

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

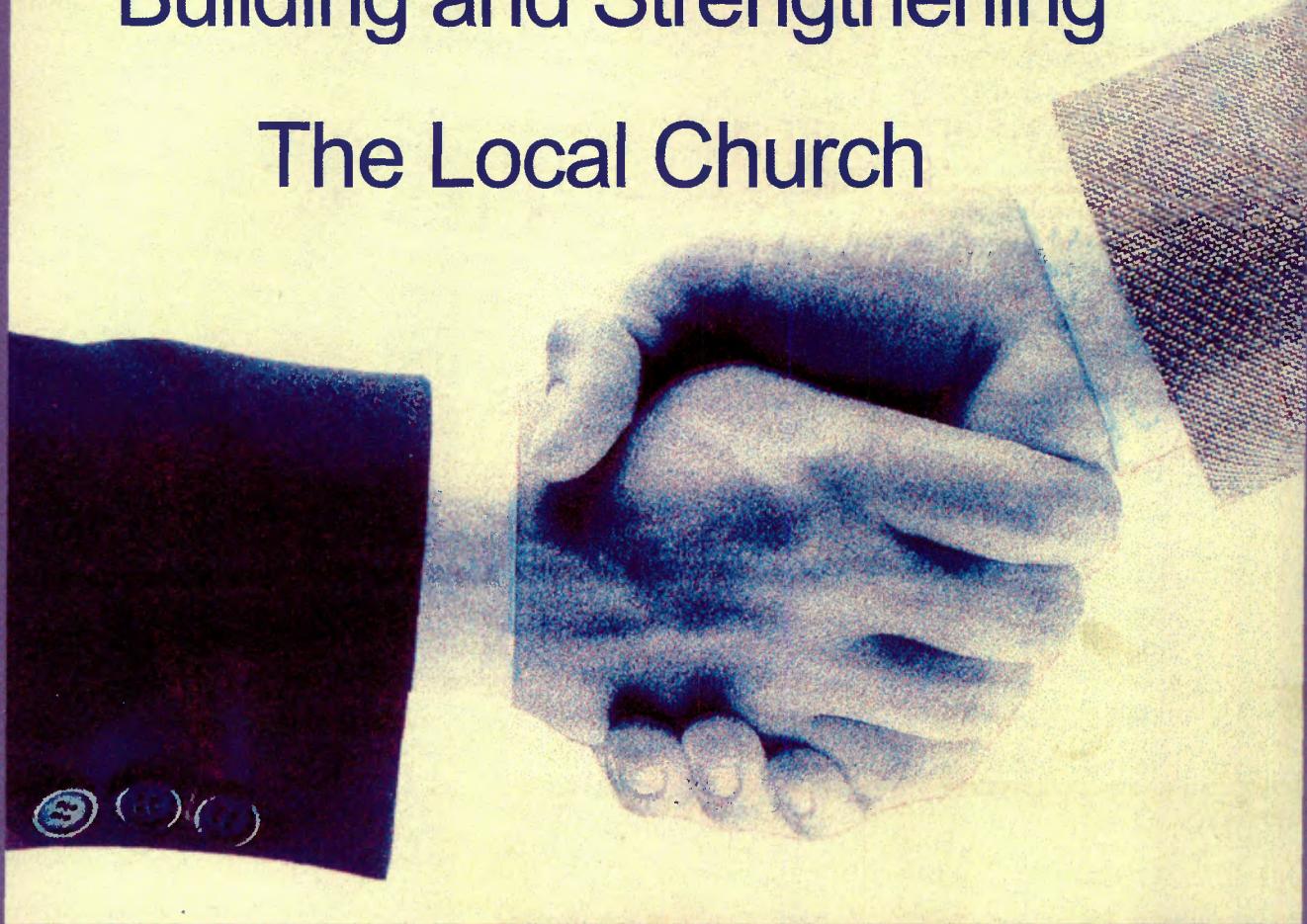
Vol. 5 Number 2

TEAM MINISTRY

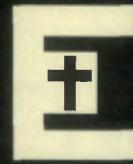
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Building and Strengthening

The Local Church



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**Elder's Digest**

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Conversion Comes First

Joel Sarli



As bureaucratic activities increases in the church there is a tendency to look for some professional skills or social influence and forget the spiritual qualification when selecting a new elder.

The ambassadorship conferred by God upon those chosen to be elders in the church is in many cases more powerful than the ministry of angels could possibly be, for they have never known the bane of sin or the blessing of pardon.

Out of cleansed and happy hearts can the human instrument speak to their fallen fellows, and through the vibrant sympathy and knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus they can be used mightily to teach and touch and turn sinners to God.

The highest, the holiest, and the heaviest responsibility ever imposed upon someone is the privilege of leading God's people. The fact that we have this entrusted treasure in earthen vessels is evidence of its high privilege, its great power, and its peculiar peril. No loftier dignity could ever crown a human brow.

All elders should bear in mind that the power is not in the human skills or any natural or acquired gift of an intellectual kind; but rather in acquaintanceship with the Lord Jesus, and in their personal devotion and true character.

"The local elder must be one recognized by the church as a strong religious and spiritual leader and must have a good reputation 'with them that are without' The elder should not be chosen primarily because of social position, or because of speaking ability, but rather because of a consecrated life and leadership ability" (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 57).

If the inner life of the elder is not transparent, if it is not sincere, candid, free from the taint of selfishness, pride, unholy ambition, and deceit, the Holy Spirit can make no saving use of the most splendid intellectual, literary, or educational gifts. Such elders may have influence but cannot have true efficiency.

Elders may have pleasing personalities and delight

their hearers with a kind of genius, wit, and humor; but their ministry will not bring fruit to perfection.

Such elders may charm others, may cause their churches to increase in membership, worldly honor, and wealth; but in winning people to Jesus Christ they fall short, for their hearts don't know the joy of spiritual life; they may get people to be loyal to them but not to Jesus Christ. "God calls for workers. Personal activity is needed, but conversion comes first; seeking for the salvation of others next. . . . Each one is to awake to the necessity of having personal holiness and a personal living faith. Then will God's work be done" (*Review and Herald*, Sept. 10, 1903).

When Moses had to select leaders, God gave him this orientation: "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exod. 18:21). When the apostles were organizing the Christian church and needed to select helpers, they were very careful and gave this orientation to the group. "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). Later when Paul was training Timothy he warned him. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Therefore it is of primary importance that we recognize the true relationship between a living experience of faith in Christ and missionary service.

In these days of stress, as we seek to extend the triumphs of the cross and count our material resources necessary to advance the work in our congregations, there is danger of placing emphasis upon human mechanics and professional skills, to the detriment of the spiritual life and a living, personal experience with Jesus our Savior.

Let us pray to God to give us a close relationship with Jesus and a wholesome balance as we serve His people as leaders.

The Wider Meaning of Stewardship

W. L. Adams

In modern times we think of a steward as one who has charge of an eating establishment, and especially one who is the supervisor of the cooking and serving of food. In ancient Bible times the term was applied to a person who had the oversight of all things pertaining to a household or an estate, who was employed to relieve the owner of the details of the business, and who received a specified allowance for his services. This practice applied to the Jews in the time of Christ and later. Such persons were responsible to the owner for all that was done about the premises or business over which they were stewards.

At this time, however, many seem to limit the term "steward" to the person in charge of that which the Lord has placed in his hands. Without question it has such meaning, for God is owner of all. He is the Creator of all, and in a sense we are personally responsible to God for what he gives us. Some seem to make the payment of tithes and offerings the sum and substance of this stewardship. But are we not responsible for the remainder of what He gives us? Can we recklessly squander the rest of this substance? Will God not hold us responsible for the nine-tenths as well as the one-tenth? Are we not stewards over that as well as the other?

Honesty in stewardship

Stewardship does not end when the person places his tithe and offerings in the hands of the church treasurer. The church treasurer becomes the steward of that which is placed in his hands, and he is just as responsible for it as is the person who pays it. The tithe is for a certain purpose, and the various offerings are given for specific purposes also. The treasurer must give an account of the funds that are turned in to him, and he is not allowed to use any sum thus placed in his hands for any other purposes than designated by the donor. When a member of the church gives a dollar to the church for the help of the poor, neither the treasurer nor any board or committee can make use of it for any other purpose. In the eyes of the law a misapplication of funds is called a breach of trust, or a misappropriation of funds. Any variation from the observance of the

donor's wishes is not strictly honest.

When the treasurers of the higher organizations receive the various funds, they become the stewards and they are responsible for them. They have no right to divert any of these funds to any other channel, and the rules that apply to the local church treasurer are equally applicable to them; and the boards they serve may not make use of these funds as they please either.

Stewardship of truth

There is another and more comprehensive meaning to this subject of stewardship, and it is expressed in the words of the Saviour in Luke 12:42, 43: "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." This is in harmony with the admonition of Christ to Peter as they walked by the sea after His resurrection. Jesus was eager to know whether Peter was as sure of himself at that time as he was before the crucifixion, when Peter assured him that though all men forsook Him, he would not do so. We know how he failed the Lord when He was arrested. Now Peter assured Jesus that he loved Him. Jesus then said, "Feed my lambs" and "Feed my sheep." In the future Peter was to demonstrate his love when he preached that wonderful sermon 50 days later on Pentecost and from that time onward until the day of his death as a martyr.

Paul expresses the same thought of stewardship: "Let a man so account for us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). The minister is a steward of the word of God and for this reason he should be very careful to teach the truth as it is found in the Bible. The apostle advised Timothy to "preach the Word." The minister who preaches that which is not clearly taught in the Scriptures should not be allowed to continue in that line of work, for he will be held accountable in the day of judgment for the things he says.

Some may ask whether a preacher may state his or

her opinion about a subject. We find some things in the Bible that are not too clear to us, and when we discuss them we should not be dogmatic in what we say. We should tell the congregation plainly that we are giving only our personal opinion, and that is should be taken for what it is worth. Among those topics that are not stated too clearly so far as the wording of the Bible is concerned, we might mention the subject of the 144,000, and the identity of the king of the north in the prophecy of Daniel. We can give our personal opinions without being dogmatic about them.

Stewardship in daily living

Not only should the minister consider his public teaching but he also should remember that his daily life and influence are likewise a part of his stewardship. His family and their influence should be included, for they all combine into a power for good or ill in the church and the community in which they live. Even the most humble member of the church has an influence on some, and he will have to account for this in the judgment. A wayward child of a minister has a detrimental influence on the minister's work, even when the latter has done everything possible to direct that child into paths of rectitude. No one has yet come forward with the solution of the problem of the one black sheep in a family. Regrettable though it be, such a stray in the minister's family is a depressing influence on the father and mother, making it hard for them to do their work effectively. If the child of a gambler goes wrong no one thinks it strange, but when the child of a preacher goes that way, it gets into the newspapers or becomes in other ways the subject of widespread news. It would seem that Satan works harder for the downfall of the family of the minister than others.

The use we make of our time is ours to direct. Life at best is short, and every moment is valuable to us and our children. Someone has said that the average person wastes enough time during the first twenty-five years

of life to secure a liberal education if that time were properly utilized. It is not well to be so busy that we never have a moment to relax, but we are the stewards of our time, and the minister who succeeds will budget time to accomplish necessary tasks with the least effort. Successful ministers study and prepare the sermons they preach. If they don't, the congregation will be aware of the lack of preparation. Ministers must have a vast supply of information to make it possible for them to give discourse after discourse without repetition. However, the pastor's health demands that he or she must also have some physical exercise. To do both, time must be budgeted.

Then each of us has physical and mental abilities over which each person is the steward. Those who have

When a member of the church gives a dollar to the church for the help of the poor, neither the treasurer nor any board or committee can make use of that for any other purpose.

made a study of mentality assure us that the average human brain has ability beyond our calculation. They have said that we have on the average somewhere between five and ten billion of neurons, or nerve cells, by which we can store knowledge. We are told that no one has ever yet used even one-hundredth part of brain power. It is wonderful to contemplate that if faithful we will have an eternity in which to store the mind with the things God would have us

know. But that is no reason for our neglect of this faculty today. We are responsible as stewards for the way we use our mental powers. Much is expected of the minister today, and so, as a faithful steward, a minister should not only acquire Bible knowledge but also develop other talents.

The minister should know his Bible thoroughly, but of necessity, he or she must understand many things of a practical nature. These are all parts of our stewardship. May God grant us the wisdom we need to administer this responsibility. ■

W. L. Adams was a pastor in Arlington, California, when he wrote this article for Ministry.

Time Management

Floyd Bresee

No one seems to have enough time. Yet all of us have all that there is. How we manage it is the secret to why some accomplish so much more than others.

Jesus emphasized the urgency of time. "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Managing time has always been a problem for Christians in general. Apparently this was true even in the first century, when Paul wrote, "Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the evils of these days" (Eph. 5:15, 16, Phillips). Following are some tips to help you save time.

Plan

Planning increases satisfaction. The trouble with having no plan for the use of your time is that you have no way of knowing if you've used it well. "To him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favorable." If you don't know where you're going on a given day, week, or year, how can you enjoy the satisfaction of having gotten there! Planning increases satisfaction.

Planning increases efficiency. First, set long-term goals and objectives based on what you want most to accomplish. Then develop a time schedule to accomplish them. Without such a plan, you will drift from task to task, finishing few and not really tackling the most important.

Every year set aside a few hours to sit down with your spouse and schedule the typical week hours in the office, in church meetings, visiting, at home.

Planning must be flexible. Don't plan too tightly. Always we have to have room for exceptions and emergencies. Expect the unexpected. A plan so precise and detailed that it cannot realistically be followed will soon be abandoned.

Planning must be communicated. Members will

never respect your time as completely as you wish, but you have no right to complain about their interfering with your time schedule if you haven't told them what it is. Discuss your schedule with the church board and get their advice, approval, and support. Then announce it to your congregation. You must always add that you're available anytime for emergencies, but that you are endeavoring to make the best use of your time so you can contribute most to the congregation.

Communicate your schedule in writing. Post it on the church board of announcements. Include it in the bulletin. Out of fairness to your members, be available in the scheduled time. Out of fairness to you, your members must understand you cannot be available for just any thing at any time.

Communicate personally. This is most difficult and delicate. How can you handle drop-ins or phone calls with no real need other than wanting to talk? If someone asks, "Are you busy?" Don't be too kind to give an honest answer. A balanced reply is "Yes, I'm terribly busy just now. How can I help you?" If that person still wants to chat, give your full attention for a few minutes. Then, if it's a drop-in, stand, thank the person for coming, shake hands, and perhaps say a little prayer. Never be unkind. But never let a few so control your time that you become ineffective in helping the many.

Prioritize

Efficiency experts speak of the 80/20 rule. According to this, we tend to spend 80 percent of our time doing what gets 20 percent of the results.

People spend far too much time doing things that don't really matter. Too many make a career of hunting ants rather than elephants, because they get a quicker kill and thus a higher body count. The most successful are not those who work hard, but those who work hard at hard work. At the beginning of each week, make a list of what needs doing that week.

Each morning, decide which items on the list should be done that day. "When you rise in the morn-

ing, take into consideration, as far as possible, the work you must accomplish during the day. If necessary, have a small book in which to jot down the things that need to be done, and set yourself a time in which to do your work" (*Evangelism*, p. 652).

Now prioritize. The 80/20 rule says that 80 percent of your day's value will come from 20 percent of the list. Resist the tendency to do the easy tasks first and leave the hard tasks undone. Alphabetize your list. Do the most important A items first and the least important C items last. Your goal is not to finish everything on the list, but those things that are most important.

Create at your prime time

Certain hours of the day energy level tends to be highest. For many, this is first thing in the morning. For others, it takes most of the morning to wake up, but they are bright and energetic into the night. No one else has the right to tell you when to do your creative, hard-thinking work. Do it whenever your energy level is highest.

Group your calls

Group your visits. Try never to be in the same part of your district twice in the same week. Group your phone calls. Let your congregation know when you will be available to receive or return phone calls so you or your family are not interrupted so many times throughout the day. Use the phone for much of your visiting.

A phone call is worth half a visit, and you can usually make five to ten phone calls in the time it takes to make one visit. If someone is sick in a satellite church, you can't go every day; but if phones are available, you could call.

Do it now

Settle trifles quickly. Be democratic, but don't call committees to make minor decisions that could just as well be made by one or two.

Make it your ideal to handle a piece of paper only once. Leave your mail until you have time to give it

proper attention. Then, if a letter needs answering, do it immediately and be done with it. If something can be delegated, pass it along right away.

Efficiency and effectiveness are powerful twins. Efficiency says, "Do the job right." Don't be so pushed by time that you do the job poorly and end up wasting time by having to do it again. Effectiveness says, "Do the right job right." Don't waste your time concentrating on minor jobs because they're easier. Tackle the most important job, even if it's the toughest. Do it first and be done with it.

Use time twice

People spend much time traveling. All spouses and parents spend time waiting here and there for family members. Use such times to read, listen to tapes, answer your mail, catch up on the radio news, etc.

Delegate

Eliminate things you shouldn't be doing. To be effective you must be reflective. You must take time to think, to study, to pray, to plan.

Ellen White counsels, "It is a great mistake to keep a minister who is gifted with power to preach the gospel constantly at work in business matters. He who holds forth the Word of life is not to allow too many burdens to be placed upon him" (*Evangelism*, 91, 92).

The apostles learned this the hard way. When they tried to do the work of the church by themselves the work didn't get done. And so they delegated that part to which they were not directly called, saying, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Results! "And the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly" (verse 7). ■

Floyd Bresee is a former Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference and presently lives in Central Point, Oregon.

The Challenge of Absenteeism

G. R. Nash

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." If this axiom is true, and we are sure it is, then the best way to reclaim a backslider is to prevent him from becoming one. One of the most effective ways to prevent backsliding is to watch for absentees from the Sabbath school. When people becomes indifferent with reference to Sabbath school attendance and loses their hunger and thirst for the study of the Holy Scriptures, they are likely apostates.

It would seem that the secret to the problem of apostasy is to be found in helping the absentees. The best way to help members who are growing cold and becoming backsliders is to visit with them and encourage them spiritually at the first sign of their losing interest. Is it possible that the Sabbath school leadership has grown indifferent toward absent members? We all live and work under great pressures. Could it be that while the Sabbath school and church go forward to finish the work, endeavoring to search out the lost and bring them in at the front door of the church, that the spiritually weak and the discouraged are slipping out the back door unnoticed?

Needed: A kind word

Perhaps in the hearts of those who are slipping away from us is a longing for a friendly handshake or a kindly word. Perhaps all that is needed is a warm invitation from a burdened heart for them to return to the Sabbath school. However, many times we are too busy to miss the absentees and may actually forget them.

I am reminded of the pastor of a large Western church who, in a Sabbath school council, responded to the question of a visiting General Conference Sabbath school secretary with the affirmation that there was no absentee problem in his church. The local elder did not want to contradict his pastor so asked the question "Are you really sure that there are not a few absentees each

week?" "Oh," he replied, "there may be a very few who live too far away to attend, but on the whole they are all present each week." The minister wanted to prove his point, so a survey was made by checking the church membership against the Sabbath school attendance. It was discovered that 31 percent of the church membership were absentees as far as Sabbath school and church attendance were concerned. Do you miss the absentees in your Sabbath school?

Are they just statistics?

Our consciousness is far too often merely statistical. We miss 13 percent or 23 percent or 33 percent of our church membership from the Sabbath school; we

may even be startled by the revelation that in 1963 in the North American Division, 52,176 new members joined the church, but at the same time 41,346 dropped their names from the church books. We may be concerned that the relation of Sabbath school atten-

dance to church membership stands at 81 percent when we know that the total Sabbath school membership should far exceed the church membership. But our concern is too often simply statistical, and we do not miss the individual absentee.

We miss 33 percent, but do we miss souls? The story is told of six small children who were playing in a row-boat tied up on one of the rivers in Maine. Somehow the boat was loosened, and the children drifted down the river and eventually out to sea. By the time the children were missed, darkness had fallen. Great anxiety filled the hearts of the members of the entire community. The thought of the children drifting on the cruel sea was horrifying. No one slept that night. Agonizing prayers were heard in many sections of the village. The next day a fisherman discovered and rescued the children. When word reached the people, there was a united cry of rejoicing. Are we as anxious about the missing

We are the family of God, but too often the absentees of the family are treated with unconcern.

members in our Sabbath school?

If we were as indifferent to the dangers and loss of physical life as we are at times to the loss of spiritual life, we would be considered barbarians and probably would be ostracized from good society. "Brethren and sisters in the faith, does the question arise in your hearts, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' If you claim to be children of God, you are your brother's keeper. The Lord holds the church responsible for the souls of those whom they might be the means of saving" (Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches*, 291). We are the family of God, but too often the absentees of the family are treated with unconcern. Some say, "They just don't seem to be interested, so what can we do?" Any mother or father who disregarded the dangers to a drowning child would be charged with legal homicide and sentenced to imprisonment. Can we be less guilty when those about us are losing their spiritual lives and drowning in a misasma of sin?

God calls for an alarm to be sounded in His holy temple. The deep concern of His heart is indicated by His outstretched hands to those who once knew Him, whose love has diminished and whose ardor has cooled off! Where can one find a more heart-stirring appeal than that voiced through Jeremiah? "Return, O back-sliding children, saith the Lord; for I am a lord unto you, and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion; and I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:14, 15, according to the Masoretic text).

The spirit of Moses must possess us

Sabbath school advisory committee resolutions on this matter are ineffective. Something more personal is needed. We must respond to the impressions of the Holy Spirit and endeavor to reclaim absentees and apostates. The spirit of Moses must take possession of us. He was willing to forfeit admittance into the kingdom if God would not redeem His backslidden people.

Some may think that new programs will bring answers to this perplexing problem. It will not. A passion for the lost is the only possible remedy. We must miss the absentees and feel in their absence a great sense of personal loss. That sense of loss will result in a special

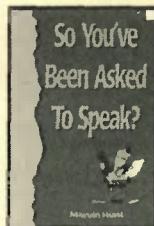
Sabbath school council or a special prayer meeting for the missing. To bring absent members back to fellowship in Sabbath school, there is no substitute for earnest prayer—personal prayer and class prayer bands. Likewise, there is no substitute for visitation. When the burden of the lost rests upon us as it should, ministers will weep between the porch and the altar, and the laity and leadership

will unite in manifesting the spirit of the Master, Who left the ninety and nine to search for the one missing sheep.

Labor for the absentees, one by one

It is because of our failure to miss the absentees that we are led to put forth effort toward corrective measures. These may prove helpful, but they are often ineffective. Sometimes they may even become a substitute for the only effective means of reclaiming absentees—a spiritual concern and personal labor for the absentees, one by one.

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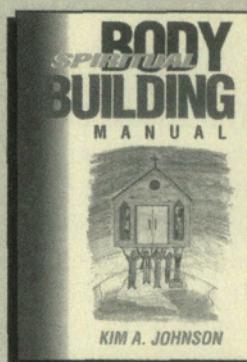
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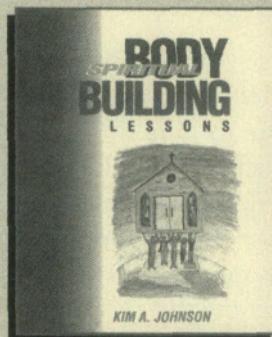
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The absentees cannot be resolved back into the Sabbath school or church. They must be rescued through the active participation of those who see their danger. They must be found and reclaimed by fellow members whose hearts are aflame with the love of God. Soul-saving by proxy has never been very successful.

The first step back to Sabbath school and church fellowship results from the assurance of having been missed. How many, even those backslidden ones we may regard as hopeless cases, sigh in their loneliness as did David: "I look to the right and watch, but there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me, no man cares for me" (Ps. 142:4, RSV).

Steps that must be taken

Step 1: Each Sabbath school council and every church board should take as an assignment from heaven the finding of the absentees and the reclaiming of the backslider.

Step 2: The leaders should put forth every effort to make each member in the Sabbath school and church conscious of the personal loss in all absentees.

Step 3: Sabbath school leaders should keep before the Sabbath school and church the spiritual loss of being absent from Sabbath school. This matter should be a subject of continuous prayer by all.

Step 4: The Sabbath school leaders and members should let all absentees know that they are sincerely loved and missed.

Step 5: Every effort should be put forth to ascertain the cause for absence. The removal of the cause should challenge all. Attendance cannot be forced. Attendance rests upon a voluntary basis and the love of the truth. The appeal to our people for faithfulness in attendance cannot be that of loyalty alone. The Sabbath school programs we conduct must also attract. Surely it is a truism that "a better Sabbath school means an increased attendance." People will attend if they feel they are getting something worthwhile.

Step 6: Last, but far from least, we should take as our overall goal for each Sabbath school session "to strengthen personal relationships with Christ Jesus." This, and this alone, can hold our people in these trying days when it is so easy to lose faith in God and go the way of the world.

G. R. Nash is a former Secretary of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.

Misuse of Public Prayer

Harold N. Williams

What is prayer? Prayer is asking. There is a difference between worship and prayer. We should always worship in prayer but we can worship without asking. When we pray we are talking to God and asking Him for favors. Too many times we forget to thank Him for past blessings and favors or to thank Him for what we are now asking. If we ask according to His will we can always thank Him for answering our present requests.

When we are talking with God alone it is proper and right to talk about our personal needs and problems and pour out to Him our heartfelt desires for our immediate family and dear ones, but these requests are out of place in public prayer.

When one prays in public he is talking with God about the needs and problems of those within the hearing of his voice. He is speaking in behalf of those present and his petition should be so worded that those present can from the heart say Amen.

God is real. God is a person. He is King of kings and Lord of Lords. If you were leading or accompanying a delegation of people who had an appointment with an earthly king to make requests you surely would want to give careful thought beforehand as to how you would word your request. At least you would find it very necessary to know what you wanted and be able to state your request clearly and concisely and in such a manner that the people in your company could and would join you in your petition.

If we would talk to an earthly ruler like many people talk to God, we would be expelled from his presence. Let us notice some of the misuses of prayer.

Vain repetition

If we were addressing a worldly ruler we would not be so thoughtless as to utter his name or title over and over again while making our request. I once counted the word "Lord" seventeen times in the prayer of a man in public worship. That is taking the name of the Lord in vain. In the sample prayer Jesus gave His disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray, He addressed God only once, at the beginning of the petition.

Preaching in prayer

We often hear ministers as well as laymen put a lot of preaching to the congregation in their prayer to God. Let us never forget that we are talking to God and asking Him for definite favors, not preaching to the congregation when we are praying. Many times we hear people hide behind the pretense of prayer to castigate someone in the congregation. This is cowardly, out of order, disrespectful to God, and not prayer. If we would realize that we are talking to God and not to men, we would not do this. We cannot see God, but if we could actually see Him when we pray, how different we would act when we talk to Him!

Do not weary God with words

If we were leading a delegation or taking part with a group in petitioning a governor or king here on earth, we wold not dare be long winded and tire the ruler with useless words. How then should we address God in public worship?

"Some of our preachers are killing themselves by long, tedious praying and loud speaking. . . . The long prayers made by some ministers have been a great failure. Praying to great length, as some do, is all out of place. . . . Long praying wearis, and is not in accordance with the gospel of Christ" (*Testimonies*, 2:616, 617).

"The prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. . . . Many tedious prayers are offered, which are more like giving the Lord a lecture than presenting to Him a request" (*Gospel Workers*, 175, 176).

"All should feel it a Christian duty to pray short. Tell the Lord just what you want, without going all over the world. . . . A common meeting to worship God is not the place to open the privacies of the heart. What is the object of assembling together? Is it to inform God, to instruct Him by telling Him all we know in prayer?" (*Testimonies*, 2:578). ■

Harold N. Williams was a pastor in Georgia at the time this article was written.

Christian Dedication

Philemon 1-25

I. Salutation (verses 1-3)

- A. Prisoner (verse 1): Though Paul was a prisoner, it did not discourage him from living for God.
- B. Persons (verse 2): Apphia was the wife of Philemon and Archippus was their son.
- C. Peace (verse 3): From God and Christ. Note the emphasis Paul places on Christ being equal with God.

II. Saints (verses 4-7)

- A. Prayer (verse 4): Paul is thankful for Philemon's prayers. Your prayers mean much to God's servants.
- B. Personality (verse 5): Philemon had faith and love in God. Faith and love always go together.
- C. Power (verse 6): Faith always results in power! All things become possible through faith and prayer.
- D. Peace (verse 7): Through faith, the Christian has great joy and peace in Christ.

III. Supplications (verses 8-19)

- A. Prisoner (verses 8, 9): Paul in jail longs to be with Philemon. Paul in prison for preaching about Christ.
- B. Plea (verse 10): Paul asks Philemon to be kind to Onesimus, a runaway slave, who was converted by Paul.
- C. Profitable (verses 11, 12): He was unprofitable but now is profitable.
- D. Person (verses 13-16): Receive Onesimus as a brother.
- E. Partner (verses 17-19): Paul will make up for anything stolen from Philemon. All in God's family!

IV. Security (verses 20-22)

- A. Personal (verse 20): Joy by knowing Philemon.
- B. Positive (verse 21): Paul had faith in people.
- C. Preparation (verse 22): Paul asks for a lodging place.

V. Summary (verses 23-25)

- A. Persons (verses 23, 24): The people who were helpful.
- B. Prayer (verse 25): A closing prayer or benediction.



This Amazing Grace

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2: 11).

I. Quality of grace "The grace of God"

- A. It cannot be *merited* (Rom. 11:6)
- B. It cannot be *inherited* (Eph. 2:8)
- C. It maybe *discredited* (Gal. 2:21; James 4:6)

II. Glory of grace "that bringeth salvation"

- A. *Justifying* grace (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7)
- B. *Delivering* grace (Acts 15:11)
- C. *Forgiving* grace (Eph. 1:7)
- D. *Enriching* grace (Phil. 4:19)
- E. *Empowering* grace (2 Tim. 2:1)

III. Ministry of grace "hath appeared to all men."

- A. To all who *look* (Isa. 45:22; John 3:14, 15)
- B. To all who *call* (Rom. 10:12)
- C. To all who *come* (Isa. 55:1; Matt. 22:9; Rev. 22:17)

Grace abounding

The house in which he lived was condemned. According to the Town Council it was unfit and unsafe because the foundation had been undermined. This happens often in coal-mining areas. Nevertheless, he lived there because he could not afford to live anywhere else. A confirmed drunkard and incurable gambler, he was the despair of his long-suffering wife.

One night he stumbled home to his wretched hovel so drunk he had no knowledge of what he was doing. Thinking he was headed for the door that led upstairs, he did not know he was trying instead to force his head and shoulders up the wide chimney. He began to cough and sputter with choking soot, and staggered back into the room, a condemned man in a condemned house. He had no thought for God, and no hope in life. In this fearful condition God spoke to him, and heard the voice

that wakes the dead to life calling him by name. He fell to his knees, and was perfectly sober in a moment, conscious of his surroundings and aware of his soul's deep need of cleansing. The God of all grace heard him as he cried for mercy, came to him and delivered him out of all his distress; and what is more God commissioned him to preach the gospel. That condemned man in a condemned house is today one of the most convincing and inspired preachers it has been my privilege to hear. It is difficult to realize that this present-day minister ever in such a terrible plight. Amazing grace indeed that raises beggars from the dung-hill to set them among princes.

E

Give Your Soul a Drink

"My soul thirsteth for God" (Psalm 42:2).

I. The underlying cause of soul-thirst

A. Man Designed for Fellowship.

1. To Walk with God. (Gen. 1:26, 27; Gen. 5:24; Gen. 6:6)
2. To Wait on God. (Ps. 145:18; Ps. 73:28)
3. To Work with God. (1 Cor. 3:9, 15:5; Matt. 5:16)

B. Man Deprived of Fellowship.

1. Through *wandering* (Prov. 21:16, 14:14)
2. Through *worldliness* (2 Tim. 4:10)
3. Through *wickedness* (Isa. 59:2)

II. The unfailing cure for soul-thirst

- A. A gracious invitation (Isa. 55:1; John 3:37)
- B. An earnest expectation (Matt. 5:6; Ps. 143: 6)
- C. A personal appropriation (Rev. 22:17; John 4:14)

III. Your most valuable possession

On one of Lawrence of Arabia's journeys through the desert, a man named Jasmin was a member of his party. Jasmin was a Bedouin and a lazy, shiftless fellow. The Arabs spoke of him as "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half a crown." As the party journeyed on, they were suddenly enveloped in a blinding sandstorm and soon were separated from each other. Hours later, when they were reunited and were preparing to make camp,

Lawrence asked, "Where is Jasmin?" There was no response. "Where is Jasmin?" he repeated. The Arabs looked at each other and then someone said, "He is out there," indicating with a wave of his hand the direction he had taken. Without a word, Lawrence led his camel out into the storm. He was going to find "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half-a-crown." At last he found him, completely exhausted. Lawrence helped him onto the camel and walked on ahead. As dawn was painting the sky, they reached camp.

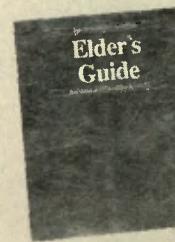
The Arabs awoke to find Jasmin in their midst, alive because their leader had found him. He had gone out into the storm to find "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half-a-crown." From that day forward the others in the group treated Jasmin with the greatest respect, but the change in Jasmin himself was the most remarkable feature of the incident. Never again was he the same lazy, good-for-nothing he had been before it happened. Lawrence had thought him worth saving, and his self-worth was enhanced beyond all knowing.

When people regard their souls as worthless, let them remember how Someone even greater than Lawrence of Arabia went out into the fiercest storm this world has ever known. Jesus must have considered our souls to be of infinite value if He endured such sufferings upon the Cross to deliver us from the power of sin and Satan. Against the background of what happened at Calvary the soul is surely heaven's most valuable possession.

E

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The Christian Soldier

Ephesians 6:10-20

I. His protective panoply

- A. It must be applied (verse 11): "Put on the whole armor"
- B. It must be appropriated (verses 13-17) "take unto yourselves"
 - 1. Girdle of Truth
 - 2. Breastplate of Righteousness
 - 3. Sandals of the Gospel
 - 4. Shield of Faith
 - 5. Helmet of Salvation
 - 6. Sword of the Spirit

II. His aggressive enemy

- A. Satan is *methodical* (verse 11c): "wiles," methods
- B. Satan is *infernal* (verse 12) "not against flesh and blood"
- C. Satan is *diabolical* (verse 16)

III. His effective strategy

- A. The *continual attitude* of prayer: "praying always"
- B. The *creative agency* in prayer: "in the Spirit"

- C. The *constant alertness* in prayer: "watching thereunto"
- D. The *comprehensive action* of prayer: "for all saints"
- E. The *compulsive authority* of prayer (verses 19, 20)
 - 1. To *liberate* the Word (verse 19a) "that utterance may be given"
 - 2. To *interpret* the Word (verse 19b) "to make known the mystery"
 - 3. To *demonstrate* the Word (verse 20)

IV. A worthy soldier of the Cross

One of the most courageous men alive today is Wiran Takko of Formosa. He grew up in a mountainous region, peopled by the aborigines. Formosa has quite a formidable past. Ceded by China to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, the Japanese State religion, Shintoism, was pressed upon the people.

By 1945 there were 4,000 believers among the aborigines; they had built 12 churches and were erecting others. This was reported by the first missionary to return to Formosa. The story of Wiran's sufferings was gradually pieced together.

Secret meetings, banned by the Japanese, were held in the hills. The police caught Wiran and beat him until he was near death. They tried to compel him to renounce his belief in Jesus Christ, but he refused and was promptly clubbed into unconsciousness and remained in that state for two days.

Three days later, at the police station, he was asked to divulge plans for the rescue of Christians by Americans, and he replied that he knew nothing of such plans. Isubaki, the police chief, punished him by refusing to allow him to sleep for a week, causing Wiran to lose his reason. When he demanded the return of his Bible, for some strange reason, they returned it.

He was then locked in an iron cage in his own home for one year and then released. Ignoring the threat of police brutality, he continued teaching his people about Christ. On two occasions he was arrested and threatened with death, but he refused to deny his Lord.

Then came the Japanese surrender, which brought great joy to the Christians. Today the man who was locked in a cage for a year and beaten many times is continuing his work, walking the mountain trails for hundreds of miles, to tell the people of a Saviour Who is mighty to save.

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BAPTISM

A Legitimate Church Priority

E. E. Cleveland

The hot sun shone brightly against the sparkling waters of the Caribbean. Ten thousand people lined the seashore singing hymns, awaiting the beginning of the baptism. History was made that day as 644 people were immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Four hundred eighty of them were brand-new Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The others were backsliders and Christians who sought a renewal of their faith.

Forty preachers stood for over three hours baptizing until this divine work was done. It was an occasion never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. As the slanting rays of the setting sun beamed their final benediction upon that day, heaven rejoiced, hell trembled, and the sons and daughters of God shouted for joy.

Baptism is a major part of the legitimate business of the church. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). By submitting to this God-ordained rite, the participant expresses faith in the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord (Rom. 6:4, 5). It is, therefore, a principal objective of our ministry to lead a man into this act of faith.

The apostles viewed baptism as being so important they felt everyone ought to have this experience. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Baptism is, therefore, legitimatized by the command of our Saviour, and by the common practice of the early apostles. But the problem today is that the church is so far removed from its early origins that some of its members and ministers seem to believe that it can exist without baptism. In fact, some members are uncomfortable when baptism time comes around.

This Laodicean attitude is epitomized by some rather familiar expressions, such as, "We don't want any evangelist coming in here and creating ill will in the community," or "These new people are not thoroughly grounded and are therefore not ready for

baptism," or "Our minister is just rushing people into the water to make a record with the conference."

Parents sometimes show their lack of interest in the baptismal rite when they are approached by their ten-and eleven-year-old children who wish to be baptized and tell them, "You're too young" or "You're not old enough to know what you are doing." (Where in the Scriptures are we told that it is better to give Christ our lives when we are old than when we are young?)

Some of our dear believers have been in the church so long that they have forgotten how they came in. Yes, that some man of God led them gently into the waters of the baptistry and immersed them in that name that is above all other names. They have become harsh and judgmental and would convert the church of God into a social club, accepting some and refusing others on man-made grounds.

Let all such remember that Christ called it "my church" (Matt. 16:18) and that therefore the temple of God is His, not ours, and we are privileged to be members of His body. Let no man, then stand between a man and the God he seeks at His altar. But let us stand aside in awe at the miracle of conversion and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart.

Contributing to a Laodicean attitude

Contributing to this Laodicean attitude on the part of some of the laity is the attitude of some of the ministry. Believe it or not, there are some preachers who are not overly enthusiastic about having a baptism and who make little or no effort to achieve it. They have become so busy with the routine of running the organizational structure that this commandment of the Lord has completely eluded them.

You see, they have more important things to do like running committees and participating in board meetings and conducting the business of giant institutions. After all, the finances of an organization have to be monitored, salaries have to be paid, policies have to be set, slogans have to be dreamed up, and pronounce-

ments have to be made. What does it matter if the baptismal pool is dry?

I think I can answer that question. If the baptismal pool were to remain dry there would be no organization to run, no decisions to be made, no one to man the committee—indeed, no committees, no departments to function, no board members to assemble, no choir to sing. In short, there would be no church. One inevitable conclusion follows: The baptismal waters must be continually troubled, not only to maintain what we have but to be the aggressive force for which the church was intended when implanted in the earth.

Indeed, a part of our comparative paralysis is that we have substituted the secondary for the primary and in too many men's minds the conquest for lost souls personally entered into by the minister is secondary to one's status in the organization. In pursuit of a selfless ministry, the job must always supersede the *position*, and only a selfless ministry can receive the full endorsement of the Holy Spirit.

So the command to teach and baptize is the legitimate church priority and all else is tributary to this. We have seen the ultimate end of the authoritarian institutional approach exemplified in the papal church of the Middle Ages. We cannot be satisfied with any modification of this travesty. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, though organized, must never partake of the pomp and circumstance consequent to the hierarchical form. It must be a seamless-garment, sandal-shod, straight ministry that functions where people are, leading them where they ought to be; the constantly troubled baptismal waters must symbolize this spirit.

This must be said again and again in our churches, our conference offices, our schools where seminarians are trained that we may develop sound values and balanced judgments, and, above all, form perfect channels for the working of the Holy Spirit's power.

Clergy-oriented skepticisms

There are also clergy-oriented cynicisms toward baptism that need to be dealt with. First of all, there is

skepticism about an organization that promotes baptism. Serious questions exist as to whether or not it ought to be externally encouraged. It is further pointed out that this tends to encourage preachers to "scramble to meet quotas." The opinion is expressed that the minister should just be left alone to work according to his internal lights and the church should be satisfied with the results. It is further pointed out that no statistics should ever be kept, for these tend either to pride or depression. And, furthermore, if a minister is converted, he will do his work on his own and does not need promotional "prodding."

In all honesty let us state that there is a grain of truth in all of this, but there is also a grain of error. Let us begin with this business of statistics. The disciples were not afraid of statistics: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). It seems that the Holy Spirit inspired Dr. Luke to include that important statistic. I wonder why?

And in chapter 4:4, "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." Now once again we are introduced

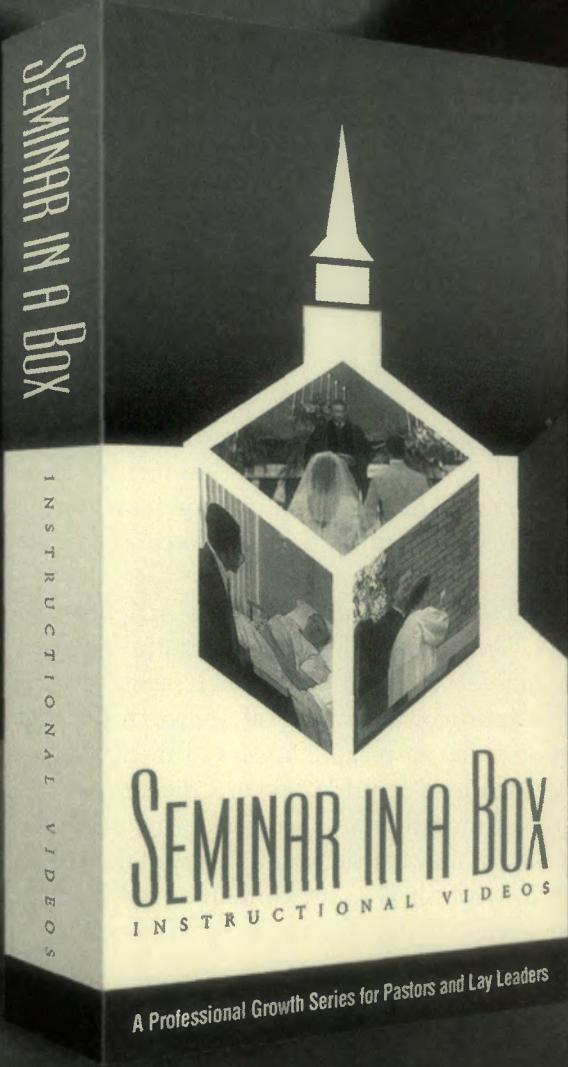
to a statistic. I wonder why? Then in chapter 5:14 we read these words, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Then chapter 6:7, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

You will notice the words of the scriptures, "multitudes," "a great company," "about three thousand," "about five thousand," and so on. It seems that the Holy Spirit approves the statistical approach that encourages and that inspires. Statistics of themselves do not inherently tend to pride, and are, therefore, not sinful. Statistics monitor the operation. And while they do not tell all, they are vague indicators of the presence of God at work in His church and, as indicated before, have been with us since apostolic times.

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Things statistics can't measure

Of course, there are some things that statistics don't measure. They can never reflect the time, energy, and prayerful concern expended over the conversion of one soul on the part of the pastor or the evangelist. Nor do statistics properly explain other variables such as extremes in climate, or the difficulty of preaching in countries that have restrictive state religious systems. Nor do statistics always tell of the sparsely populated areas that constitute some pastoral districts, so that five baptisms in Alaska may equal in significance 100 baptisms elsewhere. Or two conversions in Jerusalem may equal or excel 25 in Washington D.C.

There is also the historical record of missionaries who have labored arduously under forbidding circumstances over a period of years without realizing one convert, but they were laying the groundwork for the evangelistic explosion now taking place in some of those areas of the earth.

The statistician's pen could not possibly reveal Heaven's evaluation of these efforts, nor could cold figures anticipate the ultimate results of these initially nonstatistical efforts. But there are some things that statistics do tell. They tell us whether the work of God is heading in the right direction. They should inspire the individual minister to greater heights in evangelistic endeavor than heretofore. Statistics should encourage a field to lift its sights, taking into consideration past accomplishments, and statistics should encourage our hearts that God is at work in our midst.

Need for statistics

Of course, there are those whose sensitivities are offended by statistics. These conscientious, well-meaning brethren would not want the "right hand to know what the left hand is doing." They would simply "do the work" and "leave the results to God." There are, however, certain difficulties with the above suggestion.

There is a gas gauge on an automobile to let you know when you are low on fuel. There is a speedometer there to let you know when you are driving under or exceeding the speed limit. There are monitoring systems throughout man-made machines that serve as indicators as to the relative health of the automobile.

There are the oil gauge and the transmission gauge, all of these things serving a useful purpose. This, in my view, is the basis of the need for a statistical reading on the comparative health of the spiritual body of Christ.

In the field of medicine, doctors have stethoscopes, they have thermometers and machines to check the status of one's physical vital life signs. Many lives have been saved because of these monitoring systems. It is important that the body of Christ be monitored as to the status of its vital spiritual life signs.

The New Testament Scriptures clearly indicate that large numbers of accessions to the faith significantly revealed the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

These statistics are encouraging and do not of themselves tend to pride some are forever caught up in the *process* with little concern for *results*. The baptismal command clearly indicates that Christ is interested in results.

The baptismal command clearly indicates that Christ is interested in results, and in the very last book of the Bible, in Revelation 14:1, "And I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having this Father's name written in their foreheads."

While this statistic may be symbolic of a larger or smaller number of people, it is nevertheless there to denote the enormity of the scope of the ultimate gospel result. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothes with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9). "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" (verse 13). "And I said unto him Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (verse 14).

Inspired by this immeasurable statistical projection, we must labor on as if the winning of a soul is our business, knowing all the while that it is God's, and we must resist the temptation of Laodicean pride in the knowledge of our growth, but in humility confess to God that things would be better if we were better, and in His name pledge ourselves to the task! ■

E. E. Cleveland wrote this article when was an associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association and associate editor of Ministry.

Baptism

Introduction

Having identified God's remnant church, the true follower of Jesus will want to know how to join it. Jesus said: "Other sheep I have who are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock" (John 10:16). Generally one joins the church through baptism, though those who previously have been baptized may join by receiving Jesus as absolute Lord of their life and accepting the Biblical principles upon which the church is built. In this lesson we will learn the meaning and importance of baptism, as well as the way Jesus showed it should be administered.

1. *What two things are involved in being born again? (John 3:5)*

It takes love *and* a legal ceremony for a good marriage. There also are two aspects to the new birth: the spiritual part is our new, love-relationship with Jesus; and the official part is baptism, where we publicly pledge ourselves to Him. Both are called for in Scripture. For further study, see 1 John 5:4-61.

2. *Through what rite do we "put on Christ"? (Gal. 3:27)*

"Baptism" is a Greek word meaning "to dip" or "to immerse." It was carried over directly into English in our Bibles, being made a "theological" term. To call sprinkling baptism is a misuse of the term (Acts 22:16).

3. *What does baptism represent? (Rom. 6:3-5)*

Immersion represents two things:

1. Our faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection
2. Our death to self, burial of our old habits of sin, and our resurrection to a new way of life in Jesus (Col. 2:11-13)

4. *Why was Jesus baptized, and what was God's response? (Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21, 22)*
5. *Was Jesus sprinkled, or immersed? (Mark 1:10)*
There is not a single instance of sprinkling in the New Testament. Sprinkling was substituted by non-inspired men after the death of the apostles (Eph. 4:5).
6. *If Jesus Himself was baptized, should any of us consider ourselves too important to be baptized? Should pride prevent us from being buried in water for Him, when He was buried in a tomb for us?*
7. *In the Old Testament, the animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus' death. Were these sacrifices effectual without faith on the part of the worshiper? (Heb. 10:4; Lev. 4:35, 23:27-30; Rom. 9:31, 32; Deut. 32:20; Hab. 2:4)*
8. *In this respect, baptism is like these sacrifices. While baptism is necessary, can baptism itself, without faith, save us? (Mark 16:16)*
Baptizing infants is meaningless because they have no faith. An infant can be dedicated to the Lord, as Jesus was as a baby, but baptism is meaningful only when it expresses the believer's faith (1 Peter 3:21; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 5:1, 2).
9. *At Pentecost, what did Peter tell the new converts to do? (Acts 2:38, 8:12, 38)*
10. *What were the new converts "added" to when they were baptized? (Acts 2:41, 47)*
Some Bible versions omit "to the church." See KJV or NKJV (Acts 5:14).

11. What symbol represents the church?

(Eph. 1:22, 23)

'The church . . . is His body.' (Col. 1:24).

12. What are we to be baptized "into"? (1 Cor. 12:13)

Christ's body, the church (see verses 27, 28).

13. What is given to those who are baptized?

(1 Cor. 12:7-12)

Everyone receives some gift of the Holy Spirit for service in God's work and in His church. "Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God (Rom. 12:4-11; *Christ's Object Lessons*, 327).

14. What are we to do with these gifts after we are baptized? (John 15:2, 8; Matt. 12:31).

15. What was Jesus' last commission to the disciples?

(Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16)

16. On one occasion, what did Paul do to those who had been baptized before learning all of the gospel? (Acts 19:3-5)

He baptized them again (Acts 17:3)

Commitment

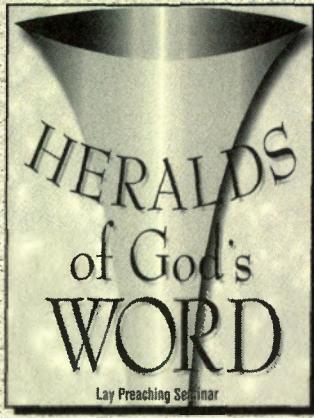
Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father" (Matt. 10:32). Once God gives us the opportunity to develop a faith-relationship with Jesus, and then as we learn how to publicly confess that relationship through baptism by immersion, salvation is conditional upon our obedience. Would you like to request baptism today and begin to prepare for that wonderful event? And while you are preparing for baptism, will you pray that God will show you what gifts He has given you to be used in service for Him and His church?

My response to Christ is:

E

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Using Group Dynamics to Increase Baptisms

K. S. Wiggins

Numerous experiments have shown that group discussions lead to better results than good lectures. People tend to make up their minds better when they talk things over than when they are told what to do.

Dr. Kert Lewin reports that when a nutrition expert told a group of mothers that they should give their babies orange juice, 55 percent were following his advice a month later. But when groups each consisting of six mothers talked and decided to give their babies orange juice, 100 percent of them did.

After carefully studying group dynamics methods, I decided to adopt a discussion approach in getting decisions for baptism. I have been able to baptize up to 96 percent of those taking part in the group discussions and making a decision in the group.

During my crusades I arrange to have my best interests come together on a Sabbath morning after the major doctrines have been presented. The program does not follow the usually Sabbath morning format, and there is no sermon. I try to have something different happen every 15 minutes, and the aim is to create an informal atmosphere that will encourage discussion and help the interests feel free to express themselves.

There is a series of short talks designed to create a decision consciousness. For example, someone gives a talk entitled "The Importance of Following Jesus Immediately," and someone else discusses "The Importance of Following Jesus When Young." The last one is appropriate because most of my converts have been under 30 years of age. The people are divided into groups of six or seven, and each group chooses its own chairman. The chair directs the discussion in his group, collects questions, and asks them publicly on behalf of the group.

The questions are answered on the spot, provided they do not call for information on subjects not yet

discussed from the pulpit during the crusade. This question-and-answer period is important for three reasons: (1) Confidence in the evangelist and the message is increased when the people see him answering questions from the Bible without prior preparation; (2) it provides an opportunity to answer objections and remove reservations before calling for a decision; and (3) the nature of the questions reveals whether or not the people are ready to make decisions. Experience has taught me that when many questions are asked about the law, the Sabbath, or the state of the dead, the people are not ready for a decision. I then spend some time clearing up the misunderstandings concerning those doctrines. However, if the questions are merely on Christian standards and health reform, I know the people are ready to make a decision to unite with the remnant church.

At this point I say: "I can see that you believe that what you've been studying is the truth. The only thing an honest person can do with truth is to accept it and act on it. I believe that is what all of you will do; but I cannot tell the church this until you give me permission. Therefore, I am going to ask you to discuss this among yourselves for three minutes and then tell your chairperson to report to me what you have decided to do about the truth you have learned."

After three minutes the chairpersons of the groups report the decisions, and there is usually a 100-percent decision for the truth and baptism.

My experience has been that these decisions are more trustworthy than the ones made during an altar call. In short, this method results in more decisions and better decisions. ■

K. S. Wiggins was an evangelist in Jamaica when he wrote this article.

“Involve Me, and I Will Understand”

Allan and Deirdre Martin

It is an amazing phenomenon! Sometimes the two of us amuse ourselves by watching the fascinating behavior of our youth group as time nears for Sabbath worship service. At first they come in, somewhat attentive to what is going on. Then almost instantly their attention is lost—it is like someone flipped a switch and turned something off. We call this action “zoning out.” They zone out of the activity in the pulpit and engage in activity with each other, oblivious to what we call “worship.” And if we are honest with ourselves, we can’t really blame them. Sometimes we zone out too, but prefer to call it daydreaming. Either way, we also turn off the action up front. What is the catalyst to this behavior? Why does zoning out happen?

As we wondered, we noticed that most of the participants in our worship service were male elders in the church. On occasion we may have an adult woman participant, but rarely did our youth and young adults participate in the pulpit during our regular worship services. If they did participate in regular services, it was to demonstrate some musical skill. In addition, we found that most of the worship service was geared toward Adventist adults talking to Adventist adults. No wonder our teens tuned out of our services. They didn’t want to eavesdrop on this conversation we adults were having among ourselves.

Much of our youth ministry energy goes toward developing exclusive programming and activities for teens. Among some of our youth leaders there is a strong push to have a youth church service separate from the main service. As we talk with our youth leaders and compare notes, they too see the zoning out phenomenon and hope to remedy it by “doing our own” service.

Short-term Solutions

We feel that may be useful short-term solutions but

our fear is for the long-term. What message do we send to our youth by separating them out because our main worship is irrelevant to them? Further, what impact does being separate from the adults have on our youth? What are we communicating by this action?

Recently our local church took a needs survey of our youth and young adults. The most prominent issue that emerged was their (youth and young adults) desire to have adult church members more involved in their lives.

Another prominent issue was captured by a young person who said, “I know what I believe. The question for me is ‘Where do I fit in? Where do I belong?’”

There is a Chinese proverb that says, “Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.”

Let’s Involve Youth

Our challenge to youth leaders is to spend some of your ministry energy integrating youth and young adults into the very core of church life. Inoculate your “main worship service” with youth and young adult participation. Place the cloak of mentorship on church elders and adult leaders, calling them into relationships with your teens. Help develop inclusive worship language. Involve youth and young adults in church administration, utilizing their spiritual gifts and their professional expertise. Take one or two young people under your wing, giving them the inside track of your ministry. Involve them.

We hope that by our efforts to meet this challenge, youth and young adults will not only tune in to church but also understand that this is where they belong. ■

Allan and Deirdre Martin have served as youth and young adult ministry consultants.

Making the Sermon Clear

Steven P. Vitrano

Clarity and coherence should characterize Christian preaching. If the preacher is to "encourage" and "charge" men "to lead a life worthy of God" (1 Thess. 2:12), what he says must not be muddled, ambiguous, or confusing. Careful consideration should be given to the following points that make for clarity in preaching:

Simplicity

Simplicity is the key to clarity. Simplicity, in this context, must not be confused with stupidity, dullness, or crudity. Rather, it should be understood in the sense that Ellen G. White uses the word. In *Gospel Workers*, she writes, "Ministers should present the truth in a clear, simple manner" (170). What she means is perhaps best illustrated in the references she makes to the preaching of Jesus. For example: "In these words [Sermon on the Mount] spoken by the greatest Teacher the world has ever known, there is no parade of human eloquence. The language is plain, and the thoughts and sentiments are marked with the greatest simplicity. The poor, the unlearned, the most simple-minded, can understand them" (*Testimonies*, 5:254).

One of the great challenges in preaching is that of making the profound simple, of making clear to men who are finite what has been revealed by the One who is infinite.

One Central Theme or Subject

For the sake of clarity, every sermon should have one central theme or subject. This central idea should run throughout the sermon, and every other element in the sermon should be related to it. Moreover, the preacher can not adequately develop more than one theme in that amount of time. To burden the mind with too many unrelated ideas at any one time is to create confusion and bewilderment. It is to this point that Mrs. White speaks in *Testimonies to Ministers*: "You have made of none effect many precious ideas, by mixing them with other thoughts which have come to your mind, but which had no bearing on the subject. That which is far from the subject under consideration

should find no place in your discourses" (309, 319).

The ideal toward which to strive is that of gathering the whole of your sermon into what is called a "topic sentence." When you can summarize in one sentence all that the sermon is designed to say, you have a sermon that, in this respect at least, is characterized by clarity.

The "precise" word

It is said of Jesus that He "did not use long and difficult words in His discourses; He used plain language, adapted to the minds of the common people" (*Gospel Workers*, 169). This does not encourage indolence in vocabulary development. While we should use simple words that are commonly understood, we need to use the "precise" word. This is the word that best expresses the thought.

You will recall from the statement quoted above that Jesus used "plain language." This does not mean that Jesus disregarded the rules of grammar and syntax. His speech was not uncouth just because it was "plain." His was a proper usage of the language of the people. His sentences were simple, uncomplicated, and short.

Too often we carry the impression that good grammar and syntax go with sophistication eloquence but not with "plain language." This is not so. These rules were devised in order to make for clarity and precision of expression.

Proficiency in the use of language does not come by accident. While it is true that some have more of a "gift" for fluency in speech than others, even the gifted must strive for excellence. In this striving two things bring rich rewards—reading and writing.

Read material that is well written but not difficult and complicated. Read that which impresses you with its simplicity and clarity, but which is rich in thought and profound in truth. As you read be sensitive to that which makes what you read clear and understandable.

Write out what you plan to say. This is painful to be sure. But that is all it costs and the rewards to you in your ability to use language effectively far outweigh

the cost. What a tragedy when a preacher gets into the pulpit and knows what he wants to say but just cannot put it into words! How different it might have been had he taken the time to put it into words before he entered the pulpit!

Read and write; write and read. You will find as time goes by that your speech will improve with the

discipline. Clarity is worth every effort we make to achieve it, especially when it has to do with the sacred work of preaching.

E

Steven P. Vitrano was professor of preaching at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary when he wrote this article.

F E E D I N G L A M B S



Promoting Your Child's Self-Esteem

Le Etta Bradshaw

Help your children learn to share what they have with others, since giving of one's self and one's time stimulates a healthy self-concept. This could mean babysitting without pay for a neighbor who is sick or helping with the yardwork at an elderly person's home. A good self-image comes from looking outward, not inward.

When children receive gifts, discuss with them how much the gift—and the person who sent the gift—are appreciated. Then ask children to write thank-you notes.

Talk often together about the principle in James 4:6—"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Discuss it not in a threatening way, but gently, helping your child realize that learning humility is as important an achievement as anything else he accomplishes.

The description of sin in Isaiah 53:6—"Each of us has turned to his own way"—is a good reminder that selfish independence is wrong.

When someone hurts a child's feelings, help the child deal with the hurt by encouraging him or her to pray about it and talk about it with others. "Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice" (Prov. 13:10).

Also, let children know you love them and will continue to love them no matter what mistakes they make. (How can we do any less, since God loves us so unfailingly?)

Don't encourage children to ignore those who hurt them or disagree with them. God wants us to develop a healthy interdependence with others, not a prideful independence.

As parents, we need to see our children's hurt as a situation for godly growth rather than trying only to stop the hurt. Children often seem to be able to handle more hurt than their parents think they can. They find it easier to forgive and forget than most adults do.

Self-control is another key component of self-worth. Learn how to help children recognize more and more their own responsibility for their conduct.

Remember that children must be loved according to their unique personalities, and that developing their self-worth is a little-by-little process.

You'll do the best job by praying for God's direction and searching for wisdom in the Scriptures.

E

Le Etta Bradshaw is a wife and mother and a former elementary school teacher.

The Meaning of Ordination in the Apostolic Church

Ellen G. White

There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen. . . . and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:1-2). Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.

The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result, the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work, would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14) that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy; and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews.

God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet; and in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.

Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office, and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church

was set upon the work of God.

To the Jew, this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they by that action asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles, in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed.

At a later date, the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination, and of the bearing that it had on their future work.

The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service, show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church. Years before, when the divine purpose concerning Paul was first revealed to him by the Saviour Himself, Paul was immediately afterward brought into contact with members of the newly organized church at Damascus. Furthermore, the church at that place was not long left in darkness as to the personal experience of the converted Pharisee. And now, when the divine commission given at that time was to be more fully carried out, the Holy Spirit, again bearing witness concerning Paul as a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, laid upon the church the work of ordaining him and his fellow-laborer. As the leaders of the church in Antioch "ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work

whereunto I have called them."

God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence, He places His servants in close connection with His church, in order that they may have less confidence in themselves, and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.

There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence.

They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God.

Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme, are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy, and overthrown. The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all

believers, Christian shall be united to Christian, and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.

Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from this time that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 160-165).

It was at the ordination of the twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on

the earth. Of this ordination the record says, "He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3: 13-14) with gladness and rejoicing, God and the angels beheld this scene. The Father knew that from these men the light of heaven would shine forth; that the words spoken by them as they witnessed for His Son,

would echo from generation to generation till the close of time.

The disciples were to go forth as Christ's witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of men. As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stood as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles stand as representatives of the gospel church (*Acts of the Apostles*, 18, 19). ■

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Working Together With Your Pastor in a Team Ministry

Juan Calderonnes Souza

It is obvious that principles of team ministry must be put into practice by the elders for them to accomplish theirs intended function. Unless the application of principles to practice is clearly discerned, team ministry will not achieve its full potential of blessing to the eldership or the church.

The elder must have team spirit

The apostle Paul wrote to the team leaders at the church of Philippi and exhorted them to have a team spirit, "that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

The words *striving together* are one Greek word, *sunathleo*, which was an athletic term. The prefix *sun* means "together with" and *athleo* is the Greek cognate verb from which the English word athlete comes. The Greek word literally means "to work together as a team, to contend along with someone" (Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 548).

This principle of working together is aptly demonstrated in many team sports. The team with average talent that works well together as a team can often beat a team with a superstar that lacks a team spirit.

A team spirit is dependent upon three traits.

A spirit of meekness. A spirit of meekness does not strive or assert self. It flows together with others. It melts individuality into unobtrusiveness. Meekness is not weakness, but strength under control. The strength is controlled by the person's spirit, which has become subservient to the team effort and which no longer seeks personal recognition. Titus 3:2 states, "shewing all meekness unto all men." The person lacking a spirit of meekness will be continually frustrated in a team effort and feel that his ministry is not appreciated enough.

The Greek word for "meekness" is *praotes*. This term

was used in the secular Greek for the taming of wild horses (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, 241). Amidst the mountainous terrain of Greece, wild horses roamed the canyons and open spaces. These horses were captured and tamed for the Greek armies. It was the cavalry of mounted soldiers that provided the backbone of Alexander the Great's conquering hosts.

Much like the cowboys of the American "Wild West," the rider would mount the wild horse and the horse would do everything it could to throw off the rider. It wanted no one to tell it what to do. If the rider succeeded in staying on the horse until it exhausted itself and its independent spirit was broken, it would become a "meek" steed. It had not lost its strength, but its strength was brought fully under control. It will work together with the rider and with more training, may be harnessed with a team of other horses to do a job that none of them could accomplish alone.

A senior pastor is God's "cowboy" to "ride" an independent team member. He must confront, instruct, and stay with him until the team member is willing to be part of a team effort.

A spirit of submission. A submissive spirit is not demanding, but surrenders to the team effort. It is not domineering or presumptuous to assume more than is warranted. It desires that the team succeed, even if a task is not accomplished in his way. Thus Ephesians 5:21 states, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Submission is not suppression. A team member's individual style and creativity must not be eliminated. He does not have to become a clone to have a spirit of Submission.

A spirit of humility. A humble spirit recognizes the need for support and strength, supplied by one's fellow team members, to do the job at hand. Peter says, "For God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

A proud spirit, however, promotes self. It tries to prove its own abilities and strength. It denies, in precept or practice, the need of others to fully accomplish the goal.

Characteristics of team spirit

- Team spirit does not demand that its way is the only way to function.
- Team spirit sacrifices personal ambition for the goals of the team.
- Team spirit finds satisfaction in the accomplishments of the church and its leadership team, not just in individual achievements.
- Team spirit finds joy in making the senior pastor and the leadership team successful.
- Team spirit submits to the leadership team as a whole unit.
- Team spirit is fiercely loyal at all times.
- Team spirit does not strive to be personally recognized.
- Team spirit is able to say 'we' most of the time, rather than saying 'me.'
- Team spirit doesn't get offended over little issues, but surrenders self-assertiveness to team purpose.

A team member must have a spirit of unity with the other team members

The church at Corinth showed the devastation that can happen in a local church when unity is not in practice. In the Corinthian church there were serious divisions. Some were saying that they were of Paul, others were claiming allegiance particularly to Cephas, others to Apollos, while some were of Jesus and rejected all other church leaders (see 1 Cor. 1:12, 13).

Thus the apostle Paul wrote in 1Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The word "divisions" is the Greek word *schisma* and was used in the classical Greek to refer to actual tears in a garment (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 3:188). These divisions were tearing apart the fabric of the Corinthian church. Paul told the church and its leaders here that they should speak the same things, think the same things, and have the same judgments.

How is it possible for a group of leaders from diverse backgrounds to fulfill such a team mandate? The answer is not for senior pastors to surround themselves with "yes men" who have weak personalities and who are afraid to speak their minds. This only constitutes a group of puppets, which makes for a weak team. It provides no check or balance to the senior pastor or other team members.

In team discussions, the team members have the right and the responsibility to give input and to speak their own minds. Senior pastors must allow room for their supportive ministry to give input to him and the team. They have been working in different areas and will have information and insights not as readily available to the others. They should be free to debate and disagree on the issues being discussed. But once the decision has been made by the leadership team or by the senior pastor about a certain direction that will be followed, team members are responsible for accepting that decision as their own. Even if team members feel they are right and the team decides to take a different direction, the team member must accept the decision and back it unreservedly. A disagreeing member would say, "Okay, if this is the decision of the team, then I will submit to it, and I will cooperate to see it work." Then when the team members leave the room, they are truly of the same mind and have the same judgment.

Consequently, one of the greatest tests for a team member who disagrees with the team decision is in being confronted by others who ask, "What do you think about the recent leadership decision? Do you think this is the direction the leadership should go?"

Even though individual team members may feel within themselves that the team decision is wrong, they must (because of their spirit of unity) back up the decision of the team. They must say to the other members, "The team made this decision, and I'm behind it 100 percent. We're going to make this thing work."

When a leadership team speaks the same thing, it gives a far greater impact to the people. When people come to attack a particular decision, they are not only coming against the senior pastor or an individual team member, but they are confronting the entire team. ■

Juan Calderones Souza writes from Puebla, Mexico, where he serves as an elder in a small congregation.

He Who Prays

Henry Feyerabend

"Call the gardner"

When the famous financier J. P. Morgan Sr., was on his deathbed, he was observed to show marked signs of anxiety. Those in attendance asked if there was anything they could do to make him more comfortable, but he replied, "No, but I desire that prayer be offered in my behalf before I die."

He had among his acquaintances many of the world's most illustrious leaders, but as these were named one by one, he slowly shook his head. He even suggested that they trouble not his pastor, adding, "Where is the gardener? He is a man who prays, and God hears him. Call the gardener."

They called the gardener, and that humble man with rough work-worn hands and sunburned face entered those majestic halls. He entered a death chamber which gave every indication of the wealth of its owner. Its marvelous oriental rug, heavy draperies, and exquisite couch spoke loudly of wealth and luxury. But upon that couch lay a man approaching death, and he was not at peace. He had millions of dollars, but he didn't have the peace that filled the soul of his gardener who had worked for him for years.

Quietly the gardener approached the couch of the great captain of finance. The dying man cast an anxious look at the lowly gardener and uttered one word. "Pray." And how the gardener prayed for his rich master! He knew the need and did not fail to tell God about it. When he was finished, Morgan uttered the words, "It is well."

"It's hard to grow old alone!"

Mozart was so poor he was unable to buy wood to heat the shabby room in which he lived, so he sat with his hands wrapped in woolen socks to keep them warm while he composed divine music that was to make his name immortal. He died of consumption at 35—his vitality lowered by the constant cold and hunger as well as lack of nourishment. His pitiful funeral cost exactly \$3.10. Only six people followed the cheap pine coffin and even they turned back because it started to rain.

One of the most popular songs ever composed, "Silver Threads Among the Gold," by Hart P. Dank, was composed as a love tribute to his wife and sold to the publisher for \$15.00. Later he and his wife quarreled and parted. He died poor and lonely in a shabby lodging house in Philadelphia. On a table beside his death bed was a note, "It's hard to grow old alone."

For this worthless body Christ died

Many years ago in an Eastern city of the United States a poor old beggar, his body shrunken and sick and covered with sores, was sent to one of the great hospitals, and after being there for some days, was taken to the operating room. In those days they didn't have anesthesia, and the other patients could hear all the preparations for the ordeal. So before the surgeon began his work on this poor old wreck of a human being, he turned to the young medical students who were in attendance and, using the scholarly Latin of the schools, said to them, "Let's perform an experiment on this worthless body."

He thought his language wouldn't be understood, but the old beggar had once been a great scholar himself. He had drifted away into liquor and sin and had paid dearly for his life of "pleasure." But he could still understand Latin. So he lifted himself up on one elbow there in the operating room, and said in Latin "Yet for this worthless body Jesus Christ died."

Guided home by a text

Wing-commander Gerald Gregson, senior chaplain to the Canadian Royal Air Force tells of the day a badly wounded airman was carried into the hospital and placed in a bed beside another patient. Turning to the man in the next bed he asked, "Say, mate, can you tell me anything about religion?"

"I'm afraid I can't, pal," said the man on the next bed, "But there is a lady who comes here on Thursdays giving out tracts. She'll be able to tell you."

"I may not be here by Thursday," said the wounded airman.

After a pause the other man said, "You know, I remember that when I was a child going to Sunday School the teacher taught us a verse from the Bible something like this—'Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.'"

In a second the dying man asked, "Do you think I could come in on that?"

"You can try," said the other.

Pulling the sheet over his head the poor broken airman, with his life ebbing away, was heard slowly to say the words, "Suffer the little children to come . . ." His voice faded away. It was all he had to direct him to the port of safety. Did God bring that text back to the mind of the man in the next bed? Who put that faith in the airman's heart? Who was trying to reach this man before it was forever too late?

True dedication

Frank Higgins was known to many people whom he had brought to Christ as "The Lumberjack Sky Pilot." He was a big man, but he carried such a huge pack of literature on his back to give the lumbermen that he literally collapsed on his last trip.

When the men learned that he was being taken to the big city hospital for medical care, they got together and had a consultation. They decided to send one of their own number with Frank to be of any service that he could. They loved the man who had brought Christ to them and had given them the hope of everlasting life in a better world.

When the time came for the operation, this great big lumberjack stood at the door and said, "Frank, you know we love you and want to help you. While the doctors are operating, I will be at your door—and Frank, if the doctors find they need a quart of blood or a piece of bone or skin, they can call on me. Frank, you can have every drop of blood or every bone in my body. Now, don't forget, I will be at the door,"

George Whitefield's dedication

George Whitefield was a wonderful example to all of us. His life and his words were a constant testimony to the power of the Gospel. Mighty audiences in the British Isles were swayed like a forest in the wind by his powerful messages. Time after time he crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the dangerous slow-moving ships of that day. In 1770, he died at Newburyport, Massachu-

sets. He had just preached to a large congregation, and they followed him to his inn. He stood on the stairway holding a candle in his hand, as he was on his way to retire, when they asked him to preach once more. Finally, as the candle burned down and was about to wink out, the great preacher ceased his preaching and went up to bed. The candle of his life burned before the morning. The words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart certainly must have been more than acceptable to God.

"It's so dark!"

One day a young mother was loving her little girl, but that same night that mother was dead. The child of six years was left without her mother. The young husband was heartbroken over his loss. The neighbors tried to comfort him and the child. After the funeral they said, "Joe, you can't stay there tonight." But Joe said, "No, I'm going back to the room where she left me."

Soon the father heard the sobbing of his child, and he reached over, patted her in her little bed and said, "Go to sleep, dear, Daddy is here and he loves you."

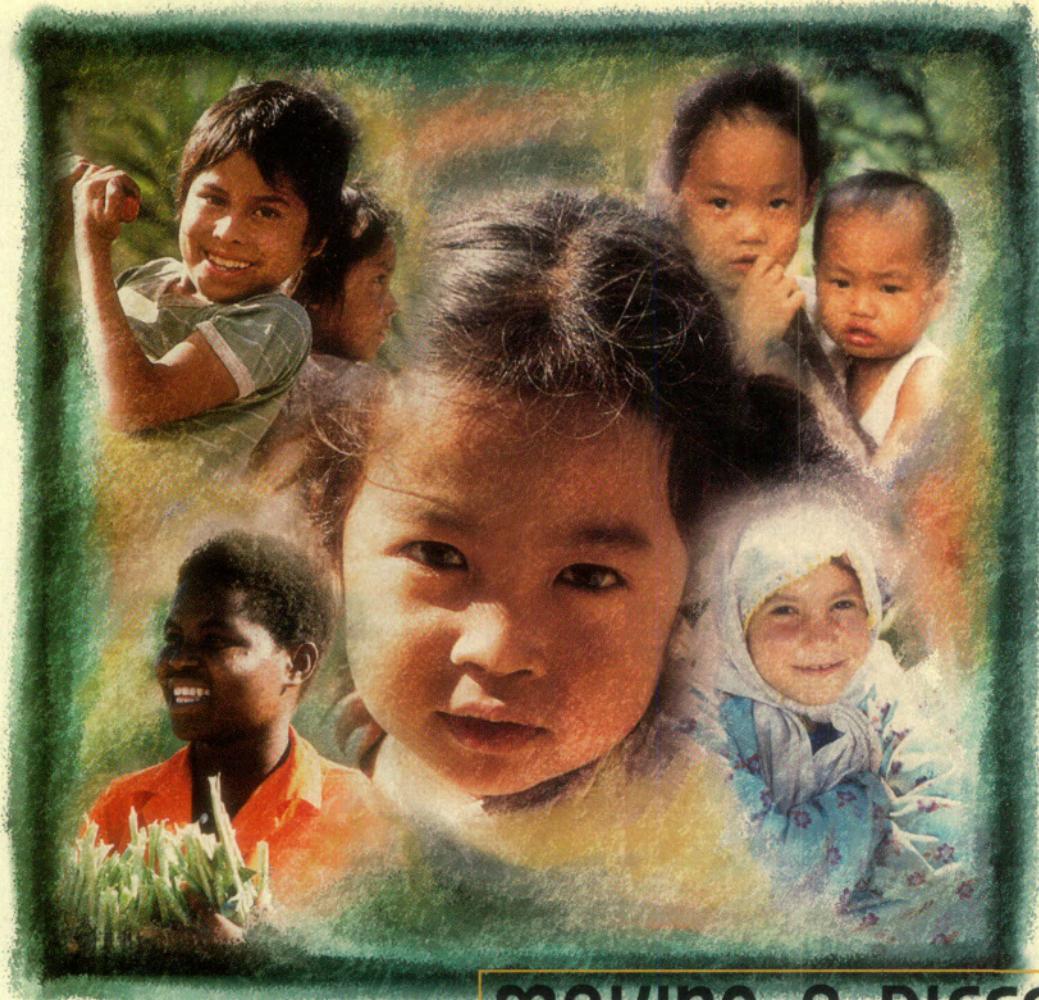
The father thought she was asleep when he heard her little voice, "Oh, Daddy, it's so dark tonight!" He tried to calm her; he told her he was with her. Pretty soon he heard that soft voice again, and again he told her to go to sleep, that he loved her.

She said, "Daddy, I tried to because you wanted me to. But Daddy, it's so dark tonight. It's never been so dark as this."

The father took the little child in his big arms and carried her over to his bed. He tried to comfort her as her mother would have done, and pretty soon she was sound asleep on her father's breast.

Then the father started to talk to the heavenly Father above. Through blinding tears he said, "Oh Father, it is dark, it's never been so dark before; but You love me, even if it is dark, don't you, Father?" Then he felt a great peace in his soul, that was never borne on land or sea, a peace that can be found nowhere but in Jesus. He found peace and rest in the great Consoler, the Light of the world.

Henry Feyerabend writes from Oshawa, Ontario, where he serves as the director and producer of It Is Written in Canada.



PATHFINDERS & ADRA

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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