

quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2017

ELDER'S DIGEST



**MUSIC
MATTERS**



FEATURES

- 4 THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACONESS THROUGH HISTORY - PART 2
- 9 AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY
- 10 MUSIC MATTERS - PART 1
- 20 LESSONS FROM DANIEL 11 AND 12
- 24 3 WAYS TO INCREASE SAFETY AT YOUR NEXT OUTREACH EVENT
- 26 GREAT HYMNS OF THE CHURCH - PART 4
- 30 INCREASE YOUR INFLUENCE



EDITORIAL	3
THE ART OF SPEECH	13
HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS	14
SERMONS	15
QUESTION & ANSWER	19
KIDDER'S COLUMN	28

EDITORIAL

EDITOR

Jonas Arrais

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alfredo Garcia-Marenko

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION SECRETARY

Jerry N. Page

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Robert Costa, Anthony Kent, Janet Page, Jeffrey Brown, Pavel Goia

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Erika Miike

PUBLISHER

Ministerial Association - General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

MARKETING MANAGER

Cathy Payne

DIVISION CONSULTANTS

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Musa Mitekaro

EURO-ASIA

Victor Kozakov

INTER-AMERICAN

Héctor Sánchez

INTER-EUROPEAN

Rainer Wanitschek

NORTH AMERICAN

Ivan Williams

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Ron Clouzet

SOUTH AMERICAN

Carlos Hein

SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN

Passmore Mulambo

SOUTHERN ASIA

Victor Sam Cherukuri

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Bienvenido Mergal

SOUTH PACIFIC

Steve Currow

TRANS-EUROPEAN

Patrick Johnson

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Daniel Opoku-Boateng

TO WRITERS: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcome and may be submitted to eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org or *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. *Elder's Digest* is published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association © 2017, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

SUBSCRIPTION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: One-year subscription, US\$18.00. Three-year subscription, US\$47.00. Please subscribe at www.eldersdigest.org or send check to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. Please send address changes to garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

BIBLE CREDITS: Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

OUR WEBSITE: www.eldersdigest.org

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER AND LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

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

PASTOR'S APPRECIATION DAY: "I ALSO SEND YOU"

The month of October has been designated by Christians worldwide as Clergy Appreciation Month. In the same way that other professions are honored during the year, a date was officially chosen to honor pastors and those who perform ministerial work. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has set the second Saturday of the month—October 14 this year—for this well-deserved tribute to our pastors.

The nature of what pastors and their families accomplish is unique. God entrusted to them one of the most precious responsibilities: to care for His church. When they fail to fulfill this duty, church members are harmed. In this context, the pastoral family has a great responsibility before God and the church they serve. The church, on the other hand, needs to pray for them and support them in their work.

On Pastor's Appreciation Day, church members from more than 150,000 congregations in 215 countries around the world have the opportunity to express gratitude to God and recognition to their pastors. On that Sabbath, you don't need to prepare a special sermon in honor of the pastoral family, for the hour of worship must always be reserved for the nourishment of church members and to glorify God. Messages based on the Bible and focused on Christ should be presented in each service. Any recognition should be done before and/or after the message.

For the year 2017, the motto "I Also Send You" was chosen based on

John 20:21 (NKJV). The goal is to share the idea that pastors are sent by God for a special mission inside and outside the church. Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, so He sends His apostles today: pastors.

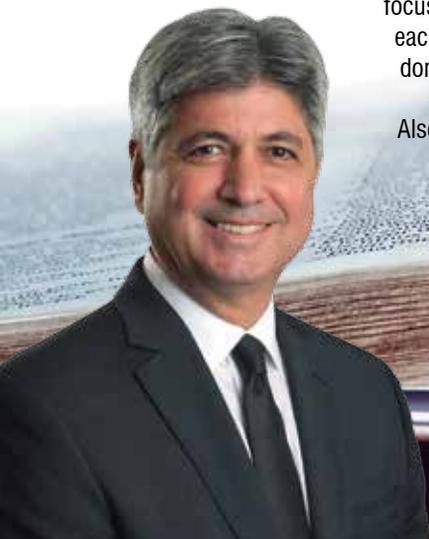
Many church leaders ask how they can appropriately honor their pastors on this day. Here are some suggestions:

1. Make plans to celebrate Pastor's Appreciation Day in your church/conference/union/division.
2. Say a public word of appreciation for the pastoral ministry.
3. Dedicate a special prayer to pastors and their families.
4. Interview the pastoral family.
5. Present a song that the pastoral family appreciates most.
6. Write a letter or prepare a special card signed by church members/officers.
7. Offer a gift in the name of the church.
8. Invite the pastoral family to a meal.
9. Call, text, email, or send messages through social media to your pastor on that day.
10. Plan a special fellowship reception hosted by the church/conference/union/division.
11. Download, advertise, and place the suggested poster on "Pastor's Appreciation Day" in your church or organization to create awareness.

What matters most on Pastor's Appreciation Day is the gratitude and recognition from the local congregation and other church entities. Pastors are spiritual leaders—make this day special for them!



Note: The poster for download is available at eldersdigest.org/pastorsday. You will also find an open document for translation purposes, considering that in some places the date for this celebration may be different.



THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACONESS THROUGH HISTORY

DEACONESSES IN THE CHURCH > PART 2 OF 2

EDITOR'S NOTE: PART ONE TRACED THE ROLE OF THE DEACONESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND THROUGH HISTORY UNTIL DEACONESSES AND THEIR FUNCTION DISAPPEARED DURING THE MIDDLE AGES. PART TWO EXAMINES THE ROLE OF THE DEACONESS IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH.

After their disappearance during the Middle Ages, deaconesses were “rediscovered” by Protestants in Holland in the sixteenth century. By the nineteenth century, they were trained for nursing, teaching, and parish work, on both sides of the Atlantic. Leslie McFall quotes an eighteenth-century source saying deaconesses were to “assist at the baptism of women, to instruct children and women before baptism, to supervise the women in Church and rebuke and correct those who misbehave.”¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew up at the time when the office of the deaconess was gathering strength. It cannot be considered strange that Adventists also considered the possibility of having women serve as deaconesses.

EARLY ADVENTISM

As early as 1856, Joseph Frisbie wrote about deaconesses as church workers. He referred to the choosing of the seven deacons of Acts 6 and Phoebe the deaconess (Rom. 16:1), noting that they “were considered servants, helpers or laborers with the apostles in the gospel, not that they preached the word, but ministered or served their temporal wants.” He approvingly quoted from Clarke’s commentary: “There were deaconesses in the primitive church, whose business it was to attend to the female converts at baptism; to instruct the catechumens, or persons who were candidates for baptism: to visit the sick, and those who were in prison; and, in short, perform those religious offices, for the female part of the church, which could not with propriety be performed by men.”

Frisbie then asked, “Would it not be well then brethren to appoint in all the churches deacons and deaconesses who may answer the qualifications that are laid down clearly in the Bible, with an understanding of



what their duties are”? He then summarized these duties:

1. To see to the poor and destitute, the widows and orphans, the sick and afflicted.
2. To raise funds and care for church finances.
3. To make preparation for the ordinances, including keeping on hand good [unfermented] wine from grapes or raisins.²

In 1870, J. H. Waggoner published his ideas about “The Office of Deacon.” His presentation, based on Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8–12, emphasized the spiritual characteristics of the deacons. Where Frisbie had earlier included deaconesses, Waggoner makes no mention of them.³

ELLEN WHITE AND DEACONESSES

A large number of books, sermons, and pamphlets regarding deaconesses and their work were published in the United States in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Ellen White had none of these in her library.⁴

A search for White’s position on the appointment, ordination, or work of deaconesses proved disappointing. Only one reference was found: a letter written in September 1902. In it White scolded A. T. Jones for listening to the private woes of women: “When a woman comes to you with her troubles, tell her plainly to go to her sisters, to tell her troubles to the deaconesses of the church.”⁵

Yet White’s 1895 message on the setting apart of women is key to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the work of the deaconess. “Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church.”⁶

Records show that on the strength of this declaration, at least three ordination ceremonies for deaconesses took place. The first was August 10, 1895, at the Ashley Church in Sydney, Australia, where “Pastors Corliss and McCullagh of the Australian conference set apart the elder, deacons, deaconesses by prayer and the laying on of hands.”⁷ The second known ordination took place at the same church on January 6, 1900, with W. C. White officiating, as he noted in his diary.⁸ The third occasion was an ordination service in February or March 1916, when E. E. Andross, then president of the Pacific Union Conference, officiated, citing as his authority Ellen White’s 1895 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* article.⁹

ADVENTIST DEACONESSES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Not having to prove their existence, we will consider only two of the three aspects considered in the first article. The

“WOMEN WHO ARE WILLING TO CONSECRATE SOME OF THEIR TIME TO THE SERVICE OF THE LORD SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO VISIT THE SICK, LOOK AFTER THE YOUNG, AND MINISTER TO THE NECESSITIES OF THE POOR.”

two are ordination and tasks.

Ordination of deaconesses. The early ordination of deaconesses in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was soon forgotten. In the *Church Officers’ Gazette* of December 1914, deacons and elders are to be ordained, for “until this is done they are not properly qualified to attend to all the duties of their office.” The work of the deaconess, “closely associated with the deacon in looking after the many interests of the church,” is “of the greatest well-being of the church,” with nothing said about the deaconess’s ordination.¹⁰ In spite of this, in 1921, F. A. Detamore described a visit to a church in Sarawak (Malaysia), and noted the ordination of “Sister

Lee [as] deaconess.”¹¹

With the publishing of the first *Adventist Church Manual* in 1932, the New Testament origin of the deaconess was noted. The manual stated that “there is no record, however, that these women were ordained, hence the practice of ordaining deaconesses is not followed by our denomination.” This sentence appeared in the *Church Manual* through the edition of 1986.¹²

The Annual Council¹³ of 1984 recommended that the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* delete the sentence about not ordaining deaconesses and include Ellen White’s 1895 statement about laying hands on women who would “consecrate some of their time to be of service to the Lord.” The 1985 General Conference Session took up an amended statement for consideration: “The church may arrange for the ordination of deaconesses by an ordained minister who holds current credentials from the conference.”¹⁴ After a delegate objected to calling Phoebe a deaconess, the General Conference Session of 1985 voted to refer the amendment to the standing Church Manual Committee for further consideration.¹⁵ The 1990 session voted to use the word “induction” rather than “ordination.” Thus the 1990 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* reads, “The church may arrange for a suitable service of induction for the deaconess by an ordained minister holding current credentials.” The recognition of Phoebe as a deaconess was included.¹⁶ This same sentence appears in the 2000 edition.

This “appropriate ceremony” may include the laying-on of hands, but ordination of deaconesses is still not generally practiced. For example, in the year 2000, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southeastern California reported that only 38 percent of its congregations ordained women as deaconesses.¹⁷

The tasks of deaconesses. Possibly the oldest reference to duties performed by deaconesses is W. C. White's recollection of his father's calling out the Battle Creek deaconesses in 1863 to repair a torn evangelistic tent.¹⁸

Further perusal of historical Adventist materials provides no information until 1909, when T. E. Bowen wrote in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* that "the work of the deaconess, properly carried on, is of great importance, and will bring much blessing into the church." Besides attending to the Communion service, they should visit "the sick and those in need of loving help."¹⁹ In the same year, in a plea for the use of proper baptismal robes, Mrs. S. N. Haskell pointed out that "Those who accept, at the hand of the church, the office of deaconess, obligate themselves to spend time to attend to the things pertaining to the Lord's house."²⁰

In June 1914, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began to publish instructions for local church officers in *The Church Officers' Gazette*. Its first two issues carried articles delineating the duties of deaconesses: "caring for the appointments of the church building, and looking after the welfare of the members of the church."²¹ The article emphasized "systematic visiting" and rendering "such assistance as may be required." Deaconesses were to care for the sick, provide food and clothing for those in need, help people find work, and teach the sisters how to cook and care for home and children. In this work deaconesses were to involve other church members, "thus leading them to become interested in one another's welfare and uniting the church as one family." Finally, the deaconess was to keep record of the "poor fund . . . administered by the deacon and deaconess."²²

The second article spoke of the care of different aspects of the church building: arranging the platform, placing flowers on the desk, and dusting the sanctuary. Deaconesses were entrusted with the preparations for communion and the women's ordinance of humility, which consists of washing the feet of another person. They were also to care for baptismal robes and help the women who were baptized. Summarizing their duties, the unknown author stated, "To faithfully perform the duties that belong to the office of a deaconess means much hard work and self-denial."²³

The article "Deacons and Deaconesses" in the October 1919 *Church Officers' Gazette* gives only one short paragraph to the care of the sick and the poor. Much more importance is given to the deaconess's part in preparing for the "quarterly [Communion] service."²⁴ The *Gazette* recapitulates the duties of deaconesses in its issue of July 1923. While the practical help deaconesses may render "in the home or sick-room" did not disappear, the emphasis shifted from caring for and visiting the members to a concern with "dishes, decanter, goblets, and linen cloths" for Communion.²⁵

The first Adventist *Church Manual*, published in 1932, dedicates five short paragraphs to the work of deaconesses. Their major tasks were preparing the Communion table, overseeing the footwashing ceremony, assisting in baptisms, and

doing "their part in caring for the sick, the needy, and the unfortunate, co-operating with the deacons in this work."²⁶

In *The Church Officers' Gazette* of October 1948, deaconesses were instructed regarding the highly choreographed Communion service. After folding the napkins covering the bread, "the deaconesses, always moving 'in sweet accord' and unison, return to the table to remove and fold the large cloth that covers the wine service. Somehow, women's fingers can do this so much more skillfully than men's."²⁷

Child care during church services is added in a 1940 issue of *Ministry*. The deaconess should be in charge of the mothers' room, supplying "picture books, crayons, blocks, and other busywork . . . for the little tots."²⁸

In a 1956 article in *Ministry*, Bess Ninaj delineated six major duties of deaconesses: (1) Communion service, including preparation of bread and wine; (2) ordinance of humility; (3) baptisms, especially of women; (4) caring for the sick and poor; (5) greeting people at the door; and (6) visitation of members, at least quarterly but better each month. Ninaj noted that the last of these tasks was "neglected or unrecognized."²⁹

The emphasis on the deaconess and the Communion service, including preparation and footwashing, appears in a two-part *Ministry* article in 1972. The later article even contains a recipe for Communion bread.³⁰

A half century ahead of his time, Leif Tobiassen suggested in 1952 that the church be divided into small groups under the leadership of deacons and deaconesses. "This ideal," wrote Tobiassen, "can most surely be reached by the



“THE DEACONESSSES, ALWAYS MOVING ‘IN SWEET ACCORD’ AND UNISON, RETURN TO THE TABLE TO REMOVE AND FOLD THE LARGE CLOTH THAT COVERS THE WINE SERVICE. SOMEHOW, WOMEN’S FINGERS CAN DO THIS SO MUCH MORE SKILLFULLY THAN MEN’S.”

pastor if he takes pains to educate the deacons and deaconesses to enlarge their vision of the significance of the part they should take in the spiritual and missionary management of the remnant church.”³¹

A ministry description, dated 2002 and prepared by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America for deacons and deaconesses, lists the duties of deacons and deaconesses. Deaconesses are to help with the baptismal service, which includes preparing robes, laundering and storing equipment, and assisting women candidates. The functions regarding footwashing and Communion follow the earlier pattern. One item, however, is new: “It is appropriate for either deacons or deaconesses, who have been ordained, to assist in distributing the emblems and uncovering and recovering the table during the service.” In addition, “They will join with the pastor and elders

in visiting church members. Some churches assign a geographic area or certain number of members for deacons and deaconesses in teams of two or three to visit.”³²

In 1999, Vincent White published a book, *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners*, based on a workshop given for deacons and deaconesses. The more traditional duties include helping to maintain reverence in the service and seeing that the preacher has a glass of water by the pulpit. Deaconesses make arrangements for funeral dinners and “serve as flower bearers.” In addition, deaconesses are to “privately call the pastor’s attention to candidates who may be wearing colorful cosmetics and jewelry.” If dressed appropriately in white, deaconesses may participate in the Communion processional and veil and unveil the table (for which activity specific details are given). Deaconesses also prepare the Communion kits for those who were unable to attend, form part of the team that takes Communion to shut-ins, and dispose of the emblems of Communion by burning the bread and pouring out the wine on the ground.³³

But Vincent White goes further—as the title of his book suggests. Deaconesses should participate in visitation of church members so that all families receive one 10 to 15 minute visit per quarter. When they find problem situations, they are to use a nine-step problem-solving method to meet the physical, social, and spiritual needs of those they work with. They are backed up by interdisciplinary teams in the

local church. In addition, the head deaconess, together with her male counterpart, organizes the telephone committee and helps train those who participate. Deaconesses are to be soul winners and help disciple new members.³⁴

With Vincent White’s book and the 2002 ministry description, one might say that Seventh-day Adventists have returned full circle to the early vision of the deaconess: consecrated women carrying out a ministry of caring for things and people. Whereas for much of the century, the emphasis was on details, now the deaconess has a place in the pastoral team.

CONCLUSION

Adventism was born as a grassroots movement. Everyone—including females—was needed to spread the message.³⁵ As early as 1856, Frisbie called for women deacons. Later Ellen White pleaded for women who gave part-time service to be ordained by the church. The women that Frisbie and White envisioned as serving the church were not to be ascetics or members of sisterhoods, living separate from the world. They were to be people involved in everyday life, giving of themselves; they were not clergy, but lay people ordained to specific tasks.

Twentieth-century Seventh-day Adventists, for the most part, lost the impetus and potential of the early deaconess movement. Deaconesses in pastoral ministry became a rarity; instead, to a great extent, they were lovely ladies who poured wine and water and kept Communion linens and baptismal robes. Selective tasks, such as greeting people at the church door and distributing welfare to the poor, were sometimes added, but deaconesses were not a force to be reckoned with. Suggestions for instructing and organizing deaconesses appear as isolated calls to use the female talents in the church, but seem not to have been heeded.

Perhaps twenty-first century Seventh-day Adventists can learn from history. Deaconesses may yet be recognized as lay ministers. Perhaps the church will find ways to instruct and enable them so that they may serve the church and their Lord with love and creativity, becoming a force for strength and growth within the church.



¹ Leslie McFall, Good Order in the Church, http://www.btinternet.com/~lmf12/HTML-GOITC/women_as_elders.htm, chaps. 4, 5 (accessed May 21, 2007).

² Joseph Birchard Frisbie, “Deacons,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 8, no. 13 (July 31, 1856): 102; the quotation is from *Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary* on Romans 16:1, 2.

³ J. H. Waggoner, “The Office of Deacon,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 27, 1870, 116.

⁴ Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, comps., *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White’s Private and Office Libraries*, 3d. ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993); she did, however, have *Clarke’s Bible Commentary*, quoted by Frisbie in 1856.

⁵ Ellen G. White, Letter to A. T. Jones, *Manuscript Releases* 21, MR no. 1520, 97.

⁶ Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, par. 8.

⁷ Jerry Moon, “A Power That Exceeds That of Men’: Ellen G. White on Women in Ministry,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 201–203.

⁸ Arthur N. Patrick, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," *Adventist Review*, January 16, 1996, 18, 19.

⁹ See Ellen G. White, appendix C to *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 253–255.

¹⁰ O. A. Olsen, "The Duties of Deacons and Deaconesses," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, December 1914, 1.

¹¹ F. A. Detamore, "First Fruits in Sarawak, Borneo," *Review and Herald*, December 8, 1921, 11.

¹² *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church Manual* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1932), 34; *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 64.

¹³ The Annual Council is the full meeting of the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Its worldwide membership consists of some 300 individuals.

¹⁴ Minutes for the 1984 Annual Council, October 15, 1984, 253–284G.

¹⁵ "Ninth Business Meeting, Fifty-fourth General Conference Session, Tuesday, July 2, 1985," *Adventist Review*, July 4, 1985, 9.

¹⁶ *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 64.

¹⁷ Kit Watts, "SECC Members Value Gender Inclusiveness," *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 2000, 31.

¹⁸ W. C. White, "Memories and Records of Early Experiences," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 28, 1932, 6.

¹⁹ T. E. Bowen, "Questions Answered," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 7, 1909, 19.

²⁰ Mrs. S. N. Haskell, "Baptismal Robes," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 11, 1909, 10.

²¹ "The Duties of the Deaconess," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, June 1914, 2.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ "The Duties of the Deaconess," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, July 1914, 2.

²⁴ J. Adam Stevens, "Deacon and Deaconesses," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, October 1919, 2.

²⁵ M. A. Hollister, "Deacon and Deaconess," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, July 1923, 2.

²⁶ *Church Manual*, 1932, 34.

²⁷ Dorothy Foreman Beltz, "Communion Service and True Worship," *The Church Officers' Gazette*, October 1948, 4.

²⁸ Howard J. Capman, "Reverence in the Church Service" *The Ministry*, October 1940, 18.

²⁹ Bess Ninaj, "The Deaconess and Her Work," *The Ministry*, December 1956, 35, 36.

³⁰ Dalores Broome Winget, "The Deaconess and the Communion Service," two parts, *The Ministry*, October 1972, 28–30; November 1972, 41, 42.

³¹ Leif Tobiassen, "Adventist Concepts of Church Management," *The Ministry*, November 1952, 20.

³² *Church Resources Consortium North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Responsibilities in the Local Church*, rev. ed., 2002. Also available at <http://www.plusline.org/article.php?id=236>.

³³ Vincent E. White Sr., *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses* (Knoxville, TN: AVA's Book Publishers, 1999), 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47–58, 59–65, 67–79, 87–93.

³⁵ See Michael Bernoi, "Nineteenth-Century Women in Adventist Ministry against the Backdrop of Their Times," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 211–234.

This article first appeared in the July 2008 issue of *Ministry*,® International Journal for Pastors, www.MinistryMagazine.org and it is reprinted by permission.

Nancy Vyhmeister, PhD, is professor emeritus of missions at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Adventist Preaching DVDs

Adventist Preaching is a collection of sermon series presented by some of the most renowned preachers in the Adventist Church. Each volume includes sermons ideal for church services, vespers, midweek meetings, or your own library of favorite Adventist preachers.

Hyveth Williams – *The Great Gospel of Grace*

Hyveth Williams is the first woman senior pastor and also the first black woman pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America. She attributes her contributions and accomplishments to the miracle, measure, and marvel of God's grace, which she explores in this edition.

Catalog #660006 US\$24.95

Derek Morris – *Healthy Christians*

Pastor Morris suggests that being a healthy Christian is more than just the food we eat. It encompasses every area of Christian life. The series reveals new areas for growth so that we can be totally healthy Christians.

Catalog #660011 US\$24.95

The Collected Works of Pioneer Preachers

This edition of Adventist Preaching features eight Adventist pioneers who searched the Scriptures to gain a personal understanding of Bible truth. It did not end there. Convinced that God had led them into new light, they traveled extensively preaching the Word.

Catalog #660018 US\$29.95



Find more Adventist Preaching DVDs at www.adventsource.org or call 402.486.8800

AdventSource

AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY



The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

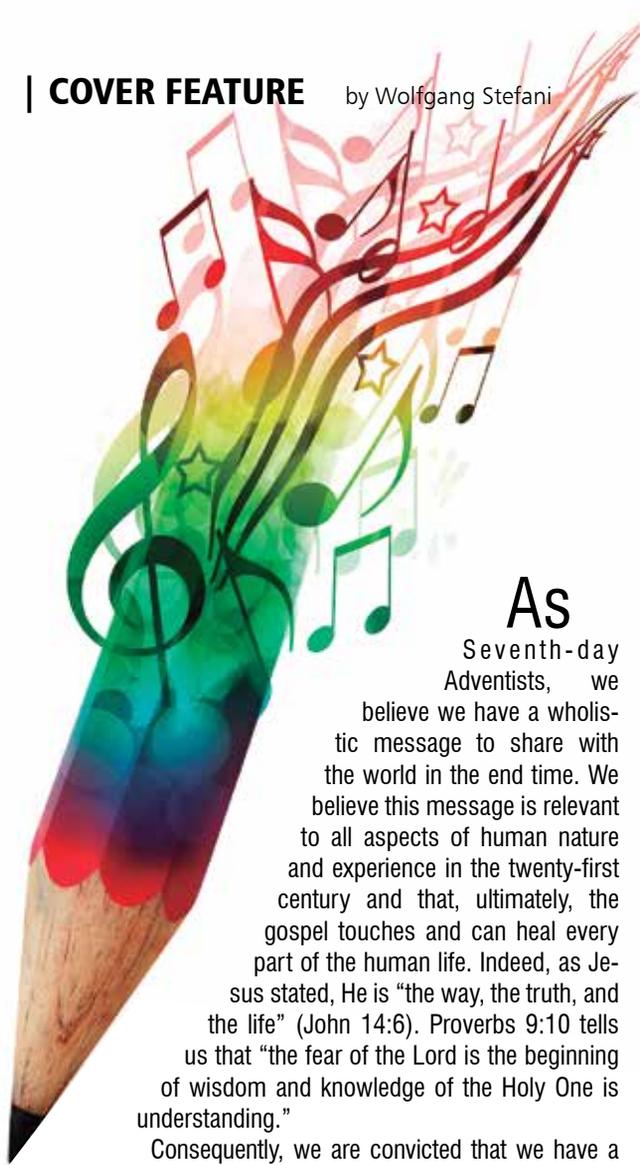
God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honor, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community. ED

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 July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.





MUSIC MATTERS

>PART 1

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe we have a wholistic message to share with the world in the end time. We believe this message is relevant to all aspects of human nature and experience in the twenty-first century and that, ultimately, the gospel touches and can heal every part of the human life. Indeed, as Jesus stated, He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Proverbs 9:10 tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

Consequently, we are convicted that we have a distinctive, Christ-centered doctrinal witness to take to the world, a unique picture of God and His relationship to humanity. Health and lifestyle outreach programs, hospitals, clinics, and health food enterprises seek to impart our vision for personal and community well-being. Adventist educational institutions share the special character of Seventh-day Adventist educational philosophy: the harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers. Through Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), we reach around the world with a message of social concern and compassionate service.

But, what is our distinctive Adventist message in the artistic arena or the aesthetic realm? What is our Adventist understanding of “the beautiful” or “the lovely”? It is fascinating that, at a time when the arts are impacting society more and more profoundly through mass media, we give the impression (and sometimes even openly assert) that when it comes to the arts, apart from religiously-inspired content, there is really nothing uniquely Adventist that needs to be witnessed to or said. Essentially, we are saying that it is okay to follow contemporary culture in these areas. Many of us feel quite comfortable align-

ing with Gene Edward Veith’s view that, apart from spiritual themes, “Christians need not be overly scrupulous in regard to types of art [because] art as art is essentially neutral. [Hence,] for aesthetics, although not for theology, a Christian may ‘go to the Sidonians.’”¹

Perhaps it is significant that the effects of this stance are increasingly evident in our church communities and in approaches taken to worship and everyday lifestyle practices. The comprehensive Valuegenesis study of the 1990s that surveyed thousands of Adventist youth revealed that less than 25 percent supported so-called church standards in the aesthetic arena (including music, dance, literature, theatre, computer games, and movies).² The follow-up Valuegenesis II study in Australia (2012) confirmed: “The majority of Adventist young people do not agree with traditional expectations in those areas.”³ The results among adults were similar. In comparison, health-related ideals such as avoiding tobacco, drugs, and alcohol while maintaining a balanced, healthy diet and exercise program were overwhelmingly endorsed.⁴

In other words, Adventist lifestyle practice was not rejected per se. However, it is hardly an exaggeration that over the past several decades, the closing verse of the book of Judges is generally indicative of Adventist attitudes to the arts, particularly music: “And every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25, KJV). This probably means we are not sharing a unique witness with the world in this arena either.

Perhaps it is time for us to ask ourselves some questions: If Seventh-day Adventists are called to share the truth about God and His relation to humanity in this generation, should there be a distinctive aesthetic component to that message? When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” did this “truth” or “way” include anything about the aesthetic realm or is there really no aesthetic truth to which we should witness? Is there no unique Adventist Christian perspective and discipleship in this arena of human life and experience?

Maybe our dilemma is that we don’t know what the aesthetic truth is. But, is this a problem of ignorance or do we truly think it is actually unimportant, especially given the myriad life-and-death concerns that pervade our world? Or, perhaps the real issue is that we are increasingly reticent to address a

thorny, subjectively-perceived issue in a pluralistic, postmodern, multicultural society? After all, who is going to enunciate the boundaries or create the vision of what “ought to be,” especially when there is such a diversity of views in the church, let alone the surrounding cultures?

But, the issue of what to do with the aesthetic realm won't go away if we ignore or shelve it because, at its heart, it is a scriptural concern. Philippians 4:8 commands us to think about the lovely and the admirable. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (NIV). We can readily understand the exhortation to think about the true, pure, noble, and right, but “the lovely” and “the admirable”? How will we decide what to contemplate here? For many, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” and is purely subjective. However, Psalm 96:9 and 1 Chronicles 16:29 push this point further by admonishing us to worship the Lord in the “beauty of holiness.” Does holiness have a beauty or splendor of its own? Clearly, the Lord wants us to have some notion of what the “beauty of holiness” is because it is apparently intended to give direction to our worship. Notice, we are not asked to worship the Lord simply in recognition or acknowledgement of His holiness.

In Psalm 27:4, the psalmist says he longs to “gaze upon the beauty of the Lord”. In other words, he wants to take a long, lingering look at the multi-faceted loveliness of God. Again, this yearning is surprising. We might expect that he wants to contemplate the mercy, love, grace, or even the justice or goodness of the Lord. But, this is not what he says. Why the “beauty of the Lord,” especially if this is so subjective and difficult to define? These texts seem to suggest that “beauty” and “loveliness” and other such aesthetic descriptors are not inconsequential facets of God's nature and way of being and acting.

This is made very apparent in God's instructions for the building of the sanctuary and the design of the high priest's garments outlined in Exodus 28:2-5, 40; 31:2-6, 11. Under inspiration, Moses describes Aaron's garments as being “for glory and for beauty” (NKJV) or “for dignity and honor” (NIV). Apparently, color, design, and style were not random matters of individual whim and fancy but divinely specified for a purpose. To fashion the sanctuary and associated furnishings and accoutrements, God gifted people through His Spirit with artistic skills and craftsmanship in a variety of areas to provide more than just functional artifacts. Evidently, this artistry even extended to skill in creating aromatic oils (Ex. 30:22-25). During David's reign, detailed prophetic direction was given regarding the development of Israelite worship music (2 Chr. 29:25).

Aesthetic values must, therefore, be worth understanding and relating to because they are part of God's revelation of Himself. They reveal that He has His own aesthetic preferences and ideals. Were they unimportant, Israel could simply have been encouraged to copy what was done in surrounding cultures. Instead, God detailed fairly precise instructions and tasked His people with following His directions, including His

aesthetic ideals (Ex. 25:8, 9). Yet, how often do we really attempt to understand those ideals and grasp their meaning?⁵

The reality is that, as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, if we do not grapple with and come to some understanding of the meaning of “the beauty of holiness,” if we do not develop and articulate a clear conception of aesthetic values informed by divine inspiration, we will inevitably be overwhelmed by the very effectively-presented, daily impact of the world's definitions and expressions in the secular advertising industry and mass media. I think we would all recognize that this is a present reality.

Furthermore, if we do not find some way to pass on a clear spiritual vision of the aesthetic realm, future generations of Adventists won't even consider the need for one. Sadly, in 2017, an Adventist view of music, literature, movies, and dance does not exist for many Adventist youth who already embrace what everyone else does in these arenas.

Despite the difficulties of defining and understanding the arts and aesthetic virtues, paradoxically, it is often the arts alone that remain as a concrete witness to Christian thought in a particular age. When all the sermons have been preached, all the Bible studies have been completed, and all the believers' lives are over, the arts—including literature, movies, music, architecture, sculpture, and painting—stand as a continuing testimony to future generations. They witness to the faith of the people and the time that spawned them. But, here is our challenge. What will be the enduring artistic legacy of Christianity in our age? And, more particularly, what will contemporary Adventist artistic involvement tell future generations about us? Will it reveal any distinctive impression of Adventism or will the following comments be true of us also:

“We may study the present situation, point to the fact that our culture is collapsing, not withstanding its technical achievement and great knowledge in many fields . . . yet we must never think that it is just ‘they,’ the haters of God. We must realize that we as Christians are also responsible To look at modern art is to look at the fruit of the spirit of the *avant-garde*: it is they who are ahead in building a view of the world with no God, no norms. Yet, is this so because Christians long since left the field to the world, and in a kind of mystical retreat from the world, condemned the arts as worldly, almost sinful? Indeed, nowhere is culture more ‘unsalted’ than precisely in the field of the arts—and that in a time when the arts [in the widest sense] are gaining a stronger influence than ever through the mass communications.”⁶

Are Seventh-day Adventists “salt” in their artistic cultures around the world or are they merely participants, followers, or cyphers? Sadly, as you read contemporary scholarly appraisals, most academics see no distinctive stylistic contribution or direction in music or any of the arts being made today by Christians in general or Seventh-day Adventists in particular. We are seen as artistic imitators rather than leaders, offering no unique aesthetic witness, no viable alternative to what is happening around us in the twenty-first century.⁷

Some may question whether it really matters. In light of our distinctive Adventist belief about the Great Controversy,

I believe it does. Writing toward the end of her life, Ellen G. White admonished:

“In both the Old and the New Testament the Lord has positively enjoined upon His people to be distinct from the world, in spirit, in pursuits, in practice, to be a holy nation, a peculiar people. The east is not farther from the west than are the children of light, in customs, practices, and spirit, from the children of darkness. And this distinction will be more marked, more decided, as we near the close of time.”⁸

She is, in fact, only reiterating here something she saw as a scriptural concern, evident in passages like 1 Peter 1:13-15.⁹ Can we honestly conclude that this counsel excludes aesthetic issues? I believe not. History teaches us that if we don’t take a proactive stand to be distinctive on lifestyle matters, we will, by default, morph into the general trends of society. As P. T. Forsyth insightfully observed, “Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is around us.”¹⁰

As elders and leaders in God’s work, we must think about discipleship matters in the times in which we live. In forthcoming articles, we will explore more closely the issue of musical discipleship from an Adventist Christian perspective. We will try to understand why music matters and learn to practically apply principles that will bring “glory and beauty” and “dignity and honor” to our worship and lives and also provide an appropriate and meaningful aesthetic witness to our God who gave us the ability to appreciate and create manifestations of the beautiful, the lovely, and the admirable in sound. 

¹ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *The Gift of Art* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 53.

² Roger L. Dudley with V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance* (La Sierra, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 148.

³ A. Barry Gane, *Valuegenesis II: Study 1—Core Report* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale College Press, 2012), 86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵ Jo Ann Davidson is one Seventh-day Adventist scholar who has sought to thoughtfully address this issue. See, for example, *The Bible and Aesthetics*, a paper she presented at the Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship, Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic, March 19-26, 2000, and *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).

⁶ H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, 2nd ed., (London: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 222.

⁷ In comparison, during the Protestant Reformation, Luther’s and Calvin’s theological standpoint made a very distinctive impression on the musical culture of their day.

⁸ Ellen G. White, “Preparing for Christ’s Return,” in *Review and Herald*, November 12, 1914. Reprinted as a Week of Prayer reading in *Record*, September 2, 2000:3.

⁹ See Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 518-519.

¹⁰ P. T. Forsyth cited in Franklin M. Segler, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), 81.

Wolfgang Stefani, Ph.D., is a pastor in the Park Ridge and Flagstone Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the South Queensland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Australia.

10 DAYS OF PRAYER

January 10–20, 2018

Seventh-day
Adventist Church

WWW.TENDAYSOFPRAAYER.ORG





BREVITY

>PART 2

SHORT SERMON, TESTIMONY SERVICE

The preaching service should generally be short so that an opportunity may be given to those who love God to express their gratitude and adoration. Prayer and praise offered to God by His believing children honor and glorify His name.

SHORT MESSAGES, OFTEN REPEATED

Let the message for this time be presented, not in long, labored discourses, but in short talks, right to the point. Lengthy sermons tax the strength of the speaker and the patience of his hearers. If the speaker is one who feels the importance of his message, he will need to be especially careful lest he overtax his physical powers, and give the people more than they can remember.

Do not think, when you have gone over a subject once, that your hearers will retain in their minds all that you have presented. There is danger of passing too rapidly from point to point. Give short lessons, in plain, simple language, and let them be often repeated. Short sermons will be remembered far better than long ones. Our speakers should remember that the subjects they are presenting may be new to some of their hearers; therefore the principal points should be gone over again and again.

THE LOSING OF A RELIGIOUS INTEREST

Long discourses and tedious prayers are positively injurious to a religious interest and fail to carry conviction to the consciences of the people. This propensity for speech-making frequently dampens a religious interest that might have produced great results.

A LITTLE AT A TIME

Present the truth to the people in its true importance and

sacredness, and be careful not to give them too large a portion in one discourse. It will be lost upon them if you do.

Lengthy speeches detract from the efficiency of your labors. To those who are ignorant of the truth, your teaching is new and strange, and they do not readily apprehend it. There is danger of pouring into their minds a mass of matter which they cannot possibly digest. "But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We need to study His method of teaching. We have the most important and decided testimony for the world, and we must give the people short discourses, in plain and simple language. Do not think, because you have gone over a subject once, that you can pass right on to other points, and the hearers retain all that has been presented.

MORE EMPHASIS ON BIBLE READING

Avoid lengthy sermons. The people cannot retain one half of the discourses which they hear. Give short talks and more Bible readings. This is the time to make every point as plain as mileposts.

PURE WHEAT THOROUGHLY WINNOWNED

Preach the truth in its simplicity, but let your discourses be short. Dwell decidedly on a few important points. . . . Keep decidedly to a few points. Give the people pure wheat thoroughly winnowed from all chaff. Do not let your discourses embrace so much that weakness shall be seen in the place of solid argument. Present the truth as it is in Jesus, that those who hear may receive the very best impression. 

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp 249-252, by Ellen G. White.

GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES: MENTAL HEALTH – SUICIDE



Suicide is among the top leading causes of death around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that almost one million people die by their own hand every year—that is one death every 40 seconds.¹ What is worse, in the last 45 years, suicide rates have increased by 60 percent worldwide making it now among the three leading causes of death in some countries for those aged 15 to 44. In the United States alone, more than twice as many Americans die by suicide than by homicide, and more by suicide than by any motor vehicle accidents.

Even more concerning is that about 9 out of 10 people who die by suicide have at least one underlying mental health issue, including substance use. Among the top risk factors for suicide, are:

1. Depression or mood disorders.
2. Alcohol or drug use.

Among youth, this reality has become worse due to the influence of social media and mobile games. The popular Blue Whale game challenges participants to ultimately kill themselves. As a result, more than 130 teenagers have ended their lives prematurely in Russia alone.²

Thus, it is no wonder that among the top United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)*, one of the priorities is to reduce by one third premature mortality by 2030 . . . and to promote mental health and well-being.³

Fortunately, suicide is a preventable public health problem. There are things we can do to help identify those at risk and help them seek help before they attempt suicide. Elders and other faith leaders are first responders and have a critical role to play in prevention. Research shows that often, those at risk are more likely to seek help for their mental or emotional struggles from a faith leader than from a therapist.

Here are some ways elders can help in suicide prevention:

1. Identify and offer support to individuals at risk as this is a crucial part of a proactive approach to suicide prevention. Speak about the signs and symptoms of depression and suicide. This can help to clarify myths or misconceptions, and make it ok to talk about it.

Some warning signs for suicide include:

- Talking or writing about death or suicide.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Feeling hopeless or helpless.
- Feeling strong anger or rage.
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes.
- Abusing drugs or alcohol.
- Acting impulsively.

- Losing interest in most activities.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Performing poorly at work or in school.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Feeling excessive guilt or shame.
- Acting recklessly.

When you see these signs in others, don't be afraid to ask questions and refer them to a health professional for help.

2. Offer warm connection, acceptance, and a caring attitude toward all, but most importantly toward those who are vulnerable, lonely, and have suffered traumatic events in their lives. Strengthening connectedness within community can be one of the most important factors in decreasing risk for suicide.

3. Provide helpful resources and access to mental health care and addiction recovery programs such as *Adventist Recovery Ministries Global*.⁴ Educational programs such as Mental Health First Aid are also offered in many communities. The faith community can be a place for education, not just about the risk factors for suicide, but also about mental health, thus helping to diminish the stigma associated with these conditions, and then refer to treatment by a health professional.

4. Share messages of hope and healing that can build one's faith in Christ and give them a sense of purpose and self-worth. A deep loving relationship with God can help in prevention and healing. If possible, schedule a mental health Sabbath and preach about mental health topics such as suicide, offering words of encouragement and hope.

Every year on October 10, we have a *World Mental Health Day*. This date offers a great opportunity to put into practice some of the suggestions above. Let us remind people that nothing, including suicide, can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39). People who die by suicide are not “deplored” and elders can send a message that it is unjust the stigma that so often falls on surviving family members and friends. Let us minister to the family of survivors and do not judge those who survive a suicide attempt.



¹ http://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/en/

² <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/worldnews/3003805/blue-whale-suicide-game-online-victims-uk-russia/>

³ United Nations Sustainable Development Goal <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

⁴ <http://adventistrecoveryglobal.org/>



Katia Reinert is associate director of the Health Ministries Department for the General Conference.

HOPE IN OUR BATTLES

Psalm 27:1-6

As we read the words of this psalm, we see the imagery of battle being portrayed in these verses. Words like “enemies” and “foes” in verse 2, “host” and “war” in verse 3, and “enemies” in verse 6 all speak of warfare. Phrases like “though an host encamp against me” and “though war should rise against me” in verse 3 speak of a battle being waged against David. It appears that he is in a difficult situation. Yet, it is also very clear from reading these verses that even during the battles he is fighting, David still has hope.

Now, I know you have battles, but, do you have hope? Are you resting in the sure confidence that God will do what He has promised? That is the essence of hope, and hope is a possession we all need to own in large quantities.

I. OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD PROVIDES HOPE (VERSES 1-3)

David begins his psalm of hope by declaring his personal faith in the Lord. Notice the threefold use of the word “my” in verse 1. David has a personal relationship with God. This is the basic foundation for hope.

A. *Confidence in the person of the Lord* (verse 1). David tells us that God is his “light,” his “salvation,” and his “strength.” There is a tremendous blessing in these three titles attributed to our God.

1. As light, God delivers His people from darkness (Col. 1:13) and guides our steps (Ps. 37:23; 119:105; John 16:13).

2. As salvation, God delivers His people from damnation (John 5:24) and secures our souls (John 10:28; 1 Pet. 1:5; John 6:37).

3. As strength, God delivers His people from defeat (1 Cor. 15:57) and guarantees our success (Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14; Isa. 54:17).

These three great characteristics of God serve to give us hope even in the midst of battle!

B. *Confidence in the performance of the Lord* (verses 2, 3). David declares that his present hope in the Lord rests upon what the Lord has done for him in the past. God did not fail him then, and He will not fail His child today.

That same confidence is ours today! The God we serve is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). He is the same God He has always been and has the same power He has always had.

II. OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD PROVIDES HOPE (VERSE 4)

Not only does living with our faith give us hope; living faithful to the Lord provides a measure of hope that cannot otherwise exist. David mentions three goals in this verse. These three goals all arise from a single commitment to serve the Lord faithfully from a heart of love.

A. *He is committed to lingering near the Lord*. David wants to spend his entire life in the house of the Lord. He wants to be in that place where the Lord dwells and where the Lord’s presence is real. This is a theme David repeats in Psalm 84:1-4.

B. *He is committed to loving the Lord*. David wants to “behold the beauty of the Lord.” That is, he wants to “seek His face.” You see, not only is David committed to being where the Lord is; he is also committed to worshiping the Lord. That is a worthy goal for life!

C. *He is committed to leaning on the Lord*. David also expresses his desire to call upon the Lord, to commune with God, and to make requests of Him. This is another image of worship. Here David declares his utter dependence upon the Lord for the necessities of life.

III. OUR COMFORT IN THE LORD PROVIDES HOPE (VERSES 5, 6)

A. *God has a sheltered place for us* (verse 5). David tells us that the Lord will hide him in His pavilion. A king’s pavilion was a tent that was erected in the middle of the military encampment. The tent was then surrounded by an army of brave soldiers. With all the host of the army camped about, the king’s pavilion was the safest place on the battlefield.

As the battles of life rage about us, we are safely tucked away in our King’s pavilion. The Bible tells us that “your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3)! Could there be a safer place in all the universe? Of course not!

B. *God has a secret place for us* (verse 5). The word “tabernacle” recalls the place of worship. The “secret” refers to the “holy of holies.” That place was off limits to all but the High Priest, and he could enter there only one day each year and only with the blood of an innocent sacrifice. It was a place that other men entered under penalty of death.

Yet, it is that secret place to which God takes His precious friends. The Holy of Holies was a place where the presence of God dwelt

and the glory of God could be seen. It was there that God took David during the battles of his life.

In a king’s home, this place is referred to as the private apartment of the king. It was a place no one could enter unless he or she did so at the king’s bidding. To do otherwise invited instant death.

It is amazing that, in a world filled with people, there is a place of solitude. There is a place to which you and I can flee during the crushing battles that rage about us. This place affords us quiet, peace, and the profound presence of God. Have you ever been to that place?

C. *God has a secure place for us* (verses 5, 6). David has the assurance that even when life threatens to overwhelm him, the Lord will set him on a rock, a place that is unchangeable, powerful, and immovable. Of course, this Rock is none other than the Lord Himself (Ps. 40:1, 2).

D. *God has a special place for us* (verse 6). David says that he will worship the Lord and praise the Lord because of the things the Lord has done for him. Because the Lord has lifted him above the battles, because the Lord has hidden him away in the secret place, because the Lord sheltered him away from the terrors of the battles, he will praise His name!

CONCLUSION

Are you fighting some battles today? Of course you are! But, in the midst of your battles, do you have hope? Do you have the deep, settled confidence that everything is going to be all right? If you do, praise the Lord, for He has already brought you to that special place of blessing from which you can offer praise to His name.

But, if you lack that hope, it can be obtained. How? You can do this by reaffirming your confidence in the Lord, by renewing your commitment to the Lord, and by resting your comfort in the Lord. Get that hope today! 

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

BE NOT AFRAID, ONLY BELIEVE

Mark 5:21-43

Today, our text takes us into a hopeless situation. This time, Jesus faces the greatest enemy known to man. Jesus faces death in these verses—and He walks away victorious!

As we watch our Lord conquer one hopeless situation after another, His example gives us hope when our own desperate times come.

I. THE CONCEPTION OF HIS FAITH (VERSES 21-24)

A man named Jairus rushed into the crowd surrounding Jesus. His story serves as the focus of these verses. He was a man whose small faith was about to grow very large.

A. *The direction of Jairus' faith* (verses 22, 23). This man was "a ruler of the synagogue." This means that he was one of the officials who oversaw the business of the synagogue; he was responsible for making sure that everything was ready and in order. Jairus possessed power, privilege, prestige, position, and prominence.

Sickness and death had visited Jairus' home, and none of the positive things in his life could drive them away! His power, his money, his position in the community, and even his religion were all powerless in the face of those two enemies. His daughter was dying, and he needed help! Jairus needed help that none of his resources could provide!

He had heard about Jesus, and he ran to Him and humbled himself at Jesus' feet. Jairus didn't understand everything there was to know about Jesus, but, he had come to believe that this Man could heal.

Let me remind you that tragedy doesn't care who you are. The trials of life are not going to pass you by (Job 14:1; John 16:33). Tragedy doesn't care that you go to church and pay your tithe. Sickness and death could care less about your achievements and assets.

When the trials of life come, you need a resource outside of yourself. When death, sickness, sorrow, marital trouble, financial trouble, and other trials come, you need more than religion or the things of this world. You need a faith that rests in Jesus and in His power alone.

B. *The depth of his faith* (verses 23b, 24). Perhaps Jairus had heard what Jesus could do just by touching someone who was diseased. Regardless of whether he had heard about or seen it with his own eyes, Jairus believed that Jesus could heal his daughter. He believed the Lord's touch would bring healing to his child.

Thus, this powerful man humbled himself at the feet of Jesus and cried out for the help he needed.

This is the kind of faith the Lord is looking for in your life and mine. He wants us to come to the end of our own abilities. He wants us to come to the place where we know that we can't but believe that He can!

II. THE CONFUSION OF HIS FAITH (VERSES 24-35)

Someone has said, "A faith that can't be tested is a faith that can't be trusted." Here we see Jairus' fledgling faith put to the test. A hopeless situation grew worse with each passing moment, and a faith that was weak was brought to the breaking point.

A. *Confused by hindering situations* (verses 24-35). Jesus left to go with Jairus to heal his daughter. As He left, He was surrounded by the crowd, and a very sick woman touched His garments and was healed. Jesus stopped to confront and comfort this woman, and as He did, precious minutes ticked by.

I would imagine that Jairus was confused and upset by this delay. After all, his daughter was dying! She didn't have much time, and Jesus was wasting His time on this woman.

On the surface, the Lord's delay seems a little insensitive. He knew the seriousness of the situation. He knew the broken heart of this father. He knew the urgency of the need. But, Jesus paused to take care of the need at hand.

What seems to be hard and harsh on the surface has some important lessons to teach us: (1) Deity doesn't run on our schedule. God is not bound by the constraints of time and space. (2) When God doesn't move as quickly as you might like, trust Him anyway.

B. *Confused by hopeless situations* (verse 36). As Jesus finally finished with this woman, some people came from Jairus' home with devastating news. His daughter had died. The news is blunt and final: "Thy daughter is dead: Why troublest thou the Master any further?" They are saying, "Don't bother Jesus! Even He can't fix this problem! Your daughter is dead, and that is just the way it is!" Surely this news rocked Jairus to his foundations! Surely this news attacked his faith and brought him to the very edge of despair!

God has a plan for your situation! Even when you can't see what the Lord is doing, trust Him anyway, and your faith will sustain you! (Job 23:10; Ps. 37:23).

III. THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS FAITH (VERSES 36-43)

Jairus' faith was weak. His faith wavered. But, in the end, his faith won out. His faith triumphed because it was rooted in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. *Confirmed by the Savior's words* (verses 36-39). Jesus overheard the words from those who brought the news of the girl's death. Jesus also knew the fear that rested within Jairus' heart. Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe."

So Jesus and Jairus continued on to Jairus' house. When they arrived, the mourners were already there. The mourners were wailing and crying, and sad tunes were being played on flutes. Jesus approached this scene and made a strange statement. He told the mourners to stop their wailing because the little girl was not dead, only sleeping. They laughed at Him, but there was much truth in His words.

What a lesson for us! No situation that we can think of is beyond His ability! When you are faced with a hopeless situation, remember the words of the Lord, and let His words be all the support your faith needs! Let His words secure your faith.

B. *Confirmed by the Savior's works* (verses 40-43). Jesus sent the mourners and the spectators away. With Jairus, the girl's mother, and Peter, James, and John, He entered the room where the girl's body was. He took her by the hand and said, "Talitha Cumi." This phrase can literally be translated, "Arise, little lamb." What a tender expression!

CONCLUSION

If Jesus can do this, nothing is impossible with Him! That lost spouse or family member can be saved! That impossible situation in your life can be handled! That incredible need that you think is so great can be met! Never forget that!

When the answers to your prayers are delayed, believe Jesus! When you are looking at a hopeless situation, believe Jesus!

You may have a problem today that you cannot handle. It is bigger than you are and out of your control. He can handle it! He can cut it down to size! Bring it to Jesus and trust Him to take care of it for His glory! Believe Jesus—He will not fail!



General Conference Ministerial Association

WHAT MATTERS MOST

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The greatest, most essential gift that God gave His church, the gift that contains the most divine power, is the gift of His love working in us and through us. His love was placed within us when we were saved by His grace (Rom. 5:5). His love, working in us and displayed one to another, is the greatest testimony we have to a lost world (John 13:35).

When we walk in love one for another, we are walking in obedience to the Lord (John 13:34). When we walk in love one for another, we prove that we are saved by His grace (1 John 3:14).

One of the problems in the church at Corinth was that they were manifesting nearly every spiritual gift in existence, but they were not walking in love one for one another. The Corinthians loved the flashy gifts: tongues, prophecy, and other gifts that made them look spiritual in the eyes of others. But God wanted them to come to the place where they loved each other as He loved them.

First Corinthians 13 talks about what matters most. How smart you are, how wealthy, how popular, how famous, how well-liked—it doesn't matter. How well you love is what matters. When you learn to love as Jesus loves, you have discovered what matters most.

I. LOVE'S DISTINCTION (VERSES 1-3)

The whole idea of these verses is that love is distinct from and superior to anything we can be or do! Regardless of what we do, if it is not infused with and carried out through the love of God, it is a colossal waste of time.

A. *Love is higher than the sensational* (verse 1). You may be a great speaker, but that is no substitute for love. Without love, you are simply a clanging cymbal.

B. *Love is higher than the spectacular* (verse 2). This verse mentions several spectacular abilities. But, even if a person does all these things and does not have God's love in their heart, he/she is nothing!

C. *Love is higher than the sacrificial* (verse 3). We can give away everything we own and even give up our bodies on the altar of martyrdom, but if we do so without love in our hearts, it is a waste of time and does not profit us one bit.

The emphasis is clear! When love is absent, the Christian is no better than a heathen (verse 1); he is nothing (verse 2) and can expect nothing (verse 3). Regardless of what others may

think of us, our abilities, or our gifts, without love, it is all a spectacular waste of time!

II. LOVE'S DESCRIPTION (VERSES 4-12)

In these verses, Paul gives an in-depth description of love and reveals all of its characteristics to us. These are truths that we need to be reminded of continually.

A. *Love's features* (verses 4-6). Paul shows us the many sides of true, godly love. As if love were a great and brilliant diamond, he holds it up before us and reveals its many facets. As he does, the Person of God is revealed in each gleam of light from the surface of love.

1. *Suffereth long* (verse 4). This means "patient endurance under provocation."

2. *Is kind* (verse 4). This word refers to "active goodness that goes forth on behalf of others."

3. *Envieth not* (verse 4). True love is "not jealous" over the abilities, successes, or possessions of others.

4. *Vaunteth not itself* (verse 4). Literally, this phrase means "does not make a parade." Love does not brag! It does not draw attention to itself or to what it is doing.

5. *Is not puffed up* (verse 4). Love is "not arrogant or proud." It realizes that all it has and all that it is has been given to it by God.

6. *Does not behave itself unseemly* (verse 5). Love is "never rude." It always treats others with compassion, consideration, and respect.

7. *Seeketh not her own* (verse 5). True love is "never selfish and self-centered" but is actively interested in what will profit others.

8. *Is not easily provoked* (verse 5). True love "keeps no record of evils done to it" but willingly endures all slights and injuries.

9. *Thinketh no evil* (verse 5). Love "takes no worthless inventory." First, genuine love does not attribute evil motives to people.

10. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity* (verse 6). Love does not rejoice in sin. Love hates sin! Love does not rejoice when another falls into sin.

11. *Rejoiceth in the truth* (verse 6). While love hates all forms of evil, it loves the truth. It rejoices when truth is proclaimed and when truth wins the victory.

B. *Love's fortitude* (verses 7-12). These verses tell us of love's staying power. Love is a remarkable thing that never waivers or fails!

1. *Beareth all things* (verse 7). Love patiently endures and overlooks the faults of others.

2. *Believeth all things* (verse 7). Love always places the best possible interpretation on everything that happens.

3. *Hopeth all things* (verse 7). Love always expects the best possible outcome. Love always holds out hope that things will work out right in the end.

4. *Endureth all things* (verse 7). It stands its ground and continues in spite of everything that is thrown against it. It continues in spite of persecution and ill treatment.

5. *Charity never fails* (verses 8-12). When everything else in this world has passed away, when everything that we hold in high esteem is gone, when knowledge and spiritual gifts no longer matter, love will still exist. It is the great constant throughout eternity.

III. LOVE'S DURABILITY (VERSE 13)

The Bible says that three things abide: faith, hope, and love. Yet, faith and hope are encompassed inside of love. Therefore, the greatest thing a believer can possess is love! If our love is right, faith is no problem! If our love is right, our hope is in the right place. When our love is right, we are right!

What makes love so great? Well, love is the defining characteristic of who God is (1 John 4:8). When the Bible wanted to describe God in one sentence, it said, "God is love."

CONCLUSION

For just a moment, take all the things you value today and set them aside. Forget about your talents, your intelligence, your gifts, your potential, your achievements, and anything else you want to mention. Now, forgetting all those other things, how well do you love? Do you love God more than anything else in this world (Matt. 22:37, 38)? Do you love others as God loves them (Matt. 22:39, 40)? Is there room for improvement in your life or have you figured it all out?

If you need to talk to Him about how you love, do it now. Who wants to ask Him to help you love as He loves?



General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

THE ROADMAP FOR REVIVAL

Isaiah 40:3-5

Most of us agree that we need revival. We need revival in our personal lives. We need revival in the church. We stand in need of a revival.

What we need to understand is that we will not have revival just because we set aside a week for meetings. We will not have revival just because we have a great preacher and some singers who come in for a few nights to minister. Genuine revival happens when God moves sovereignly among a spiritually-prepared people. These verses tell us how that can be a reality in our lives.

These verses tell us about a time of genuine revival. Isaiah is writing about the coming of the Messiah. These verses were partially fulfilled through the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3). They will see their ultimate fulfillment when Jesus comes in His second advent, to rule as the King of Kings and set things right in the world.

While these verses are primarily about the future, they also present what we can call “a roadmap for revival.” They point out the preparations we as the church must make if we want to see the Lord move among us in a time of power, glory, and spiritual renewal.

We know that we need God to move in our lives and in our church. We want to see the blessings of verse 5. Those blessings are the blessings of revival. But, before we can live in verse 5, we must make the preparations found in verse 4. If we make these preparations, I cannot promise you that we will have revival, but I can promise you that we will make revival far more likely than it would have been otherwise. I can promise you that these preparations will form a “highway in the desert.”

So, let’s review the preparations we need to make as individuals and as a church.

I. SOME THINGS WILL HAVE TO BE LIFTED UP

A. Every valley shall be exalted. Isaiah refers to a “filling process.” A valley is “a crevice, a gutter, or a low place.” This speaks to us about the places in our lives that are lacking. We all have low spots in our walk with the Lord. We all have places that we have allowed to become hollowed out and shallow. Those places must be filled in before revival can come into our lives. These valleys go by many names:

1. For some, it is spiritual: prayer life, Bible reading, church attendance, unforgiveness, guilt, anger, self-righteousness, etc.

2. For others, it is physical: financial problems, marital issues, physical problems, the hardships of life, relationships and activities that have pulled us away from God, etc.

II. SOME THINGS WILL HAVE TO BE LOWERED DOWN

A. Every mountain and hill shall be made low. This refers to a lowering process. A mountain or a hill is something that stands taller than the landscape around it.

This speaks to us about barriers or roadblocks in our lives that have the potential to hinder revival from coming our way. There are many potential barriers to revival in our lives: jealousy, lust, pride, unfaithfulness, hindering relationships, worry, hypocrisy, disobedience to the will of God, busyness, fear, guilt, unforgiveness, etc.

We all have mountains in our lives. We all have attitudes, actions, and passions that need to be brought down so God can move in as He desires. I have noticed that when mountains are brought down, low places are filled in. Look at your life today and identify those high places that stand as barriers between you and revival.

III. SOME THINGS WILL HAVE TO BE LINED UP

A. The crooked shall be made straight. This refers to getting things lined up as they should be. The word “crooked” comes from a word that means “deceitful, sly, or slippery.” It speaks of a road that is deceptive in nature.

If we want revival in our lives, we must identify those areas where we have taken the wrong road and get back on track with Him.

1. Some have gotten themselves into relationships that have led them away from God.

2. Some have allowed work, recreation, or some other pursuit to lead them away from the Lord.

3. Some have wandered down a path of self-righteousness and have come to believe that they know what’s right for everyone around them. That dangerous road should be abandoned for the straight path of humility.

4. Some are walking the crooked path of pride. They refuse to bow to the Lordship of Jesus in their lives.

We have all taken the wrong path at times. We must abandon the “deceitful, sly, and slippery” paths of sin, pride, self-righteousness, and worldliness that lead to destruction and step

onto the path of submission, surrender, and obedience to the Word and will of God.

IV. SOME THINGS WILL HAVE TO BE LEVELED OUT

A. The rough places plain. This refers to a smoothing process. It speaks to those areas in our lives that are a little rough or doubtful. It speaks to those areas that are questionable. It speaks to those places in life where we know we could do better but don’t.

The Bible tells us clearly how to handle those areas of life. It says, “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

Again, we all have those places in our lives that are a little rough. We allow ourselves a mile when the Lord has forbidden even an inch. We allow things like gossip, envy, anger, unforgiveness, laziness, hatred, bad temper, bad habits, arrogance, tardiness, prayerlessness, impurity in talk, negative thoughts, and unpure motives. There are a thousand other areas that could be named.

We all allow those rough places in our walk with the Lord, but they must be smoothed out if we want Him to send us genuine revival.

CONCLUSION

If real revival came, what would it look like? It would not be a few days of meetings and then forgotten forever. If real revival came, would everyone embrace it? No, if real revival came, many would leave the church because they like things the way they are. Revival messes things up for those who are unwilling to change.

If real revival came, what would it look like? I think it would look a lot like verse 5. I think it would look a lot like Acts 2:42-47. I think it would look a lot like Acts 4:23-33. I think it would look a lot like Acts 5:1-13. I think it would look a lot like Acts 8:4-8.

In other words, I think that, when it comes, real revival will make the church look more like the New Testament model than it does now. I think real revival will empower us for God’s work, impassion us to reach the lost, enliven us to worship the Lord, and instruct us in holiness.

Is real revival possible? Yes, I believe it is. It will be more likely when we follow His roadmap and prepare the way for Him to come to us in power and glory.



General Conference Ministerial Association

WAR IN HEAVEN

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THE “WAR IN HEAVEN” MENTIONED IN REVELATION 12:7?

Revelation 12:7-9 says: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” The reference to “Michael, the great prince” in Daniel 12:1 (see also Jude 9) suggests that Michael is Christ Himself, not a mere angelical creature as some interpreters claim. On the other hand, the dragon is identified, in Revelation 12:7, as Satan. Thus, it is evident that the war in heaven was between Christ and His angels on one hand and Satan and his angels on the other.

The conflict was marked by Satan’s strong accusations against the government of God, with special reference to the person of Christ. Describing Lucifer’s strategy to persuade the heavenly angels, Ellen G. White states: “Lucifer had at first so conducted his temptations that he himself stood uncommitted. The angels whom he could not bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings. The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon the loyal angels. It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah.”¹

But the heavenly conflict was not restricted to a fight of ideas. Revelation 12:7-9 affirms that there was “war” among the celestial beings, and Lucifer was “cast out” of heaven, and there was no longer a “place” for him and his angels in heaven. These statements make it clear that there was

a physical conflict that resulted in a physical expulsion of the rebel hosts; it wasn’t just an ideological expulsion from heaven.

Ellen G. White describes the conflict in the following terms: “All heaven seemed in commotion. The angels were marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head. Satan was warring against the law of God, because ambitious to exalt himself and unwilling to submit to the authority of God’s Son, heaven’s great commander. All the heavenly hosts were summoned to appear before the Father, to have each case determined. Satan unblushingly made known his dissatisfaction that Christ should be preferred before Him. He stood up proudly and urged that he should be equal with God and should be taken into conference with the Father and understand His purposes. God informed Satan that to His Son alone He would reveal His secret purposes, and He required all the family in heaven, even Satan, to yield Him implicit, unquestioned obedience; but that he [Satan] had proved himself unworthy of a place in heaven. Then Satan exultingly pointed to his sympathizers, comprising nearly one half of all the angels, and exclaimed, ‘These are with me! Will you expel these also, and make such a void in heaven?’ He then declared that he was prepared to resist the authority of Christ and to defend his place in heaven by force of might, strength against strength.”²

In reality, “there was war in heaven. Angels were engaged in the battle; Satan wished to conquer the Son of God and those who were submissive to His will. But the good and true angels prevailed, and Satan, with his followers, was driven from heaven.”³ This war and expulsion were not a mere question of ideological disagreement, as some claim, for “the battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend.”⁴



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

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 41.

² ———, *The Story of Redemption*, 17, 18.

³ ———, *Early Writings*, 146.

⁴ ———, *Prophets and Kings*, 176.

Alberto Timm is associate director of the General Conference Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

LESSONS FROM DANIEL 11 AND 12

SOME PEOPLE CARE ONLY FOR THEMSELVES. THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE, THE FUTURE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, OR EVEN THE FUTURE OF THEIR CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN. OTHERS CARE DEEPLY. DANIEL BELONGED TO THE SECOND CATEGORY, AND GOD REVEALED TO HIM LARGE PORTIONS OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION AND THE DESTINY OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH.

I. OVERVIEW OF DANIEL 11 AND 12

A. The Broad Structure of the Vision in Daniel 10–12

Chapters 10–12 of the book of Daniel contain the following broad structure, which will later be broken down into smaller units:

- Prologue to the last vision of Daniel (Dan 10:1–11:1).
- The vision of the kingdoms (Dan 11:2–12:4).
- Epilogue to the last vision and of the entire book (Dan 12:5–13).

In our previous study the emphasis was on the introduction to the vision of the kingdoms (Dan 10). This time the focus will be on chapters 11 and 12, the vision proper, and the epilogue. Daniel as a person appears five times in Daniel 10 and three times in Daniel 12. But other more important characters also appear in both chapters—the man in linen clothes and Michael. While in the beginning Michael is involved in a geographically limited situation (Dan 10), at the end He is involved in a drama of universal dimensions (Dan 12).

B. A Cosmic Scenario

The major visions in the preceding part of the book of Daniel all had some reference to the heavenly world. In Daniel 2 God's kingdom was completely established on earth with the falling of the stone from heaven, which became an all-encompassing mountain. In chapter 7 a heavenly judgment was portrayed before the saints received participation in God's kingdom at the end of time. In Daniel 8 the heavenly sanctuary was presented as it was attacked by the little horn. The last vision of Daniel differs insofar as a cosmic conflict appears right in the beginning (Dan 10) and climaxes in Daniel 12. This is important because we need to see the big picture apart from the details.

C. The Time Frame of the Vision

Which time elements appear in this vision?

- Daniel 11:2 clearly begins in Persian times and continues to the Greek empire.
- The vision informs us specifically about various time elements. It progresses from “the appointed time”

(Dan 11:27, 29) to “the time of the end” (Dan 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9), “the time of trouble” (Dan 12:1), and to “the time” of deliverance (Dan 12:1) which is associated with resurrection (Dan 12:2, 3) and in the epilogue is called “the end” (Dan 12:13).

- Specific time elements occur in the epilogue. These are long prophetic periods of three and a half times (Dan 12:7), 1,290 prophetic days (Dan 12:11), and 1,335 prophetic days (Dan 12:12).

Why is this time frame extremely important?

- It helps us understand the vision as it progresses from about 535 BC to the establishment of God's kingdom of glory at Christ's second coming.
- It also encourages us to focus specifically on the end of this period.

D. Literal Elements and Symbolic Elements

Daniel 11 begins with a reference to kings, kingdoms, and politics in literal language. Persia is not a bear or a ram as in previous visions but is described as a kingdom with kings. Initially, the kings of the north represent the Seleucids and the kings of the south the Ptolemaic rulers. But later the king of the north and the king of the south become symbolic entities, as do Edom, Moab, and Ammon. This is not unusual, since a mixture of literal and symbolic descriptions is also found in other parts of Scripture (e.g., the seven churches in Revelation). Since the Seleucids and the Ptolemies vanished in history, the appearance of the king of the south and the king of the north in the time of the end must be understood symbolically, at a time when a global widening of the vision develops and a narrow geographical frame is being abandoned.

E. The Religious Dimension

Unlike the image of many metals in Daniel 2, which refers to political entities only, Daniel 11 also contains a religious dimension. The characters appearing in this vision are not only kings, but obviously also religious leaders, the Messiah, and the God of gods (Dan 11:36).

Where does such a dimension surface?

- In the introduction to the vision (Dan 10) and especially the struggle behind the scenes.
- In the epilogue of the book. For instance, the “holy people” occurs (Dan 12:7) and Daniel is promised resurrection (Dan 12:13).
- In the vision proper:
 - Their gods—paganism (Dan 11:8).
 - The beautiful land—Palestine and the people of God (Dan 11:16, 41).
 - The prince of the covenant—Jesus (Dan 11:22).
 - The sanctuary and the daily—Jesus’ heavenly ministry (Dan 11:31).
 - Persecution of God’s people (Dan 11:32–35).
 - The king’s self-exaltation and blasphemy against God (Dan 11:36–37).
 - Reliance on the god of fortresses and a foreign god (Dan 11:38–39).
 - Holy mountain—attack against God and His people (Dan 11:45).
 - Rescue of those written in the book by Michael (Dan 12:1).
 - Resurrection from the dead (Dan 12:2–3).
 - Sealing of the book of Daniel and later understanding of its prophecies (Dan 12:4).

F. Connections to Other Visions in Daniel

Daniel 11 is the most difficult chapter in Daniel and has been interpreted differently. It is important to understand the big picture, even though we may not be able to explain all the details satisfactorily. However, parallels to clearer chapters help us interpret this chapter.

This table suggests that the same empires are found in chapter 11 that also occur in chapters 7 and 8, and also in Daniel 2, although the latter is not displayed here. In chapter 11 these empires are described with more details than in the other visions, but as soon as the next kingdom appears, the previous one is no longer considered. The italicized terms or phrases are either using the same vocabulary or the same concepts.

<i>Daniel 7</i>	<i>Daniel 8 and 9</i>	<i>Daniel 11 and 12</i>	<i>Period</i>
Bear (7:5)	<i>Medo-Persia</i> (ram, 8:3–4, 20)	Kings of <i>Persia</i> (11:2)	Persia
Leopard (7:6)	<i>Greece</i> (goat; 8:5–7, 21)	<i>Greece</i> (11:3)	Greece
• <i>Four wings and four heads</i> (7:6)	• <i>Large horn</i> (8:5, 21) • <i>Four horns</i> (8:8, 2)	• <i>Mighty king</i> (11:3) • <i>Four parts</i> (11:4)	

Terrible beast (7:7)	Little horn (first phase, 8:9)	Invader and other rulers (11:16–21)	Rome
	• <i>Beautiful land</i> (8:9)	• <i>Beautiful land</i> (11:16)	
	• <i>Messiah the Prince</i> (9:25)	• <i>Prince of covenant</i> (11:22)	
Little Horn (7:8)	Little horn (second phase, 8:9)	Ruler/King of the north (11:29)	Papacy
<i>Changes of time and law</i> (7:25)	<i>The daily</i> (8:11)	<i>The daily</i> (11:31)	
<i>Persecution</i> (7:25)	<i>Abomination of desolation</i> (9:27)	<i>Abomination of desolation</i> (11:31)	
<i>Self-exaltation</i> (7:8, 25)	<i>Persecution</i> (8:10, 24)	<i>Persecution</i> (11:32–35)	
<i>Three and a half times</i> (7:25)	<i>Self-exaltation</i> (8:10, 25)	<i>Self-exaltation</i> (11:36–39)	
	2,300 evenings & mornings (8:14)	<i>Three and a half times</i> , 1,290 days, and 1,335 days (12:7, 11–12)	
The Son of Man (7:13)	<i>Time of the end</i> (8:17)	<i>Time of the end</i> (11:40)	Time of the End
	Prince of princes (8:25)	Michael (12:1)	
God’s Kingdom (7:14, 27)		Resurrection (12:2–3, 13)	The End

II. THE DISCUSSION OF DANIEL 11 AND 12

A. The Persian Empire

11:2–3 When Daniel received the vision, the ruling monarch was Cyrus (Dan 10:1). The next three kings were Cambyses (530–522 BC), false Smerdis (522 BC), and Darius I (522–486 BC). The fourth king was Xerxes (486–465 BC). He is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. Despite his huge navy and army, he lost the battles of Salamis (480 BC) and Plataea (479 BC) against the Greek. The end of the Persian Empire came through the Greek under Alexander the Great, who conquered Persia about 150 years later.

B. The Greek Empire

11:4–15 The mighty king represents Alexander the Great. He died prematurely in 323 BC at about thirty-two years of age. His kingdom split into four parts, the Hellenistic kingdoms (see the parallel in Daniel 8:8). Two of those four are described in detail as the king of the north and the king of the south (Dan 8:5–15). The Jews were placed between these two powers, had to suffer the consequences of war, and had to deal with changing submission to the respective authority. The two kingdoms were those of the Seleucids in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt.

C. The Roman Empire

11:16ff A shift to the Roman Empire seems to come with the “invader” in verse 16. The beautiful land (see Dan 8:9) should be understood as Palestine here and later in verse 41 in a symbolic way as the people of God. Verses 17–19 may point to Julius Caesar and his relationship with Cleopatra. He died in 44 BC and was followed by Caesar Augustus who took an empire-wide census and levied a tax on the peoples. It was under Augustus that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 1:1–7) because the census affected Joseph and Mary. Augustus died AD 14 after more than forty years of reign. The “despicable person” must have been emperor Tiberius (AD 14–37), Augustus’ son by adoption. He is also mentioned in Luke 3:1. Under him Jesus, the prince of the covenant (*nagid*; Dan 11:22, see also 9:25–26), was crucified.

D. The Papacy

11:31–39 *What are the major issues dealt with in this section?*

- An attack on the ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Dan 11:31)
- Persecution of the true people of God (Dan 11:32–35)
- Self-exaltation and blasphemy against God (Dan 11:36–39)

The daily has already been found in Daniel 8:11. It describes Christ’s priestly ministry in heaven, which is attacked by the little horn’s substitute priestly ministry.

Persecution includes martyrdom but still has the effect of purifying God’s people.

The abomination of desolation points to the desecration of the sanctuary through a false religious system, consisting of unbiblical doctrines and practices. The parallel in Daniel 7 contains the elements mentioned above but instead of speaking about the abomination of desolation mentions changes in time and law, obviously divine law (Dan 7:25).

E. The Time of the End

11:40–45 The time of the end is associated with the three and a half times in Daniel 12:4–10. The three and a half times already occurred in Daniel 7:25. It was the time of the dominance of the papacy, which came to a preliminary end in AD 1798 when the pope was taken prisoner and exiled. The time of the end would begin after AD 1798.

The events described here are still in the making and are explained in greater detail in Revelation.

What does Daniel 11:40–45 describe?

- A battle between the king of the north and the king of the south. The two stand symbolically for the religious power of end-time Babylon—Babylon invaded Israel from the north—and atheism and secularism as symbolized by Egypt, the king of the south (Dan 11:40). Symbolic Egypt, an atheistic power, will be utterly defeated by Babylon, a religious power (Dan 11:42–43). In Revelation Babylon is an equivalent of the satanic trinity (Rev 12–13). This victory of Babylon mimics God’s victory over Pharaoh during the Exodus. However, Babylon is not a divine but an anti-Christian power, consisting of the papacy, fallen Protestantism, and spiritualism in various forms. Yet Babylon will now be unified.
- An attack on the beautiful land, persecution, and deception of God’s people (Dan 11:41). Yet some people will be rescued (see Isa 16:1–5).
- The arrival of threatening news for the king of the north from the east and the north (Dan 11:44). This is where God and the Messiah are coming from (e.g., Rev 16:12). The news may announce the fall of Babylon (Rev 14:6–12; 18:1–2).
- The attempt to take over the beautiful Holy Mountain (Dan 11:45; see Ps 99:9), the dwelling place of God, is a direct fight against God. It will end with complete defeat of the king of the north (Dan 11:45).

F. The Intervention of Michael

12:1–4 In this extremely difficult time at the end of human history, the people of God experience the intervention of Michael (Dan 11:1), the great prince (*sar*, see Dan 8:11; 10:21). He stands up, which means that He assumes rulership. Jesus will rescue all those written in the book (Dan 11:1), obviously the book of life (Rev 21:27).

Resurrection is promised in verses 2–3.

What do we know about the resurrection from the dead in Scripture?

- Jesus was raised from the dead. He is the first-born from the dead (Col 1:18). All resurrections, whether past or future, depend on Him.

- The first resurrection is the general resurrection of all believers at Christ's second coming (John 5:29; 1 Cor 15; Rev 20:4, 5b–6).
- The resurrection of the enemies of Christ takes place one thousand years later (Rev 20:5a).
- In Daniel 12:2–3 a special resurrection is mentioned that will take place prior to and yet in conjunction with the Second Coming. It comprises a limited group of believers and Christ's opponents—namely those who have crucified Jesus and were His worst enemies. This special resurrection is also alluded to in Revelation 1:7.
- Resurrection is also implied in Daniel 12:1.
- The Old Testament does not talk much about the resurrection from the dead, in contrast to the New Testament. But the book of Daniel clearly maintains the hope of a future resurrection at the very end of human history.

The sealing of parts of the book of Daniel (Dan 12:4, 9) and its later understanding (Dan 12:10) was fulfilled in the nineteenth century when the prophecies, especially the time prophecies of Daniel, were comprehended.

G. Epilogue

12:5–13 Here the question “How long?” is raised again (Dan 8:13). This question refers to the vision of Daniel 11 and requests more information regarding the time spans involved. The man dressed in linen must be the same person who appeared in the introduction to the last vision (Dan 10:5–6). We have identified this person as Jesus (see also Rev 10:1–7). This request is granted. Three time periods are given:

- Three and a half times (see Dan 7:25; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5), lasting from AD 538 to 1798¹
- 1,290 days, lasting from AD 508 to 1798. They began with the conversion of Clovis, king of the Franks to Roman Catholicism, through which the religious power was joined to the civil power. Ironically, the Franks helped the papacy to progress as a persecuting and deceiving power, and it was France that in AD 1798 gave the papacy a decisive blow.
- 1,335 days, lasting from AD 508 to 1843. This brings us to the preaching of the first angel's message (Rev 14:7) and the Advent movement, as well as to the end of the prophecy of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. There is not only great distress related to the time of the end but also a great blessing for those who live in that time.

III. APPLICATION

Daniel 11 and 12 are rich in theology and encouraging messages:

- God knows the future. He knows all the details. He knows His people, and He knows us personally. He cares for us; we are precious to Him. Through Michael He rescues us from all tribulation and distress, from lions dens and fiery furnaces.
- The book of Daniel can be more completely understood only in the time of the end. Today, while we may not understand all details of Daniel 11, we do understand Daniel's time prophecies and the book as a whole. That means we live in the time of the end and are waiting for Jesus' second coming.
- Again we have encountered our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We met Him in the person of the man in linen clothes (Dan 10; 12). We met Him as Michael, the prince (*sar*) also in Daniel 10 and 12. We met Him as the prince (*nagid*) of the covenant, who was crucified under the Romans so that He could save us.

Amazingly, the book of Daniel is full of Jesus, although it is an Old Testament document. He is victorious over all powers of darkness. He appears in:

- Daniel 2 as stone
- Daniel 3 as Son of God
- Daniel 7 as Son of Man
- Daniel 8 as the prince of the host and the Prince of Princes
- Daniel 9 as Messiah Prince
- Daniel 10 as the man with linen clothes and Michael our prince
- Daniel 11 as prince of the covenant
- Daniel 12 as Michael and as the man with linen clothes

In gratitude we acknowledge Him as our Lord and praise Him. Contemplating Jesus, we cannot but love Him.

- We have the wonderful hope of resurrection. Our life here and now is only a prelude to life eternal. God has an everlasting kingdom (Dan 4:3). The Most High has everlasting dominion (Dan 4:34; 7:27); so has Jesus (Dan 7:14). And the saints will participate in it (Dan 7:27). Jesus has brought everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24) and everlasting life (Dan 12:2–3). He has guaranteed resurrection. Therefore, we do not need to be afraid. Even if we die, the promise given to Daniel is also given to us—that we will rest until the resurrection. It is repeated in Revelation 14:13: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!” 

¹ See Heinz Schaidinger, *Historical Confirmation of Prophetic Periods*, Biblical Research Institute Releases 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010).

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

3 WAYS TO INCREASE SAFETY

AT YOUR NEXT OUTREACH EVENT

Whether it's dedicating a Sabbath afternoon to feeding the homeless or hosting a local health screening event, many churches participate in outreach activities regularly. While the goal is to serve your community, outreach activities come with a level of risk that left unmanaged can harm your ministry and the people you came to serve. Here are three ways to increase safety at your next community outreach event.

1. PLAN ADEQUATE SUPERVISION

It is important to plan for adequate supervision for all in your group, whether you are leading a group of Pathfinders and Adventurers, or the men's ministry group. Consider the kind of event you will be participating in and how many volunteers will be in your group. Based on these two factors, you can determine how many supervisors or team leaders you will need for your event.

In choosing your supervisors, be sure they are well-trained in the activity and are familiar with whom they will supervise. Schedule a separate meeting to inform supervisors of their responsibilities and your expectations. Don't forget to instruct them on what to do in the case of an emergency. Provide each designated supervisor with an emergency plan as well as names and contact information of the point person coordinating the activity.

By making supervision for your event a priority, you are proactively managing any crises that may arise, as well as minimizing the risk of liability.

2. TRAIN YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Just as your supervisors are well-trained, it is also important to train your volunteers. Based on your activity, determine which skills your volunteers will need in order to perform their duties. Does the activity involve hard labor? Will your volunteers handle food or money? How can your team prepare for the activity and the people they will encounter?

Make sure your volunteers are insured in case of a slip or fall, or even if they inadvertently cause harm. Adventist Risk Management, Inc. provides volunteer labor insurance for churches, schools, and conference groups participating in approved mission projects. Contact your local conference to see if this coverage is available for your ministry.



3. PARTNER WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

One might forget that partnering with your local community is also a service activity. This can include local emergency personnel, health services personnel, and even social service organizations. Your positive interaction can build rapport and strengthen relationships.

Not all community service events will involve going out into the community. Some events may be hosted within your facilities. If you plan to host multiple community service events in your facilities, inform your local emergency personnel of your ministry's emergency plan and offer blueprints of your facilities at the beginning of each year. This will allow for a smoother process in case of an emergency. Additionally, take time to find out about required county and city fire codes and restrictions, as well as the maximum number of people allowed inside the building at one time.

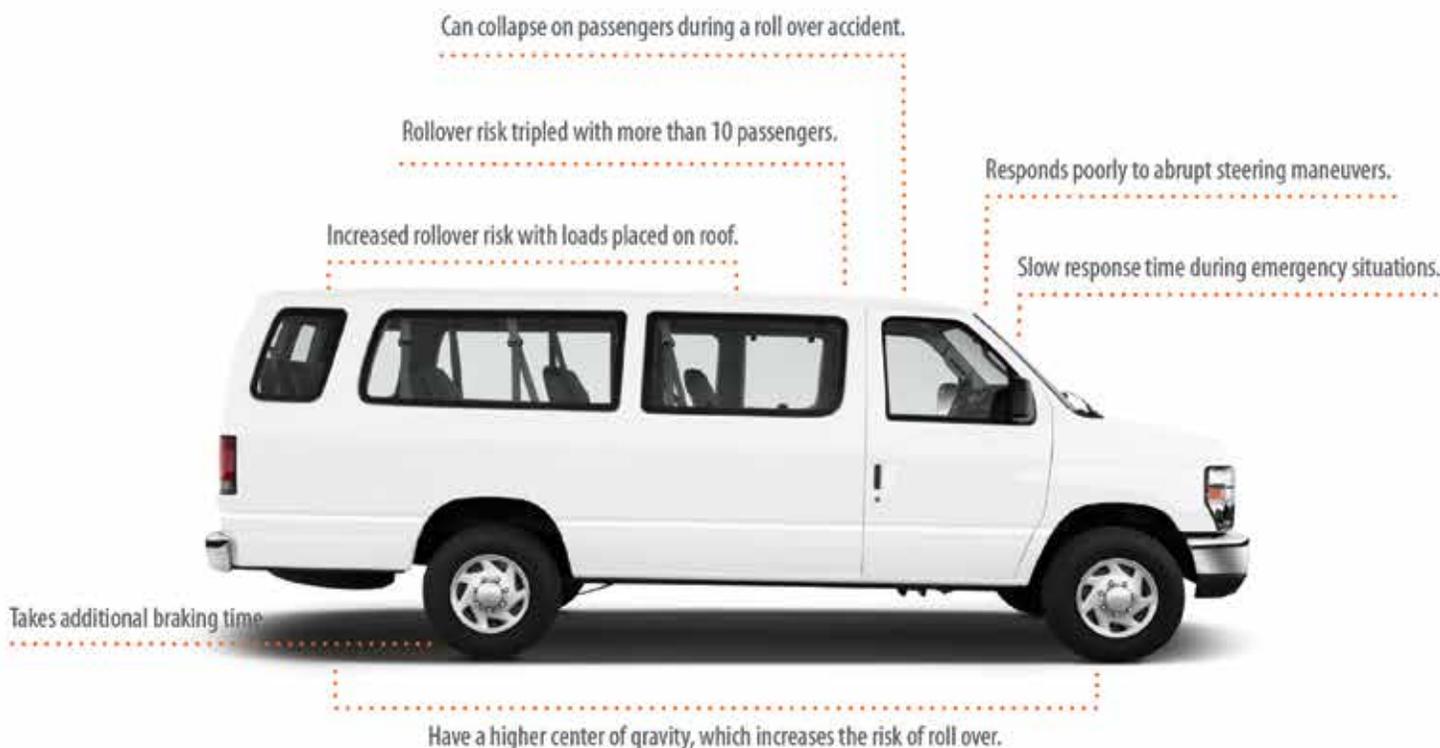
As a leader, your ultimate goal is to have a community outreach program that will focus on service and ministry to others above all else. By taking care of potential risks and other liabilities, you can rest assured that you have done your part as a ministry leader *and* a risk manager.

For more information on protecting your ministry, visit AdventistRisk.org. 

Elizabeth Camps is a writer and public relations specialist at Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

15 PASSENGER VANS ARE STILL DANGEROUS

Fundamental problems remain despite safety improvements. Here's why we need to remove these vans from use, including rented or borrowed vehicles.



Learn more at AdventistRisk.org/NADInitiatives



Let's Connect!



www.adventistrisk.org

Adventist Risk Management, Inc. is the risk management ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We provide risk management services and insurance product solutions to assist the Church in eliminating oversights that can lead to costly accidents.

It's our ministry to protect your ministry.

GREAT HYMNS OF THE CHURCH > PART 4

THE FUNCTION OF HYMNS IN WORSHIP

Before we address the function of hymns in worship, we must answer the question, “What is a hymn?” Augustine defined a hymn as “a song of praise to God.” According to this definition, a hymn has three features: it is an expression of praise, it is intended to be sung, and it is directed to God. Let’s look briefly at these features.

1. *A hymn is an expression of praise.* The word “praise” has a wide range of meanings, including the introspective glance that leads naturally to confession of sin and a seeking of forgiveness, coupled with the worshiper’s aspirations to amend his or her life and to exhibit a fresh dedication.

2. *A hymn is intended to be sung.* The variety of literary and musical forms will encourage us to expect a wide diversity in the way music and words have been wedded. A good hymn will blend verbal and melodic elements in proportion.

3. *A hymn is directed to God.* Hymns worthy of the name should be addressed formally to God. The syntax may vary as between the traditional second person (“We praise, we worship Thee, O God”) and the third person (“A safe stronghold / Our God is still”). In those instances, God is central. Perhaps the greatest single sentence in any hymn was written by Isaac Watts: “God is a name my soul adores.”

HYMNS HAVE A TWOFOLD FUNCTION

1. *Hymns play an impressive role as an aid to worship.* Hymns put us in the right frame of mind and heart to approach the divine mystery of God. Music plays that role as we hear it, and our singing can lift our spirits to new heights of contemplation and expectancy that make genuine worship possible.

However, there is the constant danger that music may be enjoyed as an end in itself instead of leading the worshiper into the divine presence. The Puritans voiced that objection by banning all musical instruments. Some, like John Milton,

appreciated “made-made” music and how it could bring enrichment of worship. In his poem *Il Penseroso*, he versified: “There let the pealing organ blow / To the full-voiced quire below / In service high, and anthems clear, / As may, with sweetness, through mine ear, / Dissolve me into ecstasies, / And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.”

2. *Hymns have an experience role in worship.* In a way not possible in ordinary speech, hymns convey and articulate all that believers would want to express in their response to God, who, in goodness and grace, has first come to them. For instance, more than 1,600 years ago, Augustine of Hippo confessed that the part of the worship service that left an abiding impression on him was the intense emotion engendered by the hymn-singing of the assembled congregation. He wrote: “How I wept at thy hymns and canticles, pierced to the quick by the voices of thy melodious church! Those voices flowed into my ears, and the truth distilled into my heart, and thence there streamed forth a devout emotion, and my tears ran down, and happy was I therein.”¹

Hymns provide a way of attesting our faith and deepening and confirming it. However, the place of hymns in worship can be demoted when hymn-singing is used to fill up space while the offering is being received or when hymn-singing is an accompaniment to something else going on in the service.

If worship gains full meaning only as it represents our wholehearted response to God’s action in Christ, then our hymns cannot be less than our devoted focusing of all our powers on the themes they poetically and musically bring before us.

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9.6.

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

HYMNS ON GOD'S LOVE

O LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO by George Matheson (1842–1902)

For any Scotsman, “doon the wa’er” means a trip down the Firth of Clyde from Glasgow to where it widens into the sea loch of Innellan. This is where George Matheson ministered between 1868–1882. On June 6 of his final year in this parish, he confessed to “suffering from extreme mental distress, and the hymn was the fruit of pain.” Many conjectures have been made regarding the cause of his anguish. Was it a personal bereavement? Was it at his sister’s wedding, when he was reminded of the pain of his broken engagement that had occurred 20 years before? Some have suggested that it was his concern “over the inroads of Darwinism.” Whatever the cause, and with all the limitations of being blind since birth, he wrote this magnificent expression of an eternal love that will never be broken.

After writing “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go,” Matheson said, “It was the quickest bit of work I ever did. . . . The whole work was completed in five minutes. . . . I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. . . . This came like a dayspring from on high.” As to its structure, Matheson uses metaphors “for a God who will not leave His child forsaken: first Love, then Light, then Joy, then the Cross.” The poignantly beautiful hymn still ministers to the triumphant sorrow of thousands.

JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL by Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Charles wrote this hymn shortly after his “heart-warming” experience at Aldersgate Hall in London in 1738. There is no authenticated information as to what situation caused Wesley to write this text. A frightening storm at sea that he experienced while returning home from America may account for the nautical references. Another story is told of a bird flying into Charles’ cabin for safety, while another describes his hiding under a hedge after being attacked by an angry mob that opposed his ministry. Still others see this text as a picture of Wesley’s own life as a young man as he struggled to find peace with God before his dramatic conversion, hence, the original title “In Temptation.”

The simple, monosyllabic language (159 of 189 words in the hymn) have been called the “finest heart-hymn in the English language.” Note the exaltation of Christ revealed in such picturesque terms as “lover,” “healer,” “fountain,” “wing,” and “pilot.” But the greatest appeal is the assurance they give of Christ’s consolation and protection through all of life.

It is of passing interest that in London’s Westminster Abbey, there is a medallion relief of John and Charles Wesley. Seen in profile, the brothers are appropriately linked—John the theologian and Charles the poet and singer.

O LOVE OF GOD, HOW STRONG AND TRUE by Horatius Bonar (1808–1889)

The author of this hymn was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was educated at the University of Edinburgh. He ministered in the slums of Edinburgh and began to write original hymns because the children in his care were bored with singing psalms (psalm-singing was the only musical form allowed by the Presbyterian Church). He was an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland and later joined the Free Church of Scotland. He emphasized the importance of pastoral visitation and was diligent in his prayer life. He was a devout student of prophecy and believed in the imminent return of Jesus, which is evident in hymns he wrote, such as “The Church Has Waited Long.”

In 1873–1874, Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey came from Chicago to conduct revivals in Scotland. Bonar wrote many hymns for Sankey, Moody’s song leader; altogether, he wrote about 600 hymns, 60 translations of the psalms, and hundreds of tracts. He published several hymn collections and regularly contributed new hymns to their pages. All his hymns are filled with the light and love of Christ, of which “I Lay My Sins on Jesus” and “I Heard the Voice of Jesus” are examples.

THE LOVE OF GOD by Frederick M. Lehman (1868–1953)

Never has God’s eternal love been described more vividly than in the words of this beloved hymn: “measureless,” “strong,” “evermore endure . . .”

The hymn’s unusual third stanza was a small part of an ancient lengthy poem composed in 1906 by a Jewish songwriter, Rabbi Mayer, in Worms, Germany. The poem, entitled “Hadamut,” was written in the Arabic language. The lines were found in revised form on the walls of a patient’s room in an insane asylum after the patient’s death. It is believed that the unknown patient, during times of sanity, adapted from the Jewish poem what is now the third verse of “The Love of God.”

The words of this third stanza were quoted one day at a Nazarene camp meeting attended by Pastor Frederick Lehman. Later, while engaged in some kind of manual labor in California, Lehman “picked up a scrap of paper and added the first two stanzas and chorus to the existing third-verse lines.”



CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: HOW TO EXPERIENCE IT TO THE FULLEST

Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” What the text is saying is that there is a sacredness that springs to life whenever people form a gathering in which the Savior is acknowledged as the supreme guest. He will honor them with His presence.

Christian community is about two or more people who make a deliberate choice not only to “accept Christ” but also to accept one another. This commitment requires discipline, humility, selfless love, grace, and a servant’s heart. When such a community is in place, other familiar words of the Lord become relevant: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34, 35). Everyone in such a community is an equal participant; everyone seeks to grow; everyone builds in the lives of the others; everyone understands that the ultimate purpose of the community is to project the influence of the gospel into the world.

Therefore, biblical fellowship between believers should break the surface and have a heartfelt experience that exalts God and edifies others. No wonder the Bible inveighs against social exchanges such as gossip, intimidation, anger, and dishonesty. Jesus expects something special, an elevated quality of relationships among people who call Him Lord. Community as Jesus modeled it (“as I have loved you”) was and is supposed to be the characteristic and heart of the Christian life.

Genuine fellowship helps us move from just sharing small talk and food to being a safe community where we can be transparent with one another. Here are some simple but effective steps a small group or Sabbath school in your church can take to build and encourage this kind of genuine community:

- *Offer new people a history of the group.* Have everyone—including the first-timers—share a little bit about their families and the activities they enjoy doing in their free time. This will bring the group closer together and help them minister to each other.
- *Provide ice-breakers.* Sometimes the silliest questions or activities are best; they help people get to know one another in a safe way.

- *Celebrate milestones.* Help foster community by celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events in people’s lives. This helps group members feel valued and appreciated.
- *Celebrate victories.* In addition to job promotions and other achievements, make sure you celebrate spiritual victories and answers to prayer.
- *Plan a retreat together.* Arrange for a weekend when members of the group can be together. The time spent in fellowship on an overnight outing is equivalent to many weeks of group meetings. When I was a pastor, I took my church on two retreats every year: one in the summer and one in the winter. Participants told me that these retreats were some of the best times they spent as a community. Outings like these build strong relationships and bond the church.
- *Host a “Fun Night.”* Instead of the usual study time, surprise the group with a night full of games and fun. Such a change of pace is both healthy and refreshing for the group.



- *Institute a "hot seat."* Seat a person in the center of the circle and have everyone shower him or her with heartfelt affirmation. Statements can begin with, "You're important to our group. We love how you have made a difference in our lives." Everyone needs this kind of affirmation from time to time. Then have the group members pray over that person. When I was a pastor, I instituted this at my board and committee meetings. Before we instituted this practice, people hated coming to board meetings, but afterward, when they saw that we were serious about loving each other and praying for each other, they started to look forward to being at the meetings.

- *Tell stories.* Plan a short activity that encourages face-to-face interaction between members. This could be as simple as letting people share a story from the heart, such as when they accepted Jesus, got engaged, or got married. It could also be a time of sharing personal stories that are relevant to the study. When people share their personal stories, community deepens.

- *Pick up the phone.* Follow-up calls strengthen community. When people are absent from the group, call to check on them. If a prayer need has been brought up, follow up to let the person know you are praying. Those phone calls can go a long way toward affirming community. Be sure to also call or send a card to people who attended your group for the first time.

- *Print a directory.* A group roster is a simple but important tool for building fellowship and fostering community. Make it easy for people to connect outside of group time by sharing email addresses and phone numbers.

- *Keep a scrapbook.* It's lots of fun to be able to turn the pages of a book and retrace the journey the group has traveled on together.

- *Adopt a cause.* This can be a ministry project or mission trip that the group does together or that they can sponsor someone to do.

- *Take care of the essentials.* The study of God's Word, prayer, worship, mission or ministry together and social activities at least once a month (Acts 2:42-47).

When genuine Christian fellowship offers a safe environment for knowing and being known, true community is the result. God wired us to love and be loved and accepted. This experience moves us beyond merely doing activities to being bonded together as brothers and sisters in Christ. We need each other, and we are stronger together than we are individually.

EO

S. Joseph Kidder is a professor of Christian ministry and biblical spirituality at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

ADVENTISTBIBICALRESEARCH.ORG

Search for answers on hundreds of Bible topics

Download free Ebooks

Stay up to date with our newsletter



INCREASE YOUR INFLUENCE

“JABEZ CRIED OUT TO THE GOD OF ISRAEL, ‘OH, THAT YOU WOULD BLESS ME AND ENLARGE MY TERRITORY! LET YOUR HAND BE WITH ME, AND KEEP ME FROM HARM SO THAT I WILL BE FREE FROM PAIN.’ AND GOD GRANTED HIS REQUEST.” 1 Chron. 4:10, NIV

PRAYER FOCUS...

Spend 5 minutes each day during Week of Prayer (November 4-11) focusing on the outreach work of Global Mission Pioneers as they seek to reach the unreached with hope.

Visit gm.adventistmission.org to learn about some of the specific projects that need your prayer.



It's hard to read about Jabez and not feel at least a little spiritual envy. After all, he prayed that God would enlarge His territory [influence] and God granted his request. If you are anything like me, you are already wondering, Would God do that for me? Is my vision big enough for God to answer my prayer the same way He did for Jabez? How do I increase my sphere of influence for mission?

Then there's Abraham. When it came time for him and his nephew Lot to part company, Abraham gave up the quick and easy gratification of investing in the green fields in nearby Sodom. His eye was on the end game, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10, KJV). And God blessed his choice by rewarding him with an enlarged territory, global influence, and generational blessings.

Are you feeling called to increase your mission influence? Are you looking for a city whose builder and maker is God? Are you working toward an end game of preparing unreached people for God's kingdom?

Maybe you are already giving Bible studies in your local neighborhood or providing support and counseling to local church projects, but somehow you sense there is something missing. Do you feel overwhelmed with the enormity of the Gospel Commission when you realize that over 42 percent of the world's people groups¹ have not yet experienced a sav-

ing relationship with Jesus? That's more than 3 billion people! How can you reach them all with God's love?

At Adventist Mission we share your passion for reaching the hearts and minds of unreached people groups. That's why we have made it possible for church leaders and members alike to extend their ministry reach far beyond the limits of national borders by supporting Global Mission projects around the world.

And the result has been incredible: in recent years, millions of people who live in challenging parts of the world have found salvation in Jesus and have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But the challenge remains to reach the rest of the world with the hope and promise found in the Word of God.

On November 11 you have the opportunity to increase your influence by giving your biggest gift ever during your church's offering time to help the GC Office of Adventist Mission to recruit, train and place Global Mission pioneers, plant new churches, and establish urban centers of influence in unentered cities.

Thank you for giving sacrificially to support Global Mission. You do make a difference. 

¹ https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics

Sylva Keshishian is marketing manager at the GC Office of Adventist Mission.

MARK THE DATE

NOVEMBER

11

ANNUAL SACRIFICE OFFERING

KAMALA IS A GLOBAL MISSION PIONEER WHO IS GLADLY SACRIFICING HER TIME AND ENERGY BY STARTING A NEW GROUP OF BELIEVERS IN AN UNREACHED NEIGHBORHOOD IN NEW DELHI, INDIA.



Will you let God increase your influence?

Will you give sacrificially to support the work of Global Mission pioneers?

"I do small group meetings, visiting house to house. And slowly people began to listen to God's message."

Kamala follows Christ's method: she speaks the local language, she knows the culture, and she mingles with the people. Then she bids them to follow Jesus.

Remember to give generously to the Annual Sacrifice Offering on November 11 to support your mission outreach around the world!

Giving.AdventistMission.org



Adventist
Mission



PASTOR'S

APPRECIATION DAY

**"AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME,
I ALSO SEND YOU."**



John 20:21, NKJV



eldersdigest.org/pastorsday

