

quarterly resource for local church leaders † january/march 2011

ELDER'S

DIGEST



TELL THE WORLD



2011

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EDITORIAL

EDITOR

Jonas Arrais

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Ricardo Bacchus

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION SECRETARY

Jerry N. Page

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Robert Costa, Willie Hucks II, Anthony Kent,
Derek Morris, Janet Page

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Erika Miike

MARKETING

PUBLISHER

Ministerial Association General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists

MARKETING MANAGER

Cathy Payne

DIVISION CONSULTANTS

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Magulilo J. Mwakalonge

EURO-AFRICA

Mario Brito

EURO-ASIA

Michel Kaminsky

INTER-AMERICAN

Héctor Sánchez

NORTH AMERICAN

Ivan Williams

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Gerald Theodore Du Preez

SOUTH AMERICAN

Bruno Raso

SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN

Jongimpi Papu

SOUTHERN ASIA

Measapogu Wilson

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Houtman Sinaga

SOUTH PACIFIC

David Tasker

TRANS-EUROPEAN

Janos Kovacs-Biro

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Daniel Opoku-Boateng

TO WRITERS: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcomed and may be submitted to eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org or *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. *Elder's Digest* is published quarterly by the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 2011, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by Review and Herald ® Pub. Assn., 55 W. Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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DESIGNER: Erika Miike - erika@emiike.com.br

GOOD NEWS & BAD NEWS

One day a pastor had the unenviable duty of visiting a member of his church who was on his deathbed in the hospital. The pastor faced the difficult task of informing the patient that he had only hours to live. When he entered the room, he said very gently that he had two things to tell him—one good and one bad. The patient asked to hear the good news first and then the bad. The pastor said, “The good news, my dear brother, is that one day you are going to sing in the heavenly choir. The bad news is that choir practice is today.”

Today, I also have two things to tell you—one good and one bad. The good news is that “Tell the World” will continue to be the official General Conference theme for this quinquennium. During the next five years, we hope there will be an unprecedented involvement of the entire church in the proclamation of the Gospel. The ultimate goal is to provide every person on earth with the chance to know Jesus Christ so that we may have a better harvest than ever before. Isn’t that good news?

The bad news is that if Christ doesn’t come during this generation, 80 percent of our church members may die without ever having the privilege of leading a soul to Christ. How sad! Although our church is growing rapidly, this growth is the result of the endeavors of only 20 percent of our members. What would happen if in this year alone more members were trained, equipped, and empowered in the church’s missionary programs? The harvest would certainly grow larger.

Our challenge is to *involve the uninvolved to reach the unreached*. This means we need pastors and elders who, more than ever, are mobilizing and equipping church members to be involved in church mission. The emphasis is not the number of baptisms but increased member involvement and participation. However, this does not mean that church leaders must carry a heavier workload; rather, we want to see church members—all church members—in action, not just the pastors and elders fighting on the front lines.

Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, is emphasizing a strategy called “integrated evangelism.” In this strategy, not only will church leaders and members be challenged to get involved; each department, institution, and church ministry will be urged to commit to the proclamation of the Gospel. Each department has its own specific activities and areas of responsibility, so the departments will not be integrated; however, each department and institution needs to be committed to the fulfillment of the mission. The slogan to motivate us in this endeavor is still “Tell the World.” Every program that the church creates—“Hope Impact,” “Share the Hope,” “Year of Evangelism,” and others in various geographical areas, are strategies to motivate, train, and involve the church in the “integrated evangelism” program.

Several goals have been set for this quinquennium. The first goal, “Reach Up,” aims to motivate people to grow spiritually through Bible study, prayer, and the reading of the Spirit of Prophecy, resulting in revival and reformation. The second, “Reach Out,” challenges members to be more involved in the mission of the church, creating community projects and increasing the number of non-members attending our churches each week. The last area, “Reach Across,” challenges church members to improve member retention and increase the percentage of young people involved in the work of the church.

We are calling everyone to get involved. Each local church leader can be an instrument of God by supporting and motivating his or her congregation in this mission strategy. Personally, I pray that God may use me in a special way to tell of His love to those who still do not know Him. Won’t you join me in this prayer? With God’s help, the next five years will be exciting years for our church!

ED



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

REVIVAL AND REFORMATION



Photo by Joel D. Springer

Ted N. C. Wilson was elected as president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church in July 2010 during the General Conference Session in Atlanta. He is married to Nancy, a physical therapist, and they have three daughters and four grandchildren. Pastor Wilson began his church career as a pastor in 1974 in the Greater New York Conference. He later went on to serve in the church's then Africa-Indian Ocean Division and then the church's world headquarters as an associate secretary. He later served as president of Euro-Asia Division and then president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association until his election as a General Conference vice president in 2000. Pastor Wilson holds a master of divinity degree from Andrews University, a master of science degree in public health from Loma Linda University's School of Public Health, and a doctoral degree in religious education from New York University.

AS THE SON OF A FORMER SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH WORLD PRESIDENT, WHAT INCLINED YOU TO FILL THE SAME POSITION?

It is a humbling experience to be asked to fill this position. It is not humanly possible, but only through the grace and leading of the Lord. I am very grateful for the many church members who are praying that the Lord will sustain me and my work. It is important that we pray for each other. I know God will guide us in our work as we humble ourselves before Him and seek Him daily in our work.

HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE WORLD TODAY?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing rapidly around the world. In many places it is recognized as a strong blessing to society. In other places, we face persecution and difficulty. We are earnestly praying for revival and reformation so that the Holy Spirit can be poured out in the latter rain and the three angels' messages will spread like wildfire.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES THE CHURCH FACES TODAY?

One of the greatest challenges is to help church members realize that we are the remnant church called by God to carry out a great message of sharing the three angels' messages. We are a unique group called by God to point people back to the true worship of the Lord. Another great challenge is that of secularism out-

side the church as well as the influences within the church. We must ask the Lord to help us "not to be squeezed into the mold of the world" as Romans 12:2 tells us. We must resist materialism by leaning totally on the Lord and asking that He help us maintain our simplicity in a world of complications. We must keep our eyes on Christ at all times. We must plead for revival and reformation leading to the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. We must maintain a strong belief in the authority of the Word of God and the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy writings. We must maintain our strong beliefs in health reform and service to others. When we humbly submit to the Lord, we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to go beyond the Laodicean state in which we find ourselves much of the time. It is time to allow God to take control of our plans and actions so Christ can return soon.

WHAT ARE THE MISSIONARY CHALLENGES WE ARE CURRENTLY FACING AND WHAT PLANS ARE BEING PUT INTO PRACTICE?

We have enormous missionary challenges in countries where it is difficult to carry on normal church activities. We are now in the process of reorganizing our mission outreach process by utilizing a "mission board" approach which will allow for us to more closely organize our strategic planning and budgeting aspects for reaching the world through the leading of the Holy Spirit. We want to see a "renaissance in mission" both in

fulltime missionaries and volunteers/students. God will open the way for greater service opportunities for many who wish to share this precious Advent message.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH?

The basic structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is sound and efficient. It has stood the test of time. The Lord helped to reorganize our work at the 1902 General Conference session. However, He has been waiting for one hundred years and more to pour out the Latter Rain on His people. We must use the current structure of the church to dramatically increase the evangelistic outreach.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH?

To have a dynamic and united church working diligently in service to the Lord and those around us. We are part of the great evangelistic outreach voted by the General Conference called "Tell the World." We need to be sharing our faith not only through words, but in strong Christian service for those in need demonstrating Christ's ministry of Luke 4:18, 19. We need churches that are on fire for the Lord . . . that have submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit and have made the Bible the focus of their lives, and are using and sharing the truths they find in the Spirit of Prophecy. God has entrusted the three angels' messages into the hands of God's people and we are

to proclaim this message with Heavenly Power and without reserve.

WHAT ARE YOUR IMMEDIATE CHURCH PRIORITIES?

To have the church revitalized through revival and reformation. We need to learn to depend more completely on the Lord so that our experience will match the Biblical model of Acts 2, Joel 2, and Hosea 6. We need to recognize the great need as outlined in Selected Messages, Book 1, page 121: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work . . . A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer." When we fulfill II Chronicles 7:14 we will see a much closer walk with the Lord as a church and fulfill the true mission of the church in careful Christian service for others.

WHAT SHOULD THE FIRST MISSION OF A CHURCH ELDER BE?

Lifting the spiritual level of the church by always pointing people to Christ, His Holy Word, and the Spirit of Prophecy.

HOW CAN A CHURCH ELDER DEVELOP A PERSONAL WALK WITH GOD?

An elder should be interested in a daily spiritual walk with the Lord, not allowing things to crowd out private devotional time with God. Prayer at anytime and anywhere should be a constant attitude, asking for wisdom from heaven every morning, claiming James 1:5.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A CHURCH ELDER WHO IS DEALING WITH DISCOURAGEMENT?

It is important to realize that the devil wants to discourage God's servants and leaders. To combat that temptation, it is important to spend time with the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and intense prayer. The church elder should then be strongly involved in working with the local church members to do outreach. There is nothing like being involved with evangelistic outreach to revitalize a discouraged heart. The Holy Spirit will bring about a new vision and understanding of why the church elder has been asked to be a spiritual leader.

WHAT COUNSEL WOULD YOU GIVE A CHURCH ELDER'S SPOUSE WHO FEELS LEFT OUT AS A RESULT OF THE ELDERS WORK WITHIN THE CHURCH?

The spouse should recognize that their role is very important as well. They can give a wonderful model of how God would have the family function. They can counsel people regarding various needs. They can support their spouse by praying and encouraging spiritual leadership. They can be a very positive influence in the church through a personal relationship with Christ.

WHAT OPINION SHOULD THE LOCAL ELDER HAVE REGARDING THE WORSHIP STYLE/MUSIC IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

It is important that whatever music or worship style is used that it conform with Biblical principles and that the music lift up Jesus and put down self. Nothing should be done to bring glory to the musician but glory must be given to God, the One who provides the talent.

WHAT TOPICS WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE FEATURED IN UPCOMING ELDER'S DIGEST ISSUES?

There are many subjects that should be emphasized. However, some of the most important are revival and reformation, the latter rain and the Holy Spirit, the unique mission and message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church found in Rev. 12:17 and Rev. 14:6-12, the second coming of Christ, personal and public evangelism as the lifeblood of the church, the importance of the church as an evangelistic center, an emphasis on health reform and medical missionary work, the importance of encouraging and nurturing young people in their walk with the Lord and being involved in the evangelistic outreach of the church, the need for church members to become true disciples of Christ by living their lives in accordance with His will, etc.

WHAT ASPIRATIONS DO YOU DESIRE EACH SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MEMBER ATTAIN?

A closer walk with the Lord realizing the justifying power of Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in making us more and more like Christ. Justification and sanctification are united

by God in the salvation process. We owe everything to Christ, but God asks us to daily recommit our lives in love and service to the Master. He will then use us to truly fulfill the wonderful counsel in Micah 6:8 which tells us that "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." God wishes to prepare a people who will stand in the last days, through His power, as His great representatives on earth demonstrating what total dependence on God can do to propel this Advent message to every kindred, tongue, and people. As "Christ's Object Lessons" says on page 69, "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain." All this can happen as we humble ourselves, seek God's face, pray and ask Him to use us in His service to proclaim the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. What a privilege to be part of the great Advent movement and look forward to Christ's soon return. Let us tell everyone about it . . . "Tell the World!"

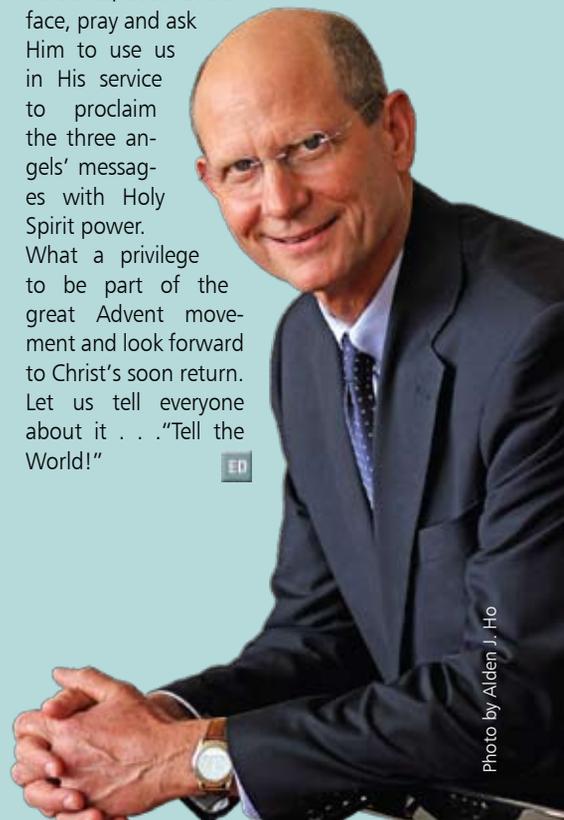


Photo by Alden J. Ho

Ellen G. White

WHAT DID ELLEN G. WHITE BELIEVE REGARDING THE GODHEAD?

Ellen White never used the term "trinity," although she did refer to the "three living persons of the heavenly trio" (*Evangelism*, p. 615). She believed in the full deity of Christ, stating that "Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore" (*Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906). She also referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Third Person of the Godhead" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671). Her comments, as collected in *Evangelism*, pages 613-617, suggest that she believed that the Scriptures taught the existence of three co-eternal divine persons.

DID ELLEN WHITE BELIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DIVINE PERSON?

Yes, but at times she used the pronoun "it" when referring to the Holy Spirit. Several statements regarding the personality of the Holy Spirit are collected in *Evangelism*, pages 616, 617. In 1906, for example, she wrote, "The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. 'For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God'" [1 Corinthians 2:11] (*Evangelism*, p. 617). (To view Ellen White's original, unedited draft of this passage, <http://www.whiteestate.org/vault/diary.asp>) See also the PDF document: Ellen White's Trinitarian Statements: What Did She Actually Write? Visit the site: <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/The-Trinity.pdf>.

DID ELLEN WHITE TEACH THAT JESUS WILL RETURN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTH MILLENNIUM?

Ellen White believed the earth's age to be about six thousand years. She also expected to see Jesus return in her day. Thus, when describing future events connected with the end of time, she could write of Satan's ruinous reign having lasted for six thousand years. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 673, for example.) Nowhere in her writings, however, did Ellen White refer to a divine timetable of seven millennia corresponding to the creation week. She consistently opposed any efforts to calculate the date (day or year) of Christ's return. She wrote, "Again and again have I been warned in regard to time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 188). And, "Anyone who shall start up to proclaim a message to announce the hour, day, or year of Christ's appearing, has taken up a yoke and is proclaiming a message that the Lord has never given him" (*Review and Herald*, September 12, 1893). 

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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 eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org.

HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

7 SECRETS FOR TRUE LONGEVITY

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS <

Supportive social connections have a powerful influence on how long and how well we live. Supportive relationships can come in the form of a spouse, a loving family, a reliable network of friends, or a caring church family. Even a connection to a pet can have a powerful positive effect on one's well-being. Thus, we conclude our series on "Seven Secrets for True Longevity" by discussing secret number 7: healthy relationships.

Perhaps one of the first studies looking at the link of social support and health was conducted in Rosetto, Pennsylvania, USA, where researchers discovered that the incidence of heart disease in this little town was half that of two neighboring towns, despite the same risks. The difference was that Rosetto was made up of a close, supportive group of religious Italian immigrants. When they maintained a high level of social connectedness, strong family ties, and a nurturing community, they had a lower incidence of heart disease; when the closeness of the community began to weaken, the incidence of heart disease increased to the same level as that of their neighbors.¹

Another powerful study on supportive relationships and the risk of death was done in Alameda County, California, USA. It followed more than 7,000 people over a period of 40 years and showed that people who were lonely and isolated were three times more likely to die, while people with many social contacts had the lowest mortality rates. Thus, the amount of social support was the best predictor of good health.²

Part of the benefit of healthy relationships might be due to a stronger immune system. Studies show that people who have more friends don't exhibit symptoms of colds despite being infected with the virus.³ In addition, another study of an elderly population showed increased immune function with more natural killer cells and antibodies after a weekly visit by relatives and close friends.⁴

Therefore, supportive relationships may contribute to fewer illnesses.

However, the reverse is also true:

Negative social interactions and unhealthy relationships can weaken one's immune system and thus bring about disease. A study has shown that when one is in conflict with a spouse or companion, the immune system is less effective.⁵

What can we do to reap the benefits of healthy relationships? Here are a few tips:

- *Reach out and touch someone.* Connect with others with a

hug or a kiss when appropriate, shake hands and smile when greeting someone, hold your pet, or volunteer at an animal shelter.

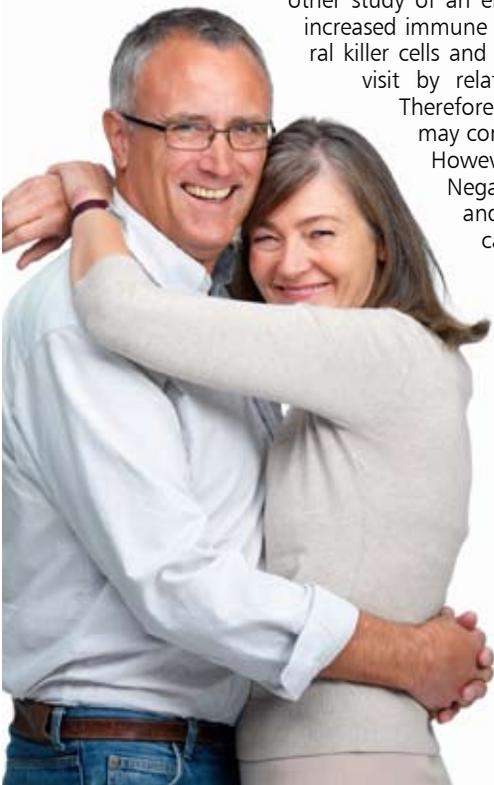
- *Be a friend.* If you want to make friends, be friendly. Be positive and supportive to those with whom you associate.

- *Invest in healthy relationships.* In our busy lives we may forget to include time for one-on-one interactions with family members and friends. Consider setting aside a few 10-minute blocks of time this week for that purpose. Let someone know you want to talk with him or her face-to-face, turn off your cell phone, and use these blocks of time strictly to interact with this person.

- *Forgive one another.* Forgiveness brings healing not only to the person who is forgiven but especially to the one who forgives. Carrying bitterness toward someone for years will affect one's health in a negative way. The healing process of forgiveness may include setting limits for interactions with "toxic" or abusive people, but it is also essential to pray for these people and sincerely wish them well. We cannot have everyone's approval, and we must accept that. But we are asked to "do all we can to live in peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18) and to forgive those who have hurt us in any way.

- *Serve others.* Studies show that 90 percent of people who volunteer are healthier than others their age. Consider setting a goal of two hours per week to serve in an area you are gifted in and equipped to do. Choose an opportunity that is relevant to you and develop meaningful connections with the people you help. Albert Schweitzer, a theologian physician, said, "The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."

As we conclude this series on healthy habits, we are reminded that Jesus offers us an abundant life (John 10:10), so we can use our physical, mental, and spiritual abilities to the fullest as we serve Him. Invest time in prayer and ask God for the power to follow the seven secrets for true longevity—regular physical activity, healthy diet, adequate sleep, healthy weight, daily servings of nuts, positive outlook, and healthy relationships—so we can "glorify God in our bodies" (1 Cor. 6:20) and fulfill His mission in our lives.



¹S. Wolf and J. Bruhn, *The Power of Clan: The Influence of Human Relationships on Heart Disease* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

²L. Berkman, "Social Networks, Host Resistance, and Mortality: A Nine-Year Follow-up Study of Alameda County Residents," in *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 1979.

³S. Cohen, "Social Ties and Susceptibility to the Common Cold," in *JAMA*, 1997.

⁴J. K. Kiecolt-Glaser, "Psychosocial Enhancement of Immunocompetence in a Geriatric Population," in *Health Psychology*, 1995.

⁵J. K. Kiecolt-Glaser, R. Glaser, et al, "Marital Quality, Marital Disruption, and Immune Function," in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 1987.



Katia Reinert is a family nurse practitioner at Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland, USA.



From the church's earliest beginnings, "Go Ye Therefore Unto All the World" has sounded the call to mission for Seventh-day Adventists. The prophetic future described in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, identifies a last-day church, filled with the Spirit, having God's Word on their lips, working with angels reaping the greatest harvest of souls in the history of the world.

TELL THE WORLD is a response to the call to mission. Its foundation rests in the revival and reformation of God's people and provides every Seventh-day Adventist an opportunity to become involved in what the Bible calls the "latter rain" – the great harvest. Read what follows with a prayer in your heart. Pray that you will see clearly what God is asking you to do. If you don't see it, pray again and again.

TELL THE WORLD 2011 offers every Seventh-day Adventist in the world an opportunity to get involved in the mission of the church. But renewed commitment to mission will only emerge from believers who are rediscovering their 'first love' experience with Jesus. TELL THE WORLD 2011 will only serve God's purpose if the Holy Spirit performs the miracle of spiritual renewal in the hearts of God's people. This church directly supports the church's long-range TELL THE WORLD initiative by pointing members to a Word-inspired relationship with Jesus Christ.

GET INVOLVED

TELL THE WORLD 2011 calls each member to:

- Invite friends to fellowship opportunities
- Introduce friends to Jesus by sharing great truths of God's Word

- Show kindness in practical Christian service to others
- Each department, service and institution of the world church will be encouraged to find ways to broaden and deepen member participation in this initiative.

DIVISIONS, UNIONS, AND CONFERENCES

Culture-specific plans for TELL THE WORLD 2011 will be developed by divisions, unions and conferences/missions to meet needs in their areas of responsibility.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

The General Conference will use global resources, networks of communications and materials development to assist what must primarily be local expressions of TELL THE WORLD 2011.

REVIVAL AND REFORMATION LAUNCH

On January 1, the world church will launch the Revival and Reformation program in which each member will be called to prayer, Bible study and will be asked to plead for the Holy Spirit, seeking God's will and purpose for their lives.

EASTER WEEKEND OR "HOLY WEEK"

TELL THE WORLD 2011 will initially use the spiritual and cultural visibility of Easter weekend (April 22-24, 2011) or "Holy Week" (April 17-24) to draw community attention on Sabbath, April 23, 2011 to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Framed by the good news of Jesus' resurrection, the initiative will communicate the gospel values of hope, new life, and trust in God's love for each human being.

BAPTISMAL GROWTH

TELL THE WORLD 2011 calls the church to concerted and coordinated action early in the 2010-2015 quinquennium, and thereby sets the stage for an unprecedented period of baptismal growth during the next five years.

PHASE 1: PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY

Through General Conference-supplied media, and through communication channels available at each level of church organization, especially including the local congregation, each Seventh-day Adventist member will be called to a renewed focus on personal prayer and Bible study. Members will be urged to pray individually and with others for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, seeking God's will and direction for their lives.

EXPECTED RESULTS:

1. By December 2011, 80 percent of church-attending members will indicate by survey a consistent involvement in personal prayer and Bible study.
2. By December 2011, 80 percent of church-attending members will indicate by survey a consistent involvement in advancing the mission of the church through personal effort and witness.

PHASE 2: INVITE A GUEST TO CHURCH

Personal renewal inevitably grows and strengthens the body of Christ, and revived members will want and

need an opportunity to share their faith in a coordinated evangelistic opportunity. Every Seventh-day Adventist member will be urged to invite at least one guest to Sabbath School, corporate worship, or a smaller-scale home-based fellowship on Sabbath, April 23, 2011.

Promotion of this unique one-day event will be coordinated by divisions, unions, and conferences/mission to focus member attention on this special outreach opportunity.

EXPECTED RESULTS:

1. On April 23, 2011, at least 10 million guests will attend a Seventh-day Adventist church somewhere around the world.
2. On April 23, 2011, at least 10 million Seventh-day Adventist members will invite and host at least one guest for Bible study and worship.

PHASE 3: GOSPEL PRESENTATION

Through the enhanced community awareness created by the April 23, 2011 event, 10 million guests will be invited by church members to a three-day series of meetings focusing on Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and Second Coming. Divisions, unions, and conferences/missions will work collaboratively to create inspiring Easter week presentations on Jesus, the **Hope** of all ages, and distribute appropriate materials to each congregation or institution hosting the three-day event.



EXPECTED RESULTS:

1. During the week before or after Sabbath, April 23, 2011, 6 million guests will attend a three-day series focused on Jesus as Savior.

2. Eight million Seventh-day Adventists will invite guests, plan events, and implement the presentations at thousands of local sites.

PHASE 4: FORMING COMMUNITIES OF RESPONSE

Friendships and relationships built through the April events will yield in heightened interest in the Bible truths of Seventh-day Adventism. Every church-attending member will invite at least one guest to join a small prayer or Bible study group at the congregational or community level during the five months following the April 23, 2011 event. Divisions, unions, and conferences/missions will align resources to create awareness, provide resources, and train leaders to facilitate approximately 1 million for prayer and Bible study groups worldwide.

EXPECTED RESULTS:

1. A world-wide baptismal celebration on Sabbath, November 5, 2011 will welcome 1 million new members into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2. Seven million Seventh-day Adventists will host events, invite community friends and guests, and implement the small group and reaping opportunities associated with TELL THE WORLD 2011, Phase 4.

PHASE 5: STRENGTHENING NEW BELIEVERS

New believers welcomed into the embrace of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in the weeks leading up to and including the worldwide baptismal celebration on November 5, 2011 will be supported by carefully designed discipling and nurturing experiences appropriate to their region and culture.

Small group Bible study and fellowship experiences, prayer and revival events in local congregations, and opportunities for training in witnessing and evangelism will help new believers find security in their new faith and equip them with tools to effectively testify to the power of the resurrected Jesus.

EXPECTED RESULTS:

1. One million newly-baptized Seventh-day Adventists will be invited to participate in faith-building and discipling experiences immediately upon their baptism, and equipped between then and the next Celebration of the Resurrection to share their faith with neighbors and friends.

WORKING TOGETHER

Each department of the church should lay plans to be dynamically involved in Tell the World 2011.

"We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history."

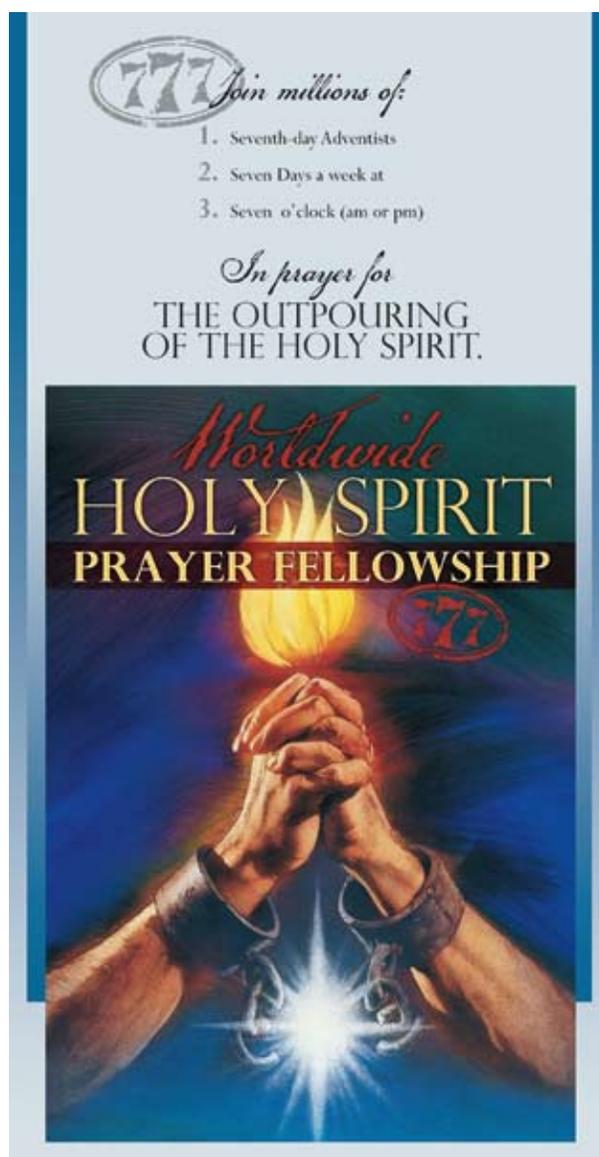
—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 196

CONCLUSION

"It is a perilous mistake to imagine that unless a young man (or woman) has decided to give himself (herself) to the ministry, no special effort is required to fit him (her) for the work of God. Whatever may be your calling, it is essential . . . to become collaborators with Him, going forth to save those who perish. . . ." (White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* 216, 217).

The world of today is marked by the great scenes described in Matthew 24. Jesus is soon coming again. As leaders in God's cause, do not rest until every member has been refreshed by the Spirit and goes forth to TELL THE WORLD.

ED





GOD'S PROMISED GIFT

AN URGENT APPEAL FOR REVIVAL, REFORMATION, DISCIPLESHIP, AND EVANGELISM

God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6-12). The challenge of reaching the more than 6 billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message seems impossible. The task is overwhelming. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission anytime soon appears unlikely (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The Church's growth rate is simply not keeping pace with the world's burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic change we will not complete Heaven's assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources are incapable of finishing God's mission for His glory on earth.

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The challenge of taking the gospel to the world is not new. The disciples faced this challenge in the first century. We face it in the twenty-first century. The New Testament Church was seemingly confronted with an impossible task. But empowered by the Holy Spirit the Church exploded in growth (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31). These early Christians shared their faith everywhere (Acts 5:42).

The grace of God overflowed from their hearts to their families, friends, and working associates. Just a few decades after the Crucifixion, the apostle Paul could report that the gospel is "preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).^{*} How was it possible for an obscure group of relatively insignificant believers to impact the world in such a short amount of time?

How could so few Christians be used of God to change the world forever?

Christ's Great Commission was accompanied by His great promise. The Savior commanded His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The Savior promised, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service. They sought God for the promised power of the Holy Spirit and knelt before Him in heartfelt confession and earnest repentance. They placed priority on seeking Heaven's blessing. They set aside times for prayer and searching the Scriptures. Their petty differences were swallowed up in their all-consuming desire to share Christ's love with everyone they met. They were absorbed in reaching the world with the gospel. Nothing was more important. They recognized that they were powerless to accomplish the mission without the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Describing the experience of the disciples, Ellen White wrote, "Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . . The disciples felt

their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the Holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ promised" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37).

Christ fulfilled His Word. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power. Thousands were converted in a day. The message of Christ's love impacted the world. In a short time the name of Jesus Christ was on the lips of men and women everywhere. "By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593).

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS END-TIME CHURCH

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). The earth will be "illuminated with his glory" (Revelation 18:1). The work of God on earth will be finished rapidly (Matthew 24:14; Romans 9:28). The Church will experience a spiritual revival and the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power like never before in its history. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter gives us this assurance: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). Ellen White adds, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and his Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 464).

Hundreds of thousands of people will accept God's last-day message through the teaching and preaching of His word. Prayer, Bible Study and witness are the elements of all true revival. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit will intensify as the end approaches, "Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of Man." (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 333) and "By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 612).

There is nothing more important than knowing Je-



sus, studying His word, understanding His truth and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission. God's last-day prophet to the remnant wrote in words too plain to be misunderstood, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 121).

If a genuine spiritual revival is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs, should we not as leaders place priority on seeking Heaven's promised blessing with all our hearts?

OUR GREAT NEED: REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We long to know Him better. The Holy Spirit reawakens the dormant spiritual faculties of the soul. There is nothing we desire more than to have a deep and life-changing relationship with Jesus. The revived heart experiences a vital connection to Jesus through prayer and the Word. Reformation is the corresponding change that comes in our lives as the result of revival.

"A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 128). Reformation does not manifest itself in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. It is the transformation of character that reveals the fruits of the Spirit in the life (Galatians 5:22-24). Obedience to God's will is the evidence of all true revival. Our Lord longs for a revived people whose lives reflect the loveliness of His character. There is nothing that Jesus desires more than a people who are passionate about personally knowing His love and sharing that love with others.

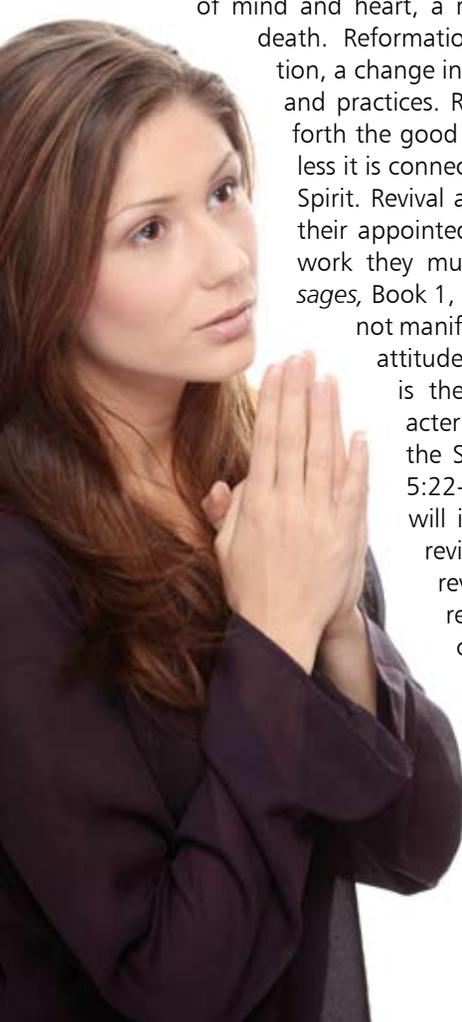
COMMITMENT AND APPEAL

As leaders and representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church assembled at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the 2010 Annual Council, we give thanks to our great and awesome God for His faithfulness and abundant blessings to His Church since its inception. The rapid worldwide expansion of His Church in both its membership and institutions is nothing short of a miracle of God. Although we praise Him for marvelously working to fulfill His purposes through His church, and thank Him for the godly leaders who have guided His people in the past, we humbly acknowledge that because of our human frailties even our best efforts are tainted by sin and in need of cleansing through the grace of Christ. We recognize that we have not always placed priority on seeking God through prayer and His Word for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power. We humbly confess that in our personal lives, our administrative practices, and committee meetings we too often have labored in our own strength. Too often God's mission of saving a lost world has not taken first place in our hearts. At times in our busyness doing good things we have neglected the most important thing—knowing Him. Too often petty jealousies, ambitions, and fractured personal relationships have crowded out our longing for revival and reformation and caused us to labor in our human strength rather than in His divine power.

We accept the clear instruction of our Lord that "the lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ's parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

We are confident that all heaven is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit in infinite power for the finishing of God's work on earth. We acknowledge that the coming of Jesus has been delayed and that our Lord longed to come decades ago. We repent of our lukewarmness, our worldliness, and our limited passion for Christ and His mission. We sense Christ calling us to a deeper relationship with Him in prayer and Bible study and a more passionate commitment to share His last-day message with the world. We rejoice that "it is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600).

Therefore, as representatives of the world church and on behalf of our entire membership, we commit ourselves:



1. To personally place priority on seeking God for spiritual revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power in our own lives, our families, and our ministries.

2. To individually set aside significant amounts of time daily to fellowship with Christ through prayer and the study of God's Word.

3. To examine our own hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of anything that may keep us from revealing the character of Jesus. We desire willing hearts so that nothing in our lives hinders the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power.

4. To encourage the ministries of the Church to spend time praying, studying God's Word, and seeking God's heart to understand His plans for His Church.

5. To encourage each of our church organizations to set aside time for administrators, pastors, health-care workers, publishing house workers, educators, students, and all employees to seek Jesus and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit together through a study of God's Word and prayer.

6. To use every available media outlet, conference, and workshop to appeal to church members to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus for the promised revival and reformation.

7. To urgently appeal to and invite our entire church membership to join us in opening our hearts to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, which will transform our lives, our families, our organizations and our communities.

We especially recognize that God is going to use children and youth in this last mighty revival and encourage all of our young people to participate in seeking God for spiritual revival in their own lives and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to share their faith with others.

We appeal to each church member to unite with church leaders and millions of other Seventh-day Adventists seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at 7:00 each morning or evening, seven days a week. This is an urgent call to circle the globe with earnest intercession. This is a call

to total commitment to Jesus and to experience the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit that our Lord is longing to give now.

We believe that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power is to finish Christ's mission on earth so He can come quickly. Recognizing that our Lord will only pour out His Spirit in its fullness on a Church that has a passion for lost people, we determine to place and maintain revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism at the top of all our church business agendas. More than anything else we long for Jesus to come.

We urge every church administrator, departmental leader, institutional worker, health worker, literature evangelist, chaplain, educator, pastor, and church member to join us in making revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism the most important and urgent priorities of our personal lives and our areas of ministry. We are confident that as we seek Him together, God will pour out His Holy Spirit in abundant measure, the work of God on earth will be finished, and Jesus will come. With the aged apostle John on the Isle of Patmos we cry out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

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*All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version.

This church document was voted during the General Conference 2010 Annual Council in Silver Spring, MD, USA.

TAKE OUR SURVEY

GET INVOLVED!

We want to hear back from YOU! How can we better serve you? Tell us if *Elder's Digest* has been helpful in your ministry. This survey can be found at www.eldersdigest.org.

A NEW YEAR

Philippians 3:12-14

We are starting a new year. What do you anticipate for this year? Are you full of enthusiasm, eagerly looking forward to what each day will bring? Or are you filled with dread, worried that 2011 will be worse for you than 2010? Your attitude, your frame of mind, and your reaction to events will largely determine whether 2011 is a year of victory or a year of defeat.

The apostle Paul was never one to let circumstances conquer him. Rather, with God's help, he was determined to win the victor's crown. Listen as his attitude, dedication, and determination shine through in these words found in Philippians 3:12-14.

With Paul's words fresh in our minds, here are some suggestions to help us be our best in 2011.

I. RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF TIME

A. First of all, the value of time is very important.

How do we value ONE YEAR? Ask a student who failed a grade.

How do we value ONE MONTH? Ask a mother whose baby arrived prematurely.

How do we value ONE WEEK? Ask an editor of a weekly magazine.

How do we value ONE HOUR? Ask someone who lies terminally ill in a hospital.

How do we value ONE MINUTE? Ask someone who missed a plane and a very important engagement can never be rescheduled.

How do we value ONE SECOND? Ask on Olympic medalist. Ask someone who barely avoided a car accident. Ask someone who is saying goodbye to a loved one for the last time.

B. The Bible often speaks of the brevity of life.

It compares life to the weaver's shuttle rapidly going back and forth; to the shadows of summer that quickly disappear; to grass which grows, dies, and then is burned.

C. The Bible also teaches us that life is uncertain.

Time is like a valuable commodity in a very delicate vessel. The vessel might break at any moment, and we might lose everything. We have no assurance of the

future, but we have this moment—and that is all that we really have.

Because of life's uncertainty, the Bible says, "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation." The writer of Hebrews says, "When you hear the name of the Lord, don't harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7). Because life is uncertain, we must take advantage of the time that we have.

II. LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND

We are special beings in that God has given us the ability to remember. Memory can be your friend or your enemy. When you look back on the past year, I hope you will remember some pleasant things, but you'll probably also remember some unpleasant moments.

At times we may dwell upon the negative and begin feeling sorry for ourselves. Maybe this past year was a time of great transition in your life. Perhaps your children grew up, married, and left home, and now you're struggling with an empty nest. Or maybe you lost your job and are having difficulty making ends meet. Maybe a loved one died and you're dealing with grief and loneliness. Or maybe last year sin got a real hold on your life, and now you feel the burden and guilt of that sin.

Past events and experiences can cripple us and hold us hostage to our pasts. The apostle Paul said, "I forget about what lies behind." Paul could have been burdened by guilt over his past actions. He had persecuted the church. He had used his authority to kill Christians. By his own admission he said, "I am the chief of sinners." He could have been crippled by this tremendous burden of guilt, never becoming the great apostle whose words and life teach us still.

But Paul said, "Forgetting what is behind . . ." In other words, "God, I commit it to you. I seek your forgiveness for all the sins of the past, and I look forward to what lies ahead. And right now I'm going to live today the best I can." At the start of a new year, this is an important prayer for us as well.

III. SET PRIORITIES

To make 2011 a good year, we must establish clear priorities. Paul says it this way: "This one thing I do." Paul obviously did more than one thing. He made tents. He preached sermons and established

churches. He healed the sick. He wrote letters. He did many different things. But he said, "The top priority in my life is to press on toward the goal for the prize for which God has called me."

Paul's words remind us of what Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

CONCLUSION

During the past Christmas season, the world was reminded again that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" (John 3:16). In His love, God offered us the most wonderful gift we could ever receive. How will we respond to this gift? Listen to this story:

Once there was an old beggar woman who ran out of money. She was very poor and couldn't pay her bills. Her landlord had threatened to throw her out if she didn't soon pay her rent.

She had only a candle, and on Christmas Day she warmed her hands over the candle's flame. When she heard a knock at her door, she was afraid to answer for fear that the landlord had come to throw her out of the humble cottage.

Blowing out her candle, she sat quietly in the dark and waited for the visitor to leave. A few days later she learned that the knock on the door had been the knock of a friend coming to bring her enough money to pay her rent and her bills.

How many times have we heard the gentle knock of the Savior, who wants so much to come in and free us from the burden of sin, but we have ignored His knocking?

Today God's invitation is offered to all who will accept and receive Him as Lord of their lives. Jesus came as a baby in the manger, but He also came as the Redeemer, and today He waits patiently to walk with us into the new year. 

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

NEW YEAR'S DECISIONS

Philippians 3:12-14

A new year is before us, full of possibility and opportunity: 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, 31,536,000 seconds. What will you do with these minutes, hours, days?

This is typically the time of year to make resolutions. We resolve to change—to lose weight, to exercise more, to be a better person, to dispense with bad habits and begin good ones.

If we are interested in keeping our resolutions this year, we should learn from the apostle Paul and his example in Philippians 3:13.

I. FORGET THE PAST

A. *“Forgetting what is behind”* (verse 13). Paul is talking about forgetting in such a way that the past—good or bad—will have no negative effect on one’s present spiritual growth and condition.

1. *Forget past wrongdoing that could paralyze you with guilt and despair.* Paul definitely remembered past misdeeds. As a persecutor of the church, he had much that he wanted to leave behind.

2. *Forget the accomplishments that might make you complacent.* Paul didn’t want to dwell on his spiritual progress. This might have made him content with where he was, satisfied with his spirituality. He realized he had a long way to go if he wanted to know Christ fully and completely.

B. *Put previous failures behind us to keep our new resolutions.* Sometimes we make resolutions only to find that we have soon broken them. Research suggests that 80 percent of people who make New Year’s resolutions won’t keep them for more than a month.

Maybe our failure to keep past resolutions makes us hesitant to make any for 2011. But if we follow Paul’s example, we will forget our past failures.

II. IMPLEMENT A PLAN

A. *“Straining toward what is ahead”* (verse 13). “Straining” refers to continuous concentration, like that of a runner in a race whose ceaseless personal exertion and intense desire help to achieve the hoped-for victory. This phrase paints a picture of a runner with body bent over, eyes fastened on the goal, never giving a backward glance. In other words, this runner is focused and determined. Once we decide

on a plan of action, we must pursue it with great exertion and intensity.

B. *Concentrating on a solid plan will help us keep our resolutions.* Set some goals with the following questions in mind:

1. *Will this goal glorify God?* The Bible says, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). God wants your goals or resolutions to bring Him glory. Goals might include: spending more time with your children, volunteering to lead a ministry at church, continuing your education, exercising regularly, purchasing a house, or getting married. None of these goals are necessarily right or wrong. The question is: How will our goals glorify God?

2. *Will this goal make you more like Jesus?* As we make resolutions for ourselves, this is really one of the ultimate questions. Would Jesus spend His time this way? Would Jesus have this as a goal? These are excellent questions to consider.

3. *Will this goal make a positive contribution to the world?* Some goals aren’t necessarily wrong; they’re just not important. One way to evaluate a goal is to measure its impact on others. Will this goal make a positive contribution to your family, co-workers, church, community, or the world?

4. *Will this goal enhance my ability to witness?* Everything we do with other people is an opportunity to witness. Do your goals for 2011 intentionally involve you with people so that you can be a witness for Christ? Do your goals specifically get you involved with people who need to know Jesus?

III. ACTION PLAN

Once your resolutions have been made, they must be translated into action. A lot of us set worthy goals, but then nothing happens. For success, try organizing your activities around the following categories:

A. *Personal life.* Many of us don’t spend enough time developing our personal lives—our spiritual well-being, our prayer life, our fitness level, our emotional health, and our willingness to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

B. *Family.* It is important that our goals and activities include our families and strengthen these relationships.

C. *Church.* When we don’t participate in the services and activities of our church, we get out of balance. We can’t be all that God wants us to be without being involved in the family of God.

D. *Work.* Work is a part of life. If we do everything for the glory of God, we will put forth our best effort at work.

E. *World.* We are citizens living in communities. We have a responsibility to the people around us to be good citizens and to look for ways to serve our communities.

IV. SOME POINTERS

We’ve seen that Paul’s methods for reaching a goal include forgetting the past, developing a plan, and moving toward what lies ahead. Now let’s consider how to best fulfill our resolutions.

Paul says, “I press on toward the goal” (verse 14). If we are going to press on toward our resolutions in 2011, we might want to remember these useful tips:

A. *Go slow!* It’s unlikely that we can change everything all at once. The key to keeping our resolutions is to make just a few and stick to them. It’s better to work on a little at a time and succeed than to try to do everything at once and accomplish little or nothing.

B. *Ask the Lord for help.* Say frequently, “With God’s help, I will use this year to improve myself in this area of my life.” That’s really what resolutions are all about. With God’s help, we seek to become more like Jesus, our example. He wants to help us become more like Him.

C. *If you break a resolution, don’t give up!* You don’t have to wait until January 2012 to start over. Remember Paul’s words: “forgetting what is behind.” God is continually making us new. If you have a relapse, talk to God about it and then get back in gear.

CONCLUSION

Starting a new year by making resolutions can help us achieve better health, stronger families, and a closer walk with God. By making resolutions, we say, “I want to be better prepared for heaven by living a more godly life right now.”



General Conference Ministerial Association

Everyone loves good news. We are delighted to hear that we have a new grandchild, that a relative's cancer is in remission, that a friend has been promoted, that a soldier has arrived home safely.

But, at times, we also receive bad news—news of illness, divorce, or job loss. The Word of God has news for us, too, some good and some bad. Both kinds of news relate to our present and future life. Let's look at the bad news first.

I. THE BAD NEWS

A. Paul says, "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). This is the bad news recorded in the Word of God. Everyone has sinned.

Some people disagree. They may say, "It can't be true. I haven't hurt anyone." Others argue, "I always try to do what is good. I help the poor. I give to charity. I'm a good citizen. I'm not a thief."

Let me illustrate this with a story. According to his neighbors, John was a good boy. He helped an old lady who had no family; in fact, he spent several hours a day helping her. While his friends were out having fun, he cleaned her house, worked in her garden, went shopping for her, and accompanied her to the hospital whenever needed. Over time John was faithful in caring for the old lady. Neighbors admired his example, saying, "Wouldn't it be great if every young man were like John?" No one suspected that he was thinking, "When this old lady dies, she will certainly leave all her fortune to me, as she promised."

What was John's real motive for helping the lady? It was the same motive that affects every human being: selfishness, an expression of our sinful nature.

Although we do good deeds, our motives may not always be pure. Ellen G. White says, "All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin."¹

B. *The wages of sin is death* (read Rom. 6:23). Death is the result of sin. Even though we believe in the promise of the resurrection, we weep at funerals. We grieve the loss of loved ones and recognize that in our humanity, we deserve death. No matter how much we may wish to be good, we fail. With Paul, we recognize, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:19).



... God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned.



Ellen G. White
A New Life, 20.

C. "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20). "He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin."² There is nothing we can do by ourselves to become right with God. The reward God offers is not because we do good works. In and of ourselves, we are lost.

II. THE GOOD NEWS

"Being justified freely by His grace . . . that is in Christ" (Rom. 3:24). The good news is that we can be justified by Christ. In this text we find four words that help us to understand the good news:

A. *Justified*. This is from the Greek word *dikaíosímenoi*. God does much more than forgive the repentant sinner; the Greek term implies that God "declares just" the repentant believer and gives him or her the gift of life. The debt has been paid by Jesus Christ.

B. *Freely*. Christ offers His justice freely. It is a gift. The wages of sin is death, but Christ paid the debt of sin by surrendering His own life for us, dying on the cross so that we could obtain eternal life. Thus salvation is offered to us freely, although God paid an infinite price for our redemption. "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith."³

C. *Grace*. This word appears 150 times in the New Testament, and Paul is the Bible writer who uses it most (100

times). He uses this expression to refer to God's great love for sinners, shown by His death on the cross to save us from sin's condemnation. God takes the initiative to save and sustain humanity, not because there is any merit in human beings but because of His infinite love—God's grace.

D. *Redemption*. This term comes from the Greek word *apolitróseos*, meaning "redemption," "ransom," or "freedom through ransom." The term is related to the ransom paid to free a slave. It reminds us once more of our condition as slaves to sin. The cost of our ransom was not gold but an inestimable price, the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. White says, "Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God."⁴

CONCLUSION

The bad news is that we all have sinned and that the wages of sin is death; it is impossible for human beings to be saved by their own efforts through human merit or works. However, the good news—the wonderful news—is that we can be freely justified through the ransom Christ paid for us. As we surrender to Him, we receive the inestimable gift of salvation.

In her book *The Home Missionary*, White offers this challenge: "The good news of a Savior—Christ dying as our sacrifice upon Calvary, Christ pleading as our high-priest and intercessor before God, Christ our king and deliverer, coming to redeem his children—this is the message to be carried to all the world, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And the obligation rests upon all Christians. Every one, to the very utmost of his talent and opportunity, is to fulfill this commission. The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know him not. They are our brethren, and God has given us light, not for ourselves alone, but to shed upon them."⁵



¹Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 60.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 61.

⁴White, *The Desire of Ages*, 131.

⁵White, *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1890, paragraph 1.

Walter Romero is a pastor in Argentina, South America.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AMIDST TEMPTATION

1 Corinthians 10:13

Often in our Christian walk, we are confronted with temptations or trials. How we react may vary. Sometimes we think God is allowing us to suffer too much, or we may believe we are suffering unfairly. Occasionally we may feel that God is far from us and that there is no way out. At these moments when we face temptation, it is important to remember that God remains faithful.

I. THE LIMITS OF TEMPTATION

A. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we read that "no temptation has seized you except that is common to man." Paul is reminding the Corinthian believers that they should not think that just because they live an upright life, conditions will always be favorable. The reality is that they will still face difficulties. Their trials and temptations will not be fewer than those experienced by their neighbors.

B. God puts a limit on temptation. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. Christians can rejoice, knowing that the God in whom they trust will not allow the enemy to tempt them beyond what their strength can bear.

It is not God's desire that human beings suffer. He does not cause temptation (see James 1:13). God may use circumstances to develop a person's character according to His divine will (see 1 Peter 4:12, 13). When we are tempted, we should remember that God is not causing the temptation, but as He allows it, He can use this means for spiritual growth. For we know God will never allow temptations to be stronger than our ability to bear them.

II. THE WAY OUT

". . . But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13). The phrase "a way out" indicates that for every temptation, God will provide an escape. This "way out" is not a way to avoid temptation, but by being grounded in God's Word, we can avoid being overcome by sin.

Although God allows us to face trials and temptations, He prepares ways through which we may obtain victory and avoid sin. Jesus, our perfect example, found His "way out" in the Word of God (Luke 4:4, 8, 12). Christ's followers may also rest in the assurance that they can



Temptation once
resisted will give power
to more firmly resist the
second time; every new
victory gained over self
will smooth the way
for higher and nobler
triumphs.



Ellen White
My Life Today, 319.

escape the tempter's snares by having a deep relationship with Jesus, the Living Word (John 1:1-3, 14). Christ is always ready and willing to free those who seek Him, and He will keep them from falling into sin (Ps. 9:9; 27:5; 41:1; 91:15; 2 Peter 2:9; Rev. 3:10).

There is no need for us to be overcome by Satan's temptations. We have assurance in the Word of God that heavenly assistance is given to everyone who strives to overcome. Ellen G. White says, "All the temptations of Satan, Christ met with the word of God. By trusting in God's promises, He received power to obey God's commandments, and the tempter could gain no advantage. To every temptation His answer was, 'It is written.' So God has given us His word wherewith to resist evil."¹

III. TRUTHS WE CANNOT FORGET

We have seen that through the Word of God, we may find strength to resist temptation. When God promises He will give us a "way out," there are two biblical truths we cannot forget.

A. Sometimes God chooses to help us by performing a miracle to instantly free us from temptation or tribulation, thus answering our prayer (Matt. 17:14-18). But God has another "way out"—

the miracle of strengthening us to face temptation and survive the difficult trials of our lives (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). White says, "Christ has made it possible for every member of the human family to resist temptation. All who would live godly lives may overcome as Christ overcame."²

B. Sometimes we are tempted to think that because we believe in God, we should not face difficulties or that they should miraculously disappear when they surround us. But the reality is that everyone—Christians and non-Christians—face problems and temptations. How do these two groups differ in their response? Does being a Christian make a difference? Yes! The difference is that we have a God who is faithful even in the midst of trials, a God who will provide a way for us to bear any trial.

We have His assurance. White gives us this beautiful reminder: "Summon all your powers to look up, not down at your difficulties; then you will never faint by the way. You will soon see Jesus behind the cloud, reaching out His hand to help you; and all you have to do is to give Him your hand in simple faith and let Him lead you. . . . A great name among men is as letters traced in sand, but a spotless character will endure to all eternity. God gives you intelligence and a reasoning mind, whereby you may grasp His promises; and Jesus is ready to help you in forming a strong, symmetrical character."³

CONCLUSION

God is always faithful, even in the midst of temptation. He will not allow us to face any temptation that can overpower us. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. Through His Word, He gives us victory. He will never fail. Remember what Ellen G. White says: "Every promise in God's Word is ours. . . . When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word. All its strength is yours."⁴



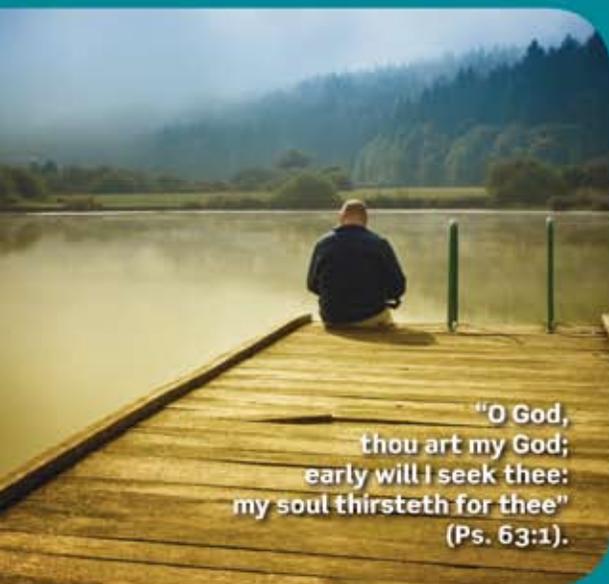
¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 181.

² White, *God's Amazing Grace*, 111.

³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴ White, *The Faith I Live By*, 23.

Walter Romero is a pastor in Argentina, South America.



**"O God,
thou art my God;
early will I seek thee:
my soul thirsteth for thee"
(Ps. 63:1).**

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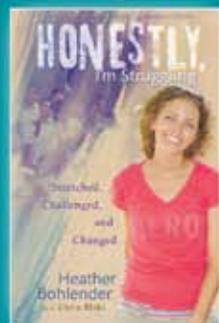
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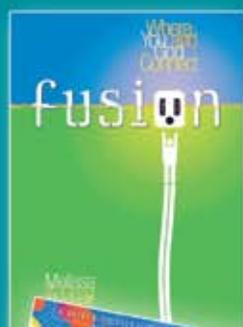
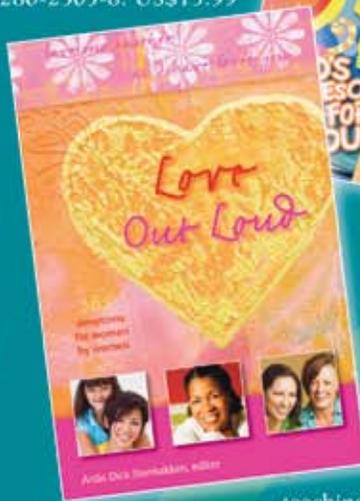
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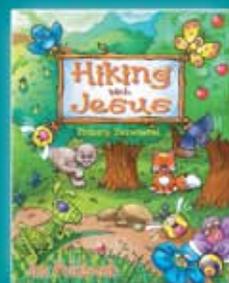
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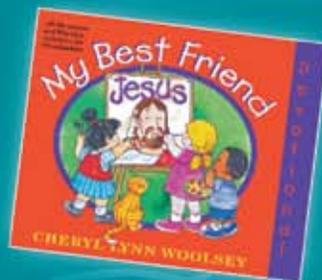
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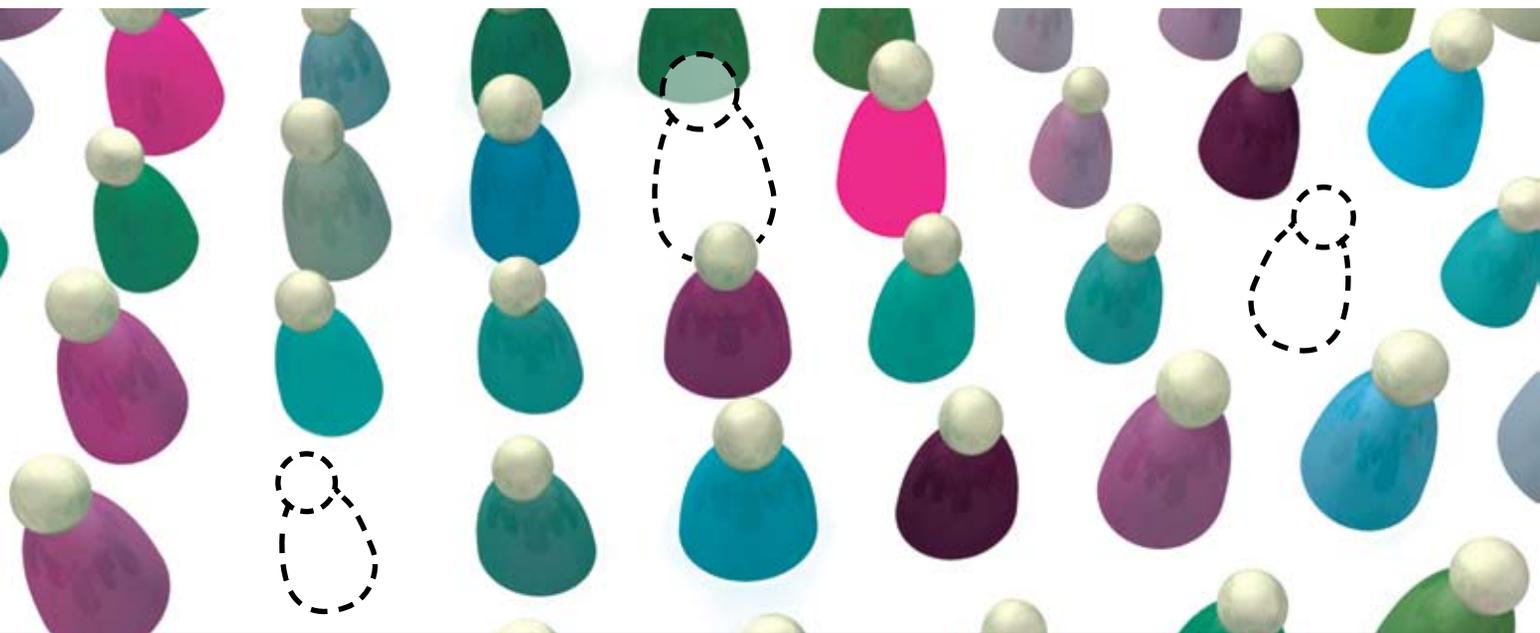
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YOUTH PERSPECTIVE THE “MISSING GENERATIONS”

A few months ago, I met with three other pastors for lunch. After the typical small talk, one of the pastors asked, “What patterns are you noticing in your congregations?” As the four of us discussed this, a picture began to emerge, and we found similar patterns in each of our churches. One worrisome pattern was that in general, two age groups—18-to-35-year-olds and those between the ages of 35 and 50—are missing. In many of our churches, members of the 35-50 age group, if they are there, rarely hold leadership positions. Thinking about my previous and current districts, I recognized a disconcerting fact: There was no leadership training or leadership transitioning.

I recall sitting down with the elders in one of my districts to discuss the need to add another elder. Several names were mentioned, but none seemed to meet the strict requirements of the current elders. Being new to the district, I asked, “Wasn’t anyone being prepared?” Their response was disturbing: “We felt there wasn’t anyone good enough to be an elder.”

“When did you begin serving as elders?” I inquired.

“Back when my kids were little” was a typical response from the grandfathers in the group. All the elders appeared to be about the same age. I wasn’t surprised by their statements, but I was disappointed by their myopia.

Discussing the problem over lunch, my three pastor-friends and I identified four possible causes.

1. Local leadership is afraid to allow younger people with a different generational focus to be in leadership. A single board position or one seat on the nominating committee (sometimes referred to as “tokenism”) isn’t bringing those under age 50 into church leadership.

2. Current leaders protect their positions by not seeking out and training young leaders. Junior deacons who merely collect the offering aren’t being trained to become full-fledged deacons. Most churches don’t have a training program for elders; even fewer churches have job descriptions for elders, deacons, or deaconesses.

3. Differences in style and opinion are frowned upon rather than encouraged. Yet only through diversity in both style and opinion will the church be able to reach into the community. If our church’s approach doesn’t match the needs of the community, maybe it’s time to re-evaluate it.

4. Narrow-mindedness fails, thus we may soon face the demise of our church. When those in the 35-50 age range are missing from church leadership, those in the 18-35 age range may be completely disconnected; after all, a grandparent’s church will seem irrelevant to the younger generation.

As our lunchtime conversation neared its end, I said, “During the first six months in my districts, I reached out to many members who were not attending church. Almost all the missing members were under the age of 50. Many were in the 18-35 age group. Asking why

they no longer attended, I noted several issues. They did not feel welcomed. They felt they were expected to maintain a status quo that wasn't working. They were expected to be at church and to carry out minor roles, but they did not have a voice in leadership."

All three pastors agreed that these responses sounded familiar. The size of the church did not matter. Each of the pastors had a similar story.

Over the next week, I kept asking myself as a 30-something pastor, "What can I do?" My church is missing one generation and most of another. At this rate, there may soon be no one to fill leadership positions. I thought of several things that churches might try:

1. *Create young-adult groups apart from the usual routine.* Creating small groups, Bible study groups, or even worship services for the 18-50 age group may help to develop a healthy dynamic of spiritual growth; small-group gatherings might be similar to the early Christian church in Jerusalem. At times early Christians gathered in the synagogue, but most often they gathered in homes, community centers, or outside.

2. *Encourage unity in diversity.* Rather than older members attacking the younger generation and the younger generation fighting back (or leaving), pro-

ductive discussion should be actively encouraged. It is important for each of us to realize that although we may differ on minor points, we share our love of the gospel. When God's amazing grace is our central theme, our differences need not be negative; rather, they can be a blessing to invigorate our church.

3. *Return to the simple gospel message: God the Father reclaiming His creation through Jesus.* That is the gospel. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are simply God's love redeeming us. When we lose sight of the Father's love, we lose touch with God and humanity.

People of all ages are searching for God. How and where they do so may vary by generation. We can never let the how and where block anyone from the gospel. As leaders, we must re-evaluate our methods. Are they working? Are we alienating some age groups? Are we losing our young people, the very age group that founded the Adventist Church? We must change our approach for the sake of our remnant message. The last thing we want is to have the message die with our leadership. It's time to include these "missing generations."



Nate Elias pastors the LaGrange and Pine Mountain Valley Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Georgia, USA.

WHAT SHAPES ADVENTIST WORSHIP?

BY NICHOLAS ZORK

Worship is, in theory, at the center of Adventist theology. We emphasize the Sabbath, a temple in time set apart for rest and worship. We have traditionally defined our mission according to the Three Angels' Messages (Rev. 14:6-12), which underscores whom we should (and should *not*) worship. And worship is a motif running through even our most distinctive doctrines (e.g., the sanctuary, the great controversy between good and evil). But even though worship is at the center of our theology, is theology at the center of our worship?

What is it that determines what we do when we gather on Sabbath mornings? Do our worship services grow out of carefully considered and deeply held theological convictions? Or, is Adventist worship a loose collection of practices in search of a theology? Is what we do a truly incarnational gathering, uniting God's Word and action with human need and circumstances? Or, is our worship just an awkward blend of inherited practices and the pragmatic concerns of the day?

Worship scholar, Robert Webber, has suggested that "the major issue" facing Christian worship today

is that it has become "divorced from all theological reflection. Worship has therefore become subject to the cultural narrative, and worship has been shaped more by the cultural narrative than it has been shaped by the story of God."¹

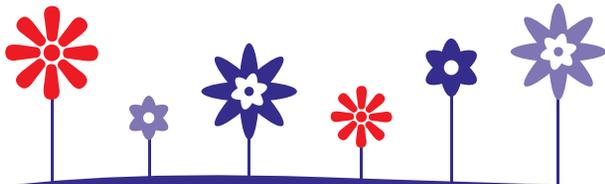
What is the narrative that shapes our worship? Is it the story of God revealed in Scripture? Or, is it something else? And how can our worship ministry be more effective and congruent with our deepest theological convictions and values? These are complex issues with no simple answers; but as we dialogue together, we can at least begin asking the right questions. And as we grow in knowledge and grace, I pray that our worship might honor God more fully and minister more effectively to both our congregations and the wider world.

This was originally published in "Best Practices for Adventist Worship", a Vervent newsletter of the North American Division Church Resource Center. Used by permission. Online signup is available at www.auworshipconference.org.

¹Robert Webber said this during an interview that can be viewed on Living Worship: A Multimedia Resource for Students and Leaders DVD-ROM (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010).

NEW DVD BIBLE STUDIES FOR WOMEN

by Carla Baker



Journey of Joy: Healthy Emotions and Holy Hearts is the name of the new DVD Bible study series produced by the North American Division (NAD) Women's Ministries Department. It is the first DVD Bible studies for women developed by the Adventist Church in North America. The series focuses on women's unique challenges and their desire to experience a close relationship with God while maintaining a healthy life balance, despite their circumstances.

As we consider the mind-boggling number of responsibilities that 21st-century women face, together with the tangle of emotions they wrestle with as they try to balance the demands of caring for family and home while very often working outside the home, always putting others' needs before their own, the question that immediately comes to mind is, How is it possible for a woman's life experience to be a "Journey of joy"?

These Bible studies help women recognize that joy and happiness are not the same. The journey of joy is not necessarily a journey of happiness, but with God it can be a journey of satisfied longings and lives filled with meaning, no matter what the circumstances. And that precious truth makes all the difference.

The DVD presentations feature speaker Carla Gober, PhD, a professor of religious studies at Loma Linda University and director of the university's Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness. She has been a speaker at women's ministries events for many years and is well-known by women in NAD. As a woman, she is also familiar with women's needs and, as a theologian and a counselor, is well-qualified to address those issues.

The studies draw entirely on stories of people in the Bible. The student is led to investigate the lives of individuals who learned what it means to follow God and experience healing that goes beyond personal brokenness. According to Carla Gober, "While the people and stories differ, each one of them reveals something about God and about what happens when God's love touches a heart."

The series consists of eleven studies on two DVDs plus two workbooks—a Leader's Guide and a Study Guide for participants. The Leader's Guide contains step-by-step instructions and tips for successfully leading small group studies. For each lesson there is a teaching outline, sup-

port material, and discussion questions to encourage group learning. The studies are designed for the students to complete each week's lesson in the Study Guide first, then view the DVD presentation in the small group setting.

The Study Guide (workbook) for participants, with 136 pages, contains in-depth resources to help the student discover the rich treasures in the Bible. Students are encouraged to spend thoughtful time each week completing the written portion of the studies and applying the lesson to their lives. In this way, the Study Guide is much more than a workbook; it becomes the journal of a woman's personal spiritual journey.

The lessons are taught inductively, meaning that they focus on the main text and generally do not skip around in the Bible. Carla Gober feels that "the best way to understand a text or passage is to explore it carefully and mine it deeply until its wisdom and truth become more evident. By extensively exploring a passage, we allow it to speak for itself. Spending this kind of time with a text can be life-changing, because it gives a text the chance to reach into the heart and mind and affect the life."

Gober's main objective for the studies is that each woman will come to understand the profound sense in which she is loved by God, and that this understanding will affect her outlook on life, how she views herself, and how she views others.

Although the studies are designed to be used in a small group setting, they are well-suited for individual studies. With the DVD format, it is easy for a novice to lead out. When the studies are used in a church setting, members are encouraged to invite their friends from the community to attend. Furthermore, the hope of the NAD Women's Ministries Department is that individual members will catch the vision of using these non-doctrinal studies with their friends, family members, and coworkers who desire to study the Bible in an informal setting such as a member's home.

The kit containing the Leader's Guide and one Study Guide is available for \$49.99 from your Adventist Book Center and from *AdventSource*. Each participant will need her own Study Guide which sells for \$9.99 each or packs of five for \$44.99.

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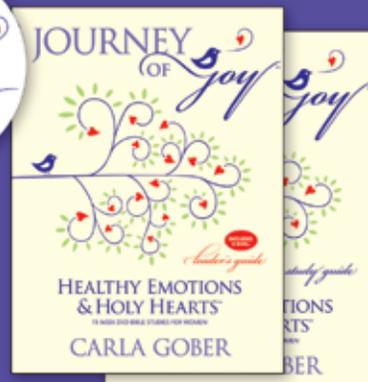
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TRINITY IN THE BIBLE PART 2

THE SPIRIT: DISTINCT AND DIVINE

The first article in this series outlined the arguments that moved the early Christians toward the doctrine of the Trinity. They accepted the divinity of the Jesus they worshipped, yet maintained the oneness of God.

Based on Scripture and rejecting pagan philosophy, they understood that for Jesus to be fully God, He must be Creator, independent of the created world. He is therefore eternal, omnipotent, ever-present and all-knowing. If He is less, He would be a second God. But as the Father and the Son are clearly two distinct persons or personalities, it follows that in the one God, there is more than one person. This Bible-based conclusion moved the early church to the next step, the identity of the Holy Spirit. How did the Christian church reach its understanding of the Holy Spirit as eternal God, distinct from, and yet one with, the Father and the Son?

TRINITARIAN FORMULAS

Because Christians were convinced of the full,

eternal divinity of Jesus Christ, the numerous triadic or trinitarian references to the Godhead in Scripture naturally led them to understand the Holy Spirit in a similar way. The Spirit was mentioned in line with the Father and the Son and is evidently, therefore, both distinct from and of the same rank.

As stated by Jesus in the gospel commission in Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NKJV).

By mentioning the three persons but using the singular, referring to only one "name," Jesus indicates the close unity of being that characterizes the one Godhead with its three distinct persons or personalities.¹ Other well-known examples from the many triadic references scattered throughout the New Testament are found in 2 Corinthians 13:13 and Revelation 1:4-6.²

BUT WHAT ABOUT . . . ?

But is not the word “spirit” used about human beings referring to the identity of that person himself, not another person? Is not the term “spirit” itself and a number of the metaphors used for “spirit” impersonal? And if the Spirit with a capital “S” really is God, why are no prayers and no worship in Scripture directed toward Him, and why is so little said about the nature of the Spirit at all?³

Such challenges and objections are often raised today as if completely new, yet they were far from unknown to the early Christian church. Its response then in some ways mirrors the modern history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, as we have also come to understand the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality, yet one with God and part of the Godhead. Reflecting on these questions leads us toward a better understanding of both God and our own personal spiritual life and salvation. The task is not just an intellectual exercise.

HE IS A PERSON

A number of biblical texts speak about the Holy Spirit in ways different from when Scripture mentions the spirit of man. Texts like these underline the personhood of the Holy Spirit:

- “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Corinthians 12:11, NRSV).

- “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30, NIV).

- “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:31, 32, ESV).

The Spirit has His own will and chooses accordingly. He can be grieved and blasphemed against. Such expressions are not fit for a mere power or influence but are characteristics of a person. Is the Spirit then a person just like you and me? No, we use limited human terminology to describe the divine, and the Spirit is so much more than we humans will never be.

YET THEY ARE ONE!

These quotations about the personhood of the Holy Spirit are important because they describe the Spirit as different from the Father and the Son. He

is another. Jesus tells us that sin against the Spirit is not identical with sin against Himself. Though united as one in a way no humans are, they are not the same person. They are distinct.

This distinctiveness is expressed in many New Testament texts. For example, Luke underlines the “threeness” in his description of the baptism of Jesus, where Father, Son, and Spirit clearly are not identical (see Luke 3:21, 22). And Jesus Himself—when sharing the promise of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit—also made it clear:

- “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever” (John 14:16, ESV).

- “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26, ESV).⁴

This difference between Jesus and the Holy Spirit was significant for the early Christians’ understanding of the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus had entered as our heavenly High Priest and, maintaining His humanity, He limited Himself. When Peter, following the Day of Pentecost, further explained the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he, therefore, emphasised that Jesus “must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:21, NIV).

HE POINTS TO ANOTHER

So why does the Spirit tell so little about Himself? Why are no prayers in the New Testament directed to the Holy Spirit? The answer to these questions spring out of the role of the Spirit in the plan of salvation. Jesus said, “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14, ESV).

In a sense, the Holy Spirit is the humble representative of the Godhead. He is not speaking about Himself but pointing to another. It is in Jesus we know God as a person. The Sovereign of the universe has chosen to come to us as a human being in Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus, we know God as Saviour and friend.

When praying, we communicate with God. Prayer is part of a dialogue. So, when we pray, we focus on the person we address, as we know Him. We know Him as Jesus, not as the Spirit. But when we pray, the Spirit comes to our aid to portray Jesus as He is. The Spirit who inspired the writers of the Bible comes to us to illuminate our minds to see

MYTHS ABOUT THE TRINITY DOCTRINE

A peculiarly Catholic doctrine?

Myths about the Trinity doctrine prevail. One of the most common is that the doctrine of the Trinity is a peculiarly Roman Catholic doctrine.

The fact is that the Nicene Creed was based on a previous baptismal vow, most likely from Antioch. The 318 delegates who voted in 325 AD and confirmed the doctrine were primarily from the eastern regions of the Christian church. Only four bishops from the Western part of the Roman Empire took part and the bishop of Rome—the pope—was not present.

The Trinity doctrine was embraced by the vast majority of early Christian churches. It is historically accepted by Orthodox, Lutherans, Reformed, Puritans, Anglicans and more. It is not a uniquely Roman Catholic doctrine.

The word “catholic” originally had another sense, however, namely universal or general. It was and is the generally accepted Christian doctrine. It was the Christian understanding of God in contrast to pagan and Jewish views at the time of the early church, and to the Muslim view of Allah a little later in history.

But shouldn't we, some say, reject the doctrine if it is shared by Catholics? In this case, should we then also reject the incarnation, the virgin birth and prayer? Of course not. While there are differences in the way Catholics and Adventists view this because of the difference in our general theological perspective, we agree on the eternal distinction, as well as the unity of the three Father, Son and Holy Spirit just as we agree with Lutherans, Reformed, Orthodox and Christians in general, in contrast to Muslims and Jews.

As Adventists, we share with other Protestants strong views on the Roman Catholic Church and have identified this power in the historical prophecies of the Bible. But it is worth noting that Ellen White never includes the doctrine of the Trinity as one of the critical elements of the teachings of Rome.

DO OTHER CHRISTIANS BELIEVE JESUS HAD A BEGINNING?

The answer is no! But confusion arises at times because the Nicene Creed uses expressions like “born, not made” and “eternally begotten/born before all times.” As strange as these and many other expressions may sound today, the intention when they were formulated was to counter the Arian teaching that Jesus had a beginning. Those who authored, voted for and later confessed the teachings of the Nicene Creed, by these terms, express their faith in the eternal divinity of the Son.

God in Jesus when we read the Word and in prayer to respond to the divine mercy and love.

SECRETS TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE

Jesus left His disciples. He serves as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Maintaining His humanity, He has limited Himself. But God is still with us. The Holy Spirit—a distinct person and part of the one God—is here to point us to Jesus. He is ready to pour out the love of God in our hearts (see Romans 5:5) and grow the fruit of love, peace and joy (see Galatians 5:22) in our lives. He shares gifts to equip the church for its service (see Ephesians 4:7-13).

He is a humble representative of God. He points to Another, and to receive His blessings, we must forget ourselves and look to that Other, namely Jesus. The apostle Paul made this point clear: “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:1, 2, ESV).

We know God the Father through Jesus—God the Son. And we know Jesus through God the Holy Spirit.



¹ Various critics claim the “gospel commission” was absent from the early manuscripts of Matthew. This claim is completely without any basis in fact. Moreover, the Trinitarian baptismal formula is attested as a quotation as early as around 100 AD in the writing called “Didache.”

² These triadic references do not always contain the sequence of Father, Son and Spirit. In Ephesians 4:4-6, the Spirit is mentioned first, then the Son and then the Father. Scholars have counted triadic references in the Pauline letters and found Jesus first in 16 instances, the Holy Spirit to be mentioned first in nine texts, and the Father first six times. This variation makes it clear the sequence is not intended to provide any ranking in authority or being.

³ The distinction made by using small or capital first letters is a recent typographical phenomenon. It never applied at the times of writing the biblical manuscripts, which only contained large or capital letters. It did not apply at the time of the translation of the King James Version. And even in the time and culture of Ellen White, there was no consistent custom of writing the personal pronouns or references to God with either small or capital letters.

⁴ The three are clearly described as distinct from one another. For example, try replacing the first person in John 16:14, spoken by Jesus, with the third-person reference to the Holy Spirit. The result will show the absurdity: the Spirit “will glorify himself, for he will take what is his and declare it to you!” This is not what Jesus teaches.

This is the second article in a series of three dealing with the issue of the Trinity in the Bible, in the early church and in the Seventh-day Adventist movement. This article has been reprinted, by permission, from *Record* magazine, published by SPD.

Paul Petersen is field secretary for the South Pacific Division, based in Wahroonga, New South Wales.

HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER— EVEN IN A CITY

CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY

I love playing in dirt. If I had another life to live, I would probably be quite content to be a farmer. But I can do farming in this life too. And so can you and your church—even if your church is in a big city.

“Imagine a farmer who owns five hundred acres of fertile land and employs one hundred farm hands. His large, well-kept barn contains various pieces of seldom-used farming equipment. Corn is their preferred crop, but farm workers rarely plow, weed, or plant. They hardly ever water or fertilize. In fact, very little farming at all is done during the year—until fall. It is then that the gleaming reaper is cranked up and put into service. High up in the cab the farmer steers toward the intended field while the farm hands applaud vigorously. The farmer motors back and forth over the cropless ground. A few wind-born seeds from other farms that landed on his acreage months ago have sprouted into an occasional stalk. The large reaper scoops these up and deposits them in the bin. Back at the barn the farmer pulls eight ears of corn out of the reaper and shows them to the workers. Together they rejoice over another excellent harvest. Tragically, this farmer sees farming as an annual event rather than a year-long process.”¹

When my husband and I were in pastoral ministry in New York City, USA, occasionally our church would hold evangelistic *events*, such as evangelistic campaigns, to do reaping. Now reaping is a very good thing. Since then, however, it has dawned on us that **reaping is best done when you’ve been farming!**

I don’t want you to miss the complexity of this concept. Jesus “said to his disciples, ‘the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers [not only reapers²] into his harvest field’” (Matthew 9:37, 38, NIV). The previous verses in Matthew 9 describe how Jesus’ compassionate mingling and healing ministry prepared the soil and nurtured the crops in preparation for reaping.

The cities, the villages, and the communities around our churches are our “harvest fields.” We might be tempted to think that the only farm workers Jesus needs are those who do reaping. However, there is other work in the field that must be done first, or there will likely be very little to reap.

In various places I have lived, I’ve had big gardens. I could have looked at working in my garden as an *event* or as a *process*. Reaping is an example of an *event*. However, preparing the soil, planting,



watering, fertilizing, cultivating, and reaping all put together is a *process*. I have a *Farmer's Almanac*, which outlines the farming *process* for an annual growing season. Most of the months are dedicated to what comes before reaping, and these activities are as important as reaping. A small part of the year is spent in reaping.

In *How to Grow an Adventist Church*, Russell Burrill, a veteran evangelist, concludes that evangelism is not an event—it is a process.³ Experience has taught him that few people are won to Christ by one exposure. Rather, they need several exposures to the gospel. Churches need to use various approaches for the varied minds in their community. This is a process that takes time. No shortcuts here.

Jesus was the ultimate Model of a Farmer—a Gospel Farmer. His way of exposing people to the gospel was wholistic. He had an intentional process as He mingled with people, showed sympathy, met their needs, thus winning their confidence. Then He reaped—inviting them to follow Him.⁴

What would Jesus do if He was an Elder in your church? He would likely advise that your church follow something like the above process in “His harvest field” around your church. Leaders who have studied Jesus’ incarnational ministry method have contextualized it for these end times. I have formatted some principles of incarnational ministry into

10 FARMING COMMANDMENTS

1. *Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method and pray* for:

- A spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in your community – resulting in more workers (“Pray ye therefore. . .” Matt 9:38, KJV);
- The workers as they work in the harvest field;
- ***The Rain – the Holy Spirit*** – throughout the growing season. *No Rain – no crop and harvest!*

2. *Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church.*

This is like checking farming equipment/supplies/workers. Have your church members fill out a form that lists their experience/interests/time availability, etc.

3. *Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT).* This is like establishing the farm management team. The SALT should have around 4-6 members with the following qualifications:

- Willing and able to work in a team that will help launch the church into ministry that will be meaningful to people in the community.
- Willing and able to interview key leaders in the local community to discover the felt needs of the community on which your church will focus.

4. *Thou shalt choose thy territory. Narrow it down.* This is like choosing a “garden plot” on which to concentrate. God has not chosen us to take care of the more than 6 billion people in the whole world. We cannot “farm” every bit of existing land. If your church is in a big city, choose a neighborhood and decide how many blocks your church will focus on. If your church is in suburbia, or in a rural area, you can choose certain zip codes for your territory.

5. *Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory.* This is like testing/analyzing the composition of the “soil.” For your service to the community to be relevant, it’s important to know various details about the people in your territory. For example, a demographic analysis will reveal answers to: How many people live here? What is the median age? How do people make a living? What is the economic situation of the people? How much education? What religions are they affiliated with? etc. You can find demographics for a given territory through the census or official statistics provided by your national government. Once you find the web site for your country, search it for “local area” demographic numbers.⁵

6. *Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the types of homes, stores, churches, and people, etc.* This is like looking over your farming field. This activity can also be a prayer walk/drive, praying for who/what you see. Make notes of the characteristics of the neighborhoods, the kinds of housing—and their appearance, the age group you see on the streets, and any other impressions. If you drive instead of walk, have someone drive while a partner takes notes.
7. *Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them.* This is another part of testing the “soil.” The relationships formed with community leaders because of this step in the process may result in planting seeds. The **Social Action Leadership Team** does the interviews.
8. *Thou shalt earn “Social Capital.”* Join community boards, town councils, local ministerial associations (pastors), civic clubs—such as Rotary International, Lions, Kiwanis, etc. to network with community leaders and business people. This part of the process makes investments in relationships (social capital) and also plants seeds.
9. *Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou hast discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church. (Be sure you implement your plan!)* This plan gives guidance to all parts of your church and unites them in meeting the needs of the soil in your community and in planting seeds.
10. *Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate.* You don’t need to invent all your community outreach. In addition to establishing an on-going “embedded

ministry” (niche) in your community you can partner with and support existing community social programs. This also plants seeds, and as more and more relationships are formed with the people involved, you may be able to share Christ & His biblical truth with them.

- 11th Commandment: *Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to*
- *Reap where thou hast farmed!*⁶
 - *Keep what thou dost reap (disciple—preserve the harvest)!*

These Farming Commandments can apply to any setting—from small towns to big cities. I wish my husband and I had followed these principles of incarnational ministry when we were at our church in New York City. If your church follows these principles, you will prepare the soil of your community so that there will be more good ground and less hard ground, rocky ground, or thorny ground, as described in Matthew 13:3-8. The farming of community-based ministry helps plow hard ground (the path), removes rocks (hardness and barriers) and thorns (helping people with their cares and worries), so that there will be more good ground and more fields in your community where the “harvest is plentiful.”

Happy farming!



¹ A parable by Kim Johnson, *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*. Silver Spring, MD: GC Ministerial Association, 1997, p.117. Used by permission.

² Inserted by author.

³ Russell Burrill, *How to Grow an Adventist Church*, Fallbrook, CA: HART Books, 2009, p. 32.

⁴ See *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143. Matthew 9 is a biblical rendition of *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

⁵ For more information on community assessment see *Understanding Your Community*, by Monte Sahlín. Available from www.AdventSource.org.

⁶ And, if it seems difficult to reap in your particular field, keep serving your community in Jesus’ name—anyway! Why? Because that’s what Jesus would do!

May-Ellen Colón is assistant director of General Conference Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Department and director of Adventist Community Services International.



THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

CREATION DEBATE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

At the Annual Council in 2001 the General Conference Executive Committee organized a series of conferences on faith and science during the years 2002-2004. The first conference in 2002 was an international conference in Ogden, Utah. More than 80 scientists, theologians and church administrators from different parts of the world began discussing the interrelationship between faith and science. Topics ranged from the hominid fossil record to Ellen White's view of science. The conference revealed the seriousness and breadth of differences concerning questions of origin that are present in the SDA community today.

During 2003 and the first half of 2004 seven divisions held similar faith and science conferences in their territories. The formal discussions culminated in August 2004 with the second international conference on the subject in Denver, Colorado. At this conference papers were read summarizing the findings of the discussions during the previous two years.

The new element in this conference was a discussion on the ethics of dissent dealing with the ethical responsibility of those who differ in significant ways from the biblical position of the church on the topic of creation. The discussion was open, candid, and highly professional. It was obvious that a small number of individuals – scientists and theologians – did not support or felt uncomfortable with the biblical doctrine of creation in six literal, consecutive days as clearly revealed in Genesis 1.¹

There was no attempt on the part of church leaders to modify or change our fundamental belief on creation. This was clearly stated by Elder Jan Paulsen before the discussions were initiated. However, such discussions cannot be avoided because the theory of evolution and the Adventist doc-



The theory of evolution and the Adventist doctrine of creation represent two antagonistic and fundamentally diverse world views.



trine of creation represent two antagonistic and fundamentally diverse world views. Unfortunately, theistic evolution is one view that is being held and taught by some Seventh-day Adventists today.

Secondly, it is important for the church to be aware of the fact that neither evolutionists nor creationists have all the answers in the debate. These conferences provided a proper environment to discuss these questions while at the same time holding to our faith commitment.

AN AFFIRMATION OF CREATION

A report entitled "An Affirmation of Creation" was presented on September 10, 2004 to the Executive Committee of the General Conference by the International Faith and Science Conference Organizing Committee.² This report noted "a high level of concurrence on basic understandings" and "widespread affirmation of the church's understanding of life on earth." However, the document also observed that "some among us interpret the biblical record in ways that lead to sharply different conclusions." Specifically, "alternative interpretations of Genesis 1, including the idea of theistic evolution," were rejected as lacking theological coherence and inconsistent with Adventist beliefs, including the biblical doctrine of creation. It also noted concern about the alleged

ambiguity of the phrase "in six days" found in Fundamental Belief #6, resulting in "uncertainty about what the church actually believes." In this same connection, the following observation is also significant:

We recognize that there are different theological interpretations among us regarding Genesis 1-11. In view of the various interpretations we sensed a high degree of concern that those involved in the Seventh-day Adventist teaching ministry conduct their work ethically and with integrity—by standards of their profession, the teachings of Scripture, and the basic understanding held by the body of believers.

The report also included the following statements of affirmations and recommendations:

AFFIRMATIONS

1. We affirm the primacy of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins.
2. We affirm the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Genesis 1 that life on earth was created in six literal days and is of recent origin.
3. We affirm the biblical account of the Fall resulting in death and evil.
4. We affirm the biblical account of a catastrophic Flood, an act of God's judgment that affected the whole planet, as an important key to understanding earth history.
5. We affirm that our limited understanding of origins calls for humility and that further exploration into these questions brings us closer to deep and wonderful mysteries.
6. We affirm the interlocking nature of the doctrine of creation with other Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.
7. We affirm that in spite of its fallenness nature is a witness to the Creator.
8. We affirm Seventh-day Ad-

RESPONSE TO “AN AFFIRMATION OF CREATION”

Whereas belief in a literal, six-day creation is indissolubly linked with the authority of Scripture, and;

Whereas such belief interlocks with other doctrines of Scripture, including the Sabbath and the Atonement, and;

Whereas Seventh-day Adventists understand our mission, as specified in Revelation 14:6, 7, to include a call to the world to worship God as Creator,

We, the members of the General Conference Executive Committee at the 2004 Annual Council, state the following as our response to the document, *An Affirmation of Creation*, submitted by the International Faith & Science Conferences:

1. We strongly endorse the document’s affirmation of our historic, biblical position of belief in a literal, recent, six-day Creation.

2. We urge that the document, accompanied by this response, be disseminated widely throughout the world Seventh-day Adventist Church, using all available communication channels and in the major languages of world membership.

3. We reaffirm the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the historicity of Genesis 1-11: that the seven days of the Creation account were literal 24-hour days forming a week identical in time to what we now experience as a week; and that the Flood was global in nature.

4. We call on all boards and educators at Seventh-day Adventist institutions at all levels to continue upholding and advocating the church’s position on origins. We, along with Seventh-day Adventist parents, expect students to receive a thorough, balanced, and scientifically rigorous exposure to and affirmation of our historic belief in a literal, recent six-day creation, even as they are educated to understand and assess competing philosophies of origins that dominate scientific discussion in the contemporary world.

5. We urge church leaders throughout the world to seek ways to educate members, especially young people attending non-Seventh-day Adventist schools, in the issues involved in the doctrine of creation.

6. We call on all members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family to proclaim and teach the church’s understanding of the biblical doctrine of Creation, living in its light, rejoicing in our status as sons and daughters of God, and praising our Lord Jesus Christ—our Creator and Redeemer.⁴

ventist scientists in their endeavors to understand the Creator’s handiwork through the methodologies of their disciplines.

9. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist theologians in their efforts to explore and articulate the content of revelation.

10. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist educators in their pivotal ministry to the children and youth of the church.

11. We affirm that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church identified in Revelation 14:6, 7 includes a call to worship God as Creator of all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Organizing Committee for the International Faith and Science Conferences recommends that:

1. In order to address what some interpret as a lack of clarity in Fundamental Belief #6 the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Genesis narrative be affirmed more explicitly.

2. Church leaders at all levels be encouraged to assess and monitor the effectiveness with which denominational systems and programs succeed in preparing young people, including those attending non-Adventist schools, with a biblical understanding of origins and an awareness of the challenges they may face in respect to this understanding.

3. Increased opportunity be provided for interdisciplinary dialog and research, in a safe environment, among Seventh-day Adventist scholars from around the world.³

The 2004 Annual Council, after careful discussion of this report, produced a response in which the members of the Council strongly endorsed the Church’s historic, biblical position of belief in a literal, recent, six-day creation.

It is significant that this response of the 2004 Annual Council called on all school boards and teachers at our schools to uphold and advocate the Church’s position on origins. Unfortunately, this recommendation has not been sufficiently followed up. There-

fore, at the recent General Conference session in Atlanta, it was voted “to reaffirm and endorse” the 2004 Annual Council’s response to the *Affirmation of Creation* statement. It also voted, in accordance with the 2005 General Conference session protocol for amending a fundamental belief, to request that the General Conference administration initiate a process to integrate Fundamental Belief #6 with this response.⁵ It is hoped that this action of the world church will encourage the boards and teachers of our schools and universities to ensure that teaching on origins supports and affirms the church’s Fundamental Belief #6.

CONCLUSION

The last few years have shown that theistic evolution has gained entrance into our church. Should it become more and more accepted, we will be in danger of losing the biblical foundation for the Sabbath and our understanding of salvation. Without the creation week, the Sabbath becomes a Jewish institution; and if death existed long before the appearance of man, then there was no Fall in Eden and therefore really no need for salvation. And if there was no Fall, then Paul was in error when he wrote:

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Rom 5:12)

ED

¹ Ángel M. Rodríguez, “Second International Faith and Science Conference: A Report,” *Reflections* 9 (Jan. 2005): 2.

² “An Affirmation of Creation,” Report of the International Faith and Science Conference Organizing Committee; online: <http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat54.html>; accessed July 8, 2010.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ This response to “An Affirmation of Creation” was voted by the Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 13, 2004; online: <http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat55.html>; accessed July 8, 2010.

⁵ *Adventist Review*, July 2, 2010, p. 30.

Gerhard Pfandl is associate director for the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference. This article has been reprinted, by permission, from *Reflections*, the BRI Newsletter, edited by Clinton Wahlen, Ph.D.

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