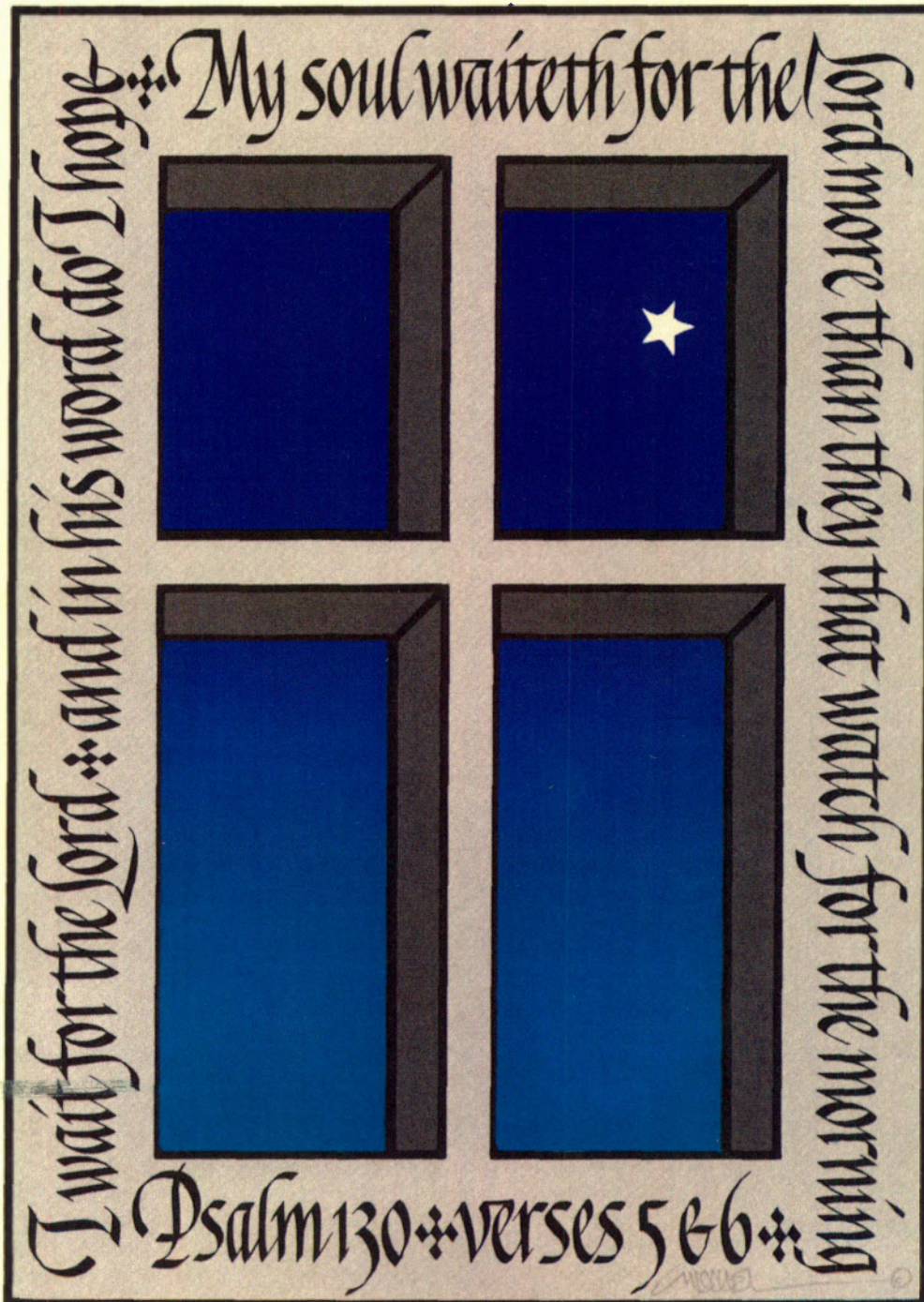


# Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Winter 1994



**Complimentary Sample Issue**



## Windows

■ JAMES A. CRESS

The cover for this inaugural issue of *Elder's Digest* aptly depicts our objectives: illumination, insight, access, spirituality, blessings, and mission.

**Windows provide illumination—they let in light.** One of our primary objectives is to focus light on the work and ministry of the local church elder. *Elder's Digest* will feature the best available resources, discuss effective methodologies, and showcase practical, easy-to-use ideas that will promote increasing proficiency for lay leaders.

**Windows provide insight—a view of others.** Windows allow us to see how others deal with their challenges and opportunities. *Elder's Digest* will permit elders to view other church leaders ministering in their unique settings. If you have wondered how to face the challenges of a city, you will benefit from reading about others who minister in an urban setting. If you lead a new congregation with plenty of energy but few resources, you will appreciate seeing how other churches cope with limited funds.

**Windows allow access—when opened they let in fresh breezes.** In addition to introducing you to resources and ideas, *Elder's Digest* will provide tools you can use right now. Each issue will contain at least one sermon you can preach plus help in preparing your own sermons.

**Windows symbolize spirituality—remember Daniel.** Praying at his open window, Daniel set an example of spirituality for his own people and those who conspired against him. It might have been more convenient to shut the window and hide his convictions, but Daniel wanted all to know of his belief in God. This attitude of openly worshipping God—even at potential personal risk—models leadership at its finest. As a spiritual leader, you will find spiritual food for your own growth that will enable you to effectively invite others to follow Christ.

**Open windows bring blessings—God promises to honor faithfulness.** Our purpose is to motivate and inspire faith-filled living. *Elder's Digest* will encourage faithful discipleship, bringing our time, energies, skills, and funds in obedience to our Lord. As a result the windows of heaven will open and abundant blessings will pour out on those who serve our local congregations as spiritual leaders.

**Our window shows the mission—notice the cross!** Above all, *Elder's Digest* must lift up Jesus as the only solution to humanity's need. Just as the cover pictures the cross in the center of the window, so our central theme must be salvation in Jesus, the theme of every doctrine, sermon, and service.



■ JAMES A. CRESS

James A. Cress is the secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. One of the objectives for the Ministerial Association is to provide practical help for both pastors and lay elders who serve as leaders in Seventh-day Adventist churches.

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# The Gospel of Jesus Christ

■ JAMES H. ZACHARY

Our readers have a right to know why we are starting this new publication. As the editor of *Elder's Digest*, I have no doubt as to the purpose of this journal. We want to assist the elders of our local churches in spreading the gospel. Readers may want to know what we mean by the gospel. How do I, as the editor, perceive the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The word *gospel* comes from the Anglo Saxon god-spell, or God's story. The gospel tells the story of a God who became our brother to save us from sin. This amazing truth has a dynamic effect. It caused Bible translator and Protestant Reformer William Tyndale to break forth in ecstasy of praise. To him the gospel signified "*good, mery, glad and iofull tydinge, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce, and leepe for ioye*" (prologue to his New Testament).

The Greek word for gospel is *euaggelion*, generally used to refer to thank offerings made in behalf of good news, but rarely used in secular Greek.

The New Testament authors brought new meaning to *euaggelion* by using it more than 75 times in the New Testament to mean good news. More than 60 of the 95 uses are by the apostle Paul, whose favorite theme was the gospel of Jesus.

Webster's dictionary defines the gospel as: "Glad tidings . . . good news concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. . . . The story or

record of Christ's life and doctrines."

The gospel of Jesus, in its broadest sense, includes six major aspects:

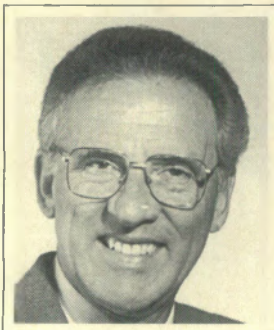
1. The story of His life.
2. His teachings.
3. The kingdom of heaven, both internal and external.
4. The salvation of sinners.
5. The destruction of Satan and sin.
6. The establishing of a new sinless society.

The most important aspect of the gospel's relevance to life today is that Jesus provides the solution to every problem that sin has brought upon the human race and the universe.

## Two False Gospels

Paul warns us of two false gospels. He uses forceful words to bring the Galatians back to the true gospel. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). \* "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28).

The Bible tells us that no one can earn salvation by obedience to God's requirements. We gain no merit by obeying the law or any other part of the



■ JAMES H. ZACHARY

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Bible. Salvation is a gift by grace through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

Some add meritorious efforts, hoping to augment the gift. But even the most saintly person can add nothing to the salvation offered us in Jesus.

"The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account," states Ellen White in *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 367. Again she says, "Through the righteousness of Christ we shall stand before God pardoned, and as though we had never sinned" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1142).

Our best efforts to be righteous through our own obedience are worthless. For years I was a legalist and believed my efforts earned merit before God. But I had difficulty understanding Isaiah 64:6: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (NIV).

It was not that I had trouble seeing my sins as filthy rags, but being told that my righteous acts were also filthy rags puzzled me.

Gradually I came to understand the truth about our obedience. Selfishness and pride of heart contaminate all that we do. Our best obedience lacks the purity of Christ's righteousness. For example, while working on my automobile, my hands, clothing, and shoes become covered with grease and dirt. If I attempt to enter the kitchen, my wife will surely call out, "Don't take another step. You will get everything dirty." And so do our attempts at obedience.

Obedience without Christ's righteousness remains futile. We have no righteousness of our own, nor can we ever create it. Christ is the only source of righteousness.

But a misapplication of this teaching leads to the second false gospel. The message of God's grace justifying the sinner by faith leads some to a false confidence that having the white robe of Christ's righteousness—a declaration of righteousness—is the end of the matter. They do not see that the fruits of this declaration—a transformed obedient lifestyle—is important. Some may say it is even impossible to achieve.

James disagrees: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? . . . faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew

me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. . . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

(James 2:14-21).

### **The Power of the Holy Spirit**

The power of the Holy Spirit works in the heart of a person to transform him or her. If we find no indication of transforming power in a person's life, James says, we have a basis for questioning whether that person has genuine faith. The fruit of the Holy Spirit provides evidence of a saving experience with Jesus Christ.

The robe of Christ's righteousness is not intended to cover a person's sins and leave one defeated. With the robe comes the transforming power that renews the believer's life.

### **The Role of Jesus**

The gospel tells the good news of the life and mission of Jesus the Creator. He became a man, lived a sinless life on earth, taught the principles of a godly life, died for all humanity, was resurrected, and ascended on high to mediate our cases before the judgment bar of heaven. Soon He will return to rescue His people and set up a universal kingdom of peace.

The gospel imparts the good news that Jesus, through His matchless grace, accepts and forgives sinners and counts believers righteous. The gospel goes beyond the judicial act of placing the white robe on a repentant sinner and declaring him or her righteous. The fruits of this act will follow.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall *live* by faith" (Rom. 1:16, 17). "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13).

### **Jesus Saves**

As a powerful Saviour, Jesus not only saves us for eternity, but saves us from our sin problems in this world. He takes care of the past damning record of sins through the gift of righteousness by faith, giving the sinner a new direction in life—a new birth. The indwelling Holy Spirit transforms the life, freeing us from sin through the power of Jesus (see Rom. 6; Eph. 2:1, 5, 6).



Jesus can transform the life of the vilest sinner. Second Corinthians 5:17 speaks of the sinner becoming a new creature. An old way of living comes to an end.

After Paul clearly states that sinners are saved, not by their own works, but through faith in Jesus, he stresses the new Christlike lifestyle that follows. The Scriptures teach that God writes the principles of His holy law in our hearts (Jer. 31:33).

Ephesians 4:21-24 speaks of being renewed in the spirit of your mind. Ephesians 3:19 tells of the sinner being filled with the fullness of God. Paul appeals that each one "walk worthy of the calling" (Eph. 4:1).

In Galatians 5:22, 24, 25, after Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit he says that genuine Christians have crucified the lusts of the flesh and live in the Spirit. A new life of obedience in a person who is surrendered to the Lord Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit.

We find the gospel of Jesus taught in Zechariah 3:1-7. This chapter pictures a life-and-death drama of the Lord and Satan battling over Joshua, the high priest. The context suggests that the devil was saying to the Lord, "Look at the sins of your high priest; he ought to burn in the fire."

We can compare this to the first aspect of the gospel. God tells Satan to stop his charges because of what God plans to do for Joshua. "Joshua is a stick that I am pulling out of the fire." Joshua was a sinner worthy of the fire, but God saves sinners!

Joshua was clothed in filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6 makes it clear that these rags represented not only sins, but works of righteousness. Zechariah watches as an angel takes away the filthy rags and places a new garment on the high priest. "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4).

Satan could say no more about Joshua, now clothed with the robe of God's making; no accusation could be brought against him (see Rom. 8:1). We find other features of the gospel in Zechariah 3:7. With Joshua dressed in his heaven-made robe, God speaks of two things that will happen.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command . . ." (verse 7). The person who wears the new robe will walk in a new life.

Thus, we cannot divorce sanctification from justification. They are both aspects of righteousness by faith.

We find the final facet of the gospel in the last part of verse 7. The Lord promises Joshua that

Joshua will "walk among these who stand here." To walk among the angels is glorification. The justified and sanctified will one day walk with the angels. The ultimate purpose of the gospel is the restoration of sinners back into eternal life in a sinless universe.

### **John Speaks on the Power of the Gospel**

Obviously John the apostle experienced the power of the gospel in his life. We find no hint of legalism or perfectionism in the following description of John's character. "In the life of the disciple John true sanctification is exemplified. . . . Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 557).

John had nothing to boast about. It was the work of the Holy Spirit that brought new life to him. This process is what we call sanctification and is part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Both the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy testify to God's power not only to declare a sinner holy, but to transform a sinner and give him or her a life of obedience. As Jude 24 promises, He "is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (NIV).

Jesus is the answer to our inner battles with our sinful nature. "True obedience comes from the heart, but it is heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668).

Praise God for the gospel of Jesus. It is the complete solution to all of our sin problems.

\* Unless otherwise noted, texts in this article are from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.



# The Reading of the Scriptures

✠ ORLEY M. BERG

In addition to the pastoral prayer, another very important part of the Sabbath worship service usually conducted by the local elder is the public reading of the Scriptures. This assignment is not to be taken lightly or entered into without much prayer and preparation. It is one of the most sacred and solemn aspects of worship. In prayer we speak to God, and in the reading of the Word He speaks directly to us. Some leaders of worship, because of the solemnity of these moments, ask the congregation to stand while the Word is read.

It is to be expected that the Scripture passage has been selected with great care, as it will either have a direct relationship to the sermon or in some other way help to create the atmosphere of worship and study that is to carry through to the end of the service.

## Announcing the Text

The reading of the scripture should involve the entire congregation. When the Scripture passage is announced, invite the worshipers to turn in their Bible to the text and follow as you read. If they have already been educated to do this, at least pause long enough to allow time for turning to the reference.

During the pause a few introductory words can be helpful. These words may give the setting of the text or point out its importance or appropriateness.

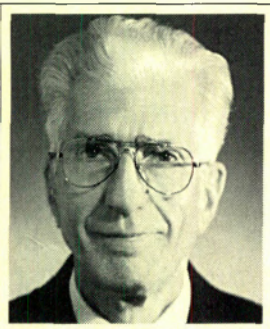
They should be few, certainly not a mini-sermon. You might use phrases such as "These words become especially meaningful to us as we remember that they were written by the apostle Paul while he languished in prison"; "These words formed a part of the important prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, truly one of the great prayers of the Bible"; "These words were a part of the prayer of Jesus, offered that Thursday night just before His Gethsemane experience"; "The experience recorded here represents one of the high points in the ministry of our Lord while here on earth"; "This is one of the familiar passages of the Bible, and one that it would be well for us to read at least once each week."

These few words of introduction will allow time for the congregation to find the text, as well as help to create a greater interest in the words to be read.

## Read Distinctly

The text itself should be read clearly and distinctly. Speaking particularly of some ministers and of their improper reading of the Scriptures, Ellen G. White declared, "They cannot read the Scriptures without hesitating, mispronouncing words, and jumbling them together in such a manner that the word of God is abused" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 71).

Ministers have the advantage of formal train-



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ing in these areas. The local elders can also do much to improve their effectiveness. "By diligent effort all may acquire the power to read intelligibly, and to speak in a full, clear, round tone, in a distinct and impressive manner. By doing this we may greatly increase our efficiency as workers for Christ" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 335, 336).

This is a most encouraging statement—also challenging. Every person called upon to read in public would do well to heed it. It should be given special attention by those who are called upon to read the Holy Scriptures before the congregation.

### **Advance Preparation**

If one is to read the Scriptures intelligibly and distinctly, one must know well in advance what the text is to be and have ample time to read it again and again, until becoming thoroughly familiar with it. Not only should the passage be read and reread, but if there are problems with any of the words or expressions, the preparatory reading should be done audibly. Words that leave any questions as to proper pronunciation should be checked out.

I was once made mindful of the importance of the correct reading of the text. The Scripture reading formed the basis of the morning sermon I was to deliver. However, a misreading of one of the verses took all the point out of the very words in the sermon I was especially to emphasize. This would not have happened if the elder had familiarized himself with the passage.

### **Reading Responsively**

At times the Scripture lesson will be read responsively from the back of the hymnal. Or a passage may be responsively read directly from the Bible, verse by verse. On such occasions it is especially important that the one leading out

should speak with a clear, distinct voice, thus encouraging the congregation to do the same. They should be further encouraged by the participation of the elders seated on the platform. Needless to say, the one leading out does not participate in the response.

When introducing a Scripture passage to be read responsively, it is especially important that enough time be allowed to permit all to find the passage.

### **Room for Improvement**

Most will agree that this part of the worship service fares rather poorly in too many of our churches. The one to read the scripture is often given the assignment just before entering the rostrum. There is no time to become familiar with the reading. There have been times when someone has actually started reading the wrong text. Without previous preparation, an elder often mispronounces words and misplaces the emphasis until the true meaning is all but lost.

Sometimes the scripture is read while latecomers are still finding their seats in the sanctuary and shuffling of feet and whispering are still going on. This is far beneath the exalted position that the reading of God's Word should occupy.

We are reminded again of the statement "We do not obtain a hundredth part of the blessing we should obtain from assembling together to worship God" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 362). Perhaps carelessness in regard to this part of the service accounts for a goodly share of this tragic loss.

The reading of the Scriptures should be a joyful as well as solemn occasion. Let us enter into it wholeheartedly and educate our congregations to do the same. These few moments when God speaks directly to us through His Word can indeed be a highlight of the Sabbath worship hour.

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## **Future *Elder's Digest* Articles**

**Please share your ideas.** Although we plan to use a significant number of reprints in *Elder's Digest*, we still want to hear from you. We welcome short articles by local church elders. Share your suggestions on the practical aspects of lay ministry. Our main subject areas are: sermon preparation and outlines,

evangelism, nurture, spiritual growth, leadership, administration, doctrinal studies, and other church-related topics. You will be paid \$25 per printed page up to \$75 for entire articles in future issues. Mail to *Elder's Digest*, Ministerial Association, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.



## *Reclaiming Former Members*

E MONTE SAHLIN

In most local churches in North America, one third to one half of the members have not attended even once in the past 12 months (excluding shut-ins). This statement is based on careful studies conducted over the years.

"The problem of lapsed members and expired faith is real and sizable," said Charles L. Brooks, general field secretary of the General Conference in 1977.<sup>1</sup> His report included data showing that from the 1960s through 1975, the number of missing members on church rolls in North America had grown to 209,683. Out of every 10 people who join the church, 4.3 simply disappear.<sup>2</sup>

The dropout problem raises serious issues of responsibility, fellowship, and the effectiveness of our nurture activities in the local church. At a more profound level it surfaces even deeper concerns about the life and structure of the Adventist Church. But we believe that something can be done about this disturbing trend.

### **Who Are the Dropouts?**

Surveys of the past few years paint a portrait of a dropout who grew up in the Adventist faith, a younger adult who has gone through a divorce or never married, has few friends in his or her local church, holds a demanding professional position or white collar job, and does not find that the program

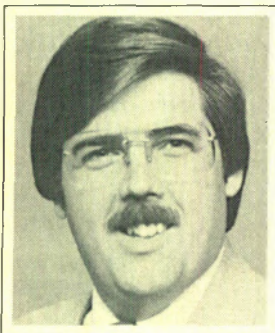
of the local church meets his or her needs.

One of the most widely held myths about dropouts is that they are the result of quick high-pressure public evangelism. In fact, half grew up in Adventist homes and only one in seven came into the church through public evangelism. The majority have attended church regularly for six years or longer.

Age is the greatest dropout factor. Nearly half are in the 20-35 age group, and another quarter are 36-50. The median age of members is 48, the median age of former members is 40, according to Dr. Jerry Lee, a social scientist at Loma Linda University who carefully completed studies of the dropouts in the Southeastern California Conference in 1978.

What are some other characteristics of former Adventists that various studies have indicated?

1. In one study 40 percent were divorced.
2. About 40 percent of single members never attend church or they attend singles' functions at churches of other denominations. According to one former single member, "They leave, at least some of the time, for the same reasons I did. Needs for love and companionship, a relationship or a hoped-for one." Singles leave the church because of unfulfilled needs rather than differences over theological issues.
3. Dr. Lee's study found that 60 percent of



E MONTE SAHLIN

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former members had a non-Adventist spouse as compared to 28 percent of active members. Members who attend church without a spouse may be treated by the congregation as if they were single.

4. A significant number have occupations in professional or white-collar categories. They are more likely to move from one area to another, and often never bother to ask for a letter of transfer.

5. They are people who never bonded with the core group of their congregation.

6. Only about one third have attended an Adventist school at any level.

7. They maintain a strong sense of connection with the Adventist Church, with only about one in six joining other denominations. About 37 percent say they still practice the Adventist faith. They continue to hold similar beliefs and lifestyle habits.

8. The two thirds who do not practice their faith have a low yet still positive view of the church. They have a high rate of divorce. They show less acceptance of church doctrine. They have few Adventist friends or visits from members or pastors, and are younger than the active or inactive practicing Adventists.

### **Why Did They Leave?**

A majority consistently describe their relationship with other church members in negative terms. One in four will cite a lack of fellowship. Another quarter say the worship and church program did not meet their needs. An equal number mention that the influence of non-Adventist friends or relatives was a strong factor. Less than one in five leave because they no longer believe in some church teaching.

Dropping out is a long, slow process that Dr. John Savage, a Protestant researcher, calls a "dropout track."

### **The Dropout Track**

1. A cluster of stressful events.
2. Subtle attempts to reach out for help.
3. Pastor and members do not respond.
4. Hurting member feels angry at nonresponse.
5. Involvement in church decreases.
6. Pastor and members do not respond.
7. Hurting member quits attending, expecting to be contacted.
8. No one contacts member to ask why he or she dropped out.
9. Hurting member tries to forget the painful memories.
10. Member reinvests the time he or she used to

spend at church.

Members leave church, not because of lost beliefs, but because of the way people have treated them.

Studies of the Adventist Church find that former members point to the following influences as causing them to drop out. They are listed in order of the largest group response to the smallest.

1. Church politics and leadership.
2. Feelings of nonacceptance.
3. Lack of sympathy by church leaders for their problems.
4. Church policy on divorce and a lack of sympathy for marital problems.
5. Hypocrisy of other members and disagreement with Adventist standards on sensuality and materialism (one of the smallest groups).
6. Church policy on smoking and alcohol (a small group).
7. Those who joined the church before they really understood what it was about (the smallest group).

About half of the dropouts did not necessarily blame the church for not meeting their needs, but suggested it was something about themselves that made them stop coming.

Researchers also target the conservative/liberal polarization and social trends as adding to the increase of inactive church members.

### **The Role of Church Leadership in Influencing Dropouts**

A significant number indicated they left the church because of dissatisfaction with local church leaders. They perceived a lack of sympathy by church leaders for their problems.

The largest group included those who reacted to the politics they found in the church and what they perceived as the impersonalness of church leaders. They felt that the church was more concerned with numbers of baptisms than those baptized, that the church had too many rules and regulations, that Adventists think they can work their way into heaven, and that the church is too organized.

Dropouts expressed that a feeling of coldness, bigotry, hypocrisy, and a judgmental attitude of members influenced them to leave. A lack of Adventist friends and visits of church leaders and members are closely related.

### **What Can Be Done?**

In the mid-1970s Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal, researcher of Adventist Church growth, made these recommendations to churches wishing to stem the



increase in inactive and former members:

1. Visit missing and former members.
2. Develop and implement small groups to foster fellowship, Bible study, and prayer.
3. Organize a strong visitation program with elders and deacons regularly visiting members assigned to them.
4. Strengthen the teaching ministry alongside the preaching ministry by employing Bible workers and showing the relevance of doctrines to life.
5. Encourage more lay participation in worship and develop richer liturgy with more singing, sharing, and Bible reading.
6. Change the present system of handling transfers of membership. Do not leave the initiative for transfers with the member.
7. Know your congregation, its people, fellowship units, interest groups, and the needs of each.
8. Do not overemphasize teachings that are more rooted in culture than in Scripture.

Visitation remains the key to reclaiming inactive members. Every church interested in bringing back former members needs a strong visitation program.

Many former members cited the lack of a visitation program. They noted that any visits made to them came after they had already left the church, and that such visits tended to be superficial, making them feel that their departure was uncontested.

A study of churches using strong visitation programs during the 1980s in the Columbia Union Conference showed a success rate from 10 to 53 percent. Churches that failed to follow through on the program were those that chose not to have a lay visitation committee or support group as outlined in a training program given by the conference.

Making personal contact in face-to-face visits has proven to be the most successful tool in reclaiming missing and former members. The one in three former members still practicing his or her faith and the one in seven not practicing it but who says it is likely he or she will return one day represent a majority of former members who can readily be brought back into the church.

<sup>1</sup> *Sabbath School Worker*, July 1977, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Carlos Medley, in *Adventist Review*, July 17, 1986, p. 5.

## MISSION STATEMENT

### ***Elder's Digest Statement of Mission***

The *Elder's Digest* is an international journal for local church elders published quarterly by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

As the church experiences rapid growth around the world, increasingly heavy burdens of leadership rest upon local elders. This is particularly true in multi-church districts. The objective of the *Elder's Digest* is to help train and support local church elders as they attempt to fulfill the gospel mission by nurturing their members and reaching out to their communities. It will do this by:

1. Addressing the elder's spiritual, mental, physical, and social needs.
2. Reviewing the great Bible themes of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, showing how each one centers in the Lord Jesus.
3. Providing resources that will assist in giving strong administrative leadership in their congregations.
4. Giving assistance that will strengthen their preaching skills. This will include sample sermons in the journal.

5. Providing instruction that will assist in the nurture of believers and new interests.

6. Encouraging leadership and participation in evangelism on the part of the elders.

7. Providing materials that will assist elders in supporting the pastors they serve.

8. Maintaining a simple writing style in the journal (6th grade level of English) similar to the *Reader's Digest*.

9. Including articles from the Spirit of Prophecy relating to the areas listed above.

The *Elder's Digest* will be designed to meet the needs of all elders, but especially those serving in churches of 25 to 100 members in multi-church districts.

The *Elder's Digest* will join *Ministry* in being a prophetic voice calling the church to be faithful to the biblical principles that constitute Adventist truth, ideals, and values. It will encourage elders continually to grow stronger in Christ that they may model faith as they encourage spiritual development in the flocks they serve as undershepherds.



## *Home Visitation: Necessary for a Healthy Church*

■ LYNDON S. UTTLEY

From the beginning of the early Christian church there were elders who acted as spiritual guardians of the people (1 Peter 5:1-3). These leaders dedicated their gifts in overseeing local church groups. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has sought to return to that early church organization that includes elders. We read of the commission given the elders in Acts 20:28-31: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

While around the world on any given Sabbath probably more Adventist sermons are preached by local elders than pastors, we still find some misconceptions about the work of the elder in some societies.

I have been involved in public evangelism for 36 years, and too often in my travels I find that elders view their jobs to include platform presentations, church board and business meeting attendance, and solving church problems. I find some-

thing vitally important missing from this list, and that is nurture. Nurturing members involves visiting them.

### **Why Elders Don't Visit**

1. Some elders either don't have the gift of pastoring or don't believe they have it. They may have the gift of organization, exhortation, preaching, or some other gift, but not pastoring in a nurturing sense.

2. The local church has not set up a plan for visitation.

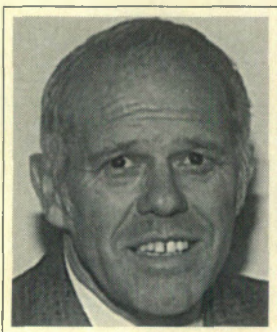
3. There may be a lack of spiritual commitment on the part of some elders. They may find leading out in meetings not as difficult as a person-to-person talk concerning spiritual matters. They may need to build up their listening skills since listening is an integral part of any personal spiritual conversation.

### **The Elder's Job Description**

In working with various churches over the years, I have developed the following job description for elders.

1. The elder needs to faithfully attend elders' monthly meetings and be prepared to abide by and conform to majority decisions.

2. The elder must accept responsibility according to his or her spiritual gifts in overseeing



■ LYNDON S. UTTLEY

Lyn Uttley began his ministry in 1957 as a music director for major evangelistic campaigns in New Zealand. Four years later he became an evangelist, running campaigns in New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. In 1980 he went into pastoral work, specializing in church growth. Currently he is senior pastor at Geelong Seventh-day Adventist Church in Victoria, Australia.



departments of the church.

3. The elder gives spiritual leadership in the church by attending and participating in worship programs, training programs, and other ministries of the church.

4. The elder supports and promotes the social life of the church.

5. The elder must be a faithful tithe payer and supporter of the local church budget.

6. The elder accepts the responsibility of nurturing a group of church members. The group is determined by mutual consent in discussion of the membership roll at elders' meetings.

### **How to Conduct a Pastoral Visit**

The elder needs to:

1. Pray for the family to be visited.

2. Be familiar with the family members, including the names of all children. Become informed about as much of the family's (or individual's) background as possible. Be aware of occupations, talents, leisure interests, etc. This material can be kept on a visitation card.

3. Make an appointment in advance either by phone or in person at church.

4. After a period of casual conversation, inquire about the family's welfare and schooling and/or work. You might ask them how they became Seventh-day Adventists and who baptized them.

5. Bring into the conversation the church and their relationship to it:

a. Sabbath school—adult, youth, and children's divisions.

b. Worship services—find out if they are receiving spiritual and social fulfillment. Do they enjoy worship?

c. Evangelism in the church—are they involved in witnessing? What contacts do they have?

6. Discuss the importance of personal spiritual life—family worship and individual growth through:

a. Bible study

b. Prayer

c. Witnessing

7. Discuss church finances and find out if they understand how the church finances God's work at both the conference and local levels.

8. If the church has a church school, encourage discussion about the school and how it is progressing, and the importance of Christian education.

9. Discuss Pathfinders and their relationship to it.

10. Note the importance of being involved in small group fellowships.

11. End the visit with prayer:

a. Speak to God as a Father who knows all about us; one who is interested in each individual and loves and cares for us as His children.

b. Pray for each member of the family and mention them by name.

c. Pray for the home and family as a whole. Seek God's blessing for them. Pray that they will have courage to witness to their work colleagues, friends, and neighbors.

d. Pray for the church, its work, and witness.

e. Thank God for all His blessings, especially the gift of salvation.

f. Pray for forgiveness for what we have not done and ask God's help for us to be the obedient Christians He longs for us to be.

g. Pray that God will keep us strong in our faith, ready to meet Jesus when He returns.

### **Don'ts During Pastoral Visiting**

1. Don't forget to pray before the visit.

2. Don't start talking about a business proposition.

3. Don't be drawn into criticism of the pastor or church leaders.

4. Don't take sides in any criticism. You will be quoted!

5. Don't do all the talking. Let the people talk as they wish to—you learn only by listening.

6. Don't pretend that you know everything. Be ready to say "I don't know" if you don't. Endeavor to find the answers to any questions and get in contact later.

7. Don't visit in untidy dress.

8. Don't stay too long—one and a half hours at the most. You can always make another visit.

9. Don't try to solve big problems on your own—confer with your pastor.

10. Don't betray confidences.



## The Central Work of Prayer

■ BEN PATTERSON

The great baseball catcher Yogi Berra was involved in a ball game in which the score was tied, with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning. The batter from the opposing team stepped into the batting box and made the sign of the cross on home plate with his bat. Berra was a Catholic too, but he wiped off the plate with his glove and said to the pious batter, "Why don't we let God just watch this game?"

That is good theology when applied to the outcome of a baseball game. It is terrible theology when applied to the way we live our lives and carry out the work of the church. Worse than that, it is fatal. But too often that is precisely the outlook we bring to our vocation as Christian elders, deacons, and pastors. God is in attendance at the game, but only as our honored spectator. Our prayers are merely ceremonial functions: tips of the hat, verbal recognition over the loudspeaker between innings, or requests to throw out the game ball. He may even have the best seat in the stadium, but He rarely if ever gets on the playing field.

Am I overstating things a bit? Not if I am to believe half of what I hear from my colleagues about the weight and frequency assigned to the role of prayer in their work. Prayer is always getting nudged aside, neglected, or perfunctorily performed as more pressing concerns take center stage. Many of us feel we just have too much to *do* to have time

to pray. That is the problem. At bottom, we don't believe we are really doing anything when we pray, other than pray, that is.

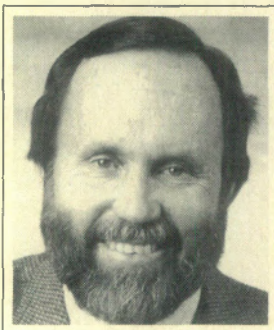
It is this attitude I would like to address, for I believe it is one of the most subtle and pernicious forms of worldliness in the church today. Why don't we believe we are getting anything done when we pray? Two reasons: the world's view, and the world's pace.

### The World's View

The world's view is basically a philosophical issue. It is the view of secularism; the view that this material world is all there is; that we live in a closed system of cause and effect with nothing outside; that official reality is only what is accessible to our senses. The secular worldview is what Peter Berger called a "world without windows." There can be no such thing as prayer in that kind of world.

Of course, any Christian can see that the world's view is at odds with the faith. For the church, however, what is more significant than secularism as a former philosophical system is secularism as a logical phenomenon. For secularism as a sociological reality, says Os Guinness, is the notion that religious ideas, institutions, and interpretations are losing *practical social significance*.

For instance, it is fine to pray in your support



■ BEN PATTERSON

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group, for it can be a warm exercise in intimacy. But pray as a means of doing the business of the church? When we must get something done, we need to start talking, writing, telephoning, spending, budgeting, mobilizing, organizing, and mailing. Those kinds of things take time. So prayer gets preempted. It is a pleasant luxury that would be wonderful to spend more time on, if only we did not have so many necessities pressing in. After all, we must complete the budget and formulate policies and act on the proposals from the fellowship committee.

God's view couldn't be more in opposition to that fatuous notion. Our battle is not with those so-called necessities, but "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." We therefore fight our battle with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. And we "pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Eph. 6:18, NIV). That places our work in a totally different perspective, doesn't it? That demands an entirely different agenda of what things must get done, does it not?

What if every church business meeting began with a reading of that passage from Paul? What if we pastors, elders, and deacons really believed we were in the midst of a raging spiritual battle in which the stakes, the territory being fought over, is none other than us and our people? What confidence would we place then in our organizational charts, lines of accountability and authority, budget reports, and plans for the Labor Day picnic? My hunch is we'd all be too frightened *not* to pray. We'd all become foxhole Christians. Can there be any other kind?

It isn't that those business items are trivial; they are to be included in the responsibilities of Christian leaders. They are, however, trivial in comparison to our vocation to be men and women of prayer. To paraphrase Calvin Coolidge's famous remark about the business of America being business, the business of the church is to pray.

### The World's Pace

The world's view leads to the world's pace. There is a sign reputed to be on the Alaska Highway that says, "Choose your rut carefully. You'll be in it for the next 200 miles." The view that sees the material reality as all there is, or at least all there is that is worth bothering with, creates a pace that is frantic at times, monotonous at others.

I read an article that created a great deal of anxiety in me. It was entitled "If You Are 35, You Have 500 Days to Live." Subtract the time you will spend sleeping, working, and tending to personal matters such as hygiene, odd chores, eating, and traveling. In the next 36 years you have 500 days of leisure. If this world is all there is, then none of us should waste our time praying. We should be literally grabbing for all the gusto we can get.

We see precisely that all around us. Yet, as leisure time increases, so do the problems of emptiness, boredom, and restlessness. We have, as a culture, a frantic determination and anxiety to relax, unwind, and have fun. Where an earlier generation may have been compulsive about work, we are compulsive about what we do with our leisure time. Martha has become the patron saint of American recreational life.

Of course, this affects the church. Activists that we are, we all feel there is so much to do and so little time to do it. A sign of our times, religiously, is the fact that Hans Kung's otherwise brilliant theological work *On Being a Christian* did not have a chapter on prayer. When asked about its absence, he apologized and admitted it was a serious oversight. But, he explained, at the time of writing he was so harassed by the Vatican and busy trying to meet his publisher's deadline that he simply forgot. That is my point exactly. Prayer is always the first thing to go when we get caught up in the world's pace. And only prayer can deliver us from that pace.

We would do well to take our clues from Benedict of Nursia. He founded his Benedictine order as a reaction to the worldliness of the sixth-century church. His slogan was *Ora Labora*, from the Latin *ora*, pray, and *labora*, work. He taught his followers that to pray was to work, and to work was to pray. Following that rule, the Benedictine order broke down the artificial dichotomy between work and prayer. From there they also bridged the gap between the manual arts and the liberal arts, the physical and the intellectual, and the empirical and the speculative. A great tradition developed in which learning, science, agriculture, architecture, and art flourished. Much of what is thought of as beautiful nature in Europe today, particularly in France, was created by the Benedictine monks who drained swamps and cleared forests.

We must learn that prayer is our chief work. Only then can our work become prayer: real service, real accomplishment, real satisfaction. This simple truth alone explains why so many workers



in the church find themselves exhausted, stretched to the breaking point, and burned out.

The apostle Paul, when writing to the church at Colossae, wanted to encourage them by telling the things to be done on their behalf. He mentioned one of his colleagues, Epaphras, whom he described as "always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. . . . he is *working hard* for you" (Col. 4:12, 13, NIV). Epaphras' hard work for the church was his earnest prayers on their behalf!

How often has our telling people we'll pray for them been a cop-out—meaning we won't do anything that really matters, anything concrete; or meaning we want to maintain a safe distance from them and their need.

Our prayer is our work! Only when that is true

for us will our work be prayer: real worship, praise, adoration, and sacrifice. The classical postures of prayer, arms stretched out and hands open, or head bowed and hands folded, are gestures of openness and submission to God. They express perhaps the greatest paradox of prayer: that only when we give up on humanity's work can God begin and, mysteriously, can humanity's work come to fulfillment. As Dr. Hallesby puts it in his book *Prayer*: "Wherever we touch His almighty arm, some of His omnipotence streams in upon us, into our souls and into our bodies. And not only that, but, through us, it *streams out to others.*" *Ora labora.*

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## *An Analysis of the Lay Preaching of Jesus*

■ LESLIE POLLARD

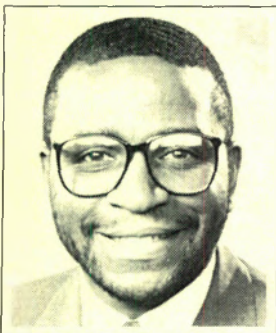
If ever there was a preacher who could “hit the nail on its head,” it was Jesus. Jesus is our example in preaching. Jesus’ teaching and preaching turned popular value constructs upside down. In Jesus’ preaching, the first would be last, and the last would be first. Out of respect for government He would pay taxes to Caesar, but would not answer Pilate when interrogated. Though claiming divine prerogatives, He would throughout His public ministry be counted among the homeless. He indicated that the entrance requirements of His kingdom, which by His own testimony were love, mercy, and faith, were superior to popular religious scrupulosity.

Further analysis of the preaching of Jesus reveals that His preaching embraced the major elements of soteriology, eschatology, and pneumatology. These big words simply describe matters of salvation, last-day events, and the work of the Holy Spirit. In reference to soteriology (i.e., matters of salvation), Jesus believed that the rebirth of the individual was critical to entrance into the kingdom. That was His message to Nicodemus in John 3. The idea that persons could be born again was not new. In rabbinic Judaism the same notion existed. However, Jesus appears to supplement this idea of individual regeneration with a new element, namely *ek hudatos kai pneumatos*, out of water and spirit. Thus baptism and regeneration were close to

the heart of Jesus. People who say that we as Adventists place too much emphasis upon baptism must not be reading what Jesus has to say. The problem is not baptism, it is our lack of emphasis on follow-up and nurture.

Another striking element of the preaching of Jesus was His apparent emphasis upon eschatology (i.e., doctrine of the last things). Jesus taught that this age would give way to the age to come. Though this fact is possibly surprising to some contemporary readers, that feature of the teaching of Jesus is not new. Much of the apocryphal intertestamental literature also asserted the ultimate destruction of history. By dividing history into epochs. (i.e., the periodization of history), apocryphal writers anticipated the interruption of history through the direct intervention of God. For them, the climax of the ages would be the dissolution of this evil age, which by definition stood irredeemable. Out of that destruction the establishment of a new order would emerge. For the teachers of Jesus’ era Yahweh would commence a reign of righteousness.

Interestingly, while Jesus was in continuity with some of these beliefs, clearly He felt free to depart from many of them. For example, Jesus’ preaching of the cataclysmic end of the evil age concurs with the assessment of the intertestamental apocalypticists—the people who wrote about the end of the world between Malachi and Matthew.



■ LESLIE POLLARD

Leslie Pollard, D.Min., Ph.D. (candidate) teaches homiletics and New Testament courses while completing his doctorate in New Testament at the SDA Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This article is an excerpt from his preaching workshop syllabus, *Preaching 2000! Developing Skills for the 21st Century*, pages 14-19.



However, Jesus' preaching separates itself from the apocalypticists in at least two critical ways. First, for Jesus the end of the world appears to be messianically centered. Unlike His predecessors, Jesus (see Matthew) believed and taught that the Messiah would be the central actor in ushering in the last days. Whereas intertestamental documents (i.e., books written between Malachi and Matthew by uninspired authors such as the Syballine Oracles and 1 Enoch) held a messiahless closure of the evil age, Jesus held out for a final age in which Messiah would introduce the age to come with His own presence.

Second, Jesus' preaching differed from that of many of His contemporaries as to when the new age would commence and when the reign of God would arrive. In Mark Jesus announces that with His own appearance the kingdom had come. While many were looking into the future hoping for the kingdom to break into human history, Mark wanted his readers to know that in Jesus Christ the kingdom had already come. This is an important understanding for any preacher to hold. C. H. Dodd commented upon this aspect of New Testament theology:

From these (Matt. 12:28; Acts 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13; 2 Cor. 3:18; Titus 3:5; Heb. 6:5; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:8) and many similar passages it is surely clear that, for the New Testament writers in general, the *eschaton* has entered history; the hidden rule of God has been revealed; the Age to Come has come.

Thus, to the degree that it was possible, the

present evil age and the age to come would coexist in the Christian era. In this regard, the lay preaching of Jesus represented a radically new understanding of eschatology (last-day events). In fact, Jesus appears to have been so certain of this particular element in His preaching, that He could say—based on His followers' acceptance of His Messiahship—that for them the promised, eternal life belonging to the eschaton had already begun.

A third vital element in the preaching of Jesus appears to have been His teaching on the Spirit. Repeatedly, Jesus stressed the importance of the work of *Parakletos* (comforter). Long ago, in my first Greek class, Dr. E. E. Rogers taught me that Jesus could have used the Greek word for "another" which means "another of a different kind." But He didn't. Jesus promised another comforter "of the same kind." That means that Jesus promised that the Comforter would be just like Him. To Jesus this Comforter would, in His own absence, sustain His followers. Indeed, the coming of the Spirit would be the guarantor of Messiah's acceptance with God, and this presence of the Spirit would serve as the unbroken link between the ministry of Jesus and that of His disciples. Thus the followers of Jesus were commanded by Jesus to wait for the fulfillment of the promise. That is, they were to continue the lay ministry of Jesus but only after they had received the enablement which actuated Jesus in His ministry of lay preaching. Thus the book of *Acts* serves as a historical supplement of the Gospels, for Tidball pointed out that "the religion of Jesus Christ was from its beginning a missionary religion" and not an "introversionist sect."

## REFLECTION

Every Christless sermon is a sin against God and a sin against humanity. Any sermon destitute of the saving blood of Christ resembles the offering of Cain. God rejected his offering because the blood of the slain lamb was not in it, was not represented by it. Christless sermons do not prick the heart and convict of sin, and lead people to ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

Any preacher who preaches the gospel of the cross will never run out of material. He will always have plenty of sermons. He will be filled with the living message every time he rises to speak.

What we need today is a positive gospel. The world is sick of negations. We are not to preach of

our doubts, but of the truth we have found. The judgments of God are in the earth, and the only protection is the protection that God gives. God gives everything in Christ. He said of old, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13).

Do you, dear preacher, have the mark of the blood? When you are preaching, is it over your pulpit? Is it over your heart? What a privilege it is to preach Christ! There is nothing more wonderful, no experience more thrilling, no joy more satisfying! I know it. I know the thrill of it, and I would like to share it with you.\*

\* H.M.S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Washington, D.C., 1958, pp. 182, 193, 195, 197.



# *The Wickedest Man Who Ever Lived*

✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

*Successful sermons need outlines. The following sermon graphically illustrates the amazing grace of God to accept, forgive, and restore even the most wicked person. The sermon's objective is to encourage all in the congregation to accept God's forgiveness—listen to the still, small voice of God and follow Him.*

*Study each of the Scripture passages. This is a biographical sermon, so you need to make the characters come alive. Draw from your own community further illustrations. Remember that any illustrations used must have meaning for your congregation.*

*For additional study see Prophets and Kings, pages 349-366; 381-383.*

**Scripture: 2 Chronicles 33:1-20**

**I. Introduction**

Ask the congregation to draw a picture in their minds of a very wicked man—an adulterer, murderer, child abuser, rebel, apostate.

- A. Does God love him?
- B. Can God save him?

**II. Manasseh's Godly Father**

- A. Manasseh had a good father—King Hezekiah.
  - 1. Hezekiah was a reformer. 2 Chron. 29:1-31:21.

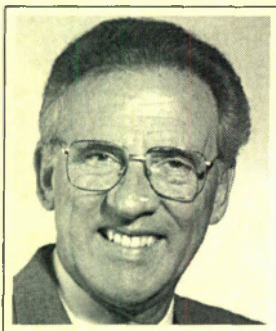
- 2. Hezekiah prayed when Sennacherib attacked. 2 Chron. 32:1-23.
  - a. God answered Hezekiah's prayer.
  - b. 185,000 soldiers were destroyed. 2 Chron. 32:20, 21; 2 Kings 19:35, 36.
- 3. Hezekiah modeled for his son the life of a Godly leader.

**III. The Character of Manasseh**

- A. We know nothing about his mother, Hephzibah. Could she have been a bad influence?
- B. At 12 years of age he became coregent with his father.
- C. He went wrong.
  - 1. Describe the list of his sins. 2 Chron. 33:1-9; 2 Kings 21:1-9.
  - 2. See *Prophets and Kings*, page 382, concerning the murder of Isaiah by Manasseh.
- D. Did Manasseh fall into the company of evil friends? Why do some youth take the wrong path in life?

**IV. God Speaks to Manasseh.** 2 Chron. 33:10, first part.

- A. The message that God gives to sinners. Eze. 18:20-32.



✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

James H. Zachary, editor of *Elder's Digest*, is an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He worked as a teacher for 27 years and was the ministerial secretary of the Far Eastern Division for nine years. He has done evangelism in some 30 countries.



- B. King Manasseh and his people refuse to listen. 2 Chron. 33:10, second part.
- C. God speaks in louder tones. 2 Chron. 33:11; 2 Kings 21:10-16. An enemy army invades; Manasseh is taken prisoner. A ring is put in his nose as one would do to an animal; he is put in brass chains in a line of slaves.

*Illustration:* Just as there are two sides to a coin, there are two sides to sin: the pleasure side and the side of pain and suffering.

*Illustration:* Picture the young king suffering in a dark, damp dungeon. The chains cutting into his skin cause intense pain. He now has time to think of his wasted life.

**V. Where Was God While Wicked Manasseh Suffered?**

God was in the prison with His rebel son, still loving, still wooing, still ready to forgive and restore him.

- A. The king begins to listen to God.
- B. Manasseh prays and God answers. 2 Chron. 33:12, 13.

*Illustration:* At this point I am reminded of the struggle between the Lord and Satan over Joshua the high priest. Zech. 3:1-7. Satan calls upon God to let the rebel die in the fire. But God silences the devil and pulls the "stick" (Joshua) out of the fire.

- C. We can assume that as with Joshua, an angel pulls off Manasseh's dirty robes and places a clean white robe on him. God looks upon the king as having never sinned. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1142.

**VI. God Returns Manasseh to His Throne.**

- A. Manasseh attempts to undo all the wrong that he has done. 2 Chron. 33:14-20.
- B. But the scars of sin remain:
  1. The ashes of his children in the altar of pagan gods. 2 Chron. 33:6.
  2. The citizens murdered by the king's orders.
  3. Citizens who still walk in sin because of the king's example.

**VII. Appeal**

"Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God." 2 Chron. 33:13.

- A. Thankfully the king could look forward to a new life with God in his remaining years. But how different his life would have been if he had made this decision at age 16 instead of 60.
- B. Appeal to audience to begin with God and stay with God.
- C. Appeal to the congregation to listen to the voice of God.
- D. Appeal to all to be aware of the other side of sin.

**On Bones**

Church standards,  
church doctrines,  
and the commandments,  
are the framework on which  
are hung the graceful robes of  
Christ's righteousness,  
His decorative grace,  
the colorful scarves of prayer communication.

Why do we too often show only the bones?  
Why do we not understand that these bones are,  
the enabling  
of the garments to hang properly,  
creating the movement  
that attracts others  
to this wonderful creation,  
this original pattern,  
that God inspires in each of us,  
allowing space for the creativity  
He planted in us to grow to full development.

Bones are not very exciting  
nor beautiful  
without their coverings.  
Coverings without bones are  
nothing but a pile of garments.  
Both are necessary together  
to make Christianity alive.

—Peggy Harris, lay leader  
Beltsville, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist Church



## *The Holy Spirit for Our Time*

✠ EDWARD HEPPENSTALL

*We begin our sermon series in Elder's Digest as a tribute to a well-known teacher of hundreds of pastors. Below is a sermon given sometime around 1970 by Seventh-day Adventist theologian Dr. Edward Heppenstall.*

*In this sermon, notice how Dr. Heppenstall uses the Scriptures to teach us the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and then tells how the Spirit works in the life of the Christian. We call this expository preaching, and many lament that we do not hear more of it in our churches today. In this doctrinal sermon you will note there are no anecdotes or short story illustrations. We have provided an illustration that could be used with this sermon.*

### **Scripture: John 16:13-15**

Who is the Holy Spirit? Ask any number of religious leaders what they understand is meant by the Holy Spirit and they will give you a variety of answers. Many will tell you the "Holy Spirit" is an impersonal influence, a force, energy, and atmosphere emanating in some mysterious way from God. Others use the word "Him" when talking about the third person of the Godhead. Actually no agreement has ever been reached concerning the Holy Spirit in the different Christian communions. Many feel that the New Testament use of the term leaves us considerably in the dark as to how we should conceive of the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost.

Furthermore, much of the Christian church has

in the past either neglected or misunderstood the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. In spite of the clear teaching of the New Testament on this doctrine, the neglect of the Holy Spirit has often been motivated by the ever-lurking fear that some unsavory and sensational manifestation might occur that would prove embarrassing and undesirable. Thus we blindly ignore the Holy Spirit as something that does not belong in a scientific age. The word "spirit" makes us think of the spirit world—a mysterious beyond about which we can prove little or nothing.

This negative mentality toward the third person of the Godhead has resulted in far less study and printed material on the topic than on almost any other doctrinal truth. Adventist theologians have written extensively about every other biblical doctrine. This neglect has brought serious loss to the church and to the Christian. The major defect is human blindness to the church's desperate need of the Holy Spirit in face of human sin and depravity.

### **Jesus Spoke Extensively of the Holy Spirit**

Jesus Christ's specific reference to and designation of the Holy Spirit seem to be quite conclusive. We find His teaching concerning the person of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, chapters 13 to 16. We are going to refer to those chapters frequently, so please turn to John 13 and 14. Christ leaves no doubt about the personality of the Holy Spirit. Our



✠ EDWARD HEPPENSTALL

Dr. Edward Heppenstall taught for many years at Andrews University Theological Seminary and its predecessor in Washington, D.C. Dr. Heppenstall, now retired for several years, resides in Redlands, California, with his wife, Margit. He no longer gives sermons, saying, "Antiquity has caught up with me." He is 90 years old.



Lord alone remains the infallible Teacher concerning the third person of the Godhead.

While discussing His possible departure from this world, Christ spoke of One who was to take His own place on the earth, once He had returned to heaven. John 16:7-11 says: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am leaving you. If I do not go, your Advocate will not come, whereas if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will confute the world, and show where wrong and right and judgement lie. He will convict them of wrong, by their refusal to believe in me; he will convince them that right is on my side, by showing that I go to the Father when I pass from your sight; and he will convince them of divine judgement, by showing that the Prince of this world stands condemned."\*

Jesus makes constant use of the personal pronoun when referring to the Holy Spirit. He also declares that the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father from heaven. Continuing in John 14: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (verse 26, KJV). Our Lord seeks to show the essential unity that exists between the three persons of the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ, the second person, came to bear witness to the Father. The Holy Spirit, the third person, was to come to bear witness to the Son.

### **The Holy Spirit Glorifies Christ**

John 16:13-15: "However, when he comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, for everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine."

Christ said that He would not leave His disciples orphans (John 14:18). He promised to come to them in the divine person of the Holy Spirit. And Christ does not send them an influence or a force as a substitute for Himself. The substitute is another person, like Himself, in perfect unity with both the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is no less a person than Jesus Christ was a person. No vague spirit or influence could ever be a substitute for Jesus. Christ promised the church He would send a continuation of Himself.

### **The Godhead: Three Distinct Persons**

Just as Christ and the Father are one in essence, so the Holy Spirit and Christ are one in essence. While there is an essential unity with the Godhead

among the three persons, the Father clearly recognizes a distinction of persons among them. Christ always speaks of the Holy Spirit as a personality distinct from Himself. Christ did not say when He left that He would leave behind simply His influence in the world, or His gracious and loving spirit. John 15:26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (KJV).

The union within the Godhead represents a unity of purpose and function, but not a unity of persons. They remain three distinct persons. Jesus Christ is the one member of the Godhead that became incarnate in human flesh. The Holy Spirit is not incarnate. He does not appear in personal, human form as Christ did. That would only confuse us as to the possibility of two Christs who were to come to the earth. The Bible never promised that. The Holy Spirit does not represent another Christ but the One who was here, died, was resurrected, and returned to heaven. His purpose is to testify to Jesus Christ—to glorify Him.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit does not become the spirit of the believer. He is literally a distinct person and never impersonal. He is never a mere force, or power, or energy. His personality is not to be confused with that of the believer. He remains forever personally distinct from ourselves, even while dwelling with us and in us. Reading in Romans 8:16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (KJV). There can be no amalgamation of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of the Christian. What is of the Godhead remains so. What is human remains so, although transformed by the control of the Holy Spirit.

Christ said He would come to dwell in us. So does the Holy Spirit (John 14:18-20). Christ intercedes for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25). The Spirit intercedes with us in the depths of our hearts (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Nowhere in the Bible is there even a suggestion that the personality and the personal nature of the Spirit's action are less than that of the Father or the Son. To the Holy Spirit are attributed all the personal qualities and characteristics that belong equally to the other members of the Godhead.

To be baptized "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19) is to say that coexistent, equal terms are used for each member of the Godhead. Consequently, in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts, the question is never "Who is the Holy Spirit?" but "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?"



### **Why Do Christians Need the Holy Spirit?**

"On the last and greatest day of the festival Jesus stood and cried aloud, 'If anyone is thirsty let him come to me.' . . . As Scripture says, 'Streams of living water shall flow out from within him.' He was speaking of the Spirit which believers in him would receive later; for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:37-39).

These words of Jesus describe a certain type of Christian experience. When Christ went back to heaven He sent the Holy Spirit, and Pentecost was the result. Thousands of Christians are living on this side of Pentecost as if that great event had never occurred. Yet we are living in the age of the Holy Spirit, the supreme gift of God to the church from that day forward. What folly it would be for us to say that we are not going to avail ourselves of the use of electric energy when it is necessary for the most tremendous accomplishments in the history of the world. Such is the Christian who is content to live his or her life without the Holy Spirit.

Often people think of experiencing the Holy Spirit as a spasmodic thing that comes as a result of long fasts and prayers, or as some profound emotional experience that carries one beyond the normal existence of everyday life. But the apostle Paul spoke of the "life-giving law of the Spirit" that "has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The Scripture does not have in mind working oneself up to a high pitch of excitement. The law of the Holy Spirit is for all believers, a permanent divine gift directing and inspiring the whole of one's existence.

What the Bible does claim is that there is still in the world today the third member of the Godhead, as real and dynamic as when Jesus was on earth; that the Holy Spirit dispenses freely a flood of spiritual vitality and dynamic reality that is the inspiring power behind all Christian living.

Christianity of the first century becomes personal when the Christ of 2,000 years ago becomes the living Christ for the Christian here and now through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is what makes a vibrant religion possible.

Christ promised His followers that, through the Holy Spirit, He would put power and spiritual reality into the gospel. Christ did not give us a set of doctrines *per se*. The Holy Spirit came to fill the form and structure of the Christian faith with life and purpose. Like a photograph coming up clear in a bath of acid, a picture comes through clearly as we read the account of the witness of the apostles

in the book of Acts. In these humble, ignorant, weak persons the Holy Spirit accomplished the unbelievable. He made them powerful witnesses to the living Christ. There is only one way to account for the complete change in Peter. Peter went from denial and cowardice to a life of genuine courageous witness. Why? Because the Holy Spirit came into his life. A true Christian is one with the divine credentials of the presence of God in his or her life.

In the Holy Spirit we are not dealing simply with a person who has been, but a person who is and continues to be. Christians must come to terms not merely with something that God requires of us but with someone who comes to meet us. Someone who continues the search that Christ started when He came to this world.

The Christian faith comes down through history to us as an inheritance from the early church. What we know initially about God comes to us through Jesus Christ, who lived 2,000 years ago. People today need to be revitalized by a God who lives now. That is what Christ promised when He returned to heaven.

By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the living Christ becomes a reality. Without Him we have only a conventional religion. Neither church nor religious tradition nor biblical theology can create this divine presence. Neither clever argument nor final authority can produce the inner spiritual dynamic humans need. No matter how unanimous people are in their agreement on biblical truth, no spiritual reality resides in the letter of religion. We realize the living God only as we open our lives to the Holy Spirit.

### **Christians Must Witness to the Spirit**

The Christian, born of the Spirit and filled with Spirit, has a witness to bear. That witness is twofold: first is the testimony that we are sons and daughters of God, an inward assurance that we belong to God. "For all who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

The believer also has a mission to the world. That mission is to give a public, personal witness, confessing Christ in word and life, testifying to the saving power of the gospel. We read in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem, and all over Judaea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth." To witness to the Spirit is not to express some emotional excitation. Witnessing is the total response of mind, body, and spirit because the Christian "knows" the things



that are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. 2:12, KJV). "You are on the spiritual level, if only God's Spirit dwells within you; and if a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ, he is no Christian" (Rom. 8:9).

Thus the Holy Spirit creates and develops in the believer the spirit of genuine sonship to God and loving fellowship with people. This is not some legalistic approach to religion.

In Galatians 3:2-5, Paul put the question to the Galatians this way: "Answer me one question: did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the gospel message? . . . I ask you then: when God gives you the Spirit . . . why is this? Is it because you keep the law, or is it because you have faith in the gospel message?"

The challenge to true Christianity through the centuries has often come through a formal legalistic approach to faith, referred to by Paul as "letter" versus the "spirit." A legalistic religion aims at securing a favorable standing with God by means of obedience to the law. Many professed Adventists are distracted by the law's requirements. They set law over against the Spirit. They fail to see the need for a spiritual dynamic. The witness of the Holy Spirit in the life is the one dynamic factor that makes obedience to the law possible.

Romans 8:3, 4: "What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: . . . so that the commandment of the law may find fulfilment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit."

The testimony of the Holy Spirit is a change from sin to righteousness, from disobedience to obedience. The Holy Spirit does what the law could not do. The believer is led into truth (John 16:13). This experience is no mere emotionalism. The divine/human relationship actually exists.

The Holy Spirit opposes any type of legalistic religion. Yet the Holy Spirit is never against the law or against obedience to the will of God. Under the Spirit, the law becomes spiritual in the believer's fulfillment of it. We find nothing careless about the work of the Holy Spirit in obeying the law of God. Only those who walk after the Spirit do justice to the law of God. The spiritual dynamic for obedience is the Holy Spirit, exerting moral and spiritual power that makes obedience to the will of God loving and free. The Christian becomes uncompromisingly faithful to all of God's will. He or she serves "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6, KJV). Our Lord speaks of the Christian who abides in Him through the Holy

Spirit: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:8-10, KJV).

Man's great need, then, is an adequate trust in the Holy Spirit, who took Christ's place on earth. Through the Spirit Christ still towers above our world and dwells in it. To live the Christian faith, we do not need a mechanical impersonal force to be moved and manipulated as people see fit but the living God. Christ's supreme legacy to His church on earth is the gift of Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as religion by proxy. We can never have assurance until we have fully committed ourselves. Only then will we find the saving and transforming power of God.

### Illustration

A man who drank heavily became converted to Christ. He lived victoriously for several weeks until one day he passed the open door of a tavern. The odor aroused his old desire for alcohol. Just then he saw a sign in the window of a nearby cafe: "All the lemonade you can drink—50 cents!" Dashing inside, he ordered one glass, then another, and still another. After finishing the third, he walked past the tavern, no longer tempted. He was so full of lemonade, he had no room for that which would be injurious to him. The lesson is clear: to be victorious over evil desires, we must leave no room for them to repossess us. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Dwight L. Moody once demonstrated the principle like this: "Tell me," he said to his audience, "how can I get the air out of the glass I have in my hand?" One man said, "Pump it out." But the evangelist replied, "That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass." Finally, after many suggestions, Moody picked up a pitcher and filled the glass with water. "There," he said, "all the air is now removed." He explained that victory for the child of God does not come by working hard to eliminate sinful habits, but rather by allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession.

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## *Balancing Your Members' Diet: Planning the Sermonic Year*

✠ JERRY FORE

Planning a whole year of sermons in advance sounds like a good idea. But I did not realize how much it would benefit my preaching until I actually tried it. After I outline my sermon topics, I plan my reading to complement my preaching schedule.

Planning the topics for preaching in advance is neither difficult nor time-consuming. It can be done in a few hours if you follow three simple steps.

First, label one sheet of paper **Subject Work Sheet**. On this sheet list all the subjects that relate to church life, such as Christian education, Week of Prayer, stewardship, Youth Day, Communion, etc.

Next list the holidays that would be appropriate for special services, such as Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Then list the topics that you feel need to be shared with your congregation, such as miracles and parables of Jesus, the Second Coming, the Holy Spirit, last-day events, the sanctuary doctrine, health, and family life.

Second, label another sheet of paper **Calendar Work Sheet**. On this sheet list the Sabbaths of each month on which you will be responsible for preaching. You will list 24 Sabbaths if you have preaching twice a month or 36 if you preach three times a month.

Third, take the subjects from the **Subject Work Sheet** and place them by the appropriate dates on the **Calendar Work Sheet**. There will be

several vacant Sabbaths on the calendar. If you have several consecutive Sabbaths open, you might expand one topic into a series of two or possibly three sermons.

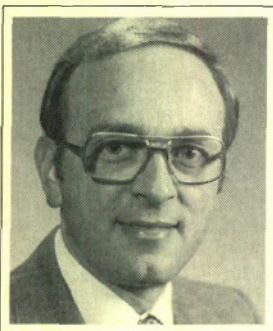
You will need to determine which subjects are most important to present when the entire congregation is likely to be in attendance, such as immediately after school begins.

Why not plan now for the next 12 months? To do so will remove the pressure of selecting a topic each week, and the congregation will be blessed as a result of your planning.

### Sample Sermonic Calendar

For Two Sabbaths a Month

Jan. 8	Communion	July 9	Topical series
Jan. 22	Religious liberty	July 23	Topical series
Feb. 5	Evangelistic meeting	Aug. 6	Christian education
Feb. 19	Evangelistic meeting	Aug. 20	Doctrinal series
March 5	Evangelistic meeting	Sept. 3	Doctrinal series
March 19	Communion	Sept. 17	Youth Day
April 2	Christian home	Oct. 1	Communion
April 16	Easter	Oct. 15	Week of Prayer
April 30	Spirit of Prophecy	Oct. 29	Topical series
May 14	Topical series	Nov. 12	Topical series
May 28	Topical series	Nov. 26	Topical series
June 11	Topical series	Dec. 10	Stewardship
June 25	Communion	Dec. 24	Christmas



✠ JERRY FORE

Jerry Fore is associate pastor of the Hamilton Community Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Chattanooga, Tennessee.



## Why the Sabbath?

■ MARTIN WEBER

Several years ago I had the opportunity to share my testimony informally on one of the California State University campuses. Ted, a sophomore art student, wanted to know why he had to become a Christian to be saved. "Hindus and Buddhists have high moral standards," he argued. "Muslims and Jews worship a personal God. Jesus was a great leader, all right, but couldn't we just appreciate Him as one of the world's great gurus and remain outside of Christianity?"

"Here's what Christianity offers that's unique," I suggested. "Although many world religions value Christ as a teacher and worthy example, only Christianity honors Him as the unique Saviour of the world." I proceeded to explain that God has high standards that none of us can meet; our only hope of doing business with Him is through the One who is our Saviour as well as our Creator.

These twin facts of life—creation and salvation—not only form the foundation of Christianity but also motivate our worship. That's where the Sabbath comes in. Through the weekly day of worship God has chosen to memorialize both Creation and salvation.

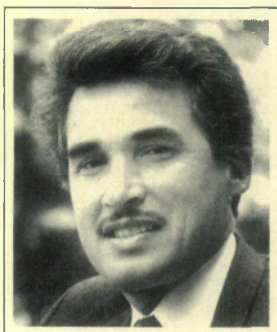
To appreciate the meaning of Sabbath rest, we must go back to the Garden of Eden. After Jesus finished His work of Creation on Friday afternoon He proceeded to rest on the Sabbath. Then He invited Adam and Eve to join the celebration of His

work—even though they had done no work themselves to earn the right to rest.

This essential meaning of the Sabbath—resting in Christ's accomplishments and not our own—is reinforced by Calvary. On that fatal Friday afternoon, Jesus once again completed a work on our behalf. With His dying breath He cried, "It is finished!" Mission accomplished! As the sun began to set, the friends of Jesus laid Him to rest inside a tomb, where He remained over the Sabbath hours to memorialize His completed work of salvation. After His quiet Sabbath repose Jesus came forth and ascended to heaven's throne.

Because of His two great accomplishments of Creation and Calvary, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. We express our faith in Him as our Maker and Redeemer by sharing the Sabbath rest He earned by His work. In keeping the Sabbath we contribute nothing of our own—we only accept God's gift of life and new life in Christ. The Sabbath is much like baptism: both are important observances that signify our acceptance of what Jesus has done for us. While baptism is a one-time event, the Sabbath is a weekly experience of celebrating Christ's accomplishments.

Our own feeble accomplishments cannot impress a holy God. He appreciates sincerity, but His uncompromising law demands a finished work of perfection: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work" (Ex. 20:9). But tell me, have you ever



■ MARTIN WEBER

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finished *all* there was to do when Sabbath came? I haven't either! Often I'm like a hamster in the pet shop spinning inside one of those little wheels. Always moving, always striving, but never making it to the top where the law requires me to be. The Sabbath offers refuge in the completed work of Jesus from the hamster wheels of our own accomplishments.

Complete in Christ—this is the message of the Sabbath. What therapy for legalism! The enemy of souls well knows that many who try to please God wind up trusting in their own works for salvation. Misguided souls who rummage around in their lives looking for evidence that they deserve to go to heaven must lament, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" The Sabbath is designed by God to prevent such spiritual discouragement. Week by week it comforts the conscience, assuring us that despite our unfinished characters we stand complete in Christ. His accomplishment at Calvary counts as our atonement.

Many Christians mistakenly regard God's day of rest as an ancient Jewish relic with no meaning for modern Christians. Some even consider Sabbath-keeping an attempt to gain salvation by works. Yet nothing could be further from the truth: the word "Sabbath" comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cease, desist, rest"—the very opposite of works. Of course, works of love are essential in Christian living; it's just that we don't depend upon them for salvation. In appreciation for salvation by grace,

genuine faith leads us to be faithful and obedient. Yes, we need God's law to convict us of sin—but we are not saved through that law. We're saved by trusting in Jesus. This is the message of the Sabbath.

You may have noticed how the Sabbath commandment differs from the other nine. All the other commandments tell us what *we* must do for God and neighbor. But the Sabbath points us away from human works and forward to rest in *God's* work for us. Therein lies our salvation! Without Sabbath rest our obedience to God would indeed be legalism.

I believe the Sabbath is the greatest teaching tool of the gospel. It's the brightest of billboards proclaiming Calvary's freedom. Week by week the seventh day comes around to remind us we can't save ourselves—we must trust Jesus. And in this world where atheism abounds, the Sabbath testifies that we didn't evolve by chance. God made us as His children.

Unfortunately, we Adventists have traditionally presented the Sabbath as an attempt to fulfill the law rather than as rest in the accomplishments of Christ. No wonder fellow Christians who know God's grace have not been overly impressed by Adventist evangelism. Thank God we are repenting of legalism and beginning to preach the truth as it is *in* Jesus.

So let us call the world to worship God at Calvary, not at Sinai. Only then can we honor the gospel and complete our Global Mission.

## RESOURCE



*Let elders . . . be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.*

—1 Timothy 5:17

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## Chairing Committees

■ FLOYD BRESEE

Chairing committees is one of the most significant, time-consuming, and sometimes exasperating things you do. Do you want to do it better? Here are tips.

**1. Prepare an agenda.** An agenda is a list of items for the committee to consider and act on. Each member should receive a copy. If practical, this should be done well before the meeting date so that members can come prepared. Under some circumstances it is wise to screen the agenda through a smaller group such as the elders' council. When there is consensus among the elders, the church board will usually agree.

**2. Begin and end on time.** Whether everyone is present or not, begin the meeting on time. If you start late, you end late. Besides, starting late gives the people the idea they can come late and not miss anything. Listing agenda items can help keep a committee on time.

List first the items that do not require everyone's presence, such as a treasurer's report or some routine business. Next, list heavy, lengthy items. After the committee talks for an hour and members realize they've gone through only a fourth of the agenda, they'll become more businesslike. Next, place the more brief, shorter items. Finally, include items that must be considered sometime but could be postponed if you run out of time.

**3. Provide information.** A committee

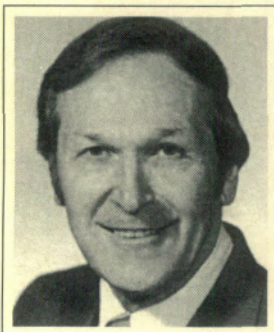
working in the right spirit and with the right information will almost invariably make right decisions. Inadequate information often leads to wrong decisions. The chairperson need not be the source of all information, but should ensure that the committee gets the information it needs to act intelligently.

**4. Create a team spirit.** Research shows that a committee becomes ineffective when there is a hostile spirit within the group. Members must want to work together, want to agree. The chairperson has much to do with creating this kind of team spirit.

Don't overcontrol. Unless the committee is oversize, members shouldn't have to address the chair when they wish to speak. Dialogue should flow freely and directly from person to person. Understand and at least informally observe the rules of parliamentary procedure. This gains respect for your leadership, establishes an organized sense of fairness, and protects the democratic process.

And nothing helps create a team spirit more effectively than a wholesome sense of humor. If you can smile together, you can usually work together.

**5. Control participation.** Ensure a broad spectrum of participation, and encourage everyone to join in the discussion. Gently bypass those who have already shared their point of view and tend to



■ FLOYD BRESEE

Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., was secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1985 to 1992. Since his retirement he and his wife, Ellen, have been living in Tobernash, Colorado. Dr. Bresee continues to be active in church work, writing, pastoring the local church, and meeting various speaking appointments all over the world. The above article has been reprinted from the July 1992 issue of *Ministry*.



dominate. Ask specifically the more timid to share their thinking. When these nonparticipating members speak once and find their contribution is heard and respected they will usually speak again and continue to participate.

**6. Respect others' ideas.** Some chairpersons tend to be too autocratic. You may know more about the subject than your committee members, probably because you have been more involved. But this does not mean your judgment is superior to that of the group.

**7. Stick to the problem.** A committee solves a problem by a cooperative pooling of information and judgment. But when the problem proves especially difficult to solve, the group or at least some of its members will tend to talk about something unrelated to the problem. The chairperson must kindly but relentlessly keep the committee on the problem at hand.

**8. Summarize periodically.** Rather than spending a lot of time presenting your own arguments as chairperson, concentrate more on condensing and summarizing the arguments given by others and working toward areas of consensus.

**9. See that decisions are recorded.** This may seem unimportant in smaller, informal groups. But forget that you can remember, and remember that you can forget. Recorded minutes can keep you out of a lot of trouble.

**10. Support the decision.** Few things aggravate a committee more than finding out that the pastor or other church leaders have ignored a committee decision and done things their own way anyway. When you're voted down, either accept the committee's wish or bring together additional information and ask the group to reconsider. Everyone together is more likely to be right than anyone alone.

## RESOURCE

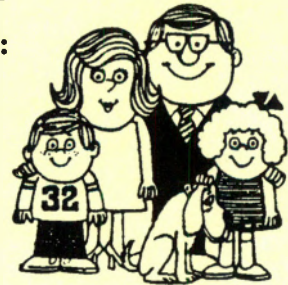
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## The Outlook

E ELLEN G. WHITE

We are nearing the close of this earth's history. We have before us a great work—the closing work of giving the last warning message to a sinful world. There are men who will be taken from the plow, from the vineyard, from various other branches of work, and sent forth by the Lord to give this message to the world.

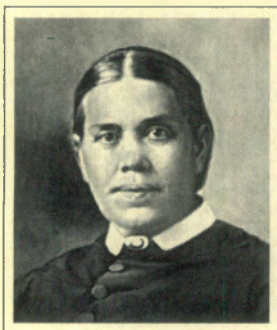
The world is out of joint. As we look at the picture, the outlook seems discouraging. But Christ greets with hopeful assurance the very men and women who cause us discouragement. In them He sees qualifications that will enable them to take a place in His vineyard. If they will constantly be learners, through His providence He will make them men and women fitted to do a work that is not beyond their capabilities; through the impartation of the Holy Spirit, He will give them power of utterance.

Many of the barren, unworked fields must be entered by beginners. The brightness of the Saviour's view of the world will inspire confidence in many workers, who, if they begin in humility and put their hearts into the work, will be found to be the right men for the time and place. Christ sees all the misery and despair of the world, the sight of which would bow down some of our workers of large capabilities with a weight of discouragement so great that they would not know how even to begin the work of leading men and women to the first round of the ladder. Their precise methods are of

little value. They would stand above the lower rounds of the ladder, saying, "Come up where we are." But the poor souls do not know where to put their feet.

Christ's heart is cheered by the sight of those who are poor in every sense of the term; cheered by His view of the ill-used ones who are meek; cheered by the seemingly unsatisfied hungering after righteousness, by the inability of many to begin. He welcomes, as it were, the very condition of things that would discourage many ministers. He corrects our erring piety, giving the burden of the work for the poor and needy in the rough places of the earth, to men and women who have hearts that can feel for the ignorant and for those that are out of the way.

The Lord teaches these workers how to meet those whom He wishes them to help. They will be encouraged as they see doors opening for them to enter places where they can do medical missionary work. Having little self-confidence, they give God all the glory. Their hands may be rough and unskilled, but their hearts are susceptible to pity; they are filled with an earnest desire to do something to relieve the woe so abundant; and Christ is present to help them. He works through those who discern mercy in misery, gain in the loss of all things. When the Light of the world passes by, privileges appear in all hardships, order in confusion, the success and wisdom of God in that which has seemed to be failure.



E ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she had literary productions of more than 100,000 pages by the time of her death in 1915. Her work continues to be a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church. This article was taken from *Gospel Workers*, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Washington, D.C., 1948. *Gospel Workers* was compiled from the complete published writings of the author and from unpublished manuscripts.



My brethren and sisters, in your ministry come close to the people. Uplift those who are cast down. Treat of calamities as disguised blessings, of woes as mercies. Work in a way that will cause hope to spring up in the place of despair.

The common people are to take their place as workers. Sharing the sorrows of their fellow men as the Saviour shared the sorrows of humanity, they will by faith see Him working with them.

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly" (Zeph. 1:14). To every worker I would say: Go forth in humble faith, and the Lord will go with you. But watch unto prayer. This is the science of your labor. The power is of God. Work in dependence upon Him, remembering that you are laborers together with Him. He is your Helper. Your strength is from Him. He will be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption. Wear the yoke of Christ, daily learning of Him, His meekness and lowliness. He will be your Comfort, your Rest (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 270-272).

The Saviour knows the depths of the world's misery and despair, knows by what means to bring relief. He sees on every hand souls in darkness, bowed down with sin and sorrow and pain. But He sees also their possibilities. He sees the height to which they may attain. Although human beings have abused their mercies, wasted their talents, and lost the dignity of godlike manhood, the Creator is to be glorified in their redemption.

Christ rejoiced that He could do more for His followers than they could ask or think. He knew that the truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the contest with evil; and that the blood-stained banner would wave triumphantly over His followers. He knew that the life of His trusting disciples would be like His—a series of uninterrupted victories, not seen to be such here, but recognized as such in the great hereafter.

"These things I have spoken unto you," He said, "that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged; and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature. They are to live as He lived, and work as He worked, because they depend on Him as the great Master-worker.

Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess. Though apparent impossibilities obstruct their way, by His grace they are to go forward. Instead of deploring difficulties, they are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love, Christ had bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the Source of all power, shall be theirs. They are to have power to resist evil, power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master, power that will enable them to overcome as Christ overcame.

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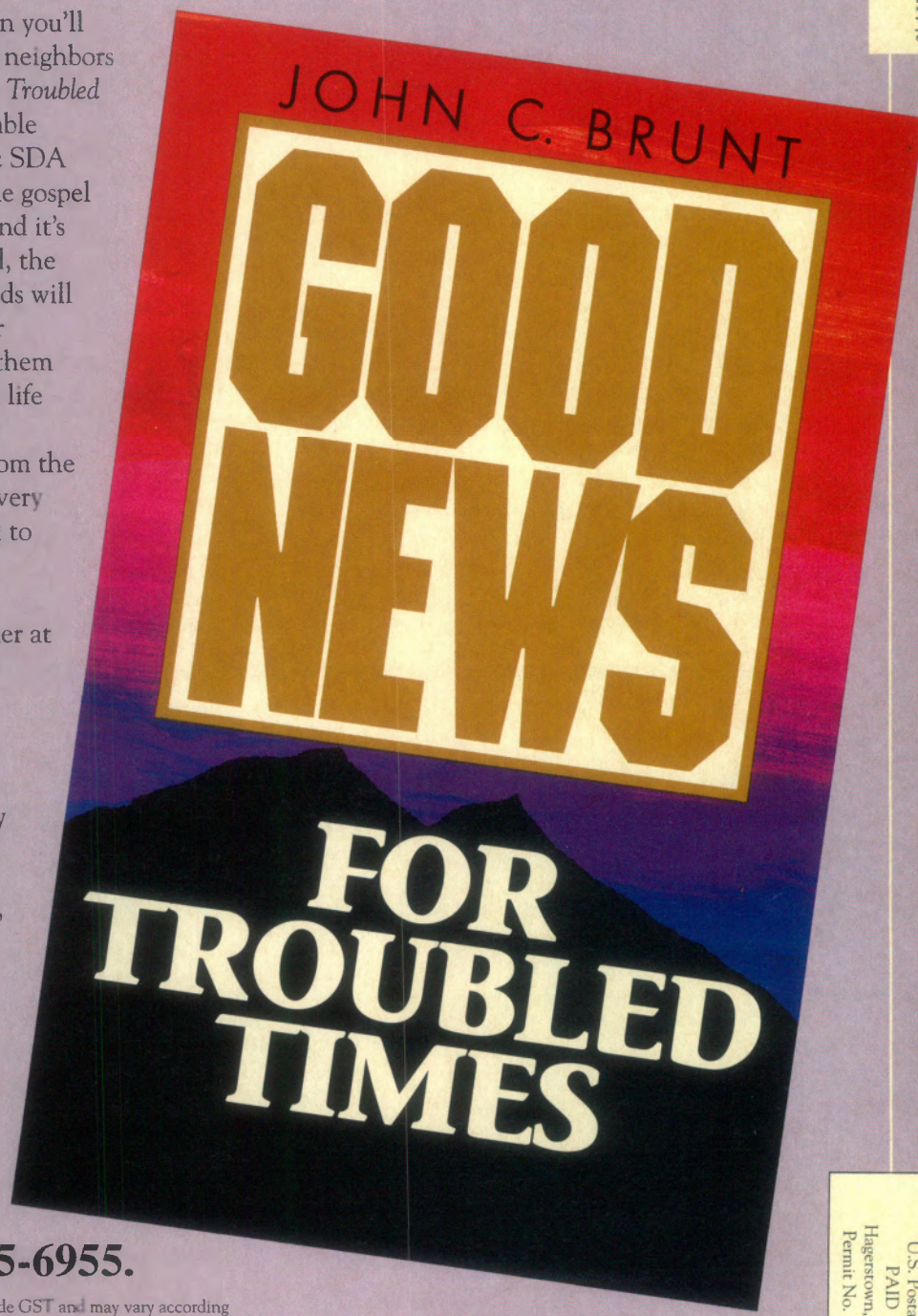
John C. Brunt is a college administrator and religion teacher at Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington.

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