

quarterly resource for local church leaders † july/september 2011

ELDER'S DIGEST



THE GREAT
CONTROVERSY
PROJECT

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Involving People

One of the hardest aspects of church leadership is getting people to become involved. This is a big challenge for many pastors and local church leaders. It would be a dream to have a church with sufficient membership involvement. I would like to share two ideas to help motivate your members to be more active in your church.

Share an exciting vision. This is the core of every successful attempt to attain involvement in the life of your church. All the gimmicks and all the systems in the world can't do anything if your members never say to themselves, "I want to be a part of that." But, if you dream big and share that dream with your members, you give them something to latch on to.

Of course, you also have to accept that not everyone wants to dream big. You're going to have some members who prefer to show up on Sabbath morning and go home without any other involvement or commitment. You can't fall into the trap of catering to these people. You have to go forward and share your vision in spite of those who don't want to be involved. On those hard days, just remember that dreams are viral. You may not get a good response at first, but slowly and surely you'll get two or three people charged up, and they'll each get two more people, until the whole church is excited and those who didn't want to dream big start to be infected by the excitement.

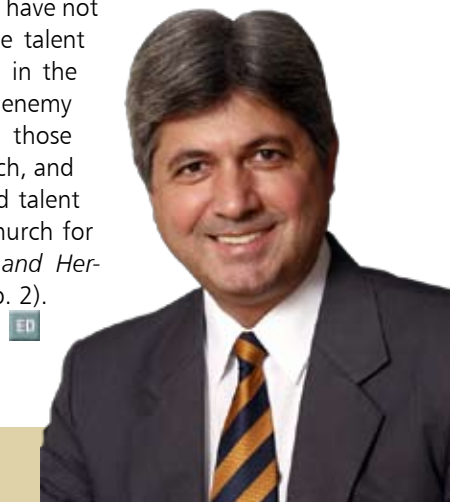
Create opportunities for involvement. This may sound simple, but it's worth thinking about. Just because you have opportunities doesn't mean your members know you do. In fact, one of the most common problems churches have is that uninvolved people look around, see everything is working fine, and assume there's no need for help. All the while, you have three volunteers working twenty hours a day in addition to their full-time jobs just so everything at church runs smoothly.

Ellen G. White says, "Every member of the church has an individual responsibility as a member of the visible church, and a worker in the vineyard of the Lord, and should do his utmost to preserve harmony, union, and love in the church. . . ." (*The Upward Look*, 63). As a church leader, one of your responsibilities is to make it clear that more volunteers are needed, that small

groups are open to everyone rather than a select few, and that anyone who wants to help in church is welcome to. Some ways to make this evident is by:

- Letting members know what you would do if you had more volunteers and more leaders, so they contrast the present situation with your dream, rather than assuming that if everything is working fine there must not be any need for help.
- Advertise areas that need more volunteers. You can do this verbally, via your bulletin, email or even post needs on your website.
- Take your overly-active members, those who tend to do the work of three people and change up their responsibilities. I wouldn't suggest too radical of a change, but if you have a new ministry or if a new need comes up, take one or two responsibilities away from an over-active member and put them in charge of the new ministry. In order to make sure someone picks up the slack, publicly announce the change in roles and announce that you need volunteers to join the ministries your over-active member is leaving. This is also a good chance to publicly acknowledge those who work hardest to serve the church.

By involving church members in different activities and ministries, we are helping them to have a growing spiritual experience. Ellen G. White affirms, "Let every member of the church become an active worker, a living stone, emitting light in God's temple. Those who bear responsibilities in the church should devise ways in which an opportunity will be given to every member of the church to act some part in the work. This has not been done in the past, and there are but few who realize how much has been lost on this account. Plans have not been formed whereby the talent of all could be employed in the service of the cause. The enemy is not slow in employing those who are idlers in the church, and he uses the unappreciated talent of the members of the church for his own work" (*Review and Herald*, September 2, 1890, p. 2). Think about it!



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

Photo by Joel D. Springer



THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

Project

WHAT IS THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT AND ITS GOALS?

The Great Controversy Project is an exciting opportunity for every Seventh-day Adventist believer to widely spread the good news of God's plan of redemption. The goal is to bring a "book into every home!" It will happen by every member, pastor, church worker, president, and leader throughout the worldwide Adventist family taking the initiative to distribute multiple copies of *The Great Controversy*, that inspired book by Ellen White, where she challenges us to disseminate it more than any of her other books. I believe that the Holy Spirit will do some wonderful, life-changing miracles when people begin reading and giving this book.

HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?

The plan is really simple. Every member purchases copies of *The Great Controversy* at specially reduced prices and distributes them like the leaves of autumn. That's really all there is to it. During 2011 we are challenging every member to read or reread *The Great Controversy*. Then during 2012 and 2013 we challenge every Seventh-day Adventist to join with the global Adventist family and give this precious book to friends, family members, work colleagues, and strangers. They can give it out publically, personally, as general material available for the taking, or by any other way possible. It's just exciting to think what will happen when God's message goes out. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will see souls influenced for good and join God's last-day movement. I believe it and so I challenge every member to test God's promise as we spread His truth-filled literature.

WHAT CAN CHURCH LEADERSHIP DO TO SUPPORT THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT?

Every church leader and church worker can do three things: 1) they can promote and support this project with their personal and public influence and resources; 2) they can creatively use every avenue at their disposal to distribute and actually get out into the highways and hedges hundreds and thousands of copies of *The Great Controversy* in their territories, institutions, and churches; 3) they can pray for revival and reformation, pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to do something special with this project and in our personal lives. We are living in the end times and I know God wants to do something special with our efforts.

IS THERE ANY SPECIAL COUNSEL YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE TO OUR READERS AS THEY PROCEED WITH THIS PROJECT?

The counsel I would give is in light of the Great Commission in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. I say be Spirit-filled, bold, and expectant. First, let's be Spirit-filled. We want to distribute as many copies as possible, but it's about the Spirit's goals not ours. So be led by the Spirit. Then be bold; don't be timid and afraid about what people might think and say if we give them a copy of *The Great Controversy*. Step out and trust God. Then finally, be expectant. Trust, have faith, and pray; expect that God will cause the recipient to read the truth-filled material and be transformed. Let's move out in faith! Maranatha!



Pastor Ted Wilson is president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church.



WORLD DIVISIONS AND THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

Project

1

“We are asking God for something big. We think this is a special opportunity for us and we are dreaming, praying and motivating our people to share more than 30 million books in 2012.”

Erton Carlos Kohler, President | South American Division

2

“This is a very important project and in our division we are supporting and endorsing it. We are asking God to give us five million copies so that we can give them to the people as soon as we launch the project.”

Alberto C. Gulfan, President | Southern Asia-Pacific Division

3

“The Great Controversy Project provides our members in the North American Division and around the world the opportunity to give hope to other people.”

Daniel R. Jackson, President | North American Division

4

“I strongly believe that The Great Controversy Project is a God-sent initiative. This is what we need as a church because we are living in the end times.”

Paul S. Ratsara, President | Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

5

“I will counsel the people from our church to read or re-read The Great Controversy again to of course share it with a friend. Europe has many cultures and I believe that this book must go to all people.”

Bruno R. Vertallier, President | Euro-Africa Division

6

“This book is telling us that we are living in the last days and that we need to be prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Our division is going to print millions of copies to distribute to the people in our territory.”

Jairyong Lee, President | Northern Asia-Pacific Division

7

“I believe this book contains the message that the world needs to hear just before the second coming of Jesus. By carrying out this project we are fulfilling the prophecy of Sister White that this book needs to go to the public.”

Israel Leito, President | Inter-American Division

8

“This project is very important for our world church and we are inciting our membership of 2.7 million to give out two copies each making a total distribution of over 5 million copies.”

Blasious M. Ruguri, President | East-Central Africa Division

9

“Right in the very heart of the Seventh-day theology is the concept of the great controversy between good and evil. With this project God has commissioned that we can have a part in His victory by sharing the good news.”

Barry D. Oliver, President | South Pacific Division

10

“We have 1.5 million members in our division and we want to use every member from our church to distribute one book to their neighbor or friend.”

John Rathinaraj, President | Southern Asia Division

11

“I think this project is a good one because we need to engage our church members and put before them a book like this asking them to share it with friends and neighbors. They will certainly benefit from this and it’s going to complement the idea of revival and reformation.”

Bertil A. Wiklander, President | Trans-European Division

12

“In our division we want to put this wonderful book in the hands of all our members and leaders. Our goal for each church member is to deliver one copy to a friend or neighbor every month.”

Guillermo E. Biaggi, President | Euro-Asia Division

13

“The Great Controversy Project is a God-initiated and God-sent project. West-Central Africa Division has a membership of 900,000 and if we challenge each member to distribute ten books, we are talking 9 million already. I know that some people will give more than that, so my faith goal regarding distribution of The Great Controversy is 12 million.”

Gilbert Wari, President | West-Central Africa Division



A BOLD PLAN TO SPREAD TRUTH FOR THESE TIMES

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE LAUNCHES
THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT
FOR THE WORLD FIELD

Countless people are desperately seeking to make sense of the calamities and senseless tragedies, large and small, that daily take place around us. These events are an inescapable part of life on this sin-sick planet. Yet there are answers for what is happening around us.

Seventh-day Adventists have answers for the times we're living in through the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We have an obligation to share these answers that outline the good news of salvation. Ellen White's book, *The Great Controversy*, is a uniquely clear and comprehensive presentation of those answers. It's too good to keep it to ourselves. We need to share it with every person we possibly can. We need to make this powerful book available everywhere, to everyone, and at every possible opportunity.

THE PROJECT PLAN

The Great Controversy Project is a presidential initiative of the General Conference President, Pastor Ted Wilson. The challenge to the world field is to distribute massive quantities of *The Great Controversy* as part of the Church's worldwide "Tell the World" emphasis.

Each Division has accepted the challenge and is making plans for this mass distribution in their area. The various ministries of the Church are also making plans to incorporate the distribution in their ministry specialty. Each leader and member, young and old, is challenged to help make this vision a reality. But it doesn't stop there. Each entity of the Church—schools,

media centers, health-care institutions, support organizations, independent ministries and any other ministry connected with the Church—is asked to join in with this global initiative.

THE PROJECT PHASES

The Great Controversy Project has two phases. Phase One is summarized in two words: Read it! During 2011 each church member is encouraged to read or reread *The Great Controversy*. As we share this book with others it is only right and logical that we be familiar with it ourselves. This year is also being used to develop the specific distribution strategies and book production logistics.

Phase Two can be summarized in one word: Distribute! This will take place during 2012 and 2013; it will be the Missionary Book of the year for two consecutive years. All media forms will be utilized to spread the book's message—print, audio, visual, and social media. We anticipate real innovation and it will be fascinating to see how God will use these means to transform lives!

THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Each member is invited to be a partner in this bold plan. Everyone can be involved. If you have not yet heard of the plans for your region of the world or ministry specialty, please communicate with your conference or union and ask what they plan to do and how you can get involved. Share with them your ideas for



Elder Ted Wilson shares *The Great Controversy* with the president of Kenya, the honorable Mwai Kibaki.

reaching your local area. Of course, you don't have to wait for your conference or union to make a plan. Congregations and individual members are encouraged to make their own plans and distribution goals. You might decide to personally distribute at least one book, one a month, one a week, or even more. You may want to donate funds to help the areas with less means to spread this Spirit-filled book. Institutions are also encouraged to get involved. Schools, hospitals, and other facilities should make their own distribution plans or arrange to participate in regional strategies. We plan to spread this book like the leaves of autumn.

THE PROJECT PARTICULARS

The General Conference is recommending that this book be published under a new title, "The Great Hope. A revealing look at the battle between good and evil—and who wins." Our reason for the change is simple: we wish to make the book as appealing as possible to today's audience. The understanding of the Ellen G. White Estate is that while the content of the book was inspired, there is no indication that its title was the product of any direct inspiration. In fact, its title was changed with each of the four versions published in Ellen White's lifetime. We believe this new title maintains the spirit of the various early titles while emphasizing the comfort to be found in knowing not only how the battle has waged but how it ends.

Each Church division is choosing for itself what title and artwork they will use to distribute this book in their territory during the Great Controversy Project. They may avail themselves of one of the recommended options or create their own.

The divisions are also deciding which version or versions of the book to distribute in their territory. They are choosing from the Classic Version, Abbre-

viated Classic Version, Modern Language Version, Partial Version, and Children's Version. Their choices will take into account the various cultural and political considerations in their area in order to present the book in an appealing and inoffensive manner. Once all these details have been finalized, information will be made available on how to purchase these special copies of the book at significantly discounted rates.

Each book, regardless of version or cover, will contain a brief introductory letter that will tactfully explain to the recipient who we are and why we are distributing this book. There will also be contact information for the local church or conference, how to get free Bible correspondence courses and literature, listings of local Adventist TV and radio programs, and the web address for the project, www.thegreathope.org. This website will contain additional information and resources for both recipients and distributors.

THE PROJECT'S PRAYER NEED

This project needs your prayers. This is a bold and innovative project for the world Church. We are moving forward with prayer, humbly seeking God's guidance each step of the way. We ask that you join us in this prayer.

THE PROJECT'S POTENTIAL

The Great Controversy Project will certainly raise awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We trust that much of the attention will be positive; that many readers will sign up for Bible studies; that eager inquirers will come to our churches and meetings to learn more of the good news they've found in this book. We are also aware that some of the responses will not be so positive. Satanic forces have historically resisted this book and will doubtlessly do the same now. However, this is God's project and we know that He will protect and preserve it.

As we make plans for this great initiative, we are giving thoughtful and prayerful consideration to possible sources of opposition and ways to lessen it. Yet realism indicates that no efforts will entirely eliminate all opposition. We accept these realities and step out in faith. Our prayer is that the Great Controversy Project will spread truth, transform lives, and bring us closer together as a Church family as we spread the word of Christ's soon coming. May God bless this project in ways we cannot imagine.



Delbert W. Baker is a General Conference Vice President and the administrative coordinator for this project.

WHY THE GREAT CONTROVERSY?

IS *THE GREAT CONTROVERSY* THE RIGHT BOOK TO DISTRIBUTE AT THIS TIME?

If Ellen White was asked this question, she would answer: "I am more anxious to see a wide circulation for this book than for any others I have written; for in *The Great Controversy*, the last message of warning to the world is given more distinctly than in any of my other books" (*Letter 281*, 1905).

HOW DOES *THE GREAT CONTROVERSY* CONTAIN THE "LAST MESSAGE OF WARNING"?

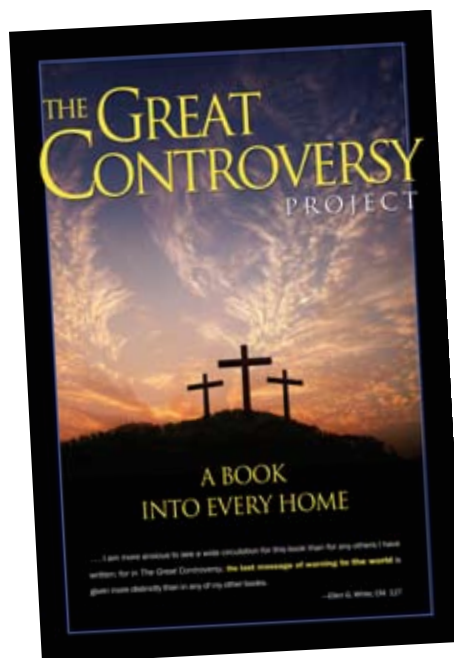
In order to understand this, Revelation 18:1 needs to be studied. It states: ". . . another angel with great authority came down from heaven, and the earth was illuminated. . . . This verse indicates that a time will come in the future when everyone will know about Jesus, the Light that illuminates the earth.

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF THIS BIBLE VERSE?

Revelation 17 refers to Babylon, the mother of prostitutes. In Chapter 18, it also directly mentions Babylon. We are living in a time when Babylon is very strong. In the near future, it will become even stronger. Those living in this mystic Babylon believe they are in the right place, the safest place on earth, and there is no need to get out. Revelation 18:4 says: ". . . Come out of her, my people. . ." Millions of God's children are living in Babylon and He wants them to come out before it's too late. The earth will be illuminated with a specific message that will convince God's children to leave Babylon.


WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THIS SPECIFIC MESSAGE?

The news about Jesus, our Savior, and His soon return is surely part of this message. However, those who are in Babylon are also preaching a similar message. Even Satan wants people to believe in the second coming, because he is planning on returning in glory and showing himself as the savior of the world. The Ten Commandments and the Sabbath should be preached, but those in Babylon might say: "We also keep the commandments and the Sunday Sabbath in memory of the resurrection of Jesus."



Preaching about Jesus and the great conflict between Him and Satan is a must. During this conflict, Satan has used several strategies to mislead people by creating a false image of God in the minds of His children. Babylon is one of his last attempts.

BESIDES THE BIBLE, WHY HAS *THE GREAT CONTROVERSY* CONVERTED MORE PEOPLE TO THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH THAN ANY OTHER BOOK?

No book expresses the reality of mystic Babylon better than *The Great Controversy*. As soon as God's children learn the religious system they follow is deceitful, they will accept His invitation to come out. The earth will be illuminated with the real truth about Jesus and His battle with Satan. Ellen White wrote: "Instruction has been given me that the important books containing the light that God has given regarding Satan's apostasy in Heaven should be given a wide circulation **just now**, for through them the truth will reach many minds" (*Review and Herald*, Feb. 16, 1905). The message to come out of Babylon is and will be the last message to be preached, and *The Great Controversy* is part of it. *The Great Controversy* is a letter from God, inviting His children to come out of Babylon. God is looking for people who are willing to be His mail carriers and deliver His invitation letter to the entire world. 



Wilmar Hirle is Publishing associate director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (hirlew@gc.adventist.org)

SHOWING RESPECT AND AVOIDING CULTURAL BLUNDERS

As professional immigrants, political refugees, and guest workers relocate to other countries, global representation is just about everywhere. How can we welcome new residents? An important first step would be to show respect to people as individuals. It is also helpful to do a bit of research on social manners of other cultures. Here are just a few interesting tips on good manners in other parts of the world.

NEPAL - It's acceptable to make slurping sounds while you sip soup or hot drinks. In some places, slurping is a compliment to the cook.

IRELAND - The small plate next to your dinner plate is not for bread. Instead, it is used for the peelings removed from your boiled potatoes.

JAPAN - When you enter the front door of a Japanese home, you must remove your shoes and place them neatly to the side. You will be offered a pair of slippers to wear inside the house.

POLAND - The local culture in Poland may seem formal, but Poles are friendly and polite. Be sure to greet people when entering or exiting an elevator.

SWEDEN - If you are invited to someone's home at 7:00 p.m., you must arrive at exactly 7:00 p.m. Punctuality is extremely important, while tardiness is considered impolite.

ECUADOR - You must never use your hand or finger to point at someone, but you may point by puckering or pursing your lips.

UZBEKISTAN - Don't be offended when your host fills your teacup only half full. This is considered polite because the hot liquid will cool more rapidly, allowing guests to refresh themselves much sooner. Serving a full cup of tea is considered disrespectful.

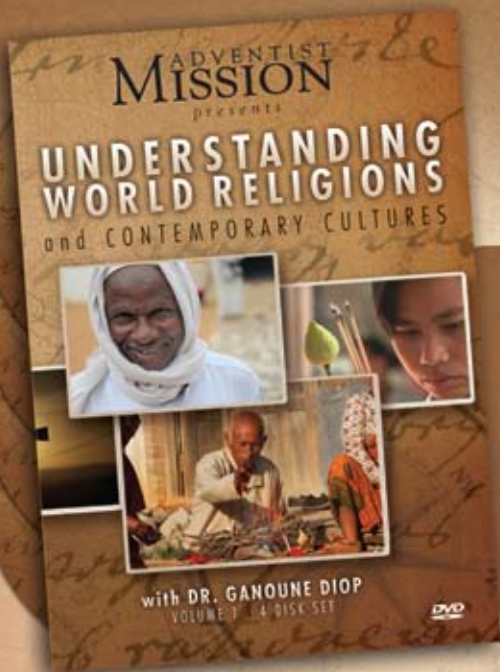
MOROCCO - If you go to a party and a lot of people are in the room, first greet each person on your right. Then greet each person on your left. It is extremely important to say goodbye to each person before you leave.

THAILAND - There are thousands of Buddhist temples to see in Thailand. To enter a temple, it is important to show proper respect. Your arms and legs must be covered, otherwise you will have to borrow or rent a garment to cover up.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - Don't be surprised if people stare at you. You might feel uncomfortable at first, but it is not considered impolite. Folks are simply curious about what you are wearing or what you are doing. (Just make sure you are on your best behavior!)

When we meet people from other cultures here at home or when we travel, we might make blunders without even realizing it. However, a friendly smile and respectful attitude will give us the confidence to take that important first step towards getting acquainted. Imagine the blessings of making an interesting new friend.

Nancy Kyte is the marketing director for the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference.



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ELDERS:

A CALL TO BE MEDIATORS

It has been said that conflict is an inevitable part of life, and this can also be seen in the Church. In fact, an examination of Scriptures makes it crystal clear that conflict is a normal part of even church life (Matthew 23:1ff; Acts 15:36-40). As a matter of fact, the Bible could be seen as a record of conflict between good and evil, which is called the Great Controversy. This great controversy will intensify as we near the end of time. So, everyone who is a true follower of Christ will encounter conflicting circumstances where their Christian experience will be tested. It is therefore vital that church leaders be fully equipped with the tools that are needed to deal with the daily conflicts that arise in the church. These tools will aid in stabilizing many of our churches that are now in turmoil. As we travel far and wide teaching and preaching the gospel of Christ, we have seen residues of unresolved conflicts or ineffective mediation. We have also watched local leaders and elders grapple with the "How to?" of mediation. It is therefore essential that a proper understanding of mediation be expressed in an effort to provide those leading out in our local churches with practical guideline[s] on how to function as effective mediators in the remnant church.

BIBLICAL MEDIATION

Mediation from a biblical perspective is the resolution of a conflict or dispute based on biblical principles, where a person not only settles substantive issues, but also recon-

ciles relationships, all for the purpose of glorifying God. Biblical Mediation is also known as "Christian conciliation."¹ Throughout Scripture one can find countless examples of conflicting situations where mediation was necessary; which when implemented was found to be effective. God called upon Moses to be a mediator between Pharaoh and the children of Israel (Exodus 6:28-12:32). His task was to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty between hostile parties. Joab was also called upon to mediate between David and Absalom, who were at odds with each other (2 Samuel 14:1-24).

The classic example of how to effectively mediate a problem is expressed in Matthew 18:15-17. In this passage Christ offers clear instructions regarding persons involved in conflicts. He posits:

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

This passage presents some simple, yet vital steps that will be valuable in mediating conflicts in our churches. (1) Inform the person, (2) Do it privately and confidentially, (3) Seek to reconcile differences, (4) Take a mediator or two with

you, (5) Tell the church, and (6) If no workable agreement let the person be as a heathen.

The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews introduces us to the greatest mediator that has ever lived. The author introduces us to Jesus the Supreme Mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises (8:6, 9:15, 12:24). The writer argues that while Moses was seen as a great mediator, Jesus' mediatorial work, while accomplishing all that Moses did was more effective and superior to that of the faithful patriarch. These examples by no means exhaust the numerous accounts of biblical mediation. Additionally, much has been written on the subject of mediation in the scholarly world and from these we can glean vital guidelines that reinforce that which Scripture teaches and is quite helpful for elders and leaders of our local churches.

MEDIATION IN TODAY'S WORLD

From careful examination of pertinent sources, it is apparent that mediation is not a new or ineffective concept. In fact, it is used quite effectively in legal circles to bring resolution to difficult matters, and over 85% of all mediation results in settlement.² According to Allan Stitt, "mediation is, simply, facilitated negotiation. A mediator attempts to help people negotiate more effectively and efficiently than they could do on their own."³ In doing this, they employ several steps in an effort to reach a satisfactory resolution of an issue: (1) Agree to mediate; (2) Gather points of views; (3) Focus on interests; (4) Create win-win options; (5) Evaluate options; (6) Create an agreement.⁴

Step 1: Agree to mediate: It has been said in conflict resolution that a great beginning will guarantee a fantastic ending, so in agreeing to mediate, parties need to be properly introduced, and a clear definition of mediation is given. The role of the mediator (to help disputants arrive at their own solutions to their problems) is clearly stated. The mediator remains neutral and must not take sides, and thus he/she takes turns talking and listening, and helps the parties cooperate in solving the problem in a private environment.

Step 2: Gather points of views: At this stage an explanation of the nature and extent of the problem is given by each disputant. The mediator, to ensure clarity and accuracy, summarizes the points of views of each disputant. While this is being done, the feelings and concerns of each disputant are validated by the mediator, which builds trust and aids in constructive dialogue about the problem.

Step 3: Focus on interests: In this very important step, the mediator guides the disputants in identifying their underlying interests. They are later asked what they want and why they want it in an effort to ascertain their position and interests. Shared interests and compatibilities are recognized, which aids in fashioning feasible resolutions.

Step 4: Create win-win options: This step involves brainstorming and inventing options upon which both sides can build and choose the next-step of the process. The interests of both parties in the dispute are addressed; no at-

tempt is made to come up with one solution. Instead, the disputants come up with as many ideas as possible, including unusual ones and just about anything that comes to mind. The mediator will assist by asking relevant questions such as, "What other possibilities can you think of? In the future, what could you do differently?"⁵ Disputants are encouraged to write down their ideas in an effort to stimulate other ideas and aid in the resolution process.

Step 5: Evaluate options: At this point disputants are asked to choose the best option from their list that they assume are fair and workable for the parties involved. The aim is to help disputants cooperatively work at evaluating and improving the options circled. The mediator's role at this stage is to find out whether the disputants believe the options are fair, doable, workable, whether they address the needs of all affected parties and what would be the consequences of deciding on those chosen.

Step 6: Create an agreement: This stage can be seen as the action stage as each disputant is asked to come up with a plan of action and to check that it is balanced, specific, realistic, lasting, and fair. Once this is done, the mediator seeks clarifications of the plan (who, what, when, where and how questions are asked) and finalizes the commitment, which could be a handshake, a written agreement, or both. Congratulations are then given to the disputants and the mediator encourages them to return if further mediation is necessary.

While conflicts are an inevitable part of church life, we can learn to resolve differences in a Christ-like and civil manner. When we are educated about conflicts and how to effectively mediate, we will be able to prevent many of the bitterness and resentment that result from unresolved conflicts, and thus rescue a soul from the way that leads to death. Elders and leaders of the local church will be more effective in ministering in their varied capacities if they are instructed on simple mediation techniques. Understanding conflict resolution and the importance of mediation from a biblical and contemporary perspective will help church leaders be better mediators when settling differences in the church.

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¹ Keith Tracy, Biblical Mediation [online], Available from <http://www.keithtracy.com/biblicalmediation>, December 14, 2010.

² Michael Roberts, Why Mediation Works [online], Available from <http://mediate.com/pfriendly.cfm?id=294>, December 19, 2010.

³ Allan Stitt, *Mediation: A Practical Guide* (Oregon: Cavendish Publishing Ltd., 2004), 1.

⁴ Fred Schrupf, Donna K. Crawford, and Richard J. Bodine, *Peer Mediation: Conflict Resolution in Schools: Program Guide* (Illinois: Research Press, 1997), 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

THE HEALTH-EXPO CONCEPT:

REACHING OUT AND TELLING THE WORLD

In Jesus' ministry, healing and preaching the gospel were inseparable. In fact, the word SOZO in Greek, used over 300 times to describe His ministry, means both "to heal" and "to save", and when He commissioned the disciples, He told them to combine healing in all they did. Ellen G. White says: "The Seventy who were sent out were also commissioned to 'heal the sick' (Luke 10:9) as well as to announce the advent of the promised Redeemer. In their work of teaching and healing, the disciples followed the example of the Master Teacher, who ministered to both soul and body. The gospel which He taught was a message of *spiritual life* and *physical restoration*. Deliverance from sin and the healing of disease were linked together."¹ In the same way, these two important aspects of ministry should not be separate today.


Is this a call for health professionals in our hospitals to "heal," while in church our focus should be to "preach"? You would agree that ALL of us are disciples, and thus called to follow Christ's example to "heal" and to "preach" (Luke 9:2). In fact inspiration confirms that "the Savior's commission to the disciples includes all the believers to the end of time."² That means each local church can be a center for whole person health, healing, and restoration, and each member is called to be a medical missionary. Hence, the global goal of Health Ministries is: "Every church a center for health in the community and every member a medical missionary."

Now is this possible? How can ministers and elders today lead lay members to follow this commission at the local church level? Simple: We must *meet people where they are!* Many outside our church doors are broken physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If we follow Christ's method of ministry, instead of coming up with our own prescriptive plan and critical judgments, we'll show we care by looking for ways to meet their needs as Jesus did. By doing that, we will draw individuals to a local church that shows disinterested benevolence while being a resource for better living.

One of the ways to accomplish this is through "Health-Expos". A Health-Expo is different than a health fair, which many cities, schools, entities, hospitals, or churches are used to. The objective of an Health-Expo is to demonstrate this "disinterested benevolence" by teaching the inspired evidence-based practical counsels on how to live healthfully while providing screenings, as-

sessments, a health age evaluation, and individual whole health counseling. The expos goal is not only to raise awareness, but to also coach people through the process of change. Partnering with an Adventist Healthcare entity nearby for a health-expo can be a wonderful way to unite our mission and resources to impact the community.

This method of reaching out through Health-Expos has grown over the years with expos conducted not only in the USA, but also in Russia, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and many other places. In 2000, many Health-Expos were conducted in Honduras, followed by over 150 evangelistic meetings, resulting in great media and public interest in the local cities. More recently in Portugal, more than 22,000 people were helped and more than 3,000 registered for follow-up health programs in a period of two years where Health-Expos were done. The Health-Expos materials are affordable, easily accessible, and come in a kit to make it easy for churches to use. The materials are available in several languages, including English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Russian, German, and come with beautiful banners, a manual, other screening materials, plus everything you need to know to hold a Health-Expo. Visit: www.healthexpobanners.com for more information.

"Never has the world's need for teaching and healing been greater than it is today. The world is full of those who need to be ministered unto—the weak, the helpless, the ignorant, and the degraded. The continual transgression of man for nearly six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death as its fruit. Multitudes are perishing for lack of knowledge."³ Your church can be a center for healing and restoration in your community by "Reaching Out and Telling the World" about the message of hope for complete restoration of body and soul. Consider the Health-Expo concept not simply as a "hook" to get people into the church, but rather as a way to demonstrate God's love through "disinterested benevolence." You will meet people where they are and draw them to a loving Savior, just like Christ did. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 465

² *Ibid.*, p. 466.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 467.



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REVIVAL AS A WAY OF LIFE

The need for spiritual revival cannot be overstressed. As stated by Elder Ted Wilson, this is the time for church leaders to call the church to pray for it. But what does revival mean and what is its intended goal?

1. Revival based on our conversion. Revival implies a prior conversion, that we were once spiritually alive but that we are now slipping toward spiritual death and in need of a revival of our spiritual life. Before our conversion, we were dead in our sins (Eph 2:1), but God through Christ forgave our sins and made us alive (2:5; Col 2:13). As a result, we were introduced to a new life in union with Christ (Rom 6:4; John 15:1-10). This new life reached us through the Spirit and is directly related to the words of Jesus, which are Spirit and life (John 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6). The union of believers with Christ is so deep that the love of God is poured into their hearts, Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20), they live in service to others (1 John 3:14; 2 Cor 13:4), and they are assured that their prayers will be heard (John 15:7, 16, 23; 1 John 5:14).

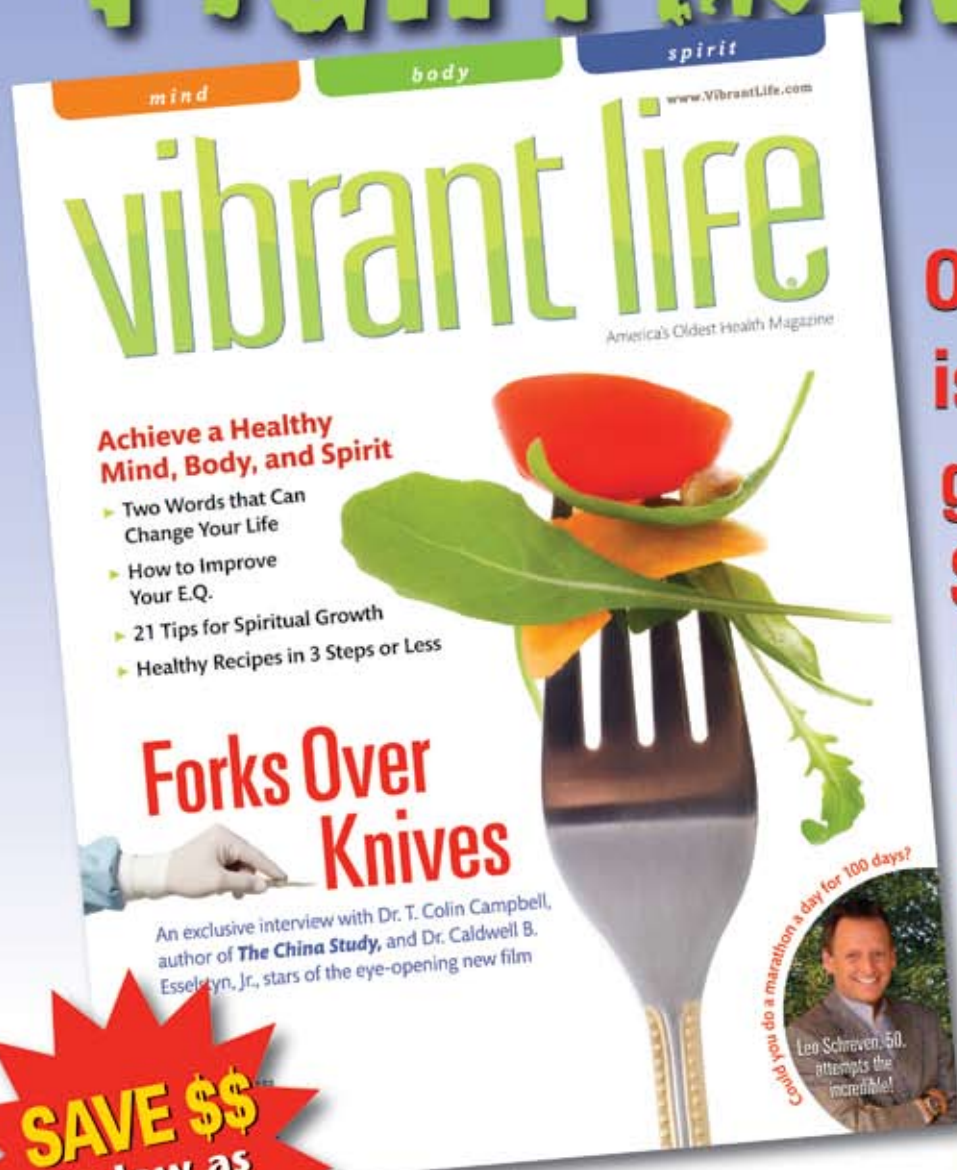
2. Revival as a return. In their journey believers may get discouraged and slowly weaken their union with Christ. This is called losing one's first love (Rev 2:4). A change is needed. We must acknowledge our need and return home like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19). When the father saw him, he exclaimed, "This son of mine was dead and now has come to life again" (15:24; NASB). Only the love of God revealed in Jesus, through the Spirit, can move us to reestablish union with the Lord. We reach our true destination when, moved by Him, we open the door (Rev 3:14-22). Then, we are once more alive, revived!

3. Revival as a way of life. Revival is the realization that we are about to lose our vital union with Christ, that the influence of the Spirit in our lives has diminished, and that we need to strengthen our spiritual life through study of the Word and through a life of prayer and service to others. This is what the Christian life should always be; if it is not, then we need revival. As we come closer to the Lord the Spirit will empower us to understand the Scriptures and to walk in holiness, moving us to spend quality time in communion with the Lord in prayer asking for the outpouring of the Spirit. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit in our lives is directly related to our *interest in spiritual growth and our engagement in the mission* of the church. The Spirit is dynamic and therefore His power is not granted to those who are indifferent to God's mission. As we approach the end of the conflict, the Spirit will come with unprecedented power (the latter rain) in preparation for the divine harvest. We should pray for this event and ask the Spirit to use us today as we share the message.

Revival is not about emotionalism, nor about miracles, but about a life totally committed to the Lord and nurtured by Him through study of the Scriptures, prayer, receptivity to the power and presence of the Spirit, and witnessing. If in our witnessing a miracle is necessary, the Spirit will do it and miracles will happen in connection with the latter rain. Let us all, together, pray for the revival of primitive godliness among us. 

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HOW TO ENJOY THE SABBATH

Isaiah 58:13

Formosa is a cow that produces 1.5 gallons of milk per day. Every morning she climbs up a hill and, at milking time, refuses to come down. When she is forced to come down from the hill, she holds back the milk, but if she is gently and respectfully directed down, Formosa is generous; she allows herself to be milked liberally.

For some people the Sabbath day can resemble Formosa the cow; a hard, unpleasant and barren day or 24 hours of joy, well-being and blessings. Here is what we read in Isaiah 58:13, 14.

I. SABBATH IS A DAY TO LOVE

A. Plants grow during the night, but grow more during the day because of the sunlight. Similarly, Christians grow during the week, but on Sabbath, when they devote a period of 24 hours to God, they are more molded into God's image and character.

Isn't this the purpose of the Sabbath? In reality, if the fourth commandment was kept by everyone, there wouldn't be evolutionists, for the fourth commandment unites all humanity to their Loving Creator. Ellen G. White states that, "The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden" (*Child Guidance*, 535).

B. Let us repeat the fourth commandment (Ex 20:8-11).

On the first six days of creation, God created life. On the seventh day, He created love, a time to love, a day to love. The first five days were created as anticipation of the arrival of "God's children". They came on the sixth day. Thus, like how parents prepare a room for the arrival of their baby, so too God prepared an ideal place for the dwelling and growth of His children. Adam and Eve were the highest life forms God created on this planet.

To create the other living creatures, God spoke and they came into existence. But he did not do the same with Adam and Eve. In fact, when God molded His first son, it was with His own hands and in His own image and likeness. And He put His lips over those clay lips and breathed in living breath. When Adam opened His eyes, the first person He saw was His Creator. He did not look into the eyes of a monkey.



All who love God
should do what they
can to make the
Sabbath a delight,
holy and honorable.



Ellen G. White
Child Guidance, p. 535

Eve, on the other hand, was not made directly from clay. God used a better substance to make the woman, so that she would have the same genetic code as man. Then, God instituted marriage. We can imagine God celebrating their union in the Garden of Eden. And at sunset on the sixth day, God had completed His work. No work was done after sunset.

Then, God created the Sabbath, starting at sunset on Friday evening. The seventh day is so important that it was the only one that received a name. It was made to benefit Adam and Eve. Read Mark 2:27, 28. The Sabbath was made for people—it is a special time in which we fill our lungs with God's breath of spiritual life and renew our birth in Christ.

II. WHAT TO AVOID ON SABBATH

A. Sabbath does not exist to put limits to our liberty, but it is a fuel that boosts us to the top. Sabbath is a golden opportunity for us to meet God and to grow together with Him. To reach these blessings, we should pay attention to what not to do on Sabbath:

1. Our regular and daily work, in the supermarket, construction site, law firm, classroom (read Ex 34:21 - in plowing time and in harvest).

Any other physical or mental work

for self benefit (read Jr 17:21, 22 – cleaning, fixing things around the house).

2. Business, selling or buying.

3. Studies—no activity related to school.

4. The benefits of turning off from the world—newspaper, internet, radio and TV.

How about emergencies? What if you need to buy medicine? If you need to take a cab or bus? What if there's a fire or accident?—Jesus mentioned the ox or donkey in the well. Aren't you going to get them?

III. WHAT TO DO ON SABBATH


A. Luke 4:16—Jesus went to church; Acts 16:13—and so did the apostles. The church provides several activities to make Sabbath more pleasant: Sabbath School, Divine Worship, Youth meetings, etc.

B. Luke 6:9, 10 – Is it licit to do good deeds on Sabbath? Share the benefits of visiting hospitals, jails, the sick, and teaching Bible truths.

C. Unite the family—during the week we go about our busy schedules, but on Sabbath we have the opportunity to go to church and spend time together as a family. Ellen G. White says, "Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children shall look forward to it, and have a welcome in their hearts for it" (*The Review and Herald*, May 30, 1871 par. 4).

D. The Sabbath's reception. On Friday all are involved in the preparation for Sabbath. At sunset, all are free from daily cares.

CONCLUSION

May the Lord help us to take more advantage of the blessings He has reserved for us through the holy Sabbath. 

This sermon has been reprinted, by permission, from the Portuguese Edition of *Elder's Digest*, 2010.

Sermon Notes:

DISTINCTIVENESS OF DISCIPLESHIP

John 8:31

What does it really mean to follow Jesus? Somehow in the latter part of the twentieth century people lost sight of what it means to follow Jesus, and it has carried over into the twenty-first century.

Discipleship is linked to external observance of religion rather than a relational experience with Jesus Christ. During the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, many people sought to follow the Lord. "Even as he spoke, many believed in him" (John 8:30).

Many motives moved people to associate with Jesus Christ. Some were infatuated with the Lord's miracles and teachings. Others were just curious. Jesus did not want people to follow Him outside the motive of a genuine commitment. To distinguish the authentic followers, Jesus gave the distinctiveness of a true disciple.

I. A TRUE DISCIPLE HAS CONTINUANCE—John 8:31-33

A. Jesus realized that some people made an impulsive decision to follow Him. At times in Jesus' ministry, large crowds followed the Master.

The Lord knew some followed just to hear His teachings, to observe His miracles, or to be a part of the crowd. He knew that many would decide not to follow Him. "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him" (6:66).

B. Jesus pointed out that perseverance would be the sign of a true disciple. "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (8:31).

Discipleship is not the excitement of one moment. It is a patient continuance in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Illustration: Ignace Jan Paderewski started playing the piano at the age of three. He developed slowly, but he was determined to become a master of the piano. He practiced six hours almost every day of his life. By discipline and determination he finally reached his goal.

C. To a crowd of potential followers Jesus gave a sure sign of a disciple.

A disciple is one who follows Jesus continuously. The genuine evidence is in the sustained effort.

II. A TRUE DISCIPLE HAS FREEDOM — vv. 34-38

A. Jesus taught of a freedom which leads to bondage. "Jesus replied, 'Very



Christ declared that their love one for another was a sure badge of their discipleship.



Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, August 1, 1896 par. 2

truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin'" (v. 34).

To a group of potential disciples Jesus taught how sin leads to bondage. Going through life trusting only on ourselves leads to a detrimental bondage. No one who follows Jesus can be a master to himself.

B. Jesus spoke of a bondage which leads to freedom.

A true disciple is one who has renounced his way to the way of Christ. This kind of bondage to the Lord leads to authentic freedom. Jesus said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (v. 36).

The true disciple of Jesus lives to please only one Person, and this Person is Jesus Christ.

C. A distinctiveness of Christian discipleship is freedom. A disciple of Jesus is not a slave to sin, but a slave to the Master.

III. A TRUE DISCIPLE HAS A CHRIST-LIKE BEHAVIOR — vv. 39-47

A. The Jews made claims to be Abraham's children. By physical lineage this was true. However, Jesus taught that a true disciple was not one of mere physical descent.

The Jews claimed to be disciples on pedigree and name. Many of these Jews lived lives that were contrary to Abraham's life. They sought to kill Jesus (v. 40).

They slandered the name of Jesus (v. 41). Jesus said they were not God's children, for they did not reflect God's character. "You belong to your father, the devil" (v. 44a).

To behave in the manner of the Jews was uncharacteristic of God's children. Ellen G. White says: "There is in human nature a tendency to run to extremes and from one extreme to another entirely opposite. Many are fanatics. They are consumed by a fiery zeal which is mistaken for religion, but character is the true test of discipleship. Have they the meekness of Christ? Have they His humility and sweet benevolence? Is the soul-temple emptied of pride, arrogance, selfishness, and censoriousness? If not, they know not what manner of spirit they are of. They do not realize that true Christianity consists in bearing much fruit to the glory of God" (5T, 305).

B. God's children behave like His children. "If God were your Father, you would love me" (v. 42a).

Also, Jesus said, "Whoever belongs to God hears what God says" (v. 47a). Nature will be true to itself. If one is born of God, then he or she will live in accordance with Christ's character. Ellen G. White also affirms, "This is not merely a Christian duty, but the certain evidence of discipleship—the Christian duty. It is the one thing, the great test of character, the proof of discipleship, and our heirship to heaven" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, 358).

IV. A TRUE DISCIPLE HONORS CHRIST — vv. 48-59

A. Many claimed to be disciples of Jesus, but they did not honor Him. Jesus said, "I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me" (v. 49, KJV). The people dishonored Christ by saying that He was possessed with a demon.

B. True disciples honor Christ.

Disciples honor the Lord by adoring and obeying Him.

CONCLUSION

Are you a true disciple of Jesus Christ? The proof is not in mere externals. It is in continuance, freedom, the way one lives, and honoring Christ.



General Conference Ministerial Association

THREE GREAT RITES OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus 16:1-22

The Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary was determined by three great rites:

1. *The rite of the young bull in favor of the high priest and his house.*
2. *The rite of the goat chosen for the Lord.*
3. *The rite of the goat for Azazel or scapegoat.*

Why were these rites performed? What do they teach us?

I. THE RITE OF THE YOUNG BULL

A. The first rite was in favor of the high priest and his house.

Leviticus 16:3, 6, 11 orders that a young bull be offered as an offering for the sin and atonement "for himself and for his house." The high priest's preparation was intense:

- He should wash himself in the morning (16:4).
- Wear the holy garment (16:4).
- Present the burnt offering that preceded the offering for sin (Nm 29:8-11).
- After the burnt offering the high priest began the first great rite: he presented the young bull as an "offering for sin" for atonement.

Leviticus 16:11-14 states that the high priest used part of the young bull's blood and part of the goat's blood (burnt offering) in the ritual. The purpose was to clean the altar and sanctify it "from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (v. 19).

B. Here are some lessons for us:

- Before the high priest performed the rites, he first had to perform them in favor of his own life and in favor of his house.
- Before we pray for someone else, we need to pray for ourselves.
- Instead of demanding changes in the lives of others, we first need to change our life and our house.
- The high priest first needed a blessing to start blessing others through his ministry.

Jesus did not need to perform this rite in His favor, for He was pure, without sin.

II. THE RITE OF THE GOAT FOR THE LORD

Leviticus 16:5, 9 talks about the second rite of the Day of Atonement. Verse 15 says that the goat offering "is for the people."

The blood of the goat for the Lord was used to cleanse the Sanctuary from

the remaining sins of the people, deposited there during the entire year.

A little of the blood of the young bull was also used in this rite and put on the horns of the altar (v. 18).

The altar was purified from the impurities of the children of Israel (v. 19).

Verse 20 says it is clear that people were involved in the cleansing/purification. Verse 33 confirms it.

- The sanctuary was purified from the impurities of the Israelites.
- The altar, Holy Sanctuary, and tabernacle were included (v. 33).

The great emphasis in Leviticus 16 is the purification of the Sanctuary. The sins confessed were transferred to the Sanctuary and remained there during the year, thus needing to be purified.

God, however, assured that forgiveness = cleansing because of His grace.

This rite is a type of the purification in the Heavenly Sanctuary which occurred since 1844 (Hb 9:23, 24; Dn 8:14).

God really emphasizes cleansing; cleansing in the camp, in the tents, in the altar, in the Sanctuary, of soul and heart.

God also wants pure people: pure eyes, hands, hearts, when speaking, walking (Mt 5:8). 1 John 1:9 says that the Lord cleans the sin in which there is confession.

Today Christ is in the Heavenly Sanctuary making atonement in our favor. When we are forgiven or justified by faith in Christ, we are at peace with God (Rm 5:1).

III. THE RITE OF THE SCAPEGOAT

A. The third rite of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:8, 10).

The scapegoat is the vehicle that led the sins of Israel to the desert. It is important to notice that the rite of the scapegoat or "for Azazel" occurs after the atonement for the Sanctuary in regards to the people of God.

This goat was not killed in a rite and his blood was not shed. The rite of this goat was a rite of elimination from sin and impurity (Lev 16:21, 22).

It is not an act of consecration or blessing, but a transfer of sin, figuratively, to the scapegoat.

All sins, from which the sanctuary was cleansed through spoken confession and laying of hands, were transferred to the living goat for the elimination of the

same from the midst of the Israelite community. It was the removal of their sins.

The rite of the live goat was not sacrificial, neither expiatory. The live goat was called a scapegoat, and verse 10 says "for Azazel" (NIV), which suggests the name of a supernatural being opposed to God.

The first goat was representing Christ; the second is seen as representing Satan, who will be destroyed at the end of the Thousand Years.

This will be the total and final eradication of sin and the establishment of the New Heaven and New Earth.

Peter talks about the New Heaven and New Earth (2 Peter 3:13). And John wrote about the death of Satan at the end of our planet's history (Rev 20:7-10).

CONCLUSION

Remember what Ellen G. White says: "We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study. We should teach our children what the typical Day of Atonement signified and that it was a special season of great humiliation and confession of sins before God. The antitypical day of atonement is to be of the same character. Everyone who teaches the truth by precept and example will give the trumpet a certain sound. You need ever to cultivate spirituality, because it is not natural for you to be heavenly-minded. The great work is before us of leading the people away from worldly customs and practices, up higher and higher, to spirituality, piety, and earnest work for God" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 520).

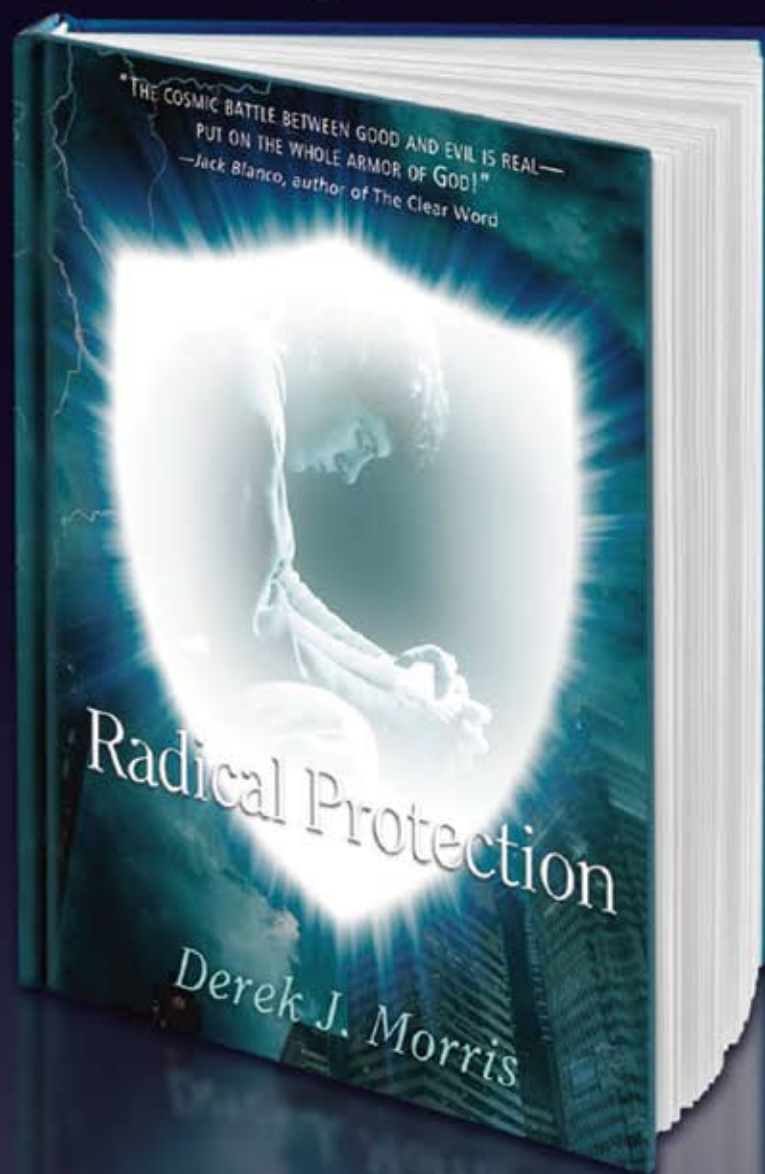
Today we need to consecrate ourselves to God and purify ourselves in Christ's blood so that our name is not erased from the book of life.



Erico Tadeu Xavier is a pastor at the South Brazilian Union.

Sermon Notes:

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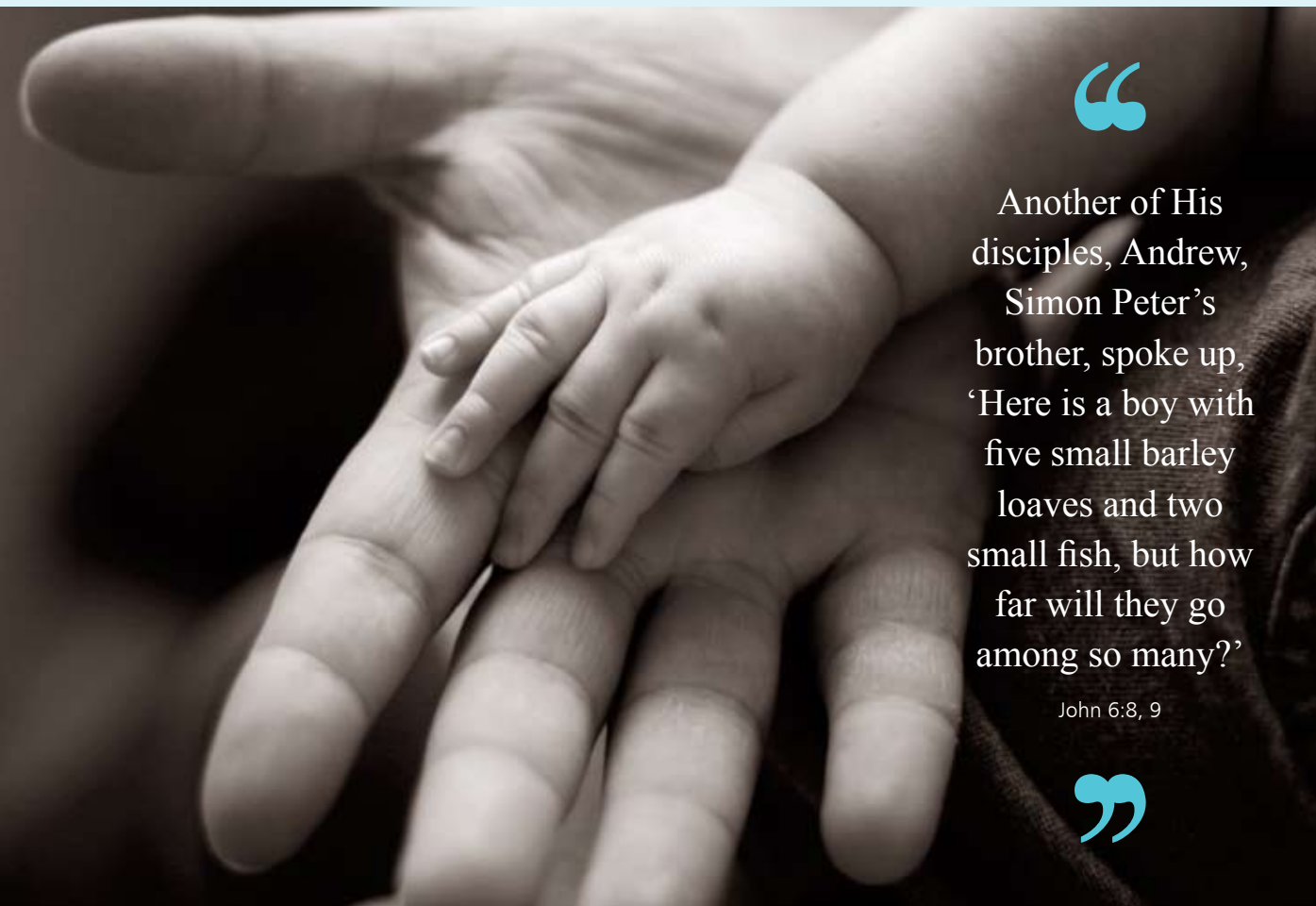
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Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'

John 6:8, 9



WHILE IN THE HANDS OF JESUS

A basketball in my hands is worth about \$20. A basketball in the hands of LeBron James is worth about \$31.5 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in.

A volleyball in my hands is worth about \$6. A volleyball in the hands of Karch Kiraly is worth about \$3 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in.

A tennis racket in my hands is worth about \$20. A tennis racket in the hands of Caroline "Sunshine" Wozniacki is worth more than \$2 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in.

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6. A baseball in the hands of Derek Jeter is worth about \$22 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in.

Two fish and five loaves in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches. Two fish and five loaves in Jesus' hands will feed thousands.

It depends on whose hands they're in.

GUESS WHO'S COMING FOR DINNER?

The winter rains had made the grassy slopes that surround the Sea of Galilee unusually green. An exciting event was taking place: the disciples were returning from a preaching tour that took them all through Galilee. They were coming to tell Jesus all about the experiences they had had while traveling. But a sad event had just taken place as well: King Herod had John the Baptist beheaded. So Jesus decided to take His disciples on a retreat.

They got into a boat and headed north on the Sea of Galilee toward Bethsaida, which was only about four miles away. However, the crowds followed them.

Jesus spent most of the day teaching and healing the people and their sick loved ones on the mountain-side. The disciples came to Jesus later in the day and said, "Master, we need to send these people away to go buy food for themselves. Here we are in this remote place. We don't have food for all these people."

Jesus answered the disciples, but not in the way you might expect someone to answer when you have just told them there are 10,000 people who need food. "You give them something to eat!" Philip responded, "Master, eight months worth of wages wouldn't buy enough food for this crowd!" If we were to try to feed them in our day, we couldn't get away with less than \$5 per person, or about \$50,000—far more than eight months' salary for most people today.

Andrew took matters into his own hands and started looking for food. I'm not sure what he expected to find. But he came back to Jesus and reported, "We have five barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go in this crowd?"

What was Jesus up to? Verse 6 tells us that Jesus said what He did to test Philip. Do you think He might have gone through this little "game" with Philip to impress on the disciples' minds that whatever they thought they could do was not enough? That the problem was bigger than their abilities? And do you think that He allows us to work through all of our "man made" solutions, only to come to the point where we discover that the problem is bigger than we are?

You know the ending of the story: Jesus held the bread and fish in His hands, looked up towards heaven and gave thanks, and broke it. His disciples then fed more than 10,000 people!

While in the hands of Jesus, the food multiplied.

CHILDREN, COME UNTO ME

Andrew got the barley loaves and fish from a boy. The Greek reads, "little boy." I find it interesting that when Andrew went looking for food, he most likely did not find this little boy's lunch and say, "Oh, this should be enough for this crowd," and stopped looking for food. I would imagine he looked long and hard through that crowd, and that little boy was the only one he could find who was prepared to be with Jesus for the long haul. Jesus could have easily made manna fall down from heaven like he did for the Israelites long ago. But, instead, he chose to use the gift of a little boy to perform a miracle.

Why is this important?

This story teaches us many things. One is that Jesus values our wholistic needs; our physical needs are a spiritual matter. But an often overlooked lesson is that Jesus values not only children but the *ministry of children*.

You may have heard it said that God works through men and women to meet the needs of their fellow man, which is true. However, what we don't always say, and what I believe this story is telling us, is that God works through the lives of little boys and little girls as well as to minister to their fellow man.

God wants to use children to help Him spread the message of His love and His soon return. God wants to

use children to help ease the physical suffering of our friends and neighbors.

God wants to use children to give hope to a world that can be scary sometimes.

Yes, parents, teachers, pastors, and other adults must guide and direct children. They need us. They need us to share with them the wisdom that life experiences bring. Some things they just can't learn until they've lived for awhile. And there are some things that they aren't ready for. It's probably not a good idea that they go drive a truck for ADRA in South Africa, or fly a helicopter to drop-ship supplies to the needy in El Salvador!

But we need them as well.

WHAT WE NEED FROM CHILDREN

We need their energy. Sometimes I think that youth is wasted on the young!

We need their simplicity. We allow our lives to get so complicated with such unimportant things.

We need their teachability. We fake knowing it all sometimes because for some strange reason we think we're supposed to know it all.

We need their gifts and talents. In 1992, a grade school boy, about 10 or 11 years old, went to spend the summer with his grandmother in Alaska. She wanted to attend a class for Prophecy Seminar instructors, but she did not want to go alone. So she took the boy with her.

The Prophecy Seminar teacher adamantly refused to allow anyone to attend who did not sign a promise to hold a prophecy seminar. The child tried to get out of it, but between the adamant teacher and the grandmother who wanted his company, he was forced to sign.

He attended the whole session and became very interested in Bible study as a result. Over the next school year, he continued to study. The next spring (he was now 11 or 12) his grandmother wrote and reminded him of his promise to hold a seminar. She added that she was sending him the leftover material from her seminar.

Being conscientious, he proceeded to plan. He made a list of everyone he knew that he could invite. His mother added some names making a total of 30 who were invited. To his great sorrow, only 9 people showed up the first night. He had yet to learn that evangelists would give their eye teeth to get almost a 30 percent response to advertising!

He held meetings for 28 nights. During the day he visited the attendees. His mother drove him around but stayed in the car while he went inside. He would ask, "Are you enjoying the meetings? Do you understand what you are hearing? Do you have any questions?" After dealing with all that, he prayed and continued to the next place.

He started out very shy and bashful, but as the meetings progressed, he gained confidence and no longer felt insecure about his ability to talk to people.



“
We must free children
from our limitations on
their talents and abilities.
We must humbly release
our children to the perfect
will of God.
”

Five adults were baptized at the end of the meetings. The young preacher told Dorothy Watts who interviewed him, “I used to not think very much about Jesus, but now I understand how special and powerful He is.”

While in the hands of Jesus, miracles take place! The weak become strong, the shy become bold, the hopeless receive hope.

God has given different gifts and abilities to different people. Not everyone can preach—even adults. But we must ask ourselves the question, “What can I do in *my* life to help people know Jesus?” And be prepared for the miraculous!

WHAT CHILDREN NEED FROM US

Evelyn Christensen, a Christian author and speaker, was touring Japan several years ago when a reporter interviewed her in Tokyo. Mirroring his country’s then male-dominated society, during the course of the interview he became agitated and suddenly blurted out, “How does your husband handle you being the teacher and speaker.” Pointing to her husband, Chris, she answered, “He’s sitting right over there. Why don’t you ask him for yourself?”

The following is his answer. While it answers the reporter’s question, it also speaks to us today regarding our children:

“I believe the Christian husband is the spiritual head of his household, God having entrusted him with his wife and children’s physical and spiritual care. The Bible says that those to whom something has been entrusted are stewards, responsible for that thing. Thus, the husband and father is the steward of the wife and children whom God has entrusted to him. That also makes him the steward of his wife’s and children’s gifts and talents from God. So he is responsible not only to free them to use their talents from God, he also must encourage and assist them to do so. Also, as the steward of these family

members, he will give an account to God as to whether he has hindered or helped them in the use of their God-given talents.” Years ago, he said, he humbly released in prayer his wife and children and all that he is to the perfect will of God.

Parents, teachers, pastors, and other adults, we must allow God to use children for His purposes. We must free children from our limitations on their talents and abilities. We must humbly release our children to the perfect will of God.

I realize letting go is not easy. I am thankful, though, for parents who released me to the perfect will of God in order to attend boarding academy at age 14, never to live at home full-time again. I remember coming home on home leaves and watching my mother cry as she sent me back to academy at the end of the week. But, she said, she was finally at peace when I turned to her and said, “Mom, it’s OK. This is where the Lord wants me to be.” Ironically, she is 75 and now lives with my husband and me. God has blessed us with special time during this season of her life.

Have you let your children go? Maybe not physically to leave home, but spiritually to be the children God would have them be?

HANDING THEM OVER

Two fish and five loaves in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches. Two fish and five loaves in Jesus’ hands will feed thousands.

It depends on whose hands they’re in.

I encourage you to place your life and the lives of your children in the hands of Jesus.

And while in the hands of Jesus, we will see miracles happen!

ED

Bonita Joyner Shields is an editor of youth Bible study guides in the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.



VISITING FOR THE MASTER

Upon arrival, our team, consisting of four deaconesses and myself, received a warm welcome from the elderly couple. They were delighted to have us visit with them. We were surprised by their optimism and cheerful disposition. Despite their grim health, they were happy to see us.

Mr. and Mrs. Constable,* both in their mid-eighties, were both terminally ill with cancer. They were still able to live on their own with some help from family and friends. We hardly noticed the slight smell that an illness will sometimes generate.

We chatted and sang songs of praise. How blessed and beautiful those hymns sounded to our ears. What a joy to see warm smiles on the faces of this endearing couple.

Mr. Constable, a gifted musician, was unable to play for us due to his illness, yet he mentioned that he was looking forward to playing again someday for church service.

After a Scripture reading, I took the communion bread and the grape juice. The wafer felt like heaven to hold, and the grape juice was a purple/red color that represented the precious blood of Jesus. We reflected on the words of Jesus and with the help of the deaconesses, we all partook of the communion bread and grape juice.

Mr. and Mrs. Constable expressed their gratitude for our visit with them. Such a simple yet sacred service. To my knowledge it was the last communion service given to the Constables. Shortly after our visit, both Mr. and Mrs. Constable succumbed to the cancer.

My most joyful experience as an elder is when I can reach out to the unfortunate in their time of need. "For I was hungry; and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:35, 36 NKJV).

As disciples, we must follow Him. We must do as He did. Jesus made house calls and so must we (Matthew

8:14, 15, Luke 8:51-55 and Luke 14:1). The early Christian church made house call (Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20). We must also follow suit.

Ellen White comments: "Remember that a minister's work does not consist merely in preaching. He is to visit families in their homes, to pray with them, and to open to them the Scriptures. He who does faithful work outside of the pulpit will accomplish tenfold more than he who confines his labors to the desk" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 124).

We must not neglect this most important ministry. If your church already has a visitation ministry, make sure it is active. If your church does not have one, here are some guidelines to get you started:

1. Make a visitation plan.
2. Discuss the plan with your pastor.
3. Evaluate your church's visitation ministry and make any necessary changes or improvements.
4. Recruit a team to work with you.
5. Get input from your ministry team.
6. Provide visitation ministry training for the team.
7. Determine which church members need visits; this should be done on an ongoing basis.
8. Create a visitation schedule.
9. Stay committed to your visitation schedule and adjust it as needed.
10. Make a commitment to keep the command of Jesus found in John 13:34, 35. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

*Pseudonym

Michael Stango is an ordained elder, who works in the Telecommunications department at the General Conference. He is also currently active in prison ministry.

MOTIVATION OF A CHURCH ELDER



As expressed in part in the *Church Manual* concerning the elder's work, "... under the pastor and in the absence of a pastor, the local elder is a spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for fostering all departments and activities of the work. The elder should maintain a mutually helpful relationship with all other church officers "Not only is it clear that it is a humbling privilege for one to be a church elder, but it also presents a challenge for the elder's exemplary personal character.

Spiritual leadership calls for real time connection with Jesus Christ to acquaint oneself with His will. Fostering church activities demands creating quality time on a daily basis to review and plan church work for mainstreaming evangelism, for both outreach and in-reach purposes. Maintaining healthy relationships requires more than interpersonal skills as applied in organizations motivated by profit, or driven by dividends, or guided by results performance. In church, individuals come together for salvation against backgrounds of varying degrees of character deficiencies, defiled past lifestyles and impure mental faculties, where the only common tangents are hope and faith which no elder can define. Elders' service is a privilege which carries with it heavy responsibilities that far more outweigh executive powers over earthly conglomerates bent on satisfying human wealth. People's eternity, and not value generation or wealth creation, is at stake.

Such is the weight of duty on an elder that even after one's term of service there is an accountability responsibility for the opportunity accorded to improve one's character and that of the church. On being ordained into office, an elder is like ushered into the inside of the veil with Christ; one is like accorded the honor to evangelize based on the tasted and proven goodness of the Lord through personal evidence. It is like one sworn to share in the bittersweet of the path to glory. Deviating from that path is tantamount to perjury of the highest order. One just has to think about how Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot must have felt after their betrayal of Christ's trust! Such is the awesomeness of the privilege that one has no excuse to know less of God's standards than what one can know. Being prepared for the worst as for the best, as both the church and the elder are still marching on the path to perfection, the elder's desire becomes like that of David, *to be in the house of the Lord forever*.

An elder must focus on Jesus Christ as the Owner and Head of the church. The elder should be the first in the

congregation to have personal experience of talking with Jesus in prayer and in hearing Him through meditative Bible study. If one is an elder and does not pray, pray, and pray, then God's work is in jeopardy.

Oftentimes elders fail to see or do God's will because they focus so much on either themselves (*how they are doing*) or on how the church members perceive their performance, after which they analyze their personal weaknesses that blur their vision of Jesus' capabilities through them. While analyzing is good for reviewing church work, they ought to be done in full honor of God who expects successes and also perfects defects.

The Holy Spirit sharpens human efforts in God's work. Elders will therefore not achieve much for Jesus if they do not create quality time at least on a daily basis to reflect on church work. Being in a better position to assist the pastor to understand how contemporary issues affect the congregation calls for deliberate personal commitment on the part of the elder to ensure that church programs are not off-tune with the congregational needs. Amidst the hassle and bustle of daily work programs, it is a blessing practice to commit time to reflect on the spiritual needs of the church and how to initiate appropriate programs to meet those needs. With Jesus at the core, quality time may not have to be in long hours sometimes. Gradually nonetheless, one discovers the growing sweetness and goodness of the Lord, the longer it takes to serve Him!

Lastly, building helpful relationships depends on understanding one's team members. God's work requires a whole lot of diverse but complimentary traits which only in Jesus we find a combination of them all—meekness without giving in to abuse, justice with mercy, rebuke without hurt, endurance without a murmur, and so on. However, the Holy Spirit distributes such traits sufficiently amongst different people in the forms of gifts, and a discerning elder will identify them in the team and ensure that they are used profitably.

Privileged to personally know Jesus and His will for the church, serving Him who "came not to lull the world to sleep, but to point out the narrow path in which all must travel who reach at last the gates of the City of God" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 565) therefore provides motivation enough for the elder against either indolence while in office or reduced after the term of office without transient expectations.

ED

Delight Joseph Ngwira is an elder at a local Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lilongwe, Central Malawi Conference, Malawi.

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Selected Message, vol. 1, p. 121

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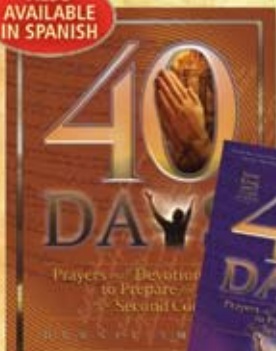
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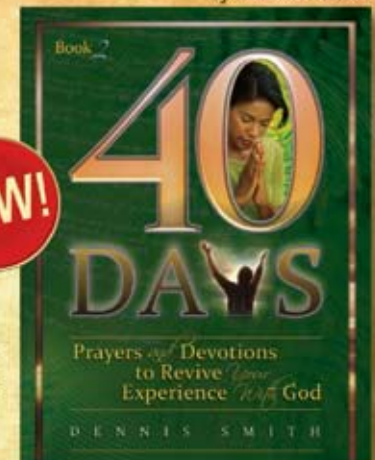
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ELLEN WHITE'S BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP



For Ellen White the meaning of true worship today should be marked by a biblical simplicity and some basic biblical principles.

First, God alone should be the object of worship (Exodus 20:3-5; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 269). In a world in which not only idols of wood and stone are worshiped, but in which human accomplishments, pride, and money are made gods, we are reminded that we are to “worship and serve the Lord God, and Him only. [...] Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a god chosen before the Lord” (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 56; see also *Evangelism*, p. 133).

A second biblical principle underlines the futility of exterior forms of worship deprived of biblical meaning and foundation (Exodus 20:4-6, 23). Today, many are tempted to look upon “outward forms” and ceremonies as sufficient indicators of true worship (*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 48). For Ellen White, however, such “cannot be substituted for inward piety” and obedience to Christ (BE, June 1, 1887).

Third, and in contrast to external forms, true worship is foremost spiritual (John 4:21-24; 9T 143). To Nicodemus

Jesus explained that the spiritual renewal occasioned by the new birth experience is essential in true worship (John 3:5-8; DA 189). True worship is thus the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit upon a person’s life; it is the result of conversion and inspired by a “true knowledge of Jesus Christ” (John 17:3; *Medical Ministry*, p. 112).

A fourth biblical principle highlights the close relationship between worship and obedience to God’s will. Genuine worship cannot be separated from a genuine Christian life. “True worship consists in working together with Christ” (Matthew 25:34-40; James 1:27; RH, August 16, 1881).

Ellen White’s foremost concern which shaped her counsels on worship was to help Christians be ready to “appreciate a pure and holy heaven, and be prepared to join with the worshipers in the heavenly courts above, where all is purity and perfection, where every being has perfect reverence for God and His holiness” (5T 500).



Denis Fortin is the Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrew University.

This was originally published in “*Best Practices*”, a free email newsletter from the North American Division Church Resource Center.

Elder John Graz recognized with First Freedom Award

On January 13, 2011, Dr. John Graz, Secretary General of the International Religious Liberty Association who directs the Adventist world church’s department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) received the Counsel on America’s First Freedom’s “National

Award” for his contribution to advancing the cause of religious liberty. He has launched a successful series of festivals of religious freedom around the world, including the First World Festival of Religious Freedom held in Lima, Peru, with more than 45,000 attendees. The Counsel on America’s First Freedom exists to promote religious freedom and owns the site where Thomas Jefferson’s Statute for Religious Freedom was enacted in Virginia—the statute that was the precursor of the religion causes in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Dr. Graz was praised at the event for his tireless efforts to promote religious freedom in many areas of the globe. During his acceptance speech, Dr. Graz noted his family’s rich history of defending human rights, including the example of his

grandfather who perished in the Dachau concentration camp where he was imprisoned by the Nazis for his role in helping Jews and French resistance members escape from occupied France to Switzerland. He also outlined his dream of active organizations in every corner of the world ensuring that the promise of religious freedom becomes a daily reality.

Each January, the First Freedom Center acknowledges extraordinary advocates of religious freedom with the First Freedom Award granted this time to three champions of this cause: John Graz, Asma Jahangir, and J. Brent Walker. Graz, who also serves as church elder at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist church in Maryland, U.S.A., is the first Adventist leader to receive a First Freedom Award.

“We are very proud of Dr. Graz,” notes Dr. Ted N. C. Wilson, the President of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. “His contribution to the field of religious freedom is outstanding, and it is not surprising that his stature in the field has been recognized at such a prestigious event. He is a great resource for our church; indeed, he is a great champion for all people of faith.”

James Standish and Alfredo Garcia-Marenko



Photo: Courtesy of PARL

► Dr. John Graz addressing the audience while accepting the First Freedom Award.

RON CLOUZET TO HOLD NET 2011 FOR NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

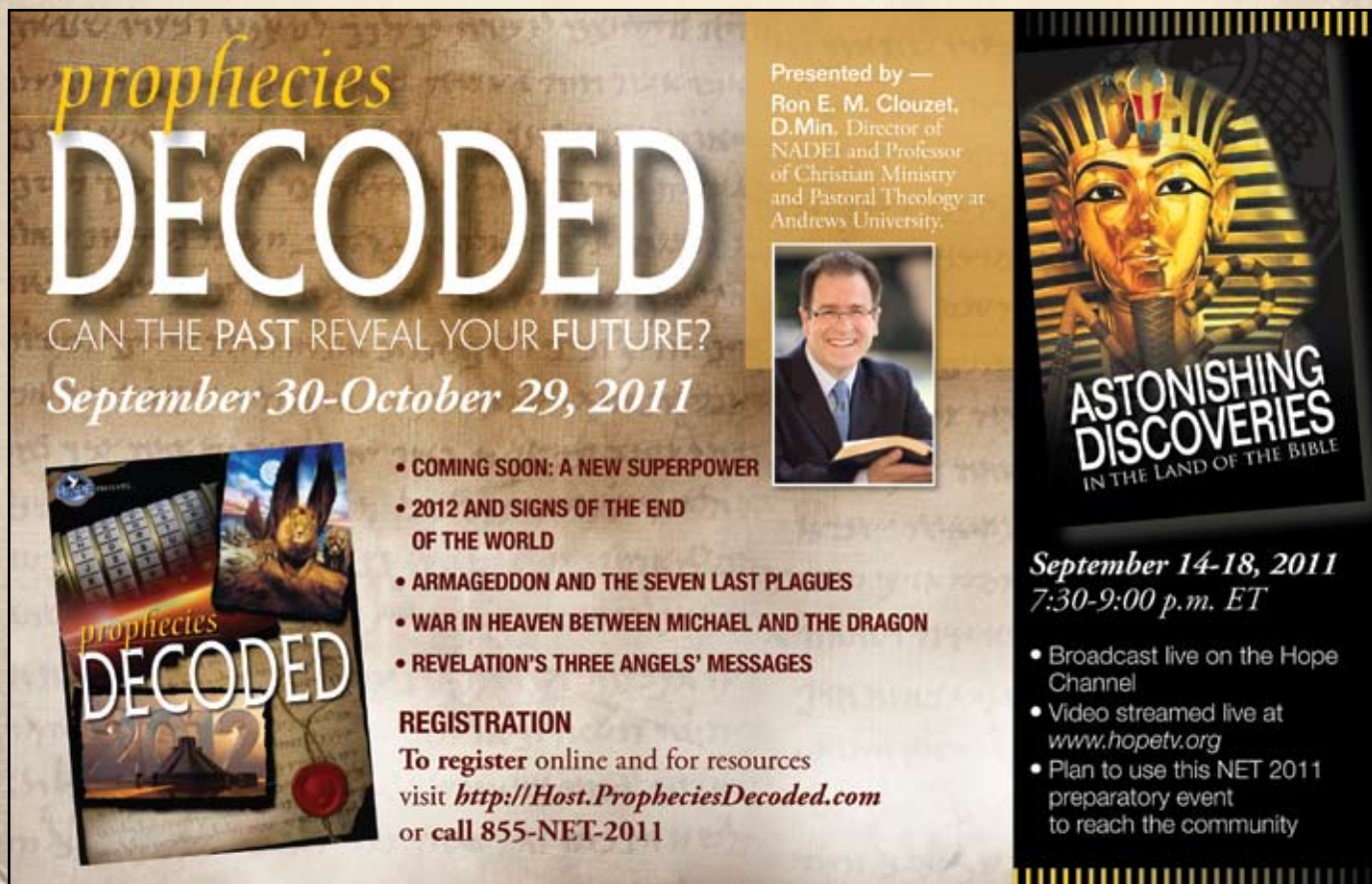
Prophecies Decoded begins September 30

Does the past reveal your future? It's the question that will attract the attention of all who receive a handbill for NET 2011: Prophecies Decoded. It's also the question that will be answered nightly September 30—October 29 for those who choose to attend.

Ron Clouzet, director, North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI), is working with his team to offer a full message resource for every church in the United States and Canada. Following the *Share the Hope* initiatives in 2009 and 2010 where pastors, and subsequently lay leaders, were encouraged to hold meetings in their communities, the Division is providing a satellite reaping series in 2011 to assist with local church outreach and evangelism.

Just prior to the NET series, September 30—October 29, Drs. Ron Clouzet of Andrews University and Michael Hasel of Southern Adventist University will co-host a 5-night archaeology seminar—*Astonishing Discoveries in the Land of the Bible*. The strategically planned mini pre-NET series September 14-18 is expected to create community interest which will support the evangelistic series.


Prophecies Decoded will be uplinked live from the Madison Campus Church, Nashville, Tennessee, and can be downloaded from Hope Church Channel. It is not too late to register to join the team of host churches. Register to host the event by calling 855-NET-2011 or online at <http://host.propheciesdecoded.com> where additional information and resources including print materials can be found for event planners.



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SCRIPTURE APPLIED

Sunday or Sabbath?

Sometimes things are different from what they seem to be at first glance. There are, for example, optical illusions. A book of adventure stories reports that certain areas in a desert were marked by poles so that travelers and caravans would not get lost. However, there were also so-called pole men who displaced the poles. Travelers followed these false poles. When they were exhausted and perplexed they were attacked and robbed of their belongings by these people. Deception!

Christianity at large keeps Sunday, but the Bible calls the Sabbath God's day of rest.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY

- (1) The Ten Commandments state: "Keep holy the Sabbath day."
- (2) For God all days are equal.
- (3) The Lord's day mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.
- (4) The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.
- (5) We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.
- (6) The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.
- (7) The early church celebrated Sunday.
- (8) Sunday is part of the church's tradition.

ARGUMENTS REVIEWED

(1) The Ten Commandments state: "Keep holy the Sabbath day."

This sentence is not found in Scripture. The Sabbath commandment is worded differently and specifies the seventh day as the Sabbath, not just any day (Exod 20:8-11). However, the sentence is found in catechisms.

(2) For God all days are equal.

If this were the case why did God give the fourth commandment? Jesus kept the Sabbath and urged the correct way to keep it holy (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:23-28)? Why did Jesus wish that Christians would observe that day if it does not matter (Matt 24:20)? America's Independence Day cannot be moved from July 4 to July 5 without losing its meaning, nor can the Sabbath simply be moved from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

(3) The Lord's Day mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.

The term is found in Revelation 1:10. A unique Greek term is used to describe the day as specifically belonging to the Lord (as also in Exod 20:10). A similar expression, translated "the Day of the Lord," describes God's day of judgment (2 Pet 3:10; Joel 2:1, 11), but only the Sabbath does God call "My holy day" (Isa 58:13). Jesus called Himself the Lord of this day (Mark 2:28). John calls Sunday "the first day of the week" (20:1, 19). Not until the second century in Rome did the term "the Lord's day" begin to be used by church fathers to refer to Sunday.

(4) The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.

James Robertson from the U. S. Naval Observatory wrote already in 1932: ". . . we have had occasion to investigate the results of the works of specialists in chronology and we have never found one of them that has ever had the slightest doubt about the continuity of the weekly cycle long before the Christian era.... There has been no change in our calendar in past centuries that affected in any way the cycle of the week." When Pope Gregory XIII made a change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar the order of days was not affected. In 1582, Thursday, October 4 was followed by Friday, October 15. In case the weekly cycle had changed before Christ, we can assume that Jesus would have told his contemporaries which day the Sabbath really was.

(5) We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.

Neither before nor after His resurrection did Jesus command the keeping of Sunday in remembrance of His resurrection (see His last words before his ascension in Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20-21). Instead Jesus expects his disciples to keep the Sabbath also in the future (Matt 24:20). It is not the day that memorializes Christ's resurrection but baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom 6:3-6 and Col 2:12; 1 Cor 11:23-26). Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) is the Creator, and He has instituted the Sabbath (Col 1:15-16). He alone has the authority to change or abolish the Sabbath commandment. Nowhere has He done this.

(6) The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.

Christians more or less keep the Ten Commandments. The problem is that many take liberty with the fourth commandment or declare this among all the others as ceremonial in nature. However, the Sabbath commandment is not ceremonial but a reminder of creation and liberation. Jesus did not transgress the Sabbath commandment (John 8:46); otherwise he might have been stoned to death (Num 15:32-36). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pointed out the real intention of the law (Matt 5:17-20). While the Bible knows different laws, the Ten Commandments are still valid (Rom 7:7, 12; Jas 2:10-13). There is a new covenant in the New Testament, but this new covenant is based on the Old Testament covenants and includes the internalization not abrogation of God's law (Heb 8:10). On the other hand, Daniel predicted that a power would come and change times and the law (Dan 7:25).

(7) The early church celebrated Sunday.

Traces of Christians keeping Sunday can be found in the mid second century AD but not in the New Testament.

John 20:19, 26: The meetings of the disciples were not worship services. The disciples hid, because they were afraid of their enemies.

Acts 20:7-8, 11: This is a farewell meeting. According

to Jewish reckoning the day begins and ends with sunset (Lev 23:32). If the Jewish reckoning is used here, it was Saturday night, and Paul set out on his journey on Sunday. According to Roman reckoning the day begins and ends at midnight. If this method is used here, it was Sunday night. The breaking of bread took place on Monday. Neither option supports the sanctification of Sunday. Furthermore, even today churches have meetings during the week without keeping the respective day holy. See also Acts 2:46.

1 Cor 16:2: The money should be laid aside at home. A worship service is not pictured here.

Col 2:16: The text has to be understood in its context which deals with different heresies (verses 8, 18, 20-23). It may be that the Sabbath mentioned in v. 16 was observed in the wrong way or Paul may have ceremonial Sabbaths in mind (see Lev 23:26-32) which foreshadowed the plan of salvation and were fulfilled in Christ.

(8) Sunday is part of the church's tradition.

The sun was worshiped already in ancient times. In the Roman Empire the unconquered sun god (*deus sol invictus*) was worshiped. In AD 321 Emperor Constantine issued the first official Sunday law. But already before that time a great

number of Christians observed Sunday, sometimes in addition to Sabbath. Reasons for observing Sunday may have included the desire to differentiate themselves from Jews and to enable Gentiles to become Christians more easily. Only after 321 was keeping Sunday enforced by civil and, later, church laws.

However, Jesus rejected traditions when opposed to the will of God (Matt 15:3, 9, 14).

GOD'S SABBATH AND ME

In his love God has given us the Sabbath in order to bless us richly. Jesus observed this day. Peter calls us to follow Christ's footsteps (1 Pet 2:21). Jesus is our Savior. He is also an example for us. We decide to follow him and keep the day that he himself kept.



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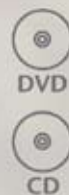
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“
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has given Me
the tongue of the
learned, that I
should know how
to speak a word
in season to him
who is weary.
”

Isaiah 50:4, NKJV

All around us are afflicted souls. Here and there, everywhere, we may find them. Let us search out these suffering ones and speak a word in season to comfort their hearts. Let us ever be channels through which shall flow the refreshing waters of compassion.

In all our associations it should be remembered that in the experience of others there are chapters sealed from mortal sight. On the pages of memory are sad histories that are sacredly guarded from curious eyes. There stand registered long, hard battles with trying circumstances, perhaps troubles in the home life, that day by day weaken courage, confidence, and faith. Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be strengthened and encouraged by little attentions that cost only a loving effort. To such the strong, helpful grasp of the hand by a true friend is worth more than gold or silver. Words of kindness are as welcome as the smile of angels.

There are multitudes struggling with poverty, compelled to labor hard for small wages, and able to secure but the barest necessities of life. Toil and deprivation, with no hope of better things, make their burden very heavy. When pain and sickness are added, the burden is almost insupportable. Careworn and oppressed, they know not where to turn for relief. Sympathize with them in their trials, their heartaches, and disappointments. This will open the way for you to help them. Speak to them of God's promises, pray with and for them, inspire them with hope. . . .

Be coworkers with Him. While distrust and alienation are pervading the world, Christ's disciples are to reveal the spirit that reigns in heaven. Speak as He would speak, act as He would act. Constantly reveal the sweetness of His character. Reveal that wealth of love which underlies all His teachings and all His dealings with humanity. The humblest workers, in cooperation with Christ, may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth and make melody throughout eternal ages.



This article is excerpted from the book *To Be Like Jesus*, p. 93, by Ellen G. White.

RESTORE YOUR SPIRITUAL PASSION

My heart has recently been “strangely warmed,” (to use John Wesley’s phrase), by a desire for revival. I’m not referring to week of prayers or evangelistic efforts, but rather, God moving among His people as only God can do.

I recently attended a seminar on church renewal and revival. The speaker started by saying, “After you pray, I have 21 strategic points to revitalize your church.” I listened to some of what he had to say, but my heart felt empty and I left. I could give you 42 or 84 strategic points, but it will not work. Revival and renewal was, is, and will always be the work of the Holy Spirit.

Promotion or slick publicity cannot bring about real revival. All of our ingenuity cannot create it. Only the manifestation of God’s power among His people can make us different; can change us so we will never be the same again.

We remember the first revival of the New Testament church in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit came like a wind upon those 120 who were praying in the upper room and gave them cloven tongues of fire that covered them. The Bible account records that those followers of Jesus were radically transformed, fanned out and preached the Gospel with thousands being saved. Those believers are referred to in the Scripture as world-changers. “These men [the Christians] who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here” (Acts 17:6). That was revival in the Book of Acts.

Revival refers to a spiritual reawakening from a state of dormancy or stagnation in the life of a believer. It encompasses the resurfacing of a love for God, an appreciation of God’s holiness, a passion for His word and His church. There is also a convicting awareness of personal and corporate sin which inspires a spirit of humility, and then a desire for repentance and growth in righteousness. Revival invigorates and deepens a believer’s faith, opening their eyes to the truth in a new way, marking a fresh start of a life lived in obedience to God. Revival breaks the charm and power of the world, which blinds the eyes of men, and generates both the will and power to live in the world but not of the world (John 15:17).

But even the early church lost this experience quickly and drifted into a lifeless state because of its human failings. By the time the book of Revelation was written in the second century, some churches were already in a rut, in need of a



Nothing great
in the world
has ever been
accomplished
without passion.



Hebbel

reformation (Rev 2:5). They needed to allow God’s Spirit to operate—to call, gather, gift, nurture and keep people in the faith. It doesn’t take long for roadblocks to appear—barriers that hinder what God wants to do in and through His people.

In Paul’s letters to the seven churches, he outlines for us some of these obstacles to revival; losing our first love, complacency, compromise with the world, incorporating worldly values to our belief system, tolerating false teaching, going through the motions without power, getting bogged down in ritual, and apathy. In order to break through these hindrances, we need to be open to letting God move in and through us. The result will be a restoration of that first love and passion for Him, a new hope and faith and right discernment of the values we should hold. This revival will resuscitate our spiritual life

(Revelation 2 and 3).

Revival replicates the believer’s experience when he or she is first saved. It is initiated by a prompting of the Holy Spirit, creating an awareness of something missing or wrong in the believer’s life that can only be righted by God. In turn, the Christian must respond from their heart and acknowledge their needs. Then the Holy Spirit draws back the veil the world has cast, allowing the believers to fully see themselves in comparison to God’s majesty. Such comparisons bring great humility, but also great awe of God and His amazing grace (see Isaiah 6:1-9). However, unlike the original conversion experience that brings about a new relationship with God, revival represents a restoration of fellowship with Him.

The evidence of revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is confession of sin, repentance and changed lives. Great movements toward righteousness, evangelism, and social justice occur. Believers are once again spending time in prayer and reading and obeying God’s Word. They begin to powerfully use their spiritual gifts.

The Spirit of God must move on us and bring the refreshment of His grace and awaken us spiritually and create in us a passion for God and for the lost. This is the greatest need of the church, renewal, and new life from the inside.



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