

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Number Seven

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Elder's Digest

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Seekers of the Lost Lamb

Joel Sarli



This issue focuses on the mission of the church in sharing the gospel and the responsibility that elders have in this mission. *Evangelism, church growth, and outreach* are terms we used to indicate any effort by the church in seeking the ones who have not found the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ. This was the first priority in Jesus' ministry and should be the first priority in our ministry as elders. "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 9).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born with the mission of proclaiming "the eternal gospel . . . to those who live on the earth" and we cannot accept the idea that our work is complete unless we lead our congregations in seeking the lost ones and bringing them to the fold.

The analogy of lost and straying sheep in the Old Testament usually referred to God's Covenant people, Israel (Ezekiel 34), but the New Testament gives a wider meaning, that the church should follow the example of Jesus Christ who came to "seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Rather than associating with the religionists of His day, Jesus was found among sinners. He explains in Luke 15 that God is interested in finding lost coins, lost sheep, and lost sons. Seeking and forgiveness is what the heart of God is all about. This great heart is manifested in the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Straying sheep, as well as the lost ones, should be a main concern of the shepherds of the church.

An elder is an individual divinely called by God to shepherd the flock and seek the other sheep who are unable to find by themselves the way to the fold. This is the mandate of Jesus to His church in John chapter 10, verse 16: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also." A person can possess no greater privilege nor responsibility. As an undershepherd, an elder is directly accountable to the Chief Shepherd in the feeding, guiding, protecting, and caring for the flock, as well as seeking for the "other sheep that are not of this fold."

Roy Allan Anderson, former Secretary of the Ministerial Association, used to tell the story of visiting a home of one of the ministers in New Zealand. As he sat down to a very welcome meal, he glanced up at the wall. There on the wall was a picture he had always admired. It was a well-known picture. The scene is from high in the mountains. The lamb, too sick to walk, has fallen in heavy snow. The sheep dog, sensing his responsibility, dares not to leave his little charge for fear some peril may befall it. He cannot go back to get help, and there he is barking frantically, as only a sheep dog who senses danger can.

"As I saw this picture I said to my friends—'That's a wonderful scene.'

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PUBLISHER

Ministerial Association
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**MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION
SECRETARY**

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EDITOR

Joel Sarli

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Matthew A. Bediako
Sharon Cress
Rex D. Edwards
Willmore Eva
Carl Johnston
Walter Pearson, Jr.
Nikolas Satelmajer
Michael A. Speegle

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Middle East Union - Peter Roennfeldt
Southern Africa Union - R. A. Zeeman

COVER DESIGN

Tanya Holland

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Regina R. Hayden

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Do All Men Speak Well of You?

by Henry Feyerabend

As a church we are indeed enjoying a measure of temporal prosperity unprecedented in our history. We count our institutional investments far up into the millions of dollars. We have beautiful new medical and educational buildings serving well the cause of present truth. Many, not of our faith, commend our educational program. Prominent persons from all walks of life come to our sanitariums and hospitals. The growth of our publishing work has been phenomenal. In North America alone our literature evangelists now sell millions of dollars' worth of books and papers in a single year. Multiplied thousands of candidates are being baptized and joining our churches all over the world. It is a bright era in the history of the church. To be associated with such a God-blessed and ever-expanding movement is a wonderful privilege. For many years we have been working and praying for such a day.

We thank God for all He has done and for the favorable light in which we bask today. BUT—can danger be inherent in a strong tide of public approval?

As a church, let us move forward unitedly and with ever-increasing zeal advance the work of God to its destined glorious climax pictured by John the Revelator (Revelation 7:9). But as individuals, let us not fail to recognize that in increased popularity lies grave danger. Jesus recognized this when He said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

Jesus points out dangers resulting from too close association with the world and from basking in the approbation of the world: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." Then He reminds us that "because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world



"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."—
Matt. 24:14, KJV

hateth you" (John 15:19). In other scriptures we are reminded that a people following the straight and narrow path our Saviour trod will not find ready acceptance.

Hand in hand with popular acclaim and prosperity, apostasy strode into the ranks of the early Christian church. A tarnished faith resulted, and soon the true church lost its identity. The apostate church walked proudly into the palaces and mansions of her day. The true church "fled into the wilderness, where she hath a

place prepared of God" (Revelation 12:6). The evil one gained through popularity what he had been unable to accomplish through savage opposition.

Satan works just as subtly today as he did in the early centuries of the church's history. "The spirit of the world is no more in harmony with the spirit of Christ today than in earlier times" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 144).

"Especially today, while earth's history is closing, the Lord requires of His children a vigilance that knows no relaxation" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 571).

"The line of demarcation between His people and the world is ever to be kept unmistakably distinct"—(*Ibid.*, p. 570).

With such inspired counsel ringing in our ears, our path of duty and action is clear to us. The pathway to the kingdom is still the strait and narrow way. Today, as in Jesus' day, the multitudes will not find in it the popular appeal they love. Many will shun this way, choosing rather the broad way that leads ultimately to destruction.

We are a "called-out" people (Revelation 18:4). We are destined by the God of heaven to be different. The Apostle Peter describes us as "a peculiar people." But we must be careful how we become "peculiar." God does not call us to some weird mysticism, or to a fanaticism that would bring

reproach upon Him and upon His church. We are not to be spiritual ascetics or recluses. God is not calling us to become eccentric extremists. He wants us to be different without being strange.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14) is the inspired command. In selecting our life companions, our business partners, and our close friends, we are to follow Paul’s counsel given him by God’s Spirit. Likewise our social and recreational pursuits will not be built around those not of our faith. Being “peculiar” includes such everyday activities as our reading, our diet, our dress, our conduct. We are to be in the world but not of the world.

God would never have us lay aside our identity as a called-out people—part of a heaven-born movement—and become just another popular denomination. We have a special message! We are on a God-sent mission. We must never lose our sense of urgency. We are not to be lulled to sleep with the world’s hearty approbation.

After saying this, may I repeat that I would not for a moment depreciate the wonderful work being done through our worldwide program of Public

Relations. As a denomination, let us solicit every inch of space we can secure in every possible paper and magazine. Let us get every possible minute on radio and television. Let us humbly, but effectively, tell the world what God is doing in these thrilling last days of earth’s history.

But let us never forget as individuals, as church members, that we need to keep our eyes upon the Lord Jesus instead of on the great amount of publicity coming our way. We must never forget that if we want to know what God’s estimate of the remnant church is and what He sees our need to be as members today, we shall still find this in the Book of books and in the red volumes of His inspired servant, not in the popular magazines.

May nothing turn us aside from the one great compelling objective—the perfecting of a character that will stand in the judgment and prepare us for a place by His side when He comes. In Him there is grace and strength sufficient for our every need. **E**

Henry Feyerabend is the speaker of the “It is Written” telecast for Canada and evangelist for the Media Center evangelistic program.



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Why Change Something If It's Not Broken?

by John W. Fowler

Someone has said that when a church loses its evangelistic focus “it begins to smell of the sacred, to play the priest and mumble. Anyone with a keen nose will smell it and find it dreadful.”¹

Little senseless mumbling or foolish games characterized the Adventist church in its early history. An aggressive evangelistic ministry constantly fired the church with spiritual life and power.

Consequently our work raced forward rapidly, even if sporadically, during the years succeeding 1844. Its greatest success, however, followed the church's formal organization in 1863. Its primary inspiration during this time, according to Howard Weeks, was Ellen and James White's evangelistic philosophy.²

An evangelistic strategy that made Christ the central focus of every sermon characterized this period. This strategy included personal witnessing, Bible studies, small group meetings, a spirited preaching of God's Word.³ It also focused on meeting people's physical needs in what was then called medical missionary work. Coupled with these activities was the establishment of institutions as support systems. The first medical institution was established in 1866; a college in 1874; and that year, as well, a second publishing house to supplement the first one which had been incorporated in 1861. Also, other medical schools, medical institutions, and publishing houses were established in America and other countries during this period.

Even though the hospitals and sanitariums had broad humanitarian objectives, they were regarded primarily as a means of evangelism and as well a means of preparing workers for the evangelistic mission of the church. The schools and colleges were viewed as a means of preparing young people for a ministry to society in general. The publishing houses had an obvious and direct relationship to the church's evangelistic mission.

The result, according to Howard Weeks, was the

tremendous growth of the church following the official organization of the church in 1863. Howard Weeks points out that in 1870 there were 5,440 members and in 1901 membership had increased to 75,000. The church now had a world-wide organization which supported 16 colleges and high schools; 27 hospitals, sanitariums and medical schools; 13 publishing houses; and 31 other miscellaneous institutions.⁴

CHANGE IN EVANGELISTIC METHODOLOGY

However, a blurred and self-defeating evangelistic approach was later developed that has undermined the effectiveness of Adventist evangelism to this very day.

One of the primary reasons for this counter-productive strategy of evangelism without doubt was the run-away

medical work of Dr. Kellogg, who went to extremes theologically and sought to control the work of the church. The problems growing out of Kellogg's medical missionary organization played a large part in influencing the leading brethren to develop a style of

Another reason for sharpening our evangelistic approaches is the growing rejection of the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

evangelism patterned not after Christ's model, but after the work of D. L. Moody and Billy Sunday.

Howard Weeks, in his book, *Adventist Evangelism*, discloses that, “In 1911 there were approximately 2,000 full and part-time professional evangelists itinerating in the United States who followed the methodologies of Moody and Sunday.”⁵ Weeks clearly argues that we were greatly influenced by the work of these men when he wrote, “thus as Seventh-day Adventists mobilized their resources for evangelism they were, in part at least, paralleling a nationwide rebirth of conservative revivalism.”⁶

Even though this flawed approach has been effective, the far-reaching changes taking place within our educational, scientific, and religious communities demand that we broaden our focus, sharpen our approaches, and quicken the pace of our evangelistic

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endeavors.

Recently an angry church leader, when asked to support an evangelistic series in his church, put a threatening fist in my chest and promised to run me out of town on a rail if I, as a previous evangelist had done, offended his Catholic friends that might attend the meetings. The negative attitude of many of our members toward evangelism is an important reason for developing new approaches.

Another reason for sharpening our evangelistic approaches is the growing rejection of the Bible as the infallible Word of God. Thirty years ago, 80 percent of the American population believed that the Bible was to be understood literally. With few exceptions, this probably held true for most of the developed countries. That belief was the foundation on which our evangelistic work was built. Today, however, only 30 percent of Americans still believe the Bible to be fully inspired by God and to be interpreted literally unless there is an obvious symbolic meaning.

A third reason for adjusting our evangelistic methods is that Americans and much of the western world no longer view Christianity as the only true religion. With the loss of the authority of Scripture, biblical Christianity has come to be seen as only one of many ways to God.

The growing acceptance of pluralism and relativism is another compelling reason for adjusting the focus of our evangelistic approaches. These two subtle and deceptive lies have effectively destroyed the conviction in the minds of most in the western world that we can know absolute truth. Millions today voice the cynicism of Pilate when he rejected the true claims of Jesus to be the Son of God and sneeringly asked Jesus "What is truth?" Conversely we recognize that these very problems also present an unusual opportunity. The hunger and thirst for meaning and purpose provides an unprecedented opening.

These contemporary developments demand new evangelistic strategies and approaches in order to more effectively reach the minds and hearts of our confused and often skeptical hearers. **E**

NOTES

¹ Karl Barth, quoted in *Evangelism Now*, edited by Ralph G. Turnbull, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p. 71.

² Howard B. Weeks, *Adventist Evangelism*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C. 1969, p. 14.

³ Ellen White, *Sermons and Talks*, E. G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1990. See also a book of James White's sermons *Our Faith and Hope*, No. 1. Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Howard Weeks, *Adventist Euangelism*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969, p. 59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

John W. Fowler is pastor, evangelist and conference administrator. This article was taken from his book, Evangelism 2000.

Outreach

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring . . .” (John 10:16).



Getting Back to Jesus

N by Craig A. Dossman, Sr.

o person has ever pressed their footprints upon the sands of this planet who demonstrated more compassion for suffering humanity than Jesus of Nazareth. The most endearing quality of His thoroughly lovely life was the concern He had for people. Nobody was too high. Nobody was too low. Nobody was too liberal or conservative. Nobody was ever of the wrong sex, age, or nationality to become the focus of Jesus' time and attention. Jesus had bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, sight for the blind, hearing for the deaf, sanity for the crazy, healing for the sick, friendship for the lonely, justice for the disenfranchised, fulfillment for the empty,

It is easy to take our relationship

with Jesus for granted. Some of us met

Jesus years ago . . . but at some

point in our pilgrimage we became

too busy.

salvation for the sinner, and much, much more.

However, because of the lack of power in the church today, if you mention to the world the love of Jesus, people are more turned off than turned on. The world says that He is a hoax, and if He ever had any power it has become short-circuited. Jesus established the church to perpetuate His name and character, to carry on His saving work, but the church has let Him down. When the world brings its problems to the church, the church is usually powerless to help. I know that Jesus still lives, and that He still has power and compassion. The problem is not with Jesus. The problem is with His followers.

We need to build relationships

with our neighbors. The process

may take time, but it is

well worth the sacrifice.

It's painful to admit it, but we are the reason the world no longer believes in Jesus.

We have presented to the world a powerless church.

Only about 10 percent of the church members are intimately involved in the mission of the church. The other 90 percent act like they are bored. Pastors have become slaves to this sad predicament and organize the work of the church on the backs of the faithful few. This has led to an overworked, burned-out laity trying their best to give aid to a stressed-out clergy. Not the most appealing fellowship into which to invite the unchurched!

It's simply amazing. We live in a world today that has the power to send satellites into space and rockets to the moon. However, the church seems to be powerless when it comes to motivating the average Christian to play his or her role in making sure that the Good News gets to their neighbors. And if there was ever a time that the world needed Jesus, it is now! People are groping in darkness and trying to find something to hold onto and when they come to the church, we are powerless.

The church today has everything it needs but no power. We have educated clerics, degreed deacons, masterful song leaders, search committees, ad hoc committees, organizational committees, and committees to watch over the committees. We have beautiful edifices with educational complexes, multi-

purpose centers, pipe organs, and hanging chandeliers overlooking padded pews and wall to wall carpets. We have all the trappings of church, we just don't have any power. And a whole lot of theological talk won't cover up powerlessness. I've learned that people don't really care how much I know, until they know how much I care.

When I use the word "power," I'm not speaking about power to manipulate someone's life against their will. I'm not talking about a source of power that will allow one group to dictate to the other. I'm speaking about a power that will direct us into the path of servant-leadership. A power that leads us to service. A power that overwhelms us with the love of Christ and empowers us to serve others in a spirit of genuine love. I guess what I'm talking about is a power that will give us such a burden for souls that we will lose sight of our own desires and seek only to fulfill the desires of Christ.

An example of this kind of compassionate service in my early life was Sister Leola Butts. When my mother first started attending church, while I was a child, she had eight little ones to get ready on Sabbath morning. What an impossible task! Sister Butts made it her practice to come by our house early each Sabbath to help my mother get us ready to go.

It is easy to take our relationship with Jesus for granted. Some of us first met Jesus years ago. We used to start off our day and end our nights with intimate communion with God, but at some point in our pilgrimage we became too busy. We became satisfied in our spiritual growth. With the increase of our earthly cares and responsibilities we no longer have time to help lead a lost soul to hope.

If I could take you on a walk up and down the streets of our large cities, you would agree with me that people need Jesus. When joblessness is all around us, when having babies and getting guns are dominating the lives of our children, when tragedy and turmoil surrounds us, when danger lurks at every corner and trouble and despair in every home, we need Jesus. I am convinced now more than ever before that what the world needs is Jesus. Christ should prioritize everything we do on this planet. Unless this is done, all of our plans and programs will be of no avail. The greatest challenge facing the church in the 21st Century is to center our message and faith in Christ and the cross. It should be our constant prayer that God will teach us how to love a lost world back to Him.

As a boy growing up in Sacramento, we would

walk to church. One day while the entire family was crossing a very busy intersection a scene took place which I will never forget. It has affected my life to this day. A gray Plymouth pulled in front of us and a woman opened the car door and pushed a baby out. The car sped away as the baby rolled across the street and came to a painful halt at my feet. As I picked up the scared, bruised, and battered baby, I was shocked by what I had witnessed. As I placed the baby into my mother's arms, I remember asking her, "Mamma, why did that woman throw her baby away?" She responded, "Son, some people just don't care!" We took the baby home and called the police. I remember standing at the door as the police cruiser pulled off with the baby in the back seat in the arms of a female officer.

The lesson for me on that day on the corner of Sacramento Boulevard and Broadway was that there are many people in our universe who are battered and bruised and we need to do something about it. We need to reach down and pick up little boys and girls and let them know that Jesus loves them. We need to touch the lives of mothers and fathers, senior citizens and youth and keep hope alive. We can no longer afford to take a passive posture while individuals are being manipulated by the forces of evil. We need to see ourselves as a church called to be actively involved in the lives of the hurting.

At the 1962 General Conference session in San Francisco, sitting in Sabbath School with one thousand other energetic young children, I heard Del Decker sing a song entitled, "A Sermon In Shoes." When we get back to basics, we must admit that we are all called to be missionaries. We don't have to go to Africa or to India or Russia. All the Lord requires of us is to open our eyes and see the challenges of ministry outside our windows. That's what the church needs more than anything today. We don't need more theologians splitting theological hairs. (Although they too can share in the challenges of servant ministry.) What we need is more ordinary people who are willing to submit to an extraordinary power that will equip and enable them for ministry.

In order to live a life of service we must see the

importance of having a personal relationship with Christ. We live in the time of the instant. We have instant potatoes, instant meals, instant popcorn, instant pudding, but there is no such thing as an instant relationship. It takes time to build deep,

lasting relationships. I remember the first time I met the woman who is my wife.

I was attracted to her by her lovely smile and beautiful disposition.

However, to admire her from a distance wasn't enough for me.

I had to get acquainted with her and this joyful task took time. I remember the time we spent in the Oakwood College student center and the many hours we spent talking when we probably should have been studying. We were investing time in the process of establishing a strong relationship with each other.

In my private devotions one morning, I was impressed to reread the familiar passage of scripture which states, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39 NIV).

And the Lord asked me, "My son, do you love your neighbors as you love yourself?" I had to be honest with God, so I responded, "No, Sir! I do not love my neighbor as I love myself. I wish I did. I know I should, but I don't." Honesty didn't get me off the hook, because the Lord through His Word challenged me that this idea of loving my neighbor was not optional with God. In my devotions each day, I began to ask the Lord to show me how to love my neighbor.

One must be very careful in asking God to help you do something. I had just received a gift from my wife of a brand new lawn mower. My friend and colleague in ministry David Taylor was spending the week with us as a revival speaker, and he helped me cut the grass that first morning. He began to mow along the row I had cut, but then he continued to cross over into my neighbor's lawn. I quickly pointed out that he was going too far. However, David reminded me that my neighbor didn't have a lawn mower and suggested I should cut her grass also. I didn't realize that the Lord was using David to show



me how to love my neighbor. Even when he went back to Los Angeles, I continued the joyful privilege of cutting Mrs. Brown's lawn. One day while I was doing my weekly cutting, Mrs. Brown told me that I didn't have to cut her lawn. I responded by telling her that I was simply trying to be a good neighbor.

My wife decided to start a community walking club and as she met various neighbors she invited them to walk with her in the mornings and evenings. One day the group stopped in the middle of their walk and told my wife how much they appreciated the fact that she took the time to be their friend. We need to take the time and build relationships with our neighbors. The process may take time but it is well worth the sacrifice. It is how Christ brings His grace and His good news into our world!

Perhaps the reason many church members don't feel as close to the Lord as they once did is because, as a people, we have lost the art of building and maintaining relationships. Those who are spiritually strong and have a vibrant faith are those who have taken the time to build a relationship with Jesus Christ through Bible study and prayer, and to live a

life of service for others. These are the tools that will enable the Church to get back to the basics. Revival will mean that more Adventists are willing to take on the role of a servant. This is what the gospel is all about. We are saved to save others. We have been blessed by God to be a blessing to others.

I see signs of a great reformatory Spirit coming upon our church like a breath of fresh air. This revival and reformation is not fueled by any new theological discoveries but by God's people simply getting back to the center of our joy in Jesus; loving Him enough to take the time to really get to know Him and entering into His life of service. Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "I've lost touch. I've been away for so long. I don't know if Jesus really wants me." Let me assure you Jesus is waiting right now for you to get reacquainted with Him. Stop now before you go any further and ask Jesus to come into Your heart. I guarantee you, if you come to Him, He will not reject you. **E**

Craig A. Dossman, Sr. was pastor in Los Angeles, New York and currently he is pastoring the Tenth Street Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring . . .” (John 10:16).



How To Get Decisions

Getting decisions

is perhaps the

most challenging

as well as the most

rewarding part

of personal work.

T by George E. Knowles

he gospel is intended to be good news, but it can be that only when we follow divine instruction and introduce the soul to Christ before we present the individual with Christ’s testing teachings. A person must have the presence and power of Christ in their life if they are to make right decisions.

A decision is a resolute determination to act based on choice. Intelligent choices require:

1. As adequate and accurate information as is possible.
2. Confidence in the source of the information.
3. A clear mind.
4. Motivation.

In the case of the Christian, every decision should be influenced by a determination to do what is right in the sight of God. Such decisions can be made only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In helping people to make right decisions it is important to know something about motivation. Results of one survey showed the four strongest motivators to be (1) *self-preservation*, (2) *recognition*, (3) *happiness*, and (4) *acquisition* (gaining

something you do not have or preventing the loss of something you do have). Keep these principles in mind as we think about getting decisions for Christ and His teachings. Bear in mind that *we must always begin with where a person is and lead the person from that point to where God wants them to be.*

“Christ drew the hearts of His hearers to Him by the manifestation of His love, and then, little by little, as they were able to bear it, He unfolded to them the great truths of the kingdom. We also must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people—to meet men where they are. While the claims of the law of God are to be presented to the world, we should never forget that love—the love of Christ—is the only power that can soften the heart and lead to obedience” (*Evangelism*, pp. 484, 485).

The doctrines of the Bible are like massive blocks of stone that are square, and true, and enduring, each fitting perfectly with the others in a beautiful, harmonious structure. But depending upon *how we present these doctrines*, we build for our prospect a wall or a stairway.

When we build a wall it seems so high that the person we are studying with cannot see Jesus on the other side. It seems that we expect them to get over this wall in one gigantic leap, but in their eyes it seems impossible. When we ask for a decision, we may get the response, “This religion might be all right for you, but I could never live up to it. I could never meet all those requirements.”

This can be very disappointing. We have conscientiously invested our time in giving these Bible studies, hoping for a baptism to result, but the person gives an emphatic “No.”

How could we have done it differently? The key is found in building a stairway instead of a wall. Note the following counsel: “The very first and most important thing is to melt and subdue the soul by presenting our Lord Jesus Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour” (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 53, 54). “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 156).

Presenting Christ First

PRINCIPLE: Introduce the person to Christ before presenting the testing truths.

The very first thing we must do is bring the person to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We do this by giving our own personal testimony, by Christ-

centered Bible studies on the plan of salvation, and by a simple gospel presentation.

As you read on, watch for the application of the following principles:

1. As you approach each study, decide on the main point you want to get across to the person you are studying with.
2. Have clearly in mind the decision you will ask for at the conclusion of that study.
3. Point out the happiness and benefits that will result from making this decision.

The greatest of all appeals is the

appeal of the cross. “Christ crucified—

talk it, pray it, sing it, and it will break

and win hearts.” — *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 67

4. Encourage the person to incorporate immediately into their way of life the truths they are learning from the Bible.
5. Remember that once a person agrees to a minor action, they are much more likely to agree to a major one.
6. Get the person to express their decision in words. Expression deepens impression.
7. Apply the principle of progressive decisions. The longest journey is made by taking one step at a time.
8. Approach the study with enthusiasm, cheerfulness, optimism, confidence, and expectation.

Here is an example. As we present the second coming of Christ, we should talk as one who knows the Christ of the coming, the Saviour who loved us enough to bear the agonies of Calvary. The news that this same Jesus is coming again is now *good* news. Encourage the person to ponder the thrill of knowing that one day we will be able to look into the face of the One who took our place on the cross. Following the study, ask some simple questions to be sure the presentation was clear. Call for a decision. “Is it clear to you now that Jesus will come again? Do you find a desire in your heart to be ready to meet Him in peace?”

Progressive Decisions

PRINCIPLE: Ask for a decision as each subject is presented.

Think, now, of the study about the Sabbath. The person has learned to know and love the Lord of the Sabbath. Explain that from the beginning of the world, the Lord set apart a special day that would be a foretaste of heaven. Through His miraculous power, He guarantees that in six days His followers will be able to provide for all their needs and to find bread for the seventh day.

Point out that the Sabbath is a wonderful day in which we can lay aside all earthly cares, a day when the family can be together with the Lord in worship and in service. It is one thing when people are thrown together because they work together each day. But when they choose to spend their day off together, that proves there is a special relationship between them. God is actually asking us to spend our day off with Him.

Again, ask questions to be sure the person you are studying with understands. Then invite a decision. “Now that you understand the love that prompted God to provide the Sabbath, do you want to make plans to reserve this holy time to be spent with Him?” This beautiful teaching becomes another block, not in a wall but in steps that lead steadily upward and the person takes another step by making one more decision in favor of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we come to the last study and the appeal for decision and church membership. Because the person has been walking in the light step by step, this decision represents only one more step in the direction they have already been going. By now the priceless principle has been learned, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). He or she is not trusting in their own ability to obey but in the Christ whom they invited into their heart at the very beginning of the studies. Now, in one final act of surrender, they determine to go all the way with Christ and are actually eager to be baptized and to become a part of the church. They want to be of service. They want to share with others the truths that have brought about such a beautiful change in their life. They have caught the thrill of the momentum of a movement, and want to join in with the chorus that gives the invitation, “Come.” They have heard the good news and want to share it.

If you do not feel ready at this point to tackle the area of getting decisions, remember you do have

options. Invite the person to the pastor’s Bible class and let the pastor get the decision. Another excellent way is to take the person with you to a series of evangelistic meetings.

The business of getting decisions is perhaps the most challenging as well as the most rewarding part of personal work. It is the area in which most laypersons feel a desperate need for help. For that reason the remainder of this article will offer practical suggestions on the deeper aspects of decision getting. If you are curious to understand some of the principles governing the human decision-making process, read on.

Mind, Will, and Heart

PRINCIPLE: In the decision-making process, use the mind, the will, and the heart.

The decision process involves the mind, the will, and the heart. A positive response in each of these areas depends upon one’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Regarding the will, Ellen White says, “The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway. . . . It is the deciding power which works in the children of men unto obedience to God or unto disobedience” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 513). “You cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire; but you can control the will, and you can make an entire change in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will be hid with Christ in God. . . . You will have strength from God that will hold you fast to His strength” (*Ibid.*, p. 514). “Everything depends on the right action of the will” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176).

We must have the power of Christ to do what we will to do (see Rom. 7:18). “Our will is not to be forced into cooperation with divine agencies” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 142). “If you are ‘willing to be made willing,’ God will accomplish the work for you” (*Ibid.*).

Experience confirms the observation that in any battle involving the will, the intellect, and the emotions, in the unconverted person the emotions usually win. Let’s give careful thought to the following statements about the heart in relation to decision. (We recognize that Ellen White has more than emotions in mind when she refers to heart in the sense used here. But emotions are clearly included.)

“Love—the love of Christ—is the only power that can soften the heart and lead to obedience”

(*Evangelism*, p. 485). “Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart” (*Ibid.*, p. 483). “The true heart expression of Christ-like sympathy, given in simplicity, has power to open the door of hearts that need the simple, delicate touch of the Spirit of Christ” (*Ibid.*).

The angels of heaven draw close to aid us when we are asking for a decision. The wisdom of the angels is at our disposal. A factor that will help us greatly in our efforts to win souls to Christ is *our capacity to love people*. Think about these two statements:

“Kindly words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation and doubt that gather over the soul” (*Ibid.*).

“By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse” (*Ibid.*).

Decision Signals

An intuition for the correct time to call for a decision is something that is gained by experience. We learn to become alert to indications that a person is considering decision. Here is a list of what we might call decision signals:

1. “I wish my husband were more agreeable to my becoming an Adventist.”
2. “I wonder if I would lose my job if I asked for Sabbath off.”
3. “I have some tithe to give you.”
4. “Would I have to quit smoking?”
5. “What would I do all day Saturday?”

Decision-getting Methods

Appeals should be specific. Here are three steps that have been used successfully in gaining decisions:

1. “You believe that what you have learned in our studies is the truth of God, don’t you?”
2. “You do plan to follow Jesus all the way, don’t you?”
3. “Let’s kneel together and ask God for grace to do it now.”

The devil has “iron bands” that he uses to hinder people from making their decision.

“Many are convinced that we have the truth, and yet they are held as with iron bands; they dare not risk the consequences of taking their position on the

side of truth. . . . Just at this critical period Satan throws the strongest bands around these souls” (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 646).

We might classify these “bands” as economic, social, and spiritual. Consider these categories.

1. Economic:

- a. Fear of losing employment.
- b. Lacking faith to tithe.

2. Social:

- a. Opposition from a loved one.
- b. Fear of ridicule.
- c. Fear of dividing the family.
- d. Concern for what friends will say.

3. Spiritual:

- a. Sentimental ties to family church.
- b. Opposition from the pastor.
- c. Prestige of belonging to popular church.

We must determine what the obstacle is before we can clear it away. We can uncover the problems by asking questions such as:

1. “Is everything clear to you?”
2. “Do you see any problems if you should move forward?”
3. “What do you have in mind?”
4. “When you think about being baptized what comes into your mind?”

There are ways in which we can help people to overcome obstacles to decision:

1. Pray with and for the individual. Teach them to pray.
2. Lead him or her to claim the promises of God. Help them in searching for these promises in the Bible. Your own experience will be enriched by searching out the promises of God. There is one for every need. When a person has a problem it is effective to say, “Yes, you have a problem, but God has a solution. I have been praying about your problem and God impressed me to read this chapter in the Bible. I read the entire chapter, and when I came to this verse I wondered if it would not help in solving your problem.”
Ask them to read the appropriate verse, and usually they will say, “I see the answer to my problem is right here.”
3. Encourage them to exercise their faith. Faith increases with exercise. It comes by “hearing”—studying and following—the Word of God. Encourage them to spend time daily in Bible study.
4. Full surrender clears away all difficulties. “As

souls give themselves to the Lord Jesus, making an entire surrender, they will understand the doctrine" (*Evangelism*, p. 465).

Memorize the following quotation; you will find many opportunities to use it in working with others:

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 481).

Perhaps the most basic principle of all in gaining decisions is simply to remember to ask for one. This is so elementary it is sometimes taken for granted and neglected. You are not likely to get a decision if you don't ask for it.

Ask for a favorable decision by offering a choice. For example, "We are planning baptisms on June 1 and 25. Which date would be best for you?"

"Would you prefer to go into the water first, or do you prefer to have your children baptized first?"

You can also get a decision by the use of an indirect question: "Would you write your name on this piece of paper the way you would like to have it on your baptismal certificate?"

"Is there a special song you would like immediately preceding your baptism?"

A REVIEW

▶ Begin at the first study to ask for progressive decisions.

▶ Encourage the person not only to give mental assent to truth but to put into practice each new duty as it unfolds. Walking in the light is a prerequisite for more light.

▶ Beginning with the first few studies, invite the person to the services and activities of the church. Combine such invitations with Sabbath dinner invitations.

▶ Help him or her to establish new friendships with church members.

▶ Keep in mind that it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

▶ Do not base appeals for decision on abstract doctrines but on a practical application of the teachings of Christ to everyday life.

Gaining decisions is a matter of helping fellow human beings to get personally acquainted with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Our work is beautifully portrayed in these words: "With one

hand the workers would take hold of Christ, while with the other they would grasp sinners and draw them to the Savior" (*Evangelism*, p. 293).

The greatest of all appeals is the appeal of the cross. "Christ crucified—talk it, pray it, sing it, and it will break and win hearts" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 67). **E**

George E. Knowles is a retired evangelist still holding meetings and conducting seminars. He resides in Chula Vista, California.



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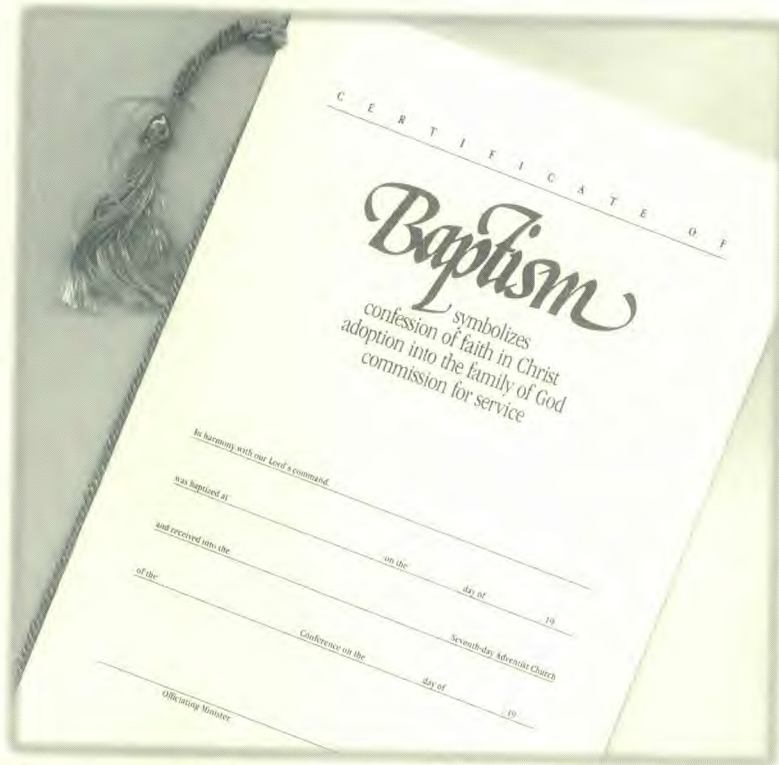
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The Elder as Supporter of the Baptismal Class

by D. E. Robertson

One of the most important periods of Christian development is that spent by a new convert in preparation for baptism. Baptism is the symbol of entrance into the family of God's church. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4).

"Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have

Baptism is an extremely

important experience in the life

of a new Christian.

Careful preparation for baptism is

vital to their future development.

become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.” *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 91.

Right at the beginning of their Christian experience, those preparing for entrance into the church need the most careful attention and support. A person who has been well instructed in the baptismal class will have been given a good start towards living a happy and victorious Christian life.

Preparing Candidates for Baptism

TIME OF INSTRUCTION

Time spent in preparation for baptism ought to be a time of instruction. Jesus urged His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Preparation for baptism is a time when the candidate is taught the truths of Scripture. The great themes of the Bible need to be clearly presented. Each should be taught in a simple manner so that the person finding his or her way to Christ can grasp their importance and accept them by faith (Acts 8:30-38).

- The Fall and the Great Controversy between Jesus and Satan
- God’s plan of salvation
- The Incarnation
- The sinless, serving life of Jesus
- His all-forgiving death on Calvary
- His resurrection and His atoning ministry in heaven
- The distinctive Bible doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Because of his heavy pastoral responsibilities, the pastor is often prevented from studying the Bible with every new believer. Elders and other church leaders who have teaching abilities may assist the pastor in this work by meeting with these people and bringing them to an understanding of Bible truth and of Christ’s demands on their lives.

TIME OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Early in their spiritual experience, a new convert should be led through the steps of becoming a child of God (Acts 2:37-41). The baptismal class will assist the new convert to understand and experience:

- repentance, confession, and forgiveness
- how to accept Jesus Christ into their lives as Lord and Savior
- how to overcome temptation
- how to develop a strong devotional life

- how to strengthen their faith in God to develop a strong, mature Christian lifestyle

Baptismal class teachers often concentrate on doctrinal topics, excluding many essential truths. At the time of their baptism, most candidates have a good understanding of the distinctive doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Unfortunately, many people are baptized without a clear understanding of God’s plan of salvation and how to live as Christians in non-Christian surroundings. Therefore, many have little strength to resist temptations that come after their baptism. Those being prepared for baptism must be brought to Jesus and taught how to accept Him as the Lord of their lives. Jesus said, “when I am lifted up from the earth, (I) will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). Hearts that have been melted by the love of Jesus will happily accept all other demands on their lives. Spiritual development grows from a relationship with Jesus.

TIME OF PREPARATION

During the early days of the Christian experience, those preparing for baptism should be trained and prepared for the privileges and responsibilities of being a Christian in God’s church. You will be able to instruct these people in correct forms of:

- Christian behavior
- church organization and procedures
- principles and practice of worship
- tithe paying
- Sabbath keeping
- Christian stewardship
- sharing their faith

You will also assist them in discovering what gifts the Holy Spirit has given them and how to usefully employ these talents in helping to build up the church and its witness.

TIME OF SOCIAL CHANGE

When people make the decision to be baptized and to join the church, they are often subject to demanding social changes. Their decision is often misunderstood by relatives and friends who may show opposition to them being baptized. Sometimes their decision to follow Jesus will cause them to be rejected by their family or friends. To be shut out and excluded from their families or to be socially rejected by friends will place these new Christians under quite a deal of stress.

When people make their decision to become Seventh-day Adventist Christians, there will often be

quite a dramatic change in their lifestyle. Some will be leaving membership in another church to join with your congregation. Others will have to leave one form of employment and look for another job which does not require them to work on God's Sabbath. Some will have to turn their backs on certain social and cultural practices which are not compatible with a Christian lifestyle. As the person preparing them for baptism, you should be aware that changes such as these are not made easily.

When people are called upon to change their religious beliefs, their jobs, and leave behind the support and security of friends and family, their lives come under considerable strain. Many are leaving behind so much that has been familiar and reassuring to pursue a new lifestyle that, for them, has many uncertainties. As you lead them toward accepting new beliefs and a new lifestyle and help them to make new acquaintances within the new church community, you are going to need to provide them with very special support to assist them through the process of change.

Encourage your church members to be very accepting of these new people. Help them to feel that they belong and are welcome in your church. Designate and train people in your congregation to make a special effort to befriend these new folk. Their social integration into your church family is vital to their long-term spiritual growth and security. (See Luke 11:24-26)

In most areas of the world, people are prepared for baptism through a series of Bible studies which are usually given in the homes of the people or in a baptismal class. Others are instructed through Bible correspondence courses, through Bible classes or through individual study. Whichever method is used, the content of the lessons should include the major teachings and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

However, it is important to remember that more is required for baptism than just a knowledge of the beliefs of the church. During the course of instruction there should be several occasions when you, as the instructor, have opportunity to get personally acquainted with each candidate. This will give you time to study and to pray with them and to assess their needs and spiritual condition. It will also give them opportunity to ask questions and share their joys or concerns with you. You should satisfy yourself that the people you are

instructing understand sufficiently their involvement in God's plan of salvation and their duties and responsibilities as they become members of His church.

"There is a need for more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has previously been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth ... It is the duty of the pastor to have special meetings with them. Read to them the teaching of the Bible in regard to conversion. Show what is the fruit of conversion, the evidence that they love God" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 91, 95).

When are Candidates Ready?

To be ready for baptism candidates must give evidence:

- that Jesus is Lord of their lives (1 John 4:15; Romans 10:9; Matthew 10:32)
- that repentance and conversion has taken place (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19)
- that they have an active belief and trust in Jesus (Mark 16:16)
- that they have a daily, saving relationship with Jesus
- that they have completed a course of instruction in the teachings of Scripture and in the distinctive biblical doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Matthew 28:20)
- that they have been prepared for responsible membership in God's remnant church
- that they are involved in the worship and witness of the church

Before baptism, there should have been visits by the elder or church pastor to confirm their readiness for baptism.

Baptism is an extremely important experience in the life of a new Christian. Careful preparation for baptism is vital to their future development. Every lesson, every Bible study and every visit the new Christian receives should be well presented so that the best possible opportunities are provided to strengthen them for their Christian walk. **E**

Douglas E. Robertson writes from Sydney, Australia. At the time this article was written he was an Associate Director of Church Ministries in the South Pacific Division.

New Members Need . . .

by James A. Cress

Acceptance

The new birth produces spiritual infants. Even at baptism, members are not spiritually mature, nor should we expect them to behave as if they were. Sanctification develops through discipleship. Accept new believers the way Jesus does—loving them both for what they are and for what they will become by His Spirit.

Parenting

Nurture of newborns is essential. New believers, like newborn babies, demand lots of time, energy, and care. Failure to provide for their needs is spiritual child abuse. Assign all new members a caring spiritual guardian who will patiently nurture their growth.

Information

Although a new believer has mentally embraced the doctrines of the church and made a deep spiritual commitment, he or she may not know the jargon of our culture. Certain terms that we might take for granted seem foreign and confusing. Excellent resource materials are available to initiate new members and acquaint them with Adventist culture.

Instruction

An initial hearing and even acceptance of biblical doctrine are not sufficient to establish it firmly in the mind, much less in the daily life. New believers need ongoing instruction from the Scriptures in the essentials of belief and practice. Review the great

themes of Scripture until they are able to articulate them for themselves. Preach the messages that brought them to conversion. Rehearse often the wonderful works of God. Exhort new members in righteousness.

Fellowship

Leaving the world and becoming a believer often means leaving friends and relationships or even suffering abandonment from former friends. Friendship and fellowship are important elements of binding new believers to the church family. Small groups that include established members as well as new members are an excellent way to build new friendships.

Activity

No one enjoys feeling useless. Most new believers assume that they will become active and productive members of the congregation. Far too many are left on the sidelines to watch as others who are already too busy attempt to meet all the needs in the congregation. The energy and commitment of new believers often exceeds that of longer-term parishioners. Their personal experience of God's grace provides a powerful witness in sharing what Jesus has done for them. Determine that you will engage each new member in meaningful work for Jesus Christ.

Obedience

Sanctification is a lifelong, ongoing journey toward Christ-

likeness. Obedience must be learned by young believers just as it must be learned by young children. This is not salvation by works. It is, indeed, experiencing the Lordship of Jesus in the personal life. If a believer's life has not matured and obedience has not grown over the course of time, discipleship is not occurring. Ask new members periodically to evaluate themselves regarding their personal obedience to God's requirements.

Vision

New members need to look beyond their own needs to the wider arena of unselfish ministry. They need to develop an eye for church growth, a vision for reaching the world. Global mission must thrill and challenge the whole church, and personal and world mission should be kept especially before new believers. Repeatedly focus on the gospel commission as the objective for the church and ask new members to discover their own role in proclaiming the good news.

Goals

Baptism and church membership is not the final goal; discipleship is. New believers are disciples only when functioning as ministers for Jesus. Don't let them become pew warmers. Determine that all new members will develop their full potential for service.

James A. Cress writes from Silver Spring, Maryland. He is secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Seven Facts About CHRIST'S RETURN

"There is an hour in each man's life appointed to make his happiness, if then he seize it."—Beaumont and Fletcher

In every crisis God warns man and makes provision for his salvation.

1. NOAH warned the antediluvian before the Flood.— 2 Peter 2:5
2. ANGELS warned the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah before their destruction.
—Genesis 19:12, 13
3. JOHN THE BAPTIST pronounced a message of preparation before the first advent of Jesus.
—Mark 1:1-9; Matthew 11:10-14
4. A LAST WARNING MESSAGE will be preached to the world before the second coming of Christ.
—Revelation 14:6-12

The last warning message is immediately followed by the coming of Christ (Revelation 14:14). This final message of mercy will be characterized by:

1. A PROCLAMATION OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL—Revelation 14:6
 - Its basis is the "good news."—Romans 1:1, 3
 - Its extent will be world-wide and all will hear it before Jesus comes.—Matthew 24:14
2. AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE JUDGMENT HAS BEGUN—Revelation 14:7
 - Christ placed the judgment at an indefinite time in the future.—Matthew 10:15; 11:21-24
 - The apostles preached of a judgment "to come."—Acts 24:25
 - Daniel locates the commencement of the judgment in 1844.—Daniel 8:14
 - This "investigative" judgment determines rewards.—Revelation 22:12
3. A CALL FOR MEN TO WORSHIP THE CREATOR—Revelation 14:7
 - Since the standard of the judgment is the law of God (James 2:12), we would expect this message to emphasize the commandments.—Revelation 14:12
 - The Sabbath of the fourth commandment memorializes the act of creation.—Exodus 20:8-11; Genesis 2:1-3
 - Sabbath observance is a sign of man's allegiance to the Creator.—Ezekiel 20:12, 20
4. A SUMMONS TO FORSAKE ERRONEOUS SYSTEMS OF MAN-MADE RELIGION—Revelation 14:8
 - "Babylon" is a figurative expression meaning "confusion."—Genesis 10:10; 11:9
 - In Revelation, John uses the term to describe false worship in the religious world.
—Revelation 17:1-6, 18
 - God's people are called out of "Babylon" and return to Bible truth.—Revelation 18:1-4
 - Jesus warned against traditions.—Mark 7:7-9; Matthew 15:9, 13
 - Valid religion will be based on the "doctrine of Christ."—2 John 9
5. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL AND REVELATION
 - The symbols used in verses 8-10 are from the prophecies of these books.
 - Jesus urges those living in the last days to understand "Daniel the Prophet."—Matthew 24:15
 - A blessing is bestowed on those who study Revelation.—Revelation 1:3
6. A FORECAST OF A FINAL CRISIS WHEN FALSE RELIGION WILL BE MANDATORY—Revelation 14: 9, 10.
7. A DECLARATION OF FAITH BASED ON—
 - a. Accepting the saving grace of Jesus and a daily relationship with Him.
 - b. Obeying the commandments of God as a fruit of this relationship.—Revelation 14: 12
 - Only such a faith will endure.—Matthew 7:24, 25.
 - Only such an obedience will mature.—Luke 6:46; Revelation 22:14.

Rex D. Edwards, D. Min., is the director for continuing education of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Silver Spring, Maryland.

God's Way of Reaching Out to the Higher Classes


by ELLEN G. WHITE

Cornelius, the Roman centurion, was a man of wealth and of noble birth. His position was one of trust and honor. A heathen by birth, training, and education, through contact with the Jews he had gained a knowledge of the true God, and he worshiped Him, showing the sincerity of his faith by compassion to the poor. He gave "alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2, ARV).

Cornelius had not a knowledge of the gospel as revealed in the life and death of Christ, and God sent a message direct from heaven to him, and by another message directed the apostle Peter to visit and instruct him. Cornelius was not united with the Jewish church, and he would have been looked upon by the rabbis as a heathen and unclean; but God read the sincerity of his heart, and sent messengers from His throne to unite with His servant on earth in teaching the gospel to this officer of Rome.

So today God is seeking for souls among the high as well as the low. There are many like Cornelius, men whom He desires to connect with His church. Their sympathies are with the Lord's people. But the ties that bind them to the world hold them firmly. It requires moral courage for these men to take their position with the lowly ones. Special effort should be made for these souls, who are in so great danger because of their responsibilities and associations.

Much is said concerning our duty to the neglected poor; should not some attention be given to the neglected rich? Many look upon this class as hopeless, and they do little to open the eyes of those, who, blinded and dazed by the glitter of


*"That which
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earthly glory, have lost eternity out of their reckoning. Thousands of wealthy men have gone to their graves unwarned. But indifferent as they may appear, many among the rich are soul-burdened. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." He that says to fine gold, "Thou art my confidence," has "denied the God that is above." "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever)." Ecclesiastes 5:10; Job 31:24, 28; Psalm 49:7, 8.

Riches and worldly honor cannot satisfy the soul. Many among the rich are longing for some divine assurance, some spiritual hope. Many long for

something that will bring to an end the monotony of their aimless lives. Many in official life feel their need of something which they have not. Few among them go to church; for they feel that they receive little benefit. The teaching they hear does not touch the heart. Shall we make no personal appeal to them?

Among the victims of want and sin are found those who were once in possession of wealth. Men of different vocations and different stations in life have been overcome by the pollution of the world, by the use of strong drink, by the indulgence of lust, and have fallen under temptation. While these fallen ones demand pity and help, should not some attention be given to those who have not yet descended to these depths, but who are setting their feet in the same path?

Thousands in positions of trust and honor are

indulging habits that mean ruin to soul and body. Ministers of the gospel, statesmen, authors, men of wealth and talent, men of vast business capacity and power for usefulness, are in deadly peril because they do not see the necessity of self-control in all things. They need to have their attention called to the principles of temperance, not in a narrow or arbitrary way, but in the light of God's great purpose for humanity. Could the principles of true temperance thus be brought before them, there are very many of the higher classes who would recognize their value and give them a hearty acceptance.

We should show these persons the result of harmful indulgences in lessening physical, mental, and moral power. Help them to realize their responsibility as stewards of God's gifts. Show them the good they could do with the money they now spend for that which does them only harm. Present the total abstinence pledge, asking that the money they would otherwise spend for liquor, tobacco, or like indulgences be devoted to the relief of the sick poor or for the training of children and youth for usefulness in the world. To such an appeal not many would refuse to listen.

There is another danger to which the wealthy are especially exposed, and here is also a field for the medical missionary. Multitudes who are prosperous in the world, and who never stoop to the common forms of vice, are yet brought to destruction through the love of riches. The cup most difficult to carry is not the cup that is empty, but the cup that is full to the brim. It is this that needs to be most carefully balanced. Affliction and adversity bring disappointment and sorrow; but it is prosperity that is more dangerous to spiritual life.

Those who are suffering reverses are represented by the bush that Moses saw in the desert, which, though burning, was not consumed. The angel of the Lord was in the midst of the bush. So in deprivation and affliction the brightness of the presence of the Unseen is with us to comfort and sustain. Often prayer is solicited for those who are suffering from illness or adversity but our prayers are most needed by the men entrusted with prosperity and influence.

In the valley of humiliation, where men feel their need and depend on God to guide their steps, there is comparative safety. But the men who stand, as it were, on a lofty pinnacle, and who, because of their position, are supposed to

possess great wisdom—these are in greatest peril. Unless such men make God their dependence, they will surely fall.

The Bible condemns no man for being rich, if he has acquired his riches honestly. Not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil. It is God who gives men power to get wealth; and in the hands of him who acts as God's steward, using his means unselfishly, wealth is a blessing, both to its possessor and to the world. But many, absorbed in their interest in worldly treasures, become insensible to the claims of God and the needs of their fellow men. They regard their wealth as a means of glorifying themselves. They add house to house, and land to land; they fill their homes with luxuries, while all about them are human beings in misery and crime, in disease and death. Those who thus give their lives to self-serving are developing in themselves, not the attributes of God, but the attributes of the wicked one.

These men are in need of the gospel. They need to have their eyes turned from the vanity of material things to behold the preciousness of the enduring riches. They need to learn the joy of giving, the blessedness of being co-workers with God.

The Lord bids us, "Charge them that are rich in this world" that they trust not "in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

It is by no casual, accidental touch that wealthy, world-loving, world-worshipping souls can be drawn to Christ. These persons are often the most difficult of access. Personal effort must be put forth for them by men and women imbued with the missionary spirit, those who will not fail or be discouraged.

Some are especially fitted to work for the higher classes. These should seek wisdom from God to know how to reach these persons, to have not merely a casual acquaintance with them, but by personal effort and living faith to awaken them to the needs of the soul, to lead them to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Many suppose that in order to reach the higher classes, a manner of life and method of work must be adopted that will be suited to their fastidious tastes. An appearance of wealth, costly edifices, expensive dress, equipage, and surroundings,

conformity to worldly customs, the artificial polish of fashionable society, classical culture, the graces of oratory, are thought to be essential. This is an error. The way of worldly policy is not God's way of reaching the higher classes. That which will reach them effectually is a consistent, unselfish presentation of the gospel of Christ.

The experience of the apostle Paul in meeting the philosophers of Athens has a lesson for us. In presenting the gospel before the court of the Areopagus, Paul met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. The wisest of his hearers were astonished and silenced. His words could not be controverted. But the effort bore little fruit. Few were led to accept the gospel. Henceforth Paul adopted a different manner of labor. He avoided elaborate arguments and discussion of theories, and in simplicity pointed men and women to Christ as the Savior of sinners. Writing to the Corinthians of his work among them, he said; "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. . . . My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." I Corinthians 2:1-5.

Again, in his letter to the Romans, he says:


"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

Let those who work for the higher classes bear themselves with true dignity, remembering that angels are their companions. Let them keep the treasure house of mind and heart filled with, "It is written." Hang in memory's hall the precious words of Christ. They are to be valued far above gold or silver.


Christ has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In the work for this class many discouragements will be presented, many heartsickening revelations will be made. But all things are possible with God. He can and will

work through human agencies upon the minds of men whose lives have been devoted to money getting.

There are miracles to be wrought in genuine conversion, miracles that are not now discerned. The greatest men of the earth are not beyond the power of a wonder-working God. If those who are workers together with Him will do their duty bravely and faithfully, God will convert men who occupy responsible places, men of intellect and influence. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, many will be led to accept the divine principles.



*The greatest men
of the earth
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God.*



When it is made plain that the Lord expects them as His representatives to relieve suffering humanity, many will respond and will give of their means and their sympathies for the benefit of the poor. As their minds are thus drawn away from their own selfish interests, many will surrender themselves to Christ. With their talents of influence and means they will gladly unite in the

work of beneficence with the humble missionary who was God's agent in their conversion. By a right use of their earthly treasures they will lay up for themselves "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."

When converted to Christ, many will become agencies in the hand of God to work for others of their own class. They will feel that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to them for those who have made this world their all. Time and money will be consecrated to God, talent and influence will be devoted to the work of winning souls to Christ.

Only eternity will reveal what has been accomplished by this kind of ministry—how many souls, sick with doubt and tired of worldliness and unrest, have been brought to the great Restorer, who longs to save to the uttermost all that come to Him. Christ is a risen Saviour, and there is healing in His wings. **E**

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church. This article comes from *Ministry of Healing*, pages 209-216.

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Exegesis in Preaching: What to Say

by Ng Kah Seng

Preparing a sermon involves two major activities: the process of arriving at *something to say* and the process of determining *how to say it*. These processes must be distinguished from each other and cannot be collapsed into one. The first process is referred to as biblical exegesis. The second is called sermon design and delivery.

Biblical exegesis can be defined as a set of procedures for discovering the biblical author's intended meaning in a passage of Scripture and the application of the meaning of that passage to its readers/hearers. Biblical exegesis can also mean the practice of these procedures. The word "exegesis" is a transliteration of a Greek word which means "description, explanation, or interpretation." The verb form is found in the New Testament and means to explain, interpret, tell, report, and describe. (See John 1:18, Luke 24:35, Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19).

IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

There are, of course, many ways of studying a passage from the Bible in order to understand its meaning and derive an application. Learning how to do exegesis is important for a preacher. For one thing, if we do not have a message from the Bible to preach, our knowledge of how to design and deliver a sermon is not of much use. We have no message! Without knowing the first process (biblical exegesis), knowledge of the second process (sermon design and delivery) is worthless as far as biblical preaching is concerned.

Biblical exegesis is essential because we, as preachers, create the sermon but we do not create the message. The message is not our own. It is entrusted to us (see 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2, 5-6; 5:19-20). As preachers, we are called to preach the will of God as found in the Bible. We must preach what



As preachers we must preach what the Bible says and means. Exegesis helps us understand the meaning of a Bible passage and to make valid applications.

the Bible says and means. Exegesis helps us to understand the meaning of a Bible passage and to make valid applications.

John Wright remarks: "He who shirks exegesis advertises in a loud voice that he does not really care what the Bible says but only wishes to use it insofar as it supports the clever points that he wishes to make. Such a man cannot possibly do biblical preaching, for he will not begin seriously with the Bible."¹

Biblical exegesis can help us to avoid these mistakes. We have a responsibility to preach what God says and means in His Word.

NEED FOR BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Why are procedures and steps necessary in order to understand a biblical passage? Is not the illumination from the Holy Spirit enough? While there is no question that one needs the Holy Spirit in order to understand a biblical passage, there are several factors that make skills and procedures in interpreting the Bible necessary.

First, there is the problem of a third-party perspective. We are neither the sender nor receiver of the biblical message, but the third-party. When the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he was not writing to you or me, but to the church in Corinth at that time. Imagine discovering a piece of correspondence written by someone and addressed to someone else. In order to understand what the message is, we must try to discover the background of the correspondence. Who is the sender? Who is the receiver? What is their relationship to each other? What circumstances initiated the correspondence? The biblical message needs to be approached in the same way.

Second, there is the problem of a language barrier. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. If the correspondence we have discovered is

written in a foreign language, we must either learn the language or rely on someone to translate the correspondence for us.

Today, we have translations of the Bible in our own individual languages. Although we can understand the original messages through a translation, nuances or shades of meanings are lost through the process of translation. Exegesis can help to recover these nuances.

Third, Scripture contains a diversity of types of literature. The Bible is written in not just one kind of literature, but it contains a wide variety: apocalypses, biographical sketches, chronicles, drama, genealogies, laws, letters, narrative history, parables, prophetic oracles, proverbs, riddles, sermons, and more. In order to understand a passage of the Bible, it is helpful to know the type of literature it is. Coming back to the illustration, it does make a difference to know the type of correspondence we have discovered. Is it an official letter (from the government, a lawyer, an employer, an employee, etc.)? Is it a personal letter (from or to a spouse, family member, friend, penpal)? Is it a telegram, postcard, greeting card (Christmas, anniversary, birthday, get well), invitation card? Is it a suicide note, a will, an invoice, a memo?

Understanding the type of correspondence and its characteristics can help us to understand better the intended message. Similarly, knowing what type of literature a biblical passage is, can help us to more fully understand the message.

Fourth, there is the problem of a cultural gap. The events of the Bible took place in a culture different from yours. Scripture may describe, mention, or allude to customs and practices we do not understand. This problem can be illustrated by a recent incident. An Indian was selling religious and health books in Sweden and was invited home for a meal. When he was being served food he politely remarked, "Thank you. That's enough." His Swedish host stopped putting food on the guest's plate. The Indian left the house after the meal still hungry for he did not have enough to eat. According to Indian custom, a guest is supposed to say, "Thank you. That's enough" as an act of courtesy when food is being served to him. The remark is not meant to be taken seriously for the guest expects to be served more food. The host also will ignore the remark and will continue to heap more food on the guest's plate. In this incident, not knowing the custom of each other caused a slight misunderstanding between a

Swede and an Indian. Knowing the culture and customs of Bible times can help to understand its messages.

Fifth, there is the problem of a historical gap. The Bible is a collection of documents, the most recent of which dates back to nearly 2,000 years ago. We are separated chronologically from the time when the documents were produced. If the correspondence we have discovered dated 200 years back instead of 2 years back, we would need to know certain facts and features of the historical past in order to correctly interpret the message. The same applies to the Bible.

Sixth, the problem of variant readings of the same documents exists. The original copies (called autographs) of the documents that make up the Bible do not exist anymore. In various museums and libraries are very old manuscripts, but they are copies of copies of copies, etc., of the originals. When compared, no two manuscript of the same documents are exactly the same: there are variant readings in certain places. Thus, the interpreter has to decide which variant is closest to the original.

The above are only some of the factors which make learning the skills of exegesis a necessity. We don't need to be experts in exegesis but we do need to be faithful to the text of God's Word. Because the message preached has to do with the eternal destiny of the hearer, how serious should a preacher be in preparing the sermon that contain God's message to the congregation! **E**

NOTE

¹John Wright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p. 170.

Ng Kah Seng is a pastor in the Southeast Asia Union Mission in Singapore

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Returning with Songs of Joy

by Joel Sarli

Scripture: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6).

Introduction

1. Our Savior, in one of His most instructive parables, likened the preaching of the Word to a sower, who went forth to sow, whose seed fell upon various kinds of ground.
2. In the book *Christ Object Lessons*, page 33, we read: "From the natural seed cast into the soil, Christ desires to lead our minds to the gospel seed, the sowing of which results in bringing man back to his loyalty to God. He who gave the parable of the tiny seed is the Sovereign of heaven, and the same laws that govern earthly seed sowing govern the sowing of the seeds of truth."
3. In observing the process of sowing the natural seed, we can understand the principles that rule the process of spreading the gospel in this world.
4. In this parable, Jesus introduced Himself as the great Sower and referred to His own work in preaching the gospel to the people of His day. The parable is equally applicable to all His servants, and to the labor of every Christian believer, who goes forth proclaiming the doctrines of the kingdom of God.
5. Christ's servants are to do the same work today.
6. The text in Psalms truly expresses that concept. The believer goes forth "bearing precious seed."

I. What is the seed that we must sow?

- A. The seed is the Word of God—the holy truths of the divine mind. Those truths revealed expressly to make men wise to eternal life.
- B. Now, this seed is to be sown in its original purity, without any mixture of what is human. Again we read from the inspired pen: "In our day, as of old, the vital truths of God's word are set aside for human theories and speculations. Many professed ministers of the gospel do not accept the whole Bible as the inspired word. One wise man rejects one portion; another questions another part. They set up their judgment as superior to the Word; and the Scripture which they do teach rests upon their own authority. Its divine authenticity is destroyed. Thus the seeds of infidelity are

broadcast; for the people become confused and know not what to believe" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 39).

- C. It is called in Revelation 14:6 "the everlasting gospel."
- D. It is the living word of life.
 1. It has in it the vital kernel that, if planted in the right ground, will live and grow.
 2. It contains living principles and truths. It is the word of the living God.
- E. It is the precious word.
 1. Intrinsically precious. Precious in its author and origin. Precious in its effects. Precious because it has no possible substitute.
 2. It was given to the Jews as a solemn, invaluable deposit.
 3. See how it was valued by the psalmist, Psalms 19 and 119.
 4. It is as precious as the air, for it brings the atmosphere of a renewed life.
 5. It is as precious as bread, for it is the staff and support of the saints.
 6. It is as precious as light, for without it we should be enveloped in darkness.
 7. It is the water of life, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb.

II. Where must we sow it?

- A. Every human heart is the ground where we must labor to deposit the seed of God's truth.
- B. According to Mark 16:15 the world is the field. "Go ye into all the world"—that is the sphere; and "preach the gospel to every creature."—this is the soil for its reception.
- C. Then wherever the Christian believer may be, he or she has a sphere of duty and labor. To everyone you meet you can say, according to the very letter of His commission, "To you this word of salvation is sent."
- D. What a privilege we have to be co-workers with Jesus in spreading the seeds of the gospel to human hearts!

III. How must the seeds be sown?

- A. *Diligently*. There is an art even in sowing, and there is great skill in rightly preaching the Word. For this, spiritual knowledge is indispensable. Wisdom is needed from above. Judgment, so that the Word may be rightly divided, truly expounded, and properly diffused abroad.

A suitable portion must be given to each person. In the Word of God there is an endless variety of topics, which a skillful sower can turn to good account.

B. *Plentifully*. The Word of God, like the ocean, is calculated to fill the channels of the wide world.

C. *Prayerfully*. Because this is a spiritual affair, prayer is necessary for the labors to be successful. A full harvest comes only as it is watered and cared for.

“A knowledge of the truth depends not so much upon strength of intellect as upon pureness of purpose, the simplicity of an earnest, dependent faith. To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth” (*Ibid.*, page 59).

Conclusion

The work of teaching the gospel of Jesus is a ministry. It is a divine call and not a business of politics or commerce. It is a task performed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The goal of this ministerial call is to openly make available the spiritual and eternal life to our fellow men that they may be born again through the Word of God.

It is the responsibility of everyone who hears the good news to respond to the divine call. God promises His blessing to those who are willing to dig, water, plant, and harvest in the field God has given them.

Seekers of the Lost Lamb

Continued from page 4

‘Yes it is,’ replied my host. Then he added, ‘Brother, we always keep that right here where we can see it every day, lest we forget our responsibility to the flock of God and specially to the sick lambs.’”

Maybe you don’t have this picture up on the wall in your church. But you can have this scene up on the wall of your mind. As elders, we have something to do for the lost lamb. Without our help they may remain lost forever.

Elders, set the fire of evangelism in your congregation. Let your congregation feel the joy of working with Jesus in bringing new sheep to the church. If you don’t know how to do it, ask for assistance from your pastor or the evangelist of the conference because “The highest of all sciences is the science of soul-saving. The greatest work to which human beings can aspire is the work of winning men from sin to holiness” (*Ministry of Healing*, page 398).

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Without Him

“Our heart, reason, history, and the work of Christ convince us that without Him we cannot achieve our goal, that without Him we are doomed by God, and only Christ can save us.”

These were deep and sensitive thoughts for a 17-year-old, revealing spiritual wisdom that few attain. He had been baptized into the Lutheran church in 1824, at age six, and was confirmed at 16. Now, to graduate from high school, he had been required to write an essay on a religious subject. He chose to explore “The union of believers with Christ, according to St. John’s Gospel 15:1-14, an exposition on its basic essence, its absolute necessity and its consequences.”

The fruit of our union with Christ, he continued, is our willingness “to sacrifice ourselves for our fellow man.” And the “joy which the Epicureans in their superficial philosophy sought in vain. . . . is a joy known only to the innocent heart united with Christ, and through Christ to God.”

So wrote Karl Heinrich Marx, but by 1844, nine years later, he had abandoned any Christian devotion he may have once felt. In fact, his militant atheism and philosophical ideas of man’s struggle for a classless utopia free from

the numbing effects of religion, established him as one of the most influential figures of the 20th century. (From *Moody Monthly*, June 1988)

The fate of the apostles

All of the apostles were insulted by the enemies of their Master. They were called to seal their doctrines with their blood and nobly did they bear the trial.

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia.

Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.

Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.

John was put in a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward branded at Patmos.

Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward.

James, the Greater, was beheaded at Jerusalem.

James, the Lesser, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller’s club.

Bartholomew was flayed alive.

Andrew was bound to a cross, whence he preached to his persecutors until he died.

Thomas was run through the body with a lance at

Coromandel in the East Indies.

Jude was shot to death with arrows.

Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded.

Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica.

Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

Such was the fate of the apostles, according to traditional statements.

Standing for Jesus

Every Christian ought to be ready to stand up courageously and unashamedly for the Lord. How inconsistent that a person re-deemed by the blood of Christ experiencing saving power should cower before an unbelieving world!

On one occasion Frederick the Great invited some notable people to his royal table, including his top-ranking generals. One of them by the name of Hans von Zieten declined the invitation because he wanted to partake of communion at his church. Some time later at another banquet Frederick and his guests mocked the general for his religious scruples and made jokes about the Lord’s supper. In great peril of his life, the officer stood to his feet and said respectfully to the monarch, “My lord, there is a greater King than you, a King to whom I have sworn allegiance even unto death. I am a Christian man, and I cannot sit quietly as the Lord’s name is dishonored. The guests trembled in silence, knowing that von Zieten might be killed. But to their surprise, Frederick grasped the hand

of this courageous man, asked his forgiveness, and requested that he remain. He promised that he would never again allow such a travesty to be made of sacred things. (Romans 1:16).

Have patience with people

“Have patience with people like me,” pleaded a Russian psychologist in Italy who was waiting to immigrate to the United States from the Soviet Union. “Six weeks ago when I came from the Soviet Union was the first time that I heard something positive about God and about faith in God.” He was 29 years old.

“There are many people like me who are atheists, not because we chose to be atheists, but because we were victims of circumstances. We knew nothing else. And this atheistic teaching was forced upon us. We accepted it because we had nothing else to hear and nothing else to believe. Now, for the first time, I hear something of a positive nature about the Bible, about God, and about faith in God. To tell you the truth, what you believers are saying makes a lot more sense than what the atheistic teachers taught us all those years in the Soviet Union. After six weeks of hearing things about God and about faith, I am now at the place where my heart is crying out to say ‘I believe,’ but my head says ‘you can’t believe; you don’t understand enough.’ Please have patience with people like me.” (From *Trans World Radio Report*)

The testimonies of two brilliant men

Writers H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw were brilliant men, yet they rejected the message of Scripture. They placed their trust in their own systems of belief, which were based on human reason. Yet they could not find lasting inner peace, and they slowly lost confidence in what they believed. Wells' final literary work, for example, has been aptly called "a scream of despair." And shortly before Shaw died in 1950, he wrote, "The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt . . . Its counsels, which should have established the millennium, have led directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once . . . In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions . . . And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith."

Attitude

It is the "advance man" of our true selves.

Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward.

It is our best friend or our worst enemy.

It is more honest and more consistent than our words.

It is an outward look based on past experiences.

It is a thing which draws people to us or repels them.

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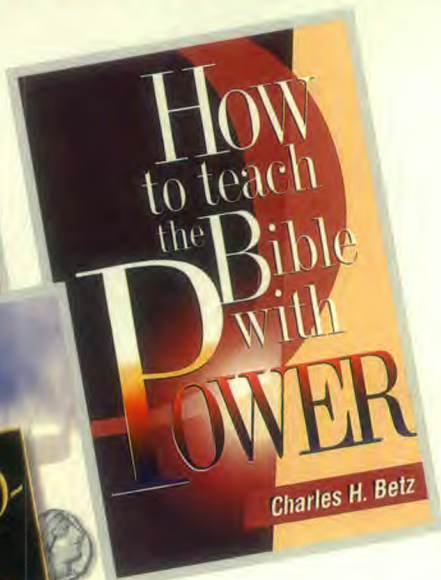
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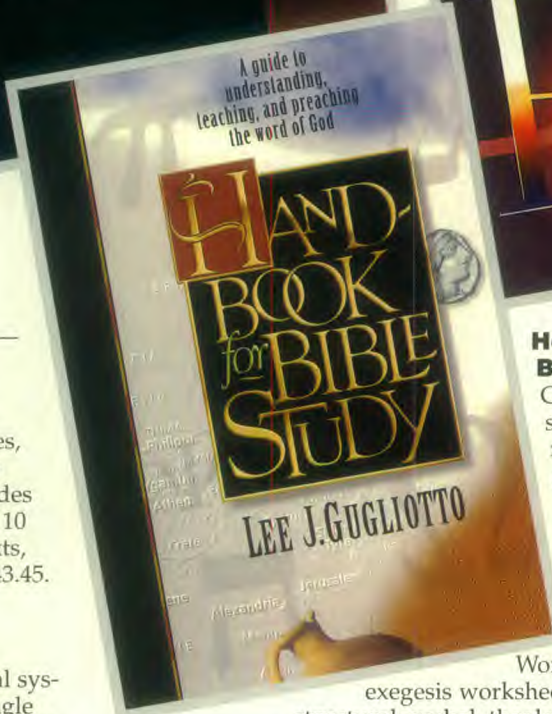


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