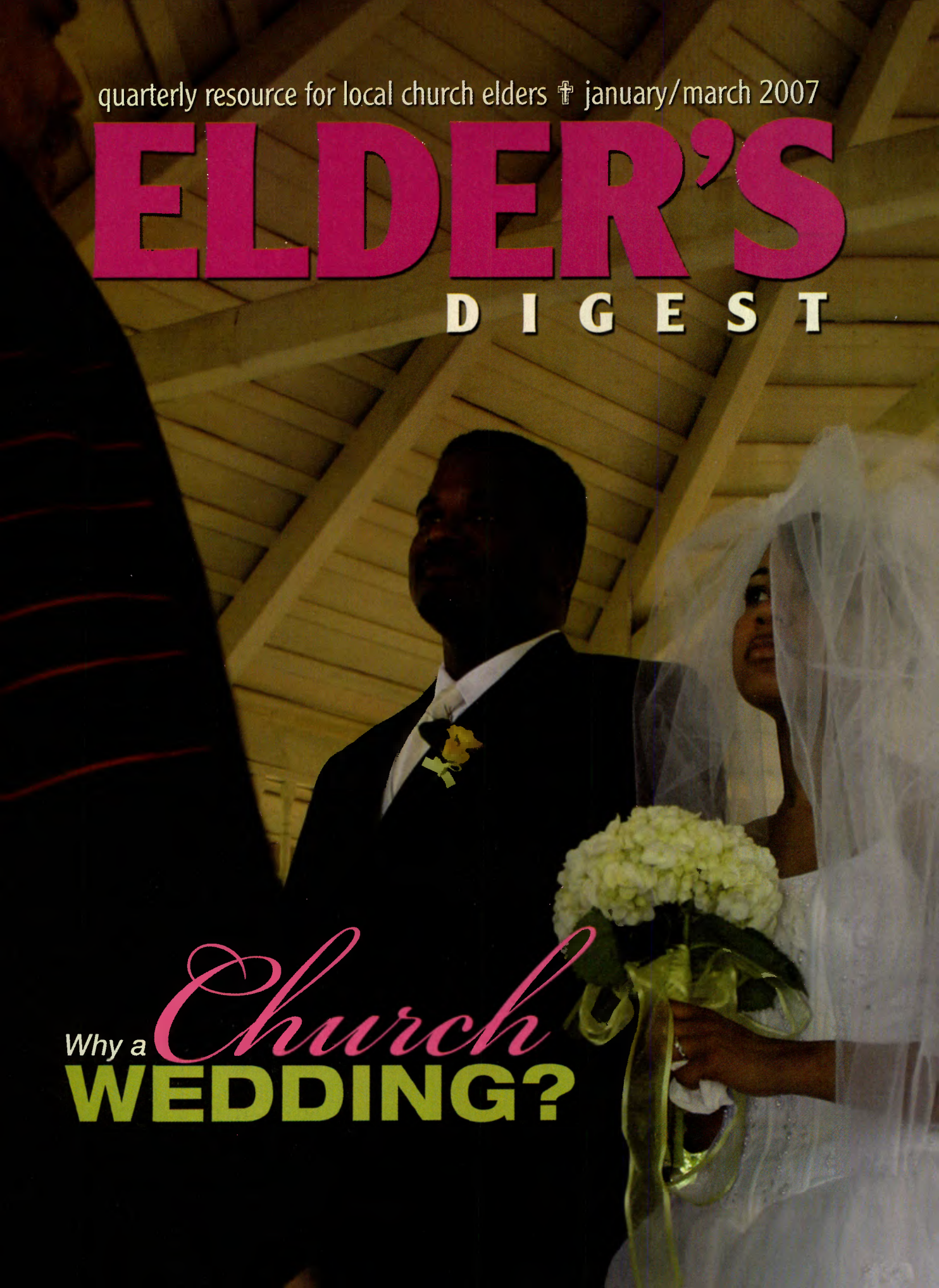


quarterly resource for local church elders † january/march 2007

ELDER'S

DIGEST

Why a *Church*
WEDDING?



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ELDER'S DIGEST

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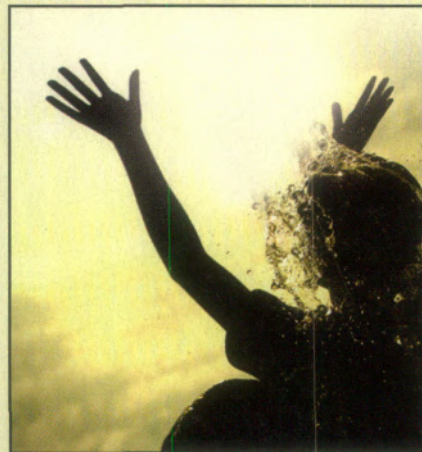


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Cover photo by Tanya Holland
Wedding of Summer and Walter Pearson III



Respect, Admiration, and Recognition

I have a deep respect, appreciation, and admiration for local church leaders and their work. I'm talking about those brothers and sisters, church elders or company leaders, who are in charge of church departments.

I just received the statistical report from Secretariat showing that from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, 1,093,089 believers accepted the everlasting gospel and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church by baptism and profession of faith. Now we are 14,754,022 members around the world. Almost 15 million brothers and sisters assembled in 60,840 churches and 61,708 organized companies. Amen! It is wonderful to witness the growth of the church as a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit and an integrated effort of pastors, leaders and members. Every weekend, more than 80 percent of our pulpits are occupied by these leaders.

Considering that they conduct more Bible studies, visit more church members, and preach and counsel more than anyone else, I ask myself: What would happen to the church if it weren't for them?


I believe that pastors alone will never accomplish and finish the work. A pastor's orientation and motivation is important, but the strength of the members and the

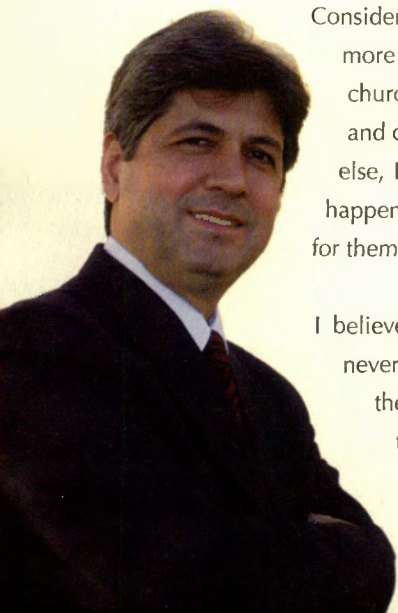
work of local church leaders are indispensable. Imagine if the church had to pay a wage for the work done by volunteers! There wouldn't be enough money; that's why they are good examples of volunteer dedication to the church.

I believe that elders and other leaders are motivated to work for the church for reasons that transcend material advantages. They love God and His church. They are conscious of the solemn time in which we live, and their Christian spirit is evident in the work they accomplish.

God has a purpose and a ministry for each Christian in the body of Christ, the church. It is good to see that many are living according to God's plan, but I feel that church leaders are desperate for more training and better material for the work they do.

Ministerial Associations in many divisions are providing training and appropriate materials for local church leaders: *Elder's Digest*, *The Church Manual*, *Elder's Handbook*, *Elder's Guide*, and other good resources. One of the Ministerial Association's primary concerns has been to equip, train, and motivate church leaders so that they can work more efficiently. However, there is still a lot to be done.

I praise God for what He has done for His church, and I thank the brothers and sisters who are working to fulfill the church's mission. I believe we'll soon be in Heaven, and together we'll see how good it was to have participated in Christ's church in this world. 



Interview with the Institute of World Mission



From left to right: Cheryl Doss (Associate Director), Wagner Kuhn (Associate Director) and Lester Merklin (Director)

Cheryl Doss was raised in a pastor's family and became a missionary kid when her family moved to Helderberg College in South Africa. With her husband, Gordon, she served for 16 years as a missionary in Malawi and pastored for five years in the Florida and Kansas Conferences. She holds a Ph.D. in Christian Education and Intercultural Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has a special interest in researching and teaching on missionary family transition and third-culture kids. Cheryl and Gordon, a teacher of mission at the Seminary, have two adult children and one adorable grandson.

Wagner Kuhn grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist. He began serving the church in 1986, immediately after his college graduation. He holds a M.A. in Mission from Andrews University and a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies (Mission) from Fuller Theological Seminary. Wagner is married to Gisele, a registered nurse, and they have two missionary daughters, Gielle and Gillian. He has served the church as a missionary in several capacities: pastor, relief and development worker, administrator, and teacher. He has worked in Brazil, Azerbaijan, and the United States.

Lester Merklin was raised in a strong Adventist home and, except for the third

and fourth grades, attended Adventist schools until he obtained his M.Div. degree. His D.Min. in Missiology came from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Lester pastored churches in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Southern New England, including academy churches, for 20 years and also taught secondary Bible during some of that time. From 1990–1996, he and his wife Lynn served at Pakistan Adventist Seminary; from 2001–2005, they served at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines.

When did the Institute of World Mission start, and what is its work and purpose?

The Institute of World Mission (IWM) was established by the General Conference at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to train missionaries for cross-cultural service. The first training event was held at Andrews University in the summer of 1966. Organized as an institute with its own faculty in 1981, IWM is still headquartered at the Seminary but holds several training events each year at different locations around the world for General Conference missionaries and others engaged in cross-cultural ministry. In addition to training missionaries, IWM is responsible for assisting in the continuing education and care of missionaries, helping to develop and promote the mission-consciousness in the world church, and researching and writing as advocates of church mission.

What kind of activities and projects is IWM engaged in?

Besides the “institutes”—the seminars held to prepare missionaries for cross-cultural ministry—IWM is currently preparing plans and materials for continuing-education opportunities for missionaries (retreats, online courses and

forums, journals) and special seminars for church leaders in multicultural team-building. IWM is involved in research projects for the church and is cooperating with the Secretariat in an initiative to prepare young missionaries for opportunities in the world's least evangelized areas.

How many missionaries work for the Adventist church around the world?

Since many Adventists are involved in cross-cultural ministries, it isn't easy to know which ones to count when giving missionary figures! However, if we use our church's statistics for missionaries sent by the church, we have approximately 800 families sent as General Conference inter-division workers, 700 volunteers (student missionaries, Adventist Volunteer Service), and 1,200 Global Pioneers (Global Mission-sponsored nationals who evangelize new areas in their homelands). Obviously, we need many more missionaries in each of these categories! These missionaries, by the way, come from many different countries of the world—the North American Division is no longer the missionary-sending division!

Why does the church still send missionaries?

Because the work is not finished yet, and billions still need to hear the Gospel. Jesus' commission is imperative, even today; He said: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

What does it mean to be a missionary?

It means to carry a mission! It means going somewhere as a representative of Jesus, as His ambassador. It means leaving your home country, learning a new

language and a new culture, and dedicating your life to living and working among those who have never heard the gospel.

Who can be a missionary?

Anyone who is willing to live for Christ and serve Him cross-culturally wherever there is a need. Young and old people are needed, people who will go and live in the unreached parts of the world. Church workers can go as missionaries, and professional people who want to use their skills in mission service can be missionaries.

What different types of missionaries do we have today?

Interdivisional workers sent by the General Conference have been filling the following positions: educational (30 percent), church administration (23 percent), medical (21 percent), ADRA (10 percent), school administration (7 percent), ministry (6 percent), and clinic/hospital administration (3 percent).

What skills or qualities must a missionary possess?

To be respectful and adaptable, to be patient and flexible, to be loving and caring—these are the most important qualities. Other skills—the ability to learn a new language; the skill of a medical and health profession; the ability to communicate the gospel in a way that people will understand; the ability of administration, teaching, and preaching—these are also valuable skills.

What are the biggest challenges facing today's missionaries?

Missionaries have always faced the challenges of separating from home and family, of needing to learn new languages and new jobs, and of adjusting to differences in climate, foods, living conditions, and

ways of life. These challenges remain, but three additional ones come to mind.

The Adventist missionary workforce is increasingly global. Most missionaries work in multicultural settings where they must adjust not only to the local culture but also to their fellow missionaries who are of a different culture, language, and ethnicity. Thus, cultural adjustments have to be made in several directions, and support between missionaries becomes more difficult.

The security situation in large parts of the world is deteriorating. Because missionaries are often visibly foreign where they serve, they can become targets for crime, may be exposed to additional traumatic events, or find themselves living with war and political instability.

Despite the growth of the Adventist church in many areas of the world, the challenge to Adventist mission and missionaries remains immense. With two billion of the world's population without a witnessing Christian community in their midst and the world religions of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism virtually untouched by any Christian group, Adventist missionaries have the hardest task of mission still before them. Learning to witness effectively to non-Christians, living in difficult parts of the world without a Christian community, and working with unwelcoming governments in hostile environments requires unusual levels of tenacity, flexibility, and God's grace.

What is the relevance of cross-cultural training to the church today?

In many ways, the world is truly becoming a global village. Globalization means that today's Adventist churches almost everywhere are becoming multi-cultural.

Immigration is a huge phenomenon that creates diverse people groups in every large city. Many disagreements and much of the disharmony in churches today can be traced to cultural misunderstandings and ethnic differences. And the church's outreach is seriously hampered when its members cannot communicate across cultures. Cross-cultural skills are necessary for the church to function well and be effective in its outreach. IWM training helps participants identify their cultural styles, practice attitudes needed for positive cross-cultural communication, and develop tools for cross-cultural dialogue and witnessing.

How does one become a missionary?

Most career missionaries today are professionals who have already received education and experience in the area of the need in the mission field. Some are called because an institution is looking for someone with their expertise and asked if they would be interested. Others are located for mission service by taking the initiative to fill out an application for mission service with the Secretariat of the General Conference at their Web site (http://www.gcsecretariat.org/RTF_Files/S312a_for_Webpage.rtf). Volunteers who serve short-terms (usually a year or so) apply for opportunities they locate in the database of calls maintained by Adventist Volunteer Service (www.adventistvolunteers.org).

Can the activities and work of a local church elder be considered equally important as that of a missionary?

As Adventists, we take seriously the biblical teaching of the church as a body. Every part of the body is important, no matter how small or specialized. Church elders are important to the functioning of the body as a whole. They are

also important to the cross-cultural mission of the church. Without strong local churches to send and support missionaries, without church elders who foster a mission vision among their flocks, the church would be seriously hampered in fulfilling the gospel commission to “go to all the world.” Whatever the size or location of the church, the evangelistic attitudes and mission fervor of the local church elders will largely contribute to the viability of mission within the local congregation and to its willingness to send its sons and daughters and give of its resources to share the Good News with those who are perishing.

Is the work of a church elder the same as that of a missionary?

I would answer Yes and No. Yes, in the sense that all activities done in God’s name and with all our abilities are important in His sight and can further His mission on earth. No, in the sense that a missionary is one who has received a specific call from God and the church to a specialized ministry crossing cultural boundaries to spread the gospel. Many times, this calling requires the missionary to learn a new language and make serious sacrifices. Yes, both activities are important; nevertheless, the requirements of the cross-cultural missionary are certainly different.

What resources does IWM provide its missionaries and others interested in cross-cultural witness?

IWM provides training for mission in several ways. Three-week training programs for career missionaries and others interested in cross-cultural service are held four times each year in diverse places such as Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Short-term mission training for student missionaries, volunteers,

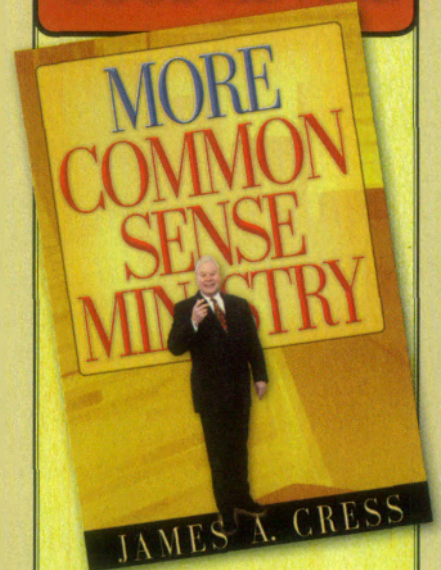
and those participating in mission trips is available as an online or video “Passport to Mission” self-study course. Adventist professionals and/or business persons interested in working in countries closed to conventional missionaries can find mission training and support through the IWM program “Global Partnerships.” “Leadership Across Cultures” seminars are designed for leaders at all levels of the church to facilitate the outreach, unity, and effectiveness of multicultural teams.

IWM maintains a publishing and book-order service with numerous volumes on topics of interest to missionaries, provides debriefing seminars for missionaries returning to their home cultures, and is developing the Adventist Mission Web site <www.adventistmission.org> to provide online resources for all those interested in mission.

Does God and the church need missionary families today?

Yes, the command to go and make disciples of all nations is still imperative today. God’s mission requires God’s missionaries. Individuals and families often want to serve the church as missionaries, but at that particular moment, there is not an available opportunity. When God calls you, He will send you! Many times you will have the opportunity to work as a career missionary for the church, or as a contract worker, a student missionary, or a volunteer. Other times, God’s call will come in the form of a job opportunity, and you will be required to go as a tentmaker, someone who works in a professional career while at the same time serving as God’s missionary, furthering the good news of the gospel in that particular context. Our task is to listen to God’s voice and join Him in His work, wherever He calls us. **ED**

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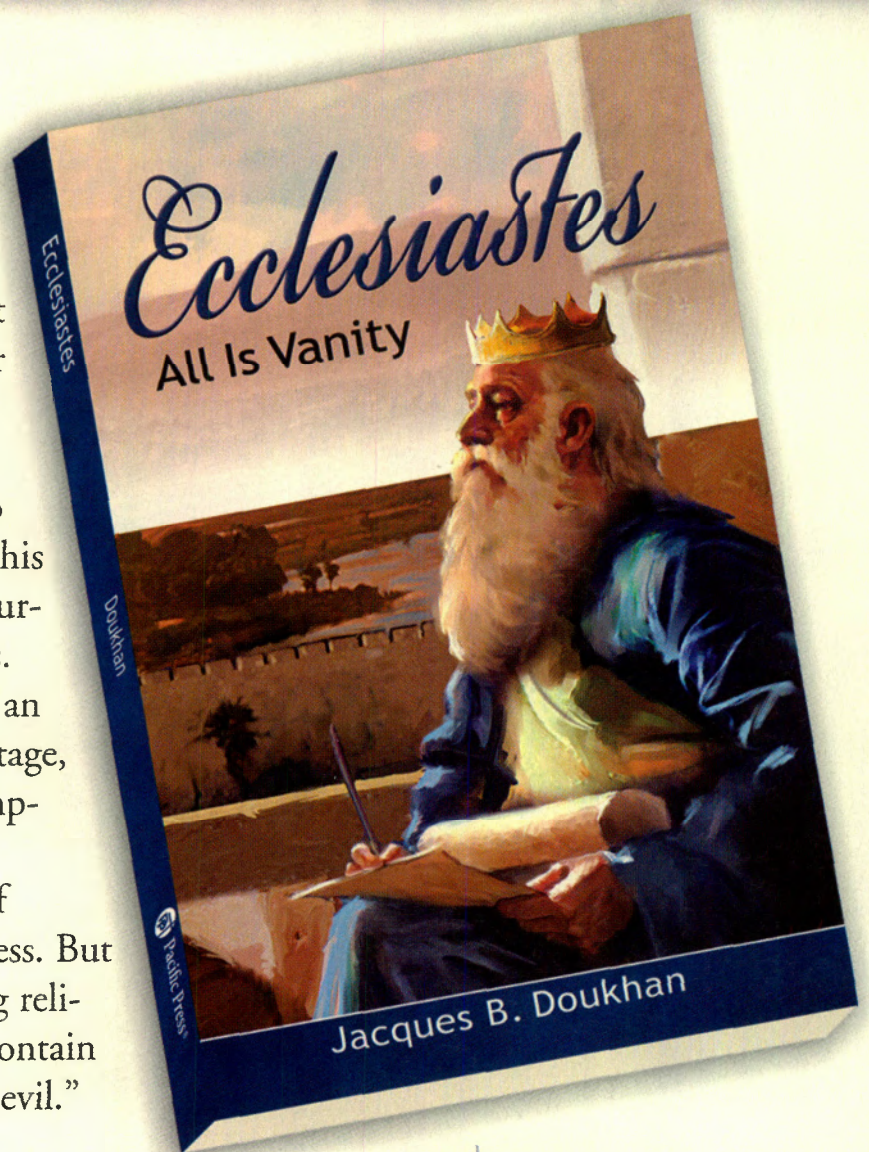
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HOW DO EFFICIENT LEADERS ACT ?

We live in fast-changing times that require leaders to be flexible and adaptable without losing sight of the mission and fundamentals of their faith. Let us observe what efficient leaders are doing to follow this fast-changing rhythm:

- **Leaders delegate and develop the people they lead.** They give them important tasks and the authority to make decisions. However, leaders follow up on the process with discretion. When challenges are overcome, abilities are developed and new leaders are formed. The result is that the church gains competent people who can assume greater responsibilities.
- **Leaders get involved.** They get enthusiastically involved with the ones being led, at least in the initial stages of a new task or campaign, until they influence and build commitment to promote and follow up on the program.
- **They give feedback.** The ones being led always wait for feedback from their leader regarding matters of interest that have been presented to superior organizations (Church committee, Elder's Committee). Honest and coherent leaders always try to communicate the results of what went to the committees, whether the answer was positive or negative.
- **Leaders promote practical activities.** If they are going to do or suggest something (church construction, reform, etc.), they present the means available for the new undertaking, making it easier to accomplish. Efficient leaders approach change in a positive and realistic way, not suggesting impractical plans with no provisions for their execution. Leaders are also flexible and willing to alter or adapt a plan, if necessary.
- **Leaders respect others.** They explain and respond patiently to questions asked by those they lead. They do not mock procedures or words they consider strange, make negative observations, or ridicule anyone's physical characteristics or regionalism. They accept everyone as they are, not allowing situations to generate constraints. If they are not skilled to lead people, at least they respect them.
- **Leaders build relationships.** Efficient leaders are skilled in interpersonal relationships. They are capable of dealing with problems without alienating people. At the right time, they make needed observations. They demonstrate that they understand others' perspectives and needs and that they are capable of obtaining cooperation, trust, and consideration. These people are dear because they know how to build and keep healthy relationships. ^{ED}

Paulo R. Pinheiro

Brazilian Publishing House Editor for *Elder's Digest Magazine*

1. I want to be further illuminated on the theology of re-baptism.

So do I, but the scriptures are silent beyond one passage (Acts 19:1-7), which tells of 12 believers who had been baptized by John in anticipatory faith of the coming Redeemer and who did not know of the reality of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. When they heard this good news, they were baptized again.

This unusual incident is insufficient to mandate that previously-immersed believers ought to be rebaptized. Adventists have always maintained that an immersed person is welcomed into church fellowship by profession of faith in his or her previous baptism. The foot-washing service that precedes Communion is a tangible and spiritual reminder of the cleansing that Jesus provides to all; those seeking rebaptism should be directed first to this meaningful service. Our *Church Manual*, however, does require rebaptism for re-admittance into the church for certain moral failures that have disgraced the church's witness in the community. Although there is no biblical text to prove this point of polity, any organization has the authority to establish rules by which it will govern itself.

2. What kind of materials has the General Conference Ministerial Association been preparing to support the ministry of local church elders?

The Ministerial Association is trying to make available to pastors the necessary resources for training officers at the local congregation level. One wonderful resource is the *Elder's Handbook*. This book presents the role and function of the elder according to biblical principles of organization and leadership. At the end of every chapter, there is a study guide to help the trainee in the learning process. There is also a special feature for group discussion. The breakout-session questions will help to make the presentation of the subject more attractive to the trainees.

Another good resource is *Elder's Digest*, a quarterly magazine for elders and other officers in the local congregation. In each issue, we focus on different aspects of the elder's activities. The articles are short and practical.

In every issue you will find sermon outlines, interviews with local church leaders and pastors, and a question-and-answer feature. *Elder's Digest* is translated into Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

Another helpful resource is the *SDA Elder's Guide*, a complete worship program for every Sabbath of the year. This program includes the sermon, children's story, calls to worship, hymn suggestions, scripture readings, and a pastoral prayer. The *SDA Elder's Guide* will follow closely our denominational calendar voted by the General Conference; in this way, all distinctive Adventist teachings, as well as the promotional program of the church, will be covered.

3. What is the role of the head elder?

The *Church Manual*, on page 52, recommends: "In churches with a large membership it is advisable to choose more than one elder. The burdens of office may be too great for one person, and should be shared by as many as are required to do the work. In such event one of them should be designated as 'first elder.' The work should be divided among the elders in harmony with their experience and ability." Several activities are under the head elder's responsibilities. One of them is to represent the pastor before the church in the pastor's absence. On the other hand, it is not the head elder's job to centralize all authority on himself, but to distribute responsibilities, plan, and be a counselor and motivator to the other elders. This attitude will facilitate the job of the group and will prepare other elders to be head elders in the future. Some think that because they are head elders, they need to do everything, they end up centering the activities on themselves. Others think that by delegating responsibilities, they will lose their authority. In reality, the more we delegate, the more authority we will exert. If you are a head elder, be a good colleague to the ones who assist you and a faithful friend of your pastor in taking care of and managing the church.

ED



DOING MORE IN THE YEAR 2007

Ready or not, the new year is here. How will you and I use our time in the upcoming year? Will we set our affections on things above or on things of the earth (Col. 3:2)? Why don't we challenge ourselves to do more for the Lord in the year 2007 than we have ever done in the past? Better yet, why don't we become more spiritually-minded and kingdom-oriented this coming year? We can do it! Let's focus on the following areas:

More serious Bible study

God's Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps. 119:105). His Word is able to save our souls (James 1:22), building us up and giving us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 20:32). How wonderful that God has given us His Word to show us the way of true life!

How tragic that His children sometimes get so busy with the daily affairs of life

that they do not spend much time studying the Bible! Why not plan to read the Bible completely through in 2007? This would be a great blessing to your life. If you want to read the Bible from cover to cover in a year's time, it will be easier and more beneficial if you have a set schedule to follow. It takes discipline to set aside time for reading and studying the Bible, but you can do it! There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament and 260 in the New Testament, totaling 1,189 chapters. To read the entire Bible in one year, you would only need to read an average of 3.25 chapters per day. Is that too much?

More diligent efforts to teach our children

This concept is clearly taught in the Bible (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4). Teaching the Bible to kids requires serious effort. Parents have a number of responsibilities to their kids, including providing for

their material, physical, educational, social, and recreational needs. However, the most important task for all Christian parents is to teach their children the will of the Lord and show them how to serve Him faithfully!

If we could just get parents to understand this great truth, we would make great progress in terms of getting more dads and moms to be serious and diligent in teaching their kids about the Bible. Let's teach our kids more in the coming year. It will be a blessing for them and us as well.

More zeal in evangelism

Jesus Christ wants all people to hear His gospel and follow Him (Mark 16:15, 16). Do we share that desire? Do we really want everyone to be saved and go to heaven? If so, then we must share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, His Son!

Let us imitate the spirit of Apollos, of whom we read, "And being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord" (Acts 18:25).

I am confident that in the coming year, we can find more time to teach Christ's gospel to the lost. Yes, we live in a fast-paced, busy society. Sometimes we feel that we don't even have time to breathe. But surely we can find time to discuss the Bible with lost people? If we sing about "seeking the lost" and going "anywhere with Jesus," then surely we can back up our claims by putting forth the effort to try and teach precious souls how to follow Jesus Christ! Let's teach more in 2007!

More involvement in visitation

A visit can do so much to help, comfort, or stir up a troubled soul. Just whom can we visit? We can visit those who have physical needs or physical sicknesses (Matt. 25:34-40). Deliver a meal to someone who is shut in. Spend 30 minutes talking with (and listening to) a member of the church who is unable to attend services. Go to the funeral home when someone has lost a loved one and is grieving. You don't necessarily need to say anything special to those who are mourning—just sitting with them and being present can really comfort them, letting them know that you care. Visiting folks when they are discouraged can be a real blessing to the visited and the visitor. And let's remember to visit and exhort those members of the body of Christ who have left their first love. Yes, let's visit more in 2007!

When you go visiting, take your children with you so that they can learn from an early age the blessing of giving to and caring for others. But shouldn't the elders and preacher be doing a lot of visiting? Absolutely, but so should all Christians! Blessed is the congregation in which the members truly understand this truth.

More faithful in attendance

Obviously, if a child of God attends services every time the doors are open, then he/she cannot attend more often than that (although getting to services on time may be an area that needs improvement). Thank God for those who attend every worship assembly and every Bible study, regardless of the weather or their personal circumstances. For those who willfully miss such worship assemblies and periods of public Bible study with other Christians, what can they do in the coming year? They need to stop forsaking such assembling (Heb. 10:25).

The Bible has a built-in cure for willfully missing worship services and Bible study. I guarantee you that it works every time. What is this no-fail cure? "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

There it is. When a child of God puts the things of God first in his or her heart and life, then he or she will come to every Bible study and worship service of the church just as naturally as a cow will seek out water when it is thirsty. That's just the way it is. Let's keep on encouraging each other to do the best we possibly can when it comes to being faithful in attendance. ^{ED}

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A MODEST APPEAL TO PREACHERS

Pastor Brian D. Jones

Like most Christians, I have heard many sermons in my life, sermons in church and sermons on the radio. Some of what I've heard has been very good—scriptural, warm, compelling, clear. But much, if not most, modern preaching is marred by several major defects. Preachers often talk too loud and too fast, and many use anecdotes and jokes that detract from the force of their messages. Some preachers vigorously gesticulate, presumably to emphasize their points. Others sound as though they are speaking to a tribunal of adversaries who are unlikely to believe anything they hear. Still others sound so casual that one might think they are conveying nothing more essential than instructions on maintaining a golf course.

It is profitable for all elders who preach to consider how to do it best, with the

aim of achieving all possible success in declaring the gospel. For it is “through the foolishness of preaching” that God has elected “to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). What a mighty prospect, what a glorious opportunity, what a solemn responsibility this sets before all who preach—pastors, elders, and other leaders in the church.

Based on what the gospels reveal, I would venture to say that Christ's method of preaching was radically different from the modern homiletical styles and techniques. Jesus is the example believers are to follow, and in both the matter and manner of preaching; His example should be regarded as normative and supreme. What were some of the qualities of Christ's preaching that led the common people to hear Him gladly and

compelled His opponents to say, “Never a man spoke like this man”?

1 *He spoke graciously* (Luke 4:22). The word “gracious” as used here (*charis*, in Greek) implies not only a heavenly anointing but a kind, pleasant, and cheerful manner. His from-the-heart warmth was captivating and opened the way for ears to listen with intimate attentiveness.

2 *He spoke very calmly and in a well-modulated voice.* One of the characteristics prophesied of the Messiah was that “He shall not strive nor cry” (Matt. 12:19; Isaiah 42:2). The word in Matthew, translated “cry” (*krauge*) means “to shout.” Yet it is equally clear that Jesus had excellent voice projection that enabled large audiences to hear Him easily.

He did not have one manner in His private discourse and another in the pulpit.

While He did not speak in an apologetic, beg-your-pardon way, He did not have a confrontational manner. When it was necessary for Jesus to publicly rebuke sin (as in Matthew 23), we may be sure that He did it with all the anguish and grief of infinite love. His voice, while it rang with holy indignation, wasn't throttled with harshness, resentment, or any indication of personal annoyance.

3 *He spoke with authority, always giving sound doctrine* (Matt. 7:28, 29). What added to the authority of His preaching was that Christ embodied and exemplified the heavenly truths that He taught. He was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). As His representatives, our preaching should also be done with authority—rooted not in the force of our opinions or self-assured style of speaking but in the power of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15), taken to heart in our own life practice and set before the people with respect, clarity, and conviction. Jesus didn't hover around the edges of His subject but always got to the core of the matter and held it up for consideration. This was equally true of His personal conversations and His preaching. (For examples, see Matthew 19–21.) It is evident that His manner in public and in private was consistent.

4 *He did not pace about or gesticulate.* He gave the Sermon on the Mount from a fixed position (Matt. 5:1). On another occasion, He addressed a large crowd by the Sea of Galilee while sitting in a fishing boat anchored a little distance from the shore (Matt. 13:1-3). Had Jesus engaged in much body motion, the boat would have swayed from side to side, and

the people would have focused more on His acrobatics than on His words.

5 *He spoke with a simplicity that held the attention of the most unlearned of His listeners, and yet with a profundity that challenged the thinking of the most intellectually exacting of scholastics and sages.* "The common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37), while the learned doctors of the law marveled at His incisive treatment of Scripture (John 7:14-17). His teaching in parables largely contributed to His effectiveness in reaching every class of mind and society. His parables worked their way into the depths of the human heart, like seed in the soil, germinating and bringing forth fruit in season. He relied on prayer and communion with His Father to give a soul-magnetizing effect to His Word.

6 *He spoke with dignity, free from extraneous anecdotes and jokes.* Like the Apostle Paul, He did not "use lightness" when among the people (2 Cor. 1:17). He came to save and heal people, not dazzle and entertain them with oratory, theatrics, or ostentation. His words, bathed as they were in the love of God, imparted holy cheer but never prompted a giddy laugh. He did not clothe His body or His thoughts in finery. Simplicity and naturalness marked everything He did. Thus His hearers were able to focus on the substance of what He taught and were not distracted by oddities of manner or method.

7 *He spoke with the assurance that His Word would not return to Him void.* Jesus realized that His words would have a soul-saving effect on the lives of

all who were responsive to God's call. Thus the tenor of His teachings and the timbre of His voice conveyed that assurance and implanted hope, rather than despair and doubt, in His hearers. In other words, despite the stubborn resistance of many to the truth, He addressed people as His friends rather than as skeptics and hopeless rebels (see John 7:37-40; 8:25-32; 12:20-36). If we follow in the same spirit, our listeners will hear us sympathetically, rather than with their guard up, and they will gladly accept the best that we have to give them in our efforts to preach the gospel.

A final thought

Not with outward show, not with sound and fury, not with clever theatrics, not with smooth marketing techniques of the latest devising, but in the fullness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are bidden to declare the Word of God. Such preaching will anchor our listeners in the unshakable realities of the eternal gospel, and lift them to the heights of heavenly hope that will be woven right into their daily experience. And "in the days of famine, they shall be satisfied" "as with marrow and fatness" (Psalm 37:19; 63:5). **ED**

—Adapted from *The Watchman Examiner*, Feb. 25, 1960.

Pastor Brian D. Jones, Mountain View



INTRODUCTION

The book of Proverbs is valuable because it provides wisdom from God to guide us in every realm of our lives. Whether it be family, business, social, or spiritual relationships, we can find inspired advice that enables us to walk in wisdom, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-17).

The purpose of this message is not to present an exhaustive study of the Proverbs, but to demonstrate in a few lessons its practicality in providing wisdom for the Christian today.

I. Advice in selecting a wife

A. Much happiness in life depends upon choosing the right wife (Prov. 12:4). A good wife greatly enhances her husband's life, but the wrong wife can destroy a man from the inside out! It is folly to think that a mistake in this area can be easily corrected.

Many people think that divorce is an easy solution, but God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), and remarriage may not be a viable option for the disciple of Christ (Matt. 19:8, 9); when it is, if you have children, your ex-wife will *always* be the mother of your children (for better or worse!).

B. Some guidelines for finding a good wife

1. Seek help from God (Prov. 19:14). Success in this venture may depend more upon God than we think! In view of the seriousness of this matter, dare we go about it alone?
2. Do not place priority on good looks alone (Prov. 31:30). Beauty is skin-deep and temporary; it is therefore a poor foundation upon which to build a life-long relationship. Sadly, most marriages are built on little more than physical attraction. Instead, look for these characteristics in a woman:
 - a. *The fear of the Lord* (Prov. 31:30). Such a woman possesses the beginning

of wisdom (1:7). Having a wife who is a devout Christian, then, should be a primary concern.

b. *Discretion* (Prov. 11:22). This is the ability to do the right thing at the right time. Without this, beauty is worthless and can even be the object of ridicule.

c. *Wisdom* (Prov. 14:1). A wife with this virtue will help her husband build a good home. *Without wisdom, she will undermine her husband's efforts.*

3. Avoid the woman who is contentious and argumentative! It is better to be single and alone than to be married to the wrong person. To be married to a godly woman, however, is a wonderful blessing from the Lord (Prov. 18:22). By following God's counsel from the book of Proverbs, we can increase our chances of finding a good spouse. The same is true for women seeking a good husband.

II. Advice in selecting a husband

A. There are many ways to learn about a man:

1. How does he treat animals? This reveals a lot about his character (Prov. 12:10).
2. Does he listen to the advice of others? That will tell you whether he is foolish or wise (Prov. 12:15).
3. What type of company does he keep? If he runs with the wrong crowd, you might be destroyed right along with him (Prov. 13:20).
4. Is he quick-tempered or is he a person of understanding (Prov. 14:29)?
5. How does he earn his living? You will be blessed or cursed by his business decisions (Prov. 15:27).
6. Does he feel like he always has to express his opinion? If so, he lacks knowledge and a calm spirit (Prov. 17:27, 28).
7. Does he have compassion for the poor? If so, his prayers will then be answered (Prov. 21:13).

B. Men to avoid

1. The womanizer (or flirter). He will destroy himself and hurt all those involved (Prov. 6:27-29).
2. A quick-tempered man. You will become like him and destroy yourself as well (Prov. 22:24, 25).
3. An alcoholic (Proverbs 23:29, 30).

Conclusion

One of life's most important decisions is choosing the right spouse. Divorce and remarriage are not options for the faithful Christian, with one exception (Matt. 19:9). Who shall be the father or mother of your children? This choice cannot be undone after your children are born. Dare we make such decisions without consulting the wisdom found in the Word of God? This certainly does not exhaust all that the Bible has to say about selecting a spouse, but God's advice is extremely practical and worthy of our careful study and application to our lives. Choose to follow Jesus and let Him help you make this important decision. ^{ED}

SERMON NOTES:

General Conference Ministerial Association



INTRODUCTION

As we study the book of Proverbs, we should remember two things: That life is short, and that our eternal existence is greatly influenced by how we live here on earth. It is imperative, then, that we not waste our time through rash and foolish decisions which not only jeopardize our eternal destiny, but can also make this life miserable.

The value of wisdom is especially seen in family relationships. "He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind; and the foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart." (Prov. 11:29). Life is too short and families grow too fast for us to raise a family through "trial and error."

I. Wisdom in providing for a family

A. Many people would say that providing the "necessities" of life—food, clothing, shelter—are most important in providing for a family. Others would say that luxuries, particularly things that parents never had when they were children, are also needed. Many people also want to provide a good education for their children. While all of these things have merit, inspired wisdom from the book of Proverbs teaches us not to place emphasis upon material things.

B. What the family needs

1. *A fear of the Lord* (Prov. 15:16). Even more than riches, your family needs you to set an example through your deep and abiding respect for the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). It prolongs life (10:27). It is the key to avoiding sin (16:6) and is the key to true wealth (22:4). The fear of the Lord, then, is perhaps the most important "provision" that one can give to his or her family.
2. *Love* (Prov. 15:17). Providing an environment where love reigns is more important than providing material abundance.

Troubled children come from homes where love, not money, is lacking!

3. *A peaceful family life* (Prov. 17:1). Where there is peace and tranquility in a family, material affluence matters little, but what value is there in wealth if family members are always fighting over the things money provides?
4. *Spiritual provisions*. Wise parents will see that spiritual provisions are more important than material things. They will see that their family receives what is truly important, even if it means cutting back on less important things.

C. How should parents provide for their families?

1. *Be righteous* (Prov. 20:7). This means that parents will put the kingdom of God first in their lives (Matt. 6:33). God watches out for His faithful children and sees that their needs are adequately met! Children of righteous parents are truly blessed, but parents who fail to put God first go through life without God's providential help, and their children may suffer as a result.
2. *Concentrate on acquiring wisdom and knowledge instead of wealth* (Prov. 24:3, 4). This would involve a careful study and application of God's Word, especially a book like Proverbs, but it also involves living a dedicated life as a disciple (learner) of Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2, 3).

II. Wisdom in raising children

A. *Inspired wisdom is explicit in the proper use of discipline*. Used properly, discipline is a demonstration of true love (Prov. 13:24). Proper discipline serves to remove foolishness from the child (22:15) and imparts wisdom and avoids shame (29:15). Proper discipline has its rewards (29:17).

B. More wisdom from family verse

1. Proverbs 22:6 is commonly translated, "Train up a child in the way he should go." This means that a child's development depends on his or her training, especially in spiritual matters.
2. Literally, the verse can be translated, "Train up a child according to his way." That is, train up a child according to his or her inclinations. For example, don't try to force a child who is mechanically inclined to be a doctor or a lawyer. However, I might add that trying to force children to go against their aptitude may encourage them to rebel in all areas of parental influence, including spiritual.

Conclusion

Since so much of our happiness (or lack of it) is affected by our family life, we should take advantage of the wisdom offered in the book of Proverbs. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). Make Jesus the center of all your relationships. ^{ED}

SERMON NOTES:

General Conference Ministerial Association



Why a Church WEDDING?

Rex. D. Edwards

In most cases, the ritual of a Christian wedding ceremony includes this significant statement: "By the authority committed unto me as a minister of the church of Christ, I declare that [names] are now husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of the state, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

This pastoral pronouncement seems to blend the twin notions of legal and religious authority in establishing the status of marriage. But the Bible nowhere insists on a religious ceremony to legitimize a wedding service, nor does it prohibit marriage by civil law. A justice of the peace or one endowed with similar legal authority can conduct a wedding without any church service. However, it has been a historic tradition and a recommended practice of the church that Christian couples have a church wedding. Why a church wedding? Consider these seven reasons:

1 Marriage is an act of God.

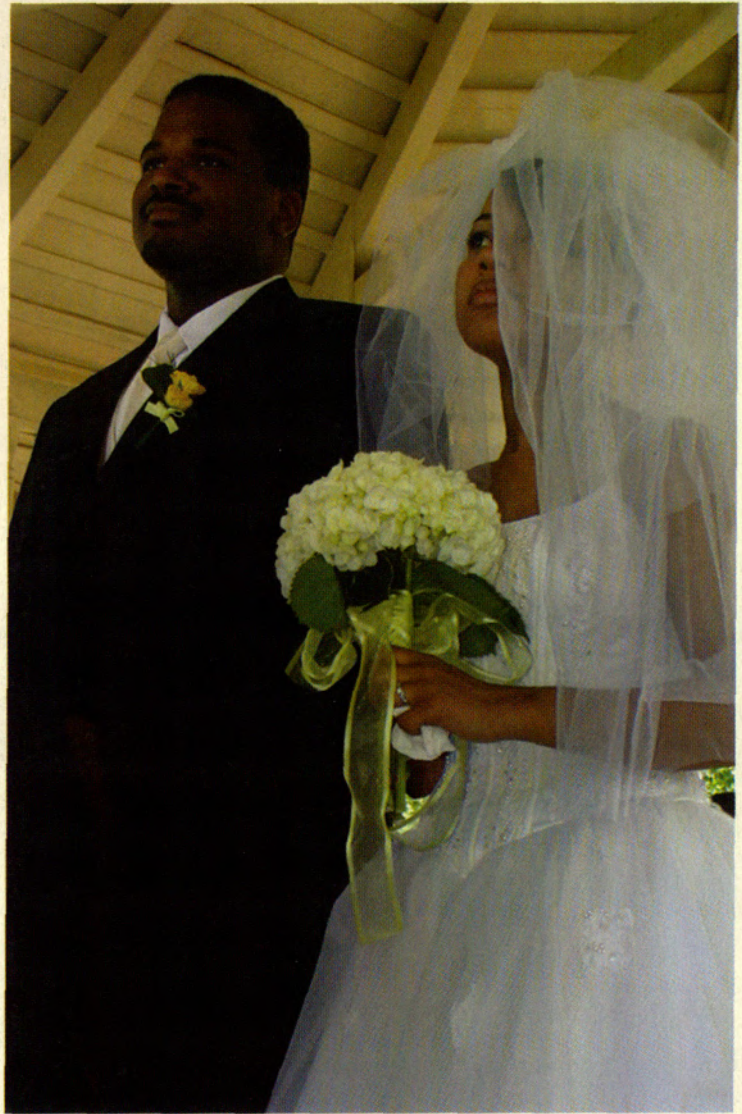
A religious ceremony acknowledges that marriage is an act of God. Legally, it could be done at the courthouse; the couple could pick up their license, go down the corridor, and ratify the marriage before an official of the law. But for Christians, that

would leave out the most essential part. A miracle takes place in a Christian marriage. Each person is transformed into a different sort of creature. Before marriage, they belonged to the families to which they were born; after marriage, they belong to each other. At marriage, a new family is created, a new home is established on earth. All this is not human doing but God's.

Marriage is a divine order of Creation. At their marriage, a man and woman enter into what was given at Creation. The bride and groom must recognize that they are entering into something that will always be alien to the life around them. If they cannot recognize the uniqueness of Christian marriage, they might as well get married at the courthouse.

2 Marriage is religiously established.

A religious ceremony reminds the bride and groom that the greatest responsibility taken on in marriage is religious. A marriage partner who is a spiritually-poor provider has failed in his or her most important obligation. It is awesome to think that husbands and wives are the keepers of each other's souls. This responsibility looks beyond this world. Augustine said that the final purpose of marriage is "that the one may bring the other with him [or her] to heaven."



A secular marriage has a legal or sociological rationale, but a religious marriage has religion as its constituting element. Without religious attitudes and practices, it loses the foundation on which it was created.

3 Marriage inaugurates a Christian home.

A marriage ceremony formalized in a church setting is a witness of what Jesus Christ can do for life. A Christian marriage is not a contract between a man and a woman, but a covenant between three individuals. The third partner is

Christ, and when He is given no room in a marriage, there can be no assurance for a happy Christian home.

4 Marriage is a sacred covenant, not a civil contract.

A religious ceremony is a statement against the trend toward the secularization of marriage. According to Samuele Bacchiocchi, secularization of marriage holds "that marriage is a temporary social contract governed by civil laws, rather than a permanent and sacred covenant, witnessed and guaranteed by God Himself." Instead of promising faith-

fulness "till death do us part," a couple pledge to remain together "as long as we both shall love."¹

The diminution of marriage from a sacred covenant to a civil contract can be traced back to the French Revolution. As Ellen White explains, among other laws passed at that time "was that which reduced the union of marriage—the most sacred engagement which humans can form and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society—to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which

A religious ceremony affirms that marriage cannot be so loosely considered

any two persons might engage in and cast loose at pleasure."²

A religious ceremony affirms that marriage cannot be so loosely considered. It places upon the union of a man and woman the sacredness and permanence of a covenant. It also conveys a divine warning to all who might try to come between the two. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6, NASB).

5 Marriage bonds the partners to the church.

A religious ceremony also affirms the church's role in the lives of the bride and groom. Church is not what is important; God is. And God has placed the church on earth to bring people nearer to Him. It may be too readily assumed that a "church connection" makes a home religious. Church membership is not a connection; it's a way of life. Those who accept this way of life may be getting what their homes need most of all. The very act of going together to church and sitting side by side in worship can unite a married couple with something rapt and wonderful. If they have come with some sense of tension, the benediction may find them feeling far more tender toward each other.

The opportunity for service in the church can allow a husband and wife to participate together in a tremendously satisfying hobby. There they can make

friends who will be a blessing to their marriage. In small groups or classes, they may join in discussions of Christian issues. They may together catch that special glow that kindles from one heart to another when friends pray. At baptisms, marriages, and funerals, a church has its homes within its keeping.

6 A religious marriage provides spiritual roots for children.

"As they become parents, a sacred trust is committed to them. Upon them depends in great measure the well-being of their children in this world, and their happiness in the world to come."³ Children whose parents are not religiously united are less likely to have strong spiritual roots. As a child is dedicated, parents are urged to be the evangelists for that child. The Christian religion uses family relationships to express spiritual truths. Many of our Christian concepts reflect what we learned in our families: God is our Father, we are His children; Christians are brothers and sisters; God's comfort is like that of a mother; new life in Christ requires nurture as newborn babes do; God loves His people as a husband loves his wife; the church is the bride of Christ. A home not founded on religious roots deprives its children of a great spiritual nurture and heritage.

7 A religious marriage is a testimony to faith in God.

A religious ceremony gives the bride and groom a foundation of faith in God,

which helps them develop faith in each other. They can face the future full of hope because they know what will bring their marriage its daily comforts and ultimate success. Side by side, they can travel through the years, held together by a love whose source is in the heart of God.

"Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring."⁴ **ED**

1. "Christian Marriage: Social Contract or Sacred Covenant?" in *Adventist Affirm*, Spring 1988, p. 6.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 270.
3. —*The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), p. 357.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

Rex D. Edwards

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Time for the Second ANGEL'S MESSAGE



I'm often asked by Adventist audiences about the imminence of Sunday laws. One of my typical responses is that when I graduated from law school, they gave me a law license, not a crystal ball! Although I understand Adventists' desire to know when or how prophecy will be fulfilled, I think there is a much more important question: In light of our prophetic insight, what message should we be sharing now?

From my perspective, the focus must be on the second angel's message as it relates to the first. Here's why: The second angel warns against the union of church and state. The fall of the religious power, "Babylon," is due to her immoral intimacy with the kings of the earth, the state. She makes all nations do her bidding, enforcing her religious teachings by law. Today, American churches have shifted their emphasis from evangelism and preaching to politics. The gospel message has been watered down. Where once the emphasis was on repentance and holiness, today it is on believing. Where once believers

were taught that those who are justified will live by faith, today the message is that they are saved by an act of faith. The gospel has been denuded of its power (see Romans 1:16, 17).

The prophetic message is that a spiritually powerless church seeks a substitute for the power of God in the power of the state. Politics replaces the Holy Spirit as the engine of moral and spiritual revival. So it is today in America. Moreover, this is the fruit of generations of antinomianism. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Protestant America rejected the law of God as the standard of character in the judgment, effectively rejecting the sanctifying influence of God's Spirit. It is no wonder that a false doctrine of the Holy Spirit has swept the globe. Emotional enthusiasm has replaced humble obedience.

The first and second angels' messages cannot be separated. It is the rejection of the first message—the everlasting gospel, its emphasis on the worship

of the Creator, and the recovery of the law of God—that leads to the apostate reliance on state power that the second angel warns against.

Adventists make the mistake of imagining that other churches have an equally robust gospel. This is false. While people of many churches have a wonderful love relationship with Christ, sound teaching is in short supply.

Today, as the American evangelical culture continues to put its trust in politics, the Adventist prophetic perspective is critically relevant and urgent. The nation deserves to benefit from the wisdom that "it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes" (Ps. 118:9). **ED**

Alan J. Reinach, Esq., Director of Public Affairs & Religious Liberty, Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Children's Baptism

Erton Kohler

With the coming of Spring, children's interest in baptism increases. After all, this ceremony was originally prepared for them. But at the same time, questions may arise regarding the legitimacy of this type of baptism. Some might think it's too early, that their decisions lack depth, that decisions made at this stage of life won't last or will end in apostasy, or that the church diminishes the importance of baptism by accepting children so early. There is another group though, that accepts and encourages children to make this decision early in life.

What should be the position of a church elder or leader in this matter? Besides seeking God's orientation, we need to evaluate this issue further so it brings harmony, not dissention.

As you read this article, please remember the meaning of baptism: it is a ceremony of commitment. According to biblical symbolism, baptism is like a wedding (a love statement) or like death and resurrection, the beginning of a new life. In both cases, baptism is the beginning, not the end, of a process. We need to see the child's decision within this reality.

THE DECISION'S REACH

God accepts and understands each person's decision within his or her reality. Children are only starting to understand life; it is within this context that they surrender themselves. It cannot be compared to the reach of an adult's decision; adults are far from this age and do not face the same reality in life. As children make



their decisions, they declare their love for Jesus, their desire to be close to Him, and their commitment to the Gospel's simple and practical aspects. Ellen White is clear when she says, "Baptism does not make children Christians; neither does it convert them; it is but an outward sign, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that they believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and will henceforth live for Christ" (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 499).

We need to be careful not to require too much from them. By knowing the basic principles and being committed to them, children will have the opportunity to continue to grow during their Christian lives. This growth will depend mainly upon the manner in which their Christian lives began. If they were welcomed, stimulated, taught the practical aspects of life, involved, and accepted into church, baptism will prepare the way for the growth that will come to them through the Christian experience and with age.

THE RISK OF PROHIBITION

Children and earliteens have high value before God, and that is why we must be careful in thinking negatively about their baptisms. We need to show them that baptism is a wall—not an insurmountable wall, but a wall of protection, fostering in them a growing desire to be welcomed in church. Constant negative comments, prohibitions, requirements, or difficulties in authorizing the baptism end up creating a feeling of rejection and building a barrier. What once was a dream for them ends up becoming a discomfort. They think, "If this is so good, why can't I do it?"

In one of the districts where I was a pastor, I went through this experience. One Sabbath, around Spring Baptism, a sister looked for me and asked me to talk to her 16-year-old son and to invite him to be baptized. She told me, "He comes to church, but he doesn't want to be baptized. I don't know what else to do." I made an appointment to visit the family during the week.

I asked to speak with the boy in private, and I asked him why he didn't want to be baptized; after all, he was raised in church. The answer was quick: "I don't accept it because I don't want to. I don't feel like it." I kept on insisting, "But don't you go to church, and don't you love Jesus?" He began opening up little by little and finally said, "When I was smaller, several times I answered calls. I wanted to be baptized, but I was still too young. My mother would always say that I wasn't ready yet, I wasn't prepared, I wasn't old enough, and I didn't behave well enough, and she even ridiculed me. Many times when she punished me,

she would remind me that a boy with my behavior could not be baptized." He ended the conversation by saying, "When I wanted it, she didn't let me, now I'm the one who doesn't want to." A seed had been planted, and now its fruits were starting to show.

I don't want to say that any child who wants to be baptized *should* be baptized, but we need to be skillful when dealing with this situation, without creating impositions, difficulties, troubles, and other behaviors that are repelling instead of stimulating. Besides, if children insist, the church should allow them to be baptized at the first possible opportunity, showing them that it understands their desire and wants them to be close to Jesus. After all, "Christ placed such a high estimate upon your children that He gave His life for them. Treat them as the purchase of His blood. . . . The youngest child that loves and fears God is greater in His sight than the most talented and learned man who neglects the great salvation. . . . The soul of the little child that believes in Christ is as precious in His sight as are the angels about His throne. They are to be brought to Christ and trained for Christ" (Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 279).

THE IDEAL AGE

The controversy appears when we are determining the best age to be baptized. Ellen White teaches that from eight years of age, children start entering a new stage in life. From this age on, they should be prepared for a decision for Christ. I'm not saying they should be baptized at this age, but they should be led in this direction. After all, "[c]hildren of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ" (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, pp. 490, 491).

This is not a matter to be discussed in the future but a matter that should be presented to children as soon as they are able to consider it. For when they start making more serious decisions and having more autonomy, when they start having some responsibility and start answering for their own attitudes, they need to be led to make a decision for Jesus.

THE PARENTS' ATTITUDE

More than the church leaders, parents should be wise when dealing with their children's baptism. Their attitude should always be supportive, and they should encourage their children's

The best way is to encourage, prepare and lead they are sure of their decision and that they will



decisions to surrender their lives to Jesus. Ellen White counsels that "as the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the children, cooperate with His work. Teach them that the Saviour is calling them, that nothing can afford Him greater joy than for them to give themselves to Him in the bloom and freshness of their years" (Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 580).

If children want to be baptized but are still not at the ideal age, it's very important not to deny them, but to show that they are going to be baptized in a little while. This is the opportunity to start studying a practical Christian lifestyle and to create special activities that will prepare them for the appropriate age. Parents should always evaluate their ability to make a decision and to gauge their interest, but they should not create perfectionist goals for their children to be baptized. And parents should not talk about baptism when disciplining their children. The inspired counsel is, "If they err, do not scold them. Never taunt them with being baptized and yet doing wrong. Remember that they have much to learn in regard to the duties of a child of God" (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 500).

THE ATTITUDE OF CHURCH LEADERS

Church leaders should also be supportive of the decision for

baptism. Even if children are not old enough or not yet prepared, the church should demonstrate an interest in helping to mold them, study with them, and keep them interested so that they keep the decision alive.

Some precautions should be taken:

1. Do not minimize or ridicule their decision. Avoid saying, "Only children answered the call. We don't have anyone to be baptized" or "Do you want to be baptized? You have a long way to go!"

2. Do not make negative comments or set unrealistic standards. Do not say things like, "This boy talks too much during the service. He's not ready for baptism." Or "We're not sure about your preparation. Let's test you first."

3. Avoid the argument that they cannot be baptized because they are too young and will soon abandon the church. Apostasy, in most cases, is greater among adults than teenagers. If children are involved and committed to their church from an early age, they are much less likely to leave the church.

4. Evaluate the children's desire and their family situations. Families need to support their children's decision. "In consenting to baptism of their children, parents sacredly pledge themselves to be faithful stewards over these children, to guide them in their character building" (Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, pp. 499, 500).

5. If necessary, seek spiritual "godparents." Many children come from unstable families or from families that do not share the same faith. It is important that an adult, the Pathfinder or Adventurer Club, or the church school supports and guides children in their first steps. Providing Sabbath School quarterlies, inviting them to lunch after church, or sitting next to them during the service can make a great difference. If the family is not Seventh-day Adventist, this is an opportunity to conquer them as well. Ellen White guarantees that "Through the children, many parents will be reached" (Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 584).

6. Organize a special Bible class. This is the way to properly prepare children for baptism. This class could function at the

the children to baptism with the assurance that have enough support to live the Christian life.

church school, the Pathfinder or Adventurer Club, or under the umbrella of children's ministry. There are many opportunities for the church to do its part in preparing children for baptism.

ELLEN WHITE'S SUPPORT

In her day, Ellen White supported the decisions, surrender, and baptism of children. They matured a little later than today's generation, but even so, she emphasized the importance of this decision. Talking about a meeting she attended, she said, "The meetings for children that took place in Monterey (Michigan) were, I believe, the best we ever attended. Everyone began to seek the Lord and to ask, 'What should we do in order to be saved? . . .' We knew that the Lord was working for us, bringing these dear children to His sheep pen. . . . These children wanted to be baptized. . . . Tuesday, ten girls went into the waters to receive the ordinance of baptism. We were deeply empathized with a girl. She decided that she had to be baptized. She came with her young friends to the water, but her difficulty came back. . . . They were all baptized except for her, who could not be persuaded to enter the water. We noticed that Satan was opposed to the good work and wanted to prevent her, and she should go on. I dressed her with the baptismal robe and insisted with her to enter the water. She hesitated. My husband on one side and I on the other, and her father imploring, we tried to

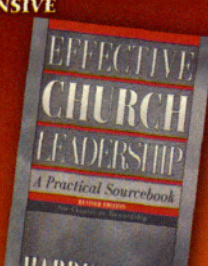
encourage her to proceed, but her fear of the water made her refuse. She finally consented. She dampened her head and hands while the minister repeated several times the words, "In the name of Jesus, proceed." Calmly she entered the water and was buried resembling Christ's death. . . . The next day five boys expressed their desire to be baptized. It was an interesting scene to see those boys, all about the same age and size, side by side professing their faith in Christ" (*Questions I Would Ask Sister White*, pp. 24, 25).

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

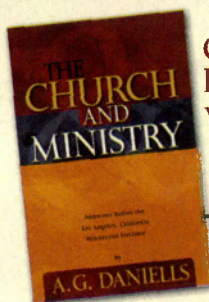
After analyzing the subject, I recommend balance and wisdom when making decisions regarding children's baptism. Don't be so firm or demanding that you discourage this special decision. On the other hand, do not baptize children too quickly, without any preparation, simply to reach numbers or to have a special part in a program. The best way to encourage, prepare, and lead children to baptism is with the assurance that they are sure of their decision and that they will have enough support to live the Christian life. It is better to make a mistake in your evaluation than to repel children from Jesus and from baptism. ^{ED}

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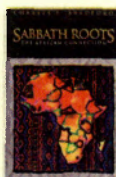
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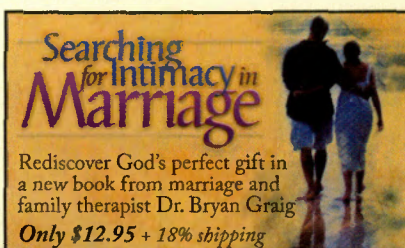
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THE ART OF SPEECH



YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO BREATHE

"Students should be taught how to breathe, how to read and speak so that the strain will not come on the throat and lungs, but on the abdominal muscles. Teachers need to educate themselves in this direction" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp.147, 148).

We all know how to breathe. As we came out of the womb, we were instinctively taught how to make use of our respiratory system. But do we know how to use our breathing when speaking? Life consists of a series of breaths. It is possible to live a long time without eating, a few days without drinking, but only a few minutes without breathing.

Breathing is absorbing oxygen into the lungs, breathing is expelling carbon dioxide from the body, breathing is living. Breathing is an involuntary yet control-

lable action, and its importance is unquestionable. Since creation, special importance has been given to it, especially when we consider that our own Creator was the One who breathed into human beings the "breath of life."

Our vocal health depends on knowing how to breathe correctly. "The training of the voice has an important place in physical culture, since it tends to expand and strengthen the lungs, and thus to ward off disease. To ensure correct delivery in reading and speaking, see that the abdominal muscles have full play in breathing and that the respiratory organs are unrestricted. Let the strain come on the muscles of the abdomen rather than on those of the throat. Great weariness and serious disease of the throat and lungs may thus be prevented" (*Education*, p. 199).


When we inhale, air enters through the nostrils, passes through the larynx (where the vocal cords are located), and goes to the lungs. When we exhale, the air returns through the larynx; when we speak, the vocal cords come together, vibrating and producing sound. This sound is amplified and modified by the resonance chambers that are the oral, nasal, and chest cavities.

Breathing can be done through the nose, mouth, or a combination of both; however, nasal breathing is the best because air goes through the nose and is warmed, purified, and humidified.

When we speak, our breathing is natural, which means air goes in and out according to the emotion and the length of the phrases. When we pause, breathing occurs slowly through the nose; when we

- Does this decision have eternal consequences?
- What consequences will this choice have in 10 years?
- Am I making this decision simply because of peer pressure?
- Will this decision affect other people?
- Could other people be involved in this decision, or only me?
- What do wise people and counselors who know me think about this choice?
- Have I prayed about this decision?

In the book of Micah, there is a verse that serves as a compass when dealing with ethical decisions in any area of our lives. I counsel you to read it and follow the counsels of the old prophet: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

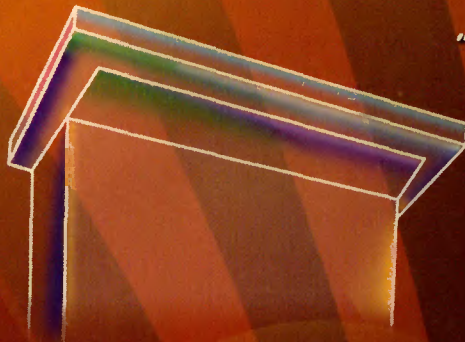
All wisdom comes from God. His counsel is what you and I need to start a new year with a determined purpose: to reflect God's will in the choices for our lives! 

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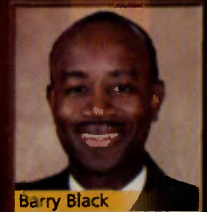
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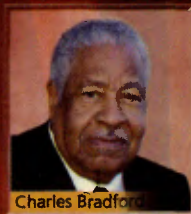
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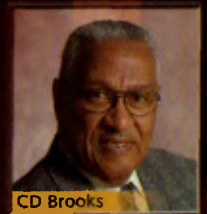
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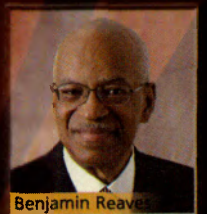
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EXPERIENTIAL SABBATH-KEEPING



If a spiritual belief or practice never takes root in daily life, we have fallen far short of evangelism's goal for new believers to experience new life in Christ. The process by which we instruct new or potential believers may be as necessary for their joy in an ongoing relationship with Jesus as the facts which we teach them. For example, consider Sabbath-keeping.

It is one thing to accurately teach the perpetuity of the seventh-day Sabbath, which was presented at the end of the six-day creation and authenticated by the testimony of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and, ultimately, Jesus Christ Himself. It is another matter entirely to ensure that believers experience the benefits of Sabbath-keeping for themselves so that they can say with the Psalmist, "Taste of the Lord and see that He is good!" I am so convinced of the need to emphasize the benefits of Sabbath-keeping that my approach centers less on proving something and more on discovering the blessings God has in store for those who, with open minds and hearts, approach the experience of His will.

Jesus Christ wants us to learn by doing, which allows His biblical truths to self-authenticate themselves in our experiment with and experience of obedience. "Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know if my teaching is from God or is merely my own" (John 7:17, NLT).

We should never fear the results of experimentally developing confidence in God's way. Rather, we should seek new and innovative ways to encourage others to "taste and see" for themselves. The most effective evangelists proclaim eternal truths from God's Word, coupled with opportunities (such as special Sabbath celebrations built right into the evangelistic program) for potential believers to experiment with God's will for their lives.

Sabbath-keeping is an excellent test for the value of this approach. Rather than asking people to pledge adherence to an intellectual concept, why not encourage them to experimentally discover the blessing that awaits them in testing God's promised blessings? Instead of risking that

people might reject what they have tried out for themselves, we actually build faith by providing opportunities for experimentation. "Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 page 69).

In his book *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck says, "Learning can be passive or experiential. Experiential learning is more demanding but infinitely more effective. As with other things, the rules of communication and community are best learned experientially" (p. 84). Personally, I've discovered great benefit in teaching the principles of Sabbath-keeping from God's own fourth commandment, but I've rooted the concept in experimental and experiential discovery and in fellowship with others who seek to know and experience the best that Jesus offers. Referencing the fourth commandment, three distinct principles readily present opportunities to experience Sabbath.

1. Preparation. The biblical concept of

speak, we breathe through our mouths. In singing, great air volume is needed, almost emptying the lungs; in speech, medium volume is used.

It is common to see some people using what is called "superior" or "short" breathing. This, however, is not the most adequate because it uses only the superior part of the thorax and lungs. It is also not recommended because little air goes in, and the speaker tends to produce a vocal effort that causes tension in the larynx, resulting in a strident voice.

Correct breathing, though, is easy and does not take effort because the amount of air that goes into the lungs is much greater. To start using what is called "inferior" or "diaphragmatic" breathing, stand in front of a mirror and place one hand on your chest and the other above your navel. When you inhale, the hand

above your chest should not move; the other, above your abdomen, moves out, according to the air going in. When you are in the pulpit, breathe deeply, not raising your chest but expanding your abdomen.

Slow and correct breathing will even help to release tension. A very important thing is to avoid using all of your air. This "air reserve" should never be used in speech. If you notice you are running out of air, take a breath, inhale. This pause will help to make your voice more audible.

Study your sermon carefully. When you are familiar with the text, you will also know when you will need more or less air. For instance, if you are making a call or emphasizing a phrase, you will probably need a lot of air; therefore, you should pause, take a breath, and then make the important statement. However,

long pauses may distract your audience. When you pray, ask God to help you to breathe correctly. Ellen White explains how to speak and breathe correctly:

"Speaking from the throat, letting the words come out from the upper extremity of the vocal organs, all the time fretting and irritating them, is not the best way to preserve health or to increase the efficiency of those organs. You should take a full inspiration and let the action come from the abdominal muscles. . . . You can speak to thousands with just as much ease as you can speak to ten" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol 2, page 616). ^{ED}

Alexandra Sampaio, speech therapist, resides in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.



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STARTING ALL OVER

Raquel Arrais

Starting something new always gives one a sensation of a new chance, a new opportunity. A new year is like that—a gift from God—365 days to live and experience His love.

When I think of the new year, I think of the many decisions I'll have to make along the way. I know that these decisions will influence my attitudes, my interests, and my relationship with God and with others.

I heard about a professor who would say, "That which you decide early in the morning will guide your decisions and choices during the entire day." I believe, however, that we can seek knowledge and guidance so that our daily decisions

foster our spiritual growth and receive divine approval with respect to our attitudes.

Although the correct way is not always easy, we can significantly improve in this matter. The book of Proverbs, as well as the entire Bible, continually encourages us to make wise decisions in everything we do. Proverbs provides questions we can ask ourselves in any situation that requires a wise and coherent decision.

Some time ago, I presented the following questions to my sons during a family trip. It was a creative yet spiritual way for them to express how God would help them face their daily challenges and choices.

Ask yourself these questions when you are facing an important decision:

- Does this choice honor God?
- Is this choice in accordance with God's values and principles?
- What are my motives in this decision?
- Is this choice fair? Is it based on the Bible?
- Did I spend time thinking about this choice?
- Is this choice something that anyone could know, or could it even be published?

"remembering the Sabbath" means that the entire week is spent preparing for a special encounter with our Creator. Friday, the sixth day, becomes a special anticipatory day which even bears the name "Preparation Day." Imagine! Our time, priorities, business schedules, leisure pursuits, and even mundane activities become focused on preparing to meet with God. Experimenting with preparation confirms Sabbath's necessity to prevent self-destruction from exhaustion.

2. Holiness. "Remember the sabbath to keep it holy." Scriptures closely link

holiness with worship ("O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness") and corporate fellowship ("Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together"). Experimenting in fellowship with like-minded believers confirms the necessity of communion with our best Friend, Jesus, the Lord of Sabbath.

3. Rest. Six days is sufficient to accomplish our own agendas; we need the rest provided by Sabbath, this sanctuary in time. Rather than being a legalist burden, Sabbath envisions a secure rest in Jesus Christ coupled with a rest of our bodies, minds, souls, and families. Christ

declared, "If you are heavily burdened, come to Me and I will give you rest." Experimentation with this rest in Jesus confirms why He said, even when envisioning future troublesome times, "Pray that your flight need not be on the Sabbath" when you could best experience My rest. **ED**

James A. Cress, General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary

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