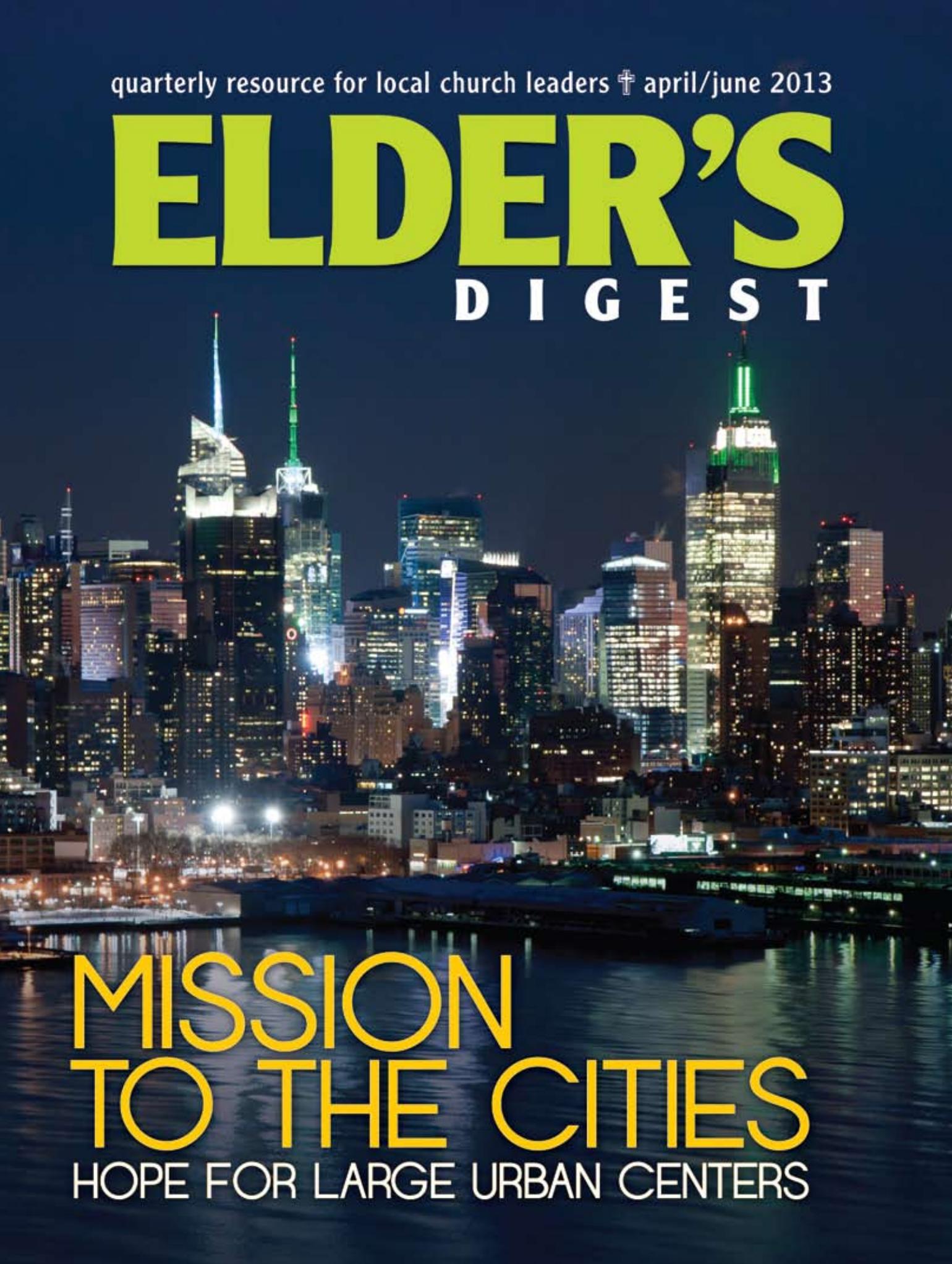


quarterly resource for local church leaders † april/june 2013

# ELDER'S DIGEST

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated by lights. The lights are reflected in the water in the foreground. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is vibrant with city lights.

MISSION  
TO THE CITIES  
HOPE FOR LARGE URBAN CENTERS

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# MISSION TO THE CITIES

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been challenged to reach the major cities around the world with the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I see this big challenge, my mind thinks about you as part of a big army of more than 230,000 local church leaders. How can you be involved? I also think on your potential, spiritual gifts, creativity, and your influence over the congregation you lead. God is calling each one of us to be involved in this end-time initiative known as, “Mission to the Cities.”

Ellen G. White challenges us saying, “Who among God’s professing people will take up this sacred work, and labor for the souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge? The world must be warned. Many places are pointed out to me as in need of consecrated, faithful, untiring effort. Christ is opening the hearts and minds of many in our large cities” (*Selected Messages* vol. 2, p. 403).

The church must go where the people are and remain there until the people are won. But before we can go, there must be a vision for these population centers.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He had compassion upon them, and we will never have compassion until we see them; therefore, vision is a key ingredient for reaching the big cities with the gospel.

How we see the cities will determine what we do about them.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved. He wasn’t moved to tears; He was moved to action. He communicated the magnitude of the harvest. He said it was plentiful. He challenged workers by

bringing to their attention that the laborers are few. He called for cooperation by asking the Lord of the Harvest to send forth workers into the harvest.

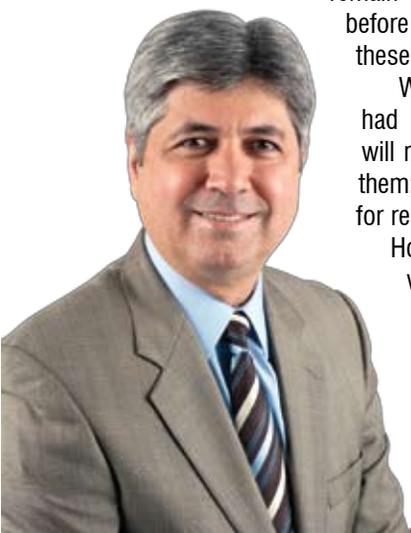
Basically, the reaching of our cities is a spiritual problem. When we are able to see people through the eyes of Jesus Christ, we will see them as souls and, both individually and collectively, we will want to go where the souls are.

The danger and evil which are in the great cities of the world create an anticity attitude among some Christians. In addition to the danger, which lurks in the city, maybe there are many other barriers to evangelism. The cost of housing, the scarcity of land, restrictions, and many other complexities cause us to neglect the city.

Because of the many existing barriers, the penetration of cities requires people who are burdened for the masses. People who are willing to make the necessary sacrifice to fulfill this mission.

If large cities are to be reached, there must be a change in the concept of ministry. Those who are looking for a comfortable pew or pulpit must be touched again in order to see the harvest clearly. Where there is a burden for souls and for reaching the cities, the means and methods will be provided through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those things, which seem to be impenetrable barriers, melt before the eyes of burdened men and women. They look not at the barriers but at the people and their needs.

In the midst of the blight of materialism and the cry for comfort, I am praying like Jesus: “Send forth laborers into the harvest.” Give us men and women to stand in the gap and make up the hedge so that the people of our land will not be destroyed. May we answer like Isaiah, “Here am I, Send me!”



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

# MISSION TO THE CITIES:

## HOPE FOR LARGE URBAN CENTERS

**We** were called by God for a special mission: to take the hope of Christ's second coming to the world. This is our birth certificate, which is recorded in Revelation 10. However, to fulfill this mission, we need to reach the people where they are. The fact that people are more and more concentrated in large urban centers, facilitates our mission. If on one hand these urban centers and metropolitan areas secularize people, on the other they make our access easier. Additionally, living in these locations cause people to need more attention, be insecure, confused, and lonely, this in turn increases our responsibility to present the Bible truths that save, nurture, provide refuge, and bring hope. This is our greatest challenge today! Pastor Mark Finley often states, "Jesus loves the cities because that's where people are, and Jesus loves people."

There is no doubt that open hearts in need of receiving the message are to be found in all places and we should reach them. Small towns, little villages and rural communities also have those in need of the message. But the large cities, especially, present unprecedented challenges and opportunities. We need to witness to all, in large and small locations, but the urban regions need special attention.

More than a century ago, Ellen White had already presented this challenge, "Who are carrying a burden for the large cities?" (*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p.

333). The answer also came from the same prophetic inspiration, "The time has come when, as never before, Seventh-day Adventists are to arise and shine, because their light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon them" (*Letter 296*, 1904).

The prophetic time is before us as God is motivating the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout the world to make an impact on the urban centers. This is also our opportunity to expand our focus in the extensive cities in each division through a special integrated evangelism endeavor to establish continual activities and permanent results. Therefore, together with the worldwide church, we can advance boldly so that there is no more delay and we can see Jesus Christ returning soon in the clouds of heaven. After all, "We are in the waiting time. But this period is not to be spent in abstract devotion. Waiting, watching, and vigilant working are to be combined" (*Christian Service*, p. 85).

The mission is in our hands, the people have already "gathered" in the large urban centers, and the signs indicate that the time will be brief. Why wait? For those who have the great hope, the call is clear, "In preparation for the coming of our Lord, we are to do a large work in the great cities. We have a solemn testimony to bear in these great centers" (*Last Day Events*, p.118).



# WORLDWIDE INITIATIVE

WILL REACH 650 LARGE CITIES



The urban evangelism initiative has been launched by the General Conference with the intention to reach more than half of the worldwide population, living in urban centers with more than 200,000 inhabitants. Although historically Seventh-day Adventists have worked in large cities for decades, this initiative looks for united efforts with a specific plan and strategy for more effective evangelism in metropolitan areas and other large urban centers.

The General Conference plan embraces outreach initiatives in at least 650 major urban centers around the world with special emphasis in locations such as New York in the United States. With an approximate population of 19 million people who speak some 800 languages, New York symbolizes the type of challenge that has been set before the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist leaders to reach the large cities for Christ.

The plan, in general terms, is to equip pastors, local church leaders, and members alike to cooperate in an aggressive outreach effort to evangelize the world's major cities by 2015, date of the next General Conference Session that will be held in San Antonio, Texas, USA. "Our Biblical message to the cities will unite us as a worldwide people and guard us from isolating ourselves from society and from each other. Our message to the cities of the world is that another city is coming: the New Jerusalem, a city of safety, hope and refuge with God at its center," affirms Elder Ted Wilson, worldwide president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We are a worldwide church and in spite of our local and regional challenges we need to understand the size of the

work that is before us as a remnant people. "... This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). A quick view of some of the largest cities of our planet shows the size of the challenge that we face (See below).

In spite of the size of the mission that these numbers present and a task that seems impossible, God has given proof that using simple or uncommon methods, He can bring about true missionary revolution. "God's messengers in the great cities are not to become discouraged. . . . Let those engaged in soul-saving ministry remember that while there are many who will not heed the counsel of God in His word, the whole world will not turn from light and truth, from the invitations of a patient, forbearing Saviour. In every city, filled though it may be with violence and crime, there are many who with proper teaching may learn to become followers of Jesus. Thousands may thus be reached. . . ." (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 277).

These numbers help us to analyze and understand the size of the mission that we still have to carry out in our region. Within this framework are the large cities, where we need to advance boldly with faith and power from the Holy Spirit. When we look at our urban centers, we recognized that many of them still have a small Seventh-day Adventist presence. Therefore, "We must . . . do our best, pressing forward with all the energy possible to make an opening in the large cities. Had we in the past worked after the Lord's plans, many lights would be shining brightly that are going out" (*Medical Ministry*, pp. 301, 302).



City	Country	Population	SDA Members	Population per SDA Member
Tokyo	Japan	36,669,000	3,882	9,446
Sao Paulo	Brazil	20,262,000	118,533	171
Mumbai	India	20,041,000	10,000	2,004
Mexico City	Mexico	19,460,000	53,093	367
New York	United States	19,425,000	37,897	513
Shanghai	China	16,575,000	6,274	2,642
Buenos Aires	Argentina	13,074,000	22,998	568
Beijing	China	12,385,000	3,300	3,753
Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	11,950,000	17,865	669
Manila	Philippines	11,628,000	30,775	378
Osaka	Japan	11,337,000	476	23,817
Cairo	Egypt	11,001,000	289	38,066
Moscow	Russia	10,550,000	3,500	3,014
Istanbul	Turkey	10,525,000	61	172,541

# NY13: A MIRACLE IN THE MAKING

As the steel wheels of the New York subway train screeched to a grinding halt at Manhattan's Hunter College station a strange refrain filled the air. A group of Adventists waiting on the platform began to sing, "Lift up the trumpet and loud let it ring, Jesus is coming again." The echoes of the familiar hymn were picked up by another group of Adventists waiting for a different train on the opposite side of the track. Up and down the line, more voices joined the chorus. Soon the subway station was filled with the glorious, hopeful refrains of "Lift up the trumpet. . . Jesus is coming again." These Seventh-day Adventist members were among the 2000 who had just heard a powerful and moving sermon by Elder Ted Wilson, President of the General Conference, at Hunter College titled, "The Time Is Now." Elder Wilson's message was especially designed to motivate members throughout the metropolitan New York area to be actively involved in NY13.

NY13 is a comprehensive evangelistic initiative designed to involve each church administrator, departmental director, pastor and church member in the greater metropolitan New York area. It is much more than a single evangelistic event. It is a divinely inspired vision of an ongoing evangelistic process. The Atlantic Union, the Columbia Union and the five Conferences (Greater New York, Northeastern, New Jersey, Allegheny East, and Southern New England) comprising the

Greater New York/ New Jersey area have united their efforts to reach the twenty million people living in this huge metropolitan area. NY13 involves varied outreach approaches including personal Bible Studies, small groups, health, family life, and youth ministries, literature ministry, community services, lay evangelistic meetings and much more. NY13 envisions each church as a dynamic soul-winning center where pastors have a passionate commitment to reaching lost people and church members are equipped and trained for service.

The weekend of January 18-20, Elder Wilson along with his wife Nancy and a team from the General Conference met with pastors, leading lay people, and Union and Conference Administrators to develop comprehensive plans to reach the city. In addition to a major convocation at Hunter College, the team conducted lay training events throughout the metropolitan area on Sunday, January 20. Five hundred and sixty people packed the Linden Seventh-day Adventist Church in Queens to attend Ernestine Finley's, "Light Your World for God" Seminar on how to become an effective Lay Bible Instructor. Each participant received a witnessing workbook and a set of Search for Certainty Bible Lessons. Attendees actively participated in the seminar as they practiced giving Bible Studies to one another. Mrs. Finley challenged each participant to allow God to use them to study the Bible with at least one person and lead that person to Jesus.



Denzil McNeilus, a banker from Dodge Center, Minnesota represented the ASI organization and along with Robert Costa, General Conference Evangelism Coordinator, led out in a “New Beginnings” Seminar to train lay preachers at the Fort Washington Spanish Church. The organizers of this seminar expected 150 people to attend. When well over 300 showed up they were overwhelmed. The church was packed to overflowing with eager participants desirous of learning how to use their homes and small auditoriums to conduct lay led evangelistic meetings. Commenting on the enthusiasm of the attendees, Mr. McNeilus said, “I am convinced that there are thousands of lay people waiting to be challenged to do something significant for the Lord. They just need to be trained and equipped.”

Mark Finley, Assistant to the President of the General Conference, taught a class on how to organize home Bible Study groups based on the book of Daniel. His seminar was held in the Greenwich Village, Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Greenwich Village Church will be the host site for Elder Ted Wilson’s, Revelation of Hope, and evangelistic series beginning Friday night June 7 and continuing to June 29, 2013. Over 130 people attended the Small Group training Seminar and committed to begin seventy small groups. In addition to the Lay Training events held in the city, over 1400 youth gathered in two locations sponsored by the Greater New York and Northeastern Conferences. These young people were challenged to be part of something great for God and use their influence to touch their friends with the gospel during NY13.

During NY13 approximately 400 evangelistic meetings will be conducted in the metropolitan New York area. Hundreds of churches and thousands of church members will be involved. Pastors are leading their congregations in prayer vigils earnestly petitioning heaven for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Lay people are giving Bible Studies. Small groups are being organized. Health and Family Life ministries are being launched. Literature is being distributed. Young people are becoming actively involved. Lay Evangelistic meetings are being planned and evangelists and pastors from every Division of the world will attend an International School of Evangelism in New York in June. The Holy Spirit is moving. Something unusual is taking place in New York. Don King, Atlantic Union Conference President challenged administrators, pastors and members to be actively involved in this massive outreach for Christ. At the Hunter College Convocation on Sabbath afternoon, January 19, he stated, “NY13 is a united approach bringing us all together to focus on reaching people in this Great Metropolitan area for Jesus.” Elders Daniel Honore and Earl Knight, presidents of the Northeastern and Greater New York Conferences respectively electrified the audience as they announced that each of their Conferences had committed one million dollars each to the NY13 evangelistic initiative. Elder Honore shared the thrilling story of a lady whom he did not know who walked into the Conference office the week before



**Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, President of the General Conference, delivers the message “The Time Is Now” to a crowd gathered from the New York Metropolitan Area.**

and told him she was impressed to do something significant for NY13 and handed him a check for \$20,000. God is at work in New York. His Spirit is moving. Something unusual is happening. We may be experiencing a miracle in the making.

The massive evangelistic outreach in New York City is part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “Mission to the Cities” initiative. Church leaders at every level of church organization have identified 650 major cities worldwide to focus their evangelistic energies and resources on in the next three years. This comprehensive evangelistic approach blends biblical principles with the practical, divinely inspired counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy to reach people living in these urban centers with Jesus’ end-time message of hope for our time.

The mission is His and He invites us to participate in His mission with Him. There can be no higher honor and no greater privilege. Let us together pray for the fulfillment of the messenger of the Lord’s promise, “When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed” (*Medical Ministry*, p. 304). May that day come soon and may we experience the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in New York and the great metropolitan centers of the world. 

Mark A. Finley is Assistant to the President of the General Conference.

# EVANGELISM IN A WORLD OF CONSTANT CHANGE

**Around** 1880, the Seventh-day Adventist Church established a strong emphasis in cities. At that time, we were few in number; only one Seventh-day Adventist church member for every 89,768 inhabitants of the world, however we faced a great challenge to fulfill the mission that God had placed in our hands. To facilitate the understanding of our task, the General Conference began to publish an annual report regarding the mission in the cities that lasted from 1885 to 1899. In 1886, the report indicated 36 missionary projects already in progress, involving 102 denominational employees and 224 volunteers.

Several years later, between 1908 and 1910, Ellen White renewed the emphasis on the work in the cities and insisted, in a clear manner, that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was neglecting this mission. More than 100 years have already gone by since she wrote these strong convocations, appeals, counsel and warnings about this subject. Since then many things have changed. Around the year 1900, the world had only 12 cities with a population of more than 1 million. Currently, there are more than 400 cities with this population, with 20 of these cities having a population greater than 10 million. Daily approximately 200,000 people leave the rural area migrating to the cities; therefore since 2008 more than half of the world's population is concentrated in urban regions. By 2030, this concentration should reach 60% of the worldwide population.

In addition to all the inspired counsel and appeals that challenge us to look with attention toward the urban concentrations, Gary Krause, director of the area of Global Mission for the General Conference, presents at least three basic reasons to face this reality.

**1. Sheer numbers.** For example, in Stockholm, Sweden, there are 410 Adventists living among a population of 1.25 million. In other words, there are more than 3,000 people for every Seventh-day Adventist. In Kolkata, India, there are 558 church members among a population of 15 million.

This means one Adventist for more than 26,000 people. In the United States 80 percent of the population lives in urban areas, but only one in three Adventist churches is located in these urban areas. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a metropolitan region with 2.4 million, there are fewer Adventist today than there were in 1948. If we consider the ratio of Adventists per person throughout the world, the data from 2010 indicates that there is 1 Adventist for every 405 people. If we evaluate this same situation, however removing the urban centers, the ratio will be 423 people to every Adventist. If we count only the large cities, the ratio becomes 953 people for every Adventist.

**2. Unique urban issues.** In many parts of the world, a Global Mission pioneer running an outreach effort in a small community brings out almost the entire population. Trying the same thing in a large city, and you are competing with theaters, cinemas, restaurants, malls, concert halls, clubs and numerous other places of entertainment. For many who live in these regions, church is something uncommon, a relic of another era. For this reason, "In the cities of today, where there is so much to attract and please, the people can be interested by no ordinary efforts. Ministers of God's appointment will find it necessary to put forth extraordinary efforts in order to arrest the attention of the multitudes" (*Manuscript 45*, 1910).

**3. Adventist dislocation from cities.** While most people live in urban areas, most Seventh-day Adventist churches, and institutions are located away from this mission field. In many cases, urban churches, downtown churches, or those in more centrally located regions has an attendance originating from people who do not live in the same region where the churches are located. Many of their members commute from the suburbs to attend these churches. Without proximity to the mission field, the church becomes distant from the reality that we need to reach. But the call is clear, "My duty is to say that God is earnestly calling for a great work to be done in the cities" (*Letter 150*, 1909).





# CHURCH PLANTING IN THE CONTEXT OF BIG CITIES

**The** deliberate planting of new churches is based on the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. In texts like Jonah 1:2 and 3:10, God tells the prophet: “Arise, go to Nineveh.” In Genesis 4:17 it is imaginable to see the first city that was established by Cain as an act of his rebelliousness against God. God’s original plan was that people were not to concentrate in just one place, due to the evil that was there, but to go out to evangelize the big cities.

Another example comes from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This region had been literally affected by evil practices, even in the family of a devout man named Lot.

Nowadays, the mission is to enter big cities for the proclamation of biblical truths. This is the moment in time where Adventists should play their part without hesitation. This is the time to present the gospel of salvation to those places. And the best way to do it is establishing centers of influence to plant new churches.

In order to reach big cities within the context of planting of new churches, the strategy includes the following:

**Training:** To train churches already existing in big cities, to get to know and to work wisely with postmodern and secularized minds.

**Small Groups:** To have small groups, deliberately established for church planting, as the foundation for planting new churches.

**Centers of Influence:** To establish centers of influence in churches or rented places to offer help to those in need who live in big cities to share the great hope to them. Marriage Encounters and health conferences could also be appropriate activities for those centers of influence.

**Urban Evangelism:** To organize series of public urban evangelism, having small groups as the foundation considering the secularized and postmodern thinking.

**Mother Churches:** To strengthen the already existing churches so that they can become generators of new churches, transplanting members who live in those neighborhoods to new places where they can start a new church.

The church planting theory, according to specialists such as pastor Emilio Abdala, is successful as long as the new congregation can be financially self sufficient, has a consolidated leadership, and a clear missionary focus.

For this reason investing resources in those centers of influence is a great priority for the global Adventist Church. Apart from the financial resources invested to build new churches, there is also investment for training; organization of Small Groups, biblical classes, and missionary couples which will give support to the preparation of new leaders.

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# HOW CAN THE LOCAL CHURCH PARTICIPATE?

**“THE LORD NOW CALLS UPON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN EVERY LOCALITY TO CONSECRATE THEMSELVES TO HIM AND TO DO THEIR VERY BEST, ACCORDING TO THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES, TO ASSIST IN HIS WORK”**

*TESTIMONY TREASURES, VOL. 3, P. 350.*

**This** is the vision behind the worldwide project to impact the large urban centers: Dedicated involvement and consecration of each member, according to their spiritual gifts and talents in each area of activity of the Church, all within a framework of the “Mission to the Cities” initiative. Each disciple, acting within the vision of communion, relationship, and mission, does his or her best to save others and see our greatest hope accomplished. As we act in a combined effort with the same focus, we build a healthy church and we open the doors for the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.

We may have different and creative forms of working in this movement to impact the large cities. The following are some strategic ideas to implement:



## **Meetings of lay business leaders, entrepreneurs, and self-employed professionals.**

“Our workers should present before these men a plain statement of our plan of labor, telling them what we need . . . Some of these will be impressed by the Holy Spirit to invest the Lord’s means in a way that will advance His cause” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 361).

## **2 Local campaigns to purchase land, build new churches, and plant new churches.**

“God’s work is now to advance rapidly, and if His people will respond to His call, He will make the possessors of property willing to donate of their means, and thus make it possible for His work to be accomplished in . . . the large cities that are waiting for the message of truth” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 184).

## **3 Large urban churches dividing to plant new congregations in challenging regions.**

In more elite regions or those apparently difficult for public evangelism, the work is slow. For this reason, a nucleus of members needs to accept the challenge of leaving the main church and plant a new congregation. From the time a select group of members exists and an appropriate location is established for meeting, it becomes easier to attract individuals from the region.

## Seventh-day Adventists witnessing and evangelizing friends from their same social and professional class.

People who have the same affinities are better able to understand each other and as a result create a climate of acceptance and openness, in addition to knowing the best approaches to present our hope. We cannot miss the opportunities that these social or professional affinities offer. “Personal, individual effort and interest for your friends and neighbors will accomplish more than can be estimated” (*Welfare Ministry*, p. 93).

4



## 5 Groups of members opening churches in the neighborhoods where they live.

Many of our members travel from their neighborhoods of residence, where there is no established church, to another location where they can congregate. This is a common reality in the large cities. We need to awaken within our church members the desire to faithfully plant a church near to their home. After all, they may make long trips to reach their church, however their neighbors will not do the same. “The believers in these cities are to work for God in the neighborhood of their homes” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 128).



6

## Make the church more relevant and useful to the community where it is situated.

There are many privations and necessities in the community where the church is located, which could easily be met by our ministers, members, and professionals. Very often, however, we are isolated. The community does not feel any benefit from our presence there. As we demonstrate our love to them and help them, we are genuinely opening the doors so that they may come, visit us, and become interested in our message. Projects can be launched to provide improvements in the region where the church is located or will be planted, such as vocational courses in more needy areas, health projects, family therapy groups, among others. An extensive list of creative possibilities can be elaborated. The role of the Seventh-day Adventist Community Service within these centers of influence will be fundamental.

7

## Keep the church open daily.

Many times when people are in greatest need or when they have free time, our churches are closed. We hold worship services adapted to our culture and our reality. However, why not keep the church open every day, making it accessible to people at the time they want a place of peace, refuge and support? Our churches are regularly expensive assets that are underused. We invest great effort to build them, and they are used for a few hours during the week. The doors of our churches can be opened for social projects, worship services, counseling, or simply as a place for personal prayer, or meditation. Volunteers, self-employed professionals, housewives, retirees or local leaders can alternate daily assistance.

8

## Advertise the church services in our printed material and communication outlets.

Each church bulletin, small newsletter, magazine with outside readership or other missionary material can include a space to report to the community regarding the various activities the church offers. The same information can be reported through our radio and TV programs, as well as on Internet sites and social networks, which are especially directed toward the public outside of the church.

# EVANGELISM AND SERVICE GO TOGETHER!



**Here** is a quote we know very well: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>1</sup>

Here is a quote we don’t share as often (hint: It follows the previous quote): “There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”<sup>2</sup>

This quote bundles evangelism and service. Here are some principles to remember:

A. *A service lifestyle is part of a divine expectation.* It would be helpful to understand that when we are standing before our Maker, instead of asking us to recite the eschatological timeline, God will ask, “What did you do about my children who needed help?” (Matt. 25:34-36).

B. *A service lifestyle takes us out of our comfort zone.* It’s more than outreach; it’s reaching out, even to those who don’t look, believe, speak, or act like we do. That includes our enemies (Matt. 5:46-48)!

C. *A service lifestyle breaks down barriers.* It’s all about love, and love can indeed conquer all. When we express love, we break down preconceived ideas about the church and about God. When they think about church, most people associate it more with asking for things than giving things. Service goes a long way to change that perception.

Remember, there are 37 recorded miracles of Jesus in the New Testament; however, there is one written sermon of Jesus (Matt. 5–7). Remember the initial quote? “If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen.” 

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143, 144.

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

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## QUESTIONS TO PONDER WITH YOUR CHURCH LEADERS

**1** What creative things is your church doing to reach your community?

**2** If money were no object, what would you do? What project would you start?

# THE MOST EFFECTIVE EVANGELIST IN THE WORLD

**Who** is the most effective evangelist in the world? I often start my training seminars in Church Growth and Evangelism by asking this question, and I always get the same predictable answers: Doug Batchelor, Walter Pearson, Mark Finley, Alejandro Bullón, Dwight Nelson, and so on. Then, when I ask how people come to the Lord and the church, I usually get wildly different answers. Most people agree that 90 percent of the people in the church are there because of felt needs. Others insist that visitation brings in another 60 percent. Still others say that the pastor brings in at least 40-60 percent. Many more believe that public evangelism brings in 50-90 percent. So, who is the most effective evangelist in the world? The following research may surprise you.

In late 2004, a survey was sent to a sample of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in the North American Division to be given to attending members on a certain Sabbath. Those surveyed were asked how they were brought into the church (they could choose more than one option, so the percentages will not add up to 100 percent).

How People Join the Church	
Brought up in an Adventist home	59 percent
A friend or relative	58 percent
Read books, journals, other literature	49 percent
Public evangelism meetings	36 percent
Bible studies in the home	34 percent
Visits by a pastor	20 percent
Television or radio programs	20 percent
Bible correspondence course	19 percent
Material on the Internet	7 percent
Other	22 percent

We learned from this survey that effective evangelism is relationship-based. This study is consistent with all similar studies done on this topic. Win Arn<sup>1</sup> and Thom Rainer<sup>2</sup> both agree that friendship is God's preferred method of reaching people, and the implications are universal in scope. I travel all over the world, training people in evangelism and church growth. Remarkably, no matter where I am, the results are the same. Most people come to the Lord through relationships and friendships.

When people in my seminars see this research, they experience an "A-ha!" moment. They start saying, "Well, yes; my mom had the most influence on my religious experience" or "My neighbor took me to Sabbath School when I was a little girl." Another person might say, "My grandmother was an Adventist, and she prayed for me for years. Finally, I decided to take God seriously." Someone else remembers that a co-worker invited him to church many years ago.

The figure I get for the influence of moms and dads, friends or relatives, neighbors or co-workers is usually between 70-95 percent. "Who is the most effective evangelist in the world?" It is obvious from both the formal research and the informal data collected in these groups that the most effective evangelist in the world is the person who takes a personal interest in us and shares Jesus in a holistic and attractive way. "Who is the most effective evangelist in the world?" The answer is, "I am the most effective evangelist in the world."

The most effective way of reaching people for the gospel is through personal influence. So what does God do? He takes full-time ministers and disguises them as teachers, police officers, construction workers, and nurses. He gives them the necessary gifts, passions, and credentials, and He assigns them to schools, police departments, construction sites, and clinics all over the world. He gives them gifts and passions, makes them strong, and puts them to work for Him. God's full-time ministers are everywhere: in classrooms and clinics, holding hammers and stethoscopes, in front of shareholders and behind the auditor's desk. We are all ambassadors of the gospel. We are all full-time ministers.

In every city, every town, and every country, you will find full-time ministers, differently made and differently gifted, in every business and vocation. Like salt from a saltshaker, God scatters us everywhere to suit His flavor. He salts the earth with His ministers, giving them gifts with which to influence their friends, families, and co-workers.

The reality is that *relationship* is the most effective form of evangelism and ministry. Our churches should focus on developing disciples and teaching relationship-based ministry. This doesn't cost much money, but it requires an open heart. It's about the authentic relationship, not the program.



<sup>1</sup> Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982), 43. See also W. Charles Arn, *How to Reach the Unchurched Families in Your Community* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 73.

This information is based on Chapter 9 from the Book, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family*. By S. Joseph Kidder, published by the Review and Herald, 2011. This book is about how to improve the life and ministry of your church to make it healthy and grow it into effectiveness.

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# PRAYER IS ABOUT ACCEPTING

Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4

The Lord's Prayer, recorded in Matthew 6:9-13, introduces four facts, the "Four Rs," that we need to remember each time we say to the Almighty God, "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." (see verse 9). The "Four Rs" are *relationship, reality, realization, and responsibility*. Please reflect carefully on them and intentionally consider accepting those facts in your connection with God.

## I. RELATIONSHIP

A. God is called "our Father." What a precious truth! This is the ground upon which we may approach Him with our prayers. When God made man in His image (Gen. 1:26), God became the Father of the human race in creation. But, when man fell into sin, man received a new "father" (John 8:44). Now, the only way any person can experience the Fatherhood of God is through the new birth (John 3:3, 7).

When the new birth takes place, we are immediately adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-7; Eph. 1:5). When we are saved, we instantly become children of God (1 John 3:1, 2). This new relationship opens up our access to His presence as our Father.

B. God not only births us into His family; He had the will, the resources, and the ability to father us. He has promised to sustain us, supply us, and care for us until we arrive home in glory (Matt. 6:25-34; 10:29-31; Phil. 4:19). We earthly fathers have the same desire within our hearts for our families, but there are times when our resources are not sufficient to meet their needs. We should never fear that with our heavenly Father (Ps. 24:1; 50:10). He is well able to meet our needs (Eph. 3:20).

## II. REALITY

A. The next two words, "which art," are filled with glory and wonder. They remind us that we serve a God who exists and who is more than a figment of our imagination.

In fact, faith in the existence of God is the very ground upon which we may approach Him (Heb. 11:6). This verse teaches us that we must believe God exists and that He hears and answers prayer; otherwise, we are merely praying to Him in vain. God is real, and when you call on His Name, you are reaching up to One who hears you and who will move in response to your need!

B. We serve a God who is, not a God who was and not a God who will be someday. But, as God told Moses in Exodus 3:14, His name is "*I AM that I AM!*" This reminds us that God is the self-existent, eternal One. He has existed unchanged from all eternity past, He continues to exist in the present, and He will continue unchanged into the vast reaches of eternity future.

C. Since God is real and changes not, you and I can approach Him with confidence, resting in His reality. Prayer is not an exercise in futility! Because God is real, prayer is real! Because God is real, there is power in prayer. Rest in that hope and exercise your right to enter His presence!

## III. REALIZATION

A. When the Bible tells us that our Father dwells "in heaven," it is telling us that He occupies a place of honor, glory, and power. Since He is in heaven, He is above the evils and problems of this world. Since He is in heaven, He is in a position to move in power in response to our petitions. Since He is in heaven, He is in a position to be exalted and honored by those who dwell below.

B. When we pray:

1. *We should enter His presence humbly.* Our Father is God! He made this world. He is holy. He is wonderful. We, on the other hand, are vile and wicked (Isa. 64:6). In fact, when we do enter, we can only do so through Jesus, our Savior and Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). But, when we come in His name, the name of Jesus, we can be assured of an audience and an answer (John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23, 24).

2. *We should enter His presence confidently.* This may sound like a contradiction, but it isn't. Even as we humble ourselves before God, let us pray in faith, believing that He will hear us and answer us for His glory. To approach Him in doubt is to slam the door of prayer (James 1:6-8), but to approach Him in simple faith is to guarantee the success of our prayers (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:8).

3. *We should enter His presence worshipfully.* When we approach the Lord in prayer, we need to remember to whom we are speaking. He is God. He is Lord. He is awesome! Let us come into His presence

to worship, honor, and glorify Him. To do so places us in a position of close communion with Him and opens the storehouses of His glory in our lives.

4. *We should enter His presence hopefully.* Our Father is already in our heavenly home, and He awaits our appearance there. Therefore, when we pray, we are merely turning our attention toward home. We look away, by faith, to that eternal homeland that awaits us. We are not seeking answers to prayer that are rooted in the troubles and problems of this life. We are seeking heavenly benefits. We are seeking those things which originate in our new home.

## IV. RESPONSIBILITY

A. You will notice that God is called "our Father." He is not just *my* Father or *your* Father; He is *our* Father. This reminds us that when we pray, we have a responsibility to pray as part of a family.

B. We have the duty before the Lord to pray one for another. We are to carry one another's burdens to the throne of grace (Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:4).

C. Remember, we have no right to pray for things that are selfish in nature. We must remember to structure our prayers so that they reflect that which is best for the whole family of God, not just what we think is best for us. For instance, when there is a situation at church that needs prayer, we should not ask God to work things out the way we want them worked out. We should pray that God will do that which is best for His family and for His glory, even if it isn't what we want! He isn't only "my Father;" He is "our Father!"

## CONCLUSION

Today we have learned four ways to accept God our Father. We have studied the "Four Rs" introduced in the Lord's Prayer. Before we pray to close our message, I would like to ask the following: How many of you would like to accept these four facts—*relationship, reality, realization, and responsibility*—as we pursue a deeper communication with the living God? May God bless you! May our prayers be also acceptable in His sight! Let's pray. 

General Conference Ministerial Association

# PRAYER IS ABOUT REVERENCING

Matthew 6:9

In the first paragraph of the Lord's Prayer, we read: "Hallowed be thy name . . ." What do these words mean and how might they enlighten our walk with God?

## I. THESE WORDS SPEAK ABOUT A DESCRIPTION

A. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" tells us something about the character of God. In fact, the names of God revealed in the Word of God reveal His character to us. The only way we can know God is through the many names by which He has revealed Himself to us. His names tell us Who He is!

B. In the Old Testament, God was commonly known by the name *Jehovah*. This is the name by which He revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 3:14). There, we are told that this name means "I AM that I AM." This phrase literally means, "I will become what I please." The word translated "I AM" in Hebrew is *Yavah*. This word has the literal meaning of "the Becoming One." It speaks of God as One whose will is supreme, whose purposes are certain, and whose word is unalterable.

C. This great name took many forms over the years, as different facets of God's character were revealed to His people. Let me give you a few derivatives of the name *Jehovah* that the Jews used:

1. *Jehovah-Jireh* (Gen. 22:14): "The Lord will see to it" or "the Lord will provide."

2. *Jehovah-Nissi* (Exod. 17:15): "The Lord is our banner" or "our victory."

3. *Jehovah-Shalom* (Judges 6:24): "The Lord is our peace."

4. Many other names of God are given in the Bible. He is called *Elohim*, which means "God." He is called *Jehovah-Elyon*, which means "the Lord Most High." He is called *Jehovah-M'Kaddesh*, which means "the Lord our sanctifier." He is called *El-Shaddai*, which means "the all-sufficient One" or "the Almighty God." He is called *Adonai*, which means "Lord." He is also called "Father"—that is a name which blesses my heart!

God is called by many names, but the greatest of all His names is *Jesus Christ*. This is the God who took upon Himself human flesh, was born into this world, and died on the cross for our sins. His names reveal who He is and what He does for His people.

D. When we enter God's presence in prayer, we are to take time to worship, honor, and praise Him for who He is. We are to lift heart, soul, and voice to the One who is God, the One who loved us, saved us, keeps us, and cares for us. We are to take the time to reverence Him and honor His hallowed Name.

## II. THESE WORDS SPEAK ABOUT A DECISION

A. When we come before the Lord in prayer, we face a decision. We can either focus our prayers around ourselves or we can center our thoughts on Him. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" expresses a desire on the part of the petitioner to bow before the Lord in humble submission and reverence. It expresses a desire to praise and worship before the Lord.

B. We can learn about reverencing God by looking at Jewish practices in the past. The ancient Jews had such reverence for the name of God that they would not say His name out loud. They created the name *Yahweh* from two of the Lord's names so they could talk about Him without saying His name. They feared they might use His name in vain and thus be guilty of blasphemy (Exod. 20:7). Jewish scribes, who were engaged in the practice of copying the Word of God, were so respectful of His hallowed name that they would wash their bodies and change their pens before they wrote His name. After they had written His name, they destroyed that quill so that it could not be profaned by writing a lesser word. Many times, when referring to God, the Jews simply referred to "*The Name*."

Today, we need to learn the same degree of reverence for the hallowed name of God. Far too many people are guilty of taking His precious name in vain. Words like "Gosh," "Golly," "Gee," "Gee whiz," and "Cripes" are all derived from the names of God and Jesus. Be careful, little tongue, what you say! How many times have we heard—or said—"Oh God!" or "Oh my God!" or "Jesus!" or any of a thousand others just like those? Even Christians are guilty of saying things like, "Oh, Lord!" or "My God!" We've all done it, but it is degrading to the Lord's name to throw it around so casually. His name is a hallowed name, and it is to be treated with respect and reverence.

C. We must come before Him with a burning desire to lift His glorious name in praise. If you do nothing else when you pray, you should at least learn to enter His presence to worship His name. After all, when you worship and hallow His name, you are worshiping and hallowing God Himself! We must pray within the parameters of His will, never asking for anything that would dishonor His name.

## III. THESE WORDS SPEAK ABOUT DEVOTION

A. That prayer, "hallowed be thy name," speaks of who God is. It also expresses a desire on the part of the one praying to worship Him for who He is and what He has done. I think it is also a petition for help in living out His holiness in our daily lives. There is no greater disservice done to the great and hallowed name of God than what is done by those who claim to love and worship Him when their lives are less than they should be!

B. Our greatest desire should be to live in such a way that the world sees Jesus revealed in us (Matt. 5:16). Our very lives are to hallow His name.

We should be able to write over every area of our lives the inscription "Hallowed be thy name." When we cannot write that inscription over an area of our lives, that area must be changed and brought under the subjection of God's will.

C. "Hallowed be thy name" is a prayer for God to be glorified by all that we are and in all that we do (1 Cor. 10:31). God's name is already holy, and we cannot make it any more so. The only way we can hallow His name is through the lives we live. Is that the kind of prayer that you can honestly pray today?

## CONCLUSION

That little phrase, "Hallowed be thy name," is a call for us to reverence the Lord by honoring Him for who He is; respecting Him and worshiping Him when we pray; and living out His perfect will in our daily lives. How are you doing in the area of hallowing His name? If there are areas that need work, then I invite you to bow before the Father and ask Him to teach you how to hallow His name for His glory!

ED

General Conference Ministerial Association

# PRAYER IS ABOUT REIGNING

Matthew 6:10

When you and I come to know God as our Father, we find out just how truly wonderful He is. This knowledge creates within us a desire to see Him glorified; thus, we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name." It also creates within us a hunger to see others come to know Him; thus we pray "Thy kingdom come."

"Hallowed be Thy name" expresses a desire to see God glorified. But, we must also know that He will never receive all the glory due Him until His kingdom becomes a reality both in us as individuals and in the world as a whole. Therefore, we are told to pray "Thy kingdom come."

These three words may be short in length, but they contain a message that is immense. Understanding what each of these words means can help shed some light on the power contained in this short phrase.

1. "Thy"—This word is a pronoun, and it refers to the Father who is in heaven. The kingdom we are talking about is not human in origin. It is not a kingdom with castles and moats, knights in shining armor, and ladies-in-waiting. It is a spiritual kingdom that belongs exclusively and totally to God.

2. "Kingdom"—This word comes from the Greek word *basilica*, and it means "royal power, kingship, dominion or to rule or to reign." So, to pray "Thy kingdom come" is to pray for God's reign to come upon the earth.

3. "Come"—This little word is an imperative verb meaning "suddenly, insistently, and quickly." It suggests the sudden appearance of a new kingdom upon this earth that is under the total control of God Almighty.

Thus, to pray "Thy kingdom come" is to pray for the sudden and absolute rule of God over the entire world. Real prayer is about seeking God's rule in the world. I want to give you three conclusions that arise out of this understanding of the phrase "Thy kingdom come." These three conclusions teach us the truth that prayer is about reigning.

## I. THIS PETITION IS PROPHETIC

A. It is clear when you read the Bible that God often promises that there will be a future kingdom of righteousness upon this earth. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are asking our Father to bring this kingdom to pass on the earth; therefore, we are asking

God to fulfill all His promises and prophecies concerning His earthly kingdom.

B. Notice a few of the passages that speak to this thought: Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:32, 33; Matthew 25:31. Just as surely as Jesus was born, lived, and died on this earth, there will come a day when He will reign and rule here in power, glory, and righteousness!

C. This future kingdom will be vastly different from any kingdom that has ever existed upon this earth. Earthly kingdoms are tainted by the effects of sin (2 Cor. 4:4; Rom. 8:22). The world lies under the grip of sin, but a day is coming when Jesus Himself will rule this world (Rev. 11:15).

D. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are echoing the groans of nature; voicing the great songs heard around God's throne in glory (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14), and we are sharing the same desire that resides within God's heart. We are praying that His righteous, absolute rule might be realized upon this earth. That is a noble prayer!

Let us therefore pray "Thy kingdom come" and join our voices with John as he says, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

## II. THIS PETITION IS PERSONAL

A. Just as surely as we are praying for the appearance of a future kingdom, we are also praying for His kingdom to be realized in our lives.

B. The word *kingdom* means "royal power, kingship, dominion or to rule or to reign." When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are praying for God to rule and reign in our personal lives. This petition expresses a desire for God to be our Lord, Sovereign, and King.

C. This is ultimately a prayer that God will be enthroned within our hearts. We should seek to see that we are dethroned, that Satan is dethroned, and that God alone is enthroned in our hearts!

D. A lot of people do not like this concept. They want a Jesus they can mold into their image. But, if you want the Jesus of the Bible, you must capitulate all to Him and His Kingship. This desire is the mark of a genuinely saved believer (John 14:15)!

E. While the literal reign of Jesus is a future event, those who are saved by His grace are citizens of that kingdom right now (Phil.

3:20). We are to pray that His kingdom will be lived out through our lives for His glory.

## III. THIS PETITION IS PRACTICAL

A. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are expressing a desire to see His work, His Word, and His will advanced in the world today. Friends, we might as well face this fact: We will not make this world any better through our efforts. In other words, we will not be able to usher in His kingdom by ourselves. He will bring it when He comes, and it will be established by His power alone. We can, however, have a part in seeing that our Lord's kingdom is spread abroad in the world around us.

B. There are several ways we can do this:

1. *Through prayer.* We are to pray for God's kingdom to come and for His will to be done in the world around us.

2. *Through submission.* We are to yield our lives to Him so that He can live through us. As we do, He demonstrates His love, grace, and saving power to a lost and dying world (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 4:7).

3. *Through outreach.* When we are properly burdened over a lost and dying world, we will go into that world and spread the gospel message. Our desire will be to see others saved, and we will do everything in our power to make that happen. We have been commanded to do this (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19, 20), and we have all the resources we need (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16).

C. We need to ask ourselves these questions: What are we doing as individuals and as a church to spread God's kingdom in the world today? What can we do to be more effective for His glory?

## CONCLUSION

Are you praying for His kingdom to come in this world? Are you doing all you can to see that the message of the King—the gospel—is shared with the lost? Are you as yielded to His Lordship in your own life as you should be?

There may be someone listening to this sermon who is not yet part of God's kingdom. Today would be a great time for you to come before Him and receive Him into your heart and life.

ED

General Conference Ministerial Association

# PRAYER IS ABOUT RESIGNING

Matthew 6:10

We are going to learn the truth that prayer is also about resigning. In our prayer lives, we are to grow until we come to the place where we lay all that we are on His altar and yield the totality of ourselves and our wills to the will of our heavenly Father. This is not always an easy task, but it is absolutely necessary if we expect to become all God saved us to be (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Let's consider God's will and what our response to it should be.

## I. GOD'S WILL: A DEFINITION

Some people look at God's will as the iron-fisted rule of an overbearing dictator. God is too strong to resist, so people give in to Him with a resentful attitude. They would do something else if they thought they could!

Others see God's will as being inevitable, so they submit, not out of faith but out of surrender. They do not submit to God's will out of love or joy but out of resignation to what they see as certain. These folks pray, but they do not think their prayers will make a difference; they believe the die is already cast.

Still others seem to think that man's duty in prayer is to bend God's will so that it aligns with our will. They see prayer as an attempt to get God to do what they want Him to do.

All three of these outlooks are flawed. Yes, God is sovereign. He is in absolute control of the universe, but He still invites His children to pray about things in their lives. Yet, when we pray, we are not doing so to get our will done in heaven. We pray so that God's will might be accomplished on earth through us. Notice that prayer is all about Him: *Thy name; Thy kingdom; Thy will*. God is a sovereign God, but He still commands us to pray.

With that in mind, let's take a minute to set the record straight as to just what the will of God is all about.

A. *God's will of decree*. There is one sense in which God has determined some things in advance. These things will be accomplished, and nothing can hinder, stop, or sidetrack the process. This kind of determination can be seen in creation, in the order that is maintained in the universe, in God's dealings with sin and Satan, and in the

## "PRAY IN FAITH, AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS PROVIDENCE WILL BRING ITS ANSWER."

Ellen G. White, *Prayer*, 59.

matter of salvation. The Word of God is clear when it talks about God's definite will being a reality (Isa. 14:24; Jer. 51:29; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:9-11; Ps. 115:3).

God's eternal plan will be accomplished! Satan, sin, and death will be judged and done away with forever. The redeemed saints of God will go to heaven. Things will play out just as God has determined they will, and nothing will derail His purposes!

B. *God's will of desire*. Unlike God's decreed will, that which God desires may not come to pass. But, let me quickly add that even if those things which fall within this area of His will are not accomplished, His decreed will still stand, unviolated and unchanged. That may not make sense to us, but God's perfect, decreed will is always going to come to pass.

## II. GOD'S WILL: A DEPICTION

This verse tells us that God's perfect will is being done in heaven; it also says that we are to pray that His will might be carried out to the same degree upon the earth.

A. *How is God's will done in heaven?* It is carried out completely, consistently, and constantly. It is done without complaint, without murmuring, and without discussion. It is done quickly and with joy and excitement. And, it is done out of a heart of love for Almighty God (Ps. 103:20).

B. *God's will is not being done on the earth as it is in heaven*. If it were, there would be no crime, no sin, no rebellion, no abortion, no homosexuality, no murder, no false doctrine—the list could go on forever!

God's will, as it is written in the Word of God, is not being done, but we are to pray that it will be! There is a desperate need for God's will to be done in this world. There is a need for God's people to earnestly pray that His will

might be done here to the same degree that it is done there!

## III. GOD'S WILL: A DUTY

If I am to pray sincerely that God's will be done on the earth as it is in heaven, then I am praying that this world and my own heart will be brought into perfect conformity to His revealed will.

A. *When I pray* "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," I am asking the Lord to take my life and conform it to His Word and to His will. I am yielding all I have and all I am to the hand of the Potter. I am echoing the prayer and following the example of the Lord Jesus when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). I am taking my life and giving it finally and fully to Him to do with as He pleases (Rom. 12:1, 2). I can't control what the world does in relationship to God and His Word, but I can control what I do. My duty is to bow and bend to His will, regardless of what that will is.

B. *When I pray* "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," I am asking the Father to use me to make the earth a little more like heaven. I am praying for *spiritual wisdom* to learn His will (Ps. 119:27, 33). I am praying for *spiritual desire* to do His will (Ps. 119:32, 36). I am praying for *spiritual strength* to carry out His will (Ps. 119:25, 28; Phil. 2:12, 13; Heb. 13:20, 21).

## CONCLUSION

If God is truly my heavenly Father, if I am really interested in hallowing His great Name, and if I am truly committed to seeing His kingdom come into the world, then I am also going to want to yield to His will in my life. Are you committed to the will of God for your life? Have you placed your all on the altar? Have you yielded all to God and His will? Are you doing everything in your power to see His will done on earth as it is in heaven?

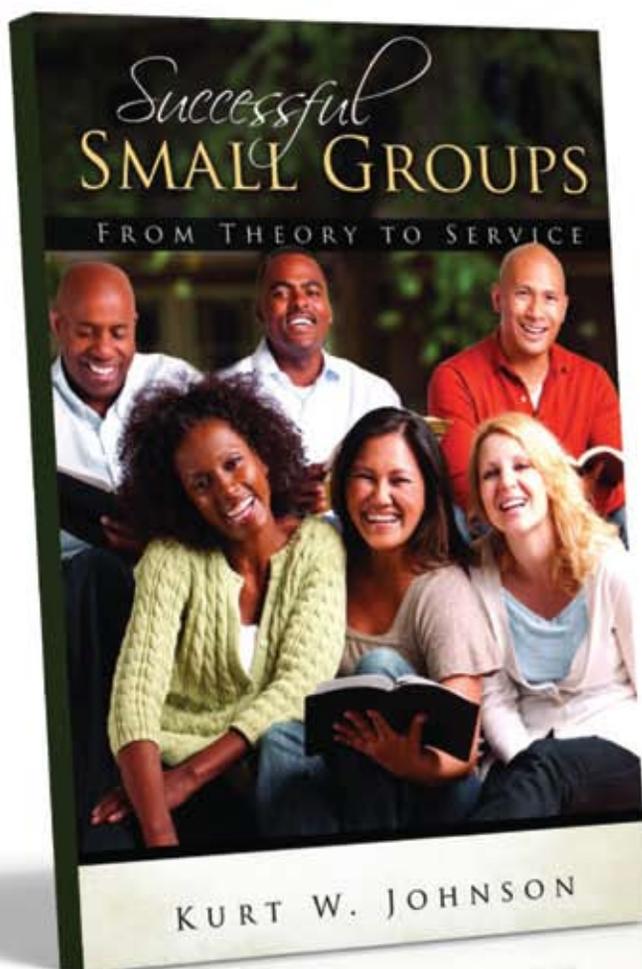
You see, when we learn to submit our all to Him and pray for His will to be done in our lives, we are honoring God as our Father, hallowing His precious name, and seeing to it that the work of His kingdom is advanced within us and within our hearts.



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Review & Herald

# OPEN YOUR BIBLE:

## ENTER THE GATEWAY OF GOD

### FOUR HOME TRUTHS – Part 1 | THE BIBLE AND SALVATION

#### I - THE BIBLE

*"The Bible is a book of faith, a book of doctrine, and a book of morals, and a book of religion, of especial revelation from God."*—Daniel Webster

The BIBLE is a unique book (Ps. 119:129):

##### 1. Because of its AUTHORSHIP (2 Pet. 1:21).

It has 40 writers some of whom were scholars (Paul), leaders (Moses), Prime Ministers (Daniel), priests (Ezekiel), fishermen (Peter), all whom claim their message came from God.

##### 2. Because of its DIVINITY (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

The Scriptures are not the result of dictation, with the lips of God on one end and the ear of the writer on the other. The written authoritative revelation was "expressed in the language of men."—Ellen G. White (*The Great Controversy*, vi)

##### 3. Because of its UNITY and ARRANGEMENT (Luke 24:44).

The **Old Testament** and **New Testament** are divided:

- LAW: Genesis to Deuteronomy.
- GOSPELS: Matthew to John.
- HISTORY: Joshua to Job.
- HISTORY: Acts of the Apostles.
- WISDOM: Psalms to Ecclesiastes.
- THEOLOGY AND ETHICS: Romans to Jude.
- PROPHECY: Isaiah to Malachi.
- PROPHECY: Revelation.

*"The New Testament is the Old Testament concealed;  
The Old Testament is the New Testament revealed."*

##### 4. Because of its POWER (Heb. 4:12; Luke 8:11).

- It contains dynamic creative activity.  
As in the "old" creation (Ps. 33:9; 2 Pet. 3:5).  
As in the "new" creation (1 Cor. 5:19; 1 Pet. 1:23).
- It saves those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Thess. 2:13).  
By its miracles are wrought (Mt. 8:3, 8, 16, 26, 32; 9:6).

##### 5. Because of its BENEFITS (Ps. 119:105).

- It offers protection (Ps. 119:11).
- It makes one wise (Ps. 119:99, 130).
- It sustains (Luke 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:14).
- It makes one strong in the battle with sin (Eph. 6:12-17).

##### 6. Because of its THEME (John 5:39).

*"The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ"* (*The Great Controversy*, 250).

- O.T.: Forecast His life and work:  
Birth (Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2);  
Atonement (Isa. 53:5-12);  
Death (Ps. 22:16-18);  
Resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10);  
Chronology (Dan. 9:27).
- N.T.: The GOSPELS record His life and teachings.  
The ACTS testify to the power of His preaching.  
The EPISTLES apply and interpret His teaching.  
The BOOK OF REVELATION envisages His triumph.

##### 7. Because of its INDESTRUCTIBILITY (Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:23; Luke 16:17).

*"Seize its principles and abide in them;  
Study its prophecies and wait for them.  
Learn its promises and lean on them;  
Ponder its principles and obey them."*—Anonymous

#### II - SALVATION

*"The hands of Christ seem very frail, For they were broken by a nail. But only they reach Heaven at last. Whom these frail, broken hands hold fast."*—John R. Moreland

##### 1. Three Realities of Life that Necessitate Salvation:

- (1) The reality of sin (Rom. 6:23 cf. 1 Jn. 1:8).
- (2) The reality that man cannot save himself (Job 14:4; Mt. 16:25, 26).
- (3) The inescapability of eternal death without intervention (Eze. 18:4, 20).

##### 2. Five Principles of Salvation:

- (1) The Cross is central: if no penalty is paid there is no salvation. (Isa. 53:5, 6; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:6, 8).
- (2) The Cross makes forgiveness possible. (Jn. 3:17, 18; Rom. 4:5; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:1, 2 cf., Ps. 32:1, 2).  
Note 3 terms: (1) Justification; (2) imputation of righteousness; (3) forgiveness (means a "cancellation of an obligation").
- (3) The Cross makes it possible for Christ's righteousness to count for us. (Rom. 4:3, 22-25; Gal 3:1-14; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- (4) The Cross makes Christ's righteousness available through the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:9, 10; 1 Cor. 1:4, 5; 2 Cor. 8:1, 2; Gal. 2:9; 2 Tim. 2:1).
- (5) The Cross of Christ gives power to obey the law. (Rom. 8:3, 4; 5:17).  
So, what must be done to secure salvation? (Acts 16:30).

##### 3. Four steps to Salvation:

- (1) Belief (Acts 16:31; cf. Mk. 16:16).  
"He does not believe that does not live according to his belief."  
—Thomas Fuller
- (2) Confession (1 Jn. 4:7).  
"The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation."—M. Luther
- (3) Repentance (Ps. 38:18; Acts 20:21; 2 Cor. 7:10; Luke 13:3).  
"To do it no more is true repentance."—M. Luther
- (4) Obedience (Heb. 5:9; Jn. 14:13).  
"Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to Him."—Nathanael Emmons

##### 4. The two blessings of Salvation:

- (1) The assurance of peace (Ps. 119:165; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Tim. 2:22).  
"I could not live in peace if I put the shadow of one sin between myself and God."—G. Eliot
- (2) The promise of a life that measures with the life of God (Jn. 3:16; 6:47).

*"O saving Victim, opening wide. The gate of heaven to man below. Our foes press hard on every side. Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow."*—Thomas Aquinas

# SAYING “YES” TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

As we look at the ways to “choose full life,” there is one choice that is critical and, if neglected, will invite disease and death. That choice is physical activity. Studies have shown the benefits of physical activity, especially in the fresh air and sunlight. Some of the documented benefits are:

- Reduces heart disease by 50 percent
- Reduces stroke by 33 percent
- Reduces diabetes by 50 percent
- Builds strong bones and prevents fractures
- Improves immunity
- Increases energy
- Reduces risks for dementia and cognitive decline
- Assists in maintaining a healthy weight
- Prevents and helps reverse anxiety and depression
- Adds years to one’s life and reduces mortality
- Improves well-being and quality of life

In fact, the benefits are so great that people who are physically active and fit, even if they smoke or are overweight, have similar mortality rates when compared to those who do not smoke or who have a healthy weight but are not physically active or fit.

Yet, on average, less than 20 percent of adults and 8 percent of children get the recommended amount of exercise each week. Current guidelines recommend that adults be active for 30 minutes or more, while children and adolescents need 60 minutes or more each day, at least 5 days a week.

Are you meeting that recommendation? No matter what hereditary conditions or current diagnosis you may have, physical activity will help prevent or treat disease, and you will live a more fulfilling, happier life. Health-care providers prescribe exercise as medicine because (besides cutting the risk for disease), physical activity has been shown to be a very effective treatment for many chronic diseases today.

The reverse is also true. Inactivity has been shown to increase mortality from any cause. The greater the number of hours you spend sitting is equally proportional to an increased mortality rate. Thus, finding ways to get up for 5 minutes for every 60 minutes you spend sitting can make a big difference. If you work in an office, you may choose to have a “walking” meeting rather than a “sitting” meeting, or you can pace in the room when you are on the phone. Some people have adapted their offices so that they can walk while working on the computer.



As children of God, we are called to make healthy choices and encourage others to take care of their bodies. Being physically active is a way to take care of God’s temple and worship Him with our bodies (Rom. 12:1).

Inspiration says, “All who can possibly do so ought to walk in the open air every day, summer and winter. A walk, even in winter, would be more beneficial to the health than all the medicine the doctors may prescribe.”<sup>1</sup> Science is now proving this statement, which was written more than 100 years ago. Why wait? You can start today!

The world is trying to reverse the trend of chronic disease. As an elder and spiritual leader, you can encourage your church to meet this need by becoming a center for health, healing, and wholeness in the community, teaching people to say “Yes” to physical activity.<sup>2</sup> Why this is important? Because our “*mental and spiritual vigor* are in great degree dependent upon *physical strength and activity*; and whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and well-balanced character.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, 52.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on how to make activity fun and keep track of times and distances, visit [www.adventistsinstepforlife.org](http://www.adventistsinstepforlife.org).

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education*, 195. Emphasis supplied.



Katia Reinert is director of the Health Ministries Department for the North American Division.

# SPIRITUAL GIFT AND CHURCH PROCEDURE



## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY SPIRITUAL GIFT IS?

**There** is no magic formula or test that can tell us exactly what our spiritual gifts are. The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts as He determines (1 Cor. 12:7-11). At the same time, God does not want us to be ignorant of how He wants us to serve Him. The problem is that it is very easy for us to get so caught up in spiritual gifts that we seek to serve God only in the area in which we feel we have a spiritual gift. That is not how spiritual gifts work. God calls us to obediently serve Him. He will equip us with whatever gifts we need to accomplish the tasks He calls us to do.

Identifying our spiritual gifts can be accomplished in various ways. Spiritual-gift tests or inventories, while not to be fully relied upon, can definitely help us understand what our gifts might be. Confirmation from others also gives light to our spiritual gifts. Other people who see us serving the Lord can often identify a spiritual gift in us that we might take for granted or not recognize. Prayer is also important. The one person who knows exactly how we are spiritually gifted is the gift-giver Himself—the Holy Spirit. We can ask God to show us our gifts so that we might better use our spiritual gifts for His glory.

Yes, God calls some to be teachers and gives them the gift of teaching. God calls some to be servants and blesses them with the gift of helps. However, knowing our specific spiritual gifts does not excuse us from serving God in other areas. Is it beneficial to know what spiritual gift(s) God has given us? Of course it is. Is it wrong to focus so much on spiritual gifts that we miss other opportunities to serve God? Yes! If we are dedicated to being used by God, He will equip us with the spiritual gifts we need.

## WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO WERE REMOVED FROM MEMBERSHIP BECAUSE THEY WERE PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE?

**When** dealing with perpetrators of sexual abuse, we must always remember that restoration to membership does not remove all consequences of such a serious offense. While attendance at church activities may be permissible with properly established guidelines, people convicted of or disciplined for sexual abuse should not be placed in roles which could put them in contact with children, youth, and other vulnerable individuals. Neither shall they be given positions which would encourage vulnerable individuals to trust them implicitly.

Because removal from membership is the most serious form of discipline, the period of time (determined in a church business meeting) before members may be reinstated should be sufficient to demonstrate that the issues which led to removal from membership have been resolved beyond reasonable doubt. It is expected that readmission to membership will be done in connection with rebaptism. ED

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

# THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN GOD

>PART 2

In Titus 1, Paul gives specific instructions regarding the appointment of elders and their role in the church. Titus 2 addresses the issues of proper conduct in the church. Like Titus, elders in the local churches have a solemn responsibility to uphold sound doctrine. The elder’s role is one that is all-inclusive and deeply rooted in a clear understanding of God’s unmerited grace and salvation.

Part 2 of this series highlights: (1) how those who believe in God should conduct themselves and (2) the doctrine of grace and salvation. Titus 2 underscores practical Christianity and how the grace of God does not give us license to sin but is designed to help Christians live sober, righteous, and godly lives. Elders have a solemn responsibility to uphold the high standards of God’s moral laws in the church.

## I. HOW THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN GOD SHOULD CONDUCT THEMSELVES (TITUS 2:1-10)

A. *Counseling older men*: “You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (verses 1, 2).<sup>1</sup>

B. *Counseling older women* (Titus 2:3): “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (verse 3).

C. *Counseling younger women*: “Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (verses 4, 5).

D. *Counseling younger men*: “Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (verses 6-8).

E. *Counseling employees*: “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” (verses 9, 10).

## II. THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE AND SALVATION (TITUS 2:11-15)

A. *Grace offers salvation to all people*: “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people” (verse 11).

B. *Grace teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness*: “It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (verses 12-14).

C. *Grace urges us to encourage and rebuke*: “These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you” (verse 15).

## CONCLUSION

There is a harmonious relationship between the Christian message and Christian ethics. In Titus 2, elders have a duty of care to instruct the members of the church to live responsibly as Christians within society while not compromising the values of those who believe in God. Sound Bible doctrines are the immovable foundation of Christian life; the two are inseparable. So, while the church must continue to live in the world and face the challenges of life on a sinful earth, it must do so critically, measuring everything against the Word of God.

Like Titus, elders of the church have a solemn privilege to “teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine” (verse 1). Their lifestyle and ministry in the church must be exemplary. Their teaching, all-inclusive and with dedicated commitment, must be authentic and must bear the marks of genuine Christian faith. By so doing, elders remove the basis for unbelievers to slander the church and make the teachings of the gospel attractive to them. The gospel that offers salvation to all people teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and urges us to encourage the faithful and rebuke sin with all authority.



<sup>1</sup> All Bible citations in this outline are taken from the New International Version.

Limoni Manu O’Uiha, Ph.D., writes from Palmerston North, New Zealand.

# PRACTICAL TIPS: PREACHING A FUNERAL

**For** many elders, preaching a funeral is one of ministry's most challenging experiences. Although it is an immense privilege to preach a funeral and minister at such a critical time, there are some lessons we can learn in regards to preaching a funeral sermon.

## **SPEND TIME WITH THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED**

There is no substitute for this. It's not enough to simply preach a sermon for this occasion; there is pastoral work to be done. Be there as a spiritual church leader at least by the day after the family members' death—after funeral arrangements have been made and other personal issues are in order. Go where family members are and just sit and listen. You may think, "I don't want to intrude on family time." To that I say, if given the choice of erring on the side of a personal presence or not, I would err by risking intrusion. You will be able to tell in about 15 seconds if it is a bad time—but the family will appreciate the gesture and may suggest a better time to come by. And when you do, be prepared to listen, inquire, go through pictures, read letters, and hear wonderful stories. But most of all, be prepared to be the Lord's presence to them during this difficult time. Because you are a spiritual leader, you are an ambassador for Christ.

## **WHEN YOU PREACH, KEEP IT SHORT**

Yes, the family asked you as a church leader to do the funeral, but this time is not about you or your sermonic skills. You are there to represent Christ and share His Word—but take care. The family is emotionally, spiritually, and, in all likelihood, physically drained. Listening takes energy. An economy of words would suit everyone well here.

## **SHARE THE GOSPEL WITHOUT FAIL**

Yes, address the reason why you all are gathered together. Yes, eulogize and recall some fond memories. Yes, address the family and send condolences on behalf of yourself and the church you serve. But shame on any minister who does not share the gospel with people who are most open to hearing it. Some readers will object and say, "This is manipulation! You shouldn't take advantage of people when they are grieving." But death is what the majority of people are



most afraid of, and this is the time when finality and mortality are clearly front and center. So share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ and give them the encouragement that the apostle Paul gave in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

## **BE THE LAST ONE TO LEAVE**

If you end with a graveside service, stay until everyone else is gone. Don't say, "Amen!" and rush to your car. Stay with the family until they leave. If possible, walk out with the last family member. Be the Lord's ambassador right until the end. If there is a meal afterward for the family and they invite you to stay and partake, stay and partake. Some very pastoral and teachable moments happen on such occasions that would not happen at any other time. So take advantage of the opportunities God brings your way.

## **TOUCH BASE WITH THE FAMILY ONE WEEK AFTER THE FUNERAL**

By now you may be saying, "I thought this was about preaching a funeral." Yes, and by showing that you care outside the pulpit, you will give more credence to what you said in the pulpit. There is something to be said for living a sermon, not just preaching one.

As you preach a funeral, remember the promise: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

How good it is to know that pain cannot and will not exist in the atmosphere of heaven. In the home of the redeemed, there will be no tears, no funeral processions, and no badges of mourning.

ED

General Conference Ministerial Association

# SPEAK WINSOMELY OF THE SAVIOR

As followers of Christ we should make our words such as to be a help and an encouragement to one another in the Christian life. Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience. We should speak of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, of the matchless depths of the Savior's love. Our words should be words of praise and thanksgiving. If the mind and heart are full of the love of God, this will be revealed in the conversation.

It will not be a difficult matter to impart that which enters into our spiritual life. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, unselfish purposes, yearnings for piety and holiness, will bear fruit in words that reveal the character of the heart treasure. When Christ is thus revealed in our speech, it will have power in winning souls to Him.

We should speak of Christ to those who know Him not. We should do as Christ did. Wherever He was, in the synagogue, by the wayside, in the boat thrust out a little from

the land, at the Pharisee's feast or the table of the publican, He spoke to men and women of the things pertaining to the higher life. The things of nature, the events of daily life, were bound up by Him with the words of truth. The hearts of His hearers were drawn to Him; for He had healed their sick, had comforted their sorrowing ones, and had taken their children in His arms and blessed them. When He opened His lips to speak, their attention was riveted upon Him, and every word was to some soul a savor of life unto life.

So it should be with us. Wherever we are, we should watch for opportunities of speaking to others of the Savior. If we follow Christ's example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him. Not abruptly, but with tact born of divine love, we can tell them of Him who is the "chiefest among ten thousand" and the One "altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5:10, 16). This is the very highest work in which we can employ the talent of speech. It was given to us that we might present Christ as the sin pardoning Savior. 

This article is excerpted from the book *To Be Like Jesus*, p. 95, by Ellen G. White.



**“LET NO CORRUPT  
COMMUNICATION  
PROCEED OUT OF  
YOUR MOUTH, BUT  
WHAT IS GOOD  
FOR NECESSARY  
EDIFICATION, THAT  
IT MAY IMPART  
GRACE TO THE  
HEARERS”  
EPHESIANS 4:29, NKJV**

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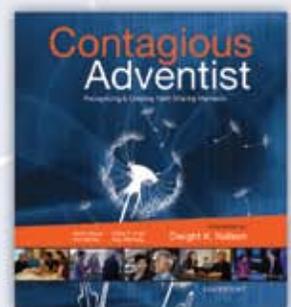
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## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

# STATEMENT ON RACISM

**One** of the odious evils of our day is racism, the belief or practice that views or treats certain racial groups as inferior and therefore justifiably the object of domination, discrimination, and segregation.

While the sin of racism is an age-old phenomenon based on ignorance, fear, estrangement, and false pride, some of its ugliest manifestations have taken place in our time. Racism and irrational prejudices operate in a vicious circle. Racism is among the worst of ingrained prejudices that characterize sinful human beings. Its consequences are generally more devastating because racism easily becomes permanently institutionalized and legalized and in its extreme manifestations can lead to systematic persecution and even genocide.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church deplores all forms of racism, including the political policy of apartheid with its enforced segregation and legalized discrimination.

Seventh-day Adventists want to be faithful to the reconciling ministry assigned to the Christian church. As a worldwide community of faith, the Seventh-day Adventist Church wishes to witness to and exhibit in her own ranks the unity and love that transcend racial differences and overcome past alienation between races.

Scripture plainly teaches that every person was created in the image of God, who “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Racial discrimination is an offense against our fellow human beings, who were created in God’s image. In Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal. 3:28). Therefore, racism is really a heresy and in essence a form of idolatry, for it limits the fatherhood of God



**“AND HATH MADE OF ONE BLOOD ALL NATIONS OF MEN FOR TO DWELL ON ALL THE FACE OF THE EARTH, AND HATH DETERMINED THE TIMES BEFORE APPOINTED, AND THE BOUNDS OF THEIR HABITATION”**

ACTS 17:26

by denying the brotherhood of all mankind and by exalting the superiority of one’s own race.

The standard for Seventh-day Adventist Christians is acknowledged in the church’s Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 13, “Unity in the Body of Christ.” Here it is pointed out: “In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”

Any other approach destroys the heart of the Christian gospel.



This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

# SCRIPTURE AND FOOD

**There** are two extremes with regard to the human body. One is neglect and abuse of the body. The other is an overemphasis on the body. Two examples may be enough: There are people who ruin their bodies and therefore themselves by the use of narcotic drugs and alcohol, while others pay excessive attention to their looks and feel they need one cosmetic surgery after the other. As stewards of the body that God has given us and that has been called “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19) we have to be careful not to fall into the trap of these extremes. We will now take a look at what the Bible has to say about the consumption of food.

## I. GOD’S ORIGINAL PLAN OF NUTRITION

Gen. 1:29; 3:18 The diet of the first human beings consisted of grain, nuts, and fruit. This continued even after the Fall, when vegetables were added. These first human beings lived with a vegetarian diet. The Lord knows what is good for humanity.

## II. THE CHANGED PLAN

### 1. The Noahic Law

Gen. 9:3-4 Eating meat was permitted after the flood. Eating blood and carcasses (see

“everything that lives and moves”) was forbidden.

Gen. 7:2-3

However, Noah already knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals.

Gen. 8:20

He only sacrificed clean animals. Obviously, it was not necessary to repeat the distinction between clean and unclean animals in Gen. 9:3.

Gen. 1:29

The terms “every” and “all” in Gen. 9:3 should not be understood in an all-encompassing sense. The “all” in Gen. 1:29 would not include poisonous plants today.

Why did God allow for this change? Most likely due to the lack of vegetation after the Flood meat was allowed to be consumed. Possibly, a meat diet would reduce the lifespan of humans and prevent the worst consequences of evil (see Gen. 6:5 and the long life spans mentioned in Gen. 5)

Noah was not an Israelite but the father of all humans that are living today. Therefore, these regulations are given to all humanity and not just to Israel. Old Testament scholars acknowledge that the differentiation between clean and unclean animals goes further back than Moses (e.g., C. F. Keil



and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983; I:144). Only clean animals were supposed to be eaten.

## 2. The Mosaic Law

The distinction between clean and unclean animals is found during the time of Moses again. A list of animals which may be eaten is found in Lev. 11:

- Land animals: Animals that have split hoofs and chew the cud are clean and can be eaten. Animals walking on paws are unclean and should not be eaten (Lev. 11:3, 27).
- Water animals: Animals that have fins and scales are clean (Lev. 11:9).
- Flying animals: Some animals that are unclean are mentioned by name (Lev. 11:13-19).
- Animals move around on the ground: They are unclean (Lev. 11:29-30, 41).
- In addition, no carcass (Deut. 14:21), no blood (Lev. 17:10, 12, 14), and no animal fat (Lev. 3:16-17) was to be eaten.

## III. THE VALIDITY OF THIS PLAN IN NT TIMES

### 1. Jesus

Jesus observed the food laws of the OT (John 8:46). While he allowed demons to enter pigs which were consequently killed (Matt. 8:28-34), he did not allow for the leftovers of the feeding of the multitude to be thrown away (John 6:1-13). Through his permission he may have indirectly confirmed the validity of the food laws.

### 2. The Apostles

The apostles observed God's commandments even after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Peter refused to eat the unclean animals seen in a vision (Acts 10:13-17). A little later he understood the vision. He should no longer consider Gentiles unclean (Acts 10:28, 34-35).

### 3. Other Reasons for Observing Biblical Food Regulations

- Because the health laws are not part of the sacrificial system, they are not abolished with the sacrificial system.
- They are different from other laws on uncleanness, because typically uncleanness is acquired and can be done away with (e.g., Lev. 12). However, unclean animals are intrinsically and innately unclean.
- Eating blood is also forbidden in the New Testament (Acts 15:29). The Christian church observed this regulation for centuries (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. V, 1, 26). It is still valid today.
- Health facts: While meat eating has certain disadvantages as compared to a vegetarian diet, some research on unclean food, especially pork, indicates

that this food is even more disadvantageous than clean meat. God means well (Exod. 15:26). 1 Cor. 6:19-20 reminds us that we are stewards of our bodies.

## IV. TEXTS THAT HAVE BEEN UNDERSTOOD DIFFERENTLY

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Matt. 15:11  | The issue is washing of hands (verses 2, 20) not unclean food.  |
| 1 Cor. 10:25 | Paul talks about food offered to idols not about unclean food (1 Cor. 8:4; 10:27-28). Similarly Rom. 14:2, 14, 20.  |
| Col. 2:16    | Food laws are not a "shadow" (verse 17) that pointed to Jesus' life and ministry as the sacrificial laws were. However, food and drink sacrifices came to an end with Jesus' death. |
| 1 Tim. 4:1-4 | Paul talks about false doctrines, e.g., the rejection of marriage and an ascetic lifestyle. The passage has nothing to do with biblical dietary laws.                               |

All these texts are not in opposition to the biblical teaching on clean and unclean animals

## CONCLUSION

Christians take seriously God's health recommendations—1 Cor. 10:31. They honor God and observe his commandments, knowing that God loves them, has saved them, and wants them to have a rich and satisfying life (John 10:10). The biblical health laws are still valid, as is the moral law of the Ten Commandments, and are an expression of God's love and grace. We benefit by doing God's will. ED

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

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# HAPPINESS IN MADAGASCAR



**Some** of the friendliest people on earth live in Madagascar. Blessed with many mountains, rivers, and waterfalls, the country is lush and green, attracting visitors from around the world. It is also home to many unique animals and butterflies.

Life isn't easy in this beautiful country because people have to work very hard to support themselves and their families. Most of them don't have cars or motor scooters, so they have to go everywhere on foot. You can imagine how long it can take to get to the next town or village when walking is your only option. Pedestrians, livestock, and motor vehicles share the road, so everyone has to stay alert.

When folks have things to sell or trade, they carry them in baskets on their head. It's better for business if they can afford to buy a cart to carry bigger loads, but it still requires a lot of strength and energy to push it up and down the winding roads. It is also dangerous because buses have to swerve around them. By the time they finish their business in town, it might be the middle of the night before they get back home.

In spite of many day-to-day challenges, people in Madagascar are very quick to smile and wave. In the village of Ankarimbelo, there is a small group of people who have a good reason to be happy. They are new Adventists, worshipping together in a church they built with their own hands.

Pastor Haja, a Global Mission pioneer, started working in the area just over a year ago. The number of people who began to worship together on Sabbath grew very quickly, and soon it was time to have a place of their own.

The hardworking members gathered all the material themselves. They went to a nearby mountain to carve out rocks for the foundation. They cut lumber from nearly 250 ravenala trees. Someone made curtains, another person provided a table, and everyone pitched in to help where they could. Once all the material was organized, it only took 10 days for the members to build the church.

Five years from now they hope to have a bigger, stronger church, but in the meantime they are very happy to have a Seventh-day Adventist Church of their own.

We send our congratulations to the members in Ankarimbelo! Please pray for Global Mission pioneers and pastors who are taking the Gospel to areas where people have never heard of Jesus.

To learn more about Global Mission or watch mission videos, please visit [www.global-mission.org](http://www.global-mission.org).



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

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An aerial photograph of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, at sunset. The Burj Khalifa is the central focus, towering over the city. In the foreground, the Dubai Fountain is illuminated with golden lights, spraying water into the air. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, and the city's modern architecture is visible in the background.

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