

QUARTERLY RESOURCE FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS • 1/2024

ELDER'S DIGEST

Ministering to People
with Addictions



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A Miraculous Reconciliation



SCAN FOR AUDIO

“But Esau ran to meet him [Jacob] and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept” (Gen 33:4, ESV). Esau was running toward Jacob, embracing, kissing—weeping.

Esau? Hardly the biblical model of piety, goodness, sweetness, or especially, forgiveness, was he? Notice this candid assessment: “Esau grew up loving self-gratification and centering all his interest in the present.”¹ He was also “impatient of restraint.”²

None of this flatters Esau. The nuance of “loving self-gratification” gives reason for virtuous people to blush. It implies self-centeredness, selfishness, even narcissism. This complete focus on the present, with no regard for the future, or recognition of the merits of the past, is a fatal flaw in anyone, but especially for those who know the God of heaven and His eternal providence. “Impatient of restraint” suggests no filter, no boundaries, no self-control—even, perhaps, a violent temper.

It is *this* Esau who is meeting Jacob. Esau with four hundred thugs capable of inflicting revenge upon Jacob³ for conning him out of his birthright and patriarchal blessing. In the context of Genesis, an army of four hundred was not to be scoffed at. Abram with 318 trained men defeated four previously victorious kings and their forces, rescuing his fatherless nephew Lot, the people of five cities, and all their possessions.

Imagine the damage that a volatile Esau, with an army of brutes, could do to Jacob, his family, servants, flocks, and herds. Fueled by years of seething hatred for his twin brother, Esau could finally unleash that brewing bile. Surely justice demanded retribution for the deceiver Jacob, who had so thoroughly wronged Esau, now appearing to return to Canaan in order to seize the benefits of the birthright.

Yet it was the cheated and uncivilized Esau who didn't just turn the other cheek, but instead kissed the cheek of his fraudster twin.

How could this be?

Some suggest that the hunter felt no satisfaction in the kill of an injured prey. But is there more to this story?

The evening before this moving reconciliation, Jacob, alone, wrestled with the Angel. He confronted his deceit of acquiring the birthright by deception rather than trusting in the promises of God. The deceiver finally realized that conniving didn't secure the blessing of heaven; rather, heaven is all too willing to bless the meek who place their trust in God. This realization liberated Jacob and gave him a new freedom and a new name, Israel, meaning *to prevail* or *win* (Gen 32:28).

What changed Esau's heart?

While Jacob was wrestling with the Angel, another heavenly messenger was sent to Esau. In a dream, Esau beheld his brother for twenty years an exile from his father's house; he witnessed his grief at finding his mother dead; he saw him encompassed by the hosts of God. This dream was related by Esau to his soldiers, with the charge not to harm Jacob, for the God of his father was with him. . . . [Jacob] was pale and disabled from his recent conflict, and he walked slowly and painfully, halting at every step; but his countenance was lighted up with joy and peace. At sight of that crippled sufferer, “Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.”⁴

It's an inspiring outcome. Two estranged brothers: one a deceiver, the other immoral and godless (Heb 12:16). Yet neither could resist divine pleadings upon their hearts. They embraced, kissed, reconciled.

Never doubt the power of God to change your brother, sister, or fellow church member's heart. Nor your own, either.

ED



ANTHONY R. KENT | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 177.

² *Ibid.*

³ Jacob literally means “deceiver.”

⁴ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 198.

Addicts in Your Congregation: What's the Best Way to Help?



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Alcoholic,

substance abuser, addictive personality, functional alcoholic, problem drinker, drug addict, smoker, sex addict, gambler, overeater: the problem has many names.

Given the frequency of addictions in the population, it would be surprising if there were no addicts in your congregation.

Addictions come in two general types: *substance* addictions—alcohol, nicotine, drugs, tranquilizers, pain pills, and food; and *process* addictions—gambling, sexual acting out, work, and even religion. Chocolate addiction we'll allow, but that's it!

THREE SIGNS OF ADDICTION

Three basic elements determine the presence and extent of an addiction.

The first is a *preoccupation*. Manifestations include thinking ahead and spending time around the substance or process. For those with a worldly lifestyle, looking forward to the weekend to be able to drink with buddies, receiving a paycheck to be able to afford the addiction, or anticipating the experience of the buzz or high show the type of thinking for alcohol addiction. I had a patient who was a nurse, and her alcoholism began with a women's Bible study group she attended where wine was served. As an addiction like that grows, one

finds the thoughts intruding into one's activities even when it's not relevant. Eventually the life begins to revolve around either procuring the substance or using it or recovering from the effects.

Second is a *loss of control*. This may initially look like taking control, in that a person begins to make rules for the addictive use. People who have never had any degree of loss of control do not need to make explicit rules for their behavior. For example, people who do not have an eating disorder don't think about making food rules for themselves. But if I have a food addiction, I am thinking about seconds while I'm still eating firsts. I overeat and am disgusted with myself and then emphatically promise myself I will not have seconds anymore. Then the addict part of my brain reasons that at the potluck, if I did not take a particular item on my first pass then technically that's "not seconds"! If I know I'm going to attend a banquet, then I'll plan ahead and skip a meal before and after in order to eat more.

Some rulemaking might be part of a learning curve, which is not a problem necessarily. If I got a lower grade on a test and I then reflect on why and realize that I didn't study regularly and crammed on the last day, or I attended a party the night before, then I make a rule: I will study ahead, I will get a study partner, and I will not attend a

party the night before a test. Sometimes we cross the line before we discover where the line is. That's called learning and is what experience consists of. We have a saying in medicine that good judgement comes from experience. Where does experience come from? Bad judgment!

There are also different aspects of control. Some can control the frequency of the addiction but not the extent. Others can control the extent but not the frequency. Some can control it completely, but it takes a lot of energy and white knuckling to do so. If someone with an addiction tells me they are doing well, I always ask, "How much energy, focus, and thinking does it take? Is it easy or hard and exhausting?" The ability to control can be variable, just like with any symptom. I had one patient, a college professor, who could last three years in between terrible drinking episodes. When he drank, he did things he regretted. This happened multiple times, and he finally sought out my input. The fact that there is temporary control doesn't mean the problem doesn't exist or is cured. We have to take a long view.

Third is *continued use in spite of adverse consequences*. There is no learning, only repetition of the problem. This is the quintessential element of addiction. I keep doing what I don't want to do even though I don't like the ef-



There are also different aspects of control. Some can control the frequency of the addiction but not the extent. Others can control the extent but not the frequency. Some can control it completely, but it takes a lot of energy and white knuckling to do so.

fects—even when it is counterproductive and disruptive to my ego, conscience, relationships, financial well-being, or health.

Even if only one of the above elements is present in a patient, I have a conversation with them as I do not know whether they are early in the course or progression of the disease, or they are minimizing, or we are in between manifestations of the disease.

IS ADDICTION A DISEASE?

On the issue of whether we should call this a disease, frankly, it doesn't matter to me what you choose to call it—disease, condition, spiritual malady, problem, and so on. The label is less important than how we look at it. I think the concept of disease is the best fit in that it is definable, has signs and symptoms, manifests a predictable course, is progressive and chronic, results in premature morbidity and death, and is treatable.

Addiction is a chronic disease, *not* an acute disease. If we view a chronic disease as acute, then we will keep being surprised when it remanifests itself. Instead of taking

the necessary actions, we relax, thinking that after one treatment it will not happen again.

“But he promised he would not drink again!” “He said he would not get another drunk driving charge!” “He’s such a good provider and loving husband and dad when he’s not drinking!” “I thought for sure he had it licked this time!” These are the words of people who think an addiction is an acute disease instead of a chronic disease.

Nobody chooses to have this disease. Nobody chooses to have negative consequences of feeling embarrassed or shamed, to have disrupted relationships, legal consequences, occupational and financial hardships, or poor health. Everybody just wants to fit in with their peers, feel good, have a good time, have fun, feel less anxious, and have more energy or less pain.

HOW IT STARTS

So where is the real choice made? When you pick up that first drink, take that first puff, violate your conscience just this once, or even do it innocently or ignorantly. While it's true that not everyone

who takes a drink will necessarily become addicted, when you choose to not use, then you can be more confident you will not have a problem.

So why do people have addictions? Is it ignorance? Even though knowing what's best doesn't compel one to do what's best, I'm still a believer in education. The more we know, the better.

Is it rebelliousness? Maybe and maybe not. The best way to deal with this is to allow natural consequences to be the teacher. Don't bail out anyone with the help of money, housing, transportation, and so on. One mother brought her 21-year-old son to me, frantic because of his heroin use. He was confused about why she was so worried. I turned to her and asked about their situation. She tells me he's living at home for free, while she's doing the cooking, cleaning, washing his clothes, and providing his transportation. She “loaned” him money “just this once” to buy heroin as he might buy some “bad stuff” and get sick. She found herself driving him to Los Angeles to buy heroin “just this once” as

Addiction is a chronic disease, not an acute disease. If we view a chronic disease as acute, then we will keep being surprised when it remanifests itself.



he might get into an accident. He thought he did not have any problems using heroin, as he had housing, food, clean clothes, and transportation. False ideas of love were the impediments to him learning that doing drugs has adverse consequences.

Is it a lack of spirituality? It could be. So let's pray more and harder. Of course, this is good. It's interesting, though, that if a person is having chest pain, we don't initiate the prayer chain and take them to the Wednesday prayer meeting. We don't tell them, "Try harder, think of Jesus, make a commitment, talk faith." We take them immediately to the emergency room or call the doctor.

Current thinking about the origins of addictions is that there is an intersection of biological, psychological, and/or sociological risk factors. Some people have a strong genetic predisposition through a variety of mechanisms such that, if they choose to use alcohol, for example, they will have a greater urge to use or a greater difficulty in moderating it. A medical student told me that every person in her family was an addict and all those over forty were dead. There can also be psychological factors that predispose one to addiction. I had a nurse at one time who drank to get drunk from age ten. Can you imagine? But in her case, she had been heavily sexually abused. Alcohol was the way available to her to cope, and she carried that into adulthood before obtaining the help she needed. And there can be sociological factors: advertising or peer influence has more effect on some people. For example, advertising fosters a culture of pleasure seeking or the need to unwind, which influences a lot of drinking. Some might have one risk factor, some several, some all. Some might have no risk factors, but just being exposed or using the substance alters the brain

chemistry in such a way that using it again becomes easier and begins the process of addiction.

While some have tried to promote the idea that alcohol has health benefits, this was always debated, as many elements were involved, and it was difficult to tease out. The latest Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee has advice to the general public about drinking in the next *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*: do not begin to drink alcohol or purposefully continue to drink because you think it will make you healthier.

We need not feel defensive about our church's stance of complete abstinence, as we cannot predict who will develop problems and who will not. I am the chairman of a hospital committee that addresses addiction issues in physicians. The best and the brightest still develop problems with just initial minimal use and exposure, and eventually need help. Their smarts only dig a deeper hole for them instead of helping them get out of the hole. The advice to avoid any use in the first place is just plain common sense.

THE CHURCH HAS A ROLE

What, then, should we do? Here is some sound advice:

We should strive to understand the weakness of others. We know little of the heart trials of those who have been bound in chains of darkness and who lack resolution and moral power. Most pitiable is the condition of him who is suffering under remorse; he is as one stunned, staggering, sinking into the dust. He can see nothing clearly. The mind is beclouded, he knows not what steps to take.... We need to put ourselves in the place of the tempted ones. Consider the power of heredity, the influence of evil associations, and surroundings, the power of wrong habits. Can we wonder that under such influences many become de-

graded? Can we wonder that they should be slow to respond to efforts for their uplifting?¹

Is any group of people immune to addictions?

Among the victims of intemperance are men of all classes and all professions. Men of high station, of eminent talents, of great attainments, have yielded to the indulgence of appetite until they are helpless to resist temptation. Some of them who were once in the possession of wealth are without home, without friends, in suffering, misery, disease, and degradation. They have lost their self-control. Unless a helping hand is held out to them, they will sink lower and lower. With these, self-indulgence is not only a moral sin, but a physical disease.²

In short, whenever addictions manifest themselves, it's important to get professionals involved, such as marriage and family therapists who have experience with addiction, addiction medicine physicians, or psychiatrists. Treatment programs can be outpatient or inpatient.

Self-help options are available in any of the twelve-step groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, and others. And for family members there are corresponding groups for each of the above. **ED**

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 168.

² *Ibid.*, 172.

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The Impact of *Mission Refocus*



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Some years ago, after a seminar,

I received a piece of paper from a colleague with a quotation from Ellen G. White that changed my commitment to our church's mission. In the quotation she says, "Every day the probation of some is closing. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom? Where are the hands stretched out to draw him back from death? Where are those who with humility and persevering faith are pleading with God for him?"¹

When I think about the 332,648 people in this world who die every day and the 13,860 who lose their life every hour, I realize that we cannot wait for a better time to share the biblical hope with the entire world. The time is now!

Of course, we have many challenges to reach "every nation and tribe and language and people," (Rev 14:6, ESV). One of the challenges is the distribution of our members in the world: 43 percent are in Africa, 29 percent are in Latin America, 20 percent are in Asia and Oceania, 6 percent are

in North America, and 2 percent are in Europe.² What can we do to increase our presence in the areas where we don't have a strong presence? And how can we motivate areas with a high presence to help reach areas with a low presence?

This challenge and the call for urgency are the components of motivation for the movement called *Mission Refocus*. It is a reevaluation of both our sending of missionaries and our strategies for reaching the unreached or low-reached people groups, countries, and urban areas.

In 1882, Ellen White wrote, "Where are the missionaries who should be raised up at the heart of the work? From twenty to fifty should be sent out from Battle Creek every year to carry the truth to those who sit in darkness."³ At that time the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America had no more than seventeen thousand members, and sending fifty missionaries a year would have been three missionaries per one thousand church members. We have never repeated that rate. If we wanted to accomplish this challenge in our day, we would need to send 67,667 missionaries each year. We are far from this recom-

mended number, but *Mission Refocus* is helping us get closer to this dream.

I would like to invite you to pray for and support this movement. Be a part of this urgent commitment to share the Three Angels' Messages with the entire world, to witness God's miracles in our mission, and to see our great hope become a great reality. **ED**

This article was previously published in the *ISE Navigator*, the IPRS newsletter, on March 28, 2024.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 140.

² 2023 *Annual Statistical Report New Series, Volume 5: Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' 2022 Statistics*, 17-36.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1889), 5:187.

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What can we do to increase our presence in the areas where we don't have a strong presence? And how can we motivate areas with a high presence to help reach areas with a low presence?



SCAN FOR AUDIO



When the Blood of a Missionary Spoke

A missionary needs to be well prepared before he or she reaches the mission territory. He or she needs to be ready to have a self-denial spirit. In the book of John 12:24 we read, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit,” (John 12:24, ESV).

Jesus told His disciples how important it is for a kernel of wheat that falls to the ground to *die*. He said that if it does not die, it will never bear fruit. When Jesus spoke about the kernel of wheat, He was actually referring to the Word of God, and the ground is the people who receive the Word of God. So He was talking about the Word of God, but at the same time talking about the messenger who takes the Word of God to people—that unless the messenger is willing to die in his or her own culture and traditions, he or she will never multiply and produce many new converts. Instead, that missionary will remain alone.

More often than not, missionaries tend to do things the other way round: They enjoy seeing people in their new territory of mission, copying their culture and traditions. They even sometimes define that change as evidence of those people becoming civilized. God never expects people in a new field of mission to change; otherwise Jesus would have never incarnated and become a man. The ground does not die; it is the wheat that dies in order to produce many seeds.

Therefore, it should not appear as a surprise that missionaries do not run away from their missionary fields even when they find themselves in the most challenging situations.

Vincent Donovan concurs by saying, “Evangelization is a process of bringing the gospel to people where they are, not where you would like them to be.”¹ Eventually it will be clear that Christian communities belong to the people; indeed, they *are* the people.² Therefore, such communities should value even those who have not yet joined those Christian communities. Donovan is emphasizing that the Christian community should value even those who have not yet been converted and joined the Christian community.

It could be for such a reason that God prepares His people, the missionaries, before they reach their new areas of mission. He prepares their hearts to love those people, Christians and non-Christians alike who live in the places they will reach with the gospel. On the other hand, He prepares them to face cultural and environmental challenges in the places they enter with the message. He does it today as He did in the past years. Therefore, it should not appear as a surprise that missionaries do not run away from their missionary fields even when they find themselves in the most challenging situations. Knowing that they are working for the Lord, they work tirelessly without being disappointed for whatever reason.

In many past years, the Maasai people were far more conservative on preserving their culture, more so than today. They were only using meat, milk, and blood for their daily food (today they try other kinds of food like cereals). They were dressed in animal skin (hides) and they did not mingle

with other people—especially those who came from outside their locality. They did not like strangers who brought a culture different from theirs. They even gave strange names to strangers; black people strangers were given their name and white people strangers as well. In fact, they were hostile to people who tried to invade their geographical territory and their culture. It was like that in the 1950s when Dave Simonson, a white Westerner, was sent by his denomination to the Maasai people in Arusha, Tanzania. As you would expect, the Maasai people were not happy to receive such a stranger to their homeland. So, they were never kind to him. They did all they could to send a message to him that he was an unwanted guest.

In contrast, Dave Simonson tried to do all he could to show the Maasai people that he really loved and valued them. He gave food to those who did not have anything to eat; he offered clothing to those who desperately needed it. He was always available whenever any needs arose. One day, there was a very serious situation that needed Dave’s intervention. A young Maasai woman who was just about to deliver her first child had serious complications, and she needed to be rushed to hospital. Her husband went to the mission center to request a ride for his sick wife. He was well received by Dave Simonson, who was at the center. Dave took the woman and her husband to the hospital without any delay. After the woman had been received in the hospital and doctors had conducted an early medi-

cal examination, it was discovered that in order for her to survive, she needed a blood transfusion. When Dave heard that that young Maasai mother was going to die if she did not receive a blood transfusion, he donated his blood. Jim Klobuchar reports, “He walked into the hospital and met the doctor who was trying to save the mother’s life, ‘I have got type O blood (universal donor),’ Simonson said. ‘Can you use me?’ ‘You give blood?’ the doctor asked. ‘Sure, I live with these people.’ The woman survived.”³ The news spread all over the Maasai territory, in Tanzania, and even in Kenya, that they got their own real brother, a Maasai in a white skin—a white man who was willing to mix his blood with a Maasai woman. They started discussing how even one of their fellow African men could have found that difficult to do. Maasai elders sent a message to wherever Maasai people lived that God had blessed them by providing them with a brother in a white skin. It became the great news among the Maasai people.

As a result of this, Maasai people everywhere started to receive Dave Simonson and his message wherever he visited. They concluded that he was a man of God, sent by God. Today, Maasai people in Tanzania as well as in Kenya have accepted Christianity in their thousands. The blood that Dave donated to the sick woman spoke louder than his words. ED

¹ Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), v–vi.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ Jim Klobuchar, *The Cross under the Acacia Tree: The Story of David and Eunice Simonson’s Epic Mission in Africa* (Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House, 1998), 97.

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The Story of Timothy: Homeless Orphan to Scholar

THE ORPHAN LAXMAN >PART 2

EDITORIAL NOTE

In this second part of a true story, an orphan boy who had been rescued by an Adventist pastor, and whose new name is Timothy, decides he will run away from the only home he has ever known.



The story of a boy in India with no home, who found a new name and a new life in Jesus.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

A Recap of Part 1:

When Timothy was a child beggar at a railway station, one day a pastor from the Flaiz School was waiting for his train. Timothy was standing next to him, and the pastor noticed his poor condition. He told Timothy about the ICC Sweet Home Children's Village, where children get food, clothes, and an education. The pastor asked Timothy if he would like to go to this home. At first, Timothy refused. But when he saw the train approaching, he picked up the pastor's briefcase and said, "Sir, that is our train, let us go."

The next morning, when seven-year-old Timothy arrived at the Sweet Home Children's Village, the staff welcomed him warmly. They found out he didn't know his last name, the names of his parents, or the name of the village where his parents lived. He could not remember anything about his family. He had lived on the railway station platform since the death of his parents.

One day something happened that caused me to run away. I had been at Sweet Home Orphanage for three years, and one night some boys were misbehaving after the lights were out. Mother's helper, whom we called Auntie, came to see who was misbehaving. She could not find the guilty ones, so she punished all of us. I had not been misbehaving, but I was punished with the others. I felt bad that I was punished when I had done nothing wrong. I did not understand that Auntie was tired and did not intend to be mean. I just knew that she hurt me.

The next morning, instead of going to school, I ran to the train station and jumped on a train going to another town. I did not think about how much I would miss Mr. Raj or Mother or my friends. I just wanted to leave. I hid myself on the upper bunk in the third-class car, where no one would bother me. I fell asleep up there.

I woke up just as the train slowed to a stop. Quickly I climbed down and jumped off the train. It was very early in the morning. A police officer walked over and asked me my name and where I lived. I told him.

"What are you doing on the train platform at 5:00 in the morning?" he asked.

I did not want him to know that I had run away, so I told a lie. "I am waiting for my parents," I said.

Somehow he knew that was not true. Who would let a ten-year-old stand on a train platform in his school uniform at 5:00 in the morning?

LONG JOURNEY HOME

The police officer put me on the next train back home. He even rode with me to make sure I did not run away again. All the way back to school I was afraid that I would be in big trouble when I returned. So as we neared the train station where I should get off, I told the police officer another lie.

"I am not really from here," I said. "I am from [another city an hour away]." We got off the train, and we waited un-

til another train came that would take us to that station. While we waited, I tried to hide behind the police officer so no one would recognize me and take me back to school.

We boarded the train and arrived in the city where I said I lived. But as we stepped off the train I said, "No, this is not the place." I guess I just wanted the police officer to get tired of me and let me go.

He was tired—tired of my lies. He became angry and asked, "How many times will you trouble me like this?" Just then my belt buckle fell to the ground. It had the name of my school on it.

"Is this where you live?" he asked. I nodded my head. We had to wait the rest of that night for a train back to the school. By now I had been gone almost two days.

HOME AT LAST

When we reached the school, I was very nervous. Would I be disciplined? Expelled? What would they say? The principal opened the office door, and I braced myself. But instead of giving me a thrashing, he welcomed me back and said he had missed me! I was surprised when no one was angry with me or wanted to punish me.

A few minutes later, Mother came. She did not yell at me; she just hugged me tight and cried. "We missed you so much! Please don't run away again, Timothy." I promised that I would not run away again.

I knew then that this was my home. The people here loved me. I also learned that Jesus loves me. I have given my heart to Jesus, and I belong to Him. Even though I do not know who my parents are, I know who my family is.

Someday I want to help other children who are lost and alone. When I am grown up, if I see a child in rags standing in the street, I will ask if they have a home. If they say no, I will ask if they want to go live in a nice place and go to school. Then I will bring them to Sweet Home and let Mother love them as she has loved me.

FROM BEGGAR TO PROFESSOR

"I never ate fresh food on a clean plate." That is what Timothy said about his life before he went to Sweet Home Children's Village in India when he was a child. Today, the boy who began life as a beggar living on train platforms is a college professor. Timothy's life is an amazing example of how you can dramatically change the life of a child and how education plays a vital role in preparing a young person to lead a productive life. Here is the rest of his story.

Timothy attended elementary and high school at the Flaiz Adventist School. After his high school graduation, Timothy studied theology at Spicer Memorial College (now Spicer Adventist University).

He received a bachelor's degree in 2014 and successfully completed a master's degree in 2016.

Recently Timothy returned "home" and joined the Flaiz College as a teacher in the theology department. He is now "paying forward" the support he received by teaching at the same school where he was a student. Timothy is recognized as a good teacher and a talented preacher. Timothy said he is grateful for the prayers and financial support of his sponsors. He is an example of how investing in children is paying a wonderful return as they pay forward the blessing in lives of service. **ED**

Timothy Patrick Roane is a theology professor at Flaiz Adventist College, Narsapur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How significant are the responsible adults in Timothy's story?

Timothy's fears had the potential to derail his amazing journey. Could your fears be stifling God's intended journey for you?

Who can you help to find freedom from the inhibiting limitations they encounter in their lives?

What opportunities is God providing you to mentor and support people on their journey to a greater experience with Jesus Christ?



Graduated 12th grade from Flaiz, 2010



Student at Spicer 1



Student at Spicer 2



Student at Spicer 3



Graduation of Bachelors in Theology at Spicer, 2014



Graduation celebration with my Sweet Home mother Lilly Florence Kaligithi



Master's Graduation in Theological Studies - 2016



Started working at Flaiz since June 2016



Got married in December 2017



Me and my wife Roselind Goli Roane



Sweet Home mother Lilly F. Kaligithi



Pr. T. Christian Raj & his wife Mrs. T. Puspha Rajayam – at the time he found me, he was serving as a headmaster for the Flaiz School and retired as the president in 2016



My family at Sweet Home

Where Do You Draw the Line?

INTRODUCTION

Where do you draw the line? Have you ever asked yourself that question? In your job, where do you draw the line between being willing to go the second mile and being exploited by your boss?

Daniel 1 raises similar questions. As Christians, where do we make compromises, and where do we not? Where do we draw the line between Christian absolutes and matters of secondary importance?

I. WITHOUT PHYSICAL DEFECT AND HANDSOME

Read: Dan 1:1–4. This is a momentous event. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Judah and took prisoners of war back to Babylon. These captives, we're told, were "without physical defect and handsome" (Dan 1:4, NRSV). Why mention that? First, being "without physical defect" was a requirement for priests (Lev 21:21). Secondly, being "handsome" was a characteristic of Judah's royal house. Remember the impressive King Saul, and then David, Absalom, the beautiful Bathsheba, and Tamar, and others. So, these captives are like priests (without physical defect) and kings (handsome). God had told Moses that Israel should be "a priestly kingdom" (Exod 19:6, NRSV), or "a kingdom of priests" (NIV). So, these young men are true representative Israelites. And they will have to demonstrate that in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

II. A NEW EDUCATION AND IDENTITIES

They are educated in the University of Babylon. Their studies are challenging for true Israelites. They receive Babylonian names: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their new names refer to Babylonian gods. They will study Babylonian "literature and language" (Dan 1:5). This will include Babylonian theology and mythology, the interpretation of dreams using Babylonian manuals, and foretelling the future by inspecting the entrails of disemboweled bulls. So, a challenging education. They'd never studied any of that back home in Jerusalem. But these subjects were not their biggest challenge. Their biggest challenge was the food. They were served at the king's table. The king might not be there in person, but they would eat meals at the king's table.

However, Daniel and his friends refuse to eat the food (1:8–14). Why did they refuse? Well, we aren't told—only that they didn't want to defile themselves. Was it because the food had been offered to idols? Maybe. But all food at court was offered to idols, including the vegetables the young friends requested. Was it because they were vegetarians? Vegetarianism is a good choice for us. But in the Old Testament, eating meat was a religious duty at certain times, such as eating lamb at Passover. Was it because they wanted to avoid

unclean foods? Well, of course, as good Israelites they wouldn't want to eat unclean food mentioned in Leviticus 11 and elsewhere.

But if the reason is the laws in Leviticus, why didn't they refuse to study at the University of Babylon? Most of what they studied was condemned in the Old Testament: pagan theology, mythology, divination, etc. So why not refuse to study those godless Babylonian subjects? Why do they draw the line only when it comes to *food from the king's table*?

III. DEDICATED LOYALTY

The main reason they refused the food is probably this. We're told that this food was the *king's* food, "royal rations" (Dan 1:8). This term refers to food from the king's table. Eating at a king's table meant that you gave your unquestioning allegiance to him. It was a binding act of covenant. Refusing to eat at a king's table could be highly dangerous. For example, King Saul gave a feast and all those invited came, except David. Saul asked his son Jonathan why David was absent. Jonathan replied that David was visiting his family. Listen to Saul's response in 1 Samuel 20:30–31. Saul wanted David to die! Why such an extreme response? Because Saul believed that David's absence from his table meant that he was not giving him his full allegiance.

We all know that a meal is often more than consuming food. Think of a romantic dinner for two, or a wedding reception. We know the difference between those meals and simply eating a sandwich on a park bench. Likewise, eating at the king's table was much more than just a free lunch.

Daniel and his friends might have had several reasons for refusing the king's food. But this is the heart of it. He and his friends say, "*Here* is where we draw the line. You can give us Babylonian names. You can teach us Babylonian language, theology, dream interpretation, and mythology. We'll go that far. But don't think that you have captured our loyalties. Nebuchadnezzar and his gods have not captured our allegiance. We will not give that commitment. We will not eat from the king's table."

They are now in a Babylonian world that does not acknowledge the God of Israel. They cannot *take a stand on everything*. They cannot insist on having everything on their terms. But they cannot *compromise on everything* either. So, the decision must be made. Where do they draw the line? They draw the line at eating food from the king's table.

Where do you and I draw the line? Consider a simple everyday situation. A young Seventh-day Adventist pastor conducted his first funeral service. Sister Brown died having only one close relative, who was not a church member. She attended the funeral and afterwards invited the pastor to her home. She was very poor, but she'd gone to the expense of preparing sandwiches. Ham sandwiches.

Every one of them. With tears still in her eyes, she held the plate out to the pastor. Where should he draw the line? On this side, and obey the letter of Leviticus 11; or on that side, and accept this grieving woman's hospitality? Where would you have drawn the line? And *why* would you draw it there? And where should we draw it when considering our personal relationships, the TV programs we watch, the books we read, the web sites we visit, the shopping we do. . . Where should we draw the line?

We often think of people who *compromise on everything*, who never draw the line, as lacking principles. But then there are those who never draw the line because they *compromise on nothing*. And ongoing political conflicts around the world—and, dare I say it, disagreements within your church board—amply demonstrate the point.

In his classic book *Christ and Culture*, Richard Niebuhr explores how Christians relate to our non-Christian culture. One option is to conform to our culture. That solves the problem by removing the pressure. But it also removes our identity. That's the option chosen by the other Jewish captives, who ate food at the king's table. Secondly, we could withdraw from our culture and create a Christian ghetto. But if we do, we would have no influence on our culture. Instead, we can engage with our culture. This means living in our culture, not conforming to everything, perhaps having to make some principled compromises, but knowing *where to draw the line*. That is what Daniel and his friends did. And that's why, at the end of the chapter, among the students at the University of Babylon, none was found like "Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" (1:19). Notice these are their Jewish names, not their Babylonian names. Why? Because in choosing where to draw the line, they remain true representative Israelites.

CONCLUSION

We live in a complex world. It isn't always easy to know what is worth compromising and what is not, what is absolute and what is relative. Take Queen Esther, for example. She too lived at a foreign court. She chose to eat from the king's table but drew the line elsewhere. You can't legislate for all circumstances.

However, it's much easier to know where to draw the line if we know *at whose table we are eating*. There is Nebuchadnezzar's table. And then there is another table each of us is invited to eat from. To share a meal with the One who sits at its head, Christ Himself, as explained by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 11:23–26). ED

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Things Aren't What They Seem to Be

INTRODUCTION

Things aren't always what they seem to be. As we go through life most of us learn that. We learn that a peanut isn't a nut, it's a legume. A cucumber isn't a vegetable, it's a fruit. A falling star isn't a star, it's a meteorite. We learn the truth of common sayings, such as "You can't judge a book by its cover," or "all that glitters is not gold." No, because things aren't always what they seem to be.

I. UNDERSTANDING APOCALYPTIC

And that's a lesson the book of Daniel wants to teach us. It's a mixture of stories and apocalyptic prophecies. But what is apocalyptic? First, apocalyptic tells us that in the world there are two opposing powers—the power of evil and the power of good. Evil seems to be stronger than good; but actually, good is stronger than evil. Because things are not what they seem to be.

Second, apocalyptic tells us that world history has been divided into two distinct ages: the present age and the future age. The present age, in which we live, is under the influence of evil and seems to be going on forever. But remember, things are not what they seem to be. The present age will not last forever. God will bring this world's affairs to an end. Then the future age of the kingdom of God will dawn. We might think it doesn't seem like that. But apocalyptic says, "Of course not, because things aren't what they seem to be."

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Which brings us to Daniel 2, and King Nebuchadnezzar during the second year of his reign. All is not well. Read: Dan 2:1–2. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreters earn a good living. They interpret dreams, using detailed dream manuals compiled by generations of their predecessors. All they need to know is the dream that has been dreamed, and they can read off its interpretation from the manual. But, thinks Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps these wise men aren't all that they seem to be. So, he demands not only that they give the interpretation, but that they also reveal what the dream was! Now, this decree of the king seems insane. How can the dream interpreters consult their dream manuals if they don't know the dream? And the penalty for not knowing? Death!

Daniel and his friends aren't present because they're still students. But they too will die if the dream interpreters cannot reveal what the dream was. So, Daniel prays with his friends for guidance from God. And God reveals to him the dream and its interpretation. What was the dream? Read: Dan 2:31–35. The dream was about a

statue—or better, an *image*. The same word is used in Daniel 3 for Nebuchadnezzar's image that all must bow down and worship (3:4–5). So, Nebuchadnezzar dreams about an image, an object of worship. It is impressive, huge, and brilliant. But it was also terrifying (2:31). That same term—"terrifying"—describes the frightening beast of Daniel 7 (7:19). And the image of Daniel 2 is also *terrifying*. It is *human* in form, but it is utterly destroyed by a stone "cut out, not by human hands," (Dan 2:34, NRSV). And it's this stone that Daniel emphasizes. He runs quickly through the metals of the image, but dwells on the stone and the idol's destruction.

So, that's *what* Nebuchadnezzar dreamed. But what does it *mean*?

III. THE MEANING OF THE DREAM

Generally, the dream portrays the rise and fall of kingdoms. Read: Dan 2:36–45. But why portray the rise and fall of kingdoms with an idol, an object of worship? Because this is an idol erected to the greater glory of humanity, not God. This dream image presents human kingdoms and empires as terrifying. That's worth reflecting on regardless of where we live, whatever kingdom or nation we call home. Those in power often spend much time making sure they stay in power. Daniel says, *human kingdoms do not last*. Things aren't always what they seem to be.

Daniel spends less time listing the metal kingdoms than he does describing how the stone kingdom sweeps them all away. This is the most important part of the dream. The image of metal kingdoms does not move. But the kingdom of stone is alive. It flies, hits, destroys, and grows. This living stone kingdom of God contrasts with the static human metal kingdoms. The stone becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth. And the kingdom of God growing from a small beginning to a huge climax is picked up by Jesus in His parables of the tiny mustard seed becoming a large plant, or a small amount of yeast raising a huge amount of dough. Read: Matt 13:31–33. The growth of the tiny mustard seed and the power of the small lump of yeast is just like the Kingdom of God in Daniel 2, starting small but growing until it fills the earth, sweeping all human kingdoms aside.

The stone kingdom stands forever (2:44) and fills the world (2:35). It stands forever—time. It fills the world—space. God's kingdom dominates time and space because He is the Lord of time and space. Some of those metal human kingdoms also "rule over the whole earth," (2:39, NIV), just like the kingdom of stone. But the cru-

cial difference is that the kingdom of God lasts forever. This story begins with the inept wise men saying, "May the king live forever" (2:4, NIV). It concludes by telling us only the kingdom of God lasts forever (2:44). Those wise men learned that things are not what they seem to be.

Does Nebuchadnezzar get that point? He bows before Daniel and calls Daniel's God the "God of gods," and showers him with gifts (2:47–48). But Nebuchadnezzar can afford to be generous. Because the dream does not affect him personally. Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold (2:38) and the kingdom of stone will not smash the image in *his* time. Nebuchadnezzar's empire will live beyond his day. And Nebuchadnezzar remains a polytheist. A polytheist can always add one more god to his collection. Overall, therefore, Nebuchadnezzar didn't get the point. It will take two more chapters before he does get the point.

IV. THE MEANING FOR US TODAY

But more to the point—do we get the point? The vision of Daniel 2 is often seen as giving objective proof for the truth of the Scriptures, for it accurately foretells history. But Daniel 2 is more than that. It encourages us to believe that God is sovereign. If God is truly sovereign over the kingdoms of this world, why is the world in such a mess? In response to that question, Daniel 2 invites us to exercise faith that despite appearances to the contrary, God is sovereign. One day God will act and that image will crash. It invites us to believe that things aren't really what they seem to be.

CONCLUSION

Biblical books like Genesis tell us that this world had a meaningful *beginning*. Daniel emphasizes its meaningful *end*. If the world had a meaningful *beginning* and will have a meaningful *end*, then our lives have meaning in the *present*. If there was no meaningful beginning and there will be no meaningful end, then our lives are meaningless. So the whole of Scripture, but particularly Daniel, invites us to live in the *present*. Seventh-day Adventists should see that. "Seventh-day" affirms creation and the meaningful *beginning*. "Adventist" proclaims the meaningful *end*. And that should make all the difference to the *present*. Let us live joyfully in the present, right now, knowing that things are not what they seem to be. ED

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Stand out from the Crowd

INTRODUCTION

Stand out from the crowd. That's what you need to do. Whether you're applying to university, or applying for a job, one thing's clear. You must stand out from the crowd. The annual London Marathon often attracts more than forty-eight thousand runners. Up to 370,000 spectators have attended. What catches my attention is not the elite athletes. Rather, it's the ordinary folk, slowly jogging, who stand out from the crowd. Runners dressed as Donald Duck, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, or Buckingham Palace. And the huge crowd goes wild as these eccentric runners jog past.

I. AN EXPRESSION OF POWER

Witness another enormous crowd. It assembled in obedience to King Nebuchadnezzar, before his golden image, outside the city walls of Babylon. Read: Dan 3:1–2. We've already met an impressive image in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a huge metal image. It represented the kingdoms of this world but was crushed by the stone of the kingdom of God. Now the massed throng of the empire's elite stand before another image. Nebuchadnezzar's dream image had a head of gold, representing Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar now erects an image that is all gold. This is a thoroughly Babylonian idol. We see that in its dimensions: sixty cubits high and six cubits wide. The base of Babylonian mathematics was sixty, unlike our decimal base of ten. That's why it measures sixty by six. That's also why the number of the Babylonian beast in the book of Revelation is 666 (Rev 13:18). When God's stone destroyed Nebuchadnezzar's dream image, it demonstrated God's judgment on human ambition and pride. And now Nebuchadnezzar is at it again. And what is he proud about? Two things: size and power. Size: this idol is massive. At sixty cubits high, or about thirty meters, only the monumental Colossus of Rhodes, a wonder of the ancient world, stood higher at seventy cubits. And power: the consequences of disobeying Nebuchadnezzar. Read: Dan 3:5–6.

II. AN ULTIMATUM

Nebuchadnezzar's obsession with size and power demands that all must obey. Those who refuse will die in his furnace. He must have absolute conformity. And that is rammed home by *what* he says and *how* the story tells it. Notice who are invited to this worship service. Read: Dan 3:2. And who accepts the invitation? Read: Dan 3:3. And what are they commanded? Read: Dan 3:4–5. And how do they respond? Read: Dan 3:7. The king demands conformity. Exactly what the king commands is exactly what he

must get. And that's exactly what he does get from almost all these officials. When Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra strikes up, immediately they all fall down. But three people stand out from the crowd: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They quite literally *stand* out from the crowd. The king is immediately informed. Read: Dan 3:12. "Certain Jews." In that crowd there would have been many Jews, exiles from Judah. But only "*certain* Jews," God's faithful remnant, stood out from the crowd.

The king gives the friends an ultimatum: Read: Dan 3:14–15. As before, what the king demands is exactly what must happen. But not this time. Read: Dan 3:16–18. Those are the only words the three friends speak in this story. The king can repeat his demands as often as he likes. But he does not control *them*. The king's speech is long and repetitive. The friends' speech is short and to the point. The king's speech sets out the principles of size, power, and *conformity*. The friends' speech makes clear that *faith cannot conform* to the world. That's why they chose to stand out from the crowd. Simply because it was the right thing to do. Whether they live, or whether they die. Furnace or no furnace.

But there is a furnace. So, Nebuchadnezzar's servants throw the friends into the flames. This wouldn't be the first time in the Bible that people died in fire. Remember the fate of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–2). And half-forgotten characters such as Zedekiah and Ahab. Read: Jer 29:22. Here, fire meant death. But fire suggests another possibility. Remember, Moses was in the wilderness when he encountered a bush. It was on fire but was not consumed. And from within the fire, God spoke to him. A pillar of divine fire also led Israel through the wilderness. Ezekiel had a vision of God, and fire surrounded His throne. And don't forget Read: Dan 7:9–10. Here, fire surrounds the presence of God. So, what will the three friends meet inside the fiery furnace? Death? Or God Himself?

III. GOD RESPONDS

The king peers into the flames. And sees God Himself in the fire. Read: Dan 3:25. Rather than death, the three friends meet God in the flames. And just like the burning bush, they are not consumed. Nebuchadnezzar thought fire would kill these faithful friends. What actually happens is that God meets them in the fire. That's what happens when they stand out from the crowd.

And something else happens. The friends reveal their character in this crisis. Character isn't *formed* in a crisis. It's *revealed* in a crisis. In a crisis there's no time to form character. In a crisis we can only

reveal the character we've formed in the humdrum activities of everyday life.

IV. LIVING IN MODERN BABYLON

Let's reflect on that crisis. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't care what gods the three friends worship in private. His interest is their public conduct. Just as in our world being an Adventist is acceptable as long as it remains simply a *personal* and *private* conviction. Just don't stand out from the crowd. Don't challenge the values of modern society—especially the Babylonian principles of size, power, and conformity. But that's the very thing this story asks us to do. Resist the principles of Babylon.

We know Babylonian principles are alive in the world. But if they seduce us, they will turn up in our lives as well. If they do, the devil will be well pleased.

Another temptation is the Babylonian principle of power. This story, however, highlights that the power of God, as true as that is, is less important than the morality of God. The three friends do not choose to stand out from the crowd because the power of God will save them. In fact, they don't know whether He will or not. Read: Dan 3:18. They choose to stand out from the crowd because they are not committed to the principles of Babylon, but to the principles of the Kingdom of God—to the principles of justice, righteousness, and truth.

And then there is the ultimate Babylonian principle of *conformity*. By contrast, the three friends want to conform to the will of God. So, they challenge Babylonian conformity. They challenge it because of "our God whom we serve." And our God whom we serve doesn't reveal Himself in the overwhelming size of the crowd. Nor in the massive idol. Nor in the power of the king's rhetoric. Our God whom we serve reveals Himself in the fire of the furnace. There with the minority who have the conviction to stand out from the crowd, for no other reason than that is the faithful thing to do.

CONCLUSION

And that is the ultimate mission of the Adventist church. To live our lives by the principles of the Gospel rather than the principles of Babylon. More than anything else, to be true to Christ. To live lives that oppose the Babylonian principles that prevail in our world—size, power, and conformity. And for the sake of "our God whom we serve," to stand out from the crowd. ED

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Size, Power, and Pride

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the best-known boxer of the twentieth century was Muhammad Ali, formerly known as Cassius Clay. In 1964 he fought Sonny Liston for the world heavyweight championship. A few days before the fight Ali gave a famous speech that summed up what he thought of himself: “I am the greatest. I am the greatest.” And history shows that he beat Liston, believing that he was “the greatest.”

I. A PROUD KING

Muhammad Ali is not the only person who had a high opinion of himself. Let’s join King Nebuchadnezzar at his favorite spot on the roof garden of his palace. He stands there in awe at the city spread before him. The city wall runs for twenty-seven kilometers around his capital. The sacred processional way, one kilometer long, has walls decorated with 575 mythological beasts. The temple of the high god Marduk, the ziggurat of Etemenanki, is ninety meters tall. Seeing all this, he says, *I am the greatest*. Read: Dan 4:30.

This is a critical point in the book of Daniel in the struggle between King Nebuchadnezzar and God. Three points sum up that struggle: size, power, and pride. Daniel 1: Nebuchadnezzar *took* Jerusalem, or so it seemed. However, the truth was that the Lord *gave* Jerusalem into his hand. Read: Dan 1:1–2a. Because the Most High rules the kingdoms of this world. So, for the first time we meet the two kingdoms: the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God. And we learn that despite appearances to the contrary, God is sovereign. But at this stage Nebuchadnezzar hasn’t met God. He doesn’t realize that it’s not his own power that has taken Jerusalem.

Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a frightening metal idol. Its size is “great” and “huge.” It conveys power, representing successive human superpowers. Its head of gold represents Babylon. But the entire image is obliterated by the rock of the kingdom of God, because the Most High rules the kingdoms of this world. But Nebuchadnezzar still doesn’t get it. Because at this stage, as he listens to Daniel’s interpretation, he’s only *heard* of the Lord. Nothing more.

Daniel 3: Being a head of gold doesn’t satisfy Nebuchadnezzar. So he erects an idol made entirely of gold. Its size monstrous. He calls on all the world to bow before it to accept that he rules the kingdoms of this world. He demonstrates his power by throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace, asking, “Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan 3:15b, RSV). But Nebuchadnezzar sees the three friends walking in the flames, with a divine fourth figure. And it begins to dawn on him that perhaps it is God who is sovereign. Nebuchadnezzar is *beginning* to get it. But nothing more.

Daniel 4: The king has a dream. Read: Dan 4:10–17. Note these points. First of all, *size*: the tree is enormous—its top reaches to heaven. Second, *power*: all the animals—that is, the inhabitants of the world—depend on this tree. This explains Nebuchadnezzar’s *pride*. Read: Dan 4:30. In previous episodes, Nebuchadnezzar was at first *ignorant* of God when he conquered Jerusalem; then *heard* of God, when Daniel interpreted his dream; then *saw* the workings of God, when the three friends walked alive in the flames. But in Daniel 4, he *experiences* God when for a period he is humbled. That experience will demonstrate that he is not the greatest. And something else. He will know the difference between the kingdoms of this world, and the Kingdom of God, and their opposing views about size, power, and pride. He will know that the Most High rules the kingdoms of this world.

When we listen to the daily news about corruption and injustice, that might be less than obvious. Is God really sovereign? Well, the Bible never claims that seeing God at work in the world is clear and unambiguous. That’s why the book of Daniel takes four chapters over Nebuchadnezzar. It shows how he only slowly realizes that the Most High rules the kingdoms of this world. And he only gets there in chapter 4.

In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream tree, representing him as head of the kingdom of Babylon, is huge. But in the Kingdom of God, size does not count.

II. A HUMBLE SAVIOUR

Consider what Jesus says about His kingdom: Read: Matt 13:31–32. Jesus calls the mustard plant a “tree.” Now, that is an exaggeration; it isn’t a tree. But Jesus calls it a tree because in the Old Testament a tree sometimes represents a kingdom, as here in Daniel 4 (e.g., Ezek 31:3–9). In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the kingdom of Babylon is like a tree that reaches to heaven and has birds in its branches. And Jesus said the Kingdom of God is like a mustard tree with birds in its branches. But the Kingdom of God’s mustard tree is insignificant next to Nebuchadnezzar’s huge tree. Because the Kingdom of God will take us by surprise; not a mighty tree, but a humble garden plant. For the kingdom of God is no huge crushing human empire. It is a humble venture built on faith, not size.

But it’s not just size. It’s also power. Standing on his palace roof proudly congratulating himself, Nebuchadnezzar saw the power of his kingdom, in a moment of time. As someone else did: He saw all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. He surveyed the power of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, China, Aztecs, Zulus, Mughals, France, Britain, and the United States. The devil tried to seduce Jesus with size and power. Read: Luke 4:5–7. But Christ replied that His king-

dom is based not on size, nor on power, but on simple faith in God. Read: Luke 4:8.

Whenever Jesus speaks about His kingdom, He never uses images of power. He never says, “Now the kingdom of heaven is like a Roman legion; a battering ram; Caesar in all his glory.” Rather, He talks about wheat and weeds, a mustard seed, leaven, fishermen landing their catch (Matt 13). These humble illustrations show clearly what His kingdom is not.

It’s easy for us to criticize Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and slowness to learn. For none of us is a monarch building an empire. But we’re all building something. An education, perhaps. Or maybe, a career. But how are we building? According to which principles? The principles of the kingdoms of this world, or of the Kingdom of God?

III. THE MOST HIGH IS SOVEREIGN

Not just size. Not only power. But also pride. God judges pride throughout Daniel. Great cities fallen, huge idols destroyed, formidable beasts slaughtered, boasting horns uprooted, massive trees chopped down. They all meet their fate because they never learn the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar finally did: humility. That the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of this world. That opportunity is given to Nebuchadnezzar. Read: Dan 4:25b. Nebuchadnezzar was the proudest of men. And he had to become like a cow to see he was only human after all. Humility might be out of place in the kingdoms of this world. But without humility, there would be no kingdom of God. Read: Phil 2:5–8.

And at last, even Nebuchadnezzar sees that since God rules *over* him, God can now rule *through* him. He no longer talks of size, power, or pride. He is content with a simple testimony of his personal experience of God. Read: Dan 4:34. We need to remember that as individual believers, and also corporately as the church.

CONCLUSION

As agents for Christ’s kingdom, can we learn from Nebuchadnezzar’s experience? Our success as witnesses for the Gospel cannot be measured primarily by *size*—for example, the number of church members. Nor by *power*—for example, influence we have with governments. According to Scripture, our success is measured by the principles of the Kingdom of God. Is there integrity? Is there morality? Is there humility? And is Christ known among us? The Most High does indeed rule the kingdoms of this world—but do we allow Him to rule *us*? ED

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“And I will give you
shepherds according to
My heart, who will feed
you with knowledge and
understanding”

JEREMIAH 3:15, NKJV

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Treasuring the History of Your Local Church

PRESERVING THE SERVICE AND DEDICATION OF PEOPLE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

When I was a child and grew tired of conversation at potluck, I would slip upstairs, pull the church's photo album off its shelf, and begin exploring our congregation's past. I'd study the photographs, ranging from neatly labeled black-and-white images from the 1940s and 1950s to fading Polaroids from the 1970s to Kodak printed snapshots from the 1990s that hadn't yet been put into place in the album, trying to figure out the stories captured by the photographs.

For they *were* full of stories of the past—the congregation's and my own. Here were Missy's parents, Gladys and Perl, who had revitalized the congregation during the Great Depression. Here was Missy, our head deaconess, with her husband Bob, our head elder, with their children before they'd grown up and moved away, with their hair darker than I'd ever seen it in my life. Here was my grandpa Russel, standing and eating during potluck because every other seat was full, and he'd given his seat up to a guest as was his usual practice. Here was my mother as a child, laughing with her friends, and then her as a grown-up, a few months away from giving birth to my youngest brother. Here I was, at the reception in the church's basement after my baptism. Here we all were, bunched together smiling in group photographs outside the congregation's previous building and inside the new building's sanctuary, eating at picnics and playing at Vacation Bible Schools and enjoying Christmas programs. Here was my Adventist church family, present and past.

Like my childhood congregation, yours probably has more records than you realize, whether those records are photographs, bulletins, books, newsletters, or board minutes (to name a few types of records). Those records capture the history of your local church family. But how to preserve and share those records? Here are six recommendations for doing just that:



1 Identify what records your congregation has and where those records are stored. It is important to know what records the congregation has, because if you do not know what records you have and where those records are, the records are essentially nonexistent, whether it's the membership roster from fifty years ago or the board minutes from last month.

2 Make an inventory of those records and where they're located. As you locate records, you will want to take note of what those records are and where they are stored in the church building. This list could be analog or digital, so long as it is kept in a place where it can be accessed (and edited) by church staff as needed. Sometimes a record is accompanied by a story about that record; you can take note of the story as well.

3 Store records in a place that is out of the sunlight. While sunlight in moderation is good for humans,

it is very bad for paper, and most congregational records are paper. Direct sunlight can cause book covers to fade and book spines to loosen, photographs to change colors or fade, and tapes of various types can warp. Anything that can expand and contract due to variation in temperature should be stored out of direct sunlight.¹

4 Store records in a place that is cool and dry. Ideally, records should be kept somewhere that is both cool and dry. In practical terms that means that records should not be stored between the water heater and the furnace, or under pipes or near heating registers, or in bathrooms. In technical terms, the temperature of wherever records are stored should be below 75 degrees Fahrenheit (23.9 degrees Celsius) and the relative humidity (the amount of water vapor in the air as compared to the temperature) should be above 15% and below 65%. If the relative humidity is too low (below 15%), the records run the risk of becoming brittle. If the relative humidity is too high (above

65%), the records and their storage area run the risk of mold growth and insect infestations. These conditions vary by season and region, so you may want to invest in a device that passively measures temperature and humidity in your records storage area. One online tool that can help you visualize how temperature and relative humidity works is the Dew Point Calculator.²

5 Digitize the records. It is equally important to care for your congregation's digital records, whether they were physical records recently scanned by volunteers or records that were created on a computer (what records managers call "born digital"). Make sure that filenames include a date (following the international standard format, YYYY-MM-DD) and an indication of what the file is about. Software such as Adobe Bridge can be used to attach metadata (information about the file, such as who is in a photo) to the file itself. Make sure to keep a list of what physical records have been scanned in order to avoid duplication of effort.



This is an example on how to preserve the local church history. This historical panel belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist Central Church in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil.

6 Share the records. Now that you know what records your congregation has, and where they're stored; are ensuring that they're kept cool, dry, and out of the sunlight; and are even digitizing records, you should make sure to share them! After all, the records capture the life of your local church family, and there are lots of ways that those stories can be shared. Host a church family night where you look at the photos and listen to stories from the older folks in the congregation. Perhaps the Pathfinders can interview those same folks for what it was like when *they* were in Pathfinders (and make sure that those interviews get saved as part of the church's records!). Maybe your congregation has a strong tradition of great potlucks and so you decide to create a cookbook with the recipes from generations past and com-

memorate the event with a celebratory homecoming potluck featuring those dishes.

Caring for your congregation's records is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing commitment to the congregation's past. But with everything else that must be done to maintain the congregation and support its ongoing work, why add managing its records to the pile? What benefit does a congregation receive from preserving its records?

When we learn family stories, we learn what it means to be a part of the family. That's true whether it is one's immediate family or their church family, be it local or global. It is easier to belong when one knows the family's stories. Yes, it is important to learn about general Adventist history, but it is equally important to learn one's local Adventist history. It's the regular people in the pews, the people we all know and love who quietly

served for decades, whose stories should also be known. Such stories—about people like Bob and Missy and Russel, all of whom I miss very much—are why taking care of your congregation's records is crucial. After all, taking care of your congregation's past—its records—and sharing those family stories demonstrates and implements care for your congregation's future. **ED**

¹ If you are interested in learning more, see the pamphlet "Protection from Light Damage" on the website of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (2012), <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview>.

² "Dew Point Calculator," Image Permanence Institute, accessed June 30, 2024, <http://www.dpcalc.org/index.php>.

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Ministering to and Ministering with People Who Are Introverts

>PART 4

EDITORIAL NOTE

In every society, significant numbers of people are introverts. This is the final of a four-part series to facilitate a greater understanding of people who are introverts and how to effectively minister to and with introverts.

“The evangelical culture ties together faithfulness with extroversion. The emphasis is on community, on participating in more and more programs and events, on meeting more and more people. It’s a constant tension for many introverts that they’re not living that out. And in a religious world, there’s more at stake when you feel that tension. It doesn’t feel like ‘I’m not doing well as I’d like.’ It feels like ‘God isn’t pleased with me.’”¹

Sometimes it seems the church has taken the extrovert ideal to the extreme. If you don’t show passion for Jesus, and express your love for Him explicitly, it can’t be real love. Is it any wonder that introverts—pastors and elders among them—start to question their own hearts?

Often extroverts are considered the best personalities for leadership. They are gregarious, charismatic, easily meet new people—perfect for leadership, right?

It is interesting to see that biblical descriptions of leadership do not include references to personality type. Instead, it pictures a servant leader and emphasizes character (see 1 Pet 5:1–3; Titus 1:5–8). “The mark of godly leadership is not a magnetic personality; it is discipline, because discipline develops character. . . . True leaders don’t lead out of what others want them to be; therefore, introverts with character will lead as introverts. . . . People desperately want to know that it’s possible to live, act, and work as they are, and introverted leaders who

model authenticity will give others freedom to be themselves.”²

If God has called you to be an (introvert) leader in the church, no matter if you are a pastor or elder, youth director, or whatever leading position, the calling is His. That’s why it has to be protected, and here are some hints that may help you:

Self-care. This is probably the most crucial part to persevere in ministry. So much time and energy are given to the needs of others that introverts especially may not heed their own needs. This, however, will create long-term difficulties, because the less attention leaders give to themselves, the less they can offer to those they want to serve. Self-care has to be done *internally*, by seeking whole-



The question I put to myself is not “How many people have you spoken to about Christ this week?” but “How many people have you listened to in Christ this week?”

—Eugene Peterson

ness in spiritual and emotional life. This is done by practicing spiritual disciplines like listening prayer, meditation on the Bible, or writing. Most introverts have to fight inner voices that nourish self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. Spiritual disciplines can help silence these voices, because they give room to God's voice and let it take on the battle against the negative self-talk. Self-care also needs to go *outward*, expressed in healthy and healing relationships. Loneliness, the negative part of focusing on the inward, was never intended by God. Though this inner focus and insights coming from the internal processes are valuable, it is necessary for introverts to have a small group of trusted people whom they can talk to and be sure not to be judged. They can help see clearer what one person alone may not be able to perceive.

Scheduling. It is important for introverts (not only leaders) to have an eye on their energy levels. They have to know when and how to save and/or restore their energy. Depending on your situation, you may want to create free spaces for

alone time. If it works for you, it can be flexible, like short breaks during the days, depending on the demands placed on you. It also means that sometimes you have to use the "magic" word *no* and not accept invitations, as appealing as they may be, especially when considering the importance of self-care. However, make sure to give room to "divine interruptions." This may be challenging, yet can be a learning process and the better you know yourself and your needs, the better you will be at handling special requests.

When God calls you to partner with Him in His church, He doesn't call you to be someone you are not. Your leading style will by nature differ from that of an extrovert. **Do not, at any time, start to believe yours is less valuable.** It is absolutely valid to use your strengths. Though you may not be familiar with every single member of the congregation, you may be able to connect with those who need it on a deeper level. Due to your natural inclination to listen more than to speak, you may be able to hear questions that are

not asked, or at least not directly. Actually, this listening ability is something even extroverts come to appreciate, and many of them do value the possibility of deeper conversations than they usually can have with other extroverts. Your preference for one-on-one meetings and your inclination to focus on your inner world allow you to connect with God on a very deep level, thus facilitating spiritual insight, which can prove to be a great help for others. Your influence in leadership can help find a balance in worship service. You may contribute to set up worship service as a room where both extroverts and introverts can find their place and feel welcome.

Introverted church members need introverted leaders—as role models, but also as an expression of inclusion.

My hope is that churches will begin to recognize what their worship services are communicating to introverts. An introvert's way of living and relating and worshiping are not inferior. In some ways the greeting time is an easy target, and by dwelling on that aspect of



When God calls you to partner with Him in His church, He doesn't call you to be someone you are not. Your leading style will by nature differ from that of an extrovert. Do not, at any time, start to believe yours is less valuable.

church life we can miss the larger issues underneath. Just as there is not one shape of discipleship, there is not one mold of worship. I would like for congregational leaders to understand that hour-long sermons may overwhelm a sizable demographic of their congregations, and a two-second silence for personal confession may feel like a mere hand wave at people who want to interact with God in a quiet way. In fact, as we find more balance in our worship, it will not only be introverts who benefit. Extroverts too will learn to listen for God in the cracks of their speech and grow in understanding that “in quietness and in trust shall be your strength,” (Is 30:15, ESV).³

Though we may often think that a leader has to do everything, this is not true. It’s not even biblical. Leadership is best done in a

team. This is good news, especially for introverted leaders. You do not, for instance, have to connect with as many people as possible; you can find a person who is skilled in this area and let him or her do the work for you. Actually, a partnership between introverts and extroverts can prove to be the best leadership team—not only for the church. Their strengths in different areas complement each other and can give a model to both personality types in the church. The key is to have a respectful, healthy relationship between the extroverts and the introverts, where both are aware of their strengths and weak points and support each other.

One last word for churches who are looking for leaders. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself:

1. What are our criteria for good leadership?
2. How do we identify and select our leaders? Are we placing too much emphasis on extroversion?
3. How important are listening skills?
4. Are we open to different kind of leaders? Do we also consider those who are thoughtful and contemplative?

Be open to God’s guidance. **ED**

¹ Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 66.

² Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 106.

³ *Ibid.*, 159.

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The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses

>PART 2

EDITORIAL NOTE

The ministry of deacons and deaconesses had its beginning in apostolic times and was related to service of different kinds in the early church. It is a commonly accepted belief that the work of the deacons began with the selection of seven men, including Stephen and Phillip, by the apostles to care for the charitable work of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5-7). Later, the New Testament also mentions the service of female deaconesses, such as Phoebe (Rom 16:1). Thus the ministry of deacons and deaconesses is biblical in origin. The leadership of Moses teaches us timeless principles for today's diaconate. A totally converted life of godliness, moral and spiritual uprightness, identity with God's people and His cause, and wisdom and discernment are some of the essential qualities of those called to church leadership. The following is an invaluable perspective on the ministry of deacons and deaconesses for the service of the church. This selection is from *Acts of the Apostles* by Ellen G. White.¹



SCAN FOR AUDIO

A MODEL FOR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

The organization of the church 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 ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2, 3); 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.

Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—"first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith

by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:4–12).

MOSES' LEADERSHIP: A TIMELESS MODEL FOR DIACONATE

Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth. In the days of the theocracy, when Moses was endeavoring to carry alone burdens so heavy that he would soon have worn away under them, he was counseled by Jethro to plan for a wise distribution of responsibilities. "Be thou for the people to Godward," Jethro advised, "that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do." Jethro further advised that men be appointed to act as "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." These were to be "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." They were to "judge the people at all seasons," thus relieving Moses of the wearing responsibility of giving consideration to many minor matters that could be dealt with wisely by consecrated helpers.

The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in leading positions of responsibility in the church, should be spent in dealing with

the weightier matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart. It is not in the order of God that such men should be appealed to for the adjustment of minor matters that others are well qualified to handle. "Every great matter they shall bring unto thee," Jethro proposed to Moses, "but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace."

In harmony with this plan, "Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves" (Ex. 18:19–26).

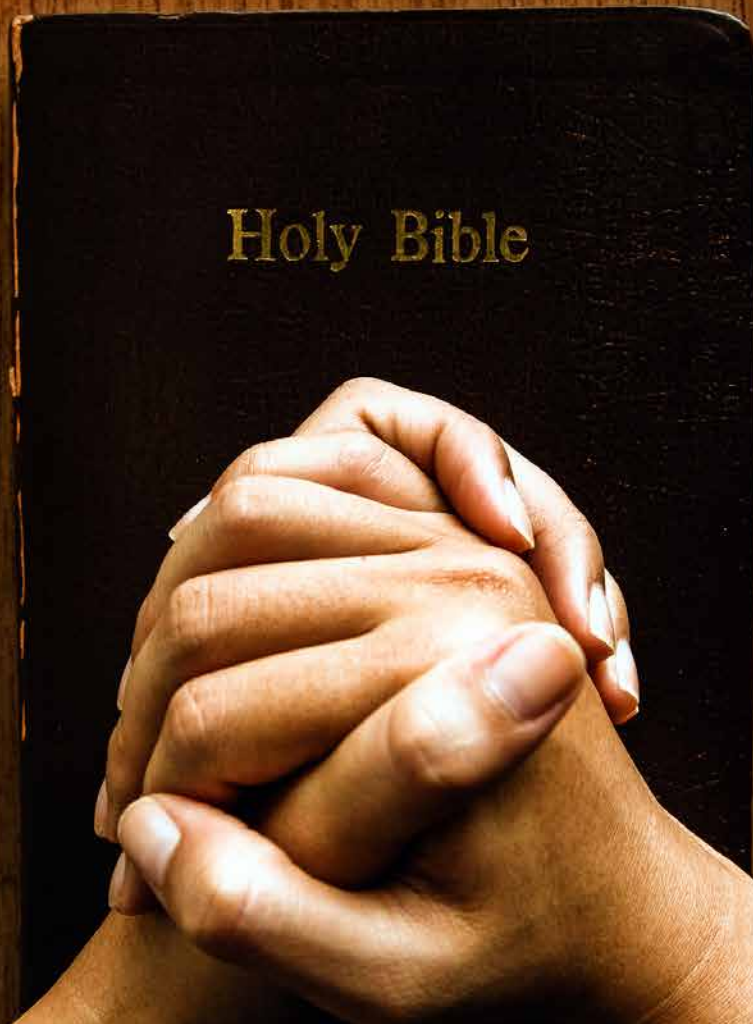
Later, when choosing seventy elders to share with him the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit 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 judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's" (Deut. 1:16, 17). ED

¹ Except for the subheadings, the entire portion that follows is from Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 87–96, and is based on Acts 6:1–7. Scriptural references are placed in parentheses.

How to Deal with Theological Conflicts

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND LOVE >PART I

Church elders and other leaders today often deal with various controversies. In every church there is at least one member who believes that their unique way of interpretation is the only way to look at Scripture or Ellen G. White's writings. We can classify these controversies into three categories: theological, such as the nature of Christ, the Trinity, and perfectionism; practical, such as music styles and church politics; and lifestyle, such as issues of diet, dress, and social issues.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

While each of these issues are theological at their core, this article, and the subsequent two articles in this series, will not deal with the controversies themselves. It is very important for church leaders to study the relevant issue thoroughly to discover what the Bible—and Ellen White—says about the topics. The Bereans were commended because they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).¹ If these new believers were so intent on their study, we as leaders must be even more studious. The intent of this series of articles is to give broad, general suggestions on how to deal with people who are questioning what the church believes. This first article will deal with the importance of prayer and love. The second will deal with the importance of handling the Scriptures and Ellen White correctly. The third will give practical ideas for having healthy dialogue.

QUESTIONING WHAT WE BELIEVE IS HEALTHY

One of the first things to remember when working with people is that questioning what we believe is healthy. It can lead to greater knowledge and stronger faith. Although it can be frightening to hear someone wonder if what they've been taught is the truth, questioning is an important part of growth. When we ask questions, we also must keep our minds and hearts open to the Holy Spirit's leading, because He promises to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Ellen White affirms this when she writes, “No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.”²

When a church member comes to you with questions or doubts, affirm them in their quest for truth and encourage them to spend time in prayer, and searching for answers in the Bible. Paul encourages Timothy to study the Scriptures so

that he is a worker who “correctly handles the word of truth” (1 Tim 2:15, NIV). When we study the Scriptures diligently, the Word of God will lead us into the truth. The psalmist says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105, NIV).

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS

Prayer must take place before, during, and after every discussion.

If we do not pray about theological conflicts, we are going into a spiritual battle without any armor. Before we address any issues, we must pray for ourselves, for the people involved, and for discernment in the conversation. We must pray that our own hearts would be pure, that we would have love for the people we will talk to, and that we would be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We must also pray for the people involved, that they, too, would be open to the Holy Spirit and that they would experience wholeness, healing, contentment, and peace in their lives. Finally, we must pray for discernment, that God would lead us to have the right approach, the right timing, and the right attitude as we speak with them.

As you begin the conversation, continue praying silently, and perhaps invite a few others to pray for you during the conversation. Afterwards, continue praying for them, for yourself, and for discernment to know if and when to broach the issue again. This follows the example of Paul's prayer for the Colossians: “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). Remember that you are not responsible for changing peoples' minds. This responsibility belongs to the Holy

Spirit alone, who promises to lead us into all truth.

Loving others is more important than conflict. Jesus disagreed with His disciples regarding the nature of His mission. His disciples thought His mission would be liberation from the Romans, but Jesus' mission was liberation from sin and death. Despite this disagreement regarding a salvation issue, Jesus spent almost all His time with them, reasoned with them, and even sent them out to proclaim the Gospel, even though their picture of the Gospel was not yet complete!

Even the disciples disagreed with each other. Matthew had worked for the Roman government; Simon the Zealot had been part of a group plotting to overthrow the Roman government! Throughout Jesus' ministry, all the disciples were in a bitter quarrel over who was the greatest. But Jesus put them together so they would learn to love each other, to work with each other, and be united—and this was Jesus' fervent prayer the night before He died (see John 17).

Even after Jesus' ascension, the disagreements continued. The book of Acts tells of conflicts over whether circumcision was mandatory for Gentiles. This was dealt with through prayer and dialogue (Acts 15). Despite this, and many other conflicts, throughout the book of Acts, the Church remained united in the proclamation of the Gospel. All these examples are reminders that differences should not prevent us from fellowshiping together, working together, and loving each other like Jesus loves us. “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:24–25).

CONCLUSION

Healthy relationships, with God and others, are essential for the health of the church. Our love for God and our love for others are inextricably intertwined (see 1 John 4:20). This means that in order to love others well, we must love God well. And to love God well, we must love others also. Our love for God is fueled by prayer, Scripture reading, witnessing, and worship. The more time we spend with God, the more we will be able to love others the way He loves them. When we pray and ask God for wisdom, He will give us the discernment to know the right ways and attitudes for the situations we encounter.

As we interact with people who have questions or divergent views, we must each agree that we will approach the subject with humility and prayer, that we will maintain respect and love for each other,

and that we will follow the revealed truth in the Word of God. While speaking to a group of ministers at the 1883 General Conference, Ellen White gave instructions on dealing with conflict and maintaining unity within the church.

Though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our brethren; for this course would lead to disorder in the church. It is the duty of ministers to respect the judgment of their brethren; but their relations to one another, as well as the doctrines they teach, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony; then, if hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us . . .³

May God grant us the spirit of submitting to each other as we pray for and love those who disagree with us. ED

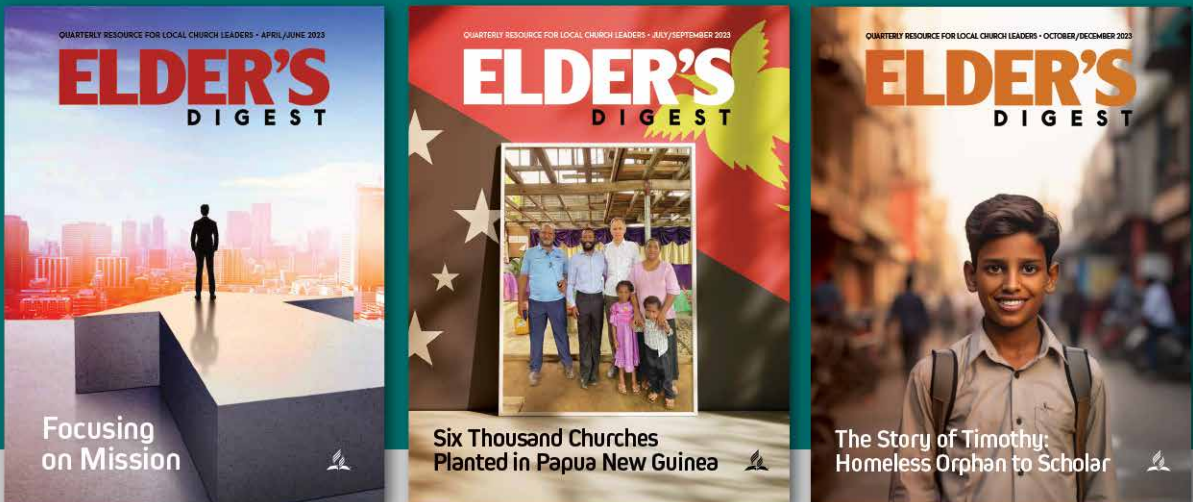
¹ All biblical quotations are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.

² Ellen G. White, "Christ Our Hope," *The Review and Herald*, December 20, 1892.

³ Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 103.

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