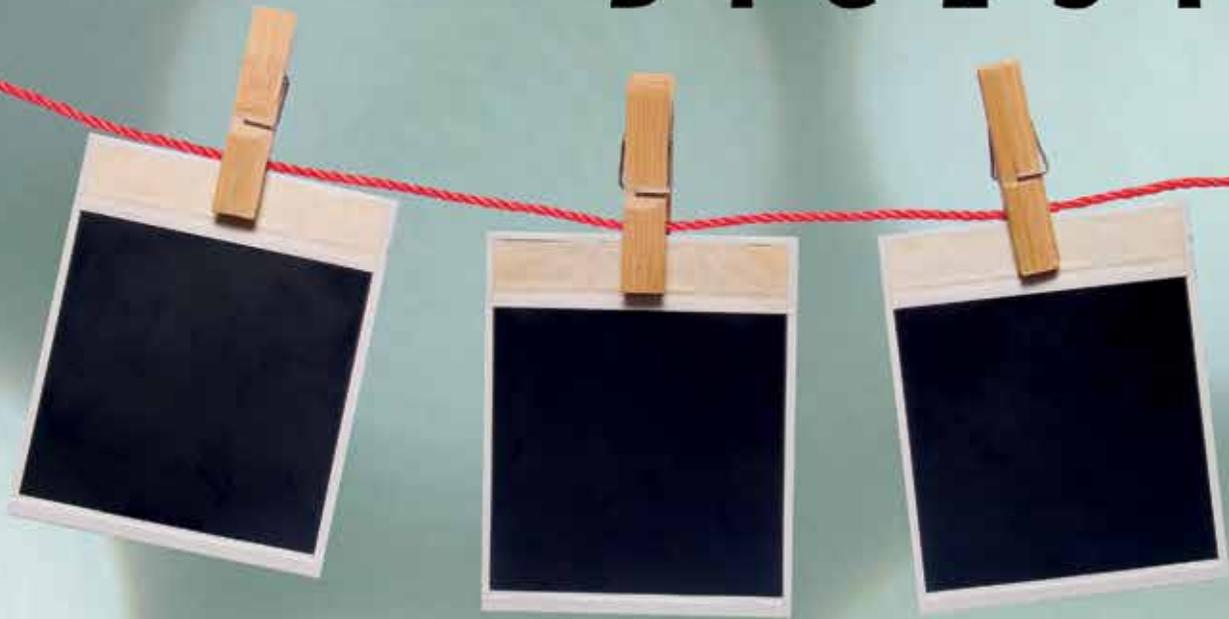


quarterly resource for local church leaders † january/march 2014

# ELDER'S DIGEST



**PICTURES OF REVIVAL**



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# LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEW YEAR

**A** new year! Here we are, standing at the door of 2014. How did 2013 go for you? Was it a good year? Do you wish you could live it over again? Are you just glad it's over?

I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to the new year. It's not that 2013 was bad; I'm looking forward to the new year because it's an opportunity for us as a church to build on the past year. It's a chance to do some of the things we didn't accomplish last year.

How was your church last year? How many people gave their lives to Jesus? How many people are receiving Bible studies? As I traveled the world, I could see many churches growing last year, but can we do better? Of course we can!

Did the people who already belonged to Christ grow over the past year? I believe many did. Did your church members experience true revival and reformation? Can we as church leaders help them grow even more? Yes, we can!

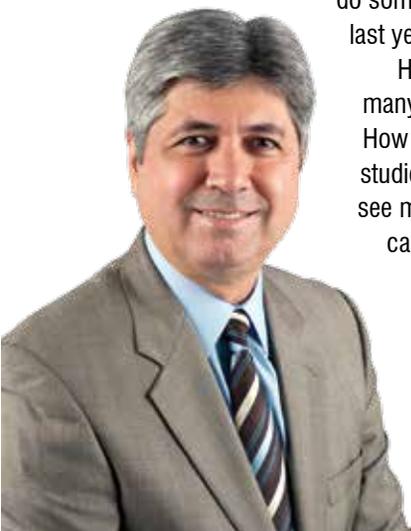
I praise God for the great work that you, as spiritual leaders, did in your church last year. I appreciate each one of you. Each of you is gifted in a unique way to help your church grow and to help each person grow closer to Jesus.

I believe our church is on the verge of doing even greater things for the kingdom of God. What will it take for us to be able to do that? Why is it important for the church to be successful? It's important because, every day, people—in your community, in your family, and in your circle of friends—are dying without Jesus. We must be successful; the world is depending on us to know Him.

If none of us who make up the church is successful in our walk with Jesus, the church will not win new souls to Him. If our personal lives are a mess, the life of the church will also be a mess.

A new year is waiting. What will we do with this new year? Let's make 2014 a year we will never forget. Let's live a life with no regrets!

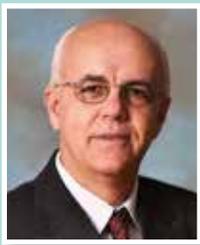
Have a happy and blessed New Year!



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

# THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT AND THE NEW MISSIONARY BOOK, BEYOND IMAGINATION

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2013, DURING THE GENERAL CONFERENCE (GC) ANNUAL COUNCIL, A THANKSGIVING CEREMONY FOR THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT (GCP) WAS HELD IN THE GC AUDITORIUM. JONAS ARRAIS, EDITOR OF *ELDER'S DIGEST*, INTERVIEWED WILMAR HIRLE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLISHING MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT.



**Wilmar Hirle** was born and raised in Brazil, where he entered the literature ministry. He served as director of the Publishing Ministries Department in Brazil at the conference, union, and division levels. He also served as Publishing Ministries director of the Euro-Asia Division. He is presently associate director of the Publishing Ministries Department at the General Conference. In this role, he works directly with 63 Adventist publishing houses and is in charge of developing new books for the world church. Hirle and his wife Cleni have a daughter, a son, and a granddaughter.

## FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW, HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE GREAT CONTROVERSY PROJECT (GCP)?

I've been working for the church for more than 30 years, and I've never seen our church members as enthusiastic about a project as they were with this one. Everybody wanted to be a part of it, to do something different. By the grace of God, we far exceeded our goal to distribute 140 million copies of *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White, which has been published and distributed in more than 100 languages around the world. It was evident that the Holy Spirit was leading this project.

## WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THESE BIG PROJECTS? WHY DO YOU REFER TO THE BOOKS AS "SILENT MESSENGERS"?

As a church, our mission is to reach every person with the good news that Jesus is coming soon. There are different ways of sharing this news. Ellen G. White said, "The silent messengers that are placed in the homes of the people . . . will strengthen the gospel ministry in every way; for the Holy Spirit will impress minds as they read the books, just as He impresses the minds of those who listen to the preaching of the word. The same ministry of angels attends the books that contain



the truth as attends the work of the minister."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, if we only preach to those who attend church, what percentage of the population are we reaching? How many non-Adventists visit Seventh-day Adventist churches each year? An optimistic number is less than one percent. Our goal is to reach not just one percent; we are told to reach the entire world! That's why we have to go everywhere. Using these "silent messengers" is one of the best ways to spread God's good news.

## THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS DISTRIBUTED UNDER THE BANNER OF THE GCP WAS IMPRESSIVE. WHAT DO YOU THINK GOD'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS FOR THESE KINDS OF PROJECTS?

Never before have we had a project that scattered such a huge number of books—more than 140 million! But if our aim is to reach everyone, we are far from our goal. Ellen G. White wrote, "Publications must be multiplied, and scattered like the leaves of autumn."<sup>2</sup>

When my wife and I moved to the United States, the first house we bought had a big yard with several trees. Without thinking, I promised my wife that I would take care of the yard. When autumn came, there were leaves everywhere, and every Friday I spent several hours raking them up. That's when I



*The Great Hope in different languages.*

understood what God had in mind to accomplish His mission. Never have our church members been as enthusiastic about scattering missionary books as they have been with this project. Praise the Lord for that! However, God wants us to do even more than we are doing.

### **THE GCP IS COMING TO AN END. WHAT WILL THE NEXT MISSIONARY PROJECT BE?**

God gave us the task of preaching the Three Angels' messages. We have good doctrines that other churches also preach. If we all preach the same messages, people will not feel the need to change their lives. The Three Angels' messages speak about the conflict between Christ and Satan and how Satan misleads people using God's Word. The next missionary book will feature the First Angel's message as mentioned in Revelation 14: "Saying with a loud voice, fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:7).

The world church has designated 2014 as the year to emphasize the Creation Project. The Publishing Ministries Department was asked to prepare a missionary book about Creation in the context of the First Angel's message. The book *Beyond Imagination* was prepared for that purpose.

The first part of this book describes the wonders of the universe, including the number of stars and their sizes; the wonders of the earth, including animals, birds, fish, and the human body—wonders that evolutionists cannot explain. Then a question is asked: If a loving Creator created so many wonders, why do people suffer? Why does death exist? The last part of the book talks about suffering and how God is planning to recreate everything at Jesus' soon return.

### **WHY SHOULD A LOCAL CHURCH ELDER STRATEGIZE TO INVOLVE MEMBERS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF MISSIONARY BOOKS?**

Most of our members attend church every Sabbath and enjoy listening to good sermons and good music. But in places where only these are offered, the church is not growing. To have a vibrant, energetic church, we need to get members more involved with the church. One of the challenges we face as leaders is that many of our members are afraid to go out and share the gospel. Most the time they're afraid because they don't know how to do evangelism. When we teach members how to use literature for missionary activities, they learn very quickly and are eager to share.

Ellen G. White advised us, "Let the leaflets and tracts, the papers and books, go in every direction. Carry with you, wherever you go, a package of select tracts, which you can hand out as you have opportunity. Sell what you can, and lend or give them away as the case may seem to require. Important results will follow."<sup>3</sup> When she wrote this, literature evangelists as we know them didn't exist; she was telling all church members to take literature with them wherever they went.

I always challenge people to keep literature with them at all times and ask God what He wants them to do with it. When they do this, they never return home with books. The Holy Spirit always shows them where the literature should go. When church members are involved in the distribution of literature, they are happier and more enthusiastic.

I recently preached at a church and challenged its members to distribute literature. A few weeks later I received an e-mail from one of the members. He told me that one Sabbath afternoon, he and several other church members took 250 bottles of water and 250 missionary books to one of Miami's beaches; they distributed all the water and all the books. He was so happy with the experience that he wanted to buy more books! Many members become literature evangelists after experiencing the power of distributing books. Ellen G. White wrote that when a person goes out to sell literature, that person becomes a living preacher. Pastors and elders, those who preach in church, are living preachers, too. When a literature evangelist presents a book and talks about it, his work is just as important as the pastor's. Being a literature evangelist is a very important work; that's why we as leaders should encourage members to do this work.

Not all members have selling skills, but experience has shown me that everyone can distribute literature.

A friend once said to me, "I cannot sell, or even approach a person to give something. But before I leave a place, I always 'forget' a book somewhere. It can be in an airplane, in a hotel room—anywhere! What happens after that is in God's hands."

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> White, *Christian Service*, 151.

# PICTURES OF REVIVAL

REVIVAL CAN BE EXPLAINED WITH MANY WORDS, BUT IT IS BETTER UNDERSTOOD WHEN DESCRIBED WITH PICTURES. LIKE JESUS' DESCRIPTIONS OF HEAVEN THROUGH PARABLES ABOUT EVERYDAY OBJECTS, PEOPLE, AND EVENTS, THE QUESTION "WHAT DOES REVIVAL LOOK LIKE?" IS BEST ANSWERED WITH BIBLICAL WORD PICTURES. FIVE OF THESE PICTURES WILL BE CONSIDERED HERE.



**“A PICTURE IS WORTH MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS.”**

Napoleon Bonaparte

**PICTURE #1:  
“CAN THESE BONES LIVE?”**

Imagine a valley of dry bones becoming a mighty army of living men and women (Ezek. 37:1-14). This is the most powerful picture of revival in the Bible. Revival is the divine transformation of a hopeless bunch of scattered bones into a hopeful cohort of living souls. Indeed, this story illustrates and confirms that revival is “a resurrection from the spiritual death.”<sup>1</sup> This Bible picture also makes clear that this resurrection comes as a result of the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 37:4-10), just as it happened at Creation (Gen. 1:1-3). This spiritual resurrection is a foretaste of the final resurrection to eternal life on the last day (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28, 29; 6:40; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 4:16).

**PICTURE #2:  
“LOOK AND LIVE”**

Picture men and women dying of venomous snake bites. This was the fate of the murmuring Israelites in their wilderness sojourn (Num. 21:1-6). Their only hope was God’s solution: to look in faith at a bronze serpent (Num. 21:8, 9). All who could do this were revived—from dying to living. No need for CPR or a defibrillator; a look of faith performed the miracle. Jesus drew from this Old Testament story when He spoke to Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus pointed out to Nicodemus that, just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent to live, eternal life comes through a continual fixed look of faith on Jesus (John 3:14-16). Indeed, true revival comes through a total moment-by-moment abiding faith relationship with Jesus Christ. True life is found in looking to Jesus in faith.

**PICTURE #3:  
“SHOWERS OF BLESSING”**

Imagine a land where there is no mist, dew, or rain for three years. This was the situation in Israel during the reign of King Ahab and the ministry of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1). Now picture this: hot air; dry, dusty soil; little or no vegetation or harvest; dried-up springs, streams, and rivers; and dying animals and humans.<sup>2</sup> This situation was the result of a covenant curse for Israel’s apostasy through idolatry (Deut. 28:15, 23, 24).

Eventually, Elijah prayed until the rains finally came, and when it rained, it poured (1 Kings 18:41-45), and the land came back to life. Rain brings revival to the land—cooling the air, causing vegetation to bloom, refreshing and cleansing all living things. Just as rain is a blessing from God giving the land physical life again (Deut. 11:13-15; Ps. 65:5, 8-13; 104:10-15, 24-28), revival is God’s promise to bring spiritual refreshment to the dry, dusty, and dying lives of His people through the Holy Spirit (Isa. 44:3, 4; Ezek. 34:26, 27; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:21-24), causing them to bear fruit—harvests for His glory.

**PICTURE #4:  
“ALIVE TOGETHER—THE POWER OF ONE”**

Think about what a revived church looks like. The early church of Acts gives us a splendid example of this. It was a church that received the early rain of the Holy Spirit as promised in Joel 2:28, 29 after continual communal prayer (Acts 1:4, 5, 8, 12-14; 2:1-4). It was a community filled with and led by God the Holy Spirit, and the entire book of Acts shows the result of this. It was a church that loved to read, study, teach, and preach the Word of God; loved to pray and worship together; loved to give of their means for God’s cause; and loved having a positive impact on their community (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35). It grew in faith (quality) and in number (quantity) (Acts 16:5). Above all, it was a church that enjoyed unity, love, and real fellowship.<sup>3</sup> It was a church full of people who were alive and working as one. The same is possible in our time if we follow the example of the early church of Acts.

**PICTURE #5:  
“SHINE, JESUS, SHINE”**

Picture a land covered in winter’s darkness and icy cold, awaiting the spring sun to rise in all its strength and glory to melt away the snow and light up the land. This is a setting that makes any source of light and heat attractive. Such a source will provide warmth, direction, and safety. Church members who have been revived are like candles in the dark or lights on a hill that cannot be hidden (Matt. 5:14-16). These individuals shine like stars in the night (Phil. 2:14, 15; Dan. 12:3), reflecting the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5) and the glory of the Son of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2) and attracting the world to His light through their deeds of love (Isa. 60:1-3; Matt. 5:16). They shine because they live in the light (1 John 1:5-7; 2:8-11; John 3:19-21; Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:4-7), dispelling the darkness and the selfish, cold love of the world (Eph. 5:8-14; Matt. 24:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). Unlike the lukewarm Laodiceans, they are hot with passionate love for Christ (Rev. 3:14-20). They spend time daily beholding the glory of God in Christ, and their faces are radiant with His light (2 Cor. 3:14-18). Together these revived people unite as shining lights and fill the whole earth with God’s glory<sup>4</sup> (Rev. 18:1; Hab. 2:14; Jer. 31:33, 34). Indeed, revival brings warmth and light to cold souls in this dark world.

So what does revival look like? Before it comes, there is dread and death. After it comes, there is love and life. Through earnest, united prayer and total personal and communal surrender to the power of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, we can experience revival.<sup>5</sup> The result? A living army of God’s people, refreshing as rain, abundant with the fruit of the Spirit and the harvest of souls, united in real fellowship, and passionately hot and radiant with the love of Jesus in a cold, dark world.

Got the picture?

BEFORE REVIVAL	AFTER REVIVAL
Dry bones, covered corpses	Living army
Poisoned dying souls	Cleansed, healed souls
Hot, dry, dusty, dying land	Cool, refreshing abundant rains and harvests, fertile land
Apathetic, divided Church	Lively, united Church
Cold souls in darkness	Hot love from shining souls in the light

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:128.

<sup>2</sup> "A year passes, and yet there is no rain. The earth is parched as if with fire. The scorching heat of the sun destroys what little vegetation has survived. Streams dry up, and lowing herds and bleating flocks wander hither and thither in distress. Once-flourishing fields have become like burning desert sands, a desolate waste. The groves . . . are leafless; the forest trees, gaunt skeletons of nature, afford no shade. The air is dry and suffocating; dust storms blind the eyes and nearly stop the breath. . . . Once-prosperous cities and villages have become places of mourning. Hunger and thirst are telling upon man and beast with fearful mortality. Famine, with all its horror,

comes closer and still closer" (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 124).

<sup>3</sup> "Real fellowship is so much more than showing up at services. It is experiencing life together. . . . Authentic fellowship is not superficial, surface-level chit-chat. It is genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level sharing. It happens when people get honest about who they are and what is happening in their lives. They share their hurts, reveal their feelings, confess their failures, disclose their doubts, admit their fears, acknowledge their weaknesses, and ask for help and prayer" (Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, 138, 139).

<sup>4</sup> "Servants of God, with their faces *lighted up and shining* with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. 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" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 611, 612, emphasis supplied).

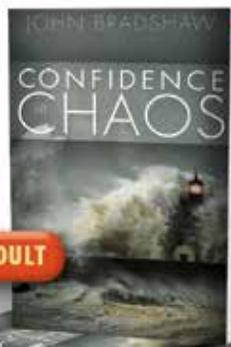
<sup>5</sup> "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. . . . it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer" (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:121).

Michael Oluike, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at Bugema University, Uganda.

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in 2014





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# COMMUNION

## SHOULD COMMUNION BE OPEN OR CLOSED?

The Bible's teaching on Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is found in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, and it promotes "open" participation for believers. All those who are true believers in God through personal faith in Jesus Christ, His Son, are worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper by virtue of the fact that they have accepted the death of Christ as payment for their sins (see also Eph. 1:6, 7).

Some churches practice "closed" Communion. Their reasoning seems to be that they want to ensure that everyone who partakes is a believer. This is understandable; however, it places church leadership and/or church ushers in a position of determining who is and who is not worthy to partake, which is problematic at best. A church may assume that all of their official members are true believers, but this is not always correct.

The practice of restricting Communion to church members seems to be an attempt to make sure someone doesn't partake in an unworthy manner, which some assume to mean that person is not a true Christian. However, the word is not "unworthy" but "unworthily." This refers to the manner in which a person partakes of the bread and cup, not to his or her worthiness to participate in the first place. No one is really worthy to come into the presence of God for any reason, but by virtue of the shed blood of Christ on the Cross, all who believe in Him have been made worthy. First Corinthians 11:27-32 is clearly addressed to believers, not to unbelievers. Beginning this passage at verse 23, it is obvious that Paul is talking about believers partaking of the Lord's Supper, thus "proclaim[ing] the Lord's death till He comes" (verse 26). Also, Paul concludes the passage by calling the readers "brethren" (verse 33). Therefore, the passage is warning believers to avoid partaking in an unworthy manner. This unworthy manner is described as excluding others at Communion and partaking of the bread and wine to curb one's hunger (verse 34).

So, Communion should be "open" to all believers, but those believers should examine their motives for partaking. If believers are irreverent in their attitude toward Communion because of prejudice or appetite, they should voluntarily refuse to partake or, in some extreme cases, should be



Photo: Jason Silva

counseled by church leadership not to partake. The *Church Manual* affirms, "The church practices open communion. All who have committed their lives to the Savior may participate."<sup>1</sup>

May the Lord bless you as you understand the biblical message and meaning of Communion so that the practice can be a real blessing to you and to your church. 

<sup>1</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, p. 22.

*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](mailto:eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org).*

# 10 TIPS FOR BETTER PREACHING

IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR PREACHING, HERE ARE 10 TIPS THAT CAN HELP YOU:



1. *Know your audience.* Prepare a sermon that can be understood and appreciated by those who are listening.
2. *Personalize your sermon.* Most people will relate and respond better to your sermon when you combine facts with interesting stories and examples.
3. *Respect time limits.* If you find yourself running late, know beforehand what you can omit. If you run short, be prepared with additional material that complements the flow of your sermon.
4. *Make a strong start.* Start off right with your very first words and you'll find that it's easy to hold your audience's attention for the rest of the sermon.
5. *Watch your body language.* It's what you don't say that tells the most about you.
6. *Maintain eye contact.* Look at your listeners when you talk, not through or beyond them.
7. *Pace yourself.* Speak slowly and steadily so that you can be understood.
8. *Silence is not a crime.* You don't have to fill every second with words; it's acceptable to pause and gather your thoughts or sip water before you resume speaking.
9. *Work on your tone and delivery.* Know when to raise and lower your voice, and which words to emphasize. Your energy is infectious, and your audience will react to it. Use your tone of voice to grab their attention and hold it.
10. *Finish well.* A perfect finish should not be abrupt or leave the audience wondering if there's more to come.

These 10 tips will help you improve your sermons. And remember, your relationship with God through prayer and Bible study is the foundation of any sermon preparation and delivery.



General Conference Ministerial Association

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

## FOR YOUR WORSHIP MINISTRY

There's something about a new beginning—on a calendar or otherwise—that inspires us. We are invigorated by an opportunity to “do better this time around.” We all know, of course, that January 1 rarely ends up being the watershed moment we had envisioned, but making New Year's resolutions continues to seem like a reasonable idea. We realize that there are at least two or three simple things we could do every day—exercise, chip away at that long-term project, read the Scriptures—that would drastically change our lives. So, what happens between January 1 and our failure by the end of February (or, more likely, January 4)?

The reality is that even the most important and least time-consuming activities are impossible in a life that is already too full. As you look at your worship ministry, I would suggest that you consider the following items:

1. *Give yourself and your worship team several weeks of extravaganza-free worship gatherings.* The Advent and Christmas seasons are generally the busiest in the church year. With special events and all the additional work that goes into seasonal worship services, December is hardly a vacation month for church leaders and musicians. With little time for restful renewal, your leadership team is probably exhausted. The ecology of a worship ministry cannot sustain the effort required in high liturgical seasons. Enjoy a few weeks of simplicity as a matter of ecological ethics and justice. In the process, you might just discover things you can permanently remove.

2. *Set aside at least one Sabbath morning to simply participate in your congregation's worship gathering with no leadership responsibilities.* If the intrinsic value of restorative rest is not reason enough to take a break, view this as an essential learning exercise as well. Those of us who are always leading from the platform need to be reminded of what worship is like for participants in the pew. And more importantly, we need to practice a truth that is obvious but sometimes overlooked: Worship is an encounter with God, not with us. Worship ministry is important, but we are not necessary mediators of God's gracious presence. God wants to use all of us, but Jesus is the true worship leader who draws people

to Himself (John 12:32). As we take time to rest in the sufficiency of God's work, we can relearn the true, intrinsic value of what it means to be human—to be beloved daughters and sons of God. Sometimes we have to set aside our “to do” lists to recognize the magnitude of what we already have.

Not only will this intentional inaction create space in your personal life, it will help you prioritize in your ministry as well.

ED

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# WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP MEAN?

## DOING A MEMBERSHIP AUDIT

The Christian church didn't adopt the idea of membership until the Reformation. For Adventists, it's embedded in the "free church" part of our heritage, as illustrated in the New England town hall meeting where the emphasis is on self-governing institutions instead of institutions run by the powerful few.

Yet membership generally is in decline in contemporary society. The book *Bowling Alone* documented that bowling leagues and all traditional civic groups in America have been hard-hit. Starting with the Baby Boom generation, individualism has changed the social structures of churches, organizations, and the workplace. Note the growth in the number of couples living together outside of marriage: relationships with social structure of any kind are not what people prefer.

Because we Adventists see "kingly power" as something that God prohibits, we must regard membership as essential to maintaining a self-governing organization. Ours is not to be merely a consumer religion—a store where we go to obtain "religious groceries" and supplies of inspiration and spirituality. It is a community of disciples charged with a mission to impact the world in which they live, an expeditionary force with assigned goals in an alien world. Its capacity to sustain and govern itself is absolutely essential. Membership is foundational to that capacity. So how do we understand church membership in a non-joining world?

Begin with an audit of your church membership. Here's how it's done:

Go through the membership list name by name and code each individual in one of the following categories:

1. People who attend church at least once a month most of the year.
2. People who do not attend because of disability or age or because they are away at school or in military service, etc.
3. People who have moved out of the area but have not yet transferred their membership.
4. The leftovers, who live in the area but attend less than once a month or perhaps not at all.

Over the last couple of decades, my graduate students and I have done this with more than 1,000 local churches. Usually about 25-35 percent of the names fall into the fourth category and can be called "inactive." I have not seen any evidence that this percentage is increasing, although many people express that opinion.

You'll also find that about 5-10 percent of the regular attenders have not joined the local church. Some of these are spouses of Adventists, and they have never been baptized. Some people are preparing for baptism. And there are usually a number of baptized members of the denomination who attend regularly, give tithes and offerings, and even hold church office but have not transferred their membership.

People express various reasons for not transferring their membership. Some seek to provide support for a small church in a rural area that they are afraid will be closed if the membership dwindles too far. Others find no spiritual value in the "bureaucracy" of membership transfers. Younger adults may see "membership" as an outdated practice. That's why many of the more contemporary Evangelical churches ignore membership as a category and keep records simply of participation—people who attend, people who join activity groups, people who register for programs, etc. Their records are usually more up-to-date and useful than those of the average Adventist congregation. ED

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# CHOICES FOR LIFE:

## THE RIGHT FOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN

**You've** probably heard that what you feed your body is one of the key factors for health and longevity. However, while what you eat does impact your health, what you feed your brain is just as important. You “feed” your brain through what you see, hear, read, and think. In fact, scientific studies have documented that what you see (e.g., movies, soap operas, video games), what you read (e.g., books, magazines), what you listen to (e.g., music, media, people), and how long you spend on these activities can have a strong influence on your cognitive ability over time. This is true for both children and adults. Here are some healthy outcomes noted by researchers:

- Early fans of rock music (gothic, punk, heavy metal), African music (blues, hip-hop), and electronic dance music (techno/hardhouse) had elevated delinquency long-term, compared to fans of classical music and conventional pop.<sup>1</sup>
- Among kids, screen time was positively associated with greater waist circumference (a measure of being overweight or obese) and lower HDL (good) cholesterol.<sup>2</sup>
- Screen time (the use of tablets, cell phones, or television) close to bedtime can disrupt sleep and interfere with melatonin production.<sup>3</sup>
- Listening to uplifting music may be good for your cardiovascular system due to increased blood flow resulting from dilation of the inner lining of the blood vessels.<sup>4</sup>

Here are some facts about kids and screen time/media use in the United States:<sup>5</sup>

- **Screen time use:** On average, 8- to 18-year-olds spend 4.5 hours daily watching TV, videos, or DVDs (more than 11 hours if you count all media).
- **Media access:** More than 71 percent of young people have a television in their bedrooms, half have a video game player, and more than one-third have a computer and Internet access.
- **Parental rules:** Only 28 percent of all 8- to 18-year-olds say their families have rules about how much time they spend watching TV.
- Media use decreases by 3 hours per day in homes with any media rules.

But how about adults like you and me? Today's high-tech, fast-paced lifestyle makes it difficult to set boundaries, doesn't it? Some think multi-tasking is a virtue and might manage to surf the Internet while on a conference call, text while driving, or view multiple screens at the same time

while working. Ready for the truth? Studies have shown that people who multi-task are not as efficient in what they do. Not only that, they may experience more rapid cognitive decline and memory impairment over time.

So, as an elder, how can you find effective ways to model what and how to feed your brain? Here are some tips:

- Set limits for screen time, including at bedtime, both for you and for the little ones in your home. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours of screen time per day.
- Take a mental inventory of the kind of music you listen to at home, at work, and in your car, and the kinds of things you read and see.
- Choose only uplifting music and value-rich reading material that builds character and deepens your relationship with God.

In summary, if you want to keep your brain sharp and optimize your cognitive abilities, choose wisely what music you listen to, what you see, what you read, and how much time you spend on these activities. The Bible says, “There is time for everything under the sun” (Eccl. 3:10, NIV). If you choose to spend your time unwisely, feeding your brain with poor-quality material in music, images, or words, you may see the negative impact in your memory, mood, cognitive abilities, and physical health. On the other hand, if you choose wisely what and how you feed your brain, you will not only increase the chances of enjoying a full abundant life, but more importantly, you will glorify God (John 10:10, NIV; 1 Cor. 10:31).



<sup>1</sup> Ter Bogt, et al (2013). *Pediatrics* 131(2), e380-e389.

<sup>2</sup> J. Chaput, et al (2013). *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* 38(5): 477-483.

<sup>3</sup> Mayo Clinic, *Are Smartphones Disrupting Your Sleep? Mayo Clinic Study Examines the Question*. 2013.

<sup>4</sup> M. Miller, et al, “Positive Emotions and the Endothelium: Does Joyful Music Improve Vascular Health?” Oral presentation, American Heart Association Scientific Sessions, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser Foundation, *Generation M<sup>2</sup>: Media in the Lives of 8-18-Year-Olds*. January 2010.



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# IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING WELL >PART 2

**Christ As Our Pattern**—The teachings of Christ were impressive and solemn; His voice was melodious. And should not we, as well as Christ, study to have melody in our voices? He had a mighty influence, for He was the Son of God. We are so far beneath Him and so far deficient, that, [even if we] do the very best we can, our efforts will be poor. We cannot gain and possess the influence that He had; but why should we not educate ourselves to come just as near to the Pattern as it is possible for us to do, that we may have the greatest possible influence upon the people?

Our words, our actions, our deportment, our dress, everything, should preach. Not only with our words should we speak to the people, but everything pertaining to our person should be a sermon to them, that right impressions may be made upon them, and that the truth spoken may be taken by them to their homes. Thus our faith will stand in a better light before the community.

**Responsibility of Youth**—Young men and women, have you, as individuals, purchased at infinite cost, sought to study to show yourselves approved unto God, workmen which need not be ashamed? Have you brought to God the precious talent of your voice, and put forth painstaking effort to speak clearly, distinctly, and readily? However imperfect may be your manner of utterance, you may correct your faults, and refuse to allow yourself to have a nasal tone, or to speak in a thick, indistinct way. If your articulation is distinct and intelligible, your usefulness will be greatly increased. Then do not leave one defective habit of speech uncorrected.

**Correct Language and Cultivated Voice**—The great educating book is the Bible, and yet it is little read or practiced. Oh, that every individual would seek to make of himself all that he could, improving his opportunities to the very best of his ability, purposing to use every power which God has given him, not simply to advance his temporal affairs, but to advance his spiritual interests. Oh, that all might search diligently to know what is truth, to study earnestly that they might have correct language and cultivated voices, that they might present the truth in all its elevated and ennobling beauty.



**Co-workers With the Holy Spirit**—Some reason that the Lord will qualify a man by His Spirit to speak as He would have him; but the Lord does not propose to do the work which He has given man to do. He has given us reasoning powers, and opportunities to educate the mind and manners. And after we have done all we can for ourselves, making the best use of the advantages within our reach, then we may look to God with earnest prayer to do by His Spirit that which we cannot do for ourselves.



This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 178-180, by Ellen G. White.

# PROSPEROUS HEALTH

It has been clearly demonstrated that humans function in three phases—physical, mental, and spiritual. We were intelligently and harmoniously designed by our Creator in His own image (Gen. 1:20). Naturalism, vegetarianism, and faith—the lifestyle that pleases God—are to be considered as the best choices to reap a prosperous health that glorifies God (see Gal. 6:7, 8).

If we want to reap wholistic health, we must follow some rules. Let's briefly study some of these rules.

## I. FRESH AIR (GEN. 2:7)

Oxygen and atmospheric gases help to sustain life, but they are not life. A person can live for weeks without food, a few days without water, but only minutes without air. Lack of oxygen even for a short time can lead to irreversible brain damage and can cause death in just a few minutes. Oxygen, brain cells, and thoughts are inseparable.

Breathing is indispensable, and this process determines if we are sick or healthy. It is divided into two parts: inspiration and expiration. Inspiration is a function that is governed by the subconscious part of the brain, and it consists of the rhythmic and steady flow of air through the respiratory tract toward the lungs, where metabolic changes occur. Expiration is the expulsion of the air in our lungs that is saturated with carbon dioxide, a byproduct of organic combustion.

## II. SUNLIGHT (MAL. 4:2)

All living beings on Planet Earth depend on the sun. Sunlight is a source of energy for the vegetable kingdom, and humans can obtain energy directly from the rays of the sun. The human body can synthesize its own cholesterol from fats, oils, and proteins.

Hypertension is one of the leading indicators of potential heart disease. The fact the exposure to sunlight can reduce cholesterol, hypertension, and glycemia is an indication that heliotherapy can be used effectively for these purposes. Sunlight is also capable of fighting cancer by stimulating the immune system and increasing the flow of oxygen in the tissues. A strong immune system not only protects us from the common cold, flu, and other infectious diseases; it can also inhibit the development of cancer.

## III. WATER (JOHN 4:14)

The process of using water to cure diseases is known as hydrotherapy. Remember that perfect circulation is perfect health, and the use of water as a treatment is one of the best ways to regulate circulation. The change that occurs when cold water is applied to the skin is called a "reaction." The application of heat followed by cold will immediately increase the number of red and white cells in the blood. The external application of water is an easy and satisfactory method of regulating blood circulation. A cold shower is excellent for toning the body. A warm shower will calm the nerves and balance the circulation.

## IV. EXERCISE (ECCL. 5:12)

Human beings were created to be active. They were given limbs that can bend and muscles that can move. A muscle is a group of fibers. These fibers derive energy from what a person eats. Muscles, including the heart, are strengthened by exercise. Inactive people are twice as likely to suffer heart attacks than those who are physically active.

Exercise is not only a valuable preventive measure; it can also be restorative. In addition to helping to develop and maintain the cardiovascular, respiratory and muscular systems, exercise also helps to relax all the body's systems and maintain homeostasis.

## V. APPROPRIATE DIET AND NUTRITION (ECCL. 10:17)

Good nutrition based on a balanced diet is essential to good health. What is a diet? It is a nutritional regime regulated by medical norms, not by choice or desire. What is nutrition? It is the act of nourishment. In other words, it is the art of "eating to live," not "living to eat."

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, once said: "May your food be your medicine and your medicine your food." Health derives from what we eat. Food is divided into two groups: natural and artificial. Natural foods are those that are taken from nature just as they are. Artificial foods are those that suffer transformation due to commercial, human-driven processes. Good nutrition is based on the consumption of appropriate substances and nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water. To enjoy good health, our intake should be 80 percent alkaline foods and 20 percent acidic foods.

And the fewer refined (processed) foods, we consume, the better.

## VI. TEMPERANCE (1 COR. 9:25)

Temperance or self-control is a mental process that helps human beings not to abuse good things and to abstain from what is not good; in other words, it works as the balancing force between good and bad.

## VII. REST (MARK 6:31)

To rest is to voluntarily cease all bodily activity. In His wisdom, God determined that every workday would lead to a night of rest. All the organs in our body require rest. Physical and mental labor produces fatigue. The principal mode of rest is sleep. Other forms of rest include napping, a change of activities, or taking a vacation.

One-third of the human existence is spent sleeping. Individuals who sleep less than 6 hours and those who sleep more than 9 hours usually live shorter lives than those who sleep between 7-8 hours.

## VIII. CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE POWER (JER. 17:7)

The Bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God, and without faith, many healing blessings will be detained. The weight of sin, with its greediness and anxieties that are never satisfied, is the fundamental cause of sickness.

What physicians can only attempt, Christ will complete. Physicians try to stimulate nature's healing powers, but only Jesus can heal. Physicians try to conserve life, and Christ gives life.

For humanity, God's health principles are the confidence that lies in the power that comes from above and which God is continually supplying. The decision to balance your life and keep it under control is an individual responsibility.

Many will ask, where can we obtain help to gain victory over degrading and destructive lifestyle habits? This is where self-control, rooted in the confidence in divine power, comes into play.



This sermon, prepared by Dr. R. Pérez Santos and published on the North Jamaica Conference Health Ministries Department Website, has been edited by the General Conference Ministerial Association for *Elder's Digest*.

Most people think preachers are not supposed to talk about weight loss, exercise, and healthy living. Some people think that all we are supposed to talk about is getting ready for heaven. But it is part of the church's mission to share God's instructions regarding healthy living.

From the beginning, God has given us foods (Gen. 1:29) that can help prevent cancer and heart disease. Since God had provided Adam and Eve with abundant fruits and vegetables, He must have intended for them to be vegetarians. However, after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God allowed animal sacrifices to be made and subsequently allowed meat to be eaten.

Prior to the Flood, we read that a distinction arose between clean and unclean animals (Gen. 7:2). Moses later enacted this distinction into law. The law was based partly on their wholesomeness as food and partly on religious considerations.

In the book of Leviticus, we learn a lot about the restrictions placed upon foods that the Hebrews could and could not eat. However, there are numerous references to other healthy foods mentioned in the Bible, and I have listed several examples below:

### I. THE "CLEANS"

- Clean, lean meat from certain animals (Lev. 11:2, 3).
- Fish with fins and scales (Lev. 11:9; Deut. 14:9).
- Honey, known to have several healing ingredients, especially royal jelly, which comes from the queen bee (Prov. 24:13; Deut. 8:8; Gen. 43:11).
- Barley grains (Ruth 1:22).
- Almonds and other nuts loaded with various nutrients (Gen. 43:11).
- Millet and other grains (Ezek. 4:9).
- Cucumbers, leeks, melons, onions, and other foods (Num. 11:5).
- Barley, wheat, figs, grapes, and pomegranates (Deut. 8:8).
- Unleavened and multigrain bread (high in fiber and gives protection from both heart disease and cancer) (Exod. 12:8, 15; Ezek. 4:9).
- Yogurt (from honey and curds/milk of cows, sheep, and goats) (Isa. 7:15, 22; Prov. 27:27).
- Beans and lentils (Gen. 25:34; Ezek. 4:9).
- Garlic, which contains cancer-fighting

chemicals and also helps to maintain a good cholesterol level in the body (Num. 11:5).

- Olive oil, which can "clean" the artery walls and strengthen the immune system (Deut. 8:8).

### II. THE "UNCLEANS"

• All that move in the water that do not have fins and scales. (Shellfish such as lobster and crab lived in water, but they could not be eaten because they had no fins or scales [Lev. 11:10]. These sea creatures—although high in zinc—contain a large amount of cholesterol).

• Wild birds and scavengers (not to be eaten because they fed upon dead animals and birds (Deut. 14:21; Lev. 11:13-19). A wide variety of birds are listed that should not be eaten because man was not allowed to eat anything related to dead things.

• Restrictions were placed upon what man could eat because of health reasons (Exod. 22:31). For instance, pork deteriorated rapidly in the semi-tropical climate of Palestine. In addition, swine have split hooves, but they don't chew the cud so are considered unclean.

• All other flying creeping things (besides locust, bald locust, beetle, and grasshopper) which have four feet shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:23).

• Other creeping things could not be eaten either (Lev. 11:41-43). An example of this would be a snake.

### III. OUR BODY IS A TEMPLE

Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Are you treating it with respect so it will last a long time? The Bible tells us, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23, KJV, emphasis added).

Furthermore, we are told to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:2, KJV).

Overeating, undereating, improper eating, lack of rest, no exercise, worry, stress, and frustration are all potentially dangerous and are definitely not right. However, proper nutrition, rest, plenty of vigorous exercise, laughter, and enough relaxation and fun are elements that are essential to good health.

### IV. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

The Bible says that God's "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6, KJV). As Christians, we need to acquire enough knowledge about the foods we eat so that we will be able to know what foods are good for us and stay away from empty or wasted calories. We need to use wisdom in selecting what foods we eat, yet exercise self-control and eat a variety of healthy foods.

### V. FINAL INSIGHTS

A. *The bondage of dietary laws.* Diets are like a "law," a written code of rules and regulations that serves only to increase our desire to break them. God told Adam and Eve that they could freely eat of every tree in the garden—except one. That was freedom, and that is what God wants for all of us (Gal. 5:1).

Jesus tells us that He came into this world "that we might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He wants us to "prosper and be in health, even as our soul prospers" (3 John 2).

We as believers are called to liberty. God does not want us to be in bondage to strict diets, overeating, or any harmful substances. Instead, He wants us to be free and to exercise self-control in all areas of our lives.

B. *Taking God for granted?* Too often we as believers take God for granted. In this fast-paced society of instant gratification, we assume we can eat what we want to eat with no regard to the consequences. Then, when we suffer physical ailments, we expect God to fix them right away.

The bottom line is that we reap what we sow—we are what we eat. If we eat fruits and vegetables and limit our intake of fatty foods, we will reap abundant health and vitality. If we eat fast food and forget about those colorful fruits and vegetables, we will reap health problems down the road.

### CONCLUSION

Exodus 23:25 declares, "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (KJV). Believe God today for His best in your body, but also take care of His creation by what you eat and how you rest to enjoy healthy living!



# HEALTHY FAMILY

Marriage and family are under attack! This is not a simple matter of rights and privileges, insurance, parental controls, visitation rights, and other family matters. The liberal agenda has made startling ground in its attempt to dismantle the institution of marriage. How did we get to the point where legislators are reviewing bills that embrace same-sex marriages? How did we get to the point where some places are licensing same-sex marriages? We fell asleep on our watch!

I would like to present four keys to a healthy family.

## I. A HEALTHY FAMILY HAS GOD AS ITS FOUNDATION (EPH. 5:1)

In spiritual and moral matters, our families are to be formed by and fashioned to follow God, not governments.

Let's consider the matter of legal institution vs. spiritual covenant. While it is absolutely necessary to claim and affirm the legal rights of the family, we can in no way rely on the government to sanctify our marriages. Genesis 2 describes God bringing a man and a woman together in a covenantal arrangement that He binds together. This reflects the relationship of the church and the Trinity—equal in essence but subordinate in function. The Bible is clear that men and women are created as equal bearers of God's image; however, each has a different role on earth. That is not an infinite role, in that Jesus proclaimed that we will not marry or divorce in heaven. The marriage covenant is established here on earth for specific purposes.

When a man leaves his father and mother, he establishes a new household. He is to represent God's spiritual authority over that household with his wife as a helpmate. We have traded this idea of a holy marriage for something less. Just as we cannot rely on the government to sanctify our marriages, we cannot rely on the church either. Getting married in the church has its value but does not guarantee a holy matrimony. The Bible says, "What God has joined together"!

This is a healthy issue. For our families to be healthy, we must have God as the foundation. How? Ephesians 5:1 says, "Follow God's example in everything you do" (NLT). If you see God doing something, copy Him. You must do the same in your relationships with others. You must practice doing what God does, or you will substitute the real thing for something easier to remember.

## II. A HEALTHY FAMILY HAS A COMMITMENT TO SUBMISSION (EPH. 5:21)

In a healthy family, everyone can't do whatever they want. Likewise, we must live in submission to Jesus and to each other.

A. Husbands to Jesus. This is an absolute must as a starting point.

1. Be firm and decisive but humble and unselfish.
2. Love your wife.
3. Encourage her spiritual growth.

B. Wives to husbands. Godly women do not consent to ungodly acts/demands.

1. Humility and submission are the most motivating tools wives possess.
2. Being the right person is more important than finding the right person.
3. Wives have a God-given ability to nurture positive change in their husbands. When this influence is abused, husbands become hardened and unwilling to lead.

C. Children to parents. The promise goes beyond the first 18 years.

Respect and honor. Those who find it hard to respect or honor others have an unbalanced view of themselves ("take delight in honoring each other" Rom. 12:10, NLT; "thinking of others as better than yourselves" Phil. 2:3, NLT).

## III. A HEALTHY FAMILY PROMOTES LOYALTY AND FAITHFULNESS (EPH. 6:1)

Trust is built over time and through trials. People, especially in families, need the security of knowing others will not take their place.

(Illustration: Bonding-tape analogy. Using clear packing tape, demonstrate how our ability to bond with each other lessens each time we attempt to bond inappropriately with others. Place the tape on the arm of someone and then remove the tape. Repeat this several times, each time showing the audience how hair, flesh, dirt, and oil stick to the tape when it's removed. Also point out how each successive attempt to apply the tape becomes less effective.)

Loyalty and faithfulness are encouraged in relationships when:

- A. Partnering means not getting your way all the time.
- B. Positive communication rules.
  1. Criticize only after making five positive statements.

2. Guard your tongue of accusations, name-calling, and the words "always" and "never."

3. Stay in the present; history belongs in the past.

4. Don't blame or yell. "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1).

C. Honesty is a priority. Trust is hard to regain once lost.

## IV. A HEALTHY FAMILY EXPERIENCES GOOD PARENTING (EPH. 6:4)

Good parenting takes the efforts of both parents and children. During the teen years, when an increasing amount of personal accountability is promoted, a team mentality is very helpful.

Illustration: In the context of a team, parents are coaches and children are players. Everyone's goal is to see the players score. As coaches, we teach fundamentals and encourage top performance while managing the game. Any coach will tell you it takes skill in a number of motivational techniques to ensure continued success. It also takes players who are coachable. The idea of "not provoking your children to wrath" should be extended to include always giving them a clear vision of how to succeed in every situation. This keeps them from losing hope, becoming frustrated, or giving in to unproductive emotions and habits.

The best coaches:

- A. Keep their spiritual life in order.
- B. Remember that coaching is more than just surviving.
- C. Understand that they are accountable (Deut. 6:1-9).
- D. Believe that success comes from self-sacrifice, not self-gratification.
- E. Model a biblical lifestyle.
- F. Spell devotion T-I-M-E.

## CONCLUSION

May the Lord help us to keep God as the foundation for a healthy family! By His grace, may we be better husbands, better wives, better parents, better children, better brothers, better sisters, better grandparents, better grandchildren, and better in-laws, all doing our part to create the best environment for the extended family of God!



General Conference Ministerial Association

# THE HEALTHY CHURCH

Acts 2, 5; Matt. 28

Healthy churches are those that fulfill their biblical purpose.

(Duct tape illustration using a roll of tape) Many of you here are familiar with this product. You have probably used it many times for many different purposes. Years ago, thousands of dollars were spent in research to develop this product. It is the invention of two men. Today, we use it on tons of things. You can use it to temporarily fix pipes. If you get a hole in your pants while hiking, you can use it to tape up your pants. It is even used on the space shuttle to temporarily fix problems. I used to have a friend who claimed the world was held together with duct tape and baling wire.

But duct tape was created with a specific purpose in mind. It was designed to be used in heating and air conditioning applications to seal joints on metal ductwork. Have any of you ever tried to use it on ductwork? This is some of the sorriest tape for ductwork I have ever seen! You try to use it on the insulation around the duct, and it sticks for about two minutes. It doesn't really stick to the duct either. It was created for a purpose, but it does everything but what it was designed to do!

Too many churches are just like duct tape. They do everything except what they were created to do. The question before us is this: Is [name of your church] a duct-tape church? Is your church fulfilling the purposes for which God created it? Healthy churches are those that fulfill their biblical purpose.

This message is not just for the leadership of the church; it is for every person who is a baptized member of the church because *all* members of the church have a part in helping it fulfill the purpose for which it was created. Let me say that again: *All* baptized members of the church have some part in fulfilling its purpose. *Church is not a spectator sport*, even though some people think it is.

Many people have opinions about why the church exists and what its purpose is. If you ask five church members to define the purpose of the church, you will probably get five different definitions! Church is for fellowship, to win souls, and other things, but this is not the whole answer. Sometimes you

may even hear people make the audacious statement that "the church exists to meet my needs."

To get a true picture of what the church was created to do, we need to go to the Bible. There are at least five biblical purposes for the church. Healthy, growing churches will strive to fulfill all of these purposes in a balanced way. Let's look at them together now.

## I. HEALTHY CHURCHES CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE IN WORSHIP AND UNITY (ACTS 2:46, 47)

Worship is a personal encounter with God in which one expresses love for God and surrenders completely to Him. (It's not just a mental thing. Love doesn't flow from the mind; it flows from the heart).

True worship includes the total person, both mind and emotion, in a way that calls him or her to praise God for who He is and what He has done and, in so doing, to reach a new awareness of and learn more about God.

Worship does not have anything to do with style or form; rather, it involves the attitude of our hearts. Worship is not accomplished only through acts; it is also accomplished through godly living and service (Rom. 12:1). Any church that places little emphasis on worship will experience little of God.

## II. HEALTHY CHURCHES SHARE GOD'S LOVE IN MINISTRY (ACTS 2:44, 45)

Ministry is meeting the needs of the total person (spiritual, emotional, social, and physical), and this doesn't just mean members of the church! Our problem is that we want to limit the definition of who our neighbor is.

I believe the Bible would define a neighbor as anyone whom God loves. Since God so loved the world, that would make our definition of neighbor invalid. The world outside the church walls doesn't care how much you know. They want to know how much you care!

## III. HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE INVOLVED IN EVANGELISM (MATT. 28:19, 20)

The church is God's agent of redemption to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the world. God is on a mission to redeem

lost humanity and calls His church to be on this mission with Him.

We are given the privilege of being ambassadors for God's kingdom. Being an ambassador carries with it not only the command to share the gospel but also the obligation to live the gospel! Churches will not grow substantially if the membership doesn't share the gospel.

## IV. HEALTHY CHURCHES GROW IN MEMBERSHIP (ACTS 5:14; 2:46, 47)

Membership means a lot more than just putting someone's name in the church books; it is about making people a part of the family (or the fellowship). Membership is an essential part of building fellowship within the church.

Fellowship is an essential element of a healthy church and a necessity for personal growth. Churches that don't have healthy fellowship or that fail to assimilate new members will grow cold.

## V. HEALTHY CHURCHES EDUCATE IN DISCIPLESHIP (MATT. 28:19, 20; 2 PET. 3:18)

Contrary to popular belief, the ultimate end of the Christian faith is not just salvation. We are to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" so that we can go back into the world and make a difference. We are to be more than those who simply believe *just* the facts. We are to be followers (disciples). That requires discipleship.

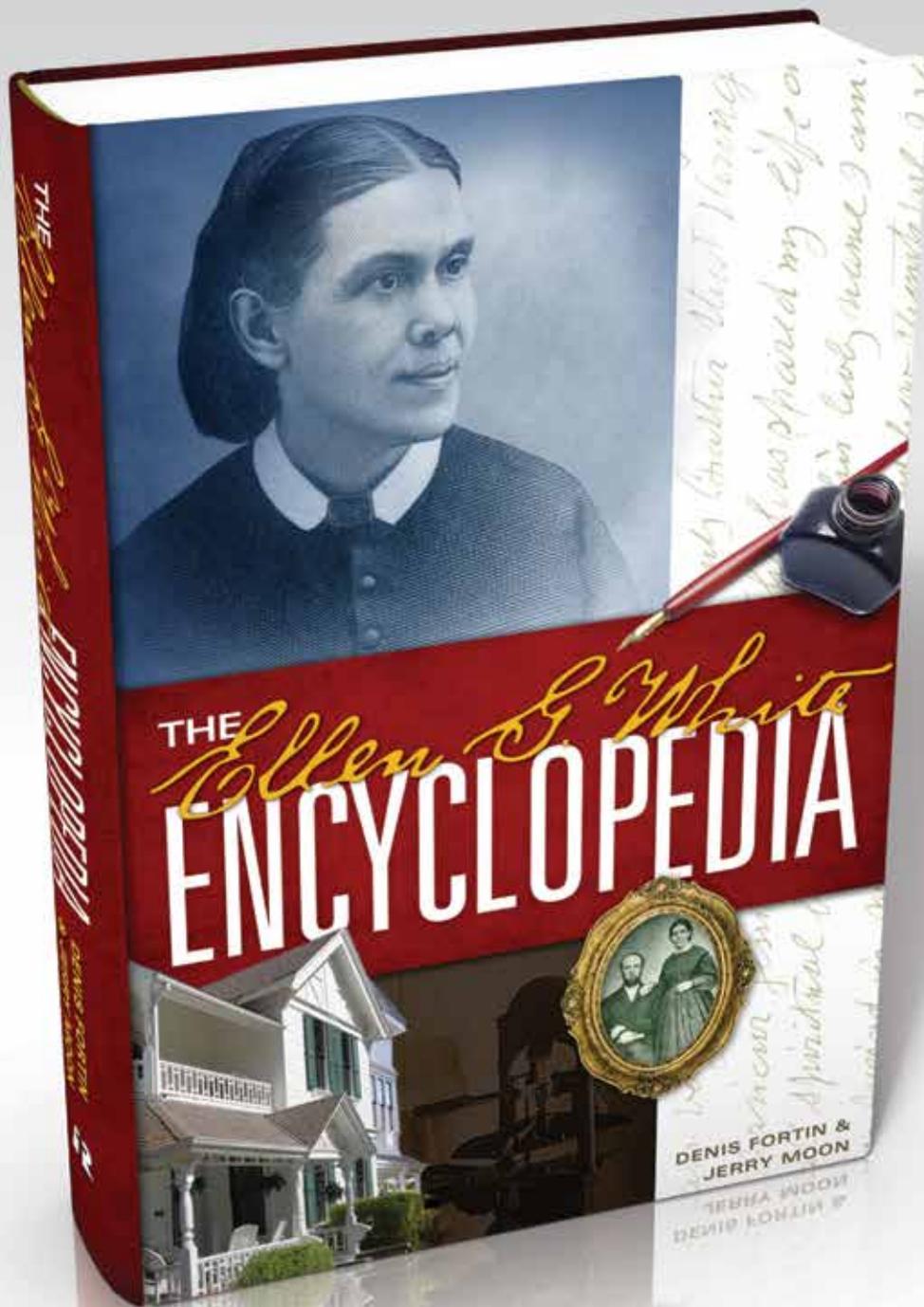
Sadly, discipleship is something that most churches do poorly. We tend to "dunk 'em and forget 'em" and never equip people to do the work of the ministry (even the fundamentals of the faith). Discipleship (equipping) is the main function of the leaders and one of the most important works of the church (Eph. 4:11, 12).

## CONCLUSION

Worship. Ministry. Evangelism. Membership. Discipleship. Is [name of your church] fulfilling these five purposes? Healthy churches are those that fulfill their biblical purpose. Let's all do our part to be an intentional healthy church!



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# STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLANNING

## SO YOUR CHURCH WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THAT ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS’ MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME<sup>1</sup> AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WOULD UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL.<sup>2</sup> BELOW IS THE SEVENTH IN THE SERIES. THIS ARTICLE WILL FOCUS ON THE NINTH “FARMING COMMANDMENT.”

**They** all must go to the mountain, not just Moses.

A prominent theory about church leadership is that pastors go up the mountain, meet God, and receive a vision about the future plans of their church. Then they come down from the mountain and share this vision with their congregation—what we could call “the Moses model.” Is this the way to develop the vision and ministry plan for your congregation?

No.

It’s important that a church’s mission and plans not rest solely on the pastor. Pastors come and go. Of course, the pastor should have a vision and some ideas to share with his/her church about where God is leading them. But the church members and leaders, not just the pastor, must give input into the vision for the church’s ministry, worship, and impact on its community. They all must go to the mountain, not just Moses.

Such was the experience of church leaders in the Church of the Advent Hope in New York City. Pastor Todd Stout, pastor of Advent Hope, literally took his church leaders to a mountain for a leadership retreat. There on the mountain they all dreamed and planned for their church’s future and their church’s strategic plan. The church didn’t just send “Moses” (the pastor or presiding elder) there. Pastor Stout said, “When you learn that God is impressing your leaders and your members with the same ideas He’s laying on your heart, you come to trust that His plans are bigger than any one person or one pastor.”<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, a leader from another church in another conference asked their new pastor, who hadn’t settled in yet, “Pastor, what is *your* plan for our church?”

In which church would you prefer to be an elder?

Pastor Stout and his church members demonstrated Farming Commandment #9: “*Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church.*” If you have fulfilled Commandments one through eight,<sup>4</sup> you are ready for this ninth commandment—an important next step. Why? “Assessment without action is hypocrisy!”<sup>5</sup>

A strategic plan is your church’s big picture. It’s like a map. Even God has a strategic plan (e.g. Matt. 25:34; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20, etc.). A recipe for a church strategic plan is as follows: (1) Input from biblical principles; (2) Input from the community; (3) Input from the congregation.<sup>6</sup>

Previous *Elder’s Digest* articles have explained the first two items in the recipe. The third item—input from your congregation—will happen if they “go to the mountain” with



“Moses” and dream/vision together what your church will be like five years in the future. Dream big—so big that you wouldn’t be able to accomplish it without Him.

Here is a process sequence compiled from other churches that have gathered strategic plan ideas from their congregations:

1. To discover the vision that is already there, and to insure that all church members have opportunity to give input, survey your church members, either in person, or with a mailed written survey, by asking them the following three questions from a process known as “Appreciative Inquiry.”<sup>7</sup>

- Think back at the most energizing and life-giving experiences that you have ever had in relation to the Adventist Church. What was going on in your life and in the church?
- What do you appreciate most about (your church’s name) and how does it contribute to your spiritual walk?
- What improvements would I like to see? (No negatives). What will that improvement look like?

2. Commission your **Social Action Leadership Team (SALT)** to create a document, which integrates data/ideas from your congregation’s Appreciative Inquiry Survey with data from your Community Assessment. Insert the comments word for word under each question in the Appreciative Inquiry Survey and the Community Assessment interviews.

3. Call a business meeting with no other agenda but brainstorming for the 5-year strategic plan (1-1/2 hour limit). Result: Additional raw ideas for the strategic plan. (Interaction with the whole group is important—stimulating responses beyond filling out a written survey).

4. Here is a suggested devotional for the beginning of your business meeting. Read Acts 2:41-47 and find the following core values of church mission from the early church:

- Worship (vs. 42, 43, 46, 47)
- Fellowship (vs. 42, 44-46)
- Community Services (v. 45)
- Reaping (vs. 41, 47)
- Discipleship (v. 42)

5. Invite the group to share additional ideas to fit those core values. Write down ideas for all to see, as well as having someone take notes.

6. Because we live in an imperfect world—expect the unexpected. Therefore, do a SWOT analysis to list **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats in your local situation that will help or hinder your dreams for the next five years.

7. Add the business meeting ideas to the document the **SALT** started compiling.

8. Categorize all the data under the core values of the early church listed in suggestion #4 and share the ideas with various departments of the local church, e.g. Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Elders, Youth, etc.

9. The Church Board should prioritize the final ideas after the church departments have evaluated what relates to

them, and the **SALT** should then create a draft of the actual strategic plan document. Note: In addition to organizing the ideas by the five core values, an effective way to organize *implementation* of your strategic plan is use the Logic Model.<sup>8</sup> Suggestion: Use the “Church Strategic Planning Process—Worksheet” at the end of this article to help with writing out your plan.

10. Create a budget to finance the plan.

11. Bring the resulting strategic plan document to the church in business session and vote approval.

12. The Church Board should track the plan at least quarterly.

13. On the first anniversary of the voting of the strategic plan, re-access its relevancy. Be continually aware of societal changes in your community and be willing to adjust accordingly. Call a general business meeting to review what has been accomplished in Year 1 of the strategic plan. Plans for Year 2 should be confirmed or modified depending on progress of Year 1. Brainstorming should then take place for a new Year 5 (Year 6). Vote adjustments as needed, and add to strategic plan document.

14. Bring the results of the business meeting to the board for approval and budgeting.

15. Allow for and seek after divine intervention in the plan. It is not to be rigid. This is God’s plan, and its users should cooperate with His leading.

16. Continue the annual review cycle of the strategic plan until the Lord comes.<sup>9</sup>

Has your church gone to the mountain with “Moses” yet?

## CHURCH STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS WORK-SHEET

Planning Elements/Preparation:

1. Pray and study Jesus’ method.
2. Study Community – *Needs Assessment*: (a) Map work—determine territory; (b) Walking/Windshield Survey; (c) Demographics; (d) Interview Community Leaders.
3. Study Congregation – *Appreciative Inquiry*: (a) Remember spiritual high points; (b) What do I appreciate most about my church?; (c) What improvements? (No negatives).
4. Organize ideas by *Acts 2:41-47 Core Values* ([1<sup>st</sup> column] Worship + Discipleship + Fellowship + Community Services + Reaping = Church Mission/Evangelism).
5. To implement plan ideas, follow Logic Model (rows): *Input* (money, staff, volunteer time, etc.); *Activities* (goals-programs, services); *Output* (objectives-how many activities/programs, how often - quantitative); *Outcomes* (the results of the services for individuals); *Impact* (immediate organizational change & long-term community results of services - qualitative).

WORSHIP				
<b>Impact</b> <i>Sample Entry: Local church center of dynamic worship /spiritual growth...</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Sample Entry: Each member experiences closeness with God, with no distractions...</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>Sample Entry: Spirit-filled, Christ-centered preaching Small groups...</i>	<b>Output</b> <i>Sample Entry: 10 small groups that meet for weekly worship/Bible study...</i>	<b>Input</b> <i>Sample Entry: Finances for new hymnals... Small group leaders...</i>
DISCIPLESHIP				
<b>Impact</b> <i>Sample Entry: A church with a high member retention rate...</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Sample Entry: Each member growing spiritually &amp; following Jesus in the real world...</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>Sample Entry: Visit missing members Spiritual gifts found and applied...</i>	<b>Output</b> <i>Sample Entry: All elders visit one member/week Two spiritual gifts classes/year...</i>	<b>Input</b> <i>Sample Entry: Educational/ equipping materials for discipling Financial support...</i>
FELLOWSHIP				
<b>Impact</b> <i>Sample Entry: A warm, friendly church that lowers apostasy and attracts new people...</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Sample Entry: Individual members have no desire to drop out, and feel supported...</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>Sample Entry: Church socials Church member assigned to befriend each new member...</i>	<b>Output</b> <i>Sample Entry: Six socials/year Fellowship dinner each Sabbath...</i>	<b>Input</b> <i>Sample Entry: Social committee Food for meals Scheduled time in church calendar...</i>
COMMUNITY SERVICES				
<b>Impact</b> <i>Sample Entry: Unemployment decreased...</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Sample Entry: People get and sustain a job; self-image/worth improves...</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>Sample Entry: Hold job-skills classes...</i>	<b>Output</b> <i>Sample Entry: Two classes with 10 students each/ week...</i>	<b>Input</b> <i>Sample Entry: Financial Resources Teachers for classes...</i>
REAPING				
<b>Impact</b> <i>Sample Entry: Community experience abundant life in Jesus—improved environment, relationships improve, less crime, etc. ...</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Sample Entry: Individuals experience improved spiritual, physical and mental health...</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>Sample Entry: Hold Bible-based evangelistic meetings in context of holistic, cyclical evangelism. Church members give Bible studies...</i>	<b>Output</b> <i>Sample Entry: Two reaping meetings/year Two classes/year for equipping church members to give Bible studies...</i>	<b>Input</b> <i>Sample Entry: Supplies for reaping meetings Interest coordinator to maintain data base of interests...</i>

<sup>1</sup> The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method and pray for...; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn "Social Capital;" (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate.... AND an 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to Reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple—preserve the harvest)!

<sup>2</sup> So far, these follow-up articles have appeared in *Elder's Digest*: (1) "Once a Month Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand..." (Oct.-Dec. 2011); (2) "Our Community Does Not Know Us..." (Jan.-March 2012); (3) "Help, Lord! I've Been Asked to Plant a Church!" (July-Sept. 2012); (4) "As I Walked Around and Looked Carefully. . ." (Jan.-March 2013); "You're the First Church That Ever Asked..." (July-Sept. 2013); and "We Can't Afford Not to Have Someone Like This in Our Community..." (Oct.-Dec. 2013). To access these articles online, go to [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org). Click on Adventist Community Services, and "Articles & Media." To access a comprehensive curriculum about community outreach, click on "Resources" and "ICM Community Services & Urban Ministry Certification Program Curriculum." For a direct link, go to [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs\\_iicm](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm).

<sup>3</sup> See Mark A. Kellner, "Hope in Manhattan: Leaning Toward the Future" *Adventist Review*, November 25, 2010. To access this article go to: <http://www.adventistreview.org/article/3947/archives/issue-2010-1538/hope-in-manhattan/leaning-toward-the-future>.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> Quote by Minnie McNeil.

<sup>6</sup> Graphic is from [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs\\_iicm](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm) - CS 04 Ministry Development and Strategic Planning.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, Google "Appreciative Inquiry." (Appreciative Inquiry focuses on building on strengths instead of merely focusing on solving problems. That's the reason for the first two questions).

<sup>8</sup> For info on the logic model, Google "Logic Model" or "Kellogg Logic Model." When using this model, it's best to consider Impact and Outcome first, and then the Activities, Output, and Input to make it all happen.

<sup>9</sup> For more on church strategic planning go to [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs\\_iicm](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm) and consult CS 03 Performance Measurement for Effective Ministry, and CS 04 Ministry Development and Strategic Planning.

The next article in the series will discuss the tenth "Farming Commandment."

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

# 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 up-

holding 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.



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As a response to the "An Affirmation of Creation—Report", this document was accepted and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Executive Committee at the Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, October 13, 2004.

# 10 THINGS EVERY WORSHIP LEADER SHOULD KNOW

FOR EVERY WORSHIP LEADER, THERE ARE ESSENTIALS THAT WE SHOULD STORE IN OUR MINISTRY TOOL CHESTS. MANY OF US UPDATE OUR SKILLS ON THE LATEST MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY, WHILE WE LACK KNOWLEDGE OF THE BASIC WORSHIP ESSENTIALS. HERE ARE 10 THINGS THAT WE TOO OFTEN IGNORE OR OVERLOOK IN OUR WORSHIP PLANNING.

## 1. GOD

Know God's will, purpose, and plan for your life. Talk to Jesus each day and let Him direct your songs and worship plans (Eph. 5:17-19).

## 2. YOUR BIBLE

Spend time reading the Bible so that the Bible can read and transform you (Ps. 119:105).

## 3. YOURSELF

Know your temperament, leadership style, and calling. Know what situations can build you up or break you down and learn how to navigate both.

## 4. YOUR PASTOR

Foster a regular working relationship with your pastor. Respect and understand his vision and mission for the church and know how to interpret it through praise (1 Tim. 5:17).

## 5. YOUR CONGREGATION

Know the spiritual condition of your congregation. Strive to teach, guide, and pastor through music.

## 6. YOUR CRAFT

Continue to improve your musical skills. Good leaders are constant learners (1 Chron. 25:7, 8).

## 7. YOUR LIMITATIONS

Know the areas where you need help and ask for it.

## 8. YOUR RESOURCES

Know what resources are available to you to be successful. Build, manage, and maintain leadership teams (Mark 3:13, 14).

## 9. YOUR SUCCESSOR

Ask God to show you your replacement and prepare him or her for your role (Deut. 34:9).

## 10. YOUR PRAYER CLOSET

Know that being called to be a worship leader requires Godly wisdom, strength, humility, and Holy Spirit power. Surrender to God in prayer and find a secluded place to offer your private praise (Mat. 14:23). 

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



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# CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE AND APPEARANCE

**While** millions of humans suffer, hunger, and die, others live extravagant lives. They own the hottest gadgets, have the newest and largest houses, seek constantly new forms of entertainment, and dedicate their lives to ever-changing fashion by wearing the latest and most expensive clothes.

“The Emperor’s New Clothes” is a story by Hans Christian Andersen, dealing with a king who always needs the newest things, especially clothes. Two people offer to weave and tailor for him an incredible suit, made from extraordinary fabric that is invisible to ignorant people. When the emperor parades in his new clothes, the people pretend to admire what they do not see, while a child asks, why the emperor has no clothes on. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon comes at last to the conclusion that all pursuit of luxury, ease, and pleasure is in the end nothing else than vanity. This raises the question of the priorities in life and a Christian lifestyle.

## I. PRINCIPLES OF A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE ACCORDING TO 1 PETER

1 Peter 2:21	Redeemed persons follow Christ's example.
1 Peter 1:15; 2:12; 3:16	They live holy lives, exhibiting excellent behavior.
1 Peter 3:13,17, 4:19	In spite of suffering they seek what is right and good and do it.
1 Peter 1:2; 4:2	They obey God's will.
1 Peter 2:12; 4:11	Their lives glorify God and help others to glorify the Lord too.
1 Peter 1:22; 2:13, 17; 4:8, 10	They love and serve.
1 Peter 4:7; 5:8	Their lives are shaped by prayer, vigilance, and sobriety.

1 Peter 2:9; 3:1, 15

They proclaim the gospel by word of mouth and by their lifestyle, aiming at winning others to become children of God.

Peter stresses that in this world Christians are strangers (1 Pet 1:23; 2:11) and may irritate others indirectly because they do not participate in the majority's wild life, debauchery, and licentiousness. They have committed their life to Jesus, are extremely grateful for the gift of salvation, and follow Jesus' example. John uses the term “world” to point to that which is hostile to God (1 John 2:15-17). While Christians cannot and do not join the world's opposition to God and its perversity (see 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jas 4:4), they are not called to turn away from the world completely. God loves the world (John 3:16), and Christians carry responsibility for it (Matt 28:19-20). Therefore, they live exemplary lives.

## II. THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF CHRISTIANS

### 1. Peter

While discussing foundational principles of the Christian life Peter also addresses the outward appearance of Christians.

1 Peter 3:1-5 Obviously, Peter approves of adornment; only inward, and not outward adornment. While he rejects outward adornment, inner adornment is to be manifested through reverence, purity, gentleness, submissiveness, and humility. Such adornment is winsome and may reach non-Christians.

### 2. Paul

In 1 Timothy 2:9-10: Paul supports inward adornment too. Outward adornment is mentioned by listing some items of jewelry. It is inward adornment such as modesty that counts.

### 3. In the Old Testament

Pride was one reason for the fall in heaven. Satan wanted to be like God (Isa 14:12-14; Eze 28:14-17).

Isaiah 3:16-24 Wearing of decorative jewelry is associated with pride. God's judgment on the haughty daughters of Jerusalem brings about a reversal of circumstances, "branding instead of beauty."

Exodus 33:5-6 Although jewelry was worn during OT times, God told Israel to take it off, before He would bring them to the Promised Land, probably as a sign of repentance and returning to Him. Functional jewelry such as the one worn by high priests and kings was not forbidden. Obviously Scripture makes a difference between functional and purely decorative jewelry, allowing for the first and rejecting the second.

#### 4. The Example of Jesus

Jesus' appearance was marked by simplicity and modesty. However, His garment was of good quality, because the soldiers decided not to divide it (John 19:23-24). Inward values were more important to Jesus than was outward appearance (Matt 15:18-20); yet he did not neglect the outward (Luke 7:44). Christians follow Christ's example.

### III. PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

When discussing clothing and outward appearance, one should consider the following issues and principles:

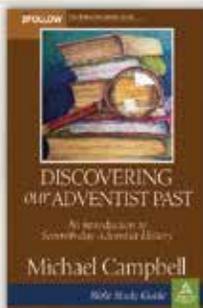
- The principle of simplicity
- The concept that clothing must meet the highest moral standards
- The question of practicality
- The economical perspective (stewardship)
- The consideration of furthering vs. damaging one's health
- The principle of natural beauty

### CONCLUSION

Christians will strive to clothe themselves in a simple, modest, and tasteful way. They will not go out in rags (if possible) nor will they show off in an extreme way. They will make a difference between what is good and what the Bible calls "worldly" in a negative way. Sometimes it is difficult to make right decisions, but believers can turn to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for wisdom to make such decisions that honor God and allow them to be effective witnesses. Then they will live their lives happily. EO

Ekkehardt Mueller is deputy director for the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference World Headquarters. This article has been reprinted, by permission, from *Reflections*, the BRI Newsletter, edited by Elias Brasil de Souza.

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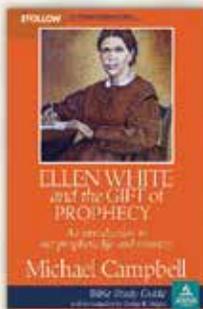


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# OPEN YOUR BIBLE:

## ENTER THE GATEWAY OF GOD

### FOUR FACTS ABOUT THE FUTURE – Part 2 of 2

#### III - THE MILLENNIUM

*“Whatever judgment comes to men will be commensurate with their character and opportunities. Because of what He [God] is, He must not only punish the wicked, but also care for His own; judgment for all will be unquestionably just.”—Daniel Shephardson*

##### 1. The Millennium explained

- (1) The word “millennium” derives from two Latin words: *mille*, meaning “a thousand,” and *annus*, “a year”—a thousand years.
- (2) This period of time is referred to in only four passages of Scripture (Ps. 90:4; Eccl. 6:6; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 20:2-7).
- (3) Never does the expression mean a time of peace and prosperity—it applies to duration rather than quality.
- (4) The world ends in a terrible global conflict (Rev. 16:14-16; 11:18).
- (5) A graphic description of the outcome of this battle (Rev. 19:20, 21; 6:14-17).
- (6) The saints will be rescued from this carnage and taken to heaven (Rev. 20).

##### 2. The events that mark the beginning of the Millennium

- (1) The coming of Jesus ushers in the millennium (1 Thess. 4:16).
- (2) The resurrection of the righteous dead takes place when Jesus comes (v. 17).
- (3) The translation of the righteous living follows (v. 17).
- (4) The redeemed all taken to heaven (John 14:1-3; 17:24; Rev. 7:9, 14, 15).
- (5) The wicked are destroyed (2 Thess. 1:8-10; 2:8; cf. Matt. 24:37, 38; Luke 17:28, 29).

##### 3. The events which transpire during the Millennium

- (1) The depopulation of the earth results in the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3; 16:20).
- (2) The wicked remain unburied on the earth (Jer. 4:16, 17).
- (3) The earth is a desolation (Rev. 20:3): “*bottomless pit*” is the Greek equivalent for the Old Testament “*chaos*” (Isa. 23:1-3; Rev. 6:14-17).
- (4) The righteous in heaven are engaged in judgment (Rev. 20:4; cf. 1 Cor. 6:2, 3).
- (5) God’s justice vindicated (Dan. 7:21, 22; Phil. 2:10, 11).

##### 4. The events which mark the end of the Millennium

- (1) The resurrection of the wicked unlooses Satan (Rev. 20:5, 7).
- (2) The wicked alone participate in the second resurrection (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15).
- (3) The wicked have no second chance (Rev. 20:11-15).
- (4) The Holy City descends and Satan overthrown (Rev. 21:2; Zech. 14:4, 5).
- (5) The earth restores to its Edenic beauty (Rev. 21:1).
- (6) The saints join in universal adoration (Rev. 19:1, 2).

*“Our redemption is a work at once of price and of power—of expiation and of conquest. On the cross was the purchase made, and on the cross was the victory gained. The blood which wipes out the sentence against us was there shed, and the death which was the death-blow of Satan’s kingdom was there endured.”—T. J. Crawford*

#### IV - HEAVEN

*“When 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews spoke about eternal life, they weren’t thinking of going to heaven in the way we normally imagine it. Eternal life meant the age to come, the time when God would bring heaven and earth together, the time when God’s kingdom would come and his will would be done on earth as in heaven.”—N. T. Wright (Time, April 16, 2012)*

##### 1. Heaven is a place (Matt. 6:9; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4).

- (1) At the Incarnation Jesus came from heaven (John 6:33).
- (2) Following His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven (John 6:62).
- (3) At His Second Coming He will descend from heaven (John 14:3).
- (4) The Apostle Paul identifies three heavens (2 Cor. 12:2).
  - (a) The atmospheric heavens (Gen. 1:20; 7:11; Rev. 19:17).
  - (b) The stellar heavens (Ps. 19:1).
  - (c) Paradise where God dwells (Acts 7:55; 2 Cor. 12:4; Ps. 103:19).

##### 2. Heaven will be on Earth (2 Pet. 3:10, 13).

- (1) A renovated nature.
  - (a) The new earth (Rev. 21:1, 2).

- (b) The living creatures (Isa. 35:9; 11:6-9).
- (2) A regenerated man.
  - (a) Physical metamorphosis (Phil. 3:20, 21).
  - (b) Immortality (1 Cor. 15:52-54; Rev. 21:4).
  - (c) No sickness (Isa. 11:6, 9; 33:24; 35:5, 6).  
*“Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven.”—Ellen G. White (GC, 676)*
- (3) A redeemed and recreated life.
  - (a) A life of productive activity (Isa. 65:21-23).
  - (b) A life with a secure environment (Isa. 32:18; 60:18; 65:21, 22).

##### 3. Heaven is an indescribable and glorious reality

- (1) Its glories are incomprehensible (1 Cor. 2:9).
- (2) It’s an inheritance destined for the redeemed (Ps. 37:29; Gal. 3:29).

*“There [in the new earth] . . . every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call the powers of mind and soul and body”—Ellen G. White, (GC, 677)*

# QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF THE ELDER

Any study or discussion of church elders focuses immediately on the qualifications for this office. Most of these qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Elders are mature people who exhibit the behaviors and character traits which every Christian seeks to attain. Thus, elders should be people who have attained a high degree of spiritual growth, Christlikeness, wisdom, and maturity. They should be mature Christians with experience in leading smaller groups (their families) so that they will be prepared to lead larger groups (their local congregations).

## THE WORK OF THE ELDER

Elders sometimes see themselves as church money managers, mere decision-makers, and administrators. Some elders have been appointed because they are popular, run secular businesses successfully, or are good at general leadership. But what are they supposed to do spiritually?

The word “elder” suggests a maturity that should be respected and honored (1 Tim. 5:1; 1 Pet. 5:5). It carries with it the weight of wisdom and knowledge (Job 12:12; Lev. 19:32). Elders of ancient Israel served as counselors to kings. Today, elders should be our counselors.

Church leaders are also called *overseers*. This implies they are to superintend, guard, and oversee. But what are they to superintend, guard, and oversee? The treasury? The church building? Souls? The correct answer is all of the above, but watching for the well-being of souls should be their priority (Heb. 13:17). Two Greek verbs are used for overseers. *Episkeptomai* means “to look at, examine, inspect, have oversight, care for, go see, visit with, help” (James 1:27; Matt. 25:36). The word *episkopeo* means “look at, take care, see to it” (Heb. 12:15; 1 Pet. 5:2). Hence, for an elder to oversee, he must be deeply concerned about the flock, visiting them and caring for them, and he must be willing to get involved in their lives.

It is good for our elders to spend at least 3-5 hours every week, apart from the Sabbath morning hours, in service and ministry to church members and the community. This ministry of evangelism will help them grow spiritually and also expand the kingdom of God.

The overseer must also be vigilant, prudent, respectable, hospitable, and skillful in teaching (1 Tim. 3:2). This qualification of an elder is an important gift that should be exercised in the church and outside of it. Elders should lead the way in promoting discipleship and spiritual growth.

Leaders also are referred to in the Bible as *pastors* or *shepherds* (1 Pet. 2:25). The terms are used figuratively to compare the physical job of shepherding to the spiritual job of being an elder. A good shepherd or elder supplies needs and gives comfort (Ps. 23; Isa. 40:11). The shepherd-elder must have an intimate knowledge of the flock. He knows his flock from spending time with them. They respect him and listen to him. Shepherds never do their jobs in “shepherd meetings;” they do their work among the flock—living with them, feeding them, protecting them, sacrificing for them. And one of the shepherd’s chief concerns involves the wayward members of his flock (Matt. 18:12-14).

Church leaders are also called *stewards* (Titus 1:7). A steward is a manager. In the Bible, a steward was a slave or servant who had been put in charge of his master’s household or property. He was responsible and accountable for things that belonged to someone else (Heb. 13:17). He had authority, but only to the degree that he acted on his master’s behalf and for his master’s purposes.

Similarly, church elders are to “rule” or lead (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17), but they are not to act as “lords” or “masters” over the congregation (1 Pet. 5:1-3). That is Christ’s role. Elders rule and lead, but not because they are superior to the rest of the congregation; rather, they lead because the congregation has seen in the elders the maturity and character traits they need to follow.

Christ gave us a leadership style that focuses on being a servant to others. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28). Like Jesus, elders lovingly lead and serve His church (1 Tim. 3:4, 5). Elders lead by providing spiritual leadership, developing a vision for the congregation, and ensuring that the mission of the church—seeking and saving the lost—is fulfilled.

## CONCLUSION

An elder is responsible for much more than reading the Bible, calling for the offering, or making decisions. An elder leads as he uses God’s Word, his spiritual maturity, and his experience to serve, love, and persuade. He must be able to watch for, lovingly correct, and rescue those who err. Because of the elder’s knowledge, responsibility, and accountability, the flock of God is to respect and listen to him—as long as he is faithful to God. **ED**

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## ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO:

# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

“I am a faithful listener of your radio programs,” reads the letter from China. “Your messages comfort me, and the Bible really purifies my heart. Therefore, my life is happy and meaningful. By your great effort, God’s love is reflected through your messages. We are farmers and live in a remote area of Jiangxi Province. It is very far from town. Shortwave broadcasting is the only way for us to receive news.”

This letter sums up the rationale for Adventist World Radio’s continued emphasis on shortwave broadcasting as part of its worldwide ministry of carrying the Adventist message of hope to the unreached people groups of the world in their own languages. There are millions of people who have never heard of Jesus, have never met an Adventist church member, do not have Christian programs on local media, and do not have access to the Internet. But shortwave radio can travel for thousands of miles into their countries, their homes, and their hearts.

This is particularly true in China—the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s biggest mission field, in terms of numbers—which is why AWR has aired broadcasts to China from the first day it began operating a shortwave station on the Pacific island of Guam. In 2013, AWR completed a major upgrade of the station, enabling it to not only improve service to China but also broadcast more effectively to countries throughout Asia, from North Korea and Vietnam to India and Indonesia. Currently, the station is airing 10 hours of programs for China daily, in addition to more than 30 languages for other countries.

“Out of the 400,000 or so Adventist believers in China, approximately half live in the countryside,” says Daniel Wang Xin Jiao, executive secretary of the Chinese Union Mission. “Shortwave radio is critical for people in those remote areas. Also, what I see is that radio is most important for non-Adventists. Once they find a church, they have a place to worship and likely have a Bible. But our media center [in Hong Kong] receives letters from people saying how they have listened to our radio programs and begun keeping the Sabbath,

without knowing any Adventist church. They are happy that through us they can be introduced to local churches.”

At the same time, AWR’s audience of online listeners—for on demand programs and podcasts—is expanding by leaps and bounds. Again, China is a prime example. Out of its population of 1.35 billion people, about 40 percent—or 540,000,000—have Internet access. Mandarin is AWR’s #1 podcast, with more than 1.5 million subscribers at the time of writing . . . and this number is growing every day. AWR is also serving China with shortwave and online programs in Uighur, Cantonese, Min Nam, and Tibetan.

Jiao says, “The majority of messages we receive are from Internet listeners. It’s easier for people to contact us through the Internet, and people in cities rarely write letters any more. The advantage of listening online is that people can choose topics of interest from our archived programs and listen whenever they want. This has really expanded the influence of radio.”

So great is the volume of correspondence that the media center employs a full-time “Internet evangelist” to communicate with listeners and conduct Bible studies through e-mail, instant messaging, and video chat.

People from all walks of life are responding to the gospel message, and the letters continue to pour in:

“I am an engineer of a big motor company in China . . . .”

“I work in a factory in Shenzhen . . . .”

“I’m a 20-year-old student . . . .”

AWR truly is a front-line ministry. We invite you to partner with us today in introducing Christ to those who have never heard His name.



Adventist World Radio is the official global radio ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. AWR’s programs can be heard in more than 100 languages through AM/FM and shortwave radio, on demand, and podcasts at [awr.org](http://awr.org) and iTunes.

Shelley Nolan Freesland is Adventist World Radio communication director at the General Conference world headquarters.



Annual Offering

March 8, 2014

# 1,295,602,404

people in China need to find Jesus

By numbers, China is the church's #1 mission field.

**Population: 1.3 billion    Non-Christians: 96-97%**

AWR is broadcasting shortwave programs for 165 hours/week to China – in Mandarin, Cantonese, Uighur, Tibetan, and Min Nan – and our podcasts are heard 24/7 worldwide.

Join us today in introducing Jesus to millions in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. AWR is *your* mission radio.

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