

Elder's Digest

Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

January-March 1999



“Bringing the
Wanderer
Back Again”

C O N T E N T S

4
Ambition and church responsibility
E. Elizabeth Cleary

6
Introducing the guest speaker
Theodore Carcich

7
How to differ with the brethren and yet love them
R. M. Wilcox

7
The elder and the home
Archa O. Dart

8
Worship is the devotion of the heart of God
J. A. Buckwalter

10
The elder's treasure chest
S. L. Dombrosky

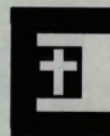
11
The power of prayer evangelism
Clement A. Murray

12
Meteor showers and 1833
Gerhard Pfandl

13
Visitation
Roy B. Thurmon

R E G U L A R F E A T U R E S

3 <i>Editor's Forum</i>	27 <i>Feeding Lambs</i>
16 <i>Sermon Outlines</i>	28 <i>Spirit of Prophecy</i>
19 <i>Special Section</i>	31 <i>Frontline</i>



Elder's Digest

Publisher
Ministerial Association
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Ministerial Association Secretary
James A. Cress

Editor
Joel Sarll

Contributing Editors
Matthew A. Bediako
Sharon Cress
Willmore D. Eva
Carl Johnston
Julia M. Norcott
Leslie Pollard
Peter Prime
Nikolaus Satelmajer

Division Consultants
Africa-Indian Ocean – Paul S. Ratsara
Eastern Africa – Joel Musvosvi
Euro-Africa – Gabriel Maurer
Euro-Asia – Victor P. Krushenitsky
Inter-America – Jaime Castrejon
North America – David Osborne
Northern Asia-Pacific – David M. Parks
South America – Alejandro Bullon
South Pacific – Eric Winter
Southern Asia – John Willmott
Southern Asia-Pacific – Abdullmussin S. Abdumajid
Trans-European – Peter Roennfeldt
Southern Africa Union – R. A. Zeeman

Production and Marketing
Cathy Payne

Design and Layout
Sheila Draper

Subscription rates and address changes:
US\$9.95 for one year (four issues); US\$3.00 single issue. Please send all subscriptions and address changes to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6516. Phone: 301-680-6508; E-mail: 11070.2631@compuserve.com; Web site: www.ministerialassociation.org

To Writers: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcome and may be submitted to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6516. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should accompany unsolicited manuscripts.

Elder's Digest is published quarterly by the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1999, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by the Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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

Vol. 5 Number 1

Watching and Working

The Responsibility of Local Church Elders

Joel Sarli



Many great movements and leaders seem to have their origin in obscure corners. With Herods trying to slay them, Iscariots trying to betray them, mobs trying to crucify them, and even sepulchers trying to confine them, they at last burst forth into recognition and

appreciation, rising above suspicion, calamity and defeat. That vindication, however, usually requires time and the untiring labors of some stalwart supporters who, with a sense of fairness and the ability to expose error, unsheath the sword of justice to lay bare the facts and reveal truth.

I recommend to the leaders of our beloved church to reread the story of Nehemiah—that great reformer of Israel—of when he was superintending the rebuilding program in Jerusalem. In describing the real situation that challenged the leadership of Nehemiah the Bible says, “In this state of alert we continued to work with half the men standing guard from dawn to dark with their weapons in hand, while the other men worked on the wall” (Neh. 4:21).

The Advent Movement also began in obscurity, but it came at a time, in a way, and in a place which Providence had foreordained. Not recognizing this divine purpose, many have severely criticized the church's origins. Bitter invectives have been hurled at its leadership and teachings, with special denunciations of the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White—messenger of the Lord. Occasionally a reply has been made to these criticisms, but for the most part, especially in more recent times, these charges have been allowed to go unchallenged.

Those who recognize truth, however, are not disturbed by the attacks of enemies from outside as well as from inside the church. Realizing that we are called to do a great work, we could find little reason to stop working and come down from the walls to defeat the enemies.

It is true that a new generation of local leaders has arisen, and the builders need to have in their possession information that will strengthen their confidence in God's remnant (Rev. 12:17) thus enabling them to defend the flock of the Lord. There is a time to keep silent but there is

also a time to speak, for error that goes unchecked and unchallenged often increases in prestige. There may be some who have reservations concerning the need of defending the church and the truth as “it is presented in Jesus.”

A minister who had recently come into the message from another Christian body once came to see us. He had just returned from visiting a number of his former ministerial associates. Many in this group were anxious to know the reason for his change in belief. Eagerly they listened as he unfolded the message to them. A number inquired especially regarding Mrs. White and her prophetic role. Remarking on this, this newly baptized brother said, “I am confident we would be amazed if we could but know how far reaching is the influence of our message upon the thinking of hundreds and perhaps even thousands of ministers of other faiths.”

During the past few years a growing number of charges have been made concerning some landmarks that have characterized us as the Adventist Movement and the Remnant for these last days. And it is not surprising to note that as each modern Sanballat or Tobiah have appeared, they have built on the premise of some earlier enemy. Consequently, for some, the picture is confusing, and in many instances even friends of the cause have no way of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

Our answer should not be presented in a spirit of combat or hostility. However it is sometime necessary for us to speak out because of potential danger to the spiritual life of faithful members, and to the resources needed to proclaim the gospel in fulfilling the Great Commission which the Lord gave to His church.

Thus, in some circumstances we need to be men and women who work with trowels and also handle the sword. At the same time that we are to work for our people we have to watch over their spiritual security. “And the men carrying building materials worked with one hand while carrying their swords in the other” (Neh. 4:17).

So today as in Nehemiah's time, it appears that our task is twofold; *work and watch* over the flock which the Lord has entrusted to us until the “wall is finished.” **E**

Ambition and Church Responsibility

E. Elizabeth Cleary

Ambition is a word that is likely to have a sinister sound. We associate with it intrigues and ruthlessness. It is often immersed in the blood of the innocent. Perhaps we would scarcely dare admit even to ourselves our inner aims and motives. "I charge thee, fling away ambition: by that sin fell the angels," said Shakespeare.

As Christian men and women, workers in the greatest, grandest cause in this old world, let us be completely honest with ourselves and take stock. Is your ambition an eager, inordinate desire to gain power or distinction? Is your ambition a ready, steadfast purpose to achieve something commendable or right in itself? Or, as the rendering of Conybeare and Howson has it, is it your "ambition to be unambitious"? Do you desire to adorn the doctrine of Christ in all things?

The word *ambition* never occurs in our English Bible. That is not surprising when we consider that the desire for preeminence was so emphatically and repeatedly denounced by our Lord Himself. But its significance is surely there. According to *Young's Analytical concordance* there is only one word in the New Testament which represents ambition: it is found in three passages only, all from the pen of the apostle Paul. The word is *philotimeomai*, literally the "love of honor," and occurs in 2 Corinthians 5:9, Romans 15:20, and 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Living as we do in days of Laodicean indifference, apparently at times unable to awaken dead souls to love and praise, may not the fault lie within our own hearts? Have we come to the place where we reason as did the disciples of old, "We have left all to follow Thee; what shall we have, therefore?" Do we dare to tell the Lord that He is greatly honored to have the use of our talents and personality; that we could earn so much more in an outside job; that we have forsaken wealth and ease and position to serve His cause and, therefore, in view of all these things, surely we ought to be recognized? We should have a place on the mission board or on the

conference committee; the financial return we receive is not commensurate with our worth; a better, bigger position should be ours; and we should be conducted thereto with a blowing of trumpets! Will we be honest, and admit that we covet the house, the car, the budget, the location, even the worker team of a brother laborer? These things ought not so to be! In an attempt to eradicate such things from our ranks, let us study three tests that should characterize all our lives, for they carry us in the three directions in which life must be lived—Godward, manward, selfward.

Godward Ambition

First, then, we turn to 2 Corinthians 5:9: "*We are ambitious to be well-pleasing unto Him.*" Surely this is the primary ambition of every true Christian. The love of God to us ought so to move our hearts that all our thoughts and energies will be spent to please Him in service. An active faith will cause us to make opportunities to witness for Him and to lead some soul a little nearer to the Saviour. Such an ambition will often cut across your own plans, frustrate your own hopes. But even Christ pleased not Himself. You will have to do many things and say many things that may not be altogether pleasing to yourself. Ease may have to be surrendered, the day's work lengthened, self-interests sacrificed, in order to please God. Sometimes this attitude will be displeasing to others, and this is where we feel the rub most acutely. Very often when we please God we upset others. Many have missed the reality of a Christian experience through trying to please someone, regardless of God's claims.

A wonderful promise is held out to those who seek to please God. The power and reality of prayer will be yours. (1 John 3:22). Being continually anxious to please God, you will have the assurance that He hears and answers your prayer and will bless you abundantly. And a further result? That idol, long hidden and nursed in the recesses of your inmost heart, will be cast out, and Christ will fill

its place. New power in your preaching and teaching, a deeper understanding the Word, and a mellowed, tender revelation of Christ in you will be manifest. The Holy Ghost will come upon you.

Manward Ambition

There is a manward ambition expressed in Romans 15:20: "I have been ambitious to preach the gospel." Paul had been seeking to make known the gospel where it has not been known. He had been exposed to all kinds of danger, but was determined to carry on. How should this ambition be manifested in us? By our relationship to those around us, by sacrificial giving for His work at home and abroad, by giving loved ones to this great aim, by sacrificing time for prayer. How self-centered is much of our praying! When last did we pray for the Jew, for the people of India, China, Japan, Russia? The church of Christ at home is rapidly becoming a "missionary church in an unevangelized land." The gospel of character must be supplemented by the gospel of speech. A word in season may bring some soul to Christ.

One great need we have is that we may come to the place where we are willing to work in the cause of God for what we can put into it, not for what we get out of it. This organization is not a medium through which we gather around us equipment and possessions we would have obtain otherwise. It is not a golden opportunity to see the world at the expense of humble, faithful men and women who give their tithes and offerings for the furtherance of the gospel, that souls may be born into the kingdom of heaven. If only we would give twenty-one pennies' worth of sheer, hard consecrated work for every dollar we are paid! If only we would put back the word *sacrifice* in our living! Then would the might of God be manifest in us, and we would lead many to Christ.

Selfward Ambition

The last reference is a striking figure of speech in I Thessalonians 4:11: *Be ambitious to be unambitious.*" Here is the emulation of the Master. Here is the spirit that cuts out all self-seeking, envy, jealousy. Here is ambition sanctified, living, in the calm of quiet faith. In these unquiet days the most helpful people are those who, strong in the calm of restful faith, make it their ambition to go about their own business in the spirit of love and self-discipline. This, and not arrogant selfishness, is God's gift to His children.

Be willing to leave the issue with the Lord. How often we mope and fret in discouragement because our best endeavors are misunderstood or our best plans for the work of God seem to miscarry! If only we would do our best in service, with an eye single to God's glory, and let God be the judge and rewarder of faithful service! A truly consecrated life will not seek for self-advancement, self-comfort, self-appreciation or self-gratification. The life lived courageously and wholeheartedly for God will not pine when position and preferment come to others. Rather, the whole endeavor will be a constant seeking and striving to be unambitious, allowing God to lead, to assess one's value, to come to the place, content in any state, God's work will fill the first place and have primary consideration in life.

Conclusion

It is evident that there were some tattling people who were disturbing the peace of others in Paul's day. They dreaded nothing so much as being quiet. They delighted in noise, in gossip, in scandal, in whispering. The truth of the Second Advent does not mean that responsibilities can be neglected while the time is spent in shallow, earthly ways. The quiet mind, the industrious spirit, are the marks of the soul really prepared for this wondrous event. Meddlesome busybodies do not commend the gospel of peace. An envious jealous spirit, pining after another man's possessions, suggesting, whispering, decrying, does not produce an attractive radiance indicative of the indwelling Christ. Let us fall on our knees before God, asking pardon for the mistakes of the past and beseeching strength for the future. With Him is mercy and abounding forgiveness.

Words can be converted as well as people. Self-seeking rivalry can be changed into selfless ambition to glorify Christ and win souls for Him. New affections are kindled in the converted. May our ambitions experience true conversion as we aim supremely, keenly, without ceasing, to meet the divine approval, to manifest quiet diligence, to win souls. **E**

Elizabeth Cleary was a Bible instructor in the North England Conference.

Introducing the Guest Speaker

Theodore Carcich

Occasionally a guest speaker is invited to speak at some church or conference gathering. How should he be treated, and how should he be introduced?

First of all, the speaker should have prior information as to the nature of the meeting and what is expected of him. He should also know the time and place of the meeting. If he arrives by train, plane, or bus, someone should meet him and provide transportation to the church or campground. Should overnight accommodations be necessary, care should be exercised that he does not stay with some family that delights in "talking his ears off" into the week hours of the morning. There is no surer way of presenting a washed-out preacher at the next day's service.

The service itself should be well organized in advance. It is disconcerting for the speaker to arrive on time only to discover that the meeting is disorganized, the presiding officer unable to find those who are to assist in the service, the rostrum chairs are not in place, the auditorium not heated or ventilated, and the choir late in taking in the choir loft.

Worse still, while the elder or presiding officer rushes around trying to bring order out of chaos, someone with an ax to grind belabors the speaker with some real or imagined grievance. All this tends to make the guest frayed and worn out before he speaks, often resulting in a flat and insipid presentation. This frustrating experience can be avoided by careful preparation and organization.

In presenting the guest the chairman of the meeting should make sure that he has the proper facts about the speaker. At times it is better to place such facts in the church bulletin. In either case, the facts should be accurate. A few well-chosen statements are sufficient. Every book written, every degree obtained, and every

office held need not be listed. If the guest did not have the necessary qualifications, he would not be there to speak.

Care should be taken in relating anecdotes, especially those involving the speaker. Many times such are not appropriate to the theme, the occasion, or the speaker. The one introducing the speaker can be pleasant without palaver, brief without disrespect.

The speaker's time should be protected. It is unfair to him and the audience when a long session precedes the address. What speaker has not watched the clock tick off the best part of the speaking hour while listening to a prolonged musical program or lengthy announcements. Equally frustrating and destructive of a speaker's time at camp meetings are the blow-by-blow instructions on how to take care of tents in a storm or how to find lost children.

It is agonizing for a speaker to hear the chairman say: "I am sorry that we have used up so much time discussing these items, but we want our speaker to feel at ease and take all the time he needs to present his subject. Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in presenting . . ." By this time the audience is tired, the children are fidgety, and infants are crying for their dinner. Upon being presented so late the speaker is tempted to simply say, "My address for this morning is 6849 Eastern Avenue, Washington, D.C.," and sit down!

A person is invited to speak because it is assumed he has something to say. That opportunity should be granted him without his laboring under pressure of time and tiredness of mind. Then what is said can be a blessing. No one should rob the audience of the latter. **E**

Theodore Carcich was vice-president of the General Conference when he wrote this article.

How to Differ with the Brethren and Yet Love Them

R. M. Wilcox

Is it possible to differ with our brethren and love them still? Is it possible to stand strongly and uncompromisingly for what we believe us right, in opposition to brethren who stand just as strongly for opposing methods and love them just as greatly as if they agreed with us?

How often we see this demonstrated in legislative bodies of the world. I have watched the Congress of the United States, and the Parliament of Great Britain in operation and have seen men on opposing sides earnestly contend for what they believe to be right. They became even vehement in their discussions, but at the end of the debate I have seen these same men leave the chamber arm in arm, evincing their warm personal friendship.

On the other hand, I have seen professed Christians

become so incensed and stirred in debate that they became personal enemies. What a contrast and what a shame to the Christian profession.

"One test of Christianity, of the power of Christ's grace in the heart, is to be able to differ with others earnestly but kindly, to contend for principles and not involve men in the confrontation. Let us always distinguish between men and principles, and even if we abhor the principles and feel that we must denounce them, let us love the men who hold the principles. In this way only can we win for Christ those with whom we associate." E

F. M. Wilcox wrote this for the Adventist Review, January 13, 1938.

H O M E

The Elder and the Home

Archa O. Dart

An elder's home influences more people than his pulpit. "Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 352. That is why Satan tempts the father to neglect his home. He tries to keep the parent so busy with all kinds of activities that he has no time for his own family. This is one of the reasons why some good elders bring in very little, while less talented ones sometimes have a rich harvest of souls. A good family is of inestimable value to the elder.

One day a very fine young man from the college came to my office and stated that he needed some professional counsel. When he introduced himself I recognized a well-known name among us and inquired whether he was related to that person.

"Yes," he replied, "he is my father."

"Oh," I answered, "he is a wonderful man. He is a real pillar in the church."

"He must be a wonderful man," he mused sadly. "I read about him in the *Adventist Review*."

That interview of more than an hour revealed that the heart of this young man was yearning for a father far more than for any professional advice. He might as well have been an orphan so far as his father was concerned. At that time his father was visiting some of the churches in Europe and would not be home for several weeks. And when he was home he was not at home. He was at the office on weekdays and in the pulpit on Sabbaths. His son knew him best through the columns of the *Adventist Review*?

Could it be that some elders, who have won many souls to Christ, will be forced to lament, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept?" E

Archa O. Dart was Assistant Secretary for Home and Parent Education of General Conference when this article was written.

Worship Is the Devotion of the Heart of God!

Compiled by J. A. Buckwalter

Correct Ideas and True Reverence

"Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5:500).

"The test questions for every Christian to ask himself is, 'Have I, in my inmost soul, supreme love for Christ? Do I love His tabernacle? Will not the Lord be honored by my making His sacred institution my first consideration?' (*Gospel Workers*, 433).

"Every morning lean thine arm awhile
Upon the window sill of heaven
And gaze upon the Lord.
Then with the vision in thy heart,
Turn strong to meet the day."—*Author Unknown*

Promptness

"I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people" (Ps. 108:2, 3).

"It is a part of my religion not to interrupt the religion of others" was the reply of a devotedly pious lady to the question why she always went early to church.

"Whoever through indolence or indifference, is behind time, sins against God, his fellow worshipers and his own good. A tardy courtier offends his prince—how much more a tardy worshiper his God."—*Anonymous*

"We believe if congregations made it a part of their religion not to twist their necks almost out of joint to witness the entrance of every person who passes up the aisle during service, it would be better both for their necks and their religion."—*R. A. Bertram*

Reverence

"Serve God acceptably with reverence" (Heb. 12:28).

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence" (*Education*, 242).

"If He be 'our Lord,' let us do Him reverence."

—*Adams*

"There are practices tolerated in religious congregations which Christians who are jealous for the honor of their Master's house should utterly condemn. Decorum is the handmaid of devotional feeling, and for this reason the house of God should never be disturbed by the slightest approach to irreverence."—*Anonymous*.

"Unless you educate yourselves to respect the place of devotion, you will receive no blessing from God" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5:608).

Godly Fear

"In thy fear will I worship thee" (Ps. 5:7).

"When thou goest to God . . . take thy heart aside, and say, 'O my soul, I am now addressing myself to the greatest work that ever a creature was employed about. I am going into the awful (full of awe) presence of God, about business of everlasting moment.'"—*Salter*

Privilege of Public Worship

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 95:6).

"If a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more . . . His saints' prayers in consort together."—*Gurnall*

"In public worship . . . strong and imperishable links are being created which will bind us together through eternity."—*R. W. Dale*

"Our meetings for worship should be sacred, precious occasions" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5:607).

"Our meetings should be made intensely interesting. They should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven. Let there be no long, dry speeches and formal prayers merely for the sake of occupying the time. All should be ready to act their part with promptness, and when their duty is done, the meeting should be closed. Thus the interest will be kept up to the last. This is offering to God acceptable worship. His service should

be made interesting and attractive and not be allowed to degenerate into a dry form" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 5:609).

"And now the wants are told that brought
They children to Thy knee;
Here lingering still, we ask for nought,
But simply worship Thee."—*Canon Bright*

Intelligence in Worship

"Sing ye praises with understanding" (Ps. 47:7).

"The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding" (1 John 5:20).

"If Christians would take home the teachings of Christ in regard to watching and praying, they would become more intelligent in their worship of God" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 2:582).

"Worship is an act of the understanding applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God and actual thoughts of His majesty. . . . It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences His majesty, is ravished with His amiableness, embraceth His goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with...all his affections upon Him; we must worship God understandingly; it is not else a reasonable service."
—*Charnock*

Wholehearted Participation

"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart" (Ps. 9:1).

"We should not dare to give God a piece of our heart, when we apprehend Him present with the whole."—*Charnock*

"Seek Him here with all thy soul; thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if thou hadst better guests for the chaffiest rooms."—*Baxter*

"Similar is the presumption of neglecting to participate in divine worship when present in God's house. Negative sins are sometimes most intensely sinful. Heedless sins are sometimes most fearfully fatal."
—*Phelps*

"To be spiritual in worship is to have our soul gathered and bound up wholly in themselves, and offered to God."—*Charnock*

"O thou Great Chief, light as a candle in my heart that I may see what is therein and sweep the rubbish from Thy dwelling place."—*African Child's Prayer*

Thoughts Centered on God

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

"A remembrance of God's omnipresence will quell distractions in worship....An eye taken up with the presence of one object is not at leisure to be filled with another.... Oppose to every intruding thought the idea of the Divine Omnipresence, and put it to silence by the awe of His majesty."—*Charnock*.

"It is impossible to have clear conceptions of eternal things unless the mind is trained to dwell upon elevated themes" (*Testimonies to the Church*, 2:141).

"A listless and wandering mind—roving like fool's eyes—in the temple of worship, is a most insolent indignity to the King of kings."—*Phelps*


What To Pray For

"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder . . . at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God."—*Phillip Brooks*

Practice the Presence of God

"Practice the presence of God. . . . Let us think often that our only business in this life is to please God, and that all besides is but folly and vanity. . . . Let us think of him perpetually. Let us put all our trust in him. . . . We cannot have too much in so good and faithful a Friend, who will never fail us."—*Brother Lawrence*

Got Stage Fright?



So You've Been Asked to Speak? is a short, to-the-point book filled with practical tips to help the non-professional prepare to speak in public. This creative book deals with the form and structure of sermon preparation and principles of public speaking. Those with minimal speaking experience who hope to expand their skills will find this book of great value.

US\$6⁹⁵ + 15% s&h

Send check, money order, or credit card number with expiration date to:
 General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center
 12501 Old Columbia Pike • Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
 Phone: 301-680-6508 • Fax: 301-680-6502
 E-mail: www.ministerialassociation.org

The Elder's Treasure Chest

S. L. Dombrosky

The elder's treasure chest is his prospect file. God calls men to put forth every effort to become more efficient and to achieve greater results in their soul-winning activities.

The prospect file should include the names of all who in some way have manifested an interest in the Seventh-day Adventist message. These may be drawn from many sources, including the following: former Seventh-day Adventists; Faith for Today, Voice of Prophecy, It Is Written, Net '98, and Bible school interests; persons who have attended evangelistic meetings in the past; visitors to Sabbath school and other worship services; names offered by members; Ingathering and welfare contacts; wedding and funeral contacts; contacts through sick calls; youth growing up in the church; and social and civic contacts among community leaders and influential citizens.

Always remember that every life we touch is a prospect for the kingdom. We must do all in our power to introduce men and women to the Savior, and then lead them gently and tactfully into a deeper study of God's Word.

A simple but effective prospect file may be categorized in the following manner:

AA prospects—These are persons who have already studied the doctrines and are preparing for baptism.

A prospects—People who are studying regularly and are definitely interested in the message of the soon-coming Savior.

B prospects—Those who have had special visits, and there is likelihood that studies can begin with them before long.

C prospects—These come principally from among those who have been dropped from church membership, and from among "unbelieving" relatives of church members—usually husbands or wives.

Suggestions

1. We should study this list frequently, every day if possible. Get to know the prospects in your field.
2. Pray earnestly for each person whose name is in the file.

3. In our prayers we should ask for specific guidance relative to the visitation schedule.

I have found myself in the neighborhood of one of my prospects whom I had not planned to visit that day. But I felt compelled to make a call, and I discovered that my visit was much needed and very effective.

4. We should know our prospects. Let's study their face and reactions as we visit and talk. Soon we shall be able automatically to place them in the proper classification.

5. Never give up a prospect—that is, almost never. We might change his position in our file, because sometimes a prospect must "season" for a time. A change of circumstances in his life might make him an A or AA prospect.

Probably the pastor cannot visit all the prospects as often as necessary. The elder must be organized to visit people whose names are in the prospect file. Following each visit a report should be made to the pastor, so the progress may be noted on the file card.

A good plan is to jot down on the back of the card the name of a church member living nearby. It may be that this member can visit the prospect, thus serving a twofold purpose:

1. The church member has an active part in soul winning right in his own neighborhood.

2. The faith of the prospect is strengthened because he sees a neighbor showing a personal interest in him.

Learn to keep these records without worry or waste of time. Make them simple and efficient, so most of our time may be spent in visiting and studying with the people rather than keeping records.

Our Lord said of Himself: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He never allowed Himself to forget why He came, for He was always seeking and He was always saving.

Those called to be His representatives must make the Master's motive their master motive in soul winning. Let us use our treasure chest of prospects well. **E**

S. L. Dombroski was a pastor in the Florida Conference when he wrote this article.

The Power of Prayer Evangelism

Clement A. Murray

In certain societies demon veneration and devil worship are not that uncommon. Voodoo, Santoria, and the Black Art are discreetly practiced and woven into the societal fabric. Even in the United States there are occasional confrontations as the forces of light and darkness battle for the souls of those for whom Christ died.

Pastor Pierre Omeler of the Philadelphie Haitian church in Malden, Massachusetts, became a participant in one such battle as his church conducted a four-week evangelistic crusade. The church had set a baptismal goal of 50. Early in the meeting he was impressed to abandon his habit of making appeals for baptism at the end of his sermons in favor of making nightly appeals for prayer. The results were immediate and dramatic as individuals who sat unmoved through previous appeals came forward for prayer and ultimately, baptism.

Prayer evangelism was working and hearts were being touched. In that group was Jean*, and his twelve-year-old son, Joseph* who indicated a desire to be baptized. Unknown to pastor Omeler was the fact that Jean's wife, Marie*, was an open devil worshiper. She had no intention of accepting a Christian in her home, including her husband. Her smoldering resentment came to a head when, on the Sabbath of her husband's and son's baptisms, she boldly and defiantly marched into the church and announced that if the baptism were to take place, she and Jean were finished.

With divorce papers in hand, she interrupted the service, demanded Jean's house keys, and told him that if he were baptized, he need never come home. As Marie left, the church prayed while her husband and son joined the other candidates in baptism.

Later that day the pastor, two elders, and Jean returned to his home to find the locks changed. Their knocking was responded to by shouts from an open window. Pastor Omeler, having witnessed the power of prayer, begged that Jean be allowed into the house for one week. Marie snarled that he would be given one

week and one week only. During that week, which was also the last week of the crusade, the church prayed exclusively for Marie during the day and each night before the sermon. Toward the end of the week, she appeared in church sitting at the very back. The cold expression on her face led many to believe that she was there simply to spy on her husband and son. She had informed her son that she would never be baptized, and so it was no surprise when on Sabbath she slipped in silently and sat again at the rear. She appeared unmoved by the service and the baptism, which brought the total baptisms for the crusade to 49.

Pastor Omeler, standing in the pool, felt impressed to make one last appeal. Only one person responded, and her raised hand caused the praying church to erupt in a thunder of praise and thanksgiving to God as Marie stood and slowly made her way toward the front. The pressure of her battle to free herself from the camp of the enemy showed as her knees buckled and she was assisted by two church members. Another deaconess had been impressed to hold Marie's baby in the minutes before the appeal, thus freeing her to concentrate on the service and focus on the Master's words.

Pastor Omeler credits this and a host of other miracles and blessings to the vibrant ongoing prayer ministry in his church. He is convinced that prayer and prayer evangelism were responsible for the 50 baptisms. He has seen healing, financial reversals, families united, and conflict resolved as a result of consistent prayer. He has coined and added a new phrase to the evangelist's lexicon, "Prayer Evangelism," he dubs it. He is a believer, a practitioner, and its most passionate proponent. E

* Not their real names.

Clement A. Murray, writes from New York where he is communication director for the Northeastern Conference.

Meteor Showers and 1833

Gerhard Pfandl

Are we about to see a repeat of the meteor shower of 1833? Probably not. Meteor showers occur regularly each year and coincide with the passage of the earth through the orbit of a comet. The Leonid meteor shower normally exhibits around 10-20 meteors per hour over a period of six or seven days every year in November. However, every 33 years or so, when the orbit of the comet Temple Tuttle, which is associated with the Leonid showers, reaches its nearest point to the sun, more dramatic displays tend to be observed.

In 1966 people in the central states of America observed about 5000 meteors in a 20-minute period. The next large meteorite shower is expected on November 17 this year. Scientists, however, have cautioned that the 1998 orbital conditions of Temple Tuttle are not as good as they were in 1966, so the number of meteors is not expected to be as high as it was in 1966.

The greatest meteor shower in modern history took place over North America on the morning of November 13, 1833. This brilliant display of "failing stars" could be seen from the Atlantic seaboard all the way to California and from the Canadian border to the island of Jamaica.

One eyewitness described it as "a constant succession of fireballs, resembling skyrocketing radiating in all directions from a point in the heavens near the zenith, and following the arch of the sky towards the horizon. They proceeded to various distances from the radiating point, leaving after them a vivid streak of light, and usually exploding before they disappeared" (R. M. Devens, *One Hundred Great and Memorable Events*).

Another observer estimated that no less than 240,000 meteors were visible at any one time (*ibid*). The next highest count of "failing stars" comes 100 years later, in 1933, when the Giacobinid shower produced 15,000 meteors per hour (Peter M. Millman, *The Telescope*, 7 [May-June 1940]).

Adventists who believe that the 1833 meteor shower was a fulfillment of prophecy have repeatedly been asked: How can an event in nature, especially a recurrent one, be regarded as a sign, or fulfillment of prophecy? Their response has been that "the validity of the 'signs' (plural) is even strengthened by their repetition and

distribution over various parts of the world. They cite as an example the unprecedented series of notable Leonid star showers, which included those seen in 1799 in South America and in 1832 and 1866 in Europe and parts of Asia and Africa, in addition to those seen in 1833 and 1867 in North America. The peak of this series was the incomparable shower of 1833." (D. Neufeld, *Seventh-day Adventist Student Source Book*, page 414).

When Jesus, in Matthew 24, mentioned wars and earthquakes as signs of His coming, He knew that wars and earthquakes were to happen throughout history. Therefore, it isn't the *occurrence* that is the fulfillment, but the unprecedented *size* and, in the case of wars and earthquakes, the *frequency* of these events that are seen as the fulfillment of these signs.

Similarly, the Leonid shower of 1833 is counted as one fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:29 because of the tremendous and singular size of the event.

People living in 1833 recognized this meteor shower as something extraordinary and exceptional. Impromptu prayer meetings were held, and people were imploring God to save the world and them.

Henry Dana Ward, an Episcopal minister who later became an associate of William Miller, wrote, "I called to my wife to behold: and while robing, she exclaimed, 'See how the stars fall!' I replied, 'That is the wonder'; and we felt in our hearts that it was a sign of the last days. For, truly, 'the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind'" (*The New York Journal of Commerce*, November 14, 1833).

No other meteor shower before or since has elicited these kinds of reactions from those observing them. While we cannot rule out an even greater meteor shower in the future, immediately prior to the second coming of Christ, the 1833 event can be seen as introducing the time of the end, which will culminate in the "glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). E

Gerhard Pfandl writes from Australia where he works as field secretary for the South Pacific Division.

Visitation

Roy B. Thurmon

I. Introduction

- A. "Pure religion . . . is this, to visit" (James 1:27).
- B. Parable of the Lost Sheep. "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matt. 18:12).
- C. "Our Savior went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 188).
- D. "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly and from house to house" (Acts 20:26, 27, 20).
- E. "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).
- F. "When a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes" (*Gospel workers*, p. 187).
- G. "To my ministering brethren I would say, by personal labor reach the people where they are. Become acquainted with them. This work cannot be done by proxy" (*Ibid.*, p. 188).
- H. "Those who labor for God have but just begun the work when they have given a discourse in the desk. After this comes the real labor, the visiting from house to house, conversing with members of families, praying with them, and coming close in sympathy to those whom we wish to benefit" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 558).
- I. "Many ministers dread the task of visiting; they have not cultivated social qualities, have not acquired that genial spirit that wins its way to the hearts of the people. Those who seclude themselves from the people are in no condition to help them" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 338).

II. Kinds of Visits Required of an Elder

- A. Sick calls.
 1. In hospital.
 - a. Routine visits, especially before surgery.
 - b. Be brief—stay only a few minutes.
 - c. Avoid discussing patient's illness. (Get information desired from family or the doctor.)
 - d. Be cheerful but always serious-minded.
 - e. Speak of pleasant things; inspire courage and hope.
 - f. Pray quietly before leaving. Be specific in prayer and make it brief. (Remember roommate if there is one.)
 2. Home visits to the sick.
 - a. Shut-ins and aged (an occasional visit will encourage).
 - b. When the baby comes (an opportunity for a good spiritual call).
 - c. People with colds, flu, et cetera, do not expect a pastoral visit unless there are complications.
- B. Soul-sick calls. In every congregation there are souls who are hesitating, almost decided to be wholly for God (*Gospel Workers*, 151).
 1. Weak members. (Anyone who does not attend Sabbath school or church services is weak).
 2. Backsliders. After visiting during the week, be sure to make a call on Sabbath for a public commitment to Christ.
- C. General membership visitation.
 1. Avoid close social contacts. (Beware of too much boating, golfing, etc.)
 2. Always remember your sacred responsibility as a spiritual leader every time you visit a home.
 3. Do not alienate yourself from a part of your church by catering to a few.
 4. Make every call spiritual. (Of course one will speak of things of common interest, but they will lead to those matters that are sublime.)
 5. Be full of courage and cheerful, but never a jester. An elder has no place telling silly jokes. It will tax his spiritual ingenuity to lead the family

to a deeper Christian experience. "Foolish talking, nor jesting," "let it not once be named among you" (Eph. 5:3,4).

6. Never leave a home without praying with the family.
7. Be careful not to use all your time visiting church members. God has other sheep to be brought into the fold.
8. Bible school interests
9. Visitors at Sabbath school and church
10. Relatives of Adventists: chances are they have our literature and have probably attended some meetings
11. New believers. Wean them—gradually. Encourage them in some missionary activity.

III. Dividing the Visiting Time

- A. Do not try to see every member every month. Soon one will be nursing a few weak members while many others are starving. See them at Sabbath school, church service, prayer meeting, MV meeting, etc..
- B. Save a big block of your time for evangelistic calls.
- C. Always have one or two regular studies in progress—personally. One is then able to encourage others to give studies. And it is good for one's own soul, keeps the heart warm.

IV. How Church Members Can Participate in Visitation

- A. Divide the church list among the elders of the church. Type the name and address of each family on a small card. Divide the number geographically or in some other natural way among the elders. Each elder is to be personally responsible for the spiritual watchcare of those families he has been assigned.
- B. Encourage the deacons and deaconesses to call on each home in the church at least once a year. Make every call spiritual.
- C. Friendship teams.
 1. Young people, or older, can go two by two to call on all the neighbors in the city—just a warm, friendly visit.
 2. Divide territory into sections of approximately 100 homes each and assign one section to each team each year.
 3. Visiting new members.
 - a. First week after baptism or transfer.
 - (1) Send name to a church leader.
 - (2) If several names, divide them among the elders.
 - b. Second week, send the new name to the Sabbath school department. Names can be divided at a Sabbath school council meeting.
 - c. Third week, send the same names to the home missionary department. Encourage new members to engage in some missionary work.
 - d. Fourth week, send the same name, or names, to the deacons and/or deaconesses. This, too, should be a spiritual visit.
 - e. The form letters for all these visits can be mimeographed to save a lot of time.

V. Office Visits

- A. Every church should have a neat, though small, office for the elders.
- B. Have certain hours when elder is available.
- C. Home offices are not advisable.

Finally, see the people. There is no substitute for personal visitation.

Roy B. Thurmon lives in Dyersburg, Tennessee. He wrote this article when he was pastor in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Advice for Elders

A long-overdue book on the duties, responsibilities, and challenges of local church elders. This book seems to cover just about everything elders need to know in order to fulfill their tasks. A must for anyone in that role and for those wishing to train elders in more effective church leadership. Each chapter includes a study guide, group discussion questions, and personal evaluation questions.

Hardcover US\$11.95, Softcover US\$7.95
(Add 15% for s&h)

Send check, money order, or credit card with expiration date to:
General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center
12501 Old Columbia Pike • Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
Phone: 301-680-6508 • Fax: 301-680-6502
E-mail: www.ministerialassociation.org

WORLD MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

- Inspirational Preaching*
- Professional Growth Seminars*
- Dynamic Worship*
- Specialty Skill Tracks*
- Language Group Seminars*
- Exhibition Hall*
- Bible Study*
- Fellowship*
- Special Programming and Seminars for PKs*



Plan now to attend. Mark the date.

**Watch here for
more information.**

June 25-29, 2000 • Toronto, Ontario • Canada

**Ministers, Spouses, PKs, Local Church Elders,
and Clergy of All Denominations**

Such As I Have

Acts 3:6

I. Introduction

A. The Book of Acts takes up the story of Christianity where the Gospels leave off. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came in a unique way, and the apostles moved forward dynamically and daringly to tell the story of the risen Christ.

B. Of course, the Book of Acts tells only a few of the many wonderful events that must have occurred.

1. The Holy Spirit led Luke to record the visit of Peter and John to the temple, where they healed the man who had been lame from birth.
2. How strange Peter's words must have sounded when he said, "Silver and gold have I none;" but how exciting Peter's deed when he took the man by the right hand, lifted him up, and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, healed him.
3. A double miracle occurred that day!
4. The man learned to walk and leap at the very moment he was healed.

C. A great stewardship lesson is present in this story. We are to do "what we can with what we have where we are for Jesus' sake today" and never wait for a greater opportunity nor for a time when we have greater abilities and resources.

II. Money isn't everything

A. Too often when we speak of stewardship, we think of money.

1. How thrilling to see a story where money is not set forth as the most important thing.
2. In fact, Peter even came close to minimizing it. He said plainly, "Silver and gold have I none" and then proceeded to work the miracle.

B. Does the time ever come in the life of a church or a religious organization that money can actually be a stumbling stone?

1. *Illustration.* Thomas Aquinas, an outstanding religious leader of another generation, once visited the pope and was shown all the treasures of the Roman Church. The pope said to Thomas, "Well, Thomas, no longer can the

church say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'"

Thomas replied, "Yes, Holy Father, but have you ever thought that the church is in danger of also not being able to say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk?'"

III. But money is important

A. The preceding paragraph is true, but something else is true also. It takes money—cold, hard cash—to carry on God's work in today's world.

B. God's Word says much about the stewardship of possessions, the giving of money. In his Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul devoted two chapters—8 and 9—to the matter of giving.

1. He said, "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7).
2. He pointed out that our supreme example in giving is the Lord Jesus Christ who, though rich, became poor in order that through His poverty we might become rich.

C. God has given to some people the ability to make "big money."

1. Their duty is to set aside an even larger part of that money to the work of the gospel.

- a. In Old Testament days, the tenth was the minimum.
- b. Certainly a Christian would not want to give any less to the spread of the Christian faith than the Old Testament Jew gave for his faith.
- c. In fact, counting all of the special offerings and supplementary tithes, the Old Testament saint was commanded to give far more than a tithe.

IV. What do you have?

A. What we have to offer God in service

1. A generation ago the emphasis was on "talents and abilities," but today we speak of "gifts".

2. There may be a fine distinction between the two, but we are not interested in that distinction at this moment. Rather, the question comes to all of us, "What do I have to offer my Lord?"
3. Another question follows closely, "Am I willing to give myself—including my talents, abilities, and gifts—to be used any way that God sees fit?"
4. *Illustration.* When General Pershing landed in France with the American Expedition Force in World War I, he presented himself and his army to General Foch, Commander of the Allied Forces, and said, "Our men, our equipment, our resources, all that we have are yours. Use them as you see fit."
 - a. God is certainly waiting to hear every Christian say, in essence, the same thing.
 - b. Stewardship is giving "such as we have" to our Master unreservedly for use in the service of His kingdom.

V. Conclusion

- A. Everyone who believes in Christ and is dedicated to Him actually has great possessions.

1. They are, however, spiritual resources.
 2. He should find his greatest joy in sharing with others the gospel by lip and by life.
 3. This, however, does not relieve him from the responsibility of supporting God's work financially.
- B. A true believer in Christ should be a liberal person with large sympathies and great compassion.
1. We cannot evade our responsibility in financial things by rationalizing that we are "spiritual" and, therefore, are not required to bring financial gifts.
 2. In the Old Testament, even the Levites gave tithes of the tithes.
 3. On the other hand, giving money does not release us from the duty of serving in other ways. Stewardship involves both finances and lifestyle.
 4. It is not a case of "either/or in relationship to stewardship."
 - a. We are obligated to the "both/and" principle.
 - b. Time, talent, tithe, influence—all that we have belongs to God.

The Necessity of the Cross

Luke 24: 26 RSV

"Only those who realize that the cross is the center of hope for the human family can understand the gospel that Christ taught". Testimonies to the Church, 8:206.

I. Introduction

- A. This message is not addressed to those who are offended by the cross, nor to unbelievers, nor to those wise in their own conceits who think it foolish.
1. Rather, it is addressed to those who might share, to some degree, in the attitude of those two sad-hearted disciples to whom Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus. They loved Him. They knew He had died. But they did not see why His death was necessary.
 2. Why did He have to die? The unrecognized Christ who walked beside them lovingly described them as "foolish men, and slow of

heart to believe" (verse 25) and asked, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (verse 26).

3. To consider His question in our own context, the cross was necessary from two points of view, God's and man's.

II. From God's point of view, the cross was necessary

- A. The cross was necessary to reveal God's evaluation of human life.
1. In Jesus' day human life was cheap.
 - a. Unwanted children were disposed of.
 - b. A slave might be killed by his master, and no questions were asked.
 - c. Despots like Nero lighted their gardens with human torches.
- B. Human life is cheap in our day also.

1. This is what makes war possible.
2. This makes poverty and slums and economic injustice possible.

C. But life is not cheap.

1. In God's sight life is supremely valuable.
2. His Son's death on the cross demonstrates this.
3. Human life is not cheap when God was willing to give His only Son to die to save it.

D. The cross was necessary to reveal the very essence of God's character.

1. "God is love" (1 John 4: 8b).
2. Again John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (4:10).
3. We could never see that without the cross. "But God commendeth his love toward us," Paul tells the Romans, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8).
 - a. The cross reveals God in His limitless love.
 - b. The cross reveals God not as a God of vengeance, nor as a despotic ruler, nor as a merciless judge, but as a loving Shepherd taking the trail of suffering and death to find the sheep that was lost.

E. The cross was necessary to reveal God's estimate of sin.

1. We call our sins mistakes, weaknesses, slips, complexes
 - a. What is sin?
 - b. How bad is sin?
 - c. *Illustration.* A pastor was waiting in a hospital with an anxious father whose little girl was in surgery. Presently, the surgeon came in and described the surgery he had just done. The incision went more than halfway around the little body. A rib had been removed. A nerve had been deliberately clipped. After the surgeon left, the father turned to his pastor and said, "If it took all that to make her well, my baby must have been terribly sick." The world was and is terribly sick. Only the blood of Christ can heal it.

III. From man's point of view, the cross was necessary

- A. Apart from Christ's death on the cross, we have no salvation; and apart from His sacrifice for our sakes, no hope. The cross is necessary for us. It is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18).

B. The cross is the power of God to challenge our sinful hearts.

1. Jesus said: (John 12:32).
2. Nothing but the cross could have such arresting, lifting power.
3. Paul speaks of Christ in the most personal terms when he refers to Him as "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20b).
4. To have someone willing to die for us is an arresting experience; and when someone does so, the experience can be traumatic.
 - a. *Illustration.* A hunter and his dog became temporarily separated. As the hunter was trying to cross a swift stream in a flimsy boat, the boat capsized. At that exact moment, his dog spotted him and immediately plunged into the swirling waters to save his master. The hunter caught the limb of a tree downstream and eventually made it to shore, but the dog was not so fortunate. His master stood helplessly on the riverbank and watched his faithful dog drown. Later he said, "It is a challenging thing to have someone die for you—even a dog." But consider this: The Son of God loved us and gave Himself up for us.

B. The cross is the power of God to atone for our sins.

1. The New Testament is most emphatic on this point. The New Testament has no fine-spun theories about the Atonement. It presents the Atonement—plain! repeated! emphatic!
 - a. Paul says (2 Cor. 5:14b; Titus 2:14a).
 - b. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (9:22b).
 - c. In his first epistle John says, "And he is the propitiation [expiation] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

C. The cross is the power of God to change us.

1. In 2 Corinthians, Paul comes to this conclusion: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (5:17).

IV. Conclusion

- A. Let us never question God's ways or God's love.
- B. The cross was necessary for Him, it is for us. "Hallelujah for the cross!"

E

Close That Door!

E. E. Cleveland

If departures from the church continue at the present rate, there will soon be more ex-Christians than Christians. Sinners use this fact to question the power of God. "Cannot Christ keep His own?" They ask. The answer is that He can. However, He has committed to the church the awesome responsibility of partnership in this divine undertaking. Each individual elder has a God-given responsibility in this matter. To us comes the command, having the force of the Ten Commandments. "Close that door! Block the exits! Stem the tide of apostasy!"

Of universal concern to the Christian church is the fact that not all of its adherents are true. Those who make bold to go from the faith are termed apostates, and so they are. Haunting the conscience of the conscientious elder, however, is the disturbing questions: "How might I have saved them?" Compounding his perplexity is the fact that the apostasy rate is not diminishing. On the contrary, it has exploded. Its chilling draft threatens the total health of the church. This depressing exodus of the sinful and disillusioned gives significance to the title of this article, "Close that Door."

Who is to Blame?

It is regrettable but true that the majority of apostates leave the church after ten years' membership. That they would leave at all is in itself a sobering thought. Just who is to blame for this state of things? The evangelist's? To be sure, he is far from perfect and he would be the first to admit that if he knew of a better method he would adopt it. But is it fair to hold a man responsible for souls when he has passed on to another field and is probably hundreds of miles from the scene? "But if they are genuine they will stick," is expert philosophy, but it has little basis in fact.

Why are we counseled to "feed the flock of God"? Why urge men to visit and counsel the church membership? The answer is clear. Would a farmer plant a crop and leave it unattended on the assumption that the good

will survive? No, "newborn babes" in the kingdom don't just "stick." What father reading this article would dare leave his newborn off-spring unattended on the assumption that "if he's any good, he'll survive"?

Well, then, who is to blame? The pastor? He is charged with the responsibility of holding what he has and adding thereto. The best pastor admits his need and longs for better answers. Let us face it. He is no superman. But it would take just that *to do all* that his job demands of him. There is a growing conviction in some quarters that he is not supposed to do it all. But what of the old slogan: "A leader must lead"? The answer is simple, "The leader who leads out in everything will be a *dead* leader."

Some suggest a wider distribution of responsibility among qualified laymen. With this the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy agree. Any promotion that would make a machine man out of a God-called soul winner is a gimmick. The pastor is an evangelist; his church is an evangelistic center. The winning of souls must claim his first attention. Leave other things to others.

But who is to blame for the apostasy rate? The church organization? For years the writer has dealt with administrators and he is yet to meet one who claims infallibility. Unfortunately, there are imperfections wherever the hand of man touches the "gospel plow." But how else would you direct and promote a world operation? Insistence on performance of duty is not infringement of freedom; rather it ensures the same. How else, except through administrative organization can the cohesive strength of the whole be realized? It is expected of administrators, within reason, to require and of promotes, to inspire. In the methodological implementation of the program, the pastor has broad freedom. With this attitude we may properly conclude that those who blame the program would, in the absence of this excuse, blame the weather. While the buck is passed and blame is spread, the back door stands ajar and the exodus of the apostates continues.

Are We in a Rut?

Part of the trouble stems from the disease of doing the usual things in the usual way. At a recent evangelistic council the writer had the privilege of hearing a minister who had concentrated on making the midweek prayer service unusually interesting. His countenance shone with excitement as he spoke of the hundreds who gathered for the weekly service. Another man told of how he transformed his Sunday night service from a "dry bone" for the saints to a feast for the general public.

Routine and Formality

During certain campaign seasons some pastors bombard the saints with a hail of promotion, leaving little room for the preaching of the cross. Others plan behind the scenes and execute through home visitation and committees, thus relieving the Sabbath service of burdensome detail. Is not this the better way? Routine breeds apostasy. Is there not a crying need for fresh music and refreshing sermons? The pulpit is no place for the "same old soup, heated up a bit." Spirit-filled preaching that casts old truth in a new mold will pack the pews again. The virus of conformity threatens our lives. The germ of life is being stifled by routine. Suffocating saints plead for a fresh breath of air. And we who guard the exits must let them live.

Closing the Door

The church apostasy rate is not a thing that must be lived with. Large scale apostasy is *not* inevitable. The number of defecting saints may be reduced. *But how?*

1. The evangelist should integrate the pastor, elders, and the local congregation into the evangelistic program. This makes for easy transition when the evangelist leaves the area.

2. The pastor and elders should guard the souls added to the flock with the same zeal as if they had been the ones who brought them in. In Lynchburg, Virginia, an evangelist raised up a new church and left for other fields. The current pastor frequently refers to the evangelist, which endears him to the congregation.

3. New converts should be tactfully integrated into the financial program of the church. While the tithe and freewill offerings are basic to Christian development, time and tact should provide the atmosphere for growth in the other graces.

4. Visitation should be set up with the sole purpose of systematic contact with new converts. A recent convert told me how let down he felt after his baptism when the constant prebaptismal visitation ceased. He stated that he needed it more after baptism than before. This is our Achilles' heel. Closing this gap will stanch the flow of apostates.

5. Some form of specific responsibility should be assigned new converts shortly after baptism. Some of these people have previously borne responsibility. Nothing holds a convert like a good job. An active layman is less likely to backslide.

6. One minister conducted a weekly Bible class at his church. He held it on Friday night. To make it interesting he had a varied program. It included a true-false test, Bible drill, special music, attendance awards; and each night he taught a doctrine of the church. This not only grounded the new converts but attracted visitors.

7. Finally, nothing can close the door of apostasy more effectively than Christ-centered Bible preaching. It should be remembered that a sermon text is merely an avenue to Christ. *Every sermon* should be about Him. Anything else is a lecture. The minister should be less concerned with adjusting his message to meet the minds of the classes than revealing Christ to the masses.

To close the door against those who through weakness, fear, or disillusionment would plunge into the abyss, requires the best in all of us. Lamentation will not profit, nor blame save the day. Immediate resolute action alone will avail. A soul won, then lost, is worse than a soul never gained. Nor should the apostasy rate dampen the ardor of those who win the lost. This is clearly no time to stop baptizing because some leave. Rather, this fact lends urgency to increased productivity. Nor may we subscribe to the negative philosophy: "If we only saved what we have, it would equal the total baptisms in any given year." The times demand that we save what we have and increase baptisms. Close the door of the church to apostasy and the morning stars will sing together, and all the sons of God will shout for joy. E

E. E. Cleveland was Associate Secretary of the Ministerial Association when he wrote this article. He lives in Huntsville, Alabama, where he still teaches evangelism.

Seeking His Lost Sheep

F. W. Detamore

Don't call them backsliders—you'll hurt their feelings!" people often object. But I know of no other term that really fits. "Former members" means little, for one might be a former member of the Dallas church and a present member of the Houston church. So I just call them backsliders and everyone knows whom I am discussing.

For years I have been urged to write detailed suggestions regarding how to work for backsliders. (Notice, I did not say "how to deal with backsliders" but "how to work for backsliders." There is a vast difference. We often *deal with* backsliders, but what a pity we seldom *work for* them!)

Some observations I shall make will not always be entirely flattering to the church and its representatives. We must bear some share in the tragedy of backsliding. If we will face up to our own faults and open-mindedly evaluate the backslider's problems and needs, we can help him and ourselves. It is dangerous for us in the organization to feel that we are "in need of nothing."

So I must speak frankly in dealing both with backsliders and some conditions that have helped to turn members into backsliders. I realize that in speaking frankly I must bear the responsibility personally for the organization, and no department should be blamed for the opinions I here express.

First, we need to recognize that few become backsliders because they were poorly indoctrinated. This is the charge I most often hear at institutes of various types. But such is not the case. Only a fraction of one percent give up because of doctrinal misunderstandings or disagreements.

One thought that should encourage us in going out to work for backsliders is that the majority of them still believe this message, and hosts of them plan definitely (or vaguely) to return someday. Many backsliders are watching with deep concern the solemn developments of the signs of the times. What an hour in which to be living, and what a challenge to be working with all our

zeal to bring back those who were once with us but who are now out in the cold and the night.

Locating Backsliders

It might be helpful to list the various ways we have obtained our leads to find some twenty-five thousand backsliders the past few years:

1. *From colporteurs.* Our colporteurs are on the firing line—close to the people. An alert colporteur will constantly be on the lookout for backslider leads.

2. *From singing bands.* Every Adventist knows about ingathering singing bands and often backsliders exclaim to the solicitor: "Yes, I know your work; I used to be an Adventist myself." Every such lead should be placed on the church's backslider list, giving, of course, the name and address. (See end of Part IV in this series.)

3. *Member-neighbors.* An active Adventist will soon discover backsliders, or new Adventists, within a small radius of his home. The same is true at work, at school, and in the offices where our people are employed. Every member should be educated to be on the lookout for ex-members, to report these, and to work for them.

4. *Doctors and nurses.* Again and again we find some of our best leads through this wonderful right-arm-of-the-message group of workers ministering to sick bodies. They also discover many sick souls.

5. *Bible schools.* Our radio and TV programs are constantly unearthing the names of many backsliders—often whole families. These leads, followed up in the home, pay high dividends.

6. *Religious census surveys.* Some of these are made by the Government; some by other church groups; some by Adventists in door-to-door surveys. Many excellent leads have come to us from such surveys.

7. *Church clerk's books.* These are the poorest leads, for if the person is merely a name or statistic on the clerk's records, there is little live connection with the church. However, these too need follow-up. We should remember, of course, that it will take effort and

persistence to track down the correct and up-to-date addresses of long-ago backsliders. But it will be worthwhile.

8. *Church visitors' register.* Every local visitor who registers at our church on Sabbath morning should be followed up by a visit in the home the following week. This has proved to be one of our richest leads to backsliders. The very fact that they were out to church shows some current interest.

9. *References from Adventist relatives.* Our members should be urged to report in full on all backslidden relatives. This perhaps supplies our largest list of leads.

Varying Types of Backsliders

It will help us in dealing with backsliders if we can learn to catalog the various types. If we will learn to recognize them, we will more easily be able to help them. No one can be dogmatic and say this one can be reached and that one cannot, but it will help if we divide backsliders into two major groups: (a) those difficult to reclaim, and (b) those easier to reclaim.

We will not be able to arrange those within each group in any particular order, but we will deal with them as we come to them, just as we do in a normal day of visiting in from 12-20 homes. We will make observations about the various types as we go along, but will reserve our general suggestions on approaching backsliders till our next section.

First we will discuss the more difficult types to reclaim. We mean no reflection on any profession or group as we deal frankly and honestly with these more difficult groups.

Types Difficult to Reclaim

1. *Former institutional workers.* For some reason an institution becomes impersonal. It is generally a poor policy to encourage new members to connect with an institution. They miss the kindness and love, the personal touch, of the church, and when dealt with on a businesslike basis, sometimes take offense, stumble, and fall. In doing so they blame the whole church for some unfortunate experiences they have had with department heads, fellow associates in the department, or supervisors. Once they leave the church they have a tendency to brand every member with the unfavorable characteristics of the few they clashed with in the institution. Tolerance, longsuffering, and kindness, perhaps unappreciated at first, will win back such

backsliders and convince them that Adventists are not hard-headed slave drivers, as they may have come to believe.

2. *Former professors.* This is one of the most difficult, if not impossible types to touch. The pattern is too consistent. They have gone to non-Adventist schools seeking accredited degrees. They have "broadened" their attitude on religious standards and teachings, and now they "look at things differently." After a few unfortunate clashes with fellow faculty members and board members, they drop out and find their place in some school of the world. Here they take satisfaction in feeling that they have attained and are appreciated—they have graduated from association with a peculiar people.

This type is usually coolly detached, calculating, condescending, or out-and-out haughty, and has need of nothing. No argument fazes them and they spurn kindness. Only sickness or personal or family tragedy may win them back, but do not cease praying for them.

3. *Physicians and surgeons.* There is something about the training, the irregularity of hours, the press of duty, the association with the world, and financial prosperity that greatly strains a medical man's connections with the church. Those who survive the rigorous tests make some of our finest church workers, as all can testify. But there are hundreds of doctors who no longer walk with us.

We need to pray for our medical workers, for their tests are great. Backslidden doctors generally are too busy to feel their need or to sense how far they have slipped. They are difficult to approach because they are too busy to talk at the office, and a visitor at the home often feels frozen out as an intruder. An occasional telephone call or a few words of encouragement dropped by an Adventist patient seems to be about the only avenue of approach here.

4. *Spiritual neurotics.* Fortunately, there are not many of these. They become ensnared with pseudo psychology spiritism, crank health fads, Pentecostalism, dreams and visions. Not much can be done for them. A small minority may outgrow their condition and return to normalcy; but many of these, if pressed into a rather shaky church connection, would only do harm in the body of the church.

5. *The overly prosperous.* Some Adventists have not had much in their earlier days. They become carpenters, builders, and finally big contractors or businessmen, real estate developers, and manufacturers. Caught up in the meshes of prosperity, lodge and business associations,

clubs, etc., they have grown proud and "in need of nothing." Their prosperity proves them successful, they believe. Their gold is their god; their lodge is their church; their club members are their brethren.

Little can be done to reach these till reverses strike or depression comes. Then they are not hard to help, and really appreciate a proffered hand of assistance. Till then we can but wait and pray and hope. Perhaps a mother's death or a child's sickness will bring them back in spite of temporal prosperity. If so, they will make good and helpful members as they come to realize that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

6. *The intellectually proud.* There are some who are proud of their skepticism, their doubts, and their ability to "get the preacher in a corner" in a discussion. They are forever scratching in the gravel or chiseling on the rocks of Mars' Hill. Only the love of Christ can soften such. Discussion and argument is worse than wasted effort, for each discussion but more firmly fixes them in their own opinions.

7. *The independent.* There is a class that rebels against authority. They like to express this attitude by refusing submission to church rules and regulations; they delight in the anarchy of spiritual individualism. Only physical calamity of some type seems to shake these to a consciousness of their need of humility and accountability to law.

8. *Apostates.* This is probably the most hopeless of all types. They were with us as workers and church leaders. They went out from us in pride and rebellion and have taken satisfaction in fighting the truth they once loved. Do not fight back! Don't fight fire with fire. Do not debate with them. Do not endeavor to throw back their arguments. We must assure them that we love them and that if they ever return to the fold, we will be most happy. Love alone will win apostates. And some, even of these, are returning.

Suggestions for Approaching Backsliders

When you obtain the name of a backslider, do not give up trying to locate him even though the address may be uncertain. We have inquired of the police, the fire department, water, light, and gas offices, post office, corner grocery and telephone company, in our search for a mission person. The dividends are rich and rewarding.

If the address is correct, but the individual is not at home, go to the neighbors to ascertain the time he is

usually home. Be as persistent as the FBI.

It was Friday afternoon, the last week of the series. We had tried every way possible to get in touch with a backslider. While the pastor was inquiring about her at a nearby dry cleaner's, I spied an old iron fire escape at the rear of the building. We had been unable to get any response at the front of the three-story apartment. As I reached the third section of the fire escape I began calling the woman's name quietly. Soon she appeared at the window. I went down to the front of the building and there made proper contact with her, and had prayer before leaving. The next day she took her stand for rebaptism. She said it was the thought that someone would even climb a fire escape to rescue her that made her decide to come back into the church.

When you find the person, introduce yourself at the door as a friend from the church who just dropped in to get acquainted. Be warm and friendly, but not gushy. Be sincere; be kind. Most homes will open for you. After a few moments of getting acquainted, a few pointed but natural questions will generally indicate the individual's present attitude toward the message. Let me list this series of questions in about the way we use them in any typical visit. Of course, there are variations. We do not always ask all of these questions. If we obtain a firm negative or rebellious reply at any point of the way, we must change the nature of our visit and terminate it, stirring up as little opposition as possible. But 50 to 75 percent of the people will follow through with favorable replies. Where the replies proved negative we must adapt our visit to the situation that develops. Following are the questions we usually ask:

What work do you do? Do you enjoy it? Have you lived here long? How many children do you have? You used to be a member of our church? Where? How long ago was that? And do you still believe quite a bit the Adventist way? Have you ever thought of returning to the church sometime? Is there anything to hinder your coming back? Or, What is the main thing that stands in your way? There is danger in waiting too long, isn't there? Or, if there are children: And with children like these, what responsibility! The longer you wait, the less chance you have of helping them into the church. Won't you try to get out to church (or the evangelistic meetings) this coming Sabbath?

This series of questions brings out the important points you need to know about the individual, and the very answering of these questions helps to stir up

responsive chords in the heart of the backslider. Listening to his replies will help you to make your farewell prayer more to the point.

And now a few "do's" and "don'ts" in working for backsliders. Each of these is vitally important.

1. *Come to the point quickly.* The backslider instinctively knows why you have come and feels uncomfortable in anticipation. The sooner you come to the point, the shorter the period of dread. Can you enjoy talking to a doctor who is standing there visiting with a big injection needle held threateningly in his hand? No! Get the injection over with and then relax and visit.

2. *Let trouble come out.* You go to the doctor with an abscess. He aims a sharp instrument at the painful center and releases the pus.

As you pierce the backslider's background with questions, occasionally one will become angry and go into a tirade of criticism. He is unloading his pent-up hatred. He is bitter toward the academy principal or the conference president or the former pastor. He blames the church for real or imagined injustices. And for the time being you become the symbol of all those who have done him wrong. For years he has been repeating to himself the mean things he wishes he'd said to those who wronged him. Now *you* get it all.

Listen kindly; listen interestedly. By neither voice nor expression of face disagree with him. Let him rant and rave; the pus is coming out. There is hope of a future healing of the wound after it has been purged and cauterized. At the close of his tirade it is effective to put in, "You know, if I were in your place and had been treated like that, I'm afraid I would have felt just about as you do." Now he has no enemy to fight. You and he, for the time being at least, seem to be on the same side, and he is disarmed.

If a man continues abusive to me personally when I've tried my best to be kind, I sometimes interject, "How can you dislike me so? If you knew me well, I can easily understand how you might dislike me. But you never saw me before. I just came here to help you, that's all. So how can you dislike me? I'm sorry for what happened. Who wouldn't be? But remember, the Lord loves you dearly and understands your heartaches. You must be saved at all costs, no matter what others may have said or done to you. Well, I must be going now, but let's bow our heads for a word of prayer."

3. *Don't defend anyone.* No matter who or what the backslider attacks, don't defend anybody. Unless you are

willing to observe this rule you had better not try working for backsliders. The moment you defend someone you automatically, in his mind, identify yourself as his enemy and the cause of his original trouble. From then on you are impotent to help him.

Of one thing you can rest assured—once he returns to God his bitterness will leave him. So just assure him of your love and longing for his return. He will be perplexed at your anxiety over his return in spite of his hostility. It will soften his heart, and after you have gone he will do some thinking.

One night a real-estate man exploded till 1:00 a.m., but he was at church the next Sabbath and later became choir leader. He is at rest now, but he died in the faith. His bitterness left him when he returned to the church.

4. *Don't betray the backslider's confidence.* Don't give wide publicity to what he has told you. Many things are better never repeated. If some of the things he has told you echo back to him, he will never have confidence in you again. He may not want his wife or the church elder ever to know what he has told you in confidence.

5. *Don't stay long.* There are rare occasions when you must listen to a long and involved story of bitterness. But ordinarily ten or fifteen minutes is long enough to stay. If you do not wear out your welcome at the first visit, the door will open more easily for you next time you call.

6. *Always close your visit with prayer.* Do not ask if prayer is desire. You can close your visit something like this: "Well, I must be going [that statement *always* relaxes people!], but before I leave, let's just bow our heads for a moment of prayer." And as you say this bow your head and start praying a short, sincere prayer. It is not necessary to kneel, though sometimes it is possible to do so without embarrassment.

In my prayer I throw in such suggestions as these: "Help him not to wait too long, but to be sure to be inside the ark when the flood comes." "Help him to know that we love him and long for him to come back." "Forgive us for the hurt we in the church have caused him, and may he know there's welcome for him upon his return." "May his children be safe in following his footsteps, and may the lead for sure to heaven at last." "May he be able to get out to church *this Sabbath* and not keep Thee waiting too long." "May he know that we love him and that *Thou* lovest him, and in spite of all the unkindnesses he's endured, may he be willing to forgive and return." "May his last days be by far the best, and help him to forget the past." "Help us to be more careful

in the future not to wound Thy child again." We remember that it says of Jesus, "Those [wounds] with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

7. *Give a brief invitation to come out to the evangelistic meetings and to church next Sabbath.*

However, don't try to squeeze out a promise that he will attend. That will undo the good you have done. Your whole visit should be conducted in a casual, off-hand, friendly way, endeavoring to leave the backslider relaxed and with a knowledge that you really love him and care about his return.

8. *Leave immediately following prayer.* Don't linger. Minutes spent in a home following prayer undo the effect of your visit. This is *very* vital, and a point on which so many err.

And now some special "don'ts."

1. *Don't try to arrange a series of Bible studies.* Many backsliders take it as a personal affront to have it suggested that they go through a series of studies. They know the doctrines already. What they need is love and reconversion. Kindness and prayer, and getting them out to Sabbath school and church, and especially to evangelistic meetings, are your best hope for getting them back.

Some have gone away from a home feeling rebuffed because the backslider refused or decided studies. This is no proof at that he is disinterested or has no intentions of coming back. It may be his blunt way of letting a tactless person know that he is already well acquainted with our doctrines and needs help other than indoctrination.

2. *Don't accept money from backsliders.* Right or wrong, far too many people have the idea that what we really want is their financial support in the church. Let them know you are not interested in their money.

A backslider once pressed fifty dollars on me, but I returned it to him saying, "I want you to know that I'm interested in *you* and not your money. Thank you just the same. I plan to come and see you again. You can know I'm coming to see *you* and not to get anything."

The exception, of course, would be tithe. If a backslider urges you to turn in his tithe for him, do it as a favor and *be sure to send him his receipt*. The pastor should write him a letter of appreciation.

3. *Don't solicit backsliders for an Ingathering contribution.* You can mail them a paper, and if they volunteer a gift, fine. Otherwise don't mention it. Many have gone out from us owning too much high pressure

during campaigns.

4. *Don't dismiss a backslider as a hopeless case because he's too many miles away.* Offer to take the Sabbath school and church to him. Suggest starting a junior (if any children) or branch Sabbath school in his home. This is one of the finest ways to start work in a new area as well as to reclaim those who have strayed far away geographically as well as spiritually.

5. *Don't argue about church standards with a backslider.* You can argue as long as you like about rouge, lipstick, the wedding ring, and movies (those are by far the most common sore spots with a backslider) and you'll never change him. Just ask him to pray about those things and ask God to make His will clear. Prayer changes hearts in a way that no argument ever can. When the root is cut, those leaves will surely fall off. Don't try to tear them off by theological argument, or chop them off with an ecclesiastical sword.

Here are a few thoughts I sometimes work into my visit when these problems come up: "Don't you think it is nice to bring to Jesus some of the things we *like* as well as the things in our lives that we hate? Bring some gifts we cherish and lay them at the foot of the cross and it will mean more to Him." "Jesus gave up *all*—even the gold and precious stones of heaven, for you. Would you be willing to give up all for Him?"

"True, that little bit of jewelry may be an idol to your, but if it is so insignificant and unimportant to you then it won't be hard to give it up, will it?" "Yes, I've seen more damage done in the church by sharp words on an old lady's tongue than a little rouge on a young lady's cheek. But we're getting ready for heaven, and let's go all the way. It's not 'How much of the world can I keep and still get into the church?' but 'How far can I go to separate from the world and be like Jesus'" "I don't want you to give up these things because the church says you *have* to, or because old folks will criticize you if you don't. I want you to give them as a willing sacrifice for Jesus." "If you were having an operation you would want a very careful surgeon. Can we be less careful about our eternal health?" "You say, the standards of the church are too strict, but do you really think they're more strict than the entrance requirements of heaven? After all, the church is to help us make ready for heaven." E

F. W. Detamore experienced pastor in North America wrote this article when was evangelist in Florida Conference

Seeking the Lost

David Torres Bravo

One of our churches has appointed four days a year known as Good Shepherd Days. On these special days the members of the church are invited to make a special effort to seek the wanderers from the fold and encourage them to return and share the fellowship of the church and the inspiration of the evangelistic program.

The members go out two by two, not only once but twice, thrice, and more times if necessary. Later, others are encouraged to visit the straying members until the warmth of love and fellowship helps them to know that the church really cares for them.

Sheep are the most helpless of all animals when lost; they cannot find their way back to the fold. The shepherd in the story that Christ told of the lost sheep could have stood in the doorway and shouted or blown a horn, and said to himself, "Surely, when that lost sheep out there realizes the hard time he is having, he will come back to the fold. When he does I will graciously open the door." But that is not what the shepherd did. With an anxious heart he left the comforts of the fold, and although it cost him much time and suffering, he found the lost one. The shepherd did not scold, condemn, or abuse the sheep. He bound up its wounds, placed it close to his heart, and tenderly carried it home.

It might be a good plan, on a particular Sabbath day, to place in the hand of each member a blank card upon which he may write the names of former church members. The following information should be obtained:

- The address and approximate age of the person
- How long it has been since he left the church
- Why he left
- How long had he been a member
- What his present attitude is
- Whether he left the message because of Sabbath problems, differences in the home, doctrinal confusion, or church misunderstanding;
- Whether he feels he was treated unfairly or was hurt by someone at the church

All this information will be valuable in determining who shall make the initial visit to reclaim him. Study

should be given to the specific problems so that those calling will be well-prepared to skillfully and tactfully reclaim. This is delicate work. Be assured that the Master Shepherd will grant the undershepherd full measure of His power to heal, to persuade, and to bring the wandering one back into the fold.

Never, never become heartless, cold, unsympathetic, and censorious. Never lose an opportunity to say a word to encourage and inspire hope. We cannot tell how far-reaching may be our tender words of kindness, our Christlike efforts to lighten some burden. The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love.—*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 612, 613.

Here are several suggestions in reclaiming former members:

- Be long suffering in your patience.
- Be understanding and tender.
- Let the wanderer unburden his heart.
- Sympathetic listening is a ministry of the highest order—be a good listener.
- Never appear shocked or hurt, no matter what you hear.
- Do not minimize the problem—it may actually be small but it usually grows large in the thinking of the sufferer.
- Do not condemn yesterday's failures.
- Speak of faith, courage, and joy in fellowship with the Saviour.
- Never break a confidence.
- Pray together.
- Arrange when necessary for transportation to the church.
- Plan a warm welcome and an invitation to Sabbath dinner.

May no drifting member or former member ever be able to say, "No man cared for my soul" (Ps. 142:4). **E**

David Torres Bravo writes from Chino, California, where he is pastor of the Portuguese-speaking congregation.



Bible Marking for Doodlers

Sally Dillon

While the Bible is a sacred book and should be treated that way, many children stop right there. The Bible never becomes 'user-friendly' and an important part of their lives. Devotional Doodling helps make their Bibles unique and personal and makes it easy to find "the good parts" (as my nephew Andrew would say).

Teaching this method helps elders assist children in identifying parts of the Scriptures that they will want to refer to again. It is a great way to mark favorite stories. This makes Bible study fun for children.

The groups of children who I have done this with often get together to compare favorite verses and art work. They sometimes borrow each other's Bibles to see what their friends have marked and drawn, going back to those verses in their own Bible to do similar doodling.

This is fun for adults too! (Many of us never outgrew the doodling stage of life.) Devotional Doodling makes a wonderful gift for a person you are trying to mentor or encourage in their personal Bible study.

As an elder, your leadership in encouraging Bible study and personal growth is especially important to

children. The influence you have on them will be greater and farther-reaching than you ever dreamed!

If you ask any group how many thought they had artistic talents, only a few would raise their hands. But asking the same group how many like to doodle in their margins and notebooks, almost every hand would go up.

Devotional Doodles are done either in the margins or directly over the text. Instead of underlining the verse, the participant draws an illustration for the verse(s).

Because of the type of paper used in most Bibles, this marking is best done with colored pencils. Most highlighters and felt-tipped pens will bleed through the page and deface the other side.

How do we get started?

1. First mark your own Bible so you have examples to show participants.

2. It is best to have a few sample texts to start your group off. Have everyone turn to the text, and then on newsprint or a large sheet of paper, you draw a simple illustration of the text. Samples are included below for you.

3. Have the participants choose a favorite text, turn to it, and illustrate it in their own Bibles.

4. Show-and-tell around the circle with participants reading their texts and showing their illustrations.

5. Each time you meet have 3-5 specific texts to mark as a group. Then allow plenty of time for members to share the devotional illustrations they have done at home.

6. For extra fun, use a concordance and do a topical search. For example, in my group we learned to draw lips; then we looked up all the 'lips' texts in Proverbs and Psalms. Also we drew 'smiley' faces every time we found the word 'rejoice'.

So get out your Bible and your colored pencils and have fun!

E

Favorite Stories to Doodle

Creation	Genesis 1
Noah and the Flood	Genesis 6:9-8:22
Tower of Babel	Genesis 11:1-9
Jacob's Ladder	Genesis 25:27-34
Joseph	Genesis 28:10-17
Baby Moses	Exodus 2:1-10
Water from Rock	Numbers 20:10-13
Fiery Furnace	Daniel 3:8-30
Daniel and the Lions	Daniel 6
Jonah	Jonah 1-4
Birth of Jesus	Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-12
Baptism of Jesus	Matthew 3:13-17
House on a Rock	Matthew 7:24-27
Fishers of Men	Luke 5:1-11
Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10

Sally Dillon writes from Timberville, Virginia.

Principles of Pastoral Administration

Ellen G. White

I. Order and Organization

1. *Jerusalem Church a model for church organization.* The organization at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the general oversight of the church, were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to "feed the flock of God . . . being examples to the flock" and the deacons were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." These men were to take their position unitedly on the side of right, and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 91).

2. *Order and system in the conduct of church affairs.* "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today, no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness, so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval (*Ibid.*, 96).

The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly, as a well-disciplined army, clad with the amour of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert, and in harmony with one another (*Ibid.*, 95, 96).

3. *Organizing new converts.* As an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts, the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards for gospel order. . . . Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers.

This is in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. Those who in any place were by his labor led to accept Christ as the Savior, were, at the proper time, organized into a church. Even when the believers were but few in number, this was done. The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

Paul did not forget the churches thus established. The care of these churches rested on his mind as an every-increasing burden. However small a company might be, it was still the object of his constant solicitude (*Ibid.*, 185, 186).

4. *Careful training of new converts.* In all their missionary endeavors, Paul and Barnabas sought to follow Christ's example of willing sacrifice and faithful, earnest labor for souls. . . . And with the sowing of the seed, the apostles were careful to give to all who took their stand for the gospel, practical instruction that was of untold value. . . .

When men of promise and ability were converted, as in the case of Timothy, Paul and Barnabas sought earnestly to show them the necessity of laboring in the vineyard. . . . This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands (*Ibid.*, 186, 187).

5. *Meeting with little companies.* The apostle felt that he was to a large extent responsible for the spiritual welfare for those converted under his labors. His desire for them was that they might increase in a knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. Often in his ministry he would meet with little companies of men and women who loved Jesus, and bow with them in prayer, asking God to teach them how to maintain a living connection with Him. Often he took counsel with them as to the best methods of giving to others the light of gospel truth. And often, when separated from those for whom he had thus labored, he pleaded with God to keep them from evil, and help them to be earnest, active missionaries (*Ibid.*, 262).

6. *Urge faithfulness in stewardship.* Let the church appoint pastors or elders who are devoted to the Lord Jesus, and let these men see that officers are chosen who will attend faithfully to the work of gathering in the tithe. . . . Let the leaders and officers for the church follow the direction of the Sacred Word, and urge upon their members the necessity of faithfulness in the payment of pledges, tithes, and offerings.

Frequently those who receive truth are among the poor of this world, but they should not make this an excuse for neglecting those duties which devolve upon them in view of the precious light they have received. They should not allow poverty to prevent them from laying up treasure in heaven. . . . It is the motive with which they work, not the amount they do

that makes their offering valuable in the sight of heaven. (*Counsels on Stewardship*, 106, 107).

7. *Give the people the Word of God.* We do not want to lose sight of the peculiar sacredness of this mission of ministering in word and in doctrine to the people. It is the work of the minister to speak the words of truth to the people, solemn, sacred truth. Some form the habit of relating anecdotes in their discourses, which have a tendency to amuse and remove from the mind of the hearer the sacredness of the work which they are handling. Such should consider that they are not giving to the people the word of the Lord. Too many illustrations do not have a correct influence; they belittle the sacred dignity that should ever be maintained in the presentation of the Word of God to the people (*Evangelism*, 208, 209).

II. Character and Methods

1. *Administer principles of piety and justice.* The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God's people in the time of Moses and for David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that he who is called to stand in a position of leading responsibility in the church, "Must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 95).

2. *Keep self in the background.* "Resolutely refusing to display human wisdom or to exalt self, they [ministers] will accomplish a work that will withstand the assaults of Satan. Many souls will be turned from darkness to light, and many churches will be established. Men will be converted, not to the human instrumentality, but to Christ. Self will be kept on the background; Jesus only, the Man of Calvary, will appear" (*Ibid.*, 363).

4. *Mingle freely with the people.* A pastor should mingle freely with the people for whom he labors, that by becoming acquainted with them, he may know how to adapt his teaching to their needs. When a minister has preached a sermon, his work has just begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes, talking and praying with them in earnestness, and humility. There are families who will never be reached by the truths of God's Word unless the stewards of His grace enter their homes and point them to the higher way. But the hearts of those who do this must throb in unison with the heart of Christ (*Ibid.*, 363, 364).

Many a laborer fails in his work because he does not come

close to those who most need his help. With the Bible in hand, he should seek in a courteous manner to learn the objections which exist in the minds of those who are beginning to inquire, "What is truth?" Carefully and tenderly should he lead and educate them, as pupils in school (*Evangelism*, 484).

5. *Give undivided interest to the Lord's work.* Some who have labored in the ministry have failed of attaining success because they have not given their undivided interest to the Lord's work. Ministers should have no engrossing interests aside from the great work of leading souls to the Savior. . . . Ministers cannot do acceptable work for God, and at the same time carry the burden of large personal business enterprises. Such a division of interest dims their spiritual perception (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 365).

6. *Deal tenderly with transgressors.* The Savior's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied the Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the under shepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care. Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ dealt with him (*The Desire of Ages*, 815).

7. *Win hearts by love.* 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 (*Evangelism*, 484).

8. *Watch for souls as they that must give account.* The messengers should watch for souls as they that must give account. Theirs must be a life of toil and anguish of spirit, while the weight of the precious but often-wounded cause of Christ rests upon them. They will have to lay aside worldly interests and comforts and make it their first object to do all in their power to advance the cause of present truth and save perishing souls.

They will also have a rich reward. In their crowns of rejoicing those who are rescued by them and finally saved will shine as stars forever and ever (*Early Writings*, 61).

9. *Teach as Christ taught.* God's Word is true philosophy, true science. Human opinions and sensational preaching amount to very little. Those who are imbued with the Word of God will teach it in the same simple way that Christ taught it. The world's greatest Teacher used the simplest language and the plainest symbols (*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, 433).

10. *Seek to reclaim those who stray.* The parable of the good shepherd represents the responsibility of every minister and of every Christian who has accepted a position as teacher of the children and youth. The one that has strayed from the fold is not followed with harsh words and a whip but with winning invitations to return. . . . The shepherd follows the sheep and lambs that have caused him the greatest anxiety and

have engrossed his sympathies most deeply. . . . This is the lesson that the under shepherds are to learn—success in bringing the sheep and lambs back to the fold (Ibid., 198).

11. *Use neither harshness nor flattery.* Pastors are needed—faithful shepherds—who will not flatter God's people, nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life—men who in their lives feel daily the converting power of the Holy Spirit, and who cherish a strong, unselfish love toward those for whom they labor (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 526).

12. *Painstaking effort for erring men and women.* The church on earth is composed of erring men and women, who need patient, painstaking effort that they may be trained and disciplined to work with acceptance on this life, and in the future life to be crowned with glory and immortality (Ibid.).

III. Dangers and Problems

1. *Blinded by self-confidence.* Men who move in accordance with their own strong traits of character, refusing to yoke up with others who have had a long experience in the work of God, will become blinded by self-confidence, unable to discern between the false and the true. It is not safe for such ones to be chosen as leaders in the church; for they would follow their own judgment and plans, regardless of the judgment of their brethren. It is easy for the enemy to work through those who, themselves needing counsel at every step, undertake the guardianship of souls in their own strength, without having learned the lowliness of Christ (Ibid., 279).

2. *Problems arising from the self-willed.* The church had been properly organized, and officers had been appointed to act as ministers and deacons. But there were some, self-willed and impetuous, who refused to be subordinate to those who held positions of authority in the church. They claimed not only the right of private judgement, but that of publicly urging their views upon the church. In view of this, Paul called the attention of the Thessalonians to the respect and deference due to those who had been chosen to occupy positions of authority in the church (Ibid., 261, 262).

3. *Undue attachment to one minister.* He who sends forth gospel workers as His ambassadors is dishonored when there is manifested among the hearers so strong an attachment to some favorite minister that there is an unwillingness to accept the labors of some other teacher. The Lord sends help to his people, not always as they may choose, but as they need; for men are short-sighted, and cannot discern what is for their highest good. It is seldom that one minister has all the qualifications necessary to perfect a church in all the requirements of Christianity; therefore God often sends to them other ministers, each possessing some qualifications in which the others were deficient. The church should gratefully

accept servants of Christ, even as they would accept the Master Himself (Ibid., 277, 278).

4. *Checking fanaticism.* I saw the necessity of messengers, especially, watching and checking all fanaticism wherever they might see it rise. . . . I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause (*Early Writings*, 63).

5. *Tactful work in the spirit of Christ needed.* There is tactful work for the under shepherd to do as he is called to meet alienation, bitterness, envy, and jealousy in the church, and he will need to labor in the spirit of Christ to set things in order. Faithful warnings are to be given, sins rebuked, wrongs made right, not only by the minister's work in the pulpit, but by personal labor. The wayward heart may take exception to the message, and the servant of God may be misjudged and criticized. Let him then remember that "wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 526).

6. *Dealing with dissension.* When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places, were met by concerted action on the part of all; and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted (Ibid., 96).

7. *Judge righteously with impartiality.* When choosing seventy elders to share with him the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgement, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, He outlines some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church. "Hear the causes between your brethren," said Moses, "and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgement; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgement is God's" (Ibid., 94).

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.

Snap, Crackle, Pop, Tony the Tiger, and Ellen G. White

Richard Dower

During the last half of the nineteenth century, many historic events took place in Battle Creek, Michigan, during the formative years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today, in the final years of the twentieth century, important things are again happening in Battle Creek.

Cereal City U.S.A., a themed attraction that highlights the history of the cereal industry in Battle Creek, opened its doors in June, 1998. The builders of Cereal City have made it interesting as well as authentic. For instance, they have made the corn flakes production line seem virtually as real as an actual plant tour. The machines, the noise, and the smell replicate an actual factory. There is also a winding exhibit called the "time line" which traces the history of cereal from the early beginnings of growing grain to the present. Within this time line part of Cereal City, Ellen White is featured along with displays of John Harvey Kellogg's memorabilia and artifacts from the old Battle Creek Sanitarium. Frequent mention is made of the Seventh-day Adventist church and Ellen G. White in two of the theaters that tell much of the cereal story.

Duff Stoltz, a long-time resident of Battle Creek, who has led Adventist History tours in Battle Creek and is an expert in cereal history, explains the connection between Cereal City, Ellen White, and the Seventh-day Adventist church.

"This connection stems from the fact that those who know Battle Creek history acknowledge that Seventh-day Adventist history is a part of Battle Creek's cereal history. You cannot get the full story of cereal without telling how and why it got started.


"In her visions from God, Ellen White was instructed in healthful living, and was given specific and practical directives for a healthful lifestyle. She not only presented these messages to the members of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but she helped to found the Battle Creek Sanitarium, which was the

forerunner of the world-wide medical work of the church. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg believed these messages and incorporated the ideas into his medical practice while he was superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

"His brother, W. K. Kellogg, took the idea of healthy breakfast foods and developed the ready-to-eat cereal industry. So you see, the cereal industry had its beginnings in the health messages God gave to Sister White."

Besides Cereal City U.S.A., two other attractions are underway in Battle Creek. Historic Adventist Village is being created that will portray life as it was in the last half of the 19th century and will contain many original or replicated buildings important to Adventist history in Battle Creek. When completed, Historic Adventist Village is expected to draw about 100,000 visitors a year, mostly non-Adventists. Lenard Jaecks, executive director of the village, calls the village "a three block evangelistic experience" because visitors will have many of the doctrines of the church explained as they tour the buildings.

Dr. Kellogg's Discovery Center opened on October 22. Located in the old Michigan National Bank building behind the Battle Creek Tabernacle, this outreach and educational facility has exhibits that tell the story of John Harvey Kellogg and allow visitors to experience some of the exercise machines he invented.

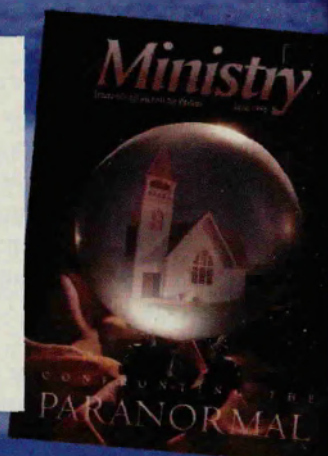
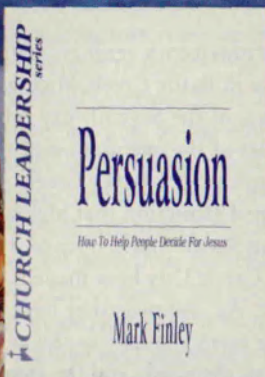
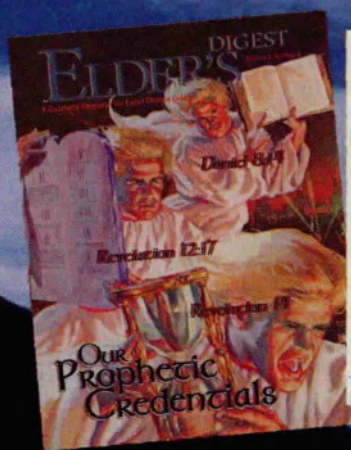
If you're traveling in the upper Midwest, you will enjoy visiting Battle Creek where there is a lot of history with a strong Adventist connection. For Battle Creek tour information, write to: Adventist History Tours, c/o Ralph Benedict, 183 Briars Farm Lane, Battle Creek, MI 49017, or call (616) 963-8744. 

Richard Dower, is communication director of Lake Union Conference and editor of the Lake Union Herald.

SPECIAL OFFER

For a limited time, receive a copy of Mark Finley's *Persuasion: How to Help People Decide for Jesus*, free with every new subscription to *Elder's Digest* or *Ministry* magazine.

Persuasion, written by one of the church's most successful soul-winners, deals with helping people make the most crucial decision of their lives. Totally Christ- and cross-centered, Finley reveals some of the experiences and challenges that he faced in his years of ministry and what he's learned from the Lord in reaching souls. Every practical principle is coupled with real-life applications.



Yes, I want a FREE copy of *Persuasion* by Mark Finley. Please find my new subscription(s) enclosed.

Elder's Digest

US\$9.95 (1 year)

US\$25.00 (3 years)

Ministry

US\$29.95 (1 year)

US\$30.95 (1 year: Canada/overseas)

Subscriptions to *Elder's Digest* and *Ministry* make great gifts!

Payment Type: Check MasterCard Visa

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____ / ____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

MAIL PAYMENT TO:

General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center • 12501 Old Columbia Pike • Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

ELDER'S DIGEST
1350 N. KINGS ROAD
NAMPA, ID 83687-2193

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nampa, ID
Permit No. 66