

# ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 9 No. 2

## FRESH SUPPLIES OF GRACE

“Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power.”

Ellen G. White

See the article:  
Music worship is a matter of principle  
The Elder and the quality of worship



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## Elder's Digest

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# “I like my pastor, but . . .”

Joel Sarli

It was 10:30 in the morning when the telephone rang. It was a call from a local church elder. He wanted some help. He was having disagreement with his pastor in some issues related to the life of the congregation. He began by saying: “I like my pastor, but,” and he made some observations about the work and ministry of his pastor: “I like my pastor, but he lacks tact in dealing with discipline issues; I like my pastor but he does not have a glowing personality; I like my pastor but he does not visit enough; I like my pastor but his speaking voice is sort of monotonous.” On and on he went. I was just listening. Hardly had I had the chance to say a word to my brother. He wanted to be listened to and I had been a good listener.

Using this event as a starting point I would like to say something about that to my dear elders. The “buts” are numerous and varied when speaking of pastors and their work. When was the last time that you made such remarks concerning your pastor? As true as the statement may be, nevertheless it should not be said. No good can come from such remarks. Remember, even though he is in the ministry, your pastor is a human being and subject to all the temptations and shortcomings to which you are—possibly even more.

“Yes” you say, “but his shortcomings are hindering the work in our church; souls are no longer being saved; Christians are leaving and going elsewhere to church.” This might very well be true, but your pastor needs something more than your discussion of his faults with others.

The need of every minister of Christ, whether missionary, evangelist, teacher, or pastor, is deeper than mere shortcomings which are obvious on the exterior. All have a deep need of the heart which, when met, will cause his few faults to fade into insignificance. This need is the fullness of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry.

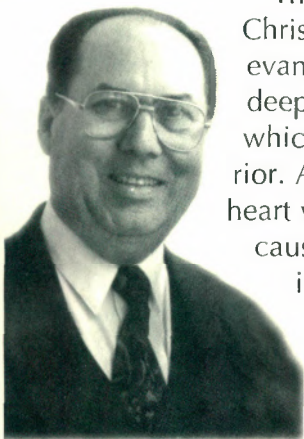
After a service one

night, two women who had been attending approached Dwight L. Moody. He was shocked, and somewhat irritated, when the women told him they were going to pray that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit. At the time he was attracting fairly large crowds, with a few souls being saved. Before long, however, Mr. Moody, too, realized the need of the fullness of God, the Holy Spirit, in his ministry. He began to pray with these women for this fullness. Two years later—according to his testimony—Moody, while walking down a street in New York City, received the answer to this prayer. From that time forward the ministry of this man of God was phenomenal. He preached the same sermons, in the same way, at the same places, but great things began to happen. Thousands were brought under conviction of sin and looked to Jesus for the solution. Other thousands were strengthened in their faith and emboldened in witnessing.

If you would help your pastor and your church, begin to pray earnestly for the fullness and the power of God’s Spirit in them. Much more will be accomplished by such a prayer than all the talking you and your fellow church members can do. Believe that God wants to bless the work and pray accordingly. The Bible declares that “God . . . is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

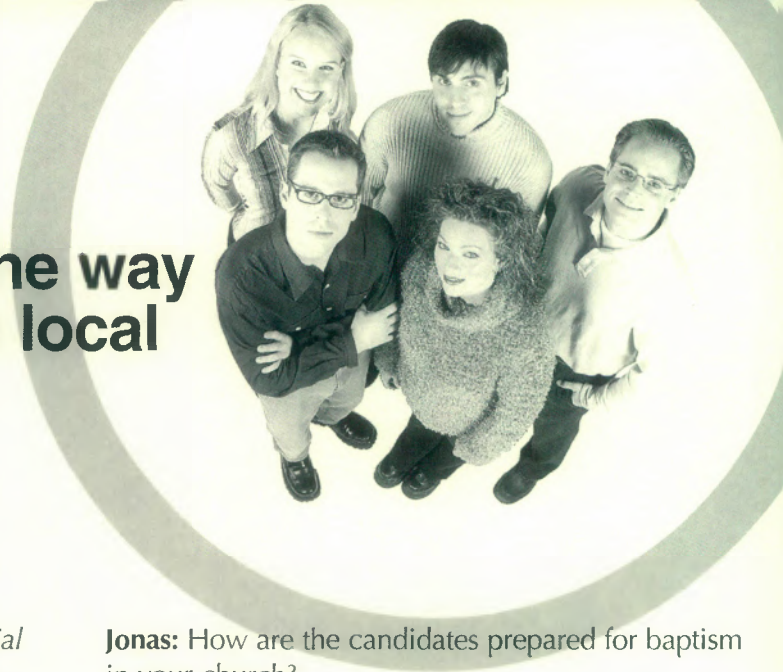
I am fully aware that all Christians do not agree regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the child of God, but one thing upon which we do agree is that we need the Holy Spirit with all His power to operate in and through us if we are to bear eternal fruits. This your pastor needs. Likewise your church, and each working member of your church. Yes, you also need this experience.

Rather than discuss among yourselves the faults of your pastor, begin today to petition God that the Holy Spirit might come in power into your midst. The command from the Bible is: “Be not drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). And the promise follows: “Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (Luke 11:13). **E**



# Small groups pave the way for the growth of the local congregation

*Jonas Arrais de Matos*



*Interviews held by Pastor Jonas Arrais, Ministerial Associate of the South American Division, with three leaders of Peruvian congregations.*

*Wladimiro Silva Chavez is a retired pastor of the North Peruvian Mission. Since his retirement he has been involved as church elder, exclusively in the missionary district of San Andrés.*

## **Wladimiro Silva Chavez**

**Jonas:** In your opinion, which are the greatest needs of the church?

**Wladimiro:**

1. We need more instruction in church doctrine.
2. Total preparation of the membership to testify.
3. Pouring of the Holy Spirit to firmly establish our faith.
4. To organize the entire church into small groups.
5. Total knowledge of Christian stewardship.
6. A true spirit of genuine love, especially for the new converts.
7. Grater missionary spirit.

**Jonas:** How many times per month do you preach?

**Wladimiro:** I generally preach once a month at the central church of the San Andrés district, and other times in the other churches and congregations of the missionary district. In our small groups I preach and teach on Wednesdays and Fridays.

**Jonas:** On what subjects do you prefer to preach?

**Wladimiro:** I derive great pleasure in preaching about Christian stewardship, the Sanctuary, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, the home and family, doctrines, the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of Christ.

**Jonas:** How are the candidates prepared for baptism in your church?

**Wladimiro:** Those interested in baptism are prepared in Bible classes, in small groups, in Bible studies at home or baptismal classes in the church.

**Jonas:** How many persons have already been baptized as a result of your direct contact?

**Wladimiro:** Up till now (November of 2001) 12 individuals were taken to the feet of Jesus. I believe that six people will be baptized at the end of the campaign.

**Jonas:** What would you say to the retired pastors?

**Wladimiro:** I would encourage them to continue working for God and His church because it's a privilege. I feel very happy because now I am able, on a voluntary basis, to continue as a member in the church leading many people to the baptismal waters. This work, which I am doing with my wife, has been a great blessing.

## **María Neri**

*María Neri, or sister Julia, as she is known, had the opportunity to lead 25 individuals into God's church by baptism.*

**Jonas:** What are the offices that you have held in the church?

**María Neri:** During the years that I have been in the church I have been children's teacher, Sabbath School leader and group leader.

**Jonas:** What happened to your Missionary Group?

**María Neri:** In 1994, our Missionary Group No. 2, of the Central Church of Porvenir went out to conquer the territory of the new housing development in Huerta Bella, where we didn't have an Adventist presence. We began meeting in a private home and to engage in personal work, visiting the neighbors' and friends' homes, which joined the new group.

We also had Holy Week meetings and slowly but surely we saw the results of that effort. Today, with the three small groups of two people each, they continue visiting and giving Bible studies.

**Jonas:** What is your work today and how do you feel?

**María Neri:** At the beginning I was elected as a leader. And in 1999, when the group was organized, I was again appointed leader, since the brethren said they had full confidence in my work and my determination to carry this work forward. My greatest dream is to have a place where we can worship our Father. God found us a piece of land right in the housing development thanks to the help received from the administrators of the North Pacific Mission, the district pastor, and to the brethren who meet with the congregation of Huerta Bella.

### Ronald Guevara

*Ronald Guevara, 25 years old, was chosen by his church to be an elder for last year. He is studying Science of Communication for Marketing and Organizational Communication.*

**Jonas:** How would you describe an elder's task?

**Ronald:** I consider the elder as an assistant to work within and without the church, the pastor's right hand, since both are involved in the work and mission of the church. It's a special call from God.

**Jonas:** What is the greatest need of the young elders?

**Ronald:** The first and most vital need is to walk with Christ every moment. Without Him is to be dead. The second item is to know the needs of the church members. Third is to know the needs of those who live close to the church; our neighbors, who see us all the time, also need to be visited constantly as an example of a living testimony.

**Jonas:** How is the life of a young elder spent?

**Ronald:** It is similar to the life of all the sons of God. The only difference in relation to the others is the office. To be an elder is a call that inspires and draws one closer to God.

**Jonas:** Is it easy to work with young people?

**Ronald:** It is fascinating to work with young people. We talk, we sing, we go for walks and form small groups to teach others who know us, but do not know Jesus. Small groups already exist at universities and our challenge is to penetrate them with the message everywhere.

**Jonas:** How do you divide your time between your studies and your responsibility in church?

**Ronald:** I am always present in the campaigns, I don't know how to explain it but with the power from above I have been able to accomplish it. I study from Tuesday to Friday and I dedicate Sabbaths to my church, preaching in the places assigned by the pastor. I take with me a group of young people and invite them to come to the front and to pray. My mother says that I prayed at home for my family members since I was six years old; today, I do it with the same joy as when I was young admiring our heavenly Father's mercy. Almost everything in life has to be planned, and it is there that we find success.

**Jonas:** What is the strategy to open up new places?

**Ronald:** Small groups are a divine inspiration. Everywhere in our district meetings are held in small groups three times a week, with studies and visits. The leaders of small groups and members are the ones who prepare the field and organize new groups. The ministry of prayer is the power that moves our church. Everyday prayer is offered for a brother or a sister so that someday we may be able to finish spreading the good news.

**Jonas:** What is the secret for a harvest campaign?

**Ronald:** The strength of the Christian is found in prayer. That's the secret. A church that does not pray will die. The second secret is the strategic planning in the leader's meeting. The motivation, through constant visits to our brethren, and total evangelism, is the strength we need.

**Jonas:** How do you evaluate your first year as an elder?

**Ronald:** The best evaluation is that I perceive in my life what God is doing for me, for my family and for all those who support me. I hope to continue working according to God's will; I am ready to go wherever He calls me. I am happy with what I have and I don't care whether it is little or much. I am happy to be called a disciple of God. I would like very much to finish my education and to serve in the work within my area of study. **E**

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Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

# Aunt Abbie

Bonny Boyd



**M**atthew 9:35: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." I love that about Him.

Scrap booking has become a very popular way of documenting family histories. We all have many interesting and unique relatives that together make up our particular family tree. I would like you to meet just one of the many characters perched on my family tree. She was my great-aunt. Her name was Abbie. She stood just about 5 feet tall. She wasn't much of a fashion plate. Never wore make-up or visited a beauty salon. When I knew her, her hair was long, wavy in the front and pinned into a tight little bun at the nap of her neck just to keep it neat. She always wore sturdy shoes and plain clothing. To me, she had a smile shaped like the letter "U." She loved to laugh and always had a mischievous twinkle in her eye. She never married.

In her thirties, Aunt Abbie decided to try something totally adventurous with her life. She learned to speak Chinese fluently, boarded an ocean liner and crossed the wide sea to become a missionary to the people of China.

I would like to share just one of the stories, told at her memorial service by Dr. Paul Wong, chief of staff at the hospital where Aunt Abbie served many years as a missionary chaplain.

Tom Lee, a 21-year-old peasant, worked in a steel factory across from the Ja-Ling River near Chung King Hospital. His job was to transport red-hot cinders from the factory site to a nearby pond where he would dump the load into the water.

One day, as he was discarding his heavy load, he accidentally fell into the pond of boiling water. He suffered second and third degree burns over the entire lower portion of his body. He was rushed to the hospital where the medical staff attempted to treat him. This was during the Japanese War and the hospital had only meager supplies, a few blankets, little medicine and no penicillin. Lee quickly became infected. His body oozed and dripped with puss every place he had been burned; ruining blanket after blanket and the odor was unbearable. Finally, when he slipped into a coma, Dr. Wong, his attending physician, foresaw that Lee's death was imminent.

In wartime, because of extreme shortages on space, the nurses received permission to move Lee to a small room next to the hospital morgue to await the inevitable.

Abbie Dunn, a little American woman chaplain, ministered to all the hospital patients. Her Chinese name was "Dun Fu On." She found Tom Lee in that remote tiny room with his life ebbing away in a most grotesque and painful manner. He kept slipping in and out of a coma; Abbie gently ministered to him, physically and spiritually. He had never heard of Christianity in his 21 years of life, or the existence of a loving heavenly Father. Abbie so much wanted him to know this before he died. She pinned a small picture of Jesus at the foot of his bed and when he would become conscious she taught him a short prayer: "Jesus, save me." Tom mumbled this prayer over and over. She longed to make him more comfortable so she searched out Dr. Wong and inquired if anything could be done

# Jesus, save me

to make his last days easier. Dr. Wong said he really needed a warm blanket and better food. The hospital could only provide a little rice mixed with a few meager vegetables. Abbie owned two blankets so she brought her warmest and heaviest blanket and some canned milk and Campbell's soup that some "American Fly Boys" had given her for her own use as a nostalgic gift when they passed by on the Burma Highway.

Abbie prayed faithfully for Tom Lee, she covered him with her own blanket and sat with him many long hours, feeding him whenever he regained consciousness. Then a miracle happened. He made a turn for the better. He came out of the coma. His appetite improved, the wounds began to heal and the odor went away. In just two weeks he was up on crutches and shortly after that, he was sent home.

With the hectic schedule of the hospital, months went by and the hospital forgot all about him. Little Abbie, always moving with great energy, also gave Bible studies in the surrounding villages, sometimes up to 48 per week. Walking through mud and much rain up and down the China hillsides with no roads, as we know them. One day she was late in returning to the hospital and the staff became concerned. She finally showed up, her scalp and hand bleeding profusely. She shrugged her wounds off, with a hearty laugh, insisting they forget about it. "Never mind, never mind, she said, I was so stupid, I slipped in the mud and fainted, but I'm fine now, I'm as strong as an ox."

The doctor treating her wounds remarked that her self-diagnosis was slightly off—truth be known she was as stubborn as an ox.

Dr. Wong, who shared this story, said he had always been a student of Confucius who taught: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (the same as our golden rule) and "Never think to harm others or beware for someone will

harm you." He had always believed this to be most valuable wisdom until he met Abbie Dunn who had her own wisdom. She told him, "Do not suspect people of evil or be filled with evil surmising, because you cannot truly love people when you are suspicious of them."

Dr. Wong said he felt a new freedom by adopting her kind way of thinking.

One day, the peasant Tom Lee returned to the hospital where he had been treated. He had fattened up, but was still relying heavily on crutches due to contractures from the burns. He had traveled many miles on foot and climbed the final 40 steps to the hospital gate, which was no small feat. There he met the gatekeeper of the hospital who asked: "Whom do you want to see?" Lee responded, "Jesus, I want to see Jesus." The gatekeeper replied, "Jesus? There's no Jesus here. He was a holy man who lived 2,000 years ago." Tom Lee exclaimed: "Don't kid me, he (in Chinese he/she is the same word) lives here in hospital!" The gatekeeper said: "Are you sure?" "Yes, said Tom Lee, he's my friend, he lives here!" "Well, could there be any other name?" the gatekeeper inquired. Tom Lee thought and thought, yes, the name Dun.

The gatekeeper asked around the hospital with Tom Lee hobbling along close behind. Together they found Dr. Paul Wong. Dr. Wong nodded, "Ah yes, you must mean Miss Dunn." Tom Lee heard him and responded excitedly, "Yes, that's him, Jesus Dunn." He joyfully leaped around because he had found Jesus. He had made the long and difficult journey from his country to thank Jesus, Jesus Dunn, the only Jesus he'd ever known.

When Jesus was here on the earth, He taught His disciples just how to minister to people. "Tell them the Kingdom of God is near! Then give them a glimpse of that Kingdom by healing the sick." **E**

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Bonnie Boyd writes from Mount Airy, Maryland

# MUSIC WORSHIP IS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

Carlos Roberto Alvarenga

*There should be a balance between melody, harmony and rhythm*

Sometime ago I came across a declaration made by Ellen G. White, which impressed me very strongly. She described a social gathering at Battle Creek, attended by believers and she made the following comment: "One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth to make the watching angels weep."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 83.

Truly, the situation here described is only a social gathering and not a spiritual meeting; but it is also true that the persons present were "none other than those who professed to believe the truth."

We know that there is good as well as bad music, popular, spiritual and sensual, holy and satanic. However, to think about somebody who professes to believe the truth playing music that causes the angels to weep, makes us think that the dividing line between the

holy and evil, in this case, may not be as clear and evident as we sometimes imagine. It is too subtle to be underestimated. Many times it is almost impossible to be discerned.

As I read the above-mentioned commentary, suddenly my mind began to wander. I saw myself sitting at the piano during a Sabbath service, accompanying during the worship hour. In my mind I saw myself partaking of the praise that individuals and vocal groups were presenting, and for which I was in a great measure responsible for having taught them and for having chosen the selections that they were going to present. Would those pieces be praising God?

Would the angels in the congregation enjoy the melody, harmony, style, and rhythm being presented? Would my style of playing, my way of conducting what I always considered "praise" make the angels cry?

"Singing is part of worship to God, but the haphazard way in which is frequently done, is not a compliment to the truth, nor an honor to God."—Ellen G. White in *Review and Herald*, August 24, 1883. Furthermore: "Music can be a great power for good; and even so we don't





take full advantage of it in our worship service.”—*Evangelism*, p. 505.

I have the impression that those two thoughts are sufficient to open our eyes to the realization that things may not be going too well, as we may sometimes imagine, in the musical aspect during worship in our churches.

### **Adoration**

It is possible that when the question is asked: “Why should a person go to church?” One may hear answers such as: “because it is pleasant,” “because that is how we were taught and we became accustomed to doing that,” or “to listen to a sermon,” or “to listen to beautiful songs, presented artistically.” Those answers really are not in themselves untrue. However, should those be the only reasons that would lead us to church?

“To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ’s representatives, are God’s appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 491.

Thus, the genuine worship must involve the entire being, the intellect, the emotions and the will, as the psalmist says: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Psalm 103:1).

As we analyze the biblical references on worship, we find the basic points of the real experience in divine worship. For those points we must indicate each of the parts that constitute the worship service.

The prophet Isaiah (6:1-8) presents five items of worship, which can never be ignored. They are:

1. God’s revelation, His greatness, His power, and praise as a human response (Isa. 6:1-3).
2. Acknowledgment and confession of the smallness and sinfulness of human beings (Isa. 6:8).
3. Divine forgiveness and the cleansing of iniquity.
4. God’s exhortation and the call to serve (Isa. 6:8).
5. Consecration or dedication as a result (Isa. 6:8b).

To summarize, we could define the objectives of worship as an act of returning to God a reality for the worshipers, help them to grow in Christian virtues, motivating in them a desire for sacrifice and consecration. All of which brings as a result a new lifestyle. In the process of obtaining those objectives, each of those worship elements will perform

one of two rolls: impression (touching the soul with God’s revelation), or of expression (man’s answer to the divine call). Music plays both rolls, which points out its importance in worship.

Many times, the sermon occupies the first place during the worship hour. However, considering how important that is, we must take into account that this is only a part of worship which includes the reading of Scripture, songs, prayers, offerings, etc.; then, the contents as well as the people, their lifestyle, their behavior, and the way in which they develop the part assigned to them, is of as great importance as the sermon or the preacher.

### **Expression**

The main purpose of music in worship is: Tell God our feelings, anxieties, our requests and confessions. In that way the participation of the congregation should never be forgotten or underestimated. It’s true that choirs and soloists or groups can offer praise in a more artistic manner. However, congregational singing should always have preference during the worship service.

In addition and within that frame it’s good to remember that if praising the Lord is an answer of gratitude, it should never be gloomy, melancholic or humanistic. On the contrary it should radiate heavenly love and happiness. As Ellen G. White reminds us: “Don’t play a sad note; don’t sing mournful hymns” (Letter 311, 1905). It is regretful that in many churches the congregational singing is more like a heavy burden that must be dragged.

The manner of giving praise and what motivates us to do it are two things that are equally important. The words can be pious and sung enthusiastically. If by chance, the motives are different, the singing will be an expression of fanaticism and hypocrisy. However, only God knows the true motives of the soul, and here it is proper to ask: What motivates us to sing as a church or choral groups? Gratitude? Desire to praise God? Personal vanity? Do we sing to reveal Christ or to exhibit our vocal abilities or the harmony of our voices? What is remembered when the voices cease? The depth and the urgency of the message, the beauty of the apparel, the voices and arrangements, or the power of the modern sound equipment?

(Continued on page 28)

# The Elder and the quality of his work

Josias Gonsiorosk



In modern times quality control has been sought with diligence. There is an organization called ISO, which checks the quality of products and services rendered. But, what is quality? It's the characteristic of things. From the human point of view it's the moral and ethical disposition in life, in character, at work, in our studies, in the family and in religion. And not a few seek it.

The Bible tells us about creation, which was done in the best way, everything controlled by perfect quality. The prophet Moses, in describing the story of Creation declares: "And God said: Let there be light; and there was light, and God saw the light, and it was good" (Gen. 1:3-4). From then on, at the end of each day, the Lord God said that "everything was good," and of excellent quality. The apostle Paul, much later, continues to say: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

We also must strive to give the best quality in what we do, to the point of even suffering for lack of understanding, with ungratefulness, deceptions or other difficulties. We must remember that our Lord Jesus suffered many disappointments during His ministry, but was very dedicated in what He did and continues to do so in behalf of our salvation.

## There was quality control in Christ's miracles

Christ's first miracle was performed in a small town. He taught that we should not discriminate against people, races or ethnicity.

The city was Cana of Galilee. In those days, depending on the social status of the individuals, the parties could last several days. Those in such position had means to offer banquets, drinks, and pastries of good quality. John tells us that Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding (John 2:2).

During the feast the wine was finished. Mary, the mother of Jesus, approached Him and said: Son,

"they have no wine" (verse 3). At the moment, Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to perform a miracle, the first of His ministry. He asked for the water pots to be filled with water and transformed them into wine of the best quality, so much so that the officer in charge of the feast went to the bridegroom and said to him: "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now" (John 2:10).

What interests in this narrative is the miracle and the quality involved, it being that the product involved was of a higher quality than the one just finished. Was Jesus introducing a new religion or was he reinstating the Jewish religion? The Creator's miracles always suggest a new lifestyle with better quality. Christ's religion is of divine quality. It contains obedience to principles and faithfulness to God. They lead us to eternal life! God wants us to have the best quality of family life, in school, at work, and in our religion.

## Quality control in the family

The family, as a divine institution, also has qualitative principles. After Eve was created, when the family was established, it was said: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

Quality control in marriage is based on love, in solidarity, in fraternity, and the pledge of the couple is extended to the children.

The apostle Paul, on recommending qualities of marriage, said: "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Eph. 5:33). They should love and respect each other.

Love involves mutual dedication, associated with reciprocity of two hearts, and whose objective is

# The Holy Scripture gives us appropriate rules

## Quality control

perfect happiness in life. With love and dedication quality of life can be obtained, conjugal happiness, companionship, dialogue and understanding.

### Quality control at work

Let's see what the Holy Scripture has to teach us. The apostle Paul tells us: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (Eph. 6:5-7).

God's word teaches the good hierarchical relationship at work. "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him" (Eph. 6:9). If these commandments are observed the quality of work will improve with dedication, honesty, satisfaction, productivity, professional accomplishment and happiness.

### Quality control in relationship with the brethren

- The Holy Scripture gives us appropriate rules:
1. Fraternity: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). "And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2).
  2. Fidelity: "A faithful man will be richly blessed" (Prov. 28:20). "Let no one deceive you with empty words" (Eph. 5:6).
  3. Cordiality: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19). "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16).
  4. Gratitude: "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ" (Eph. 5:20). "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13). What beautiful advice given in the Word of God!

### Quality control in religion

The Lord continues to instruct us: If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

### Positive attitude

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and worldly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11-12).

There are "stinging ants" like envy, pride, vanity, intrigue, and desire for supremacy, jealousy and other things that are equally sinful. The ships are turned about with a very small helm.

God's saving grace has been manifested to us through our Lord Jesus, who offers us eternal life with quality control saying: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). **E**

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Josias Gonsiorosk is first elder of his church in Brazil.  
Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.



## Working with your pastor in a ministerial team

Juan Calderonnes Souza

It is evident that the elders need to put in practice some principles of ministerial team in order to facilitate the fulfillment of their functions. Unless there is a clear discernment of the applications of the principles in practice, the ministerial team will not develop its full potential of blessings for the elders of the church.

### The elder should have team spirit

The apostle Paul wrote to a group of leaders of the church of Philippi and exhorted them to have team spirit, “. . . whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel” Phil.1: 27.

The expression *combating unanimous*, in the original text, appears in only one word: *sunathleo* that was an athletic term. The prefix *sun* means “together with” and *athleo* is a verb from which the word athlete comes. The Greek word literally means, “Work together as a team, combat together with someone” (*A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 548).

The principle that governs the work as a team is well demonstrated in different sports. A team with average talents that works together can defeat, with frequency, a winning team that lacks the team spirit.

### The team spirit depends on three features

1) *Spirit of meekness*. The spirit of meekness does not try to affirm the ego. It flows together with the other ones. Instills to the individual a discrete and moderate tone. Meekness is not a weakness, but strength under control. The strength is controlled by the person’s spirit that has subordinated to the desires of the team, not looking for personal recognition. In Titus 3:2 we read: “To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.” The person who lacks the spirit of meekness will be continually frustrated during any efforts that are accomplished by the team and will think his ministry is not sufficiently appreciated.

The translation of the Greek word “meekness” is *proates*. This term was used in the secular Greek to indicate the art of taming or breaking in wild horses (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, p. 241). In the midst of the mountainous terrain of Greece, wild horses gallop in the canyons and open spaces. Those horses

were captured and tamed for the use of the Greek army. The cavalry was the principal force in Alexander the Great's conquests.

Like the cowboys of the west in the USA, the horseman saddled the wild horse, which tried by all means to throw the horseman off the saddle. It does not want to be told what to do. If the horseman was able to stay on the horse until it was exhausted, the animal would turn into a "tame" or "broken" animal.

It does not lose its strength, but it has been put totally under control. He worked well with the horseman and with other horses to do useful work, that none of them could do by themselves.

The head pastor is the "horseman" of God. He ought to "break" any member independent of the team. He should confront him, instruct him and stay with him until he is willing to participate in the efforts of the team.

2) *A spirit of submission.* A submissive spirit does not demand, but submits to the efforts of the team. It is not dominating or presumptuous. It desires that the team is successful even if the work is not done as he would have done it. That's why Eph.5:21 says: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Submission is not oppression. The individual style and the creative capacity of a member should not be eliminated. It does not have to be transformed into a robot to have a spirit of submission.

3) *A humble spirit.* The humble spirit recognizes the need to support and to help fellow workers, to accomplish the work at hand. Peter says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" 1 Peter 5:5.

Instead, the proud spirit promotes the ego or the personal interests. It tries to demonstrate its own abilities and strength. It denies, in theory or in practice, the need to depend on others to fully accomplish an objective.

### **Characteristics of a team spirit**

- 1) The team spirit does not impose its own desires in doing things as the only way that produces results.
- 2) The team spirit sacrifices personal ambition to benefit the goals of the group.
- 3) The team spirit finds satisfaction in the accomplishments of the church and its

group of leaders, and not only in individual accomplishments.

- 4) The team spirit finds joy in contributing to the success of the pastor of the church and its leaders.
- 5) The team spirit submits to the leadership as a total unit.
- 6) The team spirit can say "us" most of the time instead of "me."
- 7) The team spirit does not get offended for insignificant things, but submits its auto-affirmation to the purpose of the team.

### **The member of the team should cultivate a spirit of unity with the rest of the members**

The church in Corinth is an example of the devastation that could occur in the local congregation when unity is not practiced. Serious divisions affected the church in Corinth. Some said they were Paul's, others confirmed fidelity to Cephas, others went after Apollo's and also there were followers of Christ who rejected the other leaders, 1 Cor.1:12-13.

Consequently the apostle Paul wrote: "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another, so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" 1 Cor.1:10.

The word "division" comes from the Greek term *schisma* and it was used in the classic Greek to refer to the rips or tears in a garment. These divisions were tearing the garment of the church in Corinth. Paul said to this church and its leaders that all should speak the same thing, think the same way, and are of one accord.

How is it possible for a group of leaders to carry out the mandate of working as a team? The answer is for the pastors not to surround the team with complaisant men, of weak personalities, afraid to express their own ideas or opinions. This would only form a group of puppets, which would constitute a weak team that would not provide support and balance for the pastor and other members.

**(Continued on page 30)**

Margarida F. Sarli, Editorial Coordinator for this section.

## The joy of spiritual activity

"It is not spiritual laziness that will bring us near to God, but Christian devotion, personal piety, intelligent advancement in the knowledge of Christ. We shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness"—EGW, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 5-17-6, "Filled With the Fruits of Righteousness" par. 10.

### Scripture reading

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

### Suggested hymns

To God be the Glory	Hymn No. 341
Love Divine	Hymn No. 191

### Offering prelude

A little girl who loved the Lord longed to share the message of salvation with those who had never heard it. So she contributed a penny to a missionary to help with the work of evangelizing the people of Burma. That small coin was all she had, but it was given from her heart. The worker on the foreign field was deeply touched by the child's earnestness and decided he would do the most he could with the money. After careful thought he purchased a Gospel tract and personally gave it to a young chieftain. Apparently the Christian did not know that the tribal leader was not educated well enough to read it. God instilled within the ruler a burning desire to know the meaning of the leaflet, and he traveled 250 miles to find someone who could translate it for him. After he heard the Gospel message, it wasn't long until the young chief was gloriously converted. Returning to his people, he told them what the Lord had done for his soul. Later he invited missionaries to come and preach to his entire village, and many tribesmen who heard the good news accepted the Savior. All this and probably much more resulted from one dedicated penny given in Christ's name by a little girl who wanted the lost to hear about Jesus!

Don't wait until you can do "great things" to start working for the Master. God can do wonders with dedicated little things.

### Children's story . . . *Learning from an ant*

Lesson: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." Proverbs 6:6.

Some creatures do a lot of standing around or sitting or lying still. You've probably noticed the reptiles in the zoo. You can stare at an alligator or crocodile for minutes on end and it doesn't appear to move a muscle. In fact, it is so quiet that you feel sure that it must be dead.

Other creatures are always on the move, however. Look at a colony of ants. They are running this way and that, all intent on some business. Perhaps they are nurse ants, caring for the young, or soldier ants. Perhaps they are storing food for leaner days, carrying loads many times their own weight. Whatever the circumstances, they are never idling.

One writer tells of watching an ant hauling away a dead beetle. The beetle was many times its own size but that did not daunt the ant. It would climb up a blade of grass and pull, go down again, give the beetle a push, and use every means possible to get the burden to its destination. It didn't seem to know the meaning of the word discouragement.

A great naturalist, Sir John Lubbock, decided to put an ant under observation for a whole day. He himself watched it from six o'clock in the morning until nearly ten o'clock that night, and it never stopped working for a single minute.

The servant of the Lord tells us, "The ants teach lessons of patient industry, of perseverance in surmounting obstacles, of providence for the future"—*Education*, p. 117.

When we pray, let us ask God to help us to be industrious as the ants are.

Read what Solomon says about these little creatures in Proverbs 30:24, 25.

# The Duty to work

Thessalonians 3:6-10

## Introduction

- A. Slothfulness is not a common word today. We use other words to describe the attitude of slothfulness. We speak of idleness, listlessness, lifelessness, apathy, indifference, goofing off, wasting time, good-for-nothing, sluggishness, procrastination, and laziness.
  1. The sloth is a lethargic animal with coarse hair. It builds no nest or home, sleeps eighteen hours a day, and wakes very slowly. The sloth is so inactive that green algae grow in its hair.
  2. Sloth permeates schoolwork, the marketplace, the home, friendship, and Christianity. Almost no area—except leisure—seems to be immune.
- B. Laziness is soundly condemned in the Bible. Proverbs 21:25 says, "The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work" (NIV).
- C. Our text is very explicit: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10 NIV).

## Laziness is the neglect of duty

- A. This is really a sin against us as much as it is a sin against society.
  1. It shows the difference between the people you are and the person you could be.
  2. Paul's letter to the people at Thessalonica indicates that while he was with them, he and his companions did work (2 Thess. 3:8-9).
- B. God expects us to work.
  1. It is our duty. When God put man in the Garden of Eden, He charged him to work and care for the garden (Gen. 2:15).
  2. Laziness is the opposite of God's plan for mankind.
    - a. A child should learn minor chores that prepare him for major responsibilities later.
    - b. A husband is to work at marriage, being a parent, and a job.
    - c. Likewise, a wife is to work at marriage, being a parent, and her home.

## Laziness is a violation of Christian living

- A. Some might ask, "How can doing nothing be a sin?"
  1. In theology there are basically two kinds of sins: sins of commission and sins of omission.
  2. For instance, if you do absolutely nothing, you will be lost.
 

In the parable of the talents the servant who went and hid his talent in the ground was chastised because he did nothing with his talent.
- B. Some Christians are slothful in their prayer life, Bible study, church attendance, witnessing, financial support, and Christian service.
- C. The Christian should be preparing for the return of Jesus.
  1. Five of the ten virgins failed to prepare for the return of the bridegroom because of laziness (Matt. 25:1-13).
  2. Whatever else this parable may mean, it demonstrates that the Lord is going to come again, and we as Christians must prepare for His return.

## Laziness is a threat to God's plan

- A. God does not intend for a person to be idle.
  1. The author of Proverbs draws on nature to illustrate God's plan for man. In Proverbs 6:6-11 he graphically draws the analogy of the ant as a picture of how diligent one should be about living.
  2. The ant has no commander, overseer, or ruler per se, but still he knows how to work.
- B. Mankind must do the same.
  1. Welfare programs are wonderful for the disabled, infirm, and unfortunate in society.

(Continued on page 23)

## The world needs love

"The world needs to see worked out before it the miracle that binds the hearts of God's people together in Christian love. It needs to see the Lord's people sitting together in heavenly places in Christ. God knows what you can be. He knows what divine grace can do for you if you will be partakers of the divine nature"—EGW, *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 188, par. 2, p. 19, par. 1.

### Scripture reading

1 John 4:11.

### Suggested hymns

I love Thee	Hymn No. 236
Rejoice, the Lord is King	Hymn No. 456
O love that wilt not let me go	Hymn No. 76

### Offering prelude . . . *Faithfulness of God— Just Suppose*

Just suppose the Lord should begin to make people as sick as they claim to be on Sabbath.

Just suppose the Lord should take away the child you used as an excuse for not being in worship on Sabbath.

Just suppose you had to live on ten times what you give to the Lord each week.

Just suppose the Lord should let some parents look into the future and see what their example and lax control are doing for their children.

Just suppose you had no opportunity to make amends for these things.

Just suppose the Lord should strike all who lie about their giving as He did Ananias and Sapphira.

Just suppose the Lord should make people as poor as they say they are when they are asked to help finance His work.

### Children's story . . . *Trapped in the Cave*

On January 30, 1925, a man called Floyd Collins decided to investigate a sand cave on the Estes farm in central Kentucky. He found the entrance in a deep ravine, under an overhanging rock. Floyd crawled in and disappeared into the blackness.

He hadn't come out by the next morning so the Estes' 17-year-old son went to check. Floyd was trapped with his foot wedged into a crack in the wall of a narrow tunnel, and a large rock was on top of his leg. Early efforts to free him were fruitless.

Newspapers and radio carried the news of Floyd's plight to the whole country. Reporters flocked to the spot. The Red Cross arrived with a trained rescue team. Money, equipment, and telegrams began to pour in. People all over America were praying for the rescue of Floyd Collins. Nothing seemed to help.

Finally, a 55-foot shaft was dug straight down to within a few feet of the helpless man. Then a tunnel was carefully picked out of the rock. Shortly after noon on February 16 the rescue team reached Floyd, but it was too late.

During the funeral service Pastor Roy Biser said, "No other incident within memory has brought so many prayers from the brotherhood of man for one fellow man."

It was true. Thousands of dollars had been spent. Hundreds of men had worked in vain for more than two weeks to rescue one man. Was it worth it?

"The value of a soul—who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Savior uplifted on the cross . . . Look upon the wounded head, the pierced side, and the marred feet. Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 196.

All about us are boys and girls trapped in sin. Someone must rescue them. There is not much time. One boy or one girl is worth all the effort you can muster. Will you join the rescue team? Tomorrow may be too late.



# The world needs love

## Introduction

- A. The basic need of every person is the need to be loved.
- B. The lyrics of a popular song reflect this worldwide longing—"what the world needs now is love."
- C. God has met this need in Christ.

## See the Father's love

A. God loves us (1 John 3:1).  
 When Martin Luther's translation of the Bible was being printed, a piece of type fell to the floor. The printer's daughter later found the section, which said, "For God so loved the world that he gave." Excitedly, she showed it to her mother. Her mother said it didn't make any sense. "Gave what?" The girl responded, "Oh Mama, it doesn't matter. If God loves me enough to give me anything, I don't have to be afraid of Him." Many think of God as harsh, judgmental, or indifferent toward the world. The truth is, He loves us. "God is love" (4:8).

B. The gift of love (4:9-10). How do we know God loves us? (v. 9). The cross is God's bold demonstration of love.

Bennett Cerf tells of an eight-year-old girl in a Pennsylvania orphanage. She was painfully shy, unattractive, and generally shunned by the others. A rule of the home required the director's approval of any written communication prior to mailing. One afternoon the girl was seen hiding a letter in the branches of a tree that hung over the wall. The letter was seized and opened. It read: "To anybody who reads this: I love you." Our Lord Jesus was driven by a loveless world outside the city wall. He hung on the cross, a message from God to the world—I love you!

## The example of Christ

A. Inclusive and active (1 John 3:16-18).

A small boy in Texas has a rare disease, which prohibits anyone from touching him. He lives in a sealed environment and has never felt the actual touch of those who love him.

1. Jesus faced many "untouchables" in His day. No one wanted to touch the lepers. When they went out in public, they cried out "unclean," and people avoided them. Jesus touched the lepers; they needed His love.

2. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (4:11).

B. Exclusive and eternal (2:15-17). The love of Christ is neither gullible nor naïve. Love of God, who is holy, means one cannot love the things, which are against Christ. We love sinners but do not love sin. "Do not love the world . . . [nor] the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (v. 15-16 RSV). Christ's love is exclusive.

C. His love is also eternal—"he who does the will of God abides for ever" (Rom. 8:39).

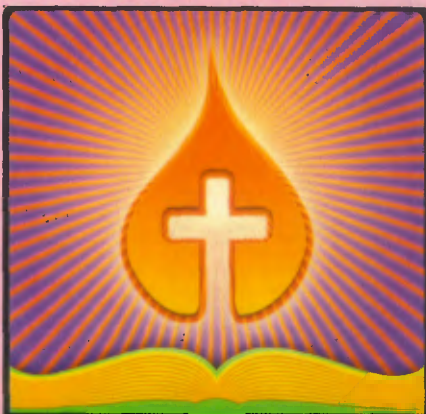
## Conclusion

Probably no word in our vocabulary is as misunderstood as love. We apply it to food and clothing tastes, to sensual relationships, and to religious experiences. My four-year-old asked me one day, "Daddy, how do you spell love?" I told her the four letters, which she proudly printed on a special note for those she loved. The spelling of love in our life is infinitely more complex. In Christ the true meaning is available, and the world desperately needs this love now. Can they see it in us?

## Illustration \_ Love of Christ Personified

In a testimony an evangelist one time described his mother as being love personified. As a boy he found her sitting at the table with an old tramp one day. Apparently she had gone shopping, met the tramp along the way, and invited him home for a warm meal. During the conversation the tramp said,

(Continued on page 29)



## ACTS 100

acknowledgement • communion • training • service

### Just Ten Minutes More

Try this spiritual experiment. Challenge every member of your congregation to try this simple plan for thirty days.

Ask each person to make a small, consistent commitment to just ten minutes more daily study of God's Word.

For some, this will mean a total of ten minutes if they are starting at zero. For others, it will mean doubling their study time if they currently give a cursory glance at the SS Lesson.

For those who already devote substantial time to Scripture, ten minutes more means very little additional time.

Ask each member to evaluate the blessings they discover from just a small increase in hearing God's Word. Then seek those who will share their results with the whole group.

Fresh ideas for developing  
your church's spiritual life  
[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)

# Or should we look for another?



James A. Cress

**T**he followers of John the Baptist questioned Jesus, "Are you the One? Or should we look for another?"

Since I was a young pastor until today, denominational leaders have recurrently called the church to deeper spirituality, revival, reformation, and preparation for the coming of Jesus.

In fact, Adventists have become so culturally accustomed to revival slogans, position papers, urgent reform calls, and soul-winning goals that flow from administrative convocations, that we seem jaded to yet another program.

As one quipster put it, "Whether it's the caring church finishing the work in a thousand days of reaping to reach out for life with the real truth as we are united in Christ through global mission to win the world in our generation with special emphasis on sowing a billion in the 10/40 window, the next great project will appear at upcoming sessions as consistently as the next bus will follow along its established route. It's going forth is as certain as the dawn!"

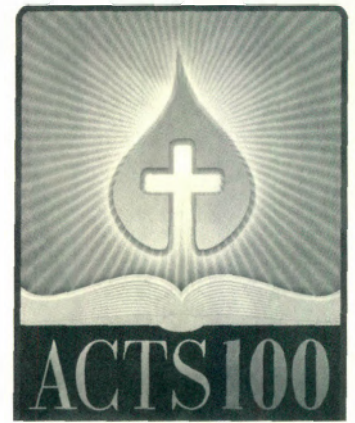
So what's different about the ACTS100 initiative which was introduced at the recent spring meeting of the General Conference committee?

Perhaps nothing! It is entirely possible that this excellent idea could become nothing more than the next program which fades from view as quickly as the slogan makers can devise a new catch phrase.

However, before I share with you what can be different this time, let me affirm the reality that whether or not "this is the one" depends much more upon my response—and yours.

You see, it is not the uniqueness of the call for renewal and spiritual growth, but the response of

# ACTS100



pastors and laity leaders that ultimately makes the difference. If I purpose to prioritize spiritual growth among my church members and begin by deepening my own relationship with Jesus, then results different than “we’re still here” will come.

ACTS100 is encouragingly different because it grows out of tragic statistics from a world church survey conducted by Andrews University which showed that only about 50 percent of members regularly participate in Bible study or prayer, that less than 40 percent are involved in witnessing activities, and less than 30 percent are involved in activities which interact with their local community.

With statistics like this, we are delaying Christ’s coming for generations. No wonder we must keep the slogan makers active!

ACTS100 (acronym for acknowledgment, communion, training, and service), must not rely on prescriptive “how to” implementation assignments with a “one-size-fits-all” mind set, but rather emphasizes 100 percent involvement with each congregation, pastor, and leader encouraged to develop effective methods for their area.

**Acknowledgment** of our great need for revival within the church. “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”<sup>1</sup> This must begin with the leadership of the church while recognizing that revival is Spirit driven and cannot be programmed or orchestrated. However, opportunities can be created where hearts and minds are open to the Holy Spirit and where He is specifically invited to accomplish His work.

**Communion with God** through Bible study and prayer. Hearing God’s word and engaging in interactive fellowship with our Saviour will awaken our

need for repentance and produce the fruits of revival. Our task: Devise attractive ways to encourage 100 percent of our members to regularly study and pray.

**Training and Witnessing.** Both aspects are necessary. Sometimes we have over trained and under utilized. The objective is that every member be equipped to witness, which Mark’s gospel defines as “telling your friends what wonderful things God has done for you,” and then deployed to share the good news they personally experience.

**Service to the Community.** The gospel commission tells us to go to the nations, not merely to await those who might seek us. We must intentionally seek them. We start by becoming involved in their lives and with meaningful activities that interest and benefit the communities in which our churches exist. Imagine the impact if 100 percent of our members become actively involved in their communities as a vital part of their church life.

Our president, Pastor Jan Paulsen, has encouraged every entity of the church to affirm and promote these concepts. The Ministerial Association is beginning a regular feature this month (see page 31) to emphasize Bible study and prayer, and to encourage every aspect of ACTS100.

At some point in time, some leader’s call for spiritual renewal will blossom into the final revival before Jesus comes.

This could be the one! Or should we search for another?

1. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 1:121.

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James A. Cress, is Associate Director of the Ministerial Department of the General Conference.



# Q & A

## UNCLEAN MEAT AND SIN

*Francis D. Nichol*

### **Occasionally someone writes to raise the question:**

“Does the denomination teach that it is a sin to eat unclean meats?” Or this question: “We do not make the eating of swine’s flesh a test of fellowship; can we therefore make the eating of pork a sin?” Or again: “Would we never, under any circumstance, be justified in eating pork, even if our life depended upon it?”

The denomination holds that the prohibition of “unclean” meats, as formally set forth in Leviticus 11, is not a ceremonial one, uniquely and exclusively belonging to the Jewish dispensation, and therefore that it is still in force in our day. There are at least three reasons why Adventists thus view this prohibition: First, there is nothing in the wording of this divine ban to suggest that the prohibition is a ceremonial one. Second, the distinction between “clean beasts” and “beasts that are not clean” (Gen. 7:8) was expressly set down by God long before there was a Jewish race. Third, God is described as having an abhorrence of unclean meats at the end of time, long after the Jewish ceremonial statutes have expired. Note the words of Isaiah 66:17: “They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.”

Consistent with this view the denomination, in its “Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates,” lists the following among the distinctive Adventist teachings that the candidate should clearly understand and accept: “The Christian should recognize his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he should honor God by caring for his body, abstaining from such things as alcoholic beverages, tobacco in all its forms, and from all unclean foods”—*Church Manual* (1951 ed.), p. 54. Almost exactly the same language is included in the Baptismal Vow that candidates are called upon to take before the whole church immediately preceding their baptism and admission to the church. See *Church Manual*, p. 57.

Now, it is true that though the church explicitly calls upon the baptismal candidate to abstain from all unclean meats, it does not disfellowship a member for falling back into the practice of eating such meats. The *Church Manual*, which authoritatively sets forth denominational teachings and practices, lists seven specific "grievous sins" for which a member may be disfellowshipped (see pages 224, 225), but eating unclean meats is not one of the seven.

To some, this fact may seem an evidence of inconsistency. We think, rather, that it is an evidence of the mercy and compassion of the church. It is one thing to call upon a candidate to order his life according to a certain code; it is something else to dismiss him because he failed after becoming a member.

But let no one hasten to conclude that because the church, mercifully conscious of the frailties of its members, does not dismiss them for failing to live up to all they vowed, therefore those points on which they failed are inconsequential. Let us cite an undebatable exhibit in illustration: The church calls upon the baptismal candidate to give obedience to the law of the tithe, and rightly so, for the Lord declares that those who hold back the tithe "rob" Him (see Mal. 3:8-11). But the church member who stops paying tithe is not therefore subject to expulsion from the church. However, he is properly the object of serious and earnest labor. And, of course, the same is true of the one who returns to eating "unclean" meats.

There are some matters on which we believe that the best interests of the individual member and of the church as a whole are served by leaving the judgment in the case to God alone. Both the eating of unclean meats and the failure to pay tithe we place in that category. But, we repeat, this fact does not justify anyone's concluding that the church considers these acts of minor importance. Undoubtedly, we all will agree that a failure to pay tithe, for example, is a sin against God. And why? Because such a failure is disobedience of an express command of God.

I have always hesitated to place the label "sin" on any act that the Bible does not explicitly thus label. In this sorry old world we have already too many sins without self-righteous people inventing any more. But it is always proper to call most sober attention to the grievousness of any course of action that flies in the face of a divine command. Doubtless one would not have to search far in our denominational literature to find the eating of

unclean foods labeled a "sin." Nor would I know how, successfully, to challenge the label. The day we say that it is sinful to disobey some of God's commands, but not other of His commands, we take an untenable position.

One more question remains for consideration. "Would we never, under any circumstance, be justified in eating pork, even if our life depended upon it?" The fact that there might be a possible exception to a command should never be used as an argument to weaken the command. The fourth precept of the Decalogue categorically declares that on the Sabbath day we should "not do any work." But we know that there are lawful exceptions. The eighth command forbids stealing, yet a hungry person passing through a field might, with impunity, pluck sufficient food to relieve his hunger.

Whether, under some abnormal condition, an exception might properly be made in regard to the prohibition of unclean foods, I am not able to say. No power resides in me to grant indulgences or exemptions. I believe that those who find themselves in dire circumstances must discover the possible exception to this or any other particular command, in prayer to God.

Let us never forget that we walk a treacherous path when we seek to discover a working policy for our routine living in terms of some direful and wholly abnormal situation. We should seek first to settle the basic questions at issue by the light shining from the Holy Word, rather than by the murky and distorting rays of a singular situation. When we have established the principles involved and the normal course we should follow, then let us leave to God and the future the answering of questions as to what we should do in unusual and desperate circumstances.

Those who do not wish to give obedience to the Sabbath command like to raise the question as to how the Sabbath could be faithfully kept at the North Pole, for example. They want to know just how the Eskimos would keep it. I have always replied that we should not go to the Eskimos but to the prophets for our basic belief on the Sabbath. Having established that, we should seek to discover, by God's grace, the answer to difficult problems that may present themselves in obeying the fourth command under singular circumstances. The same reasoning holds in the present instance. **E**



## INTERESTING SERMONS FOR CHILDREN

Victor Hulbert

**F**amily Celebration. That slogan enticed me to visit a nearby church to see what ideas it might have for reaching children. I was impressed. There was a magnificent children's story, and the sermon was family-centered. But then I noticed that my children, along with other children nearby, were taking little interest in the message preached. Actually, I could not blame them. The pastor's long words went way above their heads. While the sermon was *about* the family, it was not *for* the family.

My mind flashed back to my childhood years. Church services for me meant listening for peculiarities in the preacher's voice, or surreptitiously scribbling in the back of the hymnbook. Sermons were endured rather than enjoyed. I would time the pastoral prayer with a stopwatch. Eight and a half minutes was the record. \*

Making church both interesting and a learning experience for adults and children is quite a challenge—one that is unmet and perhaps largely unrecognized. In the current debate on worship, children are left on the fringes. They have their five-minute story time, and everything else is targeted toward adults.

Is it any wonder that many youth drop out of the church? Not primarily because they disagree with its beliefs, but rather because they are bored with its practice. This fatal boredom begins while sitting by mother's knee in church.

What is the solution? How can we make the

church service interesting to the whole family, including the children, while still communicating the great themes of salvation and our distinctive Adventist message?

### Christ's example in reaching children

Jesus succeeded in reaching both children and their parents. He spoke in simple terms and told stories. Those stories had a simple meaning for the children and a deeper meaning for the deeper minds.

In secular communication one of the broadcasting principles used by the BBC is that all programming should be understandable to a 14-year-old, even the deepest documentary. How much more so for Christian sermons! Some preachers seem to relish exhibiting the prodigious eloquence of their extensive vocabulary. But in Christ-like communication, a short word is better than a long one.


The use Jesus made of illustrations shows how they can clarify a message and drive it home, carrying the audience all along the way. Illustrations also provide a breather between two deep thoughts. Children—along with many adults—will remember your stories long after your sermon notes have turned yellow.

Another communication tool Jesus employed was humor. Can you imagine someone trying to take a plank out of his own eye? Or a camel squeezing through the eye of a needle? Can you imagine a father giving his son a stone to eat? Or that persistent widow continually banging on the

judge's door, with the bleary-eyed judge, nightcap on and candle in hand, eventually promising justice? Jesus no doubt told these stories with a smile on His face. Appropriate humor remains an effective tool today, even with the important and serious messages we must preach.

### Maintaining interest during the sermon

- Use visual aids: When I preached on forgiveness I had a stone with the word "FIRST" painted on it. I asked the congregation what it meant—and it was the children who got the answer first. (If you are still wondering, check John 8:7).
- Use overheads. The eye remembers more than the ear. The two together are most effective.
- Use children. Involve children as part of the sermon. For example, a week in advance you might hand those who wish to participate a numbered Bible text. Then during next week's sermon, each participating child can stand and read out loud the text at the appropriate moment. Another idea is to have children help with holding up a chart or conducting some "experiment."
- Listen to them. When did you last visit the cradle roll or kindergarten Sabbath school? Sit with children on your knee. Listen to their wisdom. They may give you the topic for your next sermon! At the least they will appreciate your interest in them.
- Make the children's corner interactive. Ask the children how their week has been. Involve them in the story. Ask if a boy or girl would like to pray for the congregation before the children return to their seats.
- Divide your sermon with special music or by using different speakers. My wife and I sometimes preach together. The change of flow, the different style, and the different voice add interest and variety.

\*Years later as a theology student, I was surprised and delighted to find Ellen White's admonition that "one or two minutes is long enough for any ordinary prayer" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 581.) 


### Sermon—*The joy of spiritual activity* (Continued from page 15)

2. Many souls are severely limited by physical, emotional, and mental handicaps that prevent them from working side by side with the healthy and able-bodied.
3. To reward laziness is sin.

### Conclusion

- A.** Slothfulness is found in job performance, school, church, and politics.
1. Every Christian should do his or her best at all times. We should labor as though God were our employer (Eph. 6:5-8).
  2. Jesus Christ has commanded us to be an active and effective witness for Him.
- B.** If you are not a Christian, I challenge you to serve and accept the only One who can bring joy to your work.

### Illustration – Procrastination

An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment was captured. Nolibert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions. 'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent." 

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Victor Hulbert is a pastor in the South England Conference of Great Britain.

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Margarida F. Sarli, Editorial Coordinator for this section.



# The power of a picture

*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.*

Ps. 101:3.

A mother who had lost her husband at sea was determined that none of her three boys would be sailors when they grew up. She therefore did all in her power to influence them toward a career that would keep them on land. But as they became old enough, each of them, one after the other, left home and went to sea.

One day after the youngest had gone the mother stood in the bedroom where the boys had slept, wondering sadly how it was that in spite of all she had done to influence them otherwise they had chosen to become sailors. As she gazed in lonely reminiscence around the room, suddenly she believed she understood the reason. On the wall at the foot of the boys' beds, in a position where for many years they saw it as they went to sleep and when they awoke, was a picture of a magnificent sailing ship, under full canvas, plunging through a frothing sea. This, she was convinced, was the influence that had nullified all her efforts to keep her boys from being sailors.

The Chinese have a proverb, "One picture is worth a thousand words." Educators say that pictures convey more to the mind in learning than any other medium. As a result films and TV are being used more and more as a means of teaching in our schools.

## Practicing the presence of God

*Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

Gen. 5:24.

Nicolas Herman, of Lorraine, France, was an unlearned exsoldier and footman, a great awkward fellow who was always breaking things. One wintry day he happened to stop to consider a dry, leafless tree. As he did so God used the tree to win him to Himself. As the man looked at the dead-appearing branches the thought came to him that God would transform the tree into a thing of life and beauty with the returning spring. Then his mind was led to the thought that God could perform an even greater transformation in his own life. So forcefully did this idea grip him that he surrendered himself to God.

After his conversion, in 1666, Nicolas Herman entered a monastery and was known thereafter as Brother Lawrence. For the next more than sixty years he sought to know God as his intimate acquaintance. The



account of his efforts and success in this aim may be read in a little book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, a record of his conversations with God, or of his descriptions of these experiences.

First, Brother Lawrence says, he renounced everything for God and gave himself wholly to Him. Then he persevered in centering his thoughts on God, constantly bringing them back when they wandered. "By often repeating these acts," he wrote, "they become *habitual*, and the presence of God is rendered as it were *natural* to us."

### Your face tells your story

*A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed. Eccl. 8:1.*

It is said that on one occasion Abraham Lincoln rejected a certain man for an important job with the statement, "I don't like his face."

"But, Mr. President," protested the one who had made the recommendation, "he is not responsible for his face."

"Every man is responsible for his face at forty," Lincoln retorted.

When a man has that true wisdom which springs from God, he reflects the character of Christ, who Himself "reflects the glory of God" the Father (Heb. 1:3, R.S.V.). An aura of quiet confidence, gentle strength, kindness, faith, and all the other virtues that are the fruits of the Spirit illuminate his face.

More than that, the preacher of Ecclesiastes tells us that if a man's face has been hardened by years of sin, heavenly wisdom will erase the lines carved by evil and will soften the signs of sin.

Harry Orchard, a hardened criminal and a murderer, proved the truth of this statement several times over. When Mr. Orchard was finally arrested he bore on his countenance all the marks of a life of crime. Shortly after his arrest he was converted. One year later, when he was brought to trial, so much had the Spirit of God softened his features that the presiding judge did not recognize his prisoner as the accused.

But infinitely more important than the gradual

change of countenance that comes when a man opens his mind to the true Wisdom is the sudden transformation of heart and life.

### The curative viewpoint

*Looking unto Jesus; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. Heb. 12:2.*

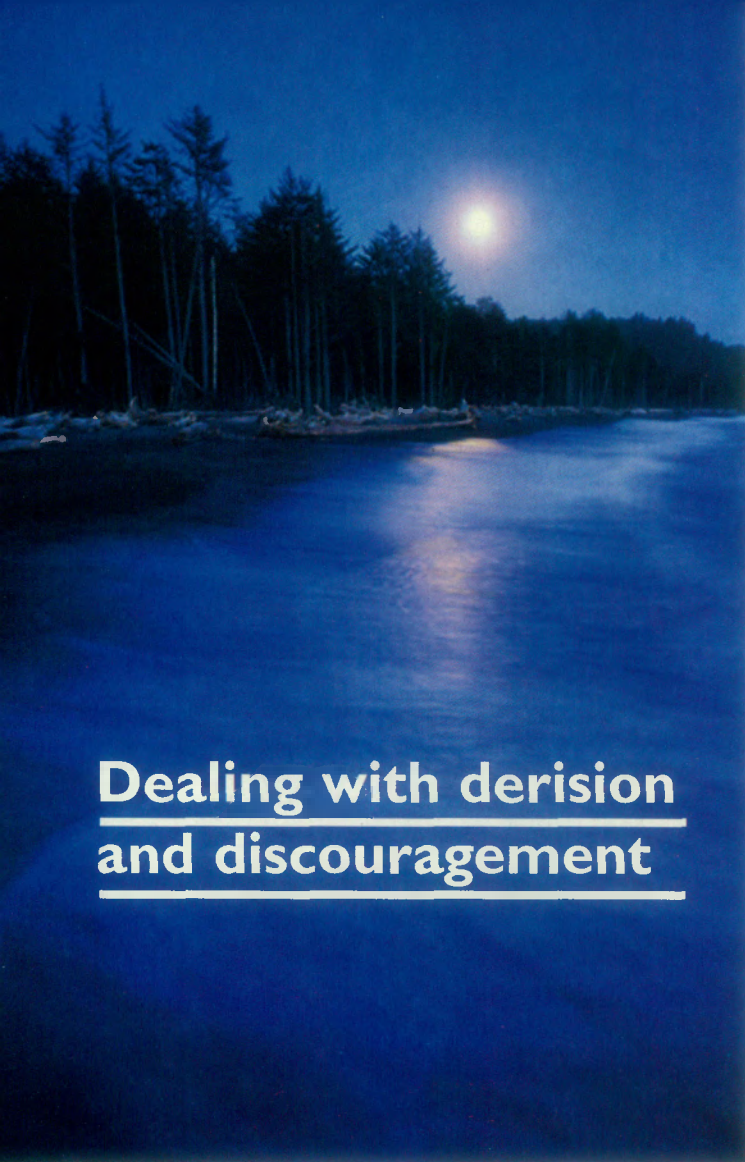
As Jesus lived His life on earth, teaching, preaching, healing, helping, encouraging, His eye was ever fastened on the future. He anticipated the time when He would gather the fruitage of His sacrifice into His kingdom and share with them the delights of the universe.

But before He ever took the step that would make this possible, He knew fully what was involved in it for Him. In *The Desire of Ages*, page 410, we read: "Even before He took humanity upon Him, He saw the whole length of the path He must travel . . . The path from the manger to Calvary was all before His eyes." Yet, understanding the cross and the shame that would be His, He nevertheless accepted them, focusing His vision on the "joy that was set before him," and pressed on unhesitatingly.

We are reminded of the famous physician who always entered the sickroom with a smile on his lips, no matter how serious the disease of his patient. On being asked how he could possibly examine and treat so many terrible diseases without being overwhelmed by them, he explained, "I always look upon disease from a curative viewpoint."

So it was with Jesus. He looked at the sinner from a "curative viewpoint," therefore He was willing; more, He was eager to come to this world, which is a vast isolation ward in the universe, to walk among men and women filled with the loathsome spiritual, moral, and physical diseases that sin has occasioned, knowing that He Himself would at last be struck down by sin, to die in terrible physical and mental agony amid the hatred and abuse of those He tried to save. But for Him it was all worth while.





# Spirit of Prophecy

## Dealing with derision and discouragement

**T**hose who were restoring the defenses of Jerusalem did not go forward in their work unmolested. Satan was busy in stirring up opposition and creating discouragement. The principal agents in this movement were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Animonite, and Geshem the Arabian. These idolaters had exulted in the feeble and defenseless condition of the Jews, and had mocked at their religion and ridiculed their devastated city. And when the work of rebuilding the wall was entered upon, they, with envenomed zeal, set themselves to hinder the undertaking. To accomplish this, they attempted to cause division among the workmen by suggesting doubts and arousing unbelief as to their success. They also ridiculed the efforts of the builders, declared the enterprise an impossibility, and predicted a disgraceful failure.

“What do these feeble Jews?” exclaimed Sanballat, mockingly. “Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” Tobiah, endeavoring to be still more contemptuous and sarcastic, added, “Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

More active opposition soon beset the builders on the wall. They were compelled to guard continually against the plots of their sleepless adversaries. The emissaries of the enemy endeavored to destroy their courage by the circulation of false reports; conspiracies were formed on various pretexts to draw Nehemiah into their toils; and false-hearted Jews were found ready to aid the treacherous undertaking. Again, the report was spread that Nehemiah was plotting rebellion against the Persian monarch, intending to exalt himself, as king over Israel, and that all who aided him were traitors.

Emissaries of the enemy, professing friendliness, mingled with the builders, suggesting changes in the plan, seeking in various ways to divert the attention of the workers, to cause confusion and perplexity, and to arouse distrust and suspicion. These spies to the enemy reported the plans formed for the advancement of the work, and thus they were enabled to labor with greater effect to thwart the purpose of the builders.

But Nehemiah continued to look to God for guidance and support, and the work went forward until the gaps were filled, and the entire wall built up to half its intended height. As the enemies of Israel saw that all their efforts had been unavailing, they were filled with rage. Hitherto they had not dared to employ violent measures, for Nehemiah

and his companions were acting by the king's commission, and any active opposition might bring upon themselves the monarch's displeasure. But now, in their blind passion, they themselves became guilty of the crime of rebellion of which they had so eagerly accused Nehemiah. Having assembled for united counsel, they "conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem."

The experience of Nehemiah is repeated in the history of God's people in this time. Those who labor in the cause of truth will find that they cannot do this without exciting the anger of its enemies. Though they have been called of God to the work in which they are engaged, and their course is approved of Him, they cannot escape reproach and derision. They will be denounced as visionary, unreliable, scheming, and hypocritical—anything, in short, that will suit the purpose of their enemies. The most sacred things will be represented in a ridiculous light to amuse the ungodly. A very small amount of sarcasm and low wit, united with envy, jealousy, impiety and hatred is sufficient to excite the mirth of the profane scoffer. And these presumptuous jesters sharpen one another's ingenuity and embolden each other in their blasphemous work. Contempt and derision are indeed painful to human nature, but all who are true to God must endure them. It is the policy of Satan thus to turn souls from doing the work which the Lord has laid upon them.

Proud scorers are not to be trusted; yet, as Satan found in the heavenly courts a company to sympathize with him, so these find among professed followers of Christ those whom they can influence, who believe them honest, who sympathize with them, plead in their behalf, and become permeated with their spirit. Those who are at variance in almost everything else will unite in persecuting the few who dare to pursue the straightforward path of duty. And the same enmity, which leads to contempt and derision, will, at a favorable opportunity, inspire more violent and cruel measures, especially when workers for God are active and successful. — *Southern Watchman*, April 12, 1904.

### **Disaffection among the believers**

Some of the leading men among the Jews, becoming disaffected, sought to discourage Nehemiah by exaggerating the difficulties attending the work, and they represented the people as already exhausted by their excessive labor. Said they, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much

rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

Again, they attempted to intimidate the people by the report that large armies were preparing for a secret attack upon the city: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease." It was the help and encouragement received from traitors in the camp that emboldened the enemies of Israel to make those threats. And traitors reported the threats for the sole purpose of terrifying and disheartening the builders on the wall.


"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you." Those who were taking no part in the work gave these alarms. They were gathering up the statements and reports of their enemies and bringing these in to the workers to weaken courage and create disaffection. Then every word of complaint, distrust, suspicion, or unbelief dropped by the workmen, with all the additional conjectures and conclusions of the news-carriers, was eagerly reported outside the walls and circulated among those who despised the Jews and sought to hinder their prosperity.

Those who are now seeking to make up the breach in the law of God experience the same difficulties. The servants of the Lord must expect every kind of discouragement. They will be tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of friends and helpers. As we seek to advance the cause of truth, and prepare a people to stand in the day of God, we are led directly away from the customs and practices of the world. But there are among us pleasure-seekers, who are not laboring to meet the high standard of the divine requirements, which love the spirit and influence of the world more than they love the truth or the prosperity of God's cause. These unconsecrated elements are used by Satan to accomplish his purposes. While still connected with the people of God, they unite themselves with His enemies, and thus the Lord's work is laid open to the attacks of its bitterest foes, and the arguments furnished by professed friends of the truth are employed to destroy the confidence, courage, and faith of workers who are too easily discouraged.

Even some who seem to desire the work of God to prosper will yet weaken the hands of His servants

by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of their adversaries. Those who appear to be honest souls are sometimes deceived through the influence of ambitious and turbulent men. Satan works with marvelous success through his agents, and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent: Hence they allow themselves to be prejudiced, misled, and deceived. For this reason, many whose lives are a reproach to the cause of truth will yet succeed in arousing distrust and suspicion of those through whom God is working.

How busy, in a crisis, is the rebellious spirit, the evil tongue! How eagerly will they gather up floating rumors and send them to the bitterest enemies of God, to be broadcast, like thistle seed, to produce their harvest of evil! And when the result is seen, in desolation, backsliding, and apostasy, then those who have done the very work, which Satan prompted them to do, are ready to charge the result upon the faithful workers whom they have hindered, burdened, and distressed. But every man's work stands registered in the books of heaven, and no disguise can there conceal the motives that prompt to action. Those who obey God will be honored of Him.

Amid great discouragements, Nehemiah made God his trust; and here is our defense. A remembrance of what the Lord has done for us will prove a support in every danger. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them and bring to naught all their counsels. —*Southern Watchman*, April 19, 1904. 

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Ellen G. White, the Lord's messenger, was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(Continued from page 9)

Music worship is a matter of principle.

If the singing was not motivated by a deep love for Christ, and to express gratitude even if it's unbelievably beautiful and artistic, it is not praise. It is a show, a secular concert, or any title you wish to give it. It's proper for any place except for a church.

### Impression

As a means of impression, music sets the proper atmosphere to praise God. Acting on the nervous system "it can produce diverse moods and establish many different situations such as happiness, joy, sadness, peace, majesty, etc., and many times perhaps only an environment for worship if that much, according to Joao Faustini in *Musica e Adoração*, p. 20.

If there is no discretion in choosing the music that will serve as prelude, congregational singing or special presentation, the effect of the worship hour on the worshipers can become minimal. Likewise, unaccompanied by the words, music produces an effect on the individual. If it were really sacred music and properly played it would awaken devotion, even though the words do not exist or are not totally understood.

There are three basic elements in music: melody, harmony, and rhythm. Melody appeals to the emotions; harmony to the intellect; and rhythm to the body. Which of the three elements should predominate in worship music? Should melody be the principal factor, our songs would be purely emotional. Religion is not purely sentimental. Should harmony be emphasized, in detriment of melody and rhythm, we have a rational music, and therefore very cold, it doesn't have any influence on the heart or the soul. If rhythm be given preference, music will be sensual, carnal and therefore, inappropriate.

Music is only spiritual and appropriate as a means to impress the church service, when there is equilibrium between melody, harmony, and rhythm. None of them should be more prominent than the others, because when this takes place, it fails to transmit a message to the whole man, depriving him of a transforming influence.

Johann Sebastian Bach used to place on the top part of his pieces the initials S. D. G. (Soli Deo Gloria), which means "only to the glory of God."

That should be the primary objective of music in the worship service: to impress the soul with the glory of God, prepare the heart so that it will respond with its praises and adoration to the Divinity's loving and majestic demonstrations.

God is holy (Lev. 19:2). Music should inspire holiness. Holy is that which is separated for a holy purpose. Therefore, worship music should not remind us in the least of popular music, whether it be in rhythm, melody, harmony, or style.

God is love (1 John 4:8). Music should awaken in the worshipers love for God and fellowmen.

God does not always identify Himself with explosive manifestation, He also reveals Himself in a soft and delicate voice (1 King 19:12). The music that God reveals to the worshipers is sober, soft and delicate as He is.

God is merciful (2 Chron. 30:9). Thus, worship should appeal to the spirit and not to the flesh.

God is pure (1 John 3:3). Likewise, worship music should be pure as He is pure, in its origin, harmony, ideas, performance, identity and its style.

The music that is not like God will not bring us closer to Him, and therefore should have no place in the worship of the Most High. This is not a matter of choice, but of principle. **E**

(Continued from page 17)

**Sermon**—*What the world needs now is love.*

"I wish there were more people like you in the world."

Where upon his mother replied, "Oh, there are. But you must look for them."

The old man simply shook his head, saying: "But, lady, I didn't need to look for you. You looked for me."

When that mother reflected her Christian kindness toward the tramp, she did something more than simply offer him welfare. It was a compassion that went out of its way to love the unlovely. And that's the story of our Savior's life, death, and resurrection. He came looking for us in the sick, the maimed, the lame, the bruised, the brokenhearted, the wretched wanderer, the poor and forgotten, the prisoner, and the lonely rich. Has he found you? **E**

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Carlos Alberto Alvarenga is pastor of the Central Church of Bauru, São Paulo, Brazil.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

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(Continued from page 13)

Working with your pastor in a ministerial team

In group discussions, the members of the team have the right and the responsibility to provide ideas and to express their own point of view. The pastors should give place to the ministry of support from their collaborators. These usually are professionals that have information and special discernment. They should feel free to discuss and discern in relation with the subject that is in analysis or in debate. But when the team or the pastor has taken a decision, the members of the group must accept that decision as if they themselves had proposed it. Even when a member of the team thinks that he is correct, if the group decides to take a different direction, the member that is in disagreement could say: "Very well, if this is the decision of the team, then I will submit to it and will support it so that it will produce good results." Then, when the members of the team go out of the meeting session, they are truly united in a same mind and accord.

Consequently, one of the major trials for a team member who differs with the decision of the group is to confront the members that ask: What do you think of the recent decision taken by the board? Do you believe that is the direction the board should go?

Even if the individual members of the team can feel privately that the decision adopted for the team was wrong, even then, for the spirit of loyalty, they should support the decision taken. They should say to the rest of the members: "The team took this decision and I will support it totally. All together we'll make it work well and produce the expected results."

When the team of directors is unified and of the same accord, it produces a major impact on the members. When they attack certain decision adopted by the leadership, not only are they opposing the pastor or an individual member of the team, but the entire group. ■

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Juan Calderonnes Souza writes from Puebla, Mexico, where he is a church elder.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

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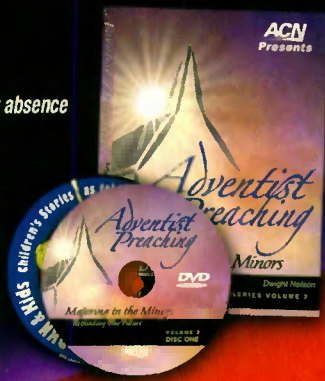
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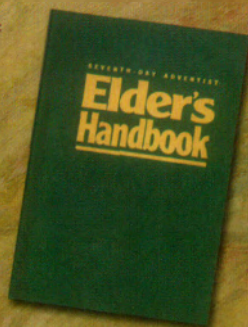
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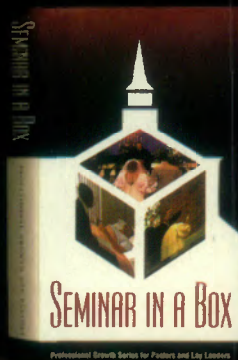
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