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ELDER'S DIGEST

*The Ministry
of the Elder*

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KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL 2008

Here we are, standing at the door of 2008. I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to the New Year. It isn't that 2007 was bad; in fact, it was a great year for me for many reasons. My older son got married. I celebrated 25 years of marriage with Raquel. I wrote a book. Even so, I am looking forward to the New Year because it is an opportunity for us as a church to build on some of the things that were missed this past year.

Why is it important for the church to be successful in 2008? Because every day neighbors, family members, and friends are dying without Jesus. They are depending on us to share Jesus with them. How? Let's look at Acts 2:42.

Make prayer a priority

When Peter preached his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people were converted; this was the beginning of the church. One of the things that the early church did was devote itself to prayer. For example, in Acts 6, when the church leaders were burdened with caring for the physical needs of the believers, what did they do? "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (verse 4). The church leaders spent more time in prayer.

Prayer is one of the keys to success. Without prayer, we are without power. Jesus spent a lot of His time in ministry praying to His Father. Was Jesus busy? Yes. He was too busy for prayer? No. Are you busy? Yes. Are you too busy for prayer? No, never! Our success as spiritual leaders requires us to make prayer a central part of our lives. I hope that we all will commit to making prayer a priority.

Build on the foundation of God's Word

Look at Acts 2:42 again. It says that the church was devoting itself to the apostles' teaching. This was the Word of God. We must be people of the Word! The Word must guide our lives and decisions. The church

must be built on the foundation of the Word. The Word of God is our authority. When we step outside of it, we have no authority.

One of the keys to a successful Christian life is knowing the Word of God and putting it into practice. God gives the Word to us for our benefit. God gives us standards of conduct for our own good, not because He is a killjoy.

Build a strong sense of community

Our Acts passage says that the believers devoted themselves to fellowship. What does that mean? The word "fellowship" means to "have something in common" or "to strive for a common goal." It also means to be one in action.

Did you know that many people start coming to church because they want to connect with other people? We need to build a strong sense of community with people when they come to our churches. We want them to belong. When they feel a sense of community, they will want to believe as we do, and they will want to behave as God wants them to.

If people feel welcome in our church, they will eventually believe and behave. I believe our church does a great job of that. Our members are wonderful and loving. Let us commit to spending more time together this year.

Have a vision for what God can do

This last key is not in the text, but I think it is very important. As you look at your life right now, what do you see?

I'll tell you what I see. I see a church that is willing to be challenged and involved in mission. I see many loving and gifted people. I see members who care for each other. I see a church with tremendous growth potential if it will only tap the potential in each member.

What can God do with His church? Anything! What can He do with you? Anything! A new year is before us. Let's make 2008 a year we will never forget! Let's live life with no regrets. Let's make prayer a priority, let's build our foundation on the Word. Let's build a strong sense of community and have a vision for what God can do with us.

What will you do in 2008? **ED**



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



INTERVIEW

WOMEN-IN-MINISTRY QUESTIONS

There is much discussion about women in ministry. In response to this interest, *Record* magazine from the South Pacific Division posed a series of questions to theologian Dr. Paul Petersen. This is the first part of that conversation. Considering the importance of this issue for our worldwide church, we are also presenting this interview in *Elder's Digest* magazine.

Usually the most significant questions people have about women in ministry are theological. Why is this the case?

As Christians we believe God has spoken through Christ and the Bible, and theology seeks to describe the content and the implications of that divine revelation. Any issue of significance has to be settled on the basis of what God has said.

Throughout the Bible, why is God generally described as masculine? Is this understanding of God too limited? How might this impact on our understanding of gender relationships and roles?

While Scripture describes God as a Father and other masculine metaphors clearly dominate, the male perspective is not exclusive. God is also compared to a mother (see Isaiah 49:15), a woman giving birth (see Isaiah 42:14) or to a woman cleaning her house (see Luke 15:8). Remember that in the Creation account the oneness of the Godhead encompasses both masculine and feminine.

We have to realise the limitations of human language in describing God. The essence, the very being of God, is beyond human comprehension and categorisation. We must be careful not to make God

too much like us. Next, we have to realise the cultural background of the times in which the Bible was written. Feminine goddesses were associated with rampant sexuality, while the Father imagery could be used to underscore the origin and the important concepts of God as Creator and Provider.

At the same time, traits typically associated with women are often used to characterise God. The most common Hebrew word for "mercy" or "compassion" - core to the character of God - comes from the word for the female bosom.

How do you respond to objections to women-in-ministry raised from the following parts of the Bible: Are women somehow precluded from ministry and leadership because of Eve's role in the first sin or from God's specific "curses" following the Fall (Genesis 3:16)?

Many biblical and historical examples prove otherwise. Deborah was the divinely appointed spiritual and political leader of the people of God; Huldah was a significant prophet; in the New Testament, Phoebe and Priscilla were important spiritual leaders in the church; and the ministry of Ellen White within the history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement certainly should convince us that the result of the Fall is not a divine

imperative against women in ministry or leadership positions among the people of God. Otherwise, God would not have provided us with such powerful role models.

When it comes to the curses—the consequences of the Fall—we should note that the purpose of the people of God is to counter these curses by being a blessing. This is clear in the call of Abraham, the father of the people of God, in Genesis 12:1-3, where blessings are first mentioned after the curses of the Fall. As a church, we are to exemplify the original gender equality established by God at Creation, before the Fall.

The curses describe results of sin. They are consequences, not necessarily divine commands for what we are to do. In a selfishly dominated world, for instance, males have used their physical power to oppress women. We don't have to, just as we don't have to force women to bear children with pain, but are allowed to ease that pain.

Is there any women-in-ministry significance to the fact that only the sons of Aaron were eligible to serve as priests in the Israelites' sanctuary and in the temple?

Seventh-day Adventists are Protestants. We believe we are called to complete what the Reformers of the 16th century set in motion. Central to the view of the Reformation is that Jesus alone is our Priest. The priesthood of the Old Testament sanctuary prefigured Jesus Christ and His service in the heavenly sanctuary. This is crucial to the self-identity of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

Using the Old Testament priesthood as a type of ministers in the Christian church takes us straight back into the most fundamental Catholic heresy. Ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not priests offering sacrifices and they do not by way of the rite of ordination receive any special gift that sets them apart from other Christians, giving them a unique authority, independent of both the corporate church and the Word of God. We believe in the heavenly sanctuary and the heavenly priesthood of Jesus Christ alone.

Do the Levitical laws about women's monthly uncleanness (see Leviticus 15:19-23) have any relevance to this discussion?

No! Let us remind ourselves of the unique position of the Ten Commandments. By trying to make obscure and at times less understood elements of the Mosaic law eternal and to apply them independent of culture and context, we downgrade the significance of the Ten Commandments that alone were intended for all people at all times.

How would you explain Jesus' relationships with women? Why did He have only men among His 12 disciples?

Compared with, for instance, the Pharisaic party, Jesus was unique in His positive attitude toward women—and women were the first to proclaim the message of the resurrected Saviour. From the outset, these factors positioned the early Christian church as a far more egalitarian movement than previously seen.

Jesus naturally chose 12 male disciples as a symbol of the new Israel He was about to establish, patterned on the model of the 12 tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob.

Why does Paul seem so anti-women, particularly in the church context, with statements such as 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15?

Misunderstandings of Paul's views abound, due to lack of close attention to Paul's actual statements, ignorance of the social environment of the time, and also the fact that some of the specific texts in question are among the more difficult sayings in the New Testament because of uncertainty about the exact background.

First, the apostle Paul—far from being a male chauvinist, as critical scholars at times claim—is unique within his culture in underlining mutuality in the relationship between husband and wife. He speaks about mutual submission (see Ephesians 5:21, 22), and with regard to the sexual life he tells in 1 Corinthians 7:4 that the body of the wife belongs to her husband—no surprise to his culture—but likewise that the body of the husband belongs to his wife. That was a shocking statement at the time!

Second, when applying the Epistles we do well in showing caution. This part of the Bible gives examples of the application of the principles of the gospel to various local situations in the apostolic churches. We are reading letters to churches about which we know little, if anything, except from the letters themselves. For example, any given letter may be part of ongoing correspondence. Sound interpretation does not establish doctrines for all times and places on the basis of a few texts in the Epistles only.

So what about 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35, for example? Does Paul intend to say that no women should ever be allowed to speak in a Christian congregation?

If so, he would abolish part of Scripture. And his own example speaks against such an interpretation. He worked with Phoebe (see Romans 16:1) and with Priscilla, a teacher of the gospel (see Romans

16:3; compare Acts 18:2, 18, 26). He recommended Junia (see Romans 16:7), who without question was a woman, even calling her an “apostle,” meaning someone sent to give a message, and a title of authority (compare 1 Corinthians 12:28).

So, what does Paul mean? We may never know on this side of the kingdom. He wrote to a church with extreme challenges and peculiar problems. He wrote a letter permeated with irony. Amid a chapter dealing with the issue of speaking in tongues in Corinth—a contentious question in itself—he asks the women in that church to keep quiet for the sake of order. He does not say, “You women in Sydney or New York or Johannesburg keep quiet.” Rather, he speaks to the situation in Corinth, because it seems some women in that congregation caused disturbance. We do not know the precise reason.

Similarly, a text like 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is difficult, both with regard to translation and background. Paul may be countering prevailing heresies among some pre-Gnostic teachers who spread peculiar ideas about the order of Creation, turning the sequence of Genesis 2 upside down. For both passages we have to acknowledge uncertainty, and God does not expect us to make doctrines, nor to generalise and apply rules we might deduce from these texts as principles for churches everywhere.

As Adventists, our approach has never been to let a few isolated and difficult texts determine what the Bible otherwise makes clear. And when it comes to the general principle of equality between the genders within the kingdom of God and His church, Paul in Galatians 3:28 leaves little doubt.

Others would argue that the New Testament compares the church with a family and the elder with a father, implying that elders—and ministers—have to be male. How are we to assess this argument?

The first major problem with the argument is that the New Testament texts never say so. Nowhere in the New Testament is the elder called the head. The text about headship in Ephesians 5:23 speaks about marriage—and certainly, we would not call the husband/head of his wife her “father.” Likewise, no New Testament text calls the elder “father.” Jesus as the head of the church is not compared to a father. He is our older brother and leaders of the church are rather older siblings taking responsibility. Indeed, we are advised not to call human leaders our “father” (see Matthew 23:8-10).

Second, though the whole Bible compares the people of God and His church to a family, the metaphor of the family is not used in such a consistent manner

that we can organise the church accordingly. The New Testament believes in organisation, but organisation is not an end in itself. In the Catholic Church, for example, the church structure and organisation is regarded as divinely ordained. But, as Adventists, we do not find that the New Testament prescribes only one type of organisation for the church. Organisation serves the message and the mission. The specific way we organise depends on the need to present the message in the best possible way—and that may change.

Further, the specific functions we attach to the various offices of the church are functions we as a corporate body have decided to delegate to these positions. They are only rarely explicitly mentioned in the New Testament. Elders are not said by way of office to possess any “teaching authority” as at times claimed. The New Testament provides no specific example of the ordination of ministers in our sense of the word, and we have no example of pastors or ministers either baptising, performing the Lord’s Supper or marrying, to mention some of today’s functions. These are functions the church delegates to certain people for the sake of order.

In short, the so-called “headship/father role of the elder” is, biblically speaking, non-existent. It is a phantom, a construct, having no textual foundation, and it is based on a Catholic presupposition of one prescribed divine model of organisation.

But does not Paul describe elders as men in, for instance, 1 Timothy 3:2, where he says they are to be husbands of one wife?

Of course he does. He is referring to historical fact. The elders were male and he spoke about them. But historical description is not divine prescription. The Ten Commandments, for instance, though containing eternal principles, are also spoken in the language of their time. It prohibits men from killing, stealing and lying—the Hebrew addresses the masculine, not the feminine—and the 10th commandment tells me as a man not to covet my neighbour’s wife. Does that mean women are not included in the commandments and that they are free to kill, steal, lie and lust for their neighbours’ husbands? Of course not! These texts are gender inclusive. The principles of murder, theft, truthfulness and covetousness cover everyone. So does the principle of faithfulness to one’s spouse emphasised by Paul to Timothy. 

This conversation will be concluded in the next issue of *Elder’s Digest* magazine.

Nathan Brown is editor of *Record*.
Paul Petersen is field secretary for the South Pacific Division.

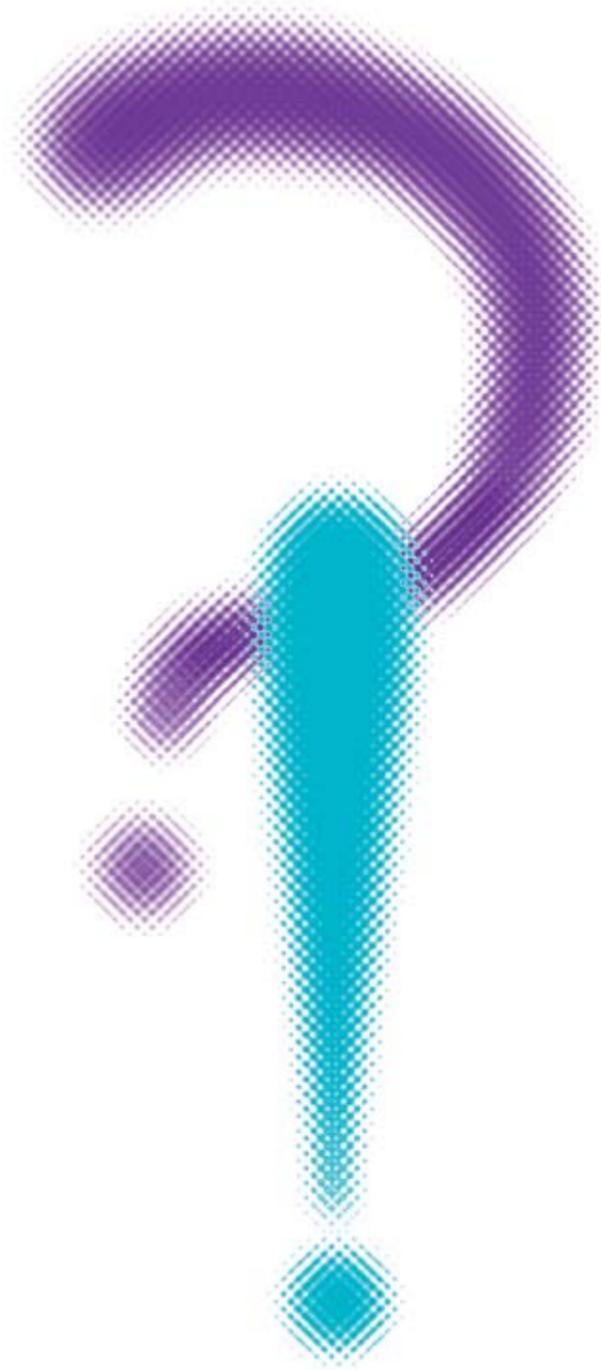
CAN AN UNMARRIED MAN BE A DEACON OR ELDER?

This question is addressed in several Bible passages. First Timothy 3:2 says, “A bishop (elder) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach,” and goes on to say, “Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” Titus 1:6, 7 agrees, saying, “Appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination . . .” These three passages have been interpreted by some to indicate that an elder or deacon must be a married man.

The issue is not the elder or deacon’s marital status, but his moral and sexual purity. This qualification heads the list because leaders are most vulnerable in this area. Some people think that “husband of but one wife” means that deacons must be married. But that is not correct. In Greek, the phrase “husband of one wife” literally reads “one-woman man.” For a married man to be considered for a position of church leadership, he must be committed to his wife. This qualification is speaking of fidelity in marriage and sexual purity; it is not a requirement of marriage. If it were, a man would have to be married and have children, because the second half of 1 Timothy 3:12 states that he “must manage his children and his household well.” We should interpret this to mean that if a man is married, he must be faithful to his wife; if he has children, he must manage them well.

Some think this requirement excludes single men from church leadership. But if that were Paul’s intent, he would have disqualified himself (1 Cor. 7:8). A one-woman man is one totally devoted to his wife, maintaining singular devotion, affection, and sexual purity to her in both thought and deed. To violate this is to forfeit blamelessness and to no longer be “above reproach” (Titus 1:6, 7). The apostle Paul praises the state of singleness because it enables more faithful service to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-35). Why would Paul restrict men from church leadership positions when he believes that “an unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs, how he can please the Lord” (verse 32)? In the first nine verses of this chapter, Paul establishes that both marriage and singleness are good and right before the Lord. An elder or deacon may be either married or single, as long as he meets the qualifications of godliness as outlined in 1 Timothy and Titus. 

General Conference Ministerial Association



WHAT IS *Preaching?*

What is preaching all about anyway? The question has been asked again and again, and has been answered in many ways. But when you have been ordained as a local elder and you realize that one of your responsibilities is to preach a sermon, when the pastor is not present on Sabbath morning or Wednesday evening or on other occasions when preaching is called for, then quite suddenly the question is your question. Preaching becomes critically relevant for you.

To begin, let us consider the “what” of preaching. It is imperative that we do this, because our attitude toward preaching is really more important than how we preach. The “what” should cause us to take preaching more seriously and give better attention to the “how.” In Thessalonians 1, Paul makes a significant statement as to what preaching is all about: “For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God . . .; for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:9-13, RSV, emphasis supplied).

When Paul preached the gospel, he was not preaching the word of men but the word of God. This suggests that gospel preaching not only communicates truth about God and the Christian way of life, but it is also a phenomenon, a holy event, in which the same word that is at work in the heart is heard by the believer. There is here something living and vital, something dynamic and moving. In his book *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, Robert H. Mounce asserts that in preaching, God reveals Himself so that it can be said, “Preaching is revelation”—the revelation of God.

We may think that point needs some modification because of its relationship to the whole doctrine of revelation, but we must not lose its force with respect to the importance of preaching. Note what Ellen G. White has written in *Testimonies to the Church*:

“Many do not look upon preaching as Christ’s appointed means of instructing His people and therefore always to be highly prized. They do not feel that the sermon is the word of the Lord to them and estimate it by the value of the truths spoken; but they judge it as they would the speech of a lawyer at the bar—by the argumentative skill displayed and the power and beauty of the language. The minister is not infallible, but God honored him by making him His messenger. If you listen to him as though he were not commissioned from above, you will not respect his words nor receive them as the message of God. We are never

to forget that Christ teaches through His servants” (5:298, 300).

Have we lost this concept of preaching? Do we still consider the sermon the “word of the Lord”? Do we believe that in preaching, Christ is teaching His people through His servants? Is the Holy Spirit present and active in the sermon? Do God and man come together? Something wonderful can happen if preaching is God’s appointed means of saving souls. Should we approach the pulpit with the expectation that it will happen?

I miss the attitude of reverence for the pulpit that I learned as a boy. I was never allowed to walk carelessly behind the pulpit, to stand in the pulpit for “the fun of it.” I was taught that it was dangerous to “fool” with sacred things, and the pulpit was one of these sacred things. It is from the pulpit that God speaks to men. It is in sermons that God and man come together.

In his book *The Art of Illustrating Sermons*, Ian Macpherson tells the following story, which has some bearing upon what we are considering:

“Picture an old lady living in London about the middle of last century. Her hero, we will suppose, is the Duke of Wellington, and when we first see her, she is sitting in her drawing room, a copy of his biography open in her hands. She is reading the account of the Battle of Waterloo, and as she reflects on the role the duke played in that famous engagement, and on all that the victory he then won has meant for her as an Englishwoman, she is overwhelmed with gratitude and devotion to him.

Every now and again she lifts her eyes from the page and looks up at an etching hanging on a wall of the apartment. It is a pen-and-ink drawing of Apsley House, Wellington’s London residence; and as she gazes at it, she says to herself: ‘How wonderful to think that the great duke lives there!’ Then, all at once, her reverie is broken by a sharp rap on the door. She rises to respond to it and, when the door is opened, there in living presence is the duke himself! In a flash, book and building—fascinating though they are—are alike forgotten, for the conqueror meets her face to face!”

Something far more marvelous than that frequently happens in a Christian church. People go there to listen to the reading and exposition of a Book, which tells of a triumph immeasurably surpassing Waterloo, or to gaze with rapture on the stately architecture of some glorious cathedral. And all at once, there comes a knock on the door of their hearts. There before them is none other than the risen Christ himself!

Will something like that happen when you preach next Sabbath? It can. How does that possibility strike you as you prepare the sermon? Are you motivated to do your best? Do you begin your preparation on your knees?

We are not sufficient for all this. But God is able. He has called you, and He wants to use you. It is a high honor to be called to preach the gospel. 

Steven P. Vitrano was a teacher of preaching at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University when this article was written.

ENTERTAINMENT AS A FORM OF

worship

Recently I attended a church service that targeted young people. The service included praise music, smoke machines, lighting effects, and even dancers. Most in the congregation had fun, some were offended, and I'm sure more than a few received a great blessing. However, throughout the church service, I kept thinking that we are doing our young people a disservice if we think that the only way we can get them to come to church is under the guise of a concert.

How many of us have attended a youth event where the pastor rushed through vespers and prayer so that the young people could start their game night, pizza feast, or swim party? Probably too many of us. The problem with using entertainment as a way of getting young people into the pews is that it is only a quick fix. What happens when young people become adults, come to Sabbath School and church, and discover that it's not fun anymore?

Statistics show that between 65-70 percent of young people in all Christian denominations leave the church after high school; some never return, and others return only after they have children. Unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no different. We too have a large number of young people leaving our church.

In Proverbs 22:6, Solomon says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he won't turn from it." So the question is: When did youth ministry decide that the gospel wasn't entertaining enough and that young people wouldn't fill the pews to hear the message of Christ's love and forgiveness?

As someone who works with Pastor Jan Paulsen's "Let's Talk" initiative for our church television channel, I hear many questions and comments about the church and its leadership. Young people complain that they are not allowed to be involved to the extent that they want to be, they worry they are not helping enough in their communities, and they wonder if their youth groups are getting the gospel foundation they need or want. They worry that when it is time for them to be leaders, they will not have the experience they need. However, I cannot remember even one email complaining that young people are not being entertained enough or that their meetings and events aren't fun enough. Young people want and need to lead, and for that they must have more than just entertainment in their youth meetings.

So what can we do to give our young people the foundation they need to stay in church, to be active members, and to become effective leaders?

First, we have to put Christ at the front of whatever we do with young people. Yes, some kids may groan when we want to have a meaningful vespers and prayer before the Saturday-night or Wednesday-night activity. We may be afraid that they will feel we are pushing the Bible and Jesus down their throats. But isn't learning about Jesus the whole point? Didn't their parents send them to youth church or AY for that very reason—so that they could have a Christian experience? We cannot be afraid to give it to them. They will remember and use what they are taught.

Second, we have to get our youth involved in the life of their church—even when we think they don't want to be. They do. At the very least, they appreciate being asked. We have to have faith that they can complete the tasks that we give them. Young people often complain that their churches do not trust them to take part in the service. When I was growing up, I always appreciated my church's willingness to make sure that young people were involved in the different aspects of the church service and church life. We were invited to read scripture, serve as deacons, lead the song service, and pray. Even when we acted like we were too cool to be involved, we each felt appreciated and welcomed in the life of our church. This is important. If young people have invested in the life of the church, they are less likely to leave it. They will also build an amazing foundation and be able to lead the church when they become adults.

Finally, we have to get our young people involved in their local and global communities. Young people need to realize that when Christ said to "love your neighbor as yourself," He was not just talking about the person sitting next to them in the church pew. He meant the person who cannot come to church because he or she

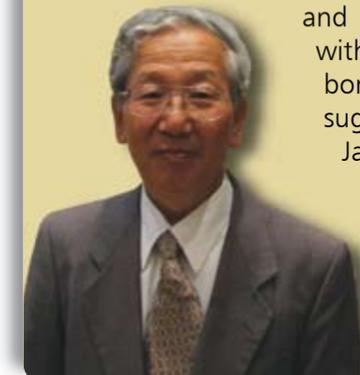
is too ill to leave the house. He meant the people who have to sleep on the street because they cannot afford housing. He meant that everyone is our neighbor, our brother, our sister. Our duties do not encompass just church life—they also include the communities around us. When young people are involved in their church, and their church is involved in the community, they will see a direct connection between Christ's love for them and for others. It also allows the people in the community to see Christ's love through our young people, to experience Christ's compassion not through words, but through actions.

The youth church experience should be fun. There is nothing wrong with Saturday night games and pizza parties. But why can't being involved in the church and community also be fun? Why should fun in church always have to come with an exciting gimmick? Our goal as leaders is to train our young people to take our place. They will lead the church one day, and it's up to us to make sure they have a strong foundation of experience and commitment to do it well. 

General Conference Communication Department

HIRONORI TAKAHASHI

Hironori Takahashi has been a local church elder from Yokohama in Tokyo, Japan for the last 10 years. He works as a professional architect. He is also the president of the Elders Association for the Japan Union Conference. According to him, the church in Japan is facing a difficult situation. The early evangelization focused on reaching out to individuals but neglecting the family. Although certain areas of major cities may have this tendency to individualism, in general Japanese society is a family oriented society and it is still very strong with attachment and bonding relations. He suggests approaching Japanese society with the gospel through families and also young people.



BIOGRAPHY

MAKING TIME FOR THE ESSENTIAL



The word that could best describe life these days is “pressure.” We all try to overcome this modern-day problem of running against the clock in an attempt to accomplish all our tasks. And what we hear so often today is, “I don’t have time!” Lack of time ends up being an excuse for everything. King Solomon was right when he wrote, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1).

Many parents today suffer from “Weekend Parenting Syndrome.” They spend so much time at work and on necessary tasks that they rarely look after their children except on weekends. We make a big mistake when we do not invest enough time in our families, because time is everything in a relationship—with your spouse, with your children, or with God.

We need to remember this important principle: Give time to whom time is due. The problem today is that we face a chronic problem when it comes to our priorities. We establish so many objectives and goals that often we fail in what is essential.

It is important to manage our time. We can satisfy significant needs within our families when we spend time praying together, developing faith, and having family worship.

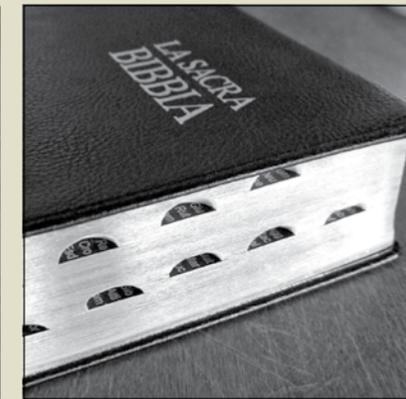
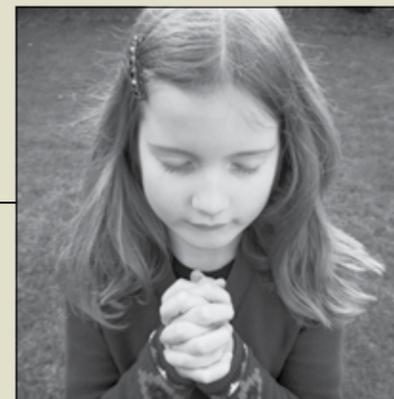
Studies have shown that only 20 percent of Christian families make a consistent time for worship in their homes. This research reflects a crisis of spiritual leadership in the home. If we do not take the responsibility for the spiritual condition of our children, who will?

Today more than ever, we should take the initiative to redirect our priorities to what is essential—raising our children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

One of the best things we can give our children is a solid spiritual heritage. Family worship is one way to provide that. Therefore, restoring the

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

(Eccl. 3:1)



family altar needs to be a priority at the beginning of each new year. However, investing in family worship and making this practice meaningful requires some consideration.

The first element of family worship is prayer. Teach your children how to pray spontaneously. Get a notebook and write down prayer requests and answered prayers. This educational tool will make worship time interesting and awaken the interest of your children.

The second element of family worship is the Bible. When praying, we talk to God, but as we read the Bible, we allow God to talk to us. In my family, we developed a habit of reading the Bible, memorizing texts, and marking the verses we liked most. We also varied our readings through the use of different Bible versions. This allowed us to study the Bible using a vocabulary my sons understood.

Another element of family worship is music. A great tragedy these days is that in some places, children no longer sing. Take time to learn hymns and choruses. Sing them together. Singing and praising transforms worship into a happy and interactive time.

Devotional time is the fourth element in family worship. Many books, hymnals, CDs, and illustrations are excellent tools. Most of these resources are easy to find and will help in the learning process.

A meaningful family worship should also include the following characteristics:

Regularity. When you choose to have worship is not the most important aspect; regularity is. I know families who have worship in the morning, while others have it in the evening. The important

thing is to find a time when the entire family can be together at a scheduled, regular time.

Be brief, but don’t hurry. Some people think that family worship should last an hour and a half. This is not true. A few minutes well-used will have a powerful impact. Also, it is important to remember that children—and even adults—have short attention spans.

Informality. Everyone participates, and everyone’s needs are met.

Variety. Avoid dull routine. For many children and teenagers, worship is boring because it is always the same. Plan for variety, perhaps a different program for worship each day. For instance:

- **Sunday:** Discuss what you learned on Sabbath.
- **Monday:** Plan for the new week and put your trust in God.
- **Tuesday:** Share a missionary story or a current fact that makes everyone think about the time they are living in.
- **Wednesday:** Prayer day.
- **Thursday:** Talk about family members and pray for them.
- **Friday:** Use a Promise Box. Include preparation for Sabbath.

Ask God to revive your family. When it happens, this revival will surely affect the church. And believe me, this starts when you and I establish a value system, a system of priorities with the clear objective of meeting Jesus soon with our families. 

Raquel Arrais
General Conference Associate Women’s Ministries Director

Advertisement Pacific Press

Through long years of preparation and finally a burning-bush experience, God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. We read in Deuteronomy 34 that at the conclusion of Moses' life, God had finished preparing Joshua, Moses' greatest general, to become the leader of Israel. Joshua had been faithful to God and to Moses' leadership, and in Deuteronomy 34 and Joshua 1, we see the beginning of a new chapter (or could we say calendar?) in the history of Israel.

For 40 years Moses had led the Children of Israel. He led them through the plagues of Egypt. He led them to safety at the first Passover. He led them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. He led them to water in the desert, to food of manna and quail. He led them to Mt. Sinai and to the law of God. For 40 years he did his best to lead his flock according to God's will. And now Moses' time on earth was complete. For the children of Israel, Moses' death would mark an end of an era and signify a new beginning with a new leader. Like Israel, we stand at the brink of a new beginning, a new year, 2008.

Moses died and was buried. Now God was ready for Joshua to lead the children of Israel to fulfill the covenant He had made with Abraham decades earlier: bringing the Israelites to a land of their own. He intended for them to have countless descendants and a future in which the whole world would be blessed. God promised Joshua success: And in this section of Scripture, God tells him how to obtain success.

Some people might define success as "a favorable course of termination of anything attempted; the gaining of position, wealth, fame, etc." However, for the Christian, success means being obedient to God's will. (Christian definitions and world definitions differ.) We all want to enjoy success in 2008. As we prepare for a happy new year, let us look closely at five principles for success contained in the first chapter of Joshua.

1. UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF GOD. Moses had been Israel's faithful leader. He had been a good steward of the task God had given him. Now God tells Joshua exactly what to do: "You and all these people, get ready

to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give them" (verses 1, 2). Joshua did not argue with God as Moses had done 40 years earlier, nor did the thousands of Jews that he was to lead. Forty years in the desert had taught the Israelites to obey God. God said, "Joshua is the boss. Now let's go." Joshua knew God's purpose for his life.

What does God want for you in the new year? What has He done in your life in 2007 to prepare you for 2008? What does He want for our church? The songwriter wrote, "Where He leads me I will follow . . . I'll go with Him all the way."

2. HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES. Look at verses 2, 3, and 4 to see how God tells Israel and Joshua exactly what He is going to give them. A map. A global positioning system. Today some countries refuse to acknowledge God's promise of the land God had pledged. They threaten, bargain, fight, and die in trying to destroy Israel. But God keeps His promises.

We are taught that "without faith, it is impossible to please God." As we prepare for 2008, how is your faith?

3. BE ASSURED OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. God promised Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you" (verse 5). Jesus makes the same promises to Christians today. God the Holy Spirit will live in us and move in us and give us reason for being (Acts 17:29). Remember, we are to live by faith, not by feeling. We rely on God's Word.

You may be thinking, "But preacher, you do not know what I've been through. You don't understand." No, I don't. But God does, and He will be with you forever. So grow in faith and get ready for 2008!

4. HAVE COURAGE AND ACCEPT GOD'S POWER. Years after Moses, Joshua, and other Bible patriarchs died, the examples they set continued to inspire others. Much of David's courage came from being taught that God had blessed the obedience, commitment, and devotion of those who trusted Him. He knew that God could accomplish great things when His people relied completely on Him. This courage helped David kill a bear, a lion, and the giant Goliath. It

helped him cope with the backslidden tirades of King Saul. It helped David to be a good king and to seek forgiveness when he sinned. David needed this courage when his infant died and when his grown son Absalom turned against him and tried to kill him.

Before Joshua became the leader of Israel, he and Caleb served as spies, along with 10 other men. But only Joshua and Caleb had faith to believe that God could fulfill His promise; the other spies were afraid of the giants in the Promised Land. What giants are you anticipating in 2008? The God who was faithful to Joshua will be faithful to you in 2008. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (verse 9).

5. PAY ATTENTION AND DO EXACTLY WHAT GOD COMMANDS. "Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go" (verse 7). In 1 John, we are reminded that if we walk in the light, we will have fellowship with Jesus, and our sins will be cleansed. Do you remember this chorus, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus; but to trust and obey"? To be happy, we must walk with the Lord, not behind or ahead of Him; not to His right or left, but in the narrow way that leads to life. Most of our world is traveling the broad way that leads to destruction. We must live lives of holiness and carefully walk the highway of holiness. We must worship and respect God enough to pay exact attention to His plans.

CONCLUSION

In verses 16-17, we read that Joshua gave God's message to Israel. They submitted to the will of God by following Joshua's leadership. Joshua and his people were successful. God gave them the Promised Land. To prosper and to have success in 2008, we must submit our wills and surrender our all to God. God wants total commitment. When we give Him that, He will fill us with His Spirit (see Deuteronomy 33:9), and we will have joy as He gives us success and prosperity. I want to do God's will in 2008. What about you? 

General Conference Ministerial Association

TRUST, BUT DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Joshua 2

There is an old Persian proverb which says, "Trust in God, but tie your camel." It acknowledges the tension we often come up against when we talk about trust: what is God's part and what is our part? Trust does not mean we do nothing but sit and wait for God. Let's read the story of Joshua 2.

I. LIVING THE PROMISES

In Joshua 1, God made a promise to Joshua and the Israelites. He promised them victory "everywhere you set your foot" (verse 3). Now in chapter two, Joshua gets busy. He secretly sends a few people to spy out the land, and especially to look at the city of Jericho. But why did he send spies? Didn't God just promise to give Joshua the whole land? Did this show a lack of trust on Joshua's part? Why didn't he just trust God, rest on the promises, march across the river, and claim the land?

The questions become even more relevant if we look ahead to chapters 5 and 6, where we read the story of the fall of Jericho. Remember how the city fell into the hands of the Israelites? They took the city simply by marching around it for seven days, and then God miraculously tore down the walls when the Israelite army shouted. Why send the spies if God was going to perform a miracle?

Here is the lesson. Sometimes it is appropriate for us to get busy and do the things that make sense. I have known people who wanted to walk with God and who were so dependent on Him that they would literally wake up in the morning and pray about which pair of socks to wear. They wanted to obey God, they wanted God to be in control, and so would pray even about things like socks and attempt to discern "God's will."

Trusting God means that we wait on Him for guidance and direction and that we move in the direction He points us.

That is what I think is happening in Joshua 2. Even though God had a different plan for taking Jericho, Joshua was not wrong in sending in the spies. That didn't indicate a lack of trust or a

lack of faith; it was the right thing to do! God surprised the Israelites with a different ending, but God honored Joshua for being smart and sending spies to see what was happening in Jericho at that time.

Sometimes in life we get stuck. We get in a rut, we feel like we're spinning our wheels, we're discouraged and going nowhere. Maybe that is how you feel about your life today, like you are stuck. If so, ask yourself whether you are stuck because you don't know where to go, or because you do know where to go but are waiting for something else to happen before heading that direction.

Trusting God means waiting on Him for guidance. It also means using the minds and gifts that He has given us to head in the right direction. As long as we move in the right direction on His strength, as long as we continue to trust Him and even let Him make mid-course corrections, we can be confident that we are trusting Him and walking in His power and not our own.

II. GOD GOES AHEAD OF US

The spies went to "the house of a prostitute," most likely because that was a place where foreigners wouldn't arouse a lot of suspicion and where they would be able to learn what the people were thinking. What they found there was miraculous.

Somehow, word got to the king and he sent in his henchmen. But here is where the story gets interesting. Rahab the prostitute hid the spies, lied for them, sent the king's men off on a wild goose chase, protected the spies, gave them needed information, and then provided their escape route. In return, she and her family were spared. Rahab earned a prominent place in the history of Israel and in Christianity because of her faith.

God goes ahead of us. Not only does He go ahead of us, preparing the way, preparing the hearts of people, revealing His fame and His glory, but He goes ahead of us, and we find Him in strange and unexpected places. These spies found God at work in a brothel, in the faith of a prostitute.

We are often reluctant to share our faith, feeling as if we are making a futile foray into enemy territory, crossing the lines into the "unknown," taking a big risk. We head into those situations feeling like it is our job to take God to people who don't know Him. We feel we are in a big, dark land, and we have the Light we must take into this dangerous place. The story of Rahab reminds us that God is already there ahead of us.

As we look for opportunities to share our faith, we must realize that the Holy Spirit is already out there, already working, already prodding and pursuing. We are wisest and most effective when we recognize that God is there already, and that we are to encourage what He is doing in people's lives. Sharing our faith isn't only about bringing people to salvation; that is the reaping stage in the evangelism process. There are lots of steps before that, lots of contacts and words and deeds and expressions of love, and lots of things that God is doing to reveal Himself and draw people to Him.

CONCLUSION

Matthew Henry, a famous Bible commentator, wrote that "faith in God's promise ought not to supersede but encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. Joshua is sure he has God with him, and yet sends men before him. We do not trust God, but tempt Him, if our expectations slacken our endeavors."

Where has God been calling you to go? What has He been telling you to do? If you feel stuck, if you are uncertain about which direction to head or how to get started, I encourage you to remember that God goes ahead of you. He has prepared the road, and He knows where the journey is going to take you. He knows exactly what you need. 

General Conference Ministerial Association

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Prov. 22:6

The Many Gifts of GRACELINK

In one of his epistles to Timothy, the apostle Paul observes that "from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15, NKJV). It is clear that Timothy had experienced a kind of religious education that was more than a mere knowledge of facts. It had resulted in faith and wisdom.

As an extension of the family of God, each local congregation has a responsibility to provide for its children and youth the best possible atmosphere for learning of God's love. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed for its children a system of religious education focused on faith and wisdom as well as on knowledge of facts. The GraceLink Curriculum is designed to lead them to be active in developing their spiritual values and to invest actively as members of the remnant church. GraceLink is a 12-year curriculum comprising 624 lessons, all firmly grounded in Scripture and supported by Spirit of Prophecy.

For the first time in the history of Adventism, the official Sabbath School lessons for children have been formulated with the use of current educational theory and methods. Curriculum consultants directed the production of the original curriculum plan and outlined the teaching methods to be used. Writers from every world division followed these plans as they participated in the development of lessons. Same message—new methods.

Today we know that learning activities must involve a variety of methods. Children remember about 30 to 35 percent of what they hear, about 40 to 50 percent of what they see, and about 90 percent of what they do. The emphasis in GraceLink is placed on all three. Children are often guided through activities that incorporate hearing, seeing, and doing—and require activity. Thus today's Sabbath School classes often nurture an exuberant atmosphere in which children actively pursue learning under the direction of a leader or teacher.

These activities are reinforced through the debriefing process in which children are led to consider "What did you learn?" "How do you feel about it?" "What are you going to do about it?" This process deals with knowledge, emotion, and application. Educational research tells us that people remember more when they are emotionally involved and that pleasant emotions enhance positive learning. Debriefing is essential to active learning. It is a means by which children (and adults) understand and apply what they have learned.

FOUR DYNAMICS

The four dynamics incorporated in the GraceLink curriculum provide a balanced program and form the core of the curriculum. These are:

- Grace (Jesus loves me). Grace is the demonstration of God's love for us. He sent His Son to die in our place, to redeem us, and to accept us unto Himself that we might live with Him forevermore.
- Worship (I love Jesus). Worship is our response to God's love. Because He first loved us, we love Him. Because He gave His Son to die in our place, we worship Him. We worship Him through praise, through our lifestyle, and through our stewardship of all that He has provided for us.
- Community (We love each other). Community involves our relationship with those around us, with our immediate family, our church family, our friends, and with other Christians who know God's love.
- Service (We love you too). Service is our outreach to others, to those who may not know and love the Jesus we serve. It is to them that we give the invitation to become a part of the family of God. It is to them that we take a message of hope for the future.

LEARNING STYLES

Educational research has determined that each individual learns best through one of four particular styles of learning. Although each person may use all four of the identified styles or ways of learning at one time or another, most of us depend on one major application. These four learning styles are incorporated into every GraceLink lesson. This makes it possible for every child to grasp the point of the lesson and to understand it in her or his own way.

The four learning styles are:

- Imaginative. The imaginative learner asks, "Why should I learn this?" The "Readiness Activity" in each lesson appeals to this type of learner.
- Analytical. The analytical learner asks, "What do I need to learn?" The Bible Lesson section deals with the content of the lesson, the memory verse, and small group Bible study—it offers the facts, the knowledge, that the analytical learner seeks.
- Commonsense. The commonsense learner wants to know, "How does this work in my life?" The "Applying the Lesson" section offers the opportunity to explore how the lesson can be applied in practical ways.
- Dynamic. The dynamic learner wants to know "What can I do with this? How can I share this idea with others?" Opportunity to explore this option is given in the "Sharing the Lesson" section of each lesson.

Past programming for children's Sabbath School was rarely designed to complement the topic of the lesson for the day. About 40 minutes was spent on material unrelated to the lesson topic. At the most, younger children spent 15 to 20 minutes sitting in their chairs, listening to a teacher tell the lesson story as she or he placed felts on a felt board. The GraceLink curriculum provides total-hour teaching, in which every activity focuses on the central message of the Sabbath School lesson for that day. Objectives are clearly stated in the teaching guides. Activities are carefully outlined to teach to the stated point of the lesson. The entire lesson focuses on one carefully determined objective for the day.

Every lesson plan includes a section that calls for sharing what the child has learned with someone else—a friend, teacher, parent, relative, neighbor, or other person with whom the child frequently comes in contact. The child is often asked to make something in Sabbath School to give that person, and while giving it tell the person something about the story or lesson they have studied that day. The goal is to help children become so comfortable with sharing what they have learned—with witnessing—that they will continue doing so throughout their lifetime.

BIBLE STUDY EMPHASIS

Every lesson in every level of this 12-year program includes Bible study appropriate to the age of the child. Even the very youngest children learn that the Bible is God's Word. Teachers at that level are asked to open their Bibles when teaching the memory verse and show that verse to the children, to identify the Bible as God's Word as they use the Bible to teach the memory verse. In addition the teacher is directed to show the children the verses on which that day's Bible story is based and to read those verses aloud, pointing to each word or phrase as she or he reads. Children learn that their stories come from the Bible and how to find and read texts that provide a background for the lesson of the day and/or lead to more discussion of the lesson objective. As they grow older, they are directed to individual daily Bible study to learn more of the story or to apply concepts taught.

Every Adventist doctrine (except the 2300 days) is taught at some point during the 12-year curriculum. Even very young children learn of baptism by immersion, state of the dead, the Sabbath, and other essential doctrines. These and others are taught through

stories and reinforced through activities during the Sabbath School hour. The bedrock Adventist message is taught at every level with the most effective methods of instruction.

Throughout each lesson children are invited to make decisions — how would they apply concepts studied in their own life. How could they use what they have learned to help themselves, their families, their friends? Questions such as "What could you do..." or "How important is this to you and/or your family?" are frequently asked throughout the entire teaching/learning experience each week.

Through the full utilization of the GraceLink Curriculum, the Sabbath School in the local congregation can now provide a rich and creative program of religious education that nurtures the faith and wisdom spoken of in Paul's epistle to Timothy. As children grow into maturity, it will be truly said that from their childhood they have "known the Holy Scriptures." 

Patricia Habada, Ph.D.
Retired GraceLink editor
Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department



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A photograph of a person in a dark suit and white shirt, seen from the waist down, holding a dark grey briefcase with both hands. The person is wearing black dress shoes. The background is plain white.

The Ministry of the Elder

You may be reading this because you have been asked to serve your local church as an elder. Or perhaps you serve on a church Nominating Committee and are wondering what an elder is expected to do. In either case, if you understand the church as the body of Christ, and understand the call to ministry as experienced by each member, this will help you see the role the elder fills within a local church.

BIBLE PRINCIPLES

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship, continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as “. . . his body, the fullness of him who filleth every thing in every way” (Eph. 1:22).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church. Thus, the church is a creation of the Spirit.

The symbol of water baptism marks our entrance into the body of Christ and also marks the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by a new disciple. “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit is the vital life force of the church. When you come to Christ, you are prepared by the Holy Spirit, who has already led you to repentance, for service.

When a church serves the world it is an expression of the love of Christ to the world. It is the body of Christ serving the worlds’ needs and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation.

Thus the church is a servant body. It was created for service. It serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to minister for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. An elder, like any other church

officer, is a ministering servant of God. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

It was during the Middle Ages that the clergy became distinct from other members as a superior element in the church. The biblical concept of laity includes all believers as ministers in the body. In actuality, however, the church today still has a great distance to go before effectively applying this concept. You should view the work of an elder as a ministry to which God calls people; it is His will operating in their lives.

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God’s character, and spiritual gifts. An elder is equipped for ministry by the gifts received from the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to make his or her ministry effective and build up the body of Christ.

THE ROLE OF THE ELDER

A local elder is an undershepherd for the church. The elder works in close relationship with the pastor and reports to the pastor and church board. He or she is a member of the church board and is usually assigned to one or more planning groups, such as an evangelism council, worship committee, Sabbath School council, or youth ministry committee. As an extension of the pastor, an elder should be open to his counsel, sensitive to the pastor’s vision for the church, teachable, and ready to communicate with him. The relationship between pastor and elders can be built up by regular weekly or monthly meetings that focus on spiritual and personal growth and the needs of the congregation.

TIME COMMITMENT

All these functions may cause you to wonder just how much time it takes to be a local elder! There obviously should be enough time committed for involvement in outreach ministries, visitation, and administration of the church. But an elder needs to be a person who can manage his time wisely and balance priorities. Generally two to four hours a week represent an appropriate commitment of time for ministry. Any elder will want to maintain enough time for personal spiritual growth, family, and personal recreation in order to maintain a balanced Christian lifestyle. It is possible to be so busy in the service of the Lord that one’s own spirituality suffers! At the same time, to give less than two to four hours of ministry per week would not represent a sincere commitment to the Lord in ministry.

APPROPRIATE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

It will be helpful to review the spiritual gifts that can be employed. They include exhortation, pastor/shepherd, administration, leadership, hospitality, and extraordinary faith.

1. Exhortation is a special ability God gives some to bring encouragement and comfort to others. It is a helping and healing ministry. The literal meaning of the Greek word translated exhortation is “to call to one’s side.” In Acts 16:40 and 20:1 Paul is spoken of as giving encouragement to the churches. This ministry may be exercised with the bereaved, lonely, or discouraged. It is also employed in the

spiritual counseling brought to persons in the process of normal church visitation.

2. The gift of pastor/shepherd is the ability to carry a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers and act as a shepherd, overseer, protector, and guide to the church. (I Peter 5:1-5) “When he ascended on high, he . . . gave gifts unto men . . . some to be pastors.” (Eph. 4:8-11) You may be surprised to realize that the professional pastor is not the only member of the church with this gift. Any church has a number of members who can employ the spiritual gift of pastor/shepherd voluntarily in the feeding, attending and nurturing of people.

3. Administration is referred to as a spiritual gift in I Corinthians 12:28. The Greek word for administration describes the service of directing or steering something. In Revelation 18:17 and Acts 27:11 the word is used to describe a ship master. An administrator guides the church in its progress toward its destination. The members of the church trust a person with administrative gifts to serve the church with love and selflessness while helping it accomplish its goals.

4. Leadership describes the ability to a) Help a congregation set goals in accordance with the purpose of God for the church, and b) Communicate those goals to others in such a way that they harmoniously work together to accomplish them to the glory of God. Romans 12:8 speaks of the spiritual gift of leadership, stating that leaders should exercise diligence and faith in their ministry.

5. Hospitality is an ability to provide an open house and a warm feeling to people. “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others” (I Peter 4:9-10). An elder should be quick to offer hospitality, not only to members of the church but to visitors and community people as well.

6. Extraordinary faith provides an elder with confidence in discerning God’s will. The special gift of faith is a specific perception of God’s will in a particular situation and extraordinary confidence that God will act on behalf of the church.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

You may already be a church elder and feel somewhat underused. What further service can an experienced elder contribute to the church? A good place to start is to ask another elder or a deacon or deaconess to accompany you as you visit members of the church on a regular basis. Call ahead for an appointment to visit the members in their home. Listen to the background of their life story and conversion, read scripture with them, and pray for them. It is amazing what such a spiritual visit can do!

Another contribution you can make involves giving attention to the worship service of your church. Read books on worship. Rather than criticizing the staleness that may exist in your current worship service, together think creatively about what you could do. Consider what activities would develop an atmosphere of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, affirmation, and fellowship in your worship service. Perhaps you can work on an “experimental” plan to bring improvement in the worship service. You may be surprised to discover how eager others, especially your pastor, are to improve the worship service.

Every church has a number of inactive members. An elder could begin to visit these people. You may hear a great deal of anger and bitterness expressed, but remember, their anger is at the church and not at you personally. These may be people who are hurting from some past experience in the church. By carefully listening, asking for forgiveness for the entire church, and encouraging these people, a great deal of good can be done. As long as you maintain the qualities of Christ, and simply listen, you will not hurt the person's experience. Your friendship and caring may help the person return to an active relationship with Jesus and participation in the church.

An elder also can contribute by visiting non-members who have some interest in the church. Make a visit to the non-members in your community who have relatives in the Adventist Church. Check for names of people who may have visited the church or attended an evangelistic activity in the past year. Visit these people and invite them to return. With some training, you can learn to discern interests for Bible studies. Not all elders have the gifts of evangelism and teaching, however, so you may wish to invite someone else to go with you to lead out in the Bible study.

TRAINING

The Holy Spirit equips a Christian disciple by bestowing spiritual gifts to accomplish ministry. But those gifts need to be developed. An elder needs to be aware of the training resources available and make use of them. The first such resource is the pastor. God places a pastor within the church to train and develop its members for ministry. The local pastor in many cases will train elders for visitation, personal Bible study, administration, and worship leadership in the context of ministry. Going two-by-two with your pastor will develop your gifts for ministry as an elder. The fellowship with your pastor while visiting members, giving Bible studies, and working on church projects together is irreplaceable.

Your conference probably has a training program established for elders which includes instruction in worship planning, preaching, and church administration. God has called you to minister and provided gifts to you, but your commitment to that call should include attendance at events designed to develop your gifts for His service.

There are many training seminars that offer help to an elder. Perhaps the best known is the "Calling and Caring Ministry Seminar" (Lab I). Many Adventist pastors are equipped to conduct this seminar, or your conference office can help you enroll for such training. It is an experience that will dramatically improve your skills as a listener and a visitor. This seminar is helpful not only in working with active members, but in caring for the inactive church member as well. This training is a must for every elder.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

You may wish to do some further reading regarding the work of the elder. If you are asked to preach — and

many elders are — you may want to get some help in that area. Either of the following books would be helpful to an elder who preaches: *Preaching to the Times* by Charles E. Bradford; *Successful Lay Preaching* by Floyd Bresee. Elders should enhance their knowledge regarding administration and leadership. Two good recommendations are: *Perils of Power* by Richard Exley and *So You Want to be a Leader* by Robert Pierson, our beloved former General Conference president. Of course you cannot forget *Elder's Digest*, *Elder's Handbook* and *Elder's Guide*, excellent tools that help elders to be very effective in their function.

THE CARING CHURCH STRATEGY

The ministry of the elder is vital to accomplish the mission of your local church.

A balanced church program is just as important as any of the individual offices or functions of the church. Your ministry is given meaning and effectiveness as you fit into the overall mission

that Christ has for your congregation. The Holy Spirit calls you to teamwork and cooperation with the other leaders in your church, according to a united plan of action.

What are the essential elements of a healthy local church? There are at least four fundamental activities that must be present in any Adventist church for it to be successful:

1. Reaching the community. Healthy churches discover the kinds of people who live in their area and understand the needs of the people, so that they can provide activities designed to meet these needs and create a strong public awareness of the church.

2. Winning people to Christ. Healthy churches cooperate with the Holy Spirit in establishing meaningful relationships with those attracted to Christ, provide opportunities for them to become acquainted with His Word and His fellowship, and challenge them to become His disciples.

3. Nurturing the members. Healthy churches provide for the continuing spiritual growth of all their members through enthusiastic worship, interesting Bible study, supportive friendships, and opportunities for significant service.

4. Inspiring leadership. Healthy churches have pastoral and lay leaders who help the congregation to identify the needs in the church and the community, clarify goals, gather the necessary resources and implement effective action.

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143). 

North American Division Local Church Officers Manual, 1988.

“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people.”

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Children's Ministries

There are two biblical concepts that are the basis, the inspiration, and the goal of the Children's Ministries Department, whose objectives are "teaching to serve and serving to teach" the younger members of the Lord's flock.

We turn to the life of Christ for principles of working with children.

Jesus as a child. Even though the account of the first years of Jesus' life is short, Luke 2:52 describes the harmony of His growth during his childhood. In the book *Desire of Ages*, p. 70, there is this promise: "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined."

Jesus as an adult, relating to children. Matthew 19:14 expresses the care Jesus had for the young ones: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them." This represented a double blessing,

for Jesus "planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 515).

Children were also a blessing to Jesus, for the presence of the little ones "refreshed His spirit when oppressed" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 511).

What a privilege we have as leaders to follow these divine precepts! That is why the mission of the Children's Ministries in our church is "to help each Adventist child to develop a redemptive and permanent friendship with Jesus, preparing them for service and commitment to the church until His coming."

And as elders look at the various departments of the church, they will certainly ask, "How can I support, encourage and promote the Children's Ministries Department in my church? How can I involve it within total church planning?"

The elder can make it a point to know the activities of the CM and the dates of their events so that none of them are missing from the church's annual calen-

dar. There are the traditional and familiar programs as well as other programs that are less familiar during the ecclesiastical year. Within the traditional ones, we encourage the following:

Children's Story. It is the time during the worship service when children participate and receive spiritual food according to their understanding. This helps children feel they are being included in the worship service. It values, recognizes and makes them feel a part of worship. The time dedicated to this activity should be short, perhaps no more than 5 to 7 minutes, because children's attention span is very short.

The children's story time need not be limited to just a story. We may include other activities, such as a child's testimony (thanksgiving, answered prayer, etc.), the dedication of a child, or a musical presentation by the children. This moment is also an educational opportunity, since many new members need orientation in ways to lead their children to the Lord.

The Voice of Youth. This is a program that allows children and teenagers to develop their gifts through preaching. Every year adequate and attractive material is prepared by some fields for this form of evangelism.

Vacation Bible School. This is a completely evangelistic program. The goal of the Children's Ministries Department is to have each Adventist church and school offer this program once a year, with many non-Adventist children from the community involved, since behind every child there is a family. Generally the duration of this program is five days, for three hours in the morning or in the evening.

Permanent Bible classes. These will include baptismal classes as well as post baptismal classes for children. Some divisions, unions and conferences/missions are preparing special materials for this church program.

Small groups for children and/or led by children and teenagers. This activity has enriched the church's spiritual life. It helps children to grow in Christ by sharing their faith with others.

The Adventist Child's World Day. This is an excellent opportunity to invite friends and interests along with their children to a special Sabbath event with an attractive child-centered program and sermon. Check your conference calendar for the date.

Sabbath School Leadership Seminar. It is important to post on the announcement board the dates in which these seminars are being held so that teachers may attend and become more competent to guide the little lambs to the Good Shepherd, thus getting the

Sabbath School divisions to supply the needs of each age group. It is an enriching experience, for many new ideas and resources may be shared in these seminars.

Children's Stewardship Week. It is important to create a generation of faithful stewards. When a church has a week of prayer about stewardship at the same time a similar program should be prepared for children.

Community outreach projects. A loving church is interested in its surroundings and its neighborhood. With the help of the children, the church may address local needs and establish friendly contacts.

Each elder should feel part of this vital department. With God's help and wisdom, they may influence, by precept and example, the children in their church, the future of the church. As we are reminded, "When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages, to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 517). 

Mirta Samojluk
Children's Ministries Department, South American Division

PAO-KUE LIN

Pao-Kue Lin is an elder of Chien Shan Church in Taiwan. She belongs to the Punon cultural group and she is married to Chang Tu. They have two children, a boy and girl. Her son is studying ministerial training at Taiwan Adventist College. She has been an Adventist for 30 years and she has been appointed as a church elder for the last two years. She is involved in preaching and teaching the word of God, and as a fruit of her witnessing she has led three people to Jesus in 2007.



BIOGRAPHY

The art of speech:

HOW TO USE YOUR VOICE

“The one who accepts the position of being a mouthpiece for God should consider it highly essential to present the truth with all the grace and intelligence possible, that the truth may lose nothing in one’s presentation of it to the people.”

(Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 665. All quotations that follow in this article are from the book *Evangelism*)

Seventh-day Adventists believe in the gift of prophecy actively manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. We believe that through her, God gave us orientation regarding physical, mental, and spiritual health. God has a people, and this people represent His voice. If we are God’s voice, we should be the most beautiful and clear voice the world could ever hear. God gave us precious writings by Ellen White regarding our voice. Let us reflect upon this advice.

Value of the voice

“The human voice is a precious gift of God; it is a power for good, and the Lord wants His servants to preserve its pathos and melody. The voice should be cultivated so as to promote its musical quality, that it may fall pleasantly upon the ear” (pp. 667, 668).

Voice is the most complex and sophisticated sound human beings can produce; we may, however, modify and control it voluntarily. We can keep our voices healthy by warming up the voice, drinking enough water, avoiding screaming and clearing our throat, and by having a diet rich in fruits, especially apples and citrus fruits.

“Some destroy the solemn impression they may have made upon the people by raising their voices to a very high pitch, and hallooing and screaming out the truth. When presented in this manner, truth loses much of its sweetness, its force, and its solemnity. But if the voice is toned right, if it has solemnity and is so modulated as to be even pathetic, it will produce a much better impression” (p. 666).

Some people have a clear understanding of the voice and its impact upon the listener. Others never

think about it. However, whether we are aware of it or not, we do influence people with our voice, and we are influenced by the voice of the people with whom we come in contact. If you don’t know your own voice very well, ask other people how your voice sounds, and if possible, listen to your own voice on a tape; thus you will be more familiar with it and will be aware of those aspects that need improvement.

Vocal health

“Careful attention and training should be given to the vocal organs. They are strengthened by right use, but become enfeebled if used improperly” (p. 667).

Vocal health is a concept that includes a series of aspects, such as a clear and pure voice, expressed without effort and pleasing to the listener. Vocal hygiene consists of basic norms that help preserve vocal health and prevent alterations and illnesses.

“Speaking from the throat, letting the words come out from the upper extremity of the vocal organs, all the time fretting and irritating them, is not the best way to preserve health or to increase the efficiency of those organs” (p. 669).

Knowing your own voice is discovering one of the most fantastic functions of the human body.

“No matter how much knowledge you may have acquired in other lines, if you have neglected to cultivate your voice and manner of speech so that you can speak and read distinctly and intelligently, all your learning will be of but little profit; for without voice culture you cannot communicate readily and clearly that which you have learned” (p. 666). 

Alexandra Sampaio is a speech therapist in Brazil

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WE GET QUESTIONS

Without any bias, is it possible to prove from the Bible, with specific passages, that women should be allowed to preach in the church?

First, let me state that it is nearly impossible to answer any question without bias from our own background, culture, spiritual experience, or educational training. I'm sure the questioner believed I would be biased since my wife, Sharon, had just preached an excellent sermon at that Bible Conference.

A simple answer, of course, is No! There are no texts that command women to preach in church. Proof-texting our way to answers, however, may be the weakest approach to finding truth. Scripture and our own denominational heritage provide ample examples of women preaching. For example, the Samaritan woman at the well was the first individual that Jesus commissioned as a public evangelist. She had amazing results. Mary, fresh from meeting Jesus at the tomb, was the first to preach His resurrection. Her results were not as great. Although her message was comprehended, Jesus later scolded his disciples for refusing to believe her proclamation. Priscilla held such an esteemed leadership role that she instructed other preachers and our own Adventist heritage has relied on the effective preaching and writings of Ellen G. White's prophetic role. If you still need a proof text, try Galatians 3, in which the apostle declares "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The church's polity decision to not ordain women should not be confused with the Lord's call for every believer to proclaim His word.

Is it our doctrine to force someone to marry a woman he has impregnated after the church board has disfellowshipped them?

The timing of the board's action has nothing to do with the issue except to remove the church board as party to the discussion.

Premarital sexual relations are a sin. They are also a reality. Perhaps the church should offer much

We get questions! Everywhere our Ministerial Association team travels we get questions, often variations on the same theme. Sometimes the questions are submitted in search of information and other times they are written by individuals in search of a platform to espouse their personal views. I thought you might enjoy some typical questions which have come to our team at recent ministerial councils.

Over the years, there have been differences of opinions expressed by pastors and local elders in respect to head covering by women and the wearing of wedding rings. Please we need to have one teaching and understanding on this issue.

Here the questioner requests the impossible. Recognizing that differences of opinions have existed for years, he pleads for one, consistent teaching. I'm reminded of a training convention for local church elders which I conducted in West Jamaica. Several hundred participants, including a significant number of women elders, listened as a man enquired whether it was custom or doctrine that demanded a woman wear a hat to church. My tongue in cheek answer was that in my culture it was custom but that in his culture it appeared to be both custom and doctrine. Then I closed the subject with admonition that in matters of women's hat styles and dress preferences, as men we ought to remain silent.

Issues regarding wedding rings have been settled among Adventists for decades. Wearing, or not wearing, wedding rings is entirely a personal conviction of the individual members and no pastor or elder may impose their personal view on anyone else.

more in premarital education, especially to young people, with the aim of avoiding sinful situations rather than punishing sinners.

The answer to sin is repentance, confession, forgiveness, and walking in new life. Marrying an individual with whom I have sinned does not atone for those sins. Marriage certificates do not move past behavior from the prohibited column to the approved column. That would be salvation by works.

I want to be further illuminated on the theology of re-baptism.

So do I. But the scriptures are silent beyond one passage (Acts 19:1-7) which tells of twelve believers who had been baptized by John in anticipatory faith of the coming redeemer and who did not know of the reality of Jesus life, death, resurrection, and ascension. When they heard this good news, they were baptized again.

This unusual incident is insufficient to mandate that previously-immersed believers ought to be rebaptized. Adventists have always maintained that an immersed person is welcomed into church fellowship by profession of faith in their previous baptism. The footwashing service which precedes communion is a tangible and spiritual reminder of cleansing that Jesus provides to all and those seeking rebaptism should be directed first to this meaningful service. Our own manual, however, does require rebaptism for readmittance into the church for certain moral failures which have disgraced the church's witness in the community. Although there is no Biblical text to "prove" this point of polity, any organization has the authority to establish rules by which it will govern itself.

Kindly tell us why people should eat the Lord's supper apart from the 14th day of the month of Nisan (the biblical date for Passover). Why does our church conduct communion quarterly?

With the reality of the gospel being present in Himself as our Passover, Jesus clearly terminated ceremonial feasts which pointed forward in shadow to Him. Therefore, the date of Passover has no controlling relationship to the communion service which may be celebrated quarterly, weekly, monthly, or annually. Rather than prescribing a frequency schedule, Jesus simply stated, "as oft as you do this, do it in remembrance of me."

Is it wrong for a widowed pastor's wife to marry another man who is not a pastor? If so, why do pastors who lose their spouses marry whomever they choose?

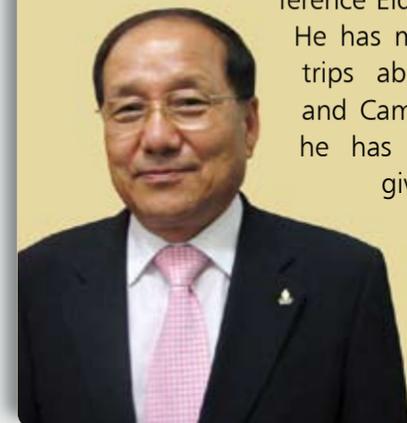
No it is not wrong. The profession of a second marriage partner is not governed by the profession of the deceased who know not anything. Cautionary counsel might be that many pastoral spouses have invested much of their lives in a public role which is accompanied by respect and a certain "sense of place" in the eyes of the membership. Such should never marry a mate of whom, subsequently, they would be embarrassed because their new spouse's job does not elicit the same level of prestige. If a potential spouse's status might cause your own loss of self-esteem, then avoid inflicting pain on them. Every spouse deserves love and respect for who they are rather than unfavorable comparison with who they are not.

Your questions? In areas of practices, theology, hermeneutics, polity, etc., we will seek input of scholars and pastors. Submit brief correspondence headlined "Questions," to postal or e-mail addresses listed in the magazine masthead. 

James A. Cress
General Conference Ministerial Secretary

SUH, JANG HO

Suh, Jang Ho has been a local elder of the GongHang Airport Church in Korea for the last 10 years. He is married to Kim, Eun Young. He has his own business industry and has been involved mainly in bio-technology. He develops a special ministry as a counselor of church members and he preaches a sermon once a month in his church. He is also treasurer of the Korean Union Conference Elders Association.



He has made missionary trips abroad to Japan and Cambodia in which he has participated in giving Bible studies, witnessing and conducting people to baptism.

BIOGRAPHY



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