*Bible translated by the Pontifical Bible Institute of Rome*, p. 6.)

Before that declaration, it could not be said that those seven books were inspired and canonical because the Catholic Church so declared it, but she herself says that it is not the church that qualifies them as inspired and canonical. And if we can say that such books are inspired by the Holy Spirit, having as author the same God, we'll be admitting that God the Father and the Holy Spirit are authors of errors and contradictions.

The last test, those seven books are not inspired, their authors never claimed inspiration for themselves, and Maccabees affirms that there were no prophets in their time (I Mac. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). He closed his book declaring his inability to clarify it and thus apologized: "My exposition is imperfect and mediocre, and that I could do no better" (II Mac. 2:24; 15:38, 39). "Jerome the translator of the Vulgate, called those seven books *apocrypha* which means hidden, secret, or not inspired." (*General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 88.) The seven *apocrypha* books are only of historical and literary value. Therefore, we should accept as inspired only the 66 canonical books as rule of faith and doctrine (2 Peter 1:21).

Enio dos Santos is president of the South Occidental Rio Grande Mission.

Some errors taught by the seven uninspired books that clash with the 66 canonical books of the Bible

Canonical books or Scripture

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Narrative of the deceiving angel about his origin. Tobias 5:1-9. | Isaiah 63:8;
Hosea 4:2. |
| • Says that bread should be denied to the wicked. Eccles. 12:4-6. | Prov. 25:21, 22. |
| • A woman fasting all her life. Judith 8:5, 6. | Matthew 4:1, 2. |
| • God gives Simeon a sword to kill the Schechemites. Judith 9:2. | Gen. 34:30;
49:5-7 |
| • A thrashing purifies from sin. Tobias 12:9. | 1 Peter 1:18, 19. |
| • Burning a fish liver drives away demons. Tobias 6:6-8. | Acts 16:18. |
| • Nebuchadnezzar was king of Assyria, at Nineveh. Judith 1:1. | Daniel 1:1. |
| • Honor your father and your sins will be forgiven. Eccles. 3:3. | 1 Peter 1:18, 19 |
| • Teaches magic and superstition. Tobias 2:9, 10; 6:5-8; 11:7-16. | James 5:14-16. |
| • Antiochus died in three different ways. I Mac. 6:16; II Mac. 1:16; 9:28. | Isaiah 63:8;
Matt. 5:37.
Eccles. 9:5, 6. |
| • Recommends offerings for the departed. II Mac. 12:42-45. | 1 John 1:7;
Heb. 9:27. |
| • Teaches about purgatory or immortality of the soul. Sabedonia 3:14. | Exodus 20:13. |
| • Suicide is justified and praised. Exodus 20:13. | |

Margarida F. Sarli is the editorial coordinator for this section

The peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Laércio Mazaro

Introduction

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." The blessings are given to those who make peace, and not only on the peace lovers. How happy is he who promotes just and wise relationships among men, because their actions are the work of God.

- It's the seventh beatitude.
- It was not directed only to the disciples, but also to all those who were present. It crossed centuries and came to us. It is directed to us living today.
- You will only become a peacemaker if you are fulfilling the requirements of the previous beatitudes. The poor in spirit; they that mourn; the meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart.

It is impossible to be a peacemaker (as Jesus was), unless the peace of God that exceeds all understanding dwells in our heart and our mind. We are called to be peacemakers as was Jesus.

Definition of the word "Peacemaker"

"He who makes peace." It's the person who searches for all means in the world through which he can make people happy. They are much needed in the world.

The United Nations is determined to keep peace in the world. Sometimes that is achieved. Other times, things continue unchanged.

Peace is much more than the absence of war or conflicts. It is integrity, prosperity, and well being, of loving harmony, which promotes positive and constructive relationship. It's all that contributes to the welfare of man. True peace is an active influence of divine mercy and love. Peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It does not depend on external circumstances to be part of our lives.

In some parts of the Orient when people meet they greet each other wishing peace. *Shalom* in Hebrew means peace, happy relationship, communion and fraternity.

Who is related to peace?

God. God is called the "God of peace." God is the source of peace. Peace is a fundamental quality of His being.

God took the initiative to establish peace between himself and man. Being sinners we are reconciled with God.

Jesus. Christ's mission was to restore the peace that sin had destroyed. Isaiah prophesied with these words: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" Isaiah 53:5.

Christ is our peace. He is the Prince of Peace. When the angels announced that Christ was born, the heavenly host sang in the plains of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men" Luke 2:14.

Christ said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" John 14:27. Whoever accepts Christ in their life will have peace.

Allow Jesus to fill your heart with peace. You will become the happiest person in the world. All those who love Jesus will experience a change in life. The peace that Christ places in the heart is very well seen in the attitude. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:1. Christ's redemptive work is contained in the word "Peace."

This peace that the world can't give should help us overcome all fear and give us courage to surmount all adverse circumstances.

What is the miracle of Christ's peace? It's peace despite tempests. It's a peace deeply rooted that no external circumstances can disturb it.

The fruits of peace

Jesus' peace yields three types of fruits, peace at three levels:

1. Peace with God.
2. Peace with ourselves—the heart will not be full of frustrating contradictions.
3. Peace with others. Peace will be shown in our relationship and we'll love others. We'll cultivate goodwill toward others. We'll smooth all misunderstandings. It's natural that we will not always have peace with everybody.

Paul counsels us to live in peace with all as far as it is possible. There are individuals who like to always be in conflicts, to provoke quarrels and difficulties.

What should be our posture? Not to depend on people. We must be at peace with everybody. You cannot control the behavior, thoughts or actions of someone else. But you can, despite all that, use your influence to calm an otherwise tense situation.

You can refuse to take sides. Do all within your power and when you know you did it you will be at peace with God and with yourself.

Conclusion

Strive to prevent family feuds. Strive to prevent divisions in the church, or misunderstandings among the members. We should be able to live together.

We live in a world separated by walls, fences, social classes, races, cultures and riches, which separate us one from the other. We must be united in Christ Jesus.

We must do our part to become peacemakers. As Christians we cannot expect everything to be peaceful. If peace were broken, I must be sure that it wasn't my fault.

We must pray for peace. Strive for peace. Show interest in activities that contribute to peace in society.

You must be a facilitator in the process to establish unity between God and His separated children.

"Christ's followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ, whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God, is a peacemaker." (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 28).

To be a Christian is to be a peacemaker. Always search for peace.

Laércio Mazaro is secretary of the West Paulista Association.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

Margarida F. Sarli is the editorial coordinator for this section

Outstretched arms

Alcides Cruz

Introduction

Let us think for a moment on Rio de Janeiro's magnificent monument, Christ of Corcovado. His arms outstretched seem to want to embrace the entire carioca immensity. Thirty feet high and forty feet from one hand to the other.

- a) Outstretched arms anxious to insure peace on a city that has a high level of insecurity.
- b) On October 12, 1931, Marconi, the scientist from Genoa, Italy, lit up the recently inaugurated monument. It was one of the most spectacular and impressive events of that era.

Arms that convey hope

1. More than 70 years have transpired since those arms were extended over the Corcovado.
 - a) Arms that should mean protection for the citizens of Rio de Janeiro. However, in the shadow of the arms of cement, an indication that they will lovingly embrace the city, much evil has been practiced. Murders, attacks, riots, immorality make up the scenario of a city similar to many others in the world that live oblivious to Christ's calling.
 - b) Oh, if men would turn their eyes heavenward, they would contemplate not only the concrete statue, but by faith contemplate the great Savior of humanity, the reality of our hope.
2. Our duty as Christians is to look toward the heavens in order to see the real Jesus; the majority looks and follows horizontally. We must travel in the ascendancy and not to become victims of a massive society.

Outstretched arms to save

1. Let's look at Jesus' hands pierced by the nails. "Christ died on the cross with one hand pointing to the East, and the other to the West. He died for every individual on Earth. His arm is long enough to reach even me. His arm is long enough to reach anybody, anywhere and at any time." *Morning Watch*, 1963, p. 228.
2. Jesus opened His blessed arms and said that His life was a river of peace; a river of love, a river of life, and His ears could hear the faintest breath, the word that has not been whispered from the heart. And His hands were always outstretched to save completely.
3. In Ex. 17:8-13 we find an account that well illustrates this thought.
 - a) Amalek's soldiers could not understand how the Hebrews could resist their fierce attacks. The Hebrew army was smaller and ill-trained.
 - b) What power and inspiration reflected from those outstretched arms on the top of the mountain? Ezek. 20:34 gives us the answer.
4. Do we trust in the Lord's arms?
 - a) Our many struggles sometimes make us feel that the arms are tired and we give up. We feel weak, without strength.
 - b) Many have experienced years of serving the Lord, with multiple trials.
 - c) God knows how to help those who have no strength. Read Job 26:2.
 - d) "Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand." Read Ps. 89:13.

Arms that don't grow weary

1. There is a significant parallelism for the Christians.

a) More than 70 years ago the monument to Christ the Redeemer was erected on top of Corcovado, aiming to attract tourists and to be a representative figure of the blessings received by those who would live or pass through Rio de Janeiro.

From the top one can contemplate the city, outlined by mountains, adorned by small woods, vegetation colored by the reflecting green waters of Copacabana and other beaches. But the arms continue paralyzed before all types of violence. They seem to be tired and frustrated since their objective to bless people has not been reached. They are dead, paralyzed and incapable arms.

b) Two thousand years ago, on top of Calvary, two arms are anxiously stretched out to bless humanity. Two nails uphold them. From those nails, nevertheless, a divine force shines upon the world.

The world choked by ambition forgets what is taking place on top of Calvary. Jesus' arms continue to extend to bless a minority who turns to receive a blessing. Those are not lifeless arms. They interceded in our behalf two thousand years ago and will continue to do so until the end of time.

Conclusion

What will happen if I lose my health, become insane, and lose my dear ones, my property? What if we should have an economic depression, if I lose my employment? Or war is declared?

The arms are outstretched to protect us – why fear? Read Deut. 33:27.

Illustration: Pastor Kenneth Wood told us that in 1937 he climbed through one of the passageways of the San Francisco Bay Bridge, approximately 220 meters high. Listen to the story. "Fog revolved around me and a strong wind was blowing. I began to fear. 'How could someone work up here?' I thought. Later on I heard that fear had been a problem. The workers knew that it had been said that 35 workers might lose their lives. Each man had the obsession that he could be one of those 35. The construction was being undermined.

Then someone suggested that a gigantic net be extended the entire length of the bridge so that if a man should fall the net could save him. The men worked more efficiently."

We can be confident that the Lord's arms will protect us. Read Isa. 33:2. Let's humbly pray to God that He will be our strong arm, morning after morning and may we try to find refuge under the protecting arms of our dear Savior.

Alcides Cruz is a retired pastor living in São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo, Brazil.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

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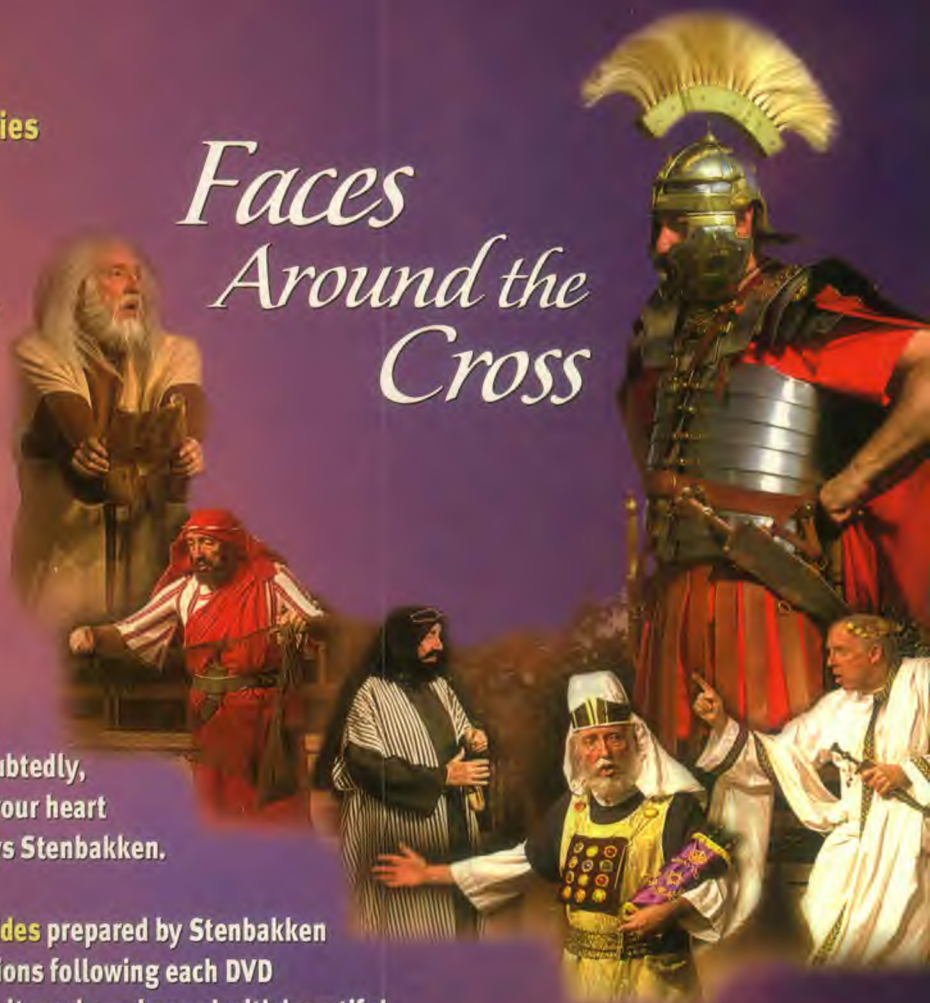
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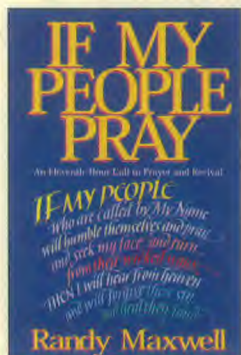
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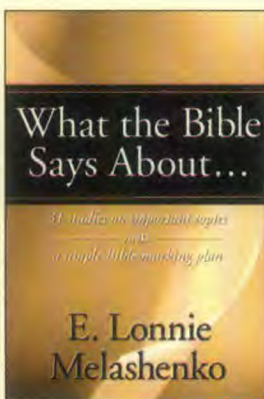
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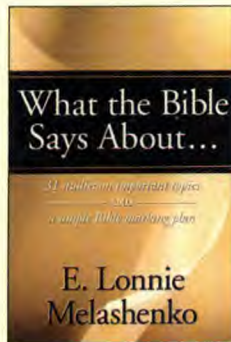
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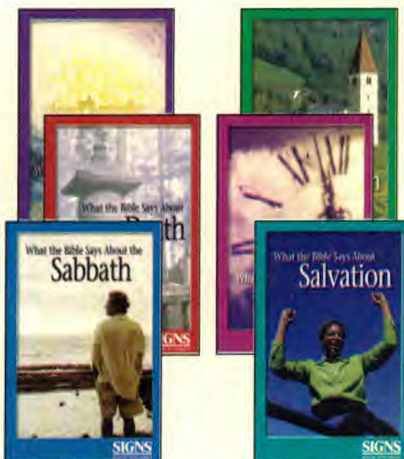


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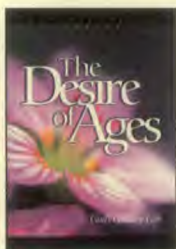
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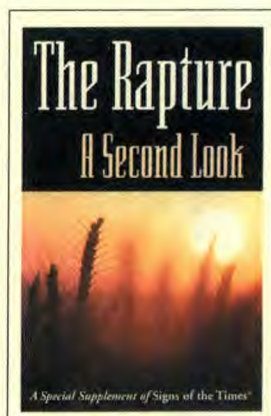
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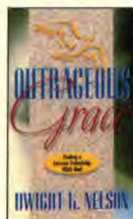
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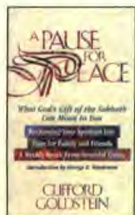
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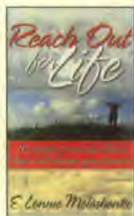
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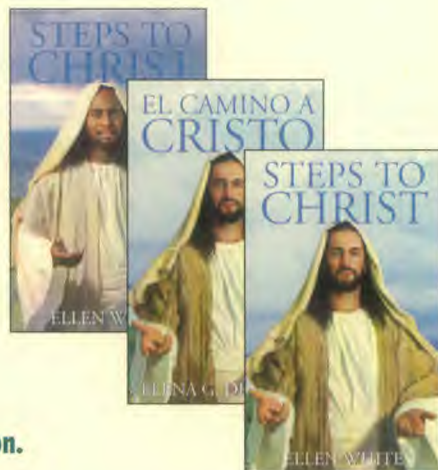
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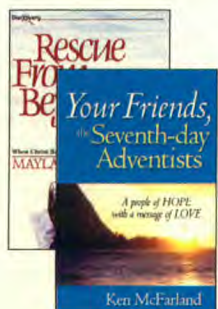
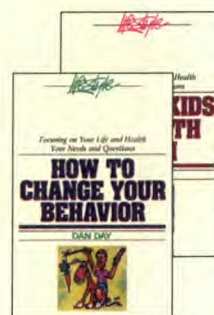


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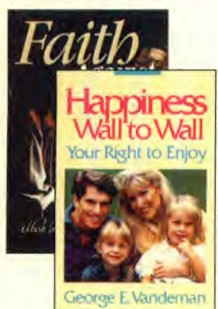
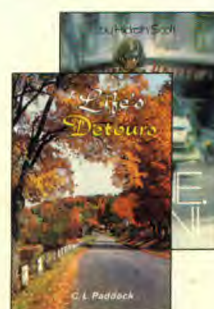


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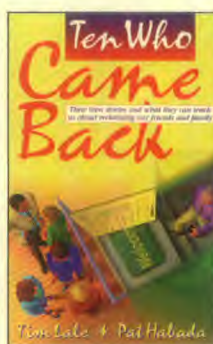
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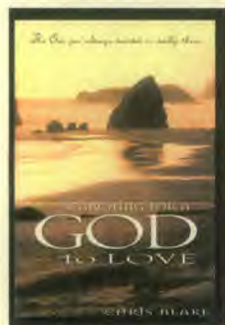
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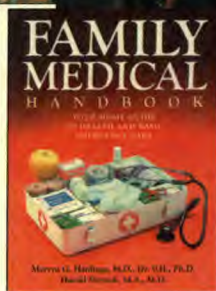
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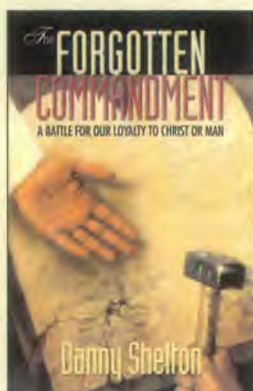
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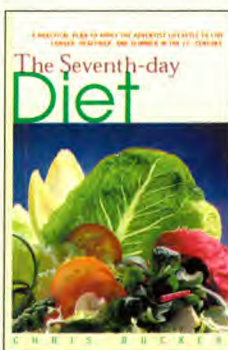
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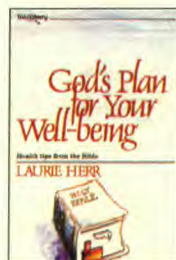
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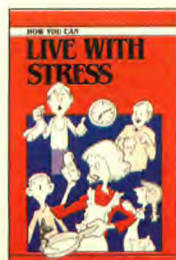
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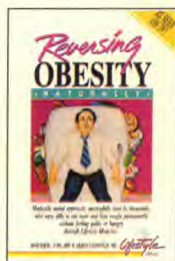
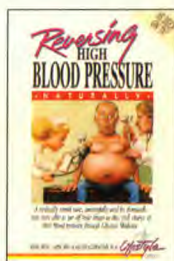


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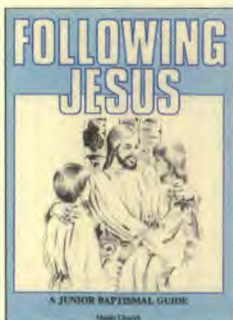
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Following Jesus, a Junior Baptismal Guide by Monte Church. This activity book contains ten Bible lessons, filled with illustrations, puzzles, word scrambles, matching games, and fill-in-the-blank exercises. Highly recommended by pastors and those who work with Juniors, this workbook makes preparation for baptism fun for children ages 9-12. English 0-8163-1864-6 US\$4.99
Spanish 0-8163-9426-1 US\$4.99



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Michael Asks Why Activity Book—0-8163-1793-3 US\$1.99



100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids by Karen Holford. This book is packed with great ideas to make prayer time meaningful and special for children. 0-8163-1968-5 US\$11.99



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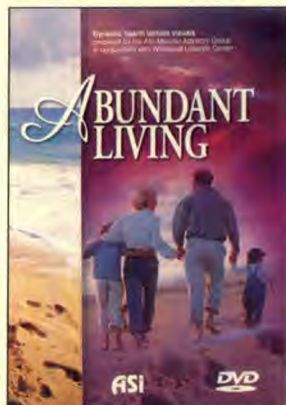
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Vol. 1, 1930920008, Vol. 2, 1930920016, Vol. 3, 1930920024 US\$24.95, each.

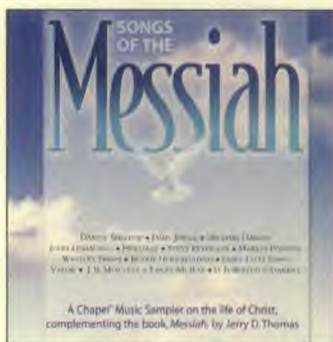


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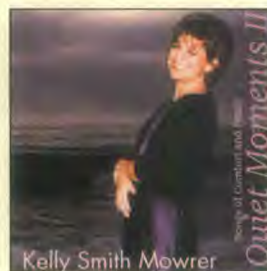
Songs for My Friends,
Phil Draper, piano
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Piano Favorites, Vol. 3,
Tommy Shelton, piano
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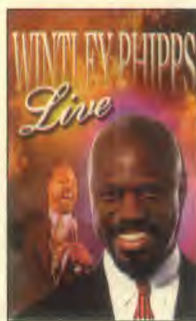
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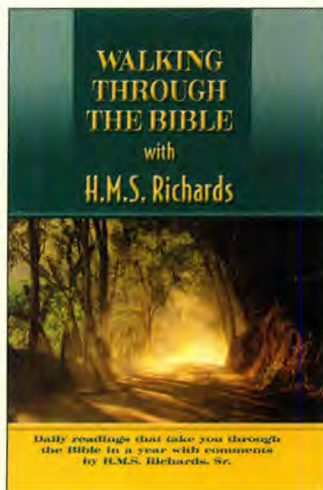
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Know the norms Raúl Gómez

The Church Manual shows how every department functions, and what the role of the leader is.

We are grateful to God for the privilege to belong to His church, the Remnant Church, and without a doubt we are certain that the Seventh-day Adventist church, of which we are members and dedicate our lives, is the true church with the unmistakable characteristics revealed and accepted in the Bible.

Before we become members of the church, all, without exception, are instructed and accept the 27 doctrines that are the fundamental beliefs of our hope and faith. For this reason I believe that all Adventists are “. . . prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” 1 Peter 3:15.

In spite of it, the percentage of members that know the structure, organization and administration of our church is small.

The unity of the church

It is a privilege to be a Seventh-day Adventist, if we understand that we are members of the body of Christ of which He is the head. The Bible refers to this church in these terms: “Body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12); “Church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15); in addition, we know that the church has the following characteristics: prophetic origin, with a prophetic and apostolic message, a world mission with a message for “every nation, tribe, tongue and people” (Rev. 14:16).

This church symbolizes a body with many members, functions and preserves the unity according to the words of the apostle Paul: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Here we find a reference that the ministry of the church should also be manifest through the unity of its structure, organization and administration. We recognize that this unity in a great measure is the result of a system of ecclesiastic government directed by the *Church Manual*.

“Just as there can be no living, active body unless its members are organically united and functioning

together under central control, so there can be no living, growing, prospering church unless its members are organized into a united body, all performing their God-given duties and functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority” *Church Manual*, p. 34.

Every member should know how the church is organized, to do so, it is necessary to read the *Church Manual*, since in it is found all that pertains to its administration, structure, and organization. If this were possible, at least, each church officer should obtain a copy and share it with the others. Many of the questions presented by the brethren are found clearly and well documented in the *Church Manual*.

Special worth

Reading this material, you too can find a summary of the 27 fundamental beliefs that we possess as a church. The responsibilities and duties of the church leaders, in relation to nominations, church discipline and other important matters are discussed in detail. Many churches are taking as an administrative guide and procedure “the elders tradition” and not the concepts established in the *Church Manual*. Why does that happen? Simply because they are not acquainted with the guiding principles of the church.

On one occasion a brother, president of a state college and university professor whom I was privileged to prepare for baptism, told me with great surprise: “Pastor, I thought that the locale where I met was an organized church, but I discovered that it is only an organized group. What can we do to organize it as a church? I can tell you in advance that we have a brother who is quite old to be the elder . . .”

I was surprised by this brother's words because I thought I had prepared him very well for baptism. Thus, I recognized that I made an error in giving him only the doctrines and failed to teach him how our church is organized. Just like that brother, there are many more members who have no idea what it means to be a church elder. **E**

Translated by Gladys B. Ríos.

The Need for Doctrinal Preaching

There is too much prejudice against doctrine in our day, especially against doctrinal preaching. Some hold that doctrines are too obscure, too difficult to explain to the lay mind, and that, since there are so many different opinions, such discussions and sermons result in confusion rather than knowledge. Sadly, some have gone so far as to claim it does not matter what a man believes so long as he behaves himself and attends church.

How can a man live right if he does not understand the Bible? Why should he be interested in and faithful to a church if he does not understand its position on matters of faith? Doctrinal preaching is simply teaching the Bible.

The spiritual anemia in our church life is due to these prevailing ideas and this dread of doctrinal preaching. Church members very often do not know where they stand on matters of faith. It is not uncommon to hear a layman or even a pastor discuss a doctrine contrary to the prevailing position of his church. It is a sad state of affairs that so many of our church members are doctrinal infants.

We can never have a full blooded, mature church or a strong Christianity until we have mature Christians. To be mature, we must know doctrine. We desperately need a revival of doctrinal preaching from our pulpits. Theology will then be clear and we will automatically eliminate our conflicts and many differing opinions. This will also bring about a Bible-reading, thinking, and faithful membership.

We must be concerned about this deep-rooted ignorance which concerns every position we hold dear. Hazy ideas and hearsay are often the only knowledge many have on great cardinal doctrines. As goes the preacher, so goes the church. Therefore throw out stunts and campaigns, and preach doctrine to fill those empty pews. Preach doctrine and dust off the balcony seats. Hold fast sound teaching and avoid those book reviews, and watch the evening congregation swell. Preach tomorrow's newspaper written centuries ago. Let your members know that when you preach, the world is left outside. Stir their souls with the word of God. Stop talking about a better Christian world until your members know what it is to be a Christian.

Trim your sails to suit men and you will trim your effectiveness for Christ. Sweeten your sermons with the soothing talk of men and you will give your congregation spiritual diabetes. Preach on popular ideas and your folks will try the way of the world and bring its dregs to your door. Preach on the great doctrines and let them know God and the riches of His word.

This old world is hungry and knows not the nature of its own appetite. It is hungry for the Bread of Life, the word of God, the authority for life and eternity. Preach doctrine, and these hungry hearts will be filled. Preach doctrine, and we will shake this old world and awaken it to a realization of its God-given responsibilities. We will then turn people back to God and into paths of peace and happiness. Our people are growing lean on the things of the world and only slumber in their own confusion as the alarm is sounded. Preach God's word and doctrine regularly and carefully until at last there stand about us strong, mature believers ready for the fray against sin, ready to carry the gospel to the world. **E**

Arthur H. Stainback wrote this article that appeared in *The Signs of the Times* in 1946.

(Continued from page 5)

By the Elder's side

Pilar: I believe it's reaching the brethren's heart.

Vicky: The greatest difficulty for the elders is lack of time. They must schedule their time very well.

Nieves: For those who live in rural areas the problem is money, more so when the offering is lost. Also the lack of support from the brethren.

Teresa: Ingratitude.

Laura: That the brethren may understand the meaning of team work, having the same objectives and visions.

Elder: Is there a project being developed in your church now?

Lucinda: We would like to have electricity and water, since those utilities are basic and we don't have them. In our spiritual life my husband studies the Bible with people of the community, not only with church members where we belong.

Pilar: There are several and for that reason we very much insist in reform in the church.

Vicky: I've been the treasurer of the Southern Church for more than five years. I'm also part of the committee for Personal Ministry and Small Groups. We have a great challenge: more than 400 persons have requested Bible studies. We changed the church pews (more than 40 years old) and thank God we now have new pews and a beautiful church.

Nieves: At present we have no new projects, but our main need is restrooms, and that they become a reality at any moment. Spiritually, our project is to have a campaign in a brother's home.

Teresa: That the church grows with God's help, and improve on the elder's work.

Laura: At this time our great project is to build a new entrance to the church. We need the help of all the brethren in order to make this a reality. It's a great challenge, but we believe that we will finish it soon.

Elder: How do you budget your time to take care of your husband, your work, the church and your family?

Lucinda: I get up, pray and prepare breakfast, do my routine housework or fieldwork, planting, picking and taking care of my children. When I visit I take my children and take to other people words of hope.

Pilar: The success in this world is to find equilibri-

um without neglecting any aspect of life. The important part is to take care of all those items.

Vicky: Now it's becoming easier to administer to the church, because the girls are grown up. But when they were small they went to all church activities, and we have seen the fruits: they are good professionals using their gifts in God's service.

Nieves: We get up early. After worship we work in the field until 3 p.m. After arriving at home we dedicate some time to Bible study, and then continue with other activities.

Teresa: Everything is possible with God's help.

Laura: We have divided schedules for the church and our work, study and home. Thus we obtain equilibrium without neglecting or overdoing it in one of those areas. As a result there is a better relationship in the family.

Elder: What message would you like to share with other elders wives?

Lucinda: It was very good to have attended the meeting to learn and then be able to share that knowledge with other people. I would say to the sisters to take courage and come to the next seminar for elder's wives.

Pilar: It is profitable to get together for such occasions in order to share our experience, find comfort and renew our strength.

Vicky: The only thing that you should do is to open your hearts and let Jesus abide in it.

Nieves: Not to get discouraged as they perform the Lord's work even if it is not easy. We must move forward regardless of the suffering, but it's worth it since what awaits us in heaven is much better. I'm sure that God hears your prayers.

Teresa: We are at the end, and it's when we must pray, unite and prepare ourselves to be a real help to our husbands.

Laura: Let's pray without ceasing so that the Holy Spirit may be able to direct our husband's ministry and that we may become the coworkers that they need so much. **E**

From the magazine *Âncião*, October – December, 2002. Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

Two messages for me

Taking time to be like Mary and Martha

Susana Giaccharini de Bruno

They were two women, one chose to develop interior beauty. She had time for her heavenly Father, in the first place. The other woman preferred to make the world around her more pleasing. She worked carefully and with energy.

In Bethany, at the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, Jesus found rest and companionship. Since He didn't own His own house He stayed with them very often.

Mary was accused of being indifferent, because she sat at Jesus' feet to listen to Him; the Master approved what others criticized. "Mary was enriching her spirit with the beautiful words proceeding from the Savior's lips, words that had greater value for her than the most magnificent jewels of earth."

Mary observed what others didn't see and she dedicated her full attention to the words of Christ more than others around Him. Martha, in turn, was always busy, doing her best to please the Master.

She went and came busy with all the details. Martha was an industrious woman. She loved Jesus very much and she wished to make Him comfortable and stood out by her example of active piety. As she worked for others she experienced great satisfaction. She was always willing to serve.

Generally, as we remember these women in the passage in Luke 10:38-42, Mary is exalted to the detriment of Martha. Therefore, I would like to share with you my opinion about them.

I can imagine Mary on one side, seating at the feet of Jesus, listening with reverence and devotion. Quoting Jesus: "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" Luke 10:42.

Martha was in another world. As they sat at the table she was the one serving, she was the one busy taking care of all the details. Even today these two types of women are necessary. It would be of great advantage if one could develop both virtues: (1) deep spiritual life, with time to sit at Jesus' feet, and (2) a life of service working with care and energy.

Martha's difficulties

Many things occupy our time: the home, a career, work, church activities and our responsibility toward the community.

You can be (1) a tired housewife, extenuated, because there is always something else to do and you have no time to rest; (2) a young student busy studying for a career; (3) a lady who works outside the home, who would like to have some rest, therefore it is difficult because she is overwhelmed by her duties and commitments of her job.

Perhaps you are living more than one of these situations, since today it is very common for a woman to take care of her home, work outside and struggle to obtain professional success. Besides, if you were a member under obligation and involved with the duties of the church, being a leader and not just a spectator, this would require responsibility, time and perseverance.

Therefore, no matter what our situation might be, we need to spend time close to God.

Mary's devotion

How can I maintain a close relationship with the Lord and understand what is His will for me?

Through prayer and Bible study. "The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, as sure as if we could hear it literally." *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 393.

Through prayer I speak with Him. "The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer" Psalm 6:9. Consequently, a point of communication is established.

Through His Word, God communicates with us in a personal way: "My son, if you accept my word and store up my commands within you, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" Proverbs 6:1, 4, 5.

Many times we are blind and cannot perceive the depth of meaning of heavenly light that shines from the pages of the Bible. Sometimes we only see the surface; therefore we need to go deeper in the study of the Scripture as if we were looking for a hidden treasure.

Peter also speaks to us with the wisdom of Solomon: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). When a baby desires milk, he cries, shouts and kicks his legs, until the milk arrives and then sucks untiringly. This should be our attitude toward the word of God; nothing else can totally satisfy our inner desires.

Being Mary and Martha

It's an excellent idea to have a bag or a small worship box. Therein you could keep the devotional material: the Bible, the quarterly, a meditation book, a Spirit of Prophecy book or some other book of particular interest, a small block of paper, pencil, pen, etc. All that we need will be there at our reach in an organized form, and ready for the best moment to have our devotional. Thus we can carry our bag or box with the materials anywhere. Wherever we go we can have our personal sanctuary.

Prayer lifts us to God. Prayer is essential for a deep relationship with Jesus. I am not referring to a fast prayer or an attitude of prayer—when I do the dishes or take care of the laundry, when I travel, when I walk—but without a special prayer. "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door

and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" Matthew 6:6.

This seems to indicate that we need a specific time to pray during the entire day, so that, in secret, alone with your Father, we may "pour our souls" and place our burdens on Him so that He can fortify us in His power and wisdom.

To dedicate time to search for God through His word and prayer, will be like Mary, a woman of deep spiritual life. When this takes first place in our life, miraculously the time is sufficient to satisfy all our daily needs. Work will be properly and carefully done. The person we love will be taken care of and our lives will be transformed.

However, if we don't lose the sensibility to perceive other people's needs and we always had something to share, we will remember Martha. Our abnegation and the spirit of sacrifice have always been a requirement of an acceptable service. Christ says that true religion is practicing compassion and showing love at home, in church, and in the world. Pure and spotless religion is not a feeling, but the practice of works of mercy and love.

Our supreme example is Jesus. He prayed, healed the sick, fed the multitudes, nevertheless He took time to renew His strength through prayer and meditation, in order to be in communion with His Father.

"All who work for God must possess a mixture of the attributes of Martha and Mary—good will to serve and sincere love for the truth. Our own self is the egotism that must be lost sight of. God requires faithful servants, prudent, affectionate, and tender." *Christian Service*, p. 27.

May each one of us be able to fulfill the ministry assigned by God, and may the Lord find in us women who are willing to serve Him, to assume the responsibility to work for Him, with Martha's dedication, but placing before everything else sitting at the feet of Jesus following Mary's example, whose desire was none other than to follow her Master's example. **E**

Susana Giaccharini de Bruno is an associate for Women's Ministries in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

Shepherd the little lambs

At what level are you placing the children in your list of pastoral priorities?

Evelyn Omaña

A professor stood before his students having some objects scattered on the desk before him. Without saying a word he took a large empty pitcher and filled it with stones, each about two inches in diameter. He immediately asked the students if the pitcher were full. Evidently, all answered yes. The professor then poured a container of smaller stones into the pitcher and shook it lightly. That, in reality, made it look as if the smaller stones had filled the spaces between the larger stones. Again, he asked the students if the pitcher were full. The answer was the same as before.

The students smiled when the professor took a box of sand and poured it in the pitcher. The sand then filled all the spaces left. "Now" said the professor, consider this pitcher as your life." The larger stones represent the most important things in life: the family, health, the children, anything so important that it would be considered a great loss if it were missing. The smaller stones represent other things that are important, such as professional career, houses and possessions.

The sand represents everything else. Had it been poured into the pitcher first, there wouldn't have been space for the larger and smaller stones. Likewise in life. If we dedicate our time and energy on things that are less important and smaller, we'll never have room for things that are essential. It's a matter of learning to prioritize our assignments.

A reflection

As a church facing many demands and needs, sometimes it seems impossible to be able to take time to consider whether our children's ministry is functioning properly, or are we directing it in a way that will elevate it and shape it in such a manner that it will be a definite help to the children. We run the risk of being trapped in the myth according to which if we move ahead introducing

some changes in our priorities, we will lose the approval of the people or promote chaos in the congregation. That type of thinking is no help in the light of the reality we are facing.

A vision of the present church allows us to notice that a significant number of members place themselves between 15 and 35 years of age. Those are adolescent and young parents with small children who attend Sabbath School classes. With that in mind we could ask ourselves: at what level am I placing the children on my list of ministerial priorities? Am I giving them a treatment of "sand-and-stone", or am I evaluating them through the priority I assign to my ministry to them? Those children represent the people who will be leading in the local or institutional church, or perhaps they will become leaders in society.

Questions to consider

Not long ago, I was present at a great ministerial meeting, during which a lady asked some hard and difficult questions:

- Why do we choose the best teachers for the adult Sabbath School classes only?
- Why do we give the children only the old equipment discarded by the adults?
- Why do we appoint leaders for the different children's ministries in church without giving them the appropriate training?
- Why are many churches interested in building large and comfortable rooms for adults, when those for the children are small and uncomfortable?
- Why, very frequently do we ignore the children when we choose those who will participate during the worship hour?

An honest analysis of these questions makes us conclude that we could definitely arrange our priorities to accommodate our children. It's easy to reach a situation in which, like Jesus' disciples, we

are tempted, in one way or another, to push the children away from Him because our minds are overwhelmed with adults' priorities.

When the Master spoke to His disciples for them not to forbid them to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers of all ages—officers of the churches, pastors, elders and all Christians. Christ is calling the children and orders us "Let them come unto Me."

As we consider this topic, we don't want to say that the church simply is not interested in the children. Perhaps many members do not clearly understand the importance of ministering to the children according to their ages. If we want to keep the youth in the church, we must pay attention to them while they are children.

We need to identify the needs of each age group and to promote a unique and appropriate environment for the children. The church that cannot provide such an environment—adequate furniture for the children's developing bodies, well-balanced and interesting programs, loving care and active participation is sending their children a negative message. That could contribute later to their emotional separation and later on to a physical separation from the church.

If we really want to see their generation involved and identified with the church we must act now. We must take attitudes that will make them look at the church, not as a place where we must go because the parents, friends and other individuals expect that of us, but as the place where we worship our Creator in a dynamic and friendly relationship.

Immediate action

If we really want to see our church fulfilling our children's needs, the following suggestions are worthy of consideration. Try to implement them with enthusiasm and determination.

Find specific ways to change the church environment into an attractive and secure one for the children. Inspect carefully the available resources for the project. Verify if they have been arranged with the children in mind. The environment we create will help the children concentrate on what is being done and will help reach the goal that is being sought.

Try to make the children feel welcome. Some



individuals, especially young people, should welcome them during a special moment of the worship hour or as they come to church.

Include the children during the worship hour. Children learn by doing. We cannot expect for boys and girls to enjoy their church if they only sit and observe what is taking place around them. Allow them to regularly participate as readers, receptionists, speakers, helpers, masters of ceremony and any other appropriate way.

Place the equipment and bathroom facilities with the children in mind. Lower the drinking fountain or place a step so that it will become accessible to them. Invite them to the podium during the pastoral prayer. Look for responsibilities that can be performed reverently instead of requiring of the children an austere attitude.

Let us remember that the children are listening to the sermon. Catch their attention by asking them questions, showing a picture, telling a story or using an attractive illustration. Remember the power of the choruses, movements and singing. Encourage the children to participate in the sermon. Ask them questions and thank them for their participation.

The goal of the Department of Children's Ministry in our church is to help the children develop a long relationship, redemptive, spiritual and loving with God and His church. We can prepare today's children so that they can feel they belong to the kingdom of God, and that the church is their church, a place where they love to be.

Evelyn Omaña is Director of the Children's Ministry in the Inter-American Division.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

The great need of the *Holy Spirit*

Ellen G. White

God has not appointed any man guide, nor made any man conscience for another; therefore let human hands be withheld from restraining His servants who feel the burden to enter His vineyard to labor. Let God work with His own chosen agents by His Holy Spirit. No human being is to sit in judgment upon his brother. Neither are any to feel that they can handle roughly the precious pearls for which Christ gave His life.

The pearl, the precious human pearl, was found by Christ. Let man be warned; be careful how you treat the Lord's "peculiar treasure." All discourtesy, all pain, all neglect, which these souls suffer at your hands, is charged against you as inflicted upon Jesus Christ. They are not to be treated in a lordly, commanding manner.

Laws and rules are being made at the centers of the work that will soon be broken into atoms. Men are not to dictate. It is not for those in places of authority to employ all their powers to sustain some, while others are cast down, ignored, forsaken, and left to perish. But it is the duty of the leaders to lend a helping hand to all who are in need.

Let each work in the line which God may indicate to him by His Holy Spirit. The soul is accountable to God alone. Who can say how many avenues of light have been closed by arrangements which the Lord has not advised nor instituted?

The Lord does not ask permission of those in responsible positions when He wishes to use certain ones as His agents for the promulgation of truth. But He will use whom He will use. He will pass by men who have not followed His counsel, men who feel capable and sufficient to work in their own wisdom; and He will use others who are thought by these supposedly wise ones to be wholly incompetent. Many who have some talent think that they are necessary to the cause of God. Let them beware lest they stretch themselves beyond their measure, and the Lord shall leave them in their own ways, to be filled with their own doings. None are to exercise their human authority to bind the minds and souls of their fellowmen. They are not to devise and put in practice methods and plans to bring every individual under their jurisdiction.

We are to be united to one another in the bonds of Christ-like love. This is the path marked out for all. By following in it, without boasting, without self-exaltation, we may satisfy the high claims of God upon us.

Those who know the truth are to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and not themselves to try to work the Spirit. If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow-laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to

Spirit is poured out upon all who will yield to its promptings, and, casting off all man's machinery, his binding rules and cautious methods, they will declare the truth with the might of the Spirit's power. Multitudes will receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord.

Many of those who are professedly followers of the Lord at the present time do not submit themselves to the guidance of His Spirit, but try to harness up the Holy Spirit, and drive it in their way. All such must abandon their self-sufficiency, and yield themselves unreservedly to the Lord, that He may work out His good pleasure in and through them. The seven last plagues are about to descend upon the disobedient. Many have let the gospel invitation go unheeded; they have been tested and tried; but mountainous obstacles have seemed to loom up before their faces, blocking their onward march. Through faith, perseverance, and courage, many will surmount these obstructions and walk out into the glorious light. Almost unconsciously barriers have been erected in the strait and narrow way; stones of stumbling have been placed in the path; these will all be rolled away. The safeguards which false shepherds have thrown around their flocks will become as naught; thousands will step out into the light, and work to spread the light. Heavenly intelligences will combine with the human agencies. Thus encouraged, the church will indeed arise and shine, throwing all her sanctified energies into the contest; thus the design of God is accomplished; the lost pearls are recovered. Prophets have discerned this grand work afar off, and have caught the inspiration of the hour, and traced the wonderful descriptions of things yet to be.

Our people have had great light, and yet much of our ministerial force is exhausted on the churches, in teaching those who should be teachers; enlightening those who should be "the light of the world;" watering those from whom should flow springs of living water; enriching those who might be veritable mines of precious truth; repeating the gospel invitation to such as should be scattered to the uttermost parts of the earth communicating the message of Heaven to many who have not had the privileges which they have enjoyed; feeding those who should be in the byways and highways heralding the invitation, "Come; for all things are

break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus. If men would act toward their fellow-men as to those whom Christ loves, if they would obey the commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself," there would be sweet harmony among the brethren. How much better it would be if those who claim to be Christians would behave like Christians.

How much better it would be if all would cease speaking of their own good works and ways, indulging their self-esteem; refrain from the putting forth of the finger, imagining evil, and using their influence to weaken, oppress, and destroy. If men will not come to the terms made by the leading workers, they will not entertain them, they do not care what results may follow their injustice. With them it is rule or ruin. God has not appointed any man to do such work. And no human being shall be permitted to prescribe my liberty or intrench upon the perfect freedom of my brethren, without hearing my voice lifted in protest against it.

God will move upon men of humble position in society, men who have not become insensible to the bright rays of light through so long contemplating the light of truth, and refusing to make any improvement or advancement therein. Many such will be seen hurrying hither and thither, constrained by the Spirit of God to bring the light to others. The truth, the word of God, is as a fire in their bones, filling them with a burning desire to enlighten those who sit in darkness. Many, even among the uneducated, now proclaim the words of the Lord. Children are impelled by the Spirit to go forth and declare the message from Heaven. The

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Graffiti IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

An impassioned response to recent attacks
on the sanctuary and Ellen White

CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

In books, on the Internet, and through his own publication, an outspoken former Adventist minister is claiming that the 1844 investigative judgment doctrine is a sham that can't be supported biblically. He also labels Ellen White a "false prophet."

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now ready." Come to the gospel feast; come to the supper of the Lamb; "for all things are now ready."

Now is the time for earnest wrestling with God. Our voices should join with the Savior's in that wonderful prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Many may ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The responsibility rests upon every individual. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." The scheme of salvation is not to be worked out under the laws and rules specified by men. There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved.

All the revelations of the past bring added responsibilities upon the workers in these last days. The past, present, and future are linked together. We must learn lessons from the experiences of other ages.

If there are any of our brethren who think that they have devised plans by which they can secure a monopoly of any line of God's work, they are released from all such burdens. Individually we form a part of the great whole, fulfilling our part in the scenes foreseen long ages ago. In the counsels of God a place was assigned to every person, and each one is to devote his entire ability, his influence, the energy of his whole being, in an earnest endeavor to discharge the responsibility laid upon him. It is the duty of every intelligent human, to put into daily practice the instructions of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John by living a practical, Christian life.

We are to be united to one another in the bonds of Christ like love. This is the path marked out for all. By following in it, without boasting, without self-exaltation, we may satisfy the high claims of God upon us. If any are inclined to boast of their superior talents, let them bear in mind that these talents are another's, only lent to them for a season, and that if they are not employed in the Lord's work, they will be taken from them. Make no boasts of your extensive knowledge and influence.

The great plan of redemption connects every man with his fellow-laborer. The influence of the past helps to mold the work of the present, and that in its turn enables us to lay hold of the work

line after line, upon which we may carry on the future work. All these agencies have a close relation, not only to time, but to the endless ages of the future, reaching into eternity.

Let man now cease to trust in man. While they should respect God's plan for unity of action, let all remember that the Holy Spirit is molding and fashioning the human agent in the divine similitude. The life that is hid with Christ in God is revealed through men. We are now living in the closing scenes of this world's history. Let men tremble with the sense of the responsibility of knowing the truth. The ends of the world are come. Proper consideration of these things will lead all to make an entire consecration of all that they have and are to their God.

There should be no boasting, no seeking for the highest places; but all should be ambitious to do with fidelity, with an eye single to the glory of God, the sacred work which it is our exalted privilege to engage in. The eye should not be so constantly looking to man, studying the plans which men devise; but rather seeking for knowledge of the plans which are determined by the Source of all wisdom. Then there will be no danger of having plans for the work contaminated by flowing through impure human channels.

Look to God; pray to God; wait and watch and pray to God; work for God. The weighty obligation of warning a world of its coming doom is upon us. From every direction, far and near, calls are coming to us for help. The church, devotedly consecrated to the work, is to carry the message to the world: Come to the gospel feast; the supper is prepared, come. The weak must not now trust in finite men if they would be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. If we have ever importuned God, wrestling for His blessing as did Jacob, let it be now.

God calls to the church to arise and clothe herself with the garments of Christ's righteousness. Crowns, immortal crowns, are to be won. The kingdom of heaven is to be gained. A world, perishing in sin, is to be enlightened. The lost pearl is to be found. The lost sheep is to be brought back in safety to the fold. Who will join in the search? Who will bear the light to those who are wandering in the darkness of error? **E**

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Illustrations & seeds for sermons

Time for sale

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Ps. 90:12.

A certain man once had a dream, so the story goes, in which he found himself waling past a bank that displayed the strange sign: "Time for sale." Going inside to investigate, he found a long line of people before a wicket. Standing there, he listened as various people explained why they wanted to buy time. One man had just learned that he had a malignant disease which could have been treated successfully one year ago, but which had now gone too far. He wanted to buy back that one year. A sad-faced couple wished to buy twenty years. Their son had been sentenced to prison for murder, and realizing that he had fallen because of their parental neglect, they wanted to begin again. A shabbily dressed man wanted thirty years in which to get the education he had neglected to gain when he was young.

Many people have waking dreams, in which they wish they could buy back the wasted years. But time once spent can never be recalled. Unfortunately, this is one important lesson that few learn in youth.

Time passes very rapidly once one has passed childhood. A friend of mine, driving in a car with an old man of ninety-four, remarked, "I suppose it must seem like a long time since you were a boy."

"Son," the old gentleman answered, "it seems like yesterday."

Time has value only as it is spent for eternity. Unless we spend our time as an investment in eternity we are wasting it, and worse than wasting it. We are like the army of the mad Roman emperor Gaius Caligula, which, instead of being prepared to protect the empire, was put to the task of

gathering pretty shells on the seashore.

Let us "apply our hearts unto wisdom" and make the very best of every passing hour in terms of eternal values.

Relieving life's strain

Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal. Isa. 26:4.

Placed at prominent positions around factories or on construction jobs safety posters are frequently seen illustrating the right and wrong way of doing certain tasks. One such poster depicts the right and wrong way to lift a heavy load from the floor. The wrong procedure is to try to lift the load while bending from the waist with the knees straight. The correct way is to lift with bent knees and thus relieve the strain on the back and avoid the danger of damaging muscles or tendons.

We see in this safety placard an important spiritual lesson. Are we lifting the right or the wrong way the various loads that life lays before us day by day? Do we bend our knees before God in prayer, asking Him for strength and wisdom to accomplish our tasks, or do we unwisely depend on our own feeble spiritual strength, which is often unequal to the demands placed upon it?

Endeavoring to lift a heavy physical load without bending the knees makes one liable to an injured back. Similarly, if we try alone and in our own strength to lift many of the loads of temptation, trials, and problems that are our daily lot, we are endangering our spiritual tendons and muscles. If we continue the practice we are sure sooner or later to find ourselves as spiritual invalids. As we go to Him in prayer each morning and all through the day, we receive the strength we need. Therefore let us "pray without ceasing" for help with our every

problem and let us “Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.”

Strength for the day

... *And your strength will equal your days.*
Deut. 33:25.

Sometimes when we think of the intrepid courage and faith of Christianity’s heroes, from the time of Stephen to missionaries of our own day, who have risked and are risking, and sometimes even are losing their lives for the gospel, we look inward and tremble. We realize that we do not have the spiritual or moral endurance to meet what they have met.

But does this necessarily mean that we could not endure what they have, should God lead us to similar experiences? The question was answered by the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody. On one occasion, after he had preached a stirring sermon on the faith of the martyrs, he was approached by someone who asked, “Mr. Moody, do you have faith enough to be a martyr?”

“No.” was the evangelist’s response.

Shocked, his questioner exclaimed, “Mr. Moody, how could you preach a sermon such as that about faith if you do not have faith enough to be a martyr?”

“If God wants me to be a martyr, He will give me a martyr’s faith,” Moody answered.

If our faith is to be tried today, He will enlarge our faith to meet the test.

The good old days

Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these? For it is not wise to ask such questions.
Eccl. 7:10.

The ancient Roman god Janus, after which our month January is named, was depicted with two faces, looking in opposite directions. In this respect he is a representative of two types of people: those who look to the past and those who look to the future. The first type gazes back wistfully at the “good old days,” when everything was “nearer to the heart’s desire.” Comparing things as they are now with what they were like then, they think that they can see little to recommend to the present.

Some years ago F. D. Nichol told in the Review and Herald of how he once asked Willie White, son of Ellen G. White, about the “good old day”

of the denomination. Elder White considered a few moments, and then answered seriously, “Brother, there were no ‘good old days.’”

The truth is that yesterday, as well as today, had its problems, its failings, its follies, and its frustrations.

About the only reason past years look better to some than the present is that the years mellow old times as well as old photographs.

The second type of person looks to the future for the golden days. One famous old-time historian said that the hope of the human race has always been in the coming of better times. The farmer with the poor crop this year looks to a bumper on next year.

The miner, down on his luck, hopes to make a million-dollar find at his next dig. The practical thing is to live in the present for the future. God has a glorious future in store for His people. Let us prepare for it today.

He will come

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay. Heb. 10:35-37.

The sermon had ended, and the crowd was surging out of the large auditorium. Many faces showed signs of deep thought, for the preacher had just spoken powerfully of the signs that foretell the imminent return of Christ.

As I stood watching, one man, evidently recognizing me as being connected with the meetings, approached and addressed me with his cynical statement: “I heard the same old story twenty years ago.”

Imagine another place and another large gathering of people. They too are listening to a preacher as he warns them in words of burning earnestness to seek shelter from the wrath of God.

When the speaker has closed with an appeal full of the deepest pathos, and his listeners begin to depart, one runs to another and says, “I heard the old fellow preach the same thing 120 years ago, and it hasn’t happened yet.”

But the awful doom that Noah warned would come, and did come. And we can picture our hypothetical scoffer being swept to his death in the colossal cataclysm. **E**



James A. Cress



Hurry up and wait

For Adventists to celebrate the 75th anniversary of any venture seems incongruous with our name. Although personally pleased with *Ministry's* continuing contribution as we reach our publication's diamond jubilee, my Seventh-day Adventist heritage leads me to apologize more than congratulate.

Our Lord's delay forces both a theological and practical challenge for every believer in the eschaton. From those first century believers who anticipated a quick parousia to early Adventists who mistakenly established a date for the second coming, we have struggled with short-term planning and dashed dreams as we have postponed projects or closed the coffin on beloved friends and family members.

Seventy-five years ago, *Ministry's* first issue emphasized our confidence in the soon return of Jesus. Sixty years ago my parents entered ministry confident that Jesus would return long before they would grow old or wait in the grave. Thirty years ago, Sharon and I eagerly began our pastoral ministry with no sense of need to plan for a retirement we would never reach. Proclaiming our confidence in the surety of Jesus' coming took precedence over His counsel to "occupy till I come." "After all," we and hundreds of other pastoral couples reasoned, "the church will always care for its retirees if the Lord delays."

We actively proclaimed the nearness of Jesus' return by citing texts enumerating end times characterized by chaos among governments, collapse of families in the midst of moral and societal deterioration, upheaval in nature, proliferation of disease and disasters, and compromise by spiritual leadership. Oh, and don't forget Scriptures strongest warnings against the multiplication of

independent ministries which attempt to draw away disciples after themselves.

Somehow, as Lisbon's earthquake, the dark day, and falling stars faded into history's recesses, their indications of immediacy of the second coming were less persuasive than the reality of their importance as signals of transition from the dark ages to the time of the end.

When church's growth demanded expansion and renewal, "Should the Lord delay His coming," became code to explain the necessity of long-range plans, expanding facilities, or even renovation buildings which critics suspect should never have been constructed in the first place. Living squarely between what Charles Bradford terms the "ought" and the "is," the church ought to be in the kingdom, but is still here on earth. Even now we seem unwilling or incapable of planning beyond the next quinquennium a global strategy to "finish the work" because it might be perceived as lack of confidence in Christ's near return.

Too often, those who struggle with the issues of delay are labeled liberal because they seek understanding beyond rote repetition of answers developed by Uriah Smith. Self-styled "historical" Adventists brand any who differ with their particular theological interpretation as heretics even as they prey on the nostalgia of thousands to support fiercely independent ventures.

Both as an individual believer and as an Adventist pastor, I long for the culmination of our blessed hope! I believe in the literal, visible, personal, and imminent return of Jesus and pray that it will occur in my lifetime. My confident proclamation is predicated on personal study and earnest desire to help others prepare for His coming.

My most powerful sermons focus on Jesus' return. One year I preached a twelve-sermon series, the last Sabbath of each month, on the second coming. After all, we are Adventists because of the Advent. Beginning the next year, my elders asked me to continue. "Preach the same sermons over again, Pastor."

I do not scornfully ask "Where is the promise of His coming?" Even though our Heavenly Father has failed to follow the time line I might have devised. Instead, I pray for patient comprehension of the New Testament which always places the delay in terms of God's infinite love, patience, and unwillingness to see any sinner perish (2 Peter 3:9).

Even as I affirm my confidence in the future and my gratitude for God's providences in the past, I am called upon to live in the present. Even in the midst of traumatic, troubled times, we live in the kingdom of grace while we long for the kingdom of glory.

To paraphrase Barry Oliver's outstanding affirmation, "Just as we eagerly look forward to the future of Jesus coming, we gratefully look up to the present reality of His grace which opens heaven for us now." Lively hope anticipates the future. Living faith endures the present.

Revelation concludes with the cry of the lonely heart, "Even so, come quickly" coupled with the reality of preparatory waiting, "and the grace of your Lord and Savior, be with you all."

Jesus wants to return even more than I want Him to. Hurry up and wait! **E**



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