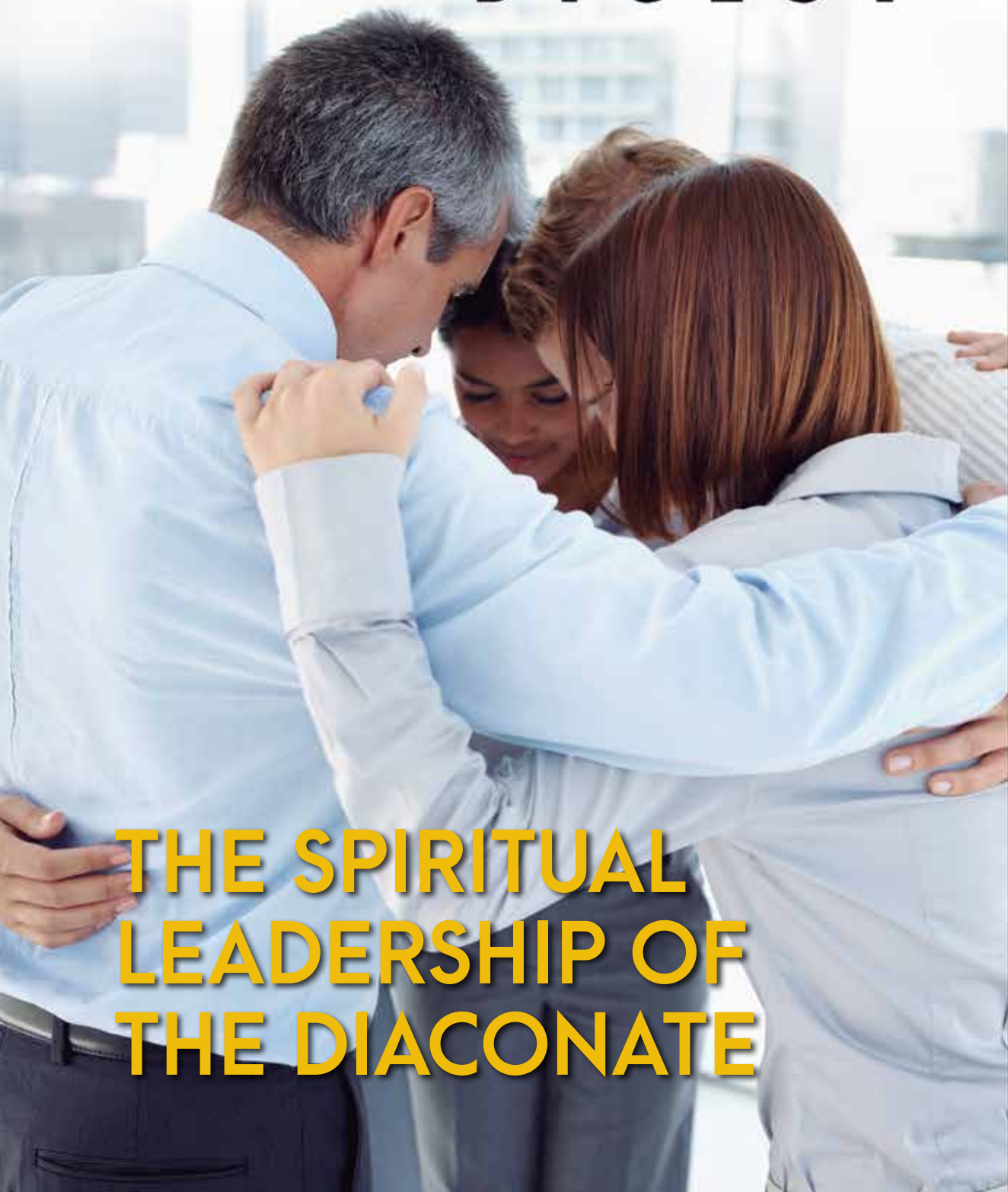


quarterly resource for local church leaders † january/march 2020

# ELDER'S DIGEST



THE SPIRITUAL  
LEADERSHIP OF  
THE DIACONATE



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# CALLED AND QUALIFIED CHURCH LEADERS

Think of a church as a mirror of its leaders. The characteristics of any church are directly related to the quality of its leadership. That's why the Bible emphasizes the importance of qualified church leadership and describes specific standards for evaluating those who are called to serve. Failure to follow those standards has caused many of the problems in churches throughout the world.

That was the problem facing Timothy in Ephesus, so Paul gave him a detailed explanation of the qualifications for elders and deacons (1 Tim 3). The Ephesian Christians were well acquainted with high-quality leadership. Several years prior to writing 1 Timothy, Paul had started the church at Ephesus and spent three years there training the local leaders.

**Godly Leadership.** A church is only as godly as its leaders. When churches fail to uphold the biblical standard for spiritual leadership, such failures always negatively impact the quality of a congregation.

Sometimes when a church is failing to have an impact on the world or is experiencing strife and conflict among its membership, it will look for solutions in church programs and strategies, when the real issue may be unqualified leaders. Perhaps this ought to be the first thing to check.

It is not without reason that in his description of the qualifications for elders and deacons, Paul focuses on the character of the person rather than the function they have in the church.

**Called by God.** How do you know if you're called to be a local leader in your church? In the Old Testament, God used different ways to deliver His call, and in the New Testament the call for His disciples came directly from Jesus Christ. Today it is different. I believe that the call to be a leader in the church now comes from the church election process and the Holy Spirit compelling a man or woman's heart in that direction. Paul says, "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim 3:1, KJV). If you sense a strong desire to serve the church as a leader, it may be God's call to serve Him in that capacity and the church should confirm that call by electing you for that function.

As mentioned before, another key element of God's call is qualification. All who desire spiritual leadership must also meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3.

Remember that when God calls you, if you do not possess the necessary qualities or skills, He will give you the gifts and empower you for the task. If today you are unsure about your calling or lacking passion for your ministry to your congregation, pray fervently that God may give you a renewed sense of calling and commitment to His work.

May God continue to bless you in this new year as you serve Him as a local church leader! ED



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# DISCIPLES KEEPING DISCIPLES: GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

>PART 1

In the recently concluded Nurture, Retention, and Reclamation Summit, it was brought to the attention of the world church that forty percent of our members have slipped away. A report outlined the staggering reality that if we had retained eighty percent of our members, our membership would be double what it is now.

Such statistics are disappointing as well as painful. We go around the “land and sea to win a single convert” (Matt 23:15), but we fail to *keep* the convert in the church. I am reminded of God’s question to Cain: “Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen 4:9). It was a significant question then; it is more so now. What answer would we give about the forty percent of members who have slipped away? Would we say, as Cain did, “I do not know”? Or ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). In fact, we are to be our *brothers’ keepers*.

This is the first of a series of articles focused on disciples *keeping* disciples. Through these articles, I wish to initiate a “brother’s keeper” movement with the slogan, “Keep them all.” To achieve this, I intend to propose simple, practical, research-based steps that, I believe, will lead to nurture, retention, and reclama-

tion. I am confident that in five years this campaign will increase retention from sixty to eighty percent and beyond in our churches across the globe.

## BUILDING ON THE STRENGTH

It is typical when encountering an issue to focus on the problem in order to fix it. I propose that it would be healthier to build on what is working, or on the “bright spots” we experience in the church.

My studies revealed that the impact of family and friends is a bright spot in the church. Elmer Towns, in an article published in 1986, looks at how people are brought into the church. According to the statistics he quotes, two percent are through advertisement, six percent are because of the pastor, six percent are due to evangelistic outreach, and eighty-six percent come because of friends and relatives in the church.<sup>1</sup> The influence of friends and relatives is as significant today as it was then. In interviews I recently conducted, more than eighty percent of the interviewees stated that they came to church because of family and friends and that they continue to attend church in order to worship together.

It is imperative that we build on the bright spot of family and friends in order to reach the goal of eighty percent retention in five years.

Now that we have a set destination, what are the steps to reach it?

### CRITICAL STEPS

Organizational specialists Chip and Dan Heath say, “Big problems are rarely solved with commensurately big solutions; they are most often solved by a sequence of small solutions.”<sup>2</sup> For our church, the small solutions are to be built upon the foundation of family and friends. I propose that if we make *everyone* in a church family and friends, *everyone* will continue to come, and we can *keep them all*. The first critical step is to help everyone know each other.

### KNOW EACH OTHER

I use the word “know” to indicate becoming familiar or acquainted with one another in the church. As I interviewed several of our members, one of the common observations was that members do not know other members across the aisles. This is true even in small churches. The most frequently stated reasons were not noticing others, not wanting to interact with others, or the existence of different groups or cliques that do not connect with others.

Though groups within the church can be a blessing, they can also make it difficult for church members to interact with those in different groups. So when a member drops out of a group or a new member comes into the church and is unable to join a group, they may become disengaged and slip away without anyone noticing. Why would someone stay if no one knows him or her?

Each member of the church is part of one body (1 Cor 12:12), so members *knowing* one another will facilitate members *staying* in the church.

### HOW?

Leadership development expert Mike Figliuolo presents the following insight into getting to know people: It can be difficult to get to know people as individuals. Even if we try to learn more about them, the world conspires to limit our opportunities. Schedules are crazy, and there is little to no time for personal conversations. He advises, “Go grab lunch. Have coffee together. Talk. I am not telling you to become friends with your people. I am simply encouraging you to know them.”<sup>3</sup>

**“IT IS NOT EARTHLY RANK, NOR BIRTH, NOR NATIONALITY, NOR RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE, WHICH PROVES THAT WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY OF GOD; IT IS LOVE, A LOVE THAT EMBRACES ALL HUMANITY.”**

In our churches, people sit with their families and friends. I propose to mix them with other groups through a fun activity. In this way, they can step out of their own intra-church groups and mingle with others at a potluck or other social gathering.

I recommend that a coordinator present a theme to get people to step out of their groups and sit with others. The theme-based activities are as follows:

- First month: The coordinator will place a name of the month on each table before the members come in. The coordinator will courteously announce that those who were born in January will sit at the January table, and likewise for the rest of the months.

- Second month: The coordinator will place on each table the dates of each month that members were born. Again, as members come in, the coordinator will direct them to different tables.

- Third month: The coordinator will place a color on each table and direct the members to sit at tables based on the colors of their clothing that particular Sabbath.

Different themes—such as names starting with certain letters, different types of professions, and favorite Bible characters—can be used to encourage members to sit at different tables month after month in order to help them get to know others in the church. I believe the first step toward a sense of oneness that will foster a disciple-keeping-disciple culture is for members to get to know each other.

Ellen G. White aptly says, “It is not earthly rank, nor birth, nor nationality, nor religious privilege, which proves that we are members of the family of God; it is love, a love that embraces all humanity.”<sup>4</sup> ED

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer Towns, “Evangelism: The How and Why,” in *Church Growth State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 43–55.

<sup>2</sup> Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (New York, NY: Currency, 2000), 45.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Figliuolo, *One Piece of Paper: The Simple Approach to Powerful, Personal Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 148.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, 72.

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# THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE DIACONATE

Every year, churches form a nominating committee to recommend people to various church positions. Among available positions, church members can be appointed to the diaconate. In many places, the functions of deacons and deaconesses have been restricted to the offertory—that is, they collect tithes and offerings from the congregation. And in some churches, when someone is left without a role, it is immediately suggested that he or she take on a position in the diaconate. This situation raises two questions: What is the diaconate and who is the deacon?

In Acts 6:1–6, Luke describes the nomination of deacons in the apostolic church. “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are

known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them’” (Acts 6:2–3).

This description goes against the idea that being appointed as a church deacon or deaconess indicates a lack of qualification or aptitude for other church functions. In the early church, three aspects were vital to the appointment of the diaconate: good reputation, wisdom, and being filled with the Spirit. Those who were appointed to this function were perceived as people who had a strong spiritual experience.

## STEPHEN

Stephen was among the seven who were appointed for the diaconate. His name means “chaplet,” “coronet,” and “wreath of victory.”<sup>1</sup> He is described as a “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5). This group of deacons was probably of Greek origin. In Stephen’s case, “though a Jew by birth, he spoke the Greek language and was familiar with the customs and manners of the Greeks.”<sup>2</sup> In order to exercise their duties, they received the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6). This indicates that the deacon’s function includes spiritual aspects.

In this context of spirituality, Stephen left his mark on the history of the apostolic church as a fervent and uncompromising defender of the Christian faith. “Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of



Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke” (Acts 6:9–10). This implies knowledge of the history of Israel and the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

Luke, in his account, made it clear that Stephen went beyond serving tables in the church. As a deacon, he was also an evangelist, developing strong spiritual leadership. Subsequently, he also became the first martyr of the apostolic church (see Acts 7:58–59). Ellen G. White writes:

The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the man who served tables proved himself to be a leader in the church, and his primary distinction was his deep fellowship with God.

### DEACONS AND DEACONESSES

In the Old Testament, God appointed the Levites to be responsible for the structure and maintenance of the sanctuary (see Num 1:50–53; 1 Chron 15:1–2). This task was connected to the spiritual life of the priests. They worked in contact with what was sacred, handling the furniture and vessels of the sanctuary.

In regards to the functioning of the church today, the duties of deacons are similar to those of the Levites. Therefore, the church should choose for the diaconate people who are spiritually qualified and deeply committed to the ministry of service. For this reason, the process of choosing deacons and deaconesses is one of the most important tasks of the church.

Although Luke and Paul emphasize deacons (see Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:8–13), early Christianity also witnessed women who practiced *diakonia* for their communities (see Phil 4:2–3; Rom 16:1–2). It is likely that Paul sent the epistle to the Romans via Phoebe, who was traveling to Rome.

The role of deacons and deaconesses is very important in the church. Their duties during worship services (offertory, organization), ceremonies (baptism, communion), and other occasions are needed for the church to function. However, their primary role is in

exercising spiritual leadership. This implies communion with God and His Word. In church, deacons and deaconesses fulfill a role that is spiritual in nature. They should be seen as a reference for spirituality in the day-to-day life of the church.

In reality, before doing anything, deacons and deaconesses should be authentic Christians. In other words, their activities in the church should reflect what they are. Men and women who maintain daily communion with God will perform their activities with noble principles, wisdom, commitment, and perfection. Their lives will be a pattern of good deeds and proper spirituality.

### SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13–14).

In the spiritual context, for someone to exercise spiritual influence over others, he or she must be linked to the source. In this case, the source is Jesus Christ. No one can give what they don’t have.

Throughout the year, the church has planned activities in its calendar: weeks of prayer, ceremonies, social events, and other activities. Deacons can interact with and assist various church ministries during these activities. For example, during a week of prayer, the diaconate can help by visiting church members, providing assistance to the sick and elderly, or visiting people who have attended the meetings and shown interest.

During an evangelistic series, deacons and deaconesses can give Bible studies. People can become members of the church by the missionary action of the diaconate. But all this is linked to the spiritual life of congregational leaders who volunteer themselves. The spiritual activities of the diaconate should reflect the spiritual communion that is maintained with God on a daily basis.

Therefore, the role of the diaconate in church is not limited, for example, to collecting tithes and offerings. Nor is it restricted to the physical aspects of the church. It is a highly spiritual function that requires the act of ordination (see Acts 6:6). Deacons and deaconesses are spiritual leaders in their community, guiding it to genuine spiritual revival. ED

<sup>1</sup> See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:190.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

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# THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 3

## BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 1

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”—Galatians 2:20*

In the previous article, I wrote about how Jesus’ sacrifice casts us into a life where we do not have to sacrifice ourselves in order to be saved. We do not have to pray to some saint; we do not have to discipline ourselves in order to please God. Because of Jesus, we are freed for life—for a life of freedom and assurance in the salvation Christ provided for all who believe! What results from this is gratitude.

At the heart of the Christian experience of salvation is gratitude. Since the day God created the world and planted in the Garden of Eden the tree of life,

humans were to experience life in the context of gratitude. Adam and Eve did not have life in themselves. They were completely dependent on God for life. And this is why the first command God gave them was: eat freely! The gift of life was always tied to the gift of food, and both life and food were given by God. This way, every time Adam and Eve reached for the fruit of life, they did so in gratitude to the God who provided life.

When Paul concludes that he has been crucified with Christ, he is not only expressing a theological conviction; he is expressing gratitude! What he and all of Israel were unable to do through the law, Christ had done through His death. Jesus made a way for us to reach out toward the tree of life and eat the fruit once again. Thus, the way of belief and faith is paved



by gratitude. And gratitude appears at the very moment we recognize that we do not have life in ourselves, at the very moment we recognize it is because of Christ that we have life, and life in abundance.

Before Jesus died, He reminded the disciples of this very truth. He gave thanks, broke bread, and served wine—the symbols of His sacrifice for humanity. He gave thanks. The food He served was given and received in gratitude. Through the bread and the wine Jesus provided a door back to paradise and into salvation.

As you sit at the table with loved ones at home and in your church, may you remember that this experience is a remembrance of Eden. In Eden there was food, God, people, and gratitude for life. Christ loved us, and Christ gave Himself for us, so in gratitude, may we live in the same way toward each other.

I love how John writes about this in his epistle: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.” Gratitude to God for life brings us to the table where we find our brothers and sisters, where we find food in abundance for all, and where we find God Himself, the giver of food, salvation, and life.

My dear reader, may your days on this earth be lived in gratitude.

## BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 2

*“I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?”—Galatians 3:2–3*

Can you feel the pain in Paul’s heart in these words? Read them again! It is as if you have just spent days teaching your children to ride a bike. And even after feeling the security of trusting your guidance and the freedom of riding the bike, they have gone back many steps to the point of thinking that true joy is found in walking beside the bike. They had experienced freedom; now they feel fear. To experience freedom in the Spirit through the new birth in Christ is the foundation of the Christian journey. Everything after the experience of this work of God in us is a consequence. Either we understand that salvation is through *our works*, or we embrace the gospel truth that salvation is only through the *work of God*.

The temptation to think we contribute to our salvation is ancient. It is found throughout history in virtually all pagan religions. It is at the heart of idolatry. It is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It is thinking that God needs our help and that His ac-

**“NO WORK CAN BE PLEASING IN HEAVEN UNLESS IT IS A WORK OF LOVE.”**

tions for us are insufficient. Jesus subverts this mechanism and teaches that small is the door and narrow is the gate that leads to the true life. And He is the small door, He is the narrow way, and nothing passes through the door except you, my dear reader, and Jesus. None of your many efforts and righteous deeds will save you.

Your time in church or the safety of your denomination will not save you. The temptation to think this is not possible is also great.

Across the world, Christianity has been presented, in practice, very similarly to idolatry. We treat God as an idol, offering Him many sacrifices in order to gain some blessing, some gift, or salvation itself. Oh that we could experience the joy, the freedom of knowing that salvation is only through the work of God in Jesus for us. Oh to experience that peace and assurance that only in Him, and through the action of His Spirit in us, will we naturally grow in love and in works of love toward others. Soren Kierkegaard wrote it well: “No work can be pleasing in heaven unless it is a work of love.” Why? Because it flows from a heart that has accepted that we can do nothing for our salvation. And as we open ourselves to the work of God in us, God eventually will work through us for others.

My dear reader, may you be sensitive to the ancient temptation Paul was fighting in Galatia: the temptation of thinking that we can help God in the process of our salvation, that the small door and narrow way is a teaching about how we must sacrifice many things for God instead of fully accepting His sacrifice for us. Having begun in the Spirit, may you be perfected in the Spirit. For wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, says Paul, there is freedom. ED

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# ADDING MEMBERS THROUGH STUDIES: HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT

>PART 8 OF 8

*Part 7 explained how to bring a person who has shown a positive interest and conviction of the Holy Spirit to a decision for baptism upon completion of their studies. Part 8 shares strategies for use with students who want to postpone their decision or are wavering in their decision.*

**From** time to time, the personal evangelist will encounter students who drag their feet in making a decision for baptism. Experience has shown, however, that most of these cases can be overcome through the wise use of key Bible verses and the right choice of words.

## STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING INDECISION FOR BAPTISM

Here are some talking points you can use to inspire the student who is delaying baptism:

- “Once you make your decision, you will feel better. I have seen this happen to many others in my experience. Right now God is calling you. He said in Jeremiah 31:3, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.’ Do you believe that? Do you feel that right now in your heart? God is calling you, my friend.”

- “Did you know that with truth there is responsibility? God did not hold us accountable before we knew what was right. But now that you know, you have a different responsibility to God. God says through Paul in Acts 17:30–31a, ‘In the past God overlooked such

ignorance, but now [that you know the truth about Jesus Christ] he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.’ I know you do not want to disappoint God.”

- “We should make decisions based on principle, not on feelings. If Jesus had made His choice based on His feelings of anxiety or fear, He may never have gone through with His sacrifice on the cross.”

- “If you don’t make the decision now, it will get harder and harder in the future. Here, read Hebrews 3:7b–9: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did.’ It always works this way. Right now the Holy Spirit is calling you, and I know that deep in your heart you know you should decide now for baptism. Don’t let Satan take advantage of you. If you make your decision now, God will give you peace, and He will work out the problems you think are impeding you.”

- “I recommend not waiting for your spouse, since I think you know that he/she is far from making a decision. If you wait, you might grow cold, and be-

sides, you will disappoint Jesus because He is asking you *now* to make your decision. Jesus didn't disappoint us when He made His decision to accept the cross, and that was for our salvation, not His."

- "Don't be afraid of the water. I (or my pastor) have/has baptized many people and never had a problem with any of them. You will only be under the water for two to three seconds." (Then you can take them through a physical practice right then and there to show them how it is done—this usually satisfies the student.)

As you work with the student in getting the decision, you need to work as the fisherman does once he has caught a fish on his hook: The experienced fisherman knows that if he pulls too hard on the line the hook could come out of the fish's mouth and he will lose the fish. In order to avoid this, the wise fisherman relaxes the line for a few moments while the fish swims around frantically, tiring itself. Then the fisherman reels in the line a little more, repeating this sequence until the fish is in the net. The same principle can be used by the wise soul-winner in getting a decision: When the conversation begins to get tense and the student is still undecided, it is time to change the subject for a while and talk about something unrelated—perhaps using a little humor, or saying something complimentary. Then when the student is relaxed again, go back to the subject of his or her decision, using other reasoning and convincing arguments for baptism. This strategy is usually very successful.

Never tell the student that once they're baptized God will immediately solve their problems. History has shown that sometimes God wants to test a new convert and therefore does not always resolve their problems at once—such as giving a job to replace the one they lost when they started keeping the Sabbath. There have been cases where a new convert lost his or her job and became quite destitute before God gave them another one. What you can say is that if they are faithful, God will *eventually* reward him or her—but at His own time. The important thing is to be faithful and trust God. Any sacrifice that he or she makes is nothing compared to the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

After the decision is made, you should have a prayer with him or her, thanking God for his or her decision. This is necessary in order to seal the decision—or at least makes it much more difficult to reverse the decision.

If the baptism is very near, like the following Sabbath, you can ask for their baptismal clothes to take with you in a closed bag. This makes it very difficult for the student to turn back.

Once the decision for baptism has been made, do not linger. Have your prayer together, reiterate the ex-

act time of the baptism and the procedure, then bid goodbye and leave.

The night before the baptism you might want to call him or her to confirm that everything will proceed as originally discussed (or explain in detail any changes that have been made). Talk positively. Do not say, for example, "Just wondering if you're still planning on going ahead with the baptism." Never say anything that might leave room for the student to squeeze out of his or her commitment. The experience of seasoned soul-winners has shown that very few people who have been taken through the series of studies and have made a decision, even with difficulty, turn back on their faith after baptism. If they do, it is usually not because of any reason they gave for resisting baptism.

At the conclusion, it should be mentioned that baptism is not the end of studies. Do not stop studying with or visiting the new member(s) after baptism. Baptism is the beginning of a new life, and most members need further studies—for example, on discipleship, which is another series of studies. Remember, newborn babies need a lot of food to grow and become strong. Studies done at Andrews University in the 1980s revealed that new members often drop out because they haven't formed new friendships in the church they were baptized into. According to the study, most new converts need seven new contacts in the congregation to cement their permanent stay in the church.

Also remember that you are an open letter to the student(s). As you teach the Bible, they will observe you more than you think—how clean your shoes and teeth are, how neatly you dress, how you control yourself from eating all the sweets on the table, how punctual and reliable you are, whether you keep your promises or forget them, whether you arrive late to your meetings or make a phone call indicating your realistic time of arrival, or whether you cancelled the studies often or kept your commitments. Your smile, your fire inside, the fruit of the spirit in you, your humility, your respect for the Word of God and for other religions, and for your guests—all these are sometimes as decisive as a good argument toward their decision to start learning from you.

Having said this, remember that friendship is not enough to maintain people in the church; they need theological roots and good tools too.

Final advice: study, study, study—not only for sharing better with others, but also for yourself and your own spiritual edification. You can only give what you have! Bring another one to Jesus. ED

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## A NEW PARADISE

Nearly all human beings long for peace, fulfillment, harmony, and happiness—in other words, some type of a paradise. The Greeks talked about Elysium, the land of the blessed, in which good people would be able to live without worries. Germanic tribes dreamed about Valhalla, a splendid palace where warriors would drink liquor and feast on the flesh of boars, spending their days with sports, fighting, and hunting. Muslims look forward to a garden with abundant food to eat, wine to drink, and noble virgins to serve them. Many have tried or are still trying to create a paradise of their own on this earth. In any case, many yearn for complete satisfaction and perfect bliss.

The first two chapters of Scripture talk about a paradise that humanity has lost; the last two chapters talk about a paradise that we may gain.

### I. TIME AND PLACE OF THE NEW PARADISE

- (Rev 20–21) After the Millennium, when Satan and his followers will be destroyed, a new heaven and a new earth will be created (Rev 21:1).
- (Rev 21:1–2) The new paradise will be found on planet Earth, probably because it was here that the drama of redemption unfolded, and it was here that Jesus lived and was crucified.

### II. THE FEATURES OF THE NEW PARADISE

#### 1. *The City* (Rev 21:10–27)

The New Jerusalem reminds us of the garden of Eden and the temple, and it replaces both. In addition, it is found in stark contrast to the great but wicked city Babylon (Rev 18:10, 21).

- The wall is about 210 feet/70 meters high, suggesting security, protection, and peace (Rev 21:12, 17–18).
- Twelve gates are constantly open (Rev 21:12–13, 21), suggesting free access for all whose names are written in the book of life (v. 27), independent of race, nationality, gender, etc.
- The size of the city is described as about 1,380 miles/2,200 km (Rev 21:16), suggesting that there is sufficient room for everyone (cf. John 14:1–3). The New Jerusalem resembles the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:20), also containing the throne of God (Rev 22:1, 3).
- Twelve gates and twelve foundations contain the names of the old and new people of God (Rev 21:12, 14, 19–20), pointing to God’s faithful people throughout the centuries.
- Materials such as gold, precious stones, and pearls point to the glory, beauty, and durability of the city (Rev 21:18–21).

## 2. *The Nature* (Rev 22:1–2)

- Water and fruit suggest that eternal life has been secured and all needs will be taken care of.
- The Old Testament also contains allusions to the end-time paradise mentioning a perfect earth and an ideal climate (Isa 35:6–7).

### III. BEINGS INVOLVED

#### 1. *Humans* (Rev 21:4, 7–8, 27; 22:5)

- Only those humans will enter the new paradise who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord and have completely committed themselves to Him. Revelation calls them “overcomers.”
- They will have taken part in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6) or will have been transformed at Christ’s second coming. Their bodies will be real bodies (concerning the resurrection body, see Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:42–44; Luke 24:36–43).
- They will be freed from all sickness, suffering, and distress (cf. Isa 35:5–6).
- They will be delivered from death, because death will be no longer.
- Because God enlightens them, they will have more and more opportunities to gain knowledge and an ever-deepening understanding of God and His plan

of salvation (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). However, past events will no longer affect them negatively (cf. Isa 65:17).

- They will participate in God’s reign.

#### 2. *God* (Rev 21:3, 22–23; 22:3–5)

God will directly dwell among His people. His children can see and meet Him face to face. God and humans will be reunited. We will be given direct access to the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Finally, we will be at home. This is the climax of the new paradise.

Since God will be personally present and “tabernacle” among the redeemed (Rev 21:3), the new Jerusalem will have become the temple.

God’s glory will provide light and warmth in all areas of life. Therefore, heavenly bodies are no longer necessary as sources of light.

The new paradise will surpass the old paradise by far. Satan and sin will be no more. Instead, God will live among His children. It is worth it to get there. Therefore, I make sure that my name is included in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 21:27). ED

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# 100 DAYS OF PRAYER

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# WHEN DOES EATING HEALTHY BECOME HARMFUL?

The fourteen-year-old patient sitting in front of me insisted that her decision to become a vegan was unrelated to being bullied and called “chubby” in elementary school. Instead, she cited reasons related to animal rights and a desire to become “healthier.”

Nothing about the straight-A student with severe muscle wasting, skeletal limbs, and a protruding abdomen heralding liver failure was healthy. She brought to my mind images from global health posters depicting starving children. This local teen was unlike any eating disordered patient I had ever encountered.

That was nearly ten years ago. Since that time, I have encountered a number of patients at the Loma Linda Behavioral Medicine Center’s Eating Disorders Program with orthorexia—an eating disorder driven by an obsession with healthy eating. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual doesn’t formally recognize this as a separate eating disorder. But by understanding the warning signs, symptoms, and health consequences, mental health professionals can better treat patients who present with orthorexia.

Stephen Bratman, MD, coined the term “orthorexia” in 1996 to better express the obsession with eating healthy. Over time, vigilant focus on proper nutrition evolves into an increasingly restrictive diet. Patients with orthorexia can no longer eat out with others, must rigidly shop for food ingredients, and have ritualized patterns of food preparation and eating. These individuals spend a substantial amount of time researching food, preservatives, or additives. Their diet eventually becomes so restrictive that their physical health is compromised.

There is significant crossover between orthorexia, anorexia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Of patients with anorexia, up to thirty percent simultaneously have OCD. A recent study of patients with orthorexia showed limited abilities to process information and problem solve on neuropsychological testing. Additionally, like patients with anorexia and OCD, those with orthorexia struggled with memory, planning, and being

**ORTHOREXIA IS AN EATING DISORDER DRIVEN BY AN OBSESSION WITH HEALTHY EATING.**

able to transfer from one task to another (“set shifting”). As the field of psychiatry advances, we hope to better understand the underlying neurobiologic causes of orthorexia.

People who have an obsession with eating healthy are likely to compulsively check the ingredients of each thing they eat, being overly concerned with the health of the ingredients they’re consuming. They avoid eating things they do not deem “healthy” or “pure,” and become visibly distressed when healthy foods aren’t available. Malnutrition is a possibility because those with orthorexia restrict the amount and type of foods consumed.

Warning signs of orthorexia may include rigid eating patterns and extreme inflexibility with diet, serious emotional distress when firm eating rules are broken, and extreme and drastic weight loss.

Potential health consequences of the disorder include permanent health damage such as osteoporosis, kidney failure, or infertility; a lowered immune system and nutritional deficiencies; and emotional instability and a low sense of self-worth.

I still remember my first orthorexic patient’s response to seeing the health consequences of her mental illness. As we reviewed her lab results together, she began to cry. “I never meant for this to happen,” she said. “I just wanted to be healthy.”

By learning to understand and respond to signs of an eating disorder, you can help the people in your life who may be struggling with orthorexia, anorexia, or bulimia.

If you or someone you care about is suffering from a mental illness, visit our behavioral health services website and learn more about how Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center can help. **ED**

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# THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:13, KJV

## PETITION SEVEN: "DELIVER US FROM EVIL"

"Deliver us from evil," does not make clear whether the adjective is neuter ("what is evil") or masculine ("the evil one, Satan, evil personified"). We cannot tell which idea was in Jesus' mind; perhaps both ideas were. What is clear is that the negative of the first half of the petition ("Lead us not") gives place to the urgent, positive plea of the second ("Deliver us").

Most Bible students feel that "evil" here stands for Satan, the evil one. Others see in it the impersonal, destructive force that threatens to deprive us of salvation. The difference does not affect the deeper meaning of the last petition. Asking the Lord to rid humanity of the "evil" exploding all around us in a pandemonium of violence and crime is one of the most timely pleas we can send up.

Who is the destructive opposer to our deliverance, who is the Deliverer, and from what are we to be delivered so as to maximize the thrill of our new freedom?

### I. DELIVERANCE

1. *The identity of the one opposed to our deliverance.* The apostle Paul says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). In other words, the temptations that come from visible and tangible sources draw their strength from an unseen source. Behind visible foes is one invisible; behind the visible opposition of evil men is an invisible prince of darkness and an unseen host of fallen spirits intruding themselves into our lives and obstructing our walk with God.

The unseen person is Satan. He is mentioned by name thirty-three times in the New Testament, and he also appears thirty-two times in the translated form *diabolos*, the obstructor, the devil. He is likewise called "the tempter" (1 Thess 3:5), "the evil one" (Matt 13:19), "the accuser" (Rev 12:10), "the prince of demons" (Luke 11:15), and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph 2:2).

Every New Testament writer takes Satan's existence as a reality. Peter bids us to "be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Jude looks back to the fall of the angels. They were not always devils, but they "did not keep their positions of authority" (Jude 1:6). James, a practical writer, bids us to "resist the devil" (Jas 4:7). Paul recognizes Satan as the prince of this world, and John,

the theologian, declares the object of the Incarnation was to "destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8) and, in Revelation, joyfully pronounces Satan's "lake of fire" ending (Rev 20:14). Satan stands for everything that is anti-man and anti-God. It is from this ruining power that Jesus teaches us to pray to be delivered.

2. *The form of the sins from which we are to be delivered.* Satan appears invariably as a distinctive personality. He is represented as entering into man and the responsible author of their evil deeds and passions. It is Satan who tempts Judas and Simon Peter (Luke 22:3, 31; John 13:27), who prompts Ananias to withhold his contribution (Acts 5:3), and who shuts men's hearts and ears to the message of God (Mark 4:15; Rev 2:9).

But the devil does not assail all of us alike; he comes to us in many ways:

- To some, he comes in great spiritual dullness, rendering them unable to lift up their thoughts or hearts to God, whispering that God has forgotten them and no longer cares for them, His children.
- To others, he comes in all the might of some besetting sin—anger, pride, impurity, intemperance—binding them with cords that seem too strong to be broken.
- For those who are not aware of any outstanding temptation and can point to no special hindrance in their Christian path, yet know that their lives are not what they should be, he attempts to lead them—consciously or unconsciously, openly or secretly—to do things they ought not to do and to leave undone those things they should have done.

From all these besetments, we need deliverance!

3. *The subtlety of the sins from which we need deliverance.* Here are some:

- irritability with others who do not work on par with us or in our way
- self-satisfaction, with the blunting of sympathy for others that so often accompanies it
- trust in self rather than reliance on God
- a disposition to be so anxious to attain a good object that we, as Shakespeare says, "to do a great right, do a little wrong"

We may also name uncharitable judgments, disregarding other people's points of view, thinking we are doing so much good for God that He will overlook our shortcomings with others (that is, letting our practical duties swallow up all our time for prayer, or being very kind to those we

love but not quite upright and sincere in our dealings with our neighbor, or being devout and good to the poor while living in some sinful habit). We can also add impatience for results and fearfulness under disappointment.

Little wonder we cry out in bitter frustration with the apostle Paul, admitting "for I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Rom 7:19) and pleading for deliverance from this "body of death" (Rom 7:24, NKJV)! What heart is there in which these words are not echoed? Who shall deliver us from this spiritual deadness of soul, this corruption of the affections, this impotence of the will, this unwillingness to love and obey?

### II. DELIVERER

1. *Jesus is the Deliverer.* This truth is seen most clearly in Paul's writings. Christ is the Deliverer from sins in the past; He is the Defender against sin in the future. It is Christ who delivers the wretched man, beaten in all his endeavors to free himself from the body of this death of sin. It is that which has done through Christ what the law could not do: enabled the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in His redeemed. Christ is emphatically the power who wipes out the past and upholds the soul, the power who alone can preserve us blameless unto His coming and whose strength is made perfect in our weakness, who shall one day "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." And observe the lyrical note in the words of Paul when he writes that God "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13, RSV). The language is similar to that of the prayer. There has been, as it were, a change of sphere. The sphere in which evil, the power of darkness, held sway has been exchanged for the sphere in which God's beloved Son reigns in power. The kingdom has arrived with His coming, His cross, and His resurrection, and we will be delivered from evil and the evil one. Praise God! That is the true spirit of this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

### CONCLUSION

How many of you would like to say to the Lord, "Deliver me from evil?" Let's pray. ED

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# THE LORD'S PRAYER

**DOXOLOGY: "FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN."**

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." The textual and liturgical background of these words is interesting. This doxology is absent from the original text of Matthew's Gospel; however, it is found in the *Didache*, the earliest existing Christian Church-order, which some date early in the second century. Its absence does not mean that Jesus intended His prayer to be recited without a word of praise at the end, but, in the very earliest times, the doxology had no fixed form, and its precise wording was left to those who prayed. Later on, when the Lord's Prayer began to be used in the services of the church as a common prayer, it was felt necessary to establish the doxology in a fixed form.

Regardless, this chant is a jubilant acknowledgment of our encounter with God. The physical and spiritual refreshment that is the first result of praying resounds in these final words. How are we to interpret them?

## I. THEY ARE A STATEMENT OF FACT UTTERED IN FAITH

Though now we see not all things put under Him, yet He *is* the kingdom and the power and the glory. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus are to us the assurance that we shall see the final triumph of right over wrong, light over darkness. The kingdom, ushered in with the incarnation of Jesus, will reach complete and perfect consummation at His coming. He must reign. The "power" is in the hands of almighty love. The "glory" will be His alone. But the words are more than a statement of fact.

## II. THEY ARE A PAEAN OF PRAISE

Notice that the apostle Paul loves to end his prayers with praise. Note two examples: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20–21). "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out . . . For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:33, 36). Just as some of Paul's great dogmatic passages burgeon out his praise, so do all his prayers. So does the Lord's Prayer. This is not just a good liturgical principle; it is good theology and good religion. It is an expression of true religious experience that proper prayer issues in adoration and thanksgiving and praise.

## III. THEY ARE AN INVITATION TO A LIFE OF HAPPINESS

Consider, for a moment, what happens to us when we pray this prayer. We have looked up into the face of God and called Him "Father." A father worthy of that title wills nothing but good for his child. If that is true on the human level, how much truer it is of God in His relationship with His children! The person who prays the opening invocation to this prayer acknowledges that true happiness is found only when he rests in the fact that "in His will is our peace." The Christian, therefore, is the integrated, fundamentally happy man, because he is "in the will of God," at peace. He does not fret. He lives as one whose Father is the Most High.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with a description of the Christian disciple (Matt 5:3–12). If the opening verses were translated back into the Aramaic from which they were originally spoken, they would be seen as a series of exclamations: "O how happy are the poor! . . . O happy are they who mourn!" Indeed, the New English Bible gives these verses their proper exclamatory form: "How blest . . . ! How blest . . . !"

## IV. THEY LEAD TO ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING

Naturally, when we pray this prayer, we find ourselves engaging frequently in adoration: in the doxology, in the Gloria, or in some other kind of thanksgiving. We can hardly do otherwise. No, we do not shut our eyes to the evil in the world; sin and suffering and death are realities to us. We do not expect to escape them just because we are sons and daughters of God. They come at us as they come at others; we are not exempt from "the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune." But we can "give thanks always for all things" (Eph 5:20, MEV, emphasis added) because we are in touch with a God who has a way of turning life's minuses into plusses, life's negatives into positives, life's sad minor keys into triumphant majors. Jesus turned that cross into a sign of victory so that, even on the tree, He reigned! He has been doing that kind of thing ever since. So we begin to understand what Paul means when he writes, "All things are yours." Note that Paul includes death on the list (1 Cor 3:21–22). Death is yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's. So the ogre becomes a friend. I ask you, which of us regards death as the final stop? No one! For, at the resurrection, death becomes the entrance into life abundant and eternal.

So, the Lord's Prayer reaches its climax in words of adoration. It has taught us to

think of God as *Father* ("Our Father"), as *King* ("Thy kingdom come"), as *Governor* ("Thy will be done"), as *Provider* ("Give us . . . bread"), as *Pardoner* ("Forgive us our trespasses"), as *Guide* ("Lead us"), and as *Deliverer* ("Deliver us from evil"). The prayer that began with the adoration of God and proceeded to petition swings back to the God-centered attitude of adoration in the doxology: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

## V. THEY LEAD US TO A WORD OF ASSEVERATION: "AMEN"

This word is strong and powerful. It puts into two brief syllables the meditative gladness of a great assent: "So be it!"

Sometimes it should be shouted. How wonderful to have a share in the divine plan, in God's strategy for His world and His church! "Amen: so be it! By His mercy, He and I are in this together!"

Sometimes it should be deliberately whispered. The way of the cross is costly. It hurts. But, "Amen: so be it." He calls. I follow, even unto death. "Amen" is assent, and assent involves sacrifice.

The biographer of Studdert Kennedy, in trying to assess his attitude to prayer, writes, "True prayer, when it is that kind which asks, is for courage to endure, never for permission to survive."<sup>1</sup> That is to say "Amen" from a full heart, just as Jesus, on the cross, said "Amen" to God's will and cried, "It is finished!" He who was the *AMEN* thus said His amen: "Finished! Fulfilled!"

## CONCLUSION

Finally, the doxology reminds us that nothing was more vivid to Jesus than the reign of God, nothing more definite than the ultimate conquest. Men, by squatters' rights, contest God's rights, but God is Master, and this is His world. He has bought it with a heart broken, a Son crucified. The time has not yet come, and meanwhile, there is agony, judgment, a dark impenetrable glass. But belief has broken into our suspicion. There are times when God's love floods the heart, leaving little room for doubt. Then we know that Christ's cross has clinched the decisive victory. His prayer has pledged that final day of glory, when heaven and earth, God and man, are reconciled forever. ED

<sup>1</sup> William Purcell, *Woodbine Willie*, 148.

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# THE GREATEST DESIRE OF THE CHRISTIAN

What is the greatest desire of a Christian? Throughout Scripture, the great men and women of God say that their passion is to truly know Him. Moses says to God, “Now show me your glory” (Exod 33:18). David prays, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God” (Ps 42:1). And Paul says that his heart longs to “know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings” (Phil 3:10). The greatest desire of a true Christian is to know God. Every other desire pales in comparison to this one.

When the Bible talks about knowing God, it does not refer to a merely intellectual exercise. Knowing God does not mean knowing facts about God. To know God is not just to recite His biblical resume or hear testimony of what He has done in someone else’s life. Knowing God involves encountering Him and finding out that He is who He says He is.

As a Pharisee, Paul knew all about God, but he did not *know* God until he met Jesus face to face on the road to Damascus. Paul’s life changed because God revealed Himself to him, not because Paul had all the right answers. It was a gift of grace.

In order to truly know God, Paul says, “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” (Phil 3:7). Paul had to be willing to turn his back on his human accomplishments in order to gain knowledge of Christ. He continues: “What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8). Paul uses the present tense verb “count” here, indicating that this is occurring in his life at the time of his writing. This shows us that even after the moment of his salvation, Paul continues to put the things of the world far below his priority of knowing Jesus Christ. This is an example of sanctification: what started at the cross with salvation continues to influence the way we live. Christ becomes a Christian’s greatest passion; knowing Him is the Christian’s number one priority.

## I. THE POWER OF KNOWING CHRIST

Paul says that he longs to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. This power is the same force that brought Christ out of the grave. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been resurrected, for we died with Him, we are buried with Him, and we have risen with Him. But that does not

necessarily mean we understand the power of the resurrection. Paul is saying that he wants to know what it is like to live a resurrected life—to no longer be in bondage to the flesh, but to have victory over sin. Knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection means that you live a resurrected life yourself. Paul says he wants to have this resurrected kind of life. His focus is on knowing Christ because Christ’s power will enable him to overcome the power of sin in the flesh.

## II. THE PAIN OF SHARING HIS SUFFERING

In order to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, Paul tells us that we have to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. Everybody is perfectly willing to experience the good stuff—the benefits—of knowing Christ. But only a true follower will understand and experience the fellowship of His suffering. The reality is that living for Jesus is not easy. The closer you get to Christ, the greater an enemy you become to Satan. Along the road of knowing Christ, you will run into challenges that are tough, awkward, and painful. At these times, the decision you face is crucial: Do you really want to know Him? At the place of suffering there is also always the simultaneous call to intimacy. In trials we often ask, “Why is this happening to me?” Very often, the reason behind our trials is that God wants to take us to the next level of intimacy with Him as we trust Him and grow in Him.

College students sometimes decide to audit classes rather than take them as registered students. Auditing means they can sit in on the classes and listen to the lectures without the obligation to do any of the work or use the textbooks. One tendency of half-hearted Christians is to audit the Christian life. They might attend church or Bible study, but they do not put those lessons to use in their daily lives. They might profess to follow Christ and even go through the motions of obedience, but they do not really know God or live in His power.

When we go through the fire of trials, we are stripped of the opportunity to rely solely on ourselves. We cannot be self-sufficient because there is nothing we can do; we must rely on God. Of course there are many sub-purposes of trials and many reasons we go through hard times, but one thing is for sure: God will always be with us and will use our trials to draw us closer to

Him and help us know Him better.

## III. THE PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWING CHRIST

Paul’s priority is to know Him. With that priority comes power—a resurrected life that overcomes sin and lives victoriously. With that power comes pain shared in Christ’s sufferings. How does Paul deal with the pain? By gaining a new perspective—the perspective of knowing Christ. “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13–14).

Paul acknowledges that he cannot change the past, and he admits that he does not have it all figured out, but he will persevere toward that for which he has been called. He has a perspective that not all believers have. He says: “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven” (vv. 17–20). That is what keeps us going: We belong in heaven. This is a different perspective from that of the world around us, where the here and now is so important. The key to living victoriously on earth is to develop the mind-set of heaven. Paul does not tell us to ignore the fact that we live in the world, to shirk our responsibilities, to walk around with our heads in the clouds, but rather tells us to live our lives in light of eternity, with the assurance of the promise of heaven. This world is not our home.

It will get foggy on this Christian walk. You will wonder how you will make it. But God tells us that if we pursue Him, Jesus Christ will give us a glimpse of heaven that will keep our eyes focused on the goal. We can persevere in His strength, so that we might “know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil 3:10–11).

Let’s pray!

ED

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# GOD'S COMMUNITY MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Community is good for us. After all, people were designed to live together. Community is a place where we can move and grow together. People have attachment to places and things, but the interactions with other people are what make the places special. It is the people who give us things that make everything special.

## I. WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH COMMUNITY SPECIAL?

You can find community anywhere people regularly get together: You will find a community in coffee shops if you show up every day at the same time. You can go to a Pilates class and find a community. You can find a community in school, centered around your shared experiences in class.

Arguments and disagreements with others in your community will happen. In most communities, relationships are broken when disagreements happen—no matter how the conflict was resolved. This is because even when the issue is resolved, the heart is not transformed.

Change can happen. In the coffee shop, you can be changed—typically, to be more wired and caffeinated. In the Pilates class, you are changed to be more physically fit and flexible. In school, your mind is elevated and your perspectives are changed. Yet, there is no element of transformation.

The church community is different. The church is a forum where you can interact and commune with others—those who think like you as well as those who think differently. The church is designed so that both you and the person who disagrees with you will grow into a better understanding of God. You help them learn, they help you learn, and together you help each other live out God's ideal in this world. Paul describes it best: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, *bearing with one another in love*. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:1–6, emphasis added).

In modern language, we could say, "Hey, be humble, gentle, and patient.

People think differently than you do. Have patience with them, and remember we all serve the same God. We're on the same team."

In the community of God, there are arguments and issues. Arguments happen because people are sinful. Paul makes it clear the church is not different because it is not a perfect community. It is different in the way it handles the arguments and results of human sin. The church community is designed to be a space in which you can disagree with others around you and still be accepted as someone representing the image of God.

## II. THE CORE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

The image of God is the core of human identity. In Genesis, during the creation of human beings, God says He will make humanity in His image, as a reflection of God. The beauty of the image of God is that it is a transformative concept.

The idea is captured by the phrase, "The apple of my eye." Think about a relationship: You are on a date with your significant other. The moon is bright, the night air is crisp, and you are overwhelmed with emotion. You look into the eyes of your significant other and you passionately say, "You're the apple of my eye." You are saying that you love your significant other more than anything else you see. He or she is the most precious thing in the world.

It comes from the Bible. Deuteronomy 32:10 describes God choosing the nation of Israel, and reveals His view of humanity: "In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye." The phrase "apple of my eye" can be translated better. In essence it should read, "You are the little man or woman of my eye."

Have you ever looked into someone's eyes? If you look closely, you see a small reflection of yourself in their pupil. The reflection is faint, but it is clear you can see a form or image of yourself. When God looks at us, He sees a reflection of Himself. We have value and worth because of our relation to Him. Thus, when we look at other people we should see God's reflection in them. Because these people reflect God, we have a duty to treat them as reflections of God.

This is what separates God's people from any other community. God's people look at those around them and see reflections of Him. God's people have a responsibility to treat these people as if they were interacting with God Himself.

Jesus tells us this. John 13:35 tells us people will recognize we are different by our love for each other. The only way we will love each other is if we begin to recognize that our value is not in what we do: My value is not in my beliefs, and my neighbor's value is not in how polite or rude he or she is to me. Your value, my value, and the neighbor's value come from being made in the image of God.

Someone reading this is thinking, "But the church doesn't act like that!" There come times in life when you will be disappointed and mistreated by God's people. Questions of ordination and compliance in the church have caused arguments that cause some to feel wronged by the church. While I don't know the eventual outcome to these conflicts, I do know how God wants His people and the corporate church to respond.

## III. GOD'S PLAN FOR THIS COMMUNITY

Ephesians 4:17–24, 29–32 describes God's desired response to others with whom we are in conflict. It also describes the need for our own regenerative transformation through continual contact with God.

What is different about God's church is that we, as a corporate body and as individuals, acknowledge we are part of the problem. Yet we are looking to become part of the solution. We recognize that we have not treated one another with the love, respect, and dignity that we should have. We recognize that we have not seen the image of God in one another. We recognize that we have harbored hatred and anger toward one another and those outside the church. In this, we ask for forgiveness. Further, we commit to being a church that allows God to transform our hearts so we can be a community that looks for God's image in other people.

Let's pray!

ED

Prescott Khair is a pastor in the Bowling Green and Glasgow Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Kentucky, USA.

# REACHING CHILDREN FOR JESUS



Several years ago I was talking with a long-retired literature evangelist who was old enough to remember being called a “colporteur.” We were talking about “the church.” He identified the challenges of his local congregation—the children’s Sabbath School had very few children attending, the local church school had downsized considerably, and there was no longer a Pathfinder club. “My church is just getting older and older,” he lamented. “Most of us are gray-haired or no-haired!”

What had once been a youthful, vibrant congregation seemed to him to be in its waning years. “I fear,” he said sadly, “my church isn’t the only one like this.”

As we talked, he made an observation. “Years ago,” he said, “we had large numbers of literature evangelists, and the two core products we sold were *Bible Stories* and *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories*! Because we were selling books for young families with children, these were the ones we would give Bible studies to and who would join the church. Thus, the work of the literature evangelists brought many young families into the church.”

“I fear,” he continued, “that our outreach isn’t as sharply aimed toward families with young children as it once was.”

While we probably won’t roll back time and once again have the numbers of literature evangelists we once had, selling large numbers of children’s books, I believe this man’s observations are a reminder that no matter what type of outreach and evangelism we conduct, we must never forget the importance of reaching young families.

“Through the children many parents will be reached,” states Ellen G. White in writing about the importance of planning programs for children.<sup>1</sup>

Here are just a few ways we can focus our soul-winning to not only bring in just “numbers” of people, but to intentionally reach family units that will bring children to our Sabbath Schools and church schools:

- Every evangelistic meeting series should include a strong children’s program—not merely “childcare,” but a program so interesting that the children beg their parents to attend night after night. The children’s meetings should receive the same intentionality and resources as are put forth for the “adult” meetings. This includes making the children’s meetings a focal point of advertising.

- Create top-notch Sabbath School programs for every age group—filled with fun and learning activities. Make sure every child feels welcome—and find ways to encourage them to come back every week. One easy way is when a child is absent, put a copy of the latest Sabbath School paper in the mail to them. Even in this electronic age, kids love to get mail.

- Conduct Vacation Bible Schools in every community—make it “the talk of the town.” Find a time of year and time of day when it can impact the most children; do not simply plan according to the convenience of church members.

- When giving Bible studies, make sure there are studies available for the children in the family. Great resources for all ages are available at [ToolsForEvangelism.com](http://ToolsForEvangelism.com).

- When the church is involved in literature distribution programs in the community, make sure you have good, attractive literature that will capture a child’s attention.

While our mission is to take the gospel to the entire world and to every person, let’s make sure to remember the children and families, and find ways to reach them in a special way!

ED

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 584.

Dale Galusha is president of Pacific Press in Nampa, Idaho, USA. This article was first published in the *Best Practices* (January 21, 2019) and has been lightly edited for *Elder’s Digest*.

# CHRIST'S PLACE IN THE GODHEAD

## A COLLECTION OF STATEMENTS ON THE TRINITY

### DEITY AND NATURE OF CHRIST

**1. One with Eternal Father.** “Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. ‘His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. His ‘goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.’ Micah 5:2” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34).

**2. Christ and the Father of One Substance.** “The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, ‘I and my Father are one.’ The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes” (*The Signs of the Times*, November 27, 1893).

**3. One in Power and Authority.** “Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged Sovereign of heaven, one in power and authority with the Father” (*The Great Controversy*, 495).

**4. Equal with the Father.** “To save the transgressor of God’s law, Christ, the one equal with the Father, came to live heaven before men, that they might learn to know what it is to have heaven in the heart. He illustrated what man must be to be worthy of the precious boon of the life that measures with the life of God” (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 179).

**5. Possesses God’s Attributes.** “The only way in which the fallen race could be restored was through

the gift of his Son, equal with himself, possessing the attributes of God. Though so highly exalted, Christ consented to assume human nature, that he might work in behalf of man and reconcile to God his disloyal subject. When man rebelled, Christ pleaded his merit in his behalf, and became man’s substitute and surety. He undertook to combat the powers of darkness in man’s behalf, and he prevailed, conquering the enemy of our souls, and presenting to man the cup of salvation” (*Review and Herald*, November 8, 1892).

**6. God in the Highest Sense.** “The world was made by him, ‘and without him was not anything made that was made.’ If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. . . .

“There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible” (*Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906, 8).

**7. Eternal and Self-Existent.** “The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36).

**8. Christ Our Everlasting Father.** “However much a shepherd may love his sheep, he loves his sons and daughters more. Jesus is not only our shepherd; He is our ‘everlasting Father.’ And He says, ‘I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father.’ John 10:14, 15, ERV. What a statement is this!—the only-begotten Son, He who is in the bosom of the Father, He whom God has declared to be ‘the Man that is My fellow’ (Zechariah 13:7),—the communion between Him and the eternal God is taken to represent the communion between Christ and His children on the earth!” (*The Desire of Ages*, 483).

**9. Life—Original, Unborrowed, Underived.** “Still seeking to give a true direction to her faith, Jesus declared, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life.’ In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life” (*The Desire of Ages*, 530).

**10. The Self-Existent One.** “Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, ‘whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity’” (*The Desire of Ages*, 469).

**11. Redeemer Equal with God.** “The world’s Redeemer was equal with God. His authority was as the authority of God. He declared that he had no existence separate from the Father. The authority by which he spoke, and wrought miracles, was expressly his own, yet he assures us that he and the Father are one” (*Review and Herald*, January 7, 1890).

**12. Eternal, Self-Existent, Uncreated.** “Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305).

**13. Jehovah is the Name of Christ.** “Jehovah is the name given to Christ. ‘Behold, God is my salvation,’ writes the prophet Isaiah; ‘I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day ye shall say, Praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted.’ ‘In that day

shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (*The Signs of the Times*, May 3, 1899).

**14. Jehovah Emmanuel Our Savior.** “The heavenly gates are again to be lifted up, and with ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy ones, our Saviour will come forth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Jehovah Immanuel ‘shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one’” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 108).

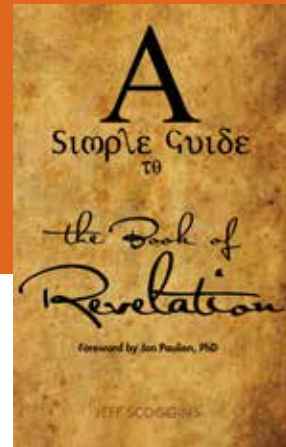
**15. Jehovah Emmanuel is Christ.** “This is the reward of all who follow Christ. Jehovah Emmanuel—he in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—to be brought into sympathy with him, to possess him, as the heart opens more and more to receive his attributes; to know his love and power, to possess the unsearchable riches of Christ to comprehend more and more ‘what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.’—this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and ‘their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord’” (*Review and Herald*, November 5, 1908).

**16. One with the Father in Nature.** Before the entrance of sin among the angels, “Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings” (*The Great Controversy*, 493).

**17. Rejection of Deity is Fatal.** “If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them; for no argument, however conclusive, could convince them. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ 1 Corinthians 2:14. None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man’s redemption” (*The Great Controversy*, 524). ED

# A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

FOREWORD BY JON PAULIEN



For a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, elder, deacon, or Sabbath School teacher, teaching Revelation is a staple of ministry—or at least it ought to be, considering the mission given to Seventh-day Adventists in Revelation 10. I grew up listening to standard Adventist Revelation meetings, but I had a problem: I could never keep everything straight. I was constantly re-learning the same symbols again and again in an abstract way, only to forget or confuse them with other symbols. Therefore, when it was time for me to start teaching, I recognized that I did not truly understand Revelation for myself. And, of course, teaching what you do not understand well is not only difficult but hypocritical as well. So I realized that I must embark on my own journey to really learn Revelation for myself—in a way that I could remember it.

I set myself several parameters for the journey:

**1. Ignore history.** Because I had grown up learning the interpretation of Revelation's symbols in terms of historical fulfillment, I decided to save historical fulfillments for the very end of the study, thus ensuring that my interpretation arose only out of the Bible.

**2. Do not use Ellen G. White's writings.** Even though I consider White's writings to be inspired, I decided not to use them so that I could teach Revelation from the Bible alone to those who do not acknowledge her prophetic gift.

**3. Work through the entire book phrase by phrase.** Requiring myself to search for the significance of every word ensured that I did not miss or skip over any detail.

**4. Explain Revelation in simple terms.** I wanted to be able to explain the material in a way that anyone with basic biblical literacy could understand and use it in his or her own study and teaching.

After a number of years of work and testing on my church members, *A Simple Guide to the Book of Revelation* was born—a verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase expedition through the book of Revelation. Unlike a

technical commentary, this is a book you can simply read through. And since it is arranged to follow Revelation by chapter and verse, you can also use it as a reference book when you need to look up a specific passage.

The first thing people comment on when opening the book is the format, which is clean and easy to read, compared to the complicated format of many commentary-style books. In fact, Dr. Jon Paulien, dean of the Loma Linda University School of Religion, who kindly wrote the foreword for the book, said he liked the format so much that he is considering using the same style for a book he is writing on the same subject.

In the book, each verse is broken into phrases and explored. For example, the whole verse of Revelation 1:1 is written at the beginning of the section, then the first phrase, "The revelation of Jesus Christ," is explored in detail. The next phrase, "which God gave him," is explored next, followed by, "to show his servants what must soon take place." Every phrase, and sometimes a single word, if necessary, is explored in detail, with particular attention being paid to how the Bible itself leads us to a correct understanding of the phrase.

As a bonus, the last chapter of the book briefly summarizes the entire study. And finally, the last page features a timeline of the book of Revelation, to help you keep the events straight in broad and general terms.

*A Simple Guide to the Book of Revelation* has recently been released and is available at the lowest price from Skapto.org or by calling (240) 381-4513 to order. The book is also available at many Adventist Book Centers around the United States and online from Amazon.com. Internationally, the book is available in English in digital format from Skapto.org or through Amazon.com and Apple's Book Store. ED

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# RAISED HANDS IN WORSHIP

IS THERE ANY BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THE INCREASINGLY COMMON PRACTICE OF RAISING AND WAVING HANDS DURING CONGREGATIONAL SINGING?

This question may not appear important, but it reveals that we are very interested in a worship that is biblically based and does not violate biblical instruction. It also suggests that waving hands while singing is a source of some tension. I will deal with the use of the hands during acts of adoration. It will become clear that, in the Bible, the ritual use of hands took place mainly during prayer.

1. *Nonverbal acts:* Body gestures play an important role in the expression of ideas and emotions. Studies on the role of nonverbal acts of worship in the Bible help us understand their significance a little better. In the Bible, we have only the language of postures, gestures, movements, and facial expressions. Ancient Near Eastern art illustrates many of the gestures. The hand gestures we find mentioned in the Bible were also common in the setting of worship and prayer in the ancient Near East.

2. *Lifting up hands:* The expressions “to lift up the hands [*yādīm*]” or “to lift up the palms [*kappayim*]” are practically synonymous. They are used in different contexts and, in some cases, express different meanings. “To lift up the hands” is a gesture that expresses adoration in the context of worship. Those who ministered in the temple were exhorted to “lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord” (Ps 134:2). The gesture indicated that the object of praise was the Lord and that the whole person was involved in the act. It was also used to present to the Lord a prayer of supplication (Ps 28:2), as if the prayer were placed in the palm of the hand and lifted up to the Lord, asking Him to accept it (Ps 141:2). In other cases, the gesture appears to express the willingness of the person to receive from the Lord what was requested (Ps 63:4–5; Lam 2:19). But the lifting up of the hands seems to express something deeper, something related to the human heart: “Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven” (Lam 3:41). The lifting of the hands

corresponded to the lifting of the inner being of the worshipper to God in communion with Him.

3. *Spreading out the hands:* In this case the verb is *pārash* (“to spread out”), expressing the idea that the hands were spread out in front of the person, not necessarily lifted up. At times, it appears that the worshipper spread hands toward the temple, the heavens (1 Kgs 8:38–39, 54; Ps 44:20), or the Lord (Exod 9:33). Spreading out the hands was particularly done during prayers of supplication (1 Kgs 8:54; Isa 1:15; Exod 9:29; Lam 1:17) or when there was a deep need for the presence of God (Ps 143:6). Psalm 88:9 reads, “I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you.” The need of the psalmist was so intense that he begs the Lord for help. Although in deep need, the worshipper goes to the Lord and extends the hands to Him for help. This more intense gesture was an expression of the individual’s dependence on God (Ps 44:20) and devotion of the heart to the Lord (Job 11:13).

As far as I can ascertain, there is no waving of hands during worship in the Bible. The lifting of hands was common (cf. 1 Tim 2:8). The Bible does not prescribe hand gestures for worship, but it describes accepted common practices. Ancient Christian art indicates that Christians used to pray with arms and hands stretched out to the sides, depicting with their bodies the crucifixion. Today we typically put our hands together either in back or in front of our bodies or simply let them hang to the side. Occasionally, we may put our palms together and interlock our fingers—a practice common among ancient Romans and Sumerians. At other times, the palms are brought together with the fingers pointing upward—common in Buddhist and Hindu religiosity. The introduction of novelties in our churches, influenced by charismatic systems of worship, can disrupt a worship that should be centered on our Creator and Redeemer and in His Word. It may be better to follow the common practice of the congregation where we collectively worship the Lord. ED

If you have a question about church policy or procedure, let us know! Every quarter we address these issues in our “Question and Answer” column, and we would love to hear from you! E-mail us at [garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org](mailto:garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org).

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez is retired after a career of service as pastor, professor, and theologian. He is a former director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, MD, USA. This answer is used by permission.



## LETTER TO THOSE NO LONGER ATTENDING

**Every** pastor or local church elder has wondered how to rekindle fervor in the hearts of members who have “fallen away” or stopped attending church. Many churches periodically send letters to those who are “on vacation” from church, reminding them they are missed or, more bluntly, asking if they still wish to be members. Many call them “missing members.” Some churches probably communicate this in ways that are sensitive and caring. But really, what is our goal? To clean up the church books? To spiritually connect with those who are no longer with us? If they are truly “missing,” we don’t know where they are, so how can we even send them a letter? What about those who are “missing” spiritually? What if you had a letter you could send to all your members to remind them of their church’s purpose and mission and to inspire them to be actively involved? Here’s a letter that might help.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

*I hope you are well. This is a note to let you know that we value you in the midst of our struggle to build community. In a world that’s falling apart at the seams, there are very few places one can go to be encouraged. The world has embarked on a journey that seems to be taking us away from civility, compassion, and grace. Each day, social media lights up*

*with heartbreaking exchanges between people who are frustrated, angry, and afraid. The divisions between political opponents are so strong that some are ready to take up arms to defend their ideas. The idea of working together, especially with those with different beliefs, seems to have fallen by the wayside. Such dialogue has become awkward and dismissive.*

*One songwriter’s lyrics cry out: “Somebody show me the people who care, and who live by the Golden Rule. / They shine like the stars in a world that is bare, and broken through and through. / They are willing to die for tomorrow and give up their freedom as well, / To love and live like the Father, and be under His magical spell. / And be under His glorious spell.”*

*We are attempting to build such a community: one that is based on Matthew 7:12, where everyone is treated as they would like to be treated—one that values people and truth. But we are an imperfect bunch who sometimes get it wrong and come across as arrogant know-it-alls. This is why we need God’s forgiveness and why we need to forgive each other.*

*By grace, we are hopeful in the face of today’s madness, because we want to be God’s salt and light, to spread the hope of a better world throughout our community. We want this passage to describe us:*

*“Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but*



work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord. Instead, 'If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.' Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good" (Rom 12:9-21, NLT).

*Please note this is not a solicitation for funds or any other hidden agenda. We are simply saying that at a time when the world is faced with unprecedented change and uncertainty, we choose to be a community of hope!*

—In His joy, (elder's name)

If you resonate with this and want to help us create such a community, we welcome your participation and feedback!

Yes, count me in!

No, I don't need this, or I have another community elsewhere.

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments (If you wish to comment, please do so below):

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ED

Rich DuBose is the Director for Church Support Services for the Pacific Union Conference. This article first appeared in *Best Practices for Adventist Ministry*. It has been lightly edited for *Elder's Digest*.

# Mission-Driven CHURCH

After years of tryouts, listening to the field, and revisions, the North American Division is introducing a first-of-its-kind resource: a practical, field-tested, biblically-based system for creating mission-driven church organizations.

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## WHAT MEMBERS WISH PASTORS KNEW

I live in a strange world. I've spent most of my professional life pastoring churches—churches large enough for multiple staff and multiple worship services, and churches so small that I had to wash my own feet at communion. (Think about it!)

These days I'm not pastoring. I'm training pastors and members. I live in that grey area between "pastor" and "member" and I hear the comments and concerns of both groups. Of course, people are different. What turns one member on turns another off. What makes one member happy makes another miserable.

But I want to share some comments about pastors that seem to be fairly consistent no matter where I go. These are some things that members may not tell pastors directly, but they wish pastors knew.

### **WE NEED A PASTOR, NOT A PREACHER!**

They really don't mean that; what they actually want is both. But something has shifted. If I had a dollar for every time I heard this comment I'd be a rich man: "All these pastors today want to do is preach. But they can't pastor!" Since my default is to protect pastors, I try to listen without being defensive. But it's impossible to ignore the comments.

Fairly or unfairly, many members think that priorities have shifted and we are producing better preach-

ers than pastors. Some of this is nostalgia, a selective memory of the "good old days." But some of this is probably true. Preaching resources and workshops are everywhere. Gifted preachers are online and on television. It's probably a lot easier to be a great preacher these days and the rewards seem greater.

But we live in a broken culture that's begging for healers, for listeners, for pastors. Ministers function in many roles, but the role of shepherd is desperately needed today. The shepherd certainly feeds the flock through effective preaching and teaching, but the shepherd also loves, leads, tends, and protects the flock.

Given the size of our churches, it is not possible for one person to shepherd the congregation one by one. It seems that even Jesus could only reasonably attend to twelve. But according to Ephesians 4:12, the primary work of a pastor is to make sure that the work is being done. Shepherding is a shared responsibility, but it must start at the top.

### **WE WANT YOU TO SUCCEED**

The vast majority of members want their pastors to succeed. I'm not talking about the weekend warriors—the frustrated few whose purpose in life seems to make everyone miserable, especially the pastor. Frankly, those people are usually badly broken and deeply hurt.

And it's true that hurt people hurt people. But for the most part, members want their pastors to succeed.

Most members want the pastor to be productive and happy. Most members want the pastor's family to feel loved and supported. Most members dislike long and unproductive board meetings. Most members hate out-of-control business meetings. Most members want the church to grow. Most members want visitors to feel comfortable. The problem is that the handful of complainers can seem like the crowd. But they aren't. The vast majority of church members sincerely want the pastor to succeed. When he or she succeeds, so do they.

### YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING

"Omni competence"—it is the curse of leadership. It is the idea that because I can do one thing well, I can do all things well. It is a pressing problem of leaders, from the local church to the General Conference, and is particularly problematic for local pastors. Why? Because pastors are immediately confronted with people who know more about the church, the city, and the context than them. There are certain things that the members absolutely know better than the pastor!

When a pastor arrives at a church, any church, some things will be working and some things will not. Even if it works for the wrong reason, there is a reason it works and the pastor needs to discover the reason. Pastors who are convinced that their way is the only way, or always the best way, will eventually find themselves proving it—alone.

### WE DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING EITHER!

Here's a little secret many pastors don't know: most members know that they need help.

- They know some of their fellow members are too intense!
- They know the church isn't growing as it should.
- They know only a handful show up for business meetings.

- They know the bathrooms are dirty or in disrepair.
- They know prayer meeting is boring.

You get my drift. Pastors can get the feeling they are living on an island with no visible or vocal support. But the reality is that most members are busy Christians trying to navigate their own world. Many of them experience in their own workplace some of the same issues as the pastor. They want to do better, but they need help. And they want the pastor to help them do better.

### WE'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU LEAVE

Most members have seen pastors come and go. Some churches have been the "science experiment" of starry-eyed pastors. Other churches have been the "training wheels" for young pastors. They have heard and seen it all. Since most of them will be there when the pastor leaves, the pastor should keep at least two things in mind.

**Make changes that will last.** Don't move things around solely because of your taste or comfort level. Make changes consistent with the culture of the church and community. If not, the church will "put all of the furniture back" when you leave. And it will create a mess for the next pastor.

**Don't start fights you can't finish.** Even necessary change is challenging. Every pastor will have battles. The problem is that people take sides. These people will be living, working, and worshipping together long after the pastor leaves. Pastors should work to resolve conflict, especially conflict that grows out of changes they started.

What do you think? Is there anything else you think members wish pastors knew? ED

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# CHURCH VOLUNTEERS: FINDING THEM, TRAINING THEM, AND KEEPING THEM >PART 2

In the preview issue of *Elder's Digest*, I offered ten suggestions on how to find and train volunteers. In this article I offer ten more to help you be more effective in your ministry.

## 1. Preach on Ministry, Evangelism, and Mission.

Taking a Sabbath morning service to preach on serving is a surefire way to find new volunteers. Not only will people see why they're called to serve, but you can also bring to their attention needs inside and outside of the church where they can help. Share the specific needs and a simple call to action, and you'll have new volunteers in no time. I preached at least four sermons every year on ministry and mission, and noticed that the number of people who volunteered afterward was more than fifty percent higher than during other times of the year.

**2. Cast the Vision about the Ministry.** Instead of simply stating the need, describe the way your volunteers will make a difference. See the following examples and ask yourself which inspires you to action:

Option 1: "We need two people to help out in our junior room."

Option 2: "Our junior students learn God's Word each and every Sabbath. Join our volunteer team and help our juniors understand God's unique love for them."

The more the emphasis is on the spiritual side, the more likely people are to volunteer.

**3. Provide Training for Workers.** Too many church members have agreed to serve, only to be left to fend for themselves. Even the most willing servants grow weary when they are ill equipped and unsupported.

Train them—and make a public announcement about the training so potential workers know they won't be alone if they serve. Indeed, invite potential workers to attend the training.

**4. Ask Current Volunteers to Recruit for You.** The best people to recruit more volunteers are your current volunteers. Encourage them to bring a friend to serve with, or to host an event such as a ministry fair in which leaders of a ministry can ask people to join their ministry team.

**5. Build a System of Reproduction.** Reproduction should be a natural part of someone who obeys Jesus and strives to become seriously qualified and competent in his or her role of ministry and evangelism. An example of this reproduction comes from my own life as a pastor: one of my responsibilities was to make sure that every disciple of Jesus was engaged in a life-changing ministry and that their ministry was not done until they had trained another disciple to do what they did.

This is what Jesus did and what we should do. Paul, writing to the young pastor Timothy, says, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul is saying that the chain of discipleship and training should go on from Jesus' time until the second coming. Every believer is not only to be involved in the mission of Jesus but to also inspire others to do the same. This is accomplished by taking the time to connect with them outside of weekend services to listen, encourage, and share life together.

**6. Give People a Chance to Try It Out.** An easy way to scare off a potential volunteer is to ask for a long commitment. Instead, make sure you give everyone the opportunity to take a trial run at a particular volunteer area. They may be a great fit for that particular role, or you may need to help them find another place where they would fit better. Either way, by encouraging them to just test it out, they'll be more likely to give it a chance.

**7. Create a Volunteer Page on Your Website.** Having a simple place for people to learn about volunteering and sign up is an easy way to find new volunteers. Create a page on your website that casts vision, gives a look behind the scenes, shares testimonials from current volunteers, mentions current needs, and has a simple call to action with a form to get in touch. This page can also serve as a data page for the church.

**8. Explain the Purpose of the Ministry.** There are lots of reasons why people volunteer. Most of them

## SHARE WHY GOD NEEDS VOLUNTEERS, WHAT THE JOB IS, AND HOW TO DO IT. SHOW THEM THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF EVERYTHING WE DO IN THE CHURCH.

aren't “I really like to say ‘Hi’ to strangers” or “I love to collect the offering.” Make sure people know *why* the ministry exists and how God will use them. Whether this happens from the pulpit, in personal conversations, or in volunteer-interest meetings, don't miss your opportunity to cast the vision for your volunteers. Share why God needs volunteers, what the job is, and how to do it. Show them the spiritual side of everything we do in the church.

Also, the more defined a role is, the easier it is to get involved. Your volunteer program should have a solid volunteer training strategy, and every volunteer should know these three things: where they need to be, what they're doing, and why they're doing it.

Developing a biblical job description of the ministry will go a long way toward helping people be effective and successful in what they do.

Make it perfectly clear what you want your volunteers to know. This is your chance to cast the vision for what volunteering looks like in your church.

**9. Make it Clear What Not to Do.** Volunteers are not the same as employees, but they absolutely represent your church, and you're inviting them to be part of your ministry. If someone has a bad experience with one of your volunteers, they're probably going to associate that experience with your ministry and church.

Put together a “code of conduct” for your volunteers. You don't need to scare anyone or preemptively wag your finger; focus on the incredible privilege your team has in serving God, and use this as an opportunity to share why their role matters for now and for eternity.

**10. Evaluate Honestly.** Hurting feelings do not need to be part of the job, so be gentle when you have to redirect people out of areas where they can't accomplish the job. Keep written records of evaluation and offer tangible steps for people to either improve or find new ways to serve.

Evaluation is easier when done against a set of pre-defined expectations—a job/role description. It is hard for a volunteer to hear they missed a mark they didn't know they were supposed to hit!

As you are faithful in serving God, in building the new leaders for His church, He will bless you and your church richly. He will give you the wisdom to know what to do and the power to do it. ED

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# CHURCH STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE

**Issues** related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was con-

ceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant. ED

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This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.

# Start the year right—light their fire for mission!

*“Dear Lord, we want to be good stewards. Help us to be faithful in our giving to the world mission offerings to help send missionaries and support the work of hospitals, clinics, schools, and churches. Amen.”*

“...for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off.”

—*Gospel Workers*, 465, 466.

Here are three ways to let your members know how their offerings are making an impact around the world and how they can become more deeply involved with the Gospel commission:

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