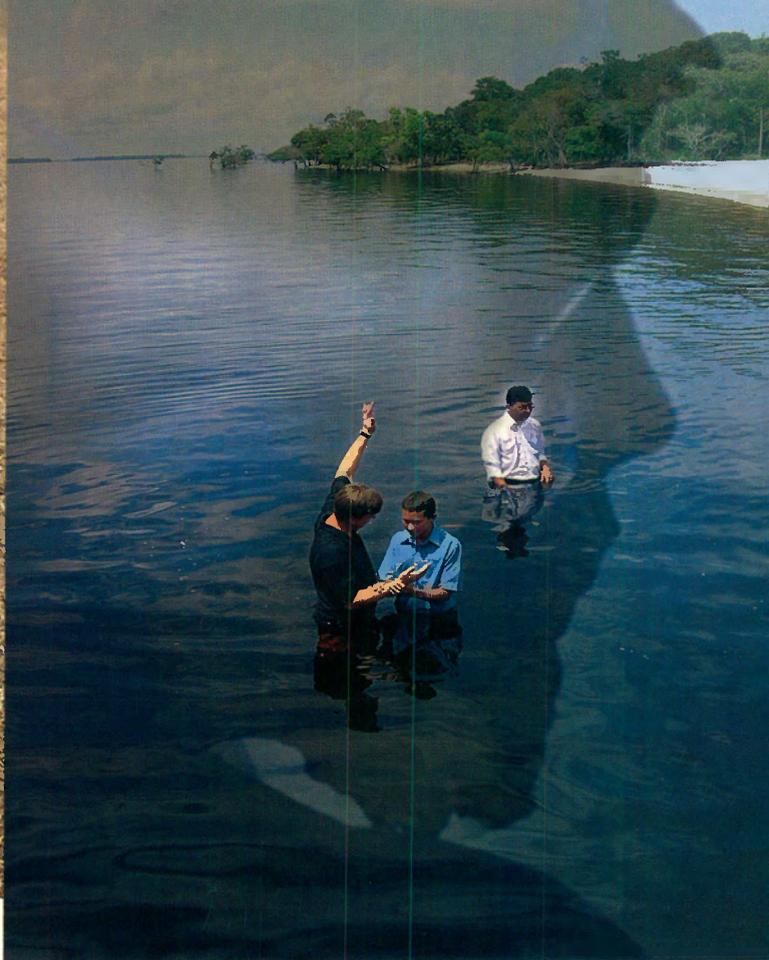


ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 11 No. 2



REDEMPTION
ONLY THROUGH

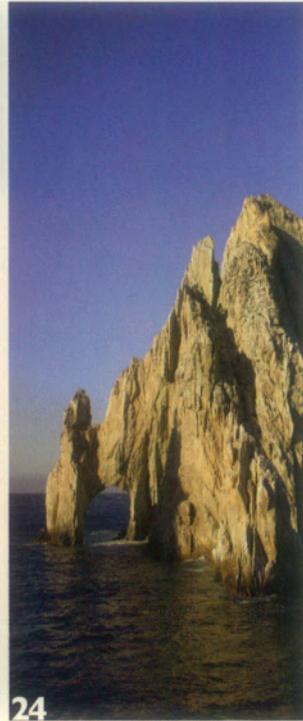
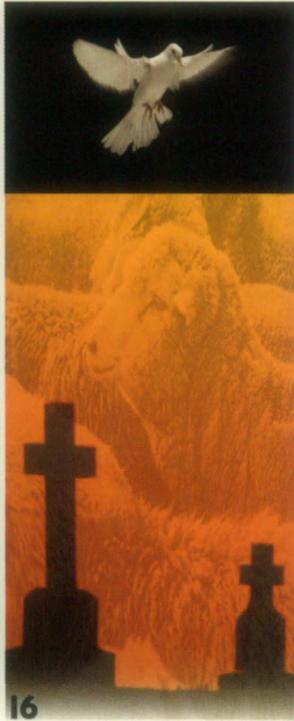
CHRIST

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

ELDER'S DIGEST

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BACK TO THE WORD

Dear readers, this is my last editorial to you as the official editor of *Elder's Digest*. Since 1994 I have had the privilege to communicate with you through *Elder's Digest*. This is my last issue. Working in the preparation of it, I asked myself, "What should I write to the dear elders in this last issue? What kind of message should be so relevant as to be in my last editorial?" After meditation and much prayer I decided to write on the importance of bringing back God's Word into the Adventist pulpit.

My friend Henry Feyerabend was in London. On Sunday morning he decided to go to the church where the great theologian, Bible expositor and preacher, Dr. John Stott was preaching. H. Feyerabend decided to arrive early to be sure that he could get a convenient place. The church was almost full one hour before the worship started. Why do these people go to that specific church? Because John Stott preaches the Word and people want to hear the Word. H. Feyerabend said the sermon that morning was a solid exposition of the Bible.

Many times we hear some among us saying that the younger generation is not interested in Bible study anymore. It is the conviction

of some preachers that to keep our young people coming to our church we need to put in the sermon different material. H.

Feyerabend observed that morning, that there was a great representation of the new generation in John Stott's congregation.

The church was full of young people. They came to hear God's Word.

In the early Adventist

days, the preacher earned the reputation of being a real student of the Scriptures. Not only the prophetic part, but also the doctrinal and devotional portions of the Word challenged our response.

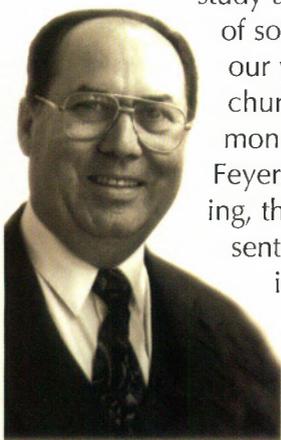
In our early days the members carried a Bible to church and they turned to the Scriptures as the preacher unfolded his message. But today there is a trend in the opposite direction. In some places it seems that the great majority of members are there without their Bibles. And if one inquires the reason, the answer will be: "Oh, well, it's only occasionally that we ever need our Bible, and so we just don't bother to bring them." The tragedy is that it is all too true.

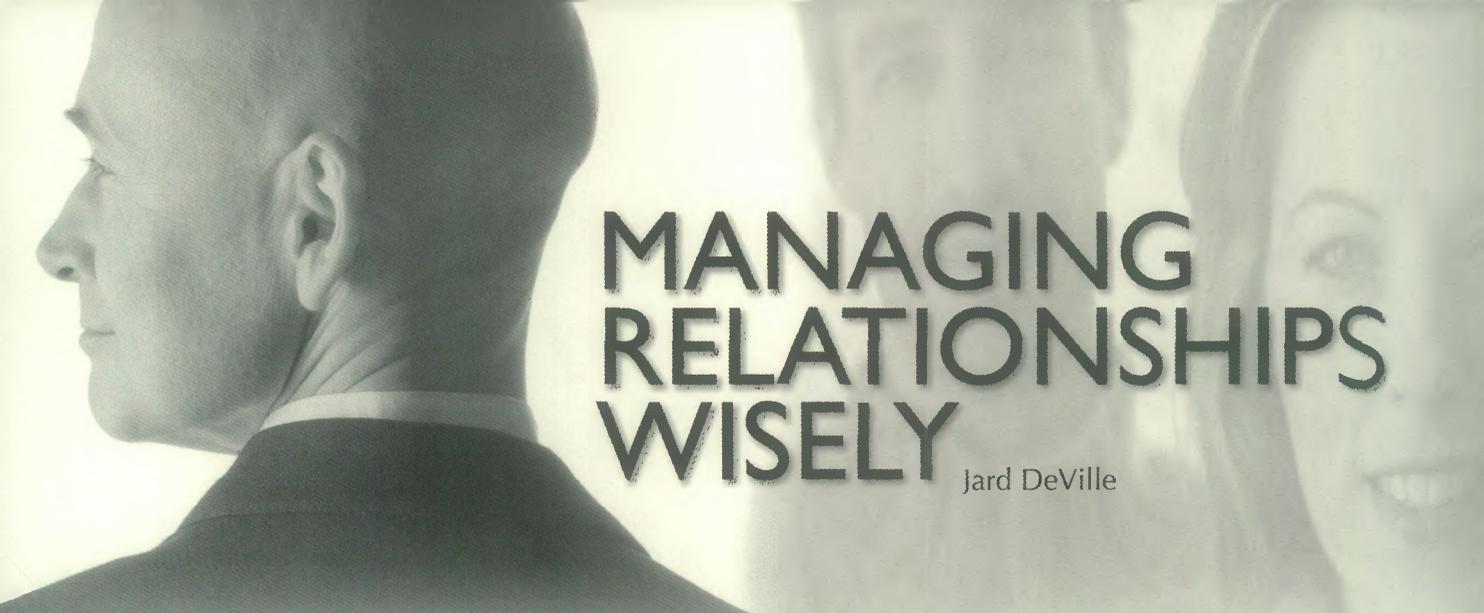
My wife and I attended a Sabbath morning worship service in one of our largest churches not long ago and were not only disappointed but shocked when the preacher never opened the Bible. He never even read a text, except for a brief reference to an experience in the New Testament. It seemed that the Word of God had absolutely no place whatever in that particular service. Many stories were told, all interesting, and some of them told with telling effects; but there was no real sermon and no exposition of the Word.

How many times the messenger of the Lord has urged us to study the Word! Statements like these should startle us: "Let us give more time to the study of the Bible. We do not understand the Word as we should." — *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 407. Again, "We should fear to skim the surface of the word of God." — *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 407.

Even more challenging is this statement: "Ninety percent of our people, including many of our ministers and teachers, are content with surface truths." — *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1903. Notice it does not say "some" or "many", but

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MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS WISELY

Jard DeVille

There is a basic principle of interpersonal relationships that every dedicated elder should learn as early as possible in his or her leadership office. It is a principle that must be communicated to the people of the parish in many different ways. This other side of the leadership coin focuses on the sound understanding of human relationships as the best way to lead a successful congregation.

"We should all please our brothers for their own good, in order to build them up in the faith" Rom. 15:2.

A recent study conducted with more than a thousand spiritual leaders in a major denomination revealed that their major concern was learning better ways to manage interpersonal relationships. I did not conduct the research, but it certainly confirms my own work and my experiences in dealing with congregation leaders in the English-speaking world.

The basic principle of better interpersonal relationships is this:

Good things happen to people who cooperate

I am not so naive as to think that good things have always occurred in the lives of men and women who give their best to God and church. That would eliminate the apostle Paul, many of the prophets, several disciples, and even Jesus himself—to say nothing of the martyrs from Christ down through the ages and the men and women of faith and devotion who are caught up in the massive economic disruptions of our era. Some slippery and malicious characters enter different congregations for their own reasons that have little to do with spiritual worship and growth.

Although I admit writing a book called *Nice Guys Finish First* that was translated and became a best-seller in several nations, I never wrote a line saying that "naive guys and gals finish first." It appears that when some people hear me talking about nice people doing well in life or quoting the basic principle they grow disturbed and angry. Some say it just isn't so in the real world. In New Zealand recently, one woman snorted loudly enough to be heard all through a large meeting room and said that was the craziest thing she had ever heard.

Even more challenging was my experience with a talk-show host in one of the larger television stations in Detroit, Michigan. I was told I would have six minutes to promote my book and to tell what it was all about. When I arrived on camera, the host, a fellow named John Kelley, sat me on a stool before the people, held a copy of *Nice Guys Finish First* to the camera, and loudly announced that this was the most absurd thing he had ever seen. There was no way, he stated loudly, that a nice person could make it successfully in this lousy, rotten world.

He then turned to his live audience and asked how many of them agreed with this dunce on the stool (his body language sent the message loud and clear). About half the audience raised their hands to show they wanted to believe that nice people could make it. He then asked how many agreed with him that nice people would be steamrollered by life. The remaining half raised their hands to endorse that host's view that a nice guy or gal had no chance in the world of succeeding.

John then turned toward me, motioned for the cameras to zoom in to see me sweat in discomfort,

and said, "Now Doctor DeVille, how are you going to handle that?" He was very sarcastic, but I was ready. "It all depends on how you define nice guy or gal," I replied. "If you think of a nice person as a marshmallow, a doormat, or a wimp, I have to agree with you. That kind of nice guy doesn't have much of a chance. I have never advised anyone to face life from such an attitude. But, if you define nice guys and gals as I do, it's an entirely different matter." I explained that I see a nice person as one who works from the following triad:

- Manages interpersonal relationships very well
- Shares the rewards of cooperation with others
- Creates a community of continual achievers

John sat stunned as the cameras swung back and forth, panning from me to him, to the audience and back to me for thirty seconds or more. That's an eternity of dead air on a talk show, but he sat silent while I crossed my arms and leaned back on my stool, having spoken my piece. He finally stood and gradually took charge of the program once more. He said aloud and on camera, "Well, I'll be damned! I had never thought of it that way." When he finally came fully out of his reverie, he turned to the live audience and asked for a show of hands again. "Under these conditions," he asked, "how many of you still disagree with the learned doctor?" Only two people raised their hands this second time. I had won them over. The next Sunday I contacted my pastor, told him the story, and suggested that with my conversion rate we would have the largest congregation in the world! John had given me a full twenty-five minutes on the show rather than the intended six!

I understand that naive people often get hurt by the users and abusers of society, but any pastor can use my basic principle to win the consistent commitment of the people in a parish. This is your promise—not that you can control acts of nature and God—that you will do your best as their leader in doing three things. You will manage interpersonal relationships well, will share the rewards of dedication, and will create a community of believing achievers in which the members support each other. This should be your spiritual contract with your congregation.

A realistic pastor does not pretend to be perfect or to have control over all the important events of parish and personal life. You can promise, howev-

er, with all your strength and wisdom to give people good for good. You can promise to reward people physically, psychologically, and philosophically in body, mind, and spirit. You can promise to the best of your finite human nature that they will get full credit for everything they do, that you will not burden them with busy work, and that you will do your utmost to help them mature in the Christian life. There is every reason in this world and in the hereafter to make this commitment to your people. Good things happen to people who help make your parish a better congregation.

There is another element in the basic principle, however:

Bad things don't happen to people who cooperate

Once more, you are not God. Accidents occur, and deeply loved children develop leukemia. We all experience what Viktor Frankl calls the "tragic triad" of suffering, guilt, and death. That is part of the human condition, and all you will be able to do is teach your people how to use each tragedy and setback as a stepping-stone to greater maturity. But, to the best of your ability as pastor and friend, you will not humiliate or allow to be devalued by others the people who take you at your word.

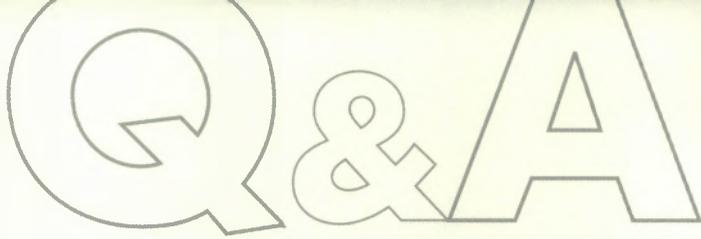
Like a good army officer who sees that his soldiers are fed and sheltered before meeting his own needs, so a pastor sees to the satisfactions of the people. By doing this, any leader is secure in the knowledge that his or her own satisfaction will be all the greater later on, as more and more people respond to better use of interpersonal trade-offs. You will not hide when people need you but will work productively until circumstances return to normal. You will give credit when it is due, thus transmuting mutual respect, creativity, and performance into the pure gold of an achieving community of Christians.

Finally, this aspect of the basic principle must be used cautiously:

Good things don't happen to people who don't cooperate

That statement sounds cruel, but I believe it is valid according to the Epistles of Paul and the teachings of Jesus. Because you are finite and there are only so many things you can do in a day, you cannot afford to give too much of your time to

(Continued on page 7)



Objection: *The days of creation were not literal, twenty-four-hour days, but long indefinite periods, millions of years in length. Therefore Seventh-day Adventists are not warranted in using the creation story of Genesis 1 as an argument for the holiness of the literal seventh day of the weekly cycle.*

Answer: If the person setting forth this view is an evolutionist, and thus does not believe that Genesis gives a dependable historical record, there is no point in our trying to provide here an answer. We would need, first, to compass the wide question of the truth of evolution and the dependability of the Bible, and that would carry us far beyond the compass of this article. But such reasoning is sometimes presented by Christian people who believe the Bible. To such, we direct our answer. The way the matter is stated one might think that Adventists, late in earth's history, thought they discovered a valid connection between creation week and the specific seventh-day Sabbath. The facts are that we found that connection by reading the straightforward narrative in Genesis and the simple declaration of the fourth commandment. "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Ex. 20:11.

Certainly when God spoke those words to Israel they understood Him to mean that the seventh day of the weekly cycle had been blessed, for it was that particular day in the cycle they were called upon to honor. Indeed, there would have been no point to the command that they should work six days and keep the seventh day of the week, in memory of creation, if creation had not taken place on that same pattern--six days God labored and the seventh day He rested. To make the days of creation long periods is to spoil the parallel that God, not the Adventists, set up between the creation incidents and the weekly cycle of human activity and rest.

This Sabbath objection goes too far. No matter how hard most Sunday advocates seek to prove

that the Sabbath is not binding in the Christian era, they quite uniformly agree that it was binding in the days before Christ. But the objection before us, if true, could have been used by all the good men before the first advent, and hence there would have been no seventh-day Sabbath in all earth's history!

How anyone who accepts the Bible record as true history could think of the creation days as long, indefinite periods, millions of years in length, we cannot understand. Adam was created on the sixth day. He lived only 930 years. Long before those years were totaled he had been driven from the Garden of Eden, and in his sinful state had reared a family. According to the objection, Adam must have lived his whole life within the span of that sixth "day," for 930 is but a small segment of a period that is measured in millions of years. But when God had rested the seventh day and looked back over the week, He blessed that day as a climax to a perfect work. Therefore, no sin had yet entered to mar the earth. How, then, could Adam, who lived sinlessly at least beyond the end of creation week, have lived a grand total of only 930 years, when he had to live through a fraction of the sixth and all of the seventh day of creation, and yet those days were millions of years long?

The whole creation account is written as a simple narrative. There is nothing in the record to suggest that words should not be understood in their ordinary meanings. To each day of that first week there is "the evening and the morning." Indeed, that is how each day is marked off. But "evening" and "morning" belongs to twenty-four-hour days, not to long, indefinite periods of millions of years.

On the third day grass, herbs, trees, and other vegetation were brought forth. Now these all require sunlight if they are to thrive. According to the creation narrative the sun appeared the next day. Does that mean millions of years later? If so, then we are confronted with a more amazing miracle than Genesis has been thought to contain, the plant kingdom flourishing for ages without sunlight!

Of the fourth day we read, "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the

lesser light to rule the night." Gen. 1:16. Here, obviously, the words "day" and "night" are being used as we use them today. From the beginning of the fourth day the day and night were thus ruled. But according to the record, the length of that fourth day, and of succeeding days, is the same as that for each of the first three days: "The evening and the morning were the fourth day," verse 19. Hence the question that the objector should answer is this: If on the fourth day and onward "the evening and the morning" mean an ordinary day measured by sun and moon, why should the identical phrase used earlier in the narrative regarding the first three days mean something entirely different? Was part of creation week a long, indefinite period, and the remainder ordinary days?

But why carry the discussion further? For the man who believes that Genesis is history, there can be no doubt that the creation days are literal days. And the "seventh day" is as literal as the others. Some who do not wish to keep that day holy would fain lose it amid the billowing mists of indefinite geological ages. We prefer to believe the straightforward historical narrative, so eloquently summarized by God Himself in the fourth commandment: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth. . . . and rested the seventh day." **E**

Francis D. Nichols former editor at the *Review and Herald Publishing Association*.

(Continued from page 5)

Managing relationships wisely

people and situations when there is no cooperative response. When I was a young minister, I inherited a congregation thickly interspersed with deadwood. Worse, it was in a denomination that worked from a connectional system in which we had to pay our budgets according to the number on the rolls.

I set up a calling program to reach every member who was not attending services fairly regularly or had not contributed financially to the church over the past few years. We were fair about it, sending letters and making phone calls, but for

those remaining on the rolls without having moved to another community, I finally went to see them. I suggested that since the congregation was apparently no longer meeting their needs and no longer important to them, they should resign. Then we who were paying the bills would not have to carry them at the state level financially, would not have to supply services when their children were getting married, or see to their burial when they died.

Some people grew angry with me, but I remained firm and fair. If the congregation was still important enough for them to remain on the rolls, I asked them to give us some tangible support with their work, money, and worship. If not, I suggested that they find a church in which they could feel comfortable and do the work of God there. Of course, I am not talking about the homebound elderly or infirmed in any form, or even the men and women who are trying to work their way through serious intellectual doubts. Great patience must be exercised with the latter, but with some you must say that the congregation is a community in which all capable members are expected to give to God and humankind in a variety of ways.

No elder or church should be expected to support and continually cope with those men and women who actively or indirectly frustrate the activities and programs being implemented. There will be times when you must say, "Good things don't happen here to people who don't cooperate with us."

The basic principle of interpersonal relationships is effective for one major reason. People want the *quid pro quo*. We all prefer *Pleasure to pain* in the physical aspects of life, *Power/prestige to devaluation* in the psychological area, and *Purpose/permanence to meaninglessness* in the spiritual area. People all want to be useful in their relationships. When you use your skills, authority, and power to help them gain pleasure, prestige/power, and purpose/permanence in their relations with others and with God, they will give you their consistent cooperation. Teach your people in as many ways as possible that *good things happen to people who cooperate in this community of believers and achievers*. **E**

Jard DeVille is professor of leadership at the Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis.

ALMOST HOME



Dick Rentfro

In the good old days before we ever heard of terrorists and when commercial jet travel was only rarely interrupted by a high-jacking, I used to invite myself up into the cockpit. When Rose and I were on a flight from Rome to Los Angeles, I told the pilot that I was a student pilot and had a total of three and a half hours solo time. It was a thrilling business and pretty soon the pilot said, "Just out ahead and to the right you see the lights of Las Vegas," and before we knew it we were over Los Angeles and lights wall to wall.

Some time ago on our way to the Holy Land I asked permission to visit the cockpit in our El Al plane and I was invited to take the engineer's seat just back of the main pilot. They didn't hurry me and I took movies for quite some time as the two pilots carried on in Hebrew an animated conversation and then one pilot said to me in English, "We are right now flying over the mountains of Greece!"

The excitement and adventure and hazards of flying are something like the Christian's race toward heaven. Paul compares this life to a foot race where you, "run to win." "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets

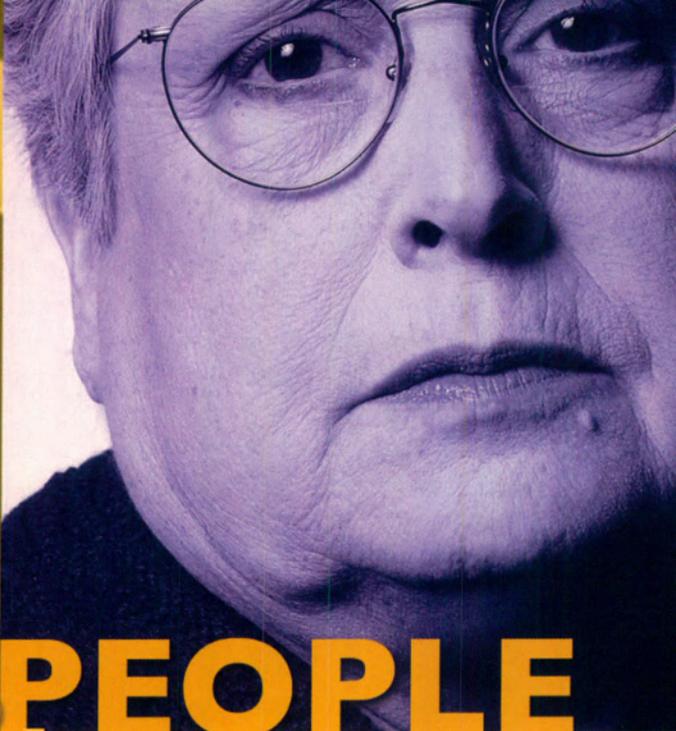
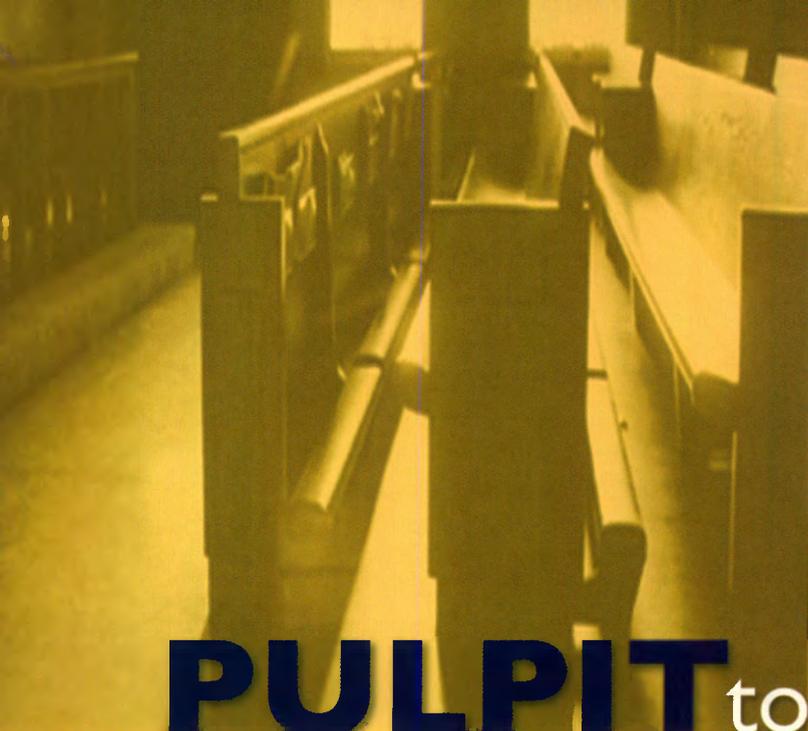
the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." — 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

As an 85-year-old pastor evangelist I still think of myself as a beginner in the deeper things of God. Eternity invites me into understanding more fully "hidden things and mysteries of God."

Back in 1932 a racing plane called the Gee Bee would top out at 298 mph. Jimmy Doolittle won in 1932 the Thompson Trophy and at speeds up to 296.2 mph.

An exact copy of the 1932 Gee Bee was completed in early 1991. This was an extremely strong airplane, designed to withstand 12g and a 450 mph dive speed. In the words of her pilot, Delmar Benjamin, "The Gee Bee copy is not so different from other fast planes cruising the skies, aside from the fact that you must fly it all the time."

(Continued on page 11)



PULPIT to PEOPLE

Jack Harris

tithe \$453

Early into my ministry in the Oklahoma Conference a literature evangelist told me about a lady he had found who wanted to meet a Seventh-day Adventist minister. She lived in a small town many miles from my nearest church. As soon as I could I drove over to see her. When I knocked on her door, I heard a feeble voice say, "Come in." As I entered her humble home, I saw her lying on a day bed. When I introduced myself to her, her first words to me were, "Open the bottom drawer of that chest of drawers. I have been listening to the Voice of Prophecy for years and Pastor Richards talked about tithe one day, so I have some tithe to give to you. Please take it, I don't have long to live and I want the church to have it."

I sat down beside her and together we counted it out in fives and tens and once in awhile a twenty dollar bill. It came to a total of \$453.00. That was a lot of money back in 1952. It was almost with a sigh of relief that she said, "Oh, I am so glad you came, it has worried me for a long time." I asked her to sign a simple statement that she had given the money to me for the church, so she could have something as a receipt until I could get an official

one to her.

We visited for awhile. I learned that her only son had been killed in an accident three years previously. Her husband had died years ago and now she was experiencing poor health and lived alone. I visited her as often as I could, and about three months later, she passed away. We had a simple service for her.

All the sermons in the world would not have brought the peace to her that she needed. That first pastoral visit seemed to bring a sense of closure and peace to her life that she needed. She could now connect a face with the radio messages she had heard and then to return her meager tithe to a cause she loved in the closing days of her life.

Also, early in my ministry, my wife and I had just moved to a new district. I began home visitation the next week. Upon arriving at a farm home of one of our members, I asked where the lady's husband was. She said, "He is out in the field plowing this afternoon but you better not go out, he has told me that he will kill the first 'Advent preacher' that comes on this farm." I left my wife and children with her and I walked out to the field. He saw

me coming and stopped the tractor. I stepped up on the draw bar and introduced myself to him. Without a word, he let out the clutch and we moved across the field while I hung on as best I could, my white shirt soaking up that red Oklahoma dust and my necktie fluttered in the wind. Dust swirled around us as the plow shares bit into the dry soil. I did my best to talk to him, asked questions about the farm, crops and so on. At first he wouldn't say a word, but slowly he warmed as he talked about the farm he had inherited from his parents and how satisfied he was to be able "to farm the old home place."

That first visit was followed by others and bonds grew tighter. He always said "Don't expect me to ever come to your church." And I always said, "We are going to be friends no matter whether you do or not." But one Sabbath, without warning, there he was side by side with his wife and son. And then one day he said, "I sure would like to be baptized." And I said, "I sure would like to baptize you." Their son later went to Southwestern Adventist University, (then Southwestern Jr. College) and chose a long career in the ministry as he is still following that profession today. I have often asked myself, "What if I had not made a pastoral visit and walked out into that field and met him on his own turf?"

Permit me one more story. I learned one day that the husband of one of our members left his grocery store every Thursday afternoon to go hunt gophers on his little farm. I had tried before to make friends with him. He was always polite to me but in a sort of arms length manner as if to say, "Don't try to get too close to me, Preacher, I like the way I am." So I dug up twenty-five dollars from our meager pastoral budget and bought a .22 rifle and a box of shells. The next Thursday afternoon I drove out to his farm and asked if I could join him in his gopher hunt. He seemed pleased that a preacher would do something like that. We climbed into his old Ford pickup and headed for the field. Soon we were laughing and talking about the shots that we missed and how lucky the gophers were that we weren't any better marksmen than we were.

I don't remember that we killed any gophers that day, but I do remember that we brought an end to the coolness that had previously exhibited itself when I stopped at their store for a visit. I never did baptize him but shortly after that his wife began

paying tithe from their earnings at the store. That was something that he would never have permitted at first. I learned later that the pastor who followed me did baptize him after he sold the store and started working at a place where he could have the Sabbath off. I never used the .22 rifle again and sold it later. It had been a good investment.

I don't share these stories with you to boast because I know they are replicated by thousands of pastors as they minister to their people. Countless numbers of you have experiences like this all the time. But I do notice from personal and professional experience that pastors who regularly visit people in their homes are a sort of vanishing breed. As a conference president I heard comments and complaints from members all too often that they seldom see their pastor even in times of emergency. It always brought stress and disappointment to me.

Not long ago I was invited to conduct a funeral for a church member. His family called and asked that I do the service because though their pastor did come by to visit the family on the day the man died, he never offered to help with the service or anything connected with it. He has not contacted the family since. It seemed to the family that the man did not exist in the eyes of the pastor despite the fact that he was a loyal member and had been all his life. He was a successful business man and highly thought of by the community as evidenced by the hundreds and hundreds of people who attended his funeral. It was hard for the son, who is now out of the church, to have a positive image of the church that his parents supported in so many ways for so many years.

I have an email on my desk, dated just a few days ago, from an outstanding evangelist. He told me that he couldn't remember ever having gotten a decision for baptism that hadn't first originated in the home as he visited those interested in the gospel. His wife died a few years ago. He is retired now and here is what he writes: "I have been retired and living here for three years. I have been in and out of the hospital several times. During those three years I have had one pastoral visit. I have had more non-Adventists interested in my welfare than my own church members. The Catholic Church members have invited me to some of their services, but my own church has dropped me even after I set up a Trust Fund in favor of the elementary school."

He goes on to say, "Today is Communion Day at our church. But I was unable to attend. There have been no phone calls, no visits, and no offer of communion in my home. All of a sudden I am an old man and I became one nobody."

Elder Don Jacobson, former President of the Oregon Conference, connected the dots between pastoral love for our church members and the necessity of personal visitation in the following poem:

"I love to run good programs, Lord,
To see your church advance.
I love to see things move along
With nothing left to chance.

Administration is my thing,
I love to fit the pieces,
To dig into the problems, Lord,
Till all trouble ceases.

I love to make agendas, too,
To do "to do" lists and instructions.
To organize long weeks ahead,
And to clear away obstructions.

I love to get the job done,
To check it off the list,
To delegate and then check up
To make sure nothing's missed.

But, Lord, I sense a problem
In this picture I just painted.
The overall direction's right,
But the emphasis seems tainted.

In my attempt to build your church
With carpet, pews and steeple
Help me to remember, Lord,
I'm here to love your people."

Elders, I plea with you, ring their doorbells and light up their lives. The sick, the grieving, the lonely, the elderly, the domestically challenged would love to see your friendly face and clasp your warm hand. **E**

Jack Harris is serving as President of the Retirees Association, in North American Division.

(Continued from page 8)

Almost home

The Gee Bee flies quite nicely with 450 horses at work. Delmar Benjamin while flying this plane is reminded constantly of the words of Jimmy Doolittle; "The Gee Bee must be flown with silk gloves and it is likened to balancing a pencil on the end of your finger."

The Christian life of a Seventh-day Adventist minister or Bible worker or college teacher can also be somewhat demanding. I have faced situations where humanly I could never pull through, but time and time again the dear Lord has made it happen, to His glory. All I know is we are nearing heaven's open gates.

Pilot Benjamin determined to fly home from the East Coast to his home in Oregon all in one day! "I had just topped off the fuel (100 gallons) so I could run at full power in a race with the sun. The airplane was indicating 250mph on a cross-country run. The line of thunderstorms I had been watching on the horizon towered 30,000ft above me. The highway I had been following disappeared into the center of a large storm cell."

Benjamin continues with encouraging words actually picturing the church leader's mind-set in his or her flight HOME: "In the midst of this battle I sat calmly, intent on the storms and the setting sun. On the horizon lay home, a meal, and a warm bed. We squeezed between the Bear Paw Mountains and the menacing, towering cumulus." All along I thought of my flight to heaven, thunderstorms and daily challenges. The ultimate arrival in heaven assured by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and was never far from my mind.

I smiled as I thought: Soon, I shall preach my last sermon, give my last Bible Study, write my last article and conduct my last baptism and heaven is my one and only goal. One of these days, as leaders and believers, we are going to blink twice and discover WE ARE HOME. No thrilling adventure story can begin to compare with the adventures God has in mind for His faithful. **E**

Dick Rentfro is a retired pastor living in Thorp, Washington State, USA.

What is a Christian mother?

Antenor Cruz

I. Introduction

Text: Acts 11:26

The second weekend of May, Mother's Day is celebrated throughout the world. It is interesting to note the definition of a mother by this unknown author who said:

"A mother can be almost any size or any age, but she won't admit to anything over thirty.

A mother has soft hands and smells good.

A mother likes new dresses, music, a clean house, her children's kisses and an automatic washer.

A mother doesn't like having her children sick, muddy feet, temper tantrums, loud noise or bad report cards.

A mother can read a thermometer (much to the amazement of Daddy) and, like magic, can kiss hurt away.

A mother can bake good cakes and pies but likes to see her children eat vegetables.

A mother can stuff a fat baby into a snowsuit in seconds and can kiss sad little faces and make them smile.

A mother is underpaid, has long hours and gets very little rest. She worries too much about her children but she says she doesn't mind it at all.

And no matter how old her children are, she still likes to think of them as her little babies.

She is the guardian angel of the family, the queen; the tender hand of love, a mother is the best friend anyone ever has."

A mother is love.

What is a Christian mother? Someone has said, "A Christian mother is a person through whom Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ sings, and a hand through which Christ helps."

II. A Christian mother is one through whom Christ thinks

We become disciples of Jesus Christ by receiving Him into our life as Lord and Savior. We experience the miracle of the new birth through faith in Him as the one whom God has sent for the salvation of the world (John 3:16).

Disciples of Jesus become truly Christians when they begin to think as Christ thought. The apostle Paul challenged the disciples in Philippi to seek for and to highly prize "the mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5-8).

In Paul's epistle to the believers in Rome he speaks of the need for and the urgency of experiencing "the renewing of your mind" (Rom.12:1-2).

We cannot become like Jesus Christ in our attitudes and actions until we accept the very thoughts of God as the way in which we will do our thinking.

Through Isaiah, the prophet, God urged the people of that day to forsake their wicked ways and their unrighteous thoughts (Isa. 55:6-8). Because the thoughts of God are so much higher than our thoughts, we must think as Jesus thought if our ways would be comparable to His (Isa. 55:8-9). A Christian mother is a mother through whom Christ thinks.

III. A Christian mother is a mother with a heart through which Christ loves

There are different kinds of love in the world. There is romantic love. This type of love is always

seeking its own satisfaction. There is philanthropic love or respect love which is based on worth and expresses itself in kindness.

The love that Jesus Christ had for God and for man is *agape* love—the love which helps. This love is characterized by a persistent, unbreakable spirit of good will and is devoted to the highest possible good of the person being loved.

Christian mothers are those who have something more than a maternal type of love. They are those who have permitted the Holy Spirit to pour out within them the very love of God for the members of their family (Rom. 5:5).

A Christian mother is a mother with a heart through which Christ loves.

IV. A Christian mother is one through whose voice Christ speaks and sings

During the ministry of our Lord there were mothers who brought their little children to Him that He might bless them. It is easy to imagine Christ, with great love, talking in affectionate terms with a little child on His knee. It doesn't take too much imagination to believe that He might sing to little children.

Some of us are fortunate in that we have memories from early childhood of a mother who would sing to us some of the great songs of faith expressing God's love.

Genuine Christianity affects the speech of those who are true believers.

The Christian mother will be a good steward of her tongue, using it to speak words of kindness, affection, and encouragement, as well as correction. The Christian mother will be generous with words of praise and commendation and very sparing with words of criticism that might harm and hurt and create a sense of low self-esteem in the heart and life of her child.

The Christian mother will certainly communicate her faith to her children and encourage them to not only trust Christ as Savior but to follow Him as Lord.

A Christian mother is a mother with a voice through which Christ speaks.

V. A Christian mother is a mother through whose hands Christ helps

It is a proverbial saying that "father works from sun to sun, but mother's work is never done."

In the wise man's great tribute to a good woman, he describes her as one who "opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet." (Prov. 31:20-21).

The Christian mother is a true helpmate to her husband. The Christian mother is a great helper to her children. She is a worker. She is an achiever. She is a doer. She finds her strength and her help in the Lord.

VI. Conclusion

What is a Christian mother? She is one who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. She loves Him and seeks to obey Him day by day. She sees home life as a place in which to honor God and serve her generation.

May each husband seek to help his wife be a good Christian mother.

Each mother can be a Christian mother with the help of Jesus Christ. May God bless you in your efforts in that direction.

(Continued on page 14)

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What is a Christian mother? / Sermon

VII. Illustration

• Countless times each day a mother does what no one else can do quite as well. She wipes away a tear, whispers a word of hope, eases a child's fear. She teaches, ministers, loves, and nurtures the next generation of citizens. And she challenges and cajoles her kids to do their best and be the best. But no editorials praise these accomplishments—where is the coverage our mothers rightfully deserve? — *James C. Dobson*.

• God can't always be everywhere, and so he invented mothers. — *Sir Edwin Arnold*.

Thank you God,

For pretending not to notice that one of
Your angels is missing and for guiding her to me.
You must have known how much I would
need her, so

You turned your head for a minute and
allowed her to slip away to me.

Sometimes I wonder what special name you
had for her.

I call her "Mother." — *Bernice Maddux*

• The child, in the decisive first years of his life, has the experience of his mother as an all-enveloping, protective, nourishing power.

Mother is food; she is love; she is warmth; she is earth. To be loved by her means to be alive, to be rooted, to be at home. — *Erich Fromm*.

Ellen G. White quotations

"The Savior understood the care and burden of the mothers who were seeking to train their children according to the word of God. He had heard their prayers. He Himself had drawn them into His presence." — *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 40.

"Jesus knows the burden of every mother's heart. He who had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation sympathizes with every mother in her labors. He who made a long jour-

ney in order to relieve the anxious heart of a Canaanite woman will do as much for the mothers of today. He who gave back to the widow of Nain her only son, and who in His agony upon the cross remembered His own mother, is touched today by the mother's sorrow. In every grief and every need He will give comfort and help.

Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Savior's feet. He who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," still invites the mothers to lead up their little ones to be blessed by Him. Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother.

John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments." — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 512. **E**

Antenor Cruz writes from Brazil. He is a retired pastor and enjoys writing sermon for elders.



(Continued from page 3)

Back to the Word / Editorial

ninety percent "are content with surface truths."

Why should we as preachers be content to be mere surface skimmers? We are told that "the truth, as it is in Jesus, is capable of constant expansion, of new development. . . . It will constantly reveal deeper significance." — *Ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1890.

The need at all times is for deeper study. Much of our preaching is topical. Yet perhaps the strongest method, that which builds up the flock in spiritual strength, is expository. This is more difficult, requiring much more study and research. But Adventist preachers should excel in this, for the Word of God must be more than a buttress for an argument. It needs to glow and gleam with a new radiance that will inspire our hearers.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, some years ago was visiting a church where the pastor, a young but rather brilliant man, was drawing large audiences with such topics as "Popping the Question," "Two Lumps of Sugar, Please," or "That's My Weakness Now," etc. By some misfortune Dr. Morgan's name was placed in the church bulletin opposite of these titles. The young pastor, in introducing the guest speaker of the evening, explained that the visitor would not preach on that topic, but that he himself would do so on the following Sunday. This caused a ripple of laughter all over the church. In the midst of it all Dr. Morgan stood up, and looking over the great audience, said with appropriate reverence, "Hear the Word of God." No apology, no pleasantries, no jokes, no explanation. All sensed that here was a man who was bringing them the message from God.

Why should we seek for new or novel ways of entertaining? Our people are hungry for the Word. True, we have a great program requiring tremendous promotion, but we must not forget that we also have a great God to worship. Our message will have power only when it leaps fresh and vibrant from the Word of God.

If as preachers we have been drinking from the living fountain and feeding upon the living bread, then like our Master's, our messages will be with power. Surely nothing is more needed in the work of God today than men who are truly men of the Word.

Let us bring back God's Word in the pulpits of our congregation. **E**



REDEMPTION ONLY THROUGH CHRIST

Ellen G. White

Satan's power will be broken

The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the

experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation.

That simple faith which takes God at His word should be encouraged. God's people must have that faith which will lay hold of divine power, "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Those who believe that God for Christ's sake has forgiven their sins, should not, through temptation, fail to

press on to fight the good fight of faith. Their faith should grow stronger until their Christian life, as well as their words, shall declare, "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin" (John 1:7). — *Gospel Workers*, p. 161.

The Christian lives by virtue of his union with Christ. The sinful and human is linked to the holy and divine. The believing soul abides in Christ, and becomes one with Him. When persons are closely united in the relations of this life, their tastes become similar; they come to love the same things. So those who abide in Christ will love the things which He loves. They will sacredly cherish and obey His commandments . . . The vine-branch, nourished from the parent stock, becomes flourishing and fruitful. Its rich and fragrant clusters attest its union with the living vine. So the Christian, abiding in Jesus, will bring forth fruit. In character and life will be manifested, like the teeming cluster of the vine, the precious graces of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . .

Resolve that you will be fruit-bearing members of the living Vine. The scion can flourish only as it receives life and strength from the parent stock. Improve, then, every opportunity to connect yourselves more closely with Christ. It is by believing Him, loving Him, copying Him, and depending wholly upon Him, that you are to become one with Him; and through you His life and character will be revealed to the world. — *Our High Calling*, p. 145.

That all might be pardoned

As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death. But Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in man's behalf. He redeems Adam's disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished. This places man on vantage ground with God. It places him where, through accepting Christ as his Savior, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus he becomes connected with God and Christ. — *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1074.

The sin of the whole world was laid upon Jesus, and divinity gave its highest value to the suffering of humanity in Jesus, that the whole world might be pardoned through faith in the

Substitute. The most guilty need have no fear that God will not pardon, for because of the efficacy of the divine sacrifice the penalty of the law will be remitted. Through Christ the sinner may return to allegiance to God. — *The Faith I Live By*, p. 104.

The apostle contrasts the disobedience of Adam and the full, entire obedience of Christ. Think of what Christ's obedience means to us. It means that in His strength we too may obey. Christ was a human being. He served His heavenly Father with all the strength of His human nature. He has a twofold nature, at once human and divine. He is both God and Man. — *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1074.

Delivered from the curse

It is the province of the law to condemn, but there is in it no power to pardon or to redeem. Without Christ the law of itself was only condemnation and death to the transgressor. It has no saving quality, no power to shield the transgressor from its penalty . . .

The transgression of God's law made the death of Christ essential to save man and yet maintain the dignity and honor of the law. Christ took upon Himself the condemnation of sin. He opened His bosom to the woes of man. He who knew no sin became sin for us . . .

Sin, so hateful to His sight, was heaped upon Him till He groaned beneath its weight. The despairing agony of the Son of God was so much greater than His physical pain, that the latter was hardly felt by Him.

God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin-Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father.

Herein His love commends itself in the most marvelous manner to the rebellious race. — *The Faith I Live By*, p. 104.

"That He might sanctify the people with His own blood," Christ "suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). For transgression of the law of God, Adam and Eve were banished from Eden. Christ, our substitute, was to suffer without the boundaries of Jerusalem. He died outside the gate, where felons and murderers were executed. Full of significance

are the words, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). — *Desire of Ages*, p. 741.

By saving faith alone

It is by beholding Christ upon the cross of Calvary that the sinner is drawn to his Savior; and as he realizes that Christ has died for him, his heart is melted into contrition and tenderness. He repents toward God because he has transgressed the divine law, and he has faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ as his substitute and surety. This is the work that is before every soul who has transgressed the law of God—repentance toward God for breaking His commandments, which has caused the death of His Son, and faith toward Him who imputeth His righteousness unto us. But there is a great misapprehension in regard to what is genuine faith. It is not a mere intellectual assent to truth, or a nominal acceptance of the fact that Christ has died for the salvation of men. Genuine faith works by love, and purifies the soul. — *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1892.

The light given me of God places this important subject above any question in my mind. Justification is wholly of grace and not procured by any works that fallen man can do. The matter has been presented before me in clear lines that if the rich man has money and possessions, and he makes an offering of the same to the Lord, false ideas come in to spoil the offering by the thought he has merited the favor of God, that the Lord is under obligation to him to regard him with special favor because of this gift.

Man broke God's law, and through the Redeemer new and fresh promises were made on a different basis. All blessings must come through a Mediator. . . . Every gift is stamped with the cross and bears the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. All things come of God. From the smallest benefits up to the largest blessing, all flow through the one Channel—a superhuman mediation sprinkled with the blood that is of value beyond estimate because it was the life of God in His Son.

Now not a soul can give God anything that is not already His. Bear this in mind: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chron. 29:14). This must be kept before the people wherever we go—that we possess nothing,

can offer nothing in value, in work, in faith, which we have not first received of God and upon which He can lay His hand any time and say, They are Mine – gifts and blessings and endowments I entrusted to you, not to enrich yourself, but for wise improvement to benefit the world. — *Faith and Works*, pp. 20-22.

See Christ in the law

The burden of our message is not only the commandments of God, but the faith of Jesus. A bright light shines upon our pathway today, and it leads to increased faith in Jesus. We must receive every ray of light, and walk in it, that it may not be our condemnation in the judgment. Our duties and obligations become more important as we obtain more distinct views of truth. — *Gospel Workers*, p. 162.

I ask you what position shall we take that we may be partakers of the divine nature? Why should we not see in that law the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Christ comes in and imputes to me His righteousness in His perfect obedience to that law. — *1888 Materials*, p. 125.

The instruction which Moses gave to the children of Israel concerning the statutes and the precepts of God, did not originate with Moses, but with the God of heaven. We are told that Christ was in the pillar of cloud by day and in the fiery pillar at night. Men are enshrouded in darkness, and when they array Christ in the New Testament against Christ in the Old Testament, surely wisdom has departed from them. The Israelites of old were saved by Christ as verily as we are saved by Christ in this day. We read in the Word of God, "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you."

We want the sanctification that God Himself gives, and that sanctification comes through doing His law. — *Review and Herald*, July 15, 1890.

Only by the grace of Christ

Many will say, I am saved, I am saved, I am saved. Well, have they been cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? And can they cleanse themselves by the righteousness of the law? Jesus Christ came to this world, and there is

His righteousness to impart to the children of men who are obeying the law of God. The whole world can say, I am saved, as well as any transgressor today. They can say, I believe in Christ that he is my Savior, but why do they disregard His law which is the transcript of His character? When they disregard the law of Jehovah they disregard the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to say to you before closing, that we have a wonderful friend in Jesus, who came to save His people from the transgression of the law. What is sin? The only definition of sin is that it is the transgression of the law. Then here is Jesus Christ, who comes right in and imparts His righteousness to us; we cannot overcome in our own strength, but by faith in Him. If you will believe on Jesus Christ, you will have Him today. You must believe that He is your Savior now, and that He imputes to you His righteousness because He has died, and because He has been obedient unto every requirement of that transgressed law of God. If you do this, you will have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve lost Eden because they transgressed that law, but you will lose heaven if you transgress it.

We can be filled with all the fullness of God. Our lives may measure with the life of God. Then can we press back the powers of darkness. — *1888 Materials*, p. 128.

Here the battle is before us. We see the battle, how Christ contended with the powers of darkness; and we see what He has done, and why the cross of Calvary had been erected between God and man. Then what? Man comes to Christ, and God and man are united at the cross, and here mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and truth have kissed each other. This is drawing man to the cross, where Christ died in behalf of man to elevate the law of Jehovah, but not to lessen it one iota. The cross of Calvary will stand in the judgment and testify to everyone the immutability and changeless character of the law of God, and not a word can be offered for sin in that day. — *1888 Materials*, p. 125.

Only by accepting the virtue and grace of Christ can we keep the law. Belief in the propitiation for sin enables fallen man to love God with his whole heart, and his neighbor as himself. — *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 378.

Overcoming by the cross

Today Satan presents the same temptations that he presented to Christ, offering us the kingdoms of the world in return for our allegiance. But upon him who looks to Jesus as the author and finisher of his faith, Satan's temptations have no power. He cannot cause to sin the one who will accept by faith the virtues of Him who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He, who repents of his sin and accepts the gift of the life of the Son of God, cannot be overcome. Laying hold by faith of the divine nature, he becomes a child of God. He prays, he believes. When tempted and tried, he claims the power that Christ died to give, and overcomes through His grace. This every sinner needs to understand. He must repent of his sin, he must believe in the power of Christ, and accept that power to save and to keep him from sin. How thankful ought we to be for the gift of Christ's example!

Profound theories and speculations of human creation may abound, but he who would come off conqueror in the end, must be humble enough to depend upon divine power. When we thus grasp the power of Infinity, and come to Christ, saying, "In my hand no price I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling," then divine agencies can cooperate with us to sanctify and purify the life.

Let no one seek to evade the cross. It is through the cross that we are enabled to overcome. It is through affliction and trial that divine agencies can carry on a work in our lives that will result in the love and peace and kindness of Christ.

A great work is to be accomplished daily in the human heart by the study of the Word. We need to learn the simplicity of true faith. This will bring its returns. Let us seek for decided advancement in spiritual understanding. Let us make the precious Word the man of our counsel. We need to walk carefully every moment, keeping close to the side of Christ. The spirit and grace of Christ are needed in the life, and the faith that works by love and purifies the souls. — *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 224, 225. **E**

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

What is preaching?

H. M. S. Richards

Certainly the flowers cannot be brought to the full measure of their beauty without knowledge of botany, but the eyes of the wise gardener will always be upon the results to be achieved, upon the flowers that are to bloom. The preacher's duty is not merely to produce a good sermon according to all the rules of homiletics which as a student he has learned from his excellent teachers and the fine books he has read—that's not his object in preaching, not his primary object. His big job is to produce flowers for the garden of God, to have a harvest to present to the King. His knowledge of Scripture, of history, of human nature—all these things—are simply tools to use. He will be saying to his hearers, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28).

Think for a moment, not of the time you spend in preparing a sermon—thinking about it, praying about it—but of the time others will spend listening to it. Suppose you have only two hundred people in your congregation and you preach to them for half an hour once a week. You have taken one hundred hours of their time. That is as much as twelve whole

days of eight hours each for one individual.

Think of the heartbeats in a hundred hours of a man's life. Think of the quantity of human life that you have demanded from people to stop and listen to you. "Dost thou love life?" asked Benjamin Franklin. "Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of." Is there enough material in that sermon of enough importance to warrant your going to any one man or woman in the congregation and saying, "I would like to have two whole weeks of your time to bring you certain truths and blessings which I have here in my heart"? What I have to say ought to be pretty important if I make a request like that. Think of the responsibility that a preacher carries if he has five hundred or a thousand people in his congregation! Yet, in spite of all this, some of us and I am with you, fellow preachers, some of us sometimes fill up a half hour with a lot of pious twaddle. You know we do. And that's the word for it, a lot of unimportant pleasantries, a lot of thin, tasteless, powerless, hopeless, human inventions. Certainly, when a man has given me

part of his life I should use it to bring him the great things of God's law, the mighty revelations of His Word, the eternal promises of the holy gospel.

Let's put it this way: Would you go to a man and say, "Let me have two weeks of your life," and then just joke and laugh and fool around all that time? Are the things said to the congregation important enough to take to each individual and buttonhole him and say, "Sir, I have something to say to you"?

A sermon should bring to maturity with tremendous earnestness, all that is best and greatest in the man who preaches it. We should be able to say, "This is my ripest judgment, my best thought, my supreme aspiration; and I believe it with all my heart." How clear it is from Scripture that the sermon should be the highest output of the preacher. Of Jesus it is written: "Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: . . . and he opened his mouth, and taught them" (Matt. 5:1, 2). And that supreme sermon of the ages, the Sermon on the Mount, came forth from the mouth of Jesus because it was in His heart. It was called forth by the need of the people—"and seeing the multitudes . . . he opened his mouth, and taught them."

And so today the need of man is the occasion of the sermon, the reason for the sermon, the reason for all our preaching. If by some sort of spiritual X-ray you and I could look into the heart of every person in our audience when we rise to speak, would it not change our preaching? Would it not give us more enthusiasm, more earnestness, more carefulness, more sympathy? Wouldn't it shame us out of our listlessness, our dullness, our perfunctory officialism?

Suppose you could see that tomorrow, next week, someone in your audience is going to die, and he is hearing his last sermon today but doesn't know it. Suppose there is someone there whom the shadow of a great sorrow is just about to grip, and he doesn't know it. There is a man who is going to lose his wife before the week rolls around. There is a child who is going to be motherless before next Sabbath. There is a woman who may discover the infidelity of her husband before you have a chance to speak to her again, and all her life will come tumbling down around her like a house of cards; the future will be desolate. What do you have to say to these people?

In 1953 Mrs. Richards and I spent Christmas Eve in the State Hotel in Christchurch, New Zealand.

*O my friends, preach
the great themes of
the Scripture. Preach
the great truths.*

*You don't have time in
this world for
anything else.*

We were very hungry and went to the dining room for dinner. I will never forget the wild hilarity of the party that was going on there. Someone tried to put a dunce cap on me. Everybody was drunk or wanted to be, and all were really having a great time. The Queen had just landed in New Zealand, and of course you know that New Zealand is more British than Britain itself, and the people were surely glad to see her. They were happy, the whole country was happy. And so they were celebrating in this way. Of course we were happy to be there too, for it is a wonderful and beautiful land. My wife said that if we were to live anywhere outside the United States, it would be in New Zealand. I believe it's about the most beautiful country in the world, though of course one says that almost every time he sees some beautiful place.

There we were that night. Everything was pleasant as a Christmas Eve should be. Of course, it was midsummer down there, and a beautiful clear night it was. The moon was bright, and there wasn't a storm from one end of New Zealand to the other. That night a railroad train was speeding northward from Wellington, filled with Christmas merrymakers hurrying home for the holiday. On it were several of our own Seventh-day Adventist young people going to the camp meeting at Haskell Park, near Auckland. There were few highway crossings; there was no danger—or was there? About halfway up to Auckland, just to the west, is a high volcano, supposed to be inactive. In its ancient crater is a lake covering about four-

teen acres, which is frozen over most of the time, summer and winter. The outlet of this lake was blocked with a great wall of ice which, as far as anyone knew, had been there for centuries. This very night, for some unknown reason, that wall of ice gave way and the water from that lake rushed down the mountainside carrying mud, ashes, stones, and great rocks weighing many tons. When the water and debris came to the railroad bridge, it carried the bridge away. It took out the highway bridge also as it rushed on to the sea just as the train drew near.

A truck driver who had discovered the destruction just in time tried to flag down the train with his flashlight, but it was too late. On the train rushed with its merry-makers into the bridgeless river, where all of that great trainload except those in a few cars at the end were hurled to death amid the grinding boulders and carried on into the sea. In just twenty seconds more than 140 people lost their lives that Christmas Eve, among them two of our own young men. The tragedy threw the whole nation into mourning. The joy of Christmas and the Queen's arrival was changed into a great sadness, and well it might be. It was a terrible, terrible blow.

Do you know the first thing that came to my mind when I heard the awful news in the morning? I wondered whether anyone I had preached to during the previous three days was on that train. What had I said that would help him to meet eternity? That was what I was thinking about. Had any of those people been in my meetings? What had I said?

Dr. Charles Reynolds Brown, dean of the Divinity School of Yale University, was among the other preachers who were delivering their messages in the cities of the San Francisco Bay area on Easter Sunday in 1906. All the churches were crowded. On the next Wednesday, at five-fifteen in the morning, a severe earthquake reduced much of San Francisco to a burning ruin. Many of the people whom Dr. Brown and other ministers had addressed that Easter Sunday went to bed wealthy and happy on the night of April 17. The next morning they awoke—if they awoke at all—penniless and amid ruins. Many of them found themselves surrounded by devouring flames that couldn't be stopped. In his very fine book *The Art of Preaching*, which I hope you will read sometime, Dr. Brown says that he asked himself, "What kind of sermon did I give my congregation last Sunday to fit them for facing that ordeal, the destruction of San

Francisco?" That was the first thought that came to him. This same minister tells of one of his own experiences in preaching one Sunday night on the subject of "The Everlasting Mercy"—and that's a wonderful subject too. At the close of the service a young man, a cashier in a big financial institution, came up to him and confessed that he had taken \$2,800 from the company's till and that they were just about to discover the theft. The day of reckoning was just ahead; maybe in a few hours, maybe in a day or two, his dishonesty would be exposed. He was considering changing his identity, fleeing in an attempt to get away from himself and his crime, or committing suicide, rather than to face the disgrace that was sure to come. Thinking to find some help in making a decision, he had dropped into this church and heard Dr. Brown preach on "The Everlasting Mercy." After the service he went to the minister, and they discussed the situation until after midnight. Out of that long conference a plan was devised and carried out, in which the young man confessed his sin and crime and made restitution of the stolen money through several years of self-sacrifice. The officials of the company were very kind to him, and he made a complete recovery not only of his financial position but of his manhood. Dr. Brown says, "Suppose the preacher had been trifling that night with some fringe of truth!"

O my friends, preach the great themes of the Scripture. Preach the great truths. You don't have time in this world for anything else. You don't know who might be in your audience. Suppose, through lack of preparation or lack of genuine feeling and earnestness, Dr. Brown had been unable to make the mercy of God and of man real to that cashier so that he had gone out into the darkness and committed suicide. I tell you, preacher friends, it is a serious thing to preach. Many eternal decisions for right or wrong, for life or death, are in our hands. **E**

Harold M. S. Richards was founder and speaker of the Voice of Prophecy radio broadcasting program. This article is taken from his book *Feed My Sheep* published by Review and Herald Publishing Association in 1958.

My Thoughts

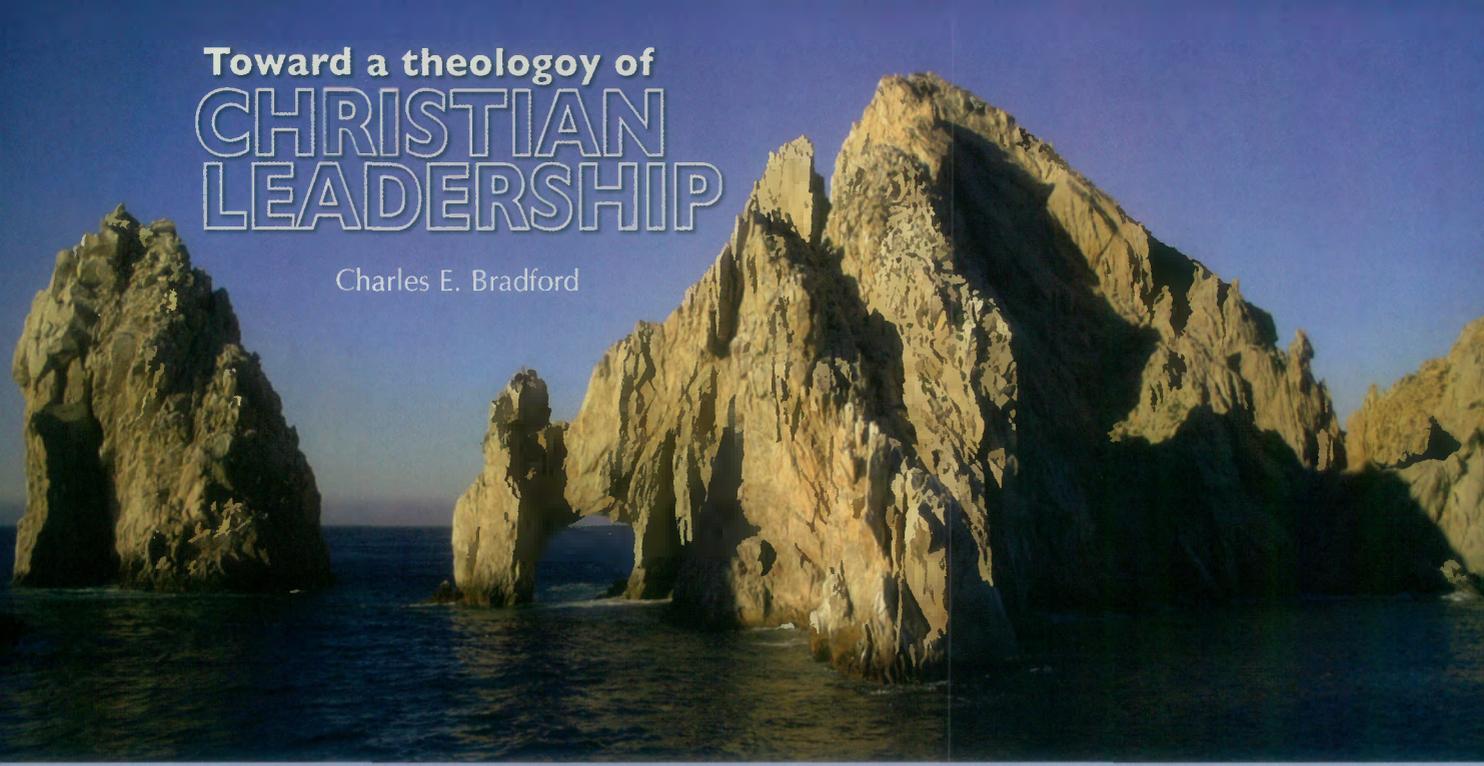
No one can define me but me
No one can make me be something I don't want to be
I am responsible for my actions
People can influence me, not make me
I think outside of the box
Therefore I am different
I stand up for what I believe
I believe on a higher power
I believe all things are possible
The world is full of bad things
The world is also full of great things
Marvelous things, wondrous things
Things that shape us from what we were
Into something that's beyond what we
Could have ever achieved by ourselves
Happiness is a choice
I am a success because I believe I will succeed
Sometimes I am perplexed but not in despair
Good things come to those who wait
But sometimes you have to reach out and grab it
It is not enough to stand on faith
You also have to step out on faith
Choose your role models wisely
Be careful of rumors
Remember there are always two sides to every story
Communication is the key to relationships
Be sensitive and caring, but not a doormat
Sometimes being diplomatic is the best way to go
Self-fulfillment is not accomplished by being self-seeking
Money is not the root of all evil but people are
If you are not happy with yourself
Don't expect anyone else to be able to do the job
Be an idealistic realist
Ignore rude people as best you can
Know the difference between stupidity and ignorance
Don't assume
Learn new things, stretch your mind continuously
Make new friends, keep old ones
All things in moderation
Most of the time a person's background explains a lot
Enjoy life
Food is an art, savor it
Be open minded
Make every stage in life the best stage in life
Love your family
They are really the only certainty in your life
Sometimes you need to just go shopping
People are confused by perplexity and complexity,
Especially by perplexing or complex people
Although almost everyone has something
Perplexing or complex about them.
A lot of people just seem confused in general
Make sure to have dreams and goals
Take time to rejuvenate yourself
Don't do something a certain way
Just because "that's the way we've ALWAYS done it"
Ask questions but also listen for answers
Resist the temptation to gossip
When things seem too much to bear and you're overwhelmed
Remember things will get better

And then to put it into perspective
Is it really that big of a deal in the long run?
Prioritize
Ask yourself what's stressing you, then ask if it's worth it.
Take time off, enjoy the holidays
Blow bubbles and eat ice cream in the park
Get out of your comfort zone
Learn a new skill
Embrace life
Don't take insults and slights personally
They usually stem from jealousy or insecurity
Don't wish to be someone else
That's insulting God
Trust and have faith
Everything will work out the way it is supposed to
Faith is like a muscle
You have to exercise it and use it to make it stronger
Take care of your body; it is the only one you've got
Have smile wrinkles, not frown wrinkles
Enjoy nature
Just because it sounds crazy doesn't mean it is
Don't run around in circles, go somewhere
Be eclectic and versatile, have variety
Listen with your eyes, and your heart
Laugh a lot, love a lot
Take the initiative, be a leader
Most people are like sheep, they'll follow
Try to remember everyone's human and love them anyway
Some people you can't love just because,
You can only love despite
Be honest with yourself and with others
Never sell yourself short
Expect the unexpected
Greet each morning with anticipation
You'll find what you're looking for
People are attracted to positive and happy people
It's possible to appreciate something
Even if you don't fully understand it
Dance, laugh, sing, who cares who's watching
Be culturally sensitive
Let's face it, there will be no world peace, stop asking for it
Be spiritual, not religious
Practice what you believe
Believe what you practice
Know why you believe what you believe
Try not to let your overactive imagination get the best of you
Know your worth and never settle for less
Eternity is just the right amount of time
To be with God.

By Melisa A. Ríos. She writes from Southern Adventist University, TN. USA.

Toward a theology of CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Charles E. Bradford



Introduction

This article is about leadership, a quality that by all accounts is in short supply. It is specifically about Christian leadership, and is written from a Judeo-Christian perspective. In this setting the moral-ethical dimension is elemental. The Bible is our primary source.

There is an intense, almost frenetic search to discover the dynamics of effective leadership. How does it function? What qualities in an individual make a leader? Why do people follow one person rather than another? What is the place of charisma, the gifts? What about the born leader? Is there a "call" to leadership? How do "circumstances" play in the mix? Are leaders made and shaped by events?

Materials and more materials

We are inundated with a plethora of materials and literature on the subject with accompanying workshops, seminars and thinktanks ready to exploit the situation. It is difficult to sort things out. Everyone, it seems, is getting into leadership training and consultation. Some can command handsome fees.

Seventh-day Adventists have not come lately to the discussion. Indeed, the development of Christian leaders has been high on the Adventist agenda for decades. Church administrators have followed trends and developments in the field with keen interest and for many years have shared the

best and latest findings with their colleagues in ministry. Our Lutheran friends speak our sentiments when they say, "We can certainly learn from a wide variety of resources in society and in the church but we have a uniqueness that cannot be minimized." (ECLA paper on Leadership Center, Sept 1991).

Leadership defined

Precise definitions of leadership are difficult to come by. We know that it is the ability to influence others to follow a certain course, to adopt a point of view, a way of thinking. It is the influence exerted by human beings over other human beings, societal groups, communities, even nations. Some form of leadership is seen in every culture.

There is a universal need for it. Leadership is the position of a leader, the ability to lead, an act or instance of leading. "A leader is a person you will follow to a place you would never go on your own." (Joel Barker, *Future Edge*, p. 163).

Development of the Biblical idea

Human societies must have leadership, from the nuclear family to the nation. There is a universal need and a universal craving for leadership. Early in human history, according to the biblical account, leaders emerged in the community. It seems that their leadership was based on "natural" gifts, skills, and abilities. Strength and prowess placed men in the forefront.

Key passage

Isaiah 3:1-3 is a significant passage, in which Yahweh validates a number of leadership types. God is angry with His people and threatens to take from "Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter."

An effective leadership cadre is just as necessary to the life of the community as supplies of food and water. Various leadership types and qualities are cited: the **hero** (*gibbowr*), the champion or valiant man. The **warrior** (*milchamah*), the fighting man who engages the enemy. The **judge** (*shaphat*), the one who pronounces sentence, defends, reasons. The **prophet** (*nabiy*) the inspired man, man of insight and vision. The **captain** (*sar*), head person, governor, keeper, steward. The **counselor** (*ya'ats*), who advises, consults, guides. The **elders** are recognized leaders in every society. The **skilled craftsmen** (*khaw-kawm*), fabricators of materials, are also recognized as leaders. It may seem strange to us, but the **clever enchanter** (*bene*), a person who could separate and sort out things mentally, who could distinguish, a person of intelligence, is also included in the roster.

Examples and prototypes

Abraham is the prototypical paragon of all leadership virtues. Yahweh declares, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment." (Gen.18:19).

Abraham proved himself to be a man of strength when he rescued his nephew, Lot, from the five kings. "The worshiper of Jehovah had not only rendered a great service to the country, but had proved himself a man of valor. It was seen that righteousness is not cowardice, and that Abraham's religion made him courageous in maintaining the right and defending the oppressed. His heroic act gave him a widespread influence among the surrounding tribes." *Patriarchs and Prophet*, p. 135. This man Abraham displayed great integrity when he refused to receive the spoils of war because that would be taking "advantage of the unfortunate." He was without avarice. Abraham recognizes the claims of justice and humanity. He is the epitome of the golden rule, "As ye would that others should

do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

The life of Moses is also highly instructive. He is the incomparable leader, of unquestioned ability and power. "A goodly child" he rises quickly to prominence in the court of Egypt. This adopted son and foreigner masters the Egyptian curriculum and becomes heir apparent. "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." (Acts 7:22).

In Exodus 17 and 18, Moses learns valuable lessons of team building, organization and interdependence. He is seized by the vision of the unlimited human potential and anticipates the day when all the people of God will be fully empowered for participation in service. "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" Num. 11:29. The great leaders of Old Testament times were big-hearted, unselfish persons who put the welfare of the people above their own. Abraham argues with Yahweh about His decision to destroy Sodom. "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen. 18:24.) Moses asks God to spare the disobedient Israelites even if it meant taking his name out of the book of life: "Please forgive their sin-but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." (Exod. 32:32).

The judges

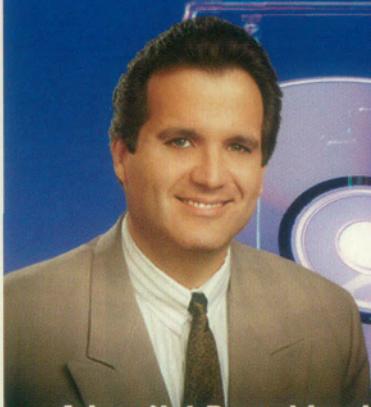
The time of the judges was a transition period between Joshua and the establishment of the monarchy. "Lack of leadership is the problem and the complaint. To go on at all, the group must have a leader, and so a willing soul, however limited, is chosen to fill a place of great responsibility." (*The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 2, pp. 754, 755).

The chroniclers saw the hand of God in this. The theme of the book of Judges is the appearance of a succession of heroes to deliver the people. Yahweh showed His care for the tribes by providing them with leaders, imperfect though they were. Without leadership the nation suffers. Anarchy is the worst possible state.

"They were in great distress. Then the Lord raised up judges . . . whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies . . ." (Jud. 2:15, 16, 18).

It is to be understood that prophets and seers inquired of the Lord on behalf of the people, as emergencies arose, and leadership decisions were

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made according to divine instructions. On the surface, the arrangement seems to be quite unstructured and unsatisfactory, but the nation survived. Israel's history of that era is recorded in the names of the judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson. Samuel was the last of the judges. This system of governance calls for a great deal of maturity and self-control on the part of the people. But the hungering for visible leadership exercised through a strong central government proved to be well nigh incurable. The people demanded a king "such as all the other nations have." (1 Sam. 8:5).

Yahweh acquiesces. The mind of the people, where they are in their growth and development at the time, are realities that must be considered in the style of leadership. The context cannot be ignored!

There emerges in the prophetic writings a profile of the ideal king. He is to inculcate the principles of *mispat* and *tsadek* in all his activities, especially as principal administrative officer of the nation. "He is God's representative and the chief patron of Israel's religious life." (Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, p. 219).

Israel's monarchy was to be different from the nations round about them. "Two points express what is distinctive of the Israelite ideal: the king is absolutely subordinate to Yahweh and in everything dependent upon Him for His covenant blessing; and the king's essential task is to be the instrument of Yahweh's justice and covenant blessing among men." (Sigmond Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, p. 94).

The study of the Torah was to prepare the king in heart and mind to carry out his duties. "When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel." (Deut. 17:18-20).

Under this concept, king and people were bound up together in covenant relationship under God. The king was not to oppress God's people or take economic advantage. His subjects were to

be regarded as brethren. David comes closest to this ideal and in fact, as Brevard Childs points out, as Israel's history developed, "his final role as the ideal, righteous king emerges with great clarity." (*Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, pp. 118, 119).

These leaders displayed compassion and nobility. David's spirit of magnanimity is contrasted with Saul's mean-spirited ways. "Afterward, David was conscience stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. He said to his men, The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD. With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way." (1 Sam. 24:5-7).

What a contrast between these leaders and Ezekiel's shepherds. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally." (Ezek. 34:2-4).

Unfortunately, in Solomon the ideal was soon abandoned. The abundance of material blessings upon the kingdom raised Israel to dizzying heights. The king was overcome by half and the covenant was broken. Solomon's reign became known for its excesses in the same manner as the surrounding nations. To keep up this conspicuous consumption lifestyle, exorbitant taxes were levied on the subjects (they were no longer looked on as brethren to the king), and seeds of destruction were planted that led to the division of the kingdom. "Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray." (Isa. 9:16.) Hubris is always followed by nemesis!

Leadership criteria as defined by the Prophets

The prophets speak of justice and righteousness (integrity) as the core of leadership qualities, *sine qua non*. The Hebrew *mispah* refers to justice or the judgment pronounced by the *shofet* (judge). This justice also "relates to the claim to life and

participation by all persons in the structures and dealings of the community especially to equity in the legal system." Bruce C. Birch, op. cit., p. 259.

Tsadek is usually translated "righteousness." Its root is to be or make right (in a moral or forensic sense), to cleanse, to clear oneself. "However, it seems that justice is a mode of action, righteousness a quality of the person . . . Righteousness goes beyond justice. Justice is strict and exact, giving each person his due. Righteousness implies benevolence, kindness, generosity." (Abraham J Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 201).

The prophets combine righteousness with mercy. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic. 6:8).

The prophets charge Israel's leadership group: royalty, nobility, judges, elders, priests, tribal leaders and prophets to model these qualities in their administration. Indeed, "Israel's life as a concrete social reality is to reflect the qualities already modeled by God in Israel's experience." (Birch, op. cit, p. 177). "Old Testament prophets had a litmus test for measuring their nation's true relationship to God. It was this: how do those in power treat those who are not?" (Kit Watts, *Adventist Woman*, Vol. 12, No. 4-5, Sept./Oct., 1993).

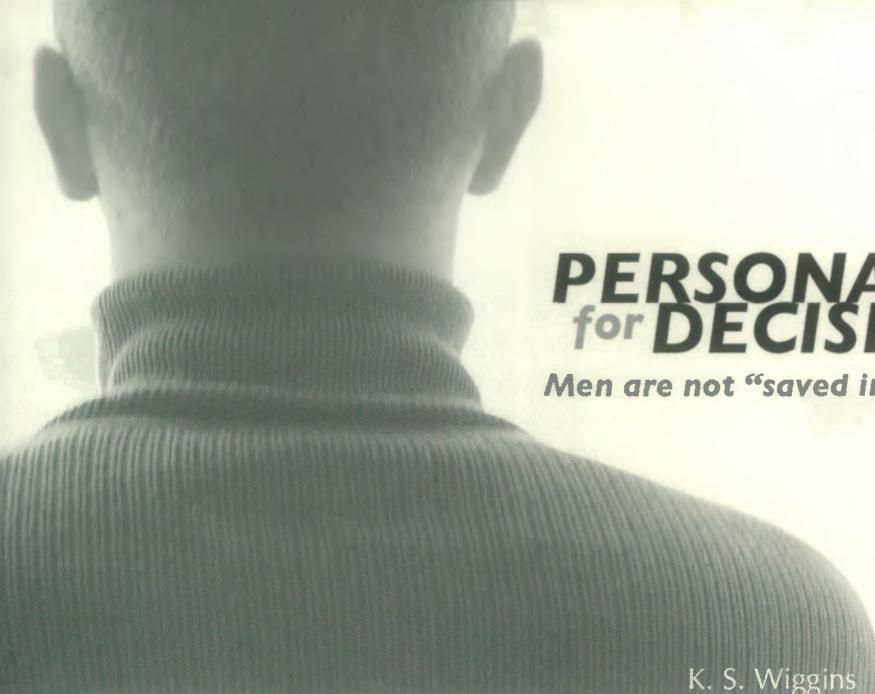
The prophets are not an aberration in Israel's history. They are integral to the continuing leadership group that is necessary to the health and prosperity of the community. The prophet's message of justice and righteousness is incorporated into the Temple service of worship to continually remind the whole nation, leaders and people of their responsibility for maintaining the right. "God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods': How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah* Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Ps. 82:1-4).

Wisdom literature

In the wisdom books there is a great deal of practical counsel for leaders. Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and several Psalms are included in this genre.

The sages are pragmatists, in the best sense of the word. They warn against excesses, "It is not for

(Continued on page 31)



PERSONAL WORK for DECISIONS

Men are not “saved in masses, but as individuals.”

K. S. Wiggins

Men are not “saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit.”

A careful reading of the writings of Ellen White on soul winning will reveal the following:

- (1) *Personal work was the method preferred by Jesus.*
- (2) *It is of equal importance with the public effort.*
- (3) *Certain classes can be reached in no other way.*
- (4) *A few words spoken to some individuals privately will do more than the entire sermon has done.*
- (5) *Many souls decide for error because personal work is not done at the right time.*
- (6) *“Many are in the valley of decision, where special close, and pointed appeals are necessary to move them to lay down the weapons of their warfare and take their position on the Lord's side.”*

I would like to emphasize that appeals must be close and pointed in order for them to be maximally effective. They will move men to decide for Christ only as they are positive, unambiguous, and used by the Holy Spirit. Many soul winners are excellent in the art of persuading men for Christ until they reach the point of causing the other person to act. Here fear of rejection or fear of failure causes many to postpone asking for the decision or weakens them into a half-hearted appeal that invites a turndown.

Persuaders of men have a name for the part of the persuasion process when the prospect decides to do what is desired—the close. It is the point in the interview at which an appeal is made for decision and action. It is the clinching of a strong decision for Christ, the Sabbath, or baptism into the remnant church. This is the acid test of a Christian's ability as a soul winner.

The success at the close will be directly dependent upon how well we have done in convincing people of the truth, arousing desire to obey, and implanting conviction that they should take action immediately. There is no sense in asking a person to be baptized if he is not convinced of the truth of our doctrines or if his love for Jesus is not strong enough to create a desire to obey at any cost.

However, certain principles make clinching decisions easier, and we owe it to prospective converts to make it as easy as possible for them to put their wills on the Lord's side. Three important principles will help soul winners to clinch favorable decisions. They are:

- (1) Have a positive attitude.
- (2) Know when to clinch the decision.
- (3) Make it easy for prospects to act.

A positive attitude

The soul winner needs to appreciate the great importance of getting a sound decision. You are dealing with a person whose destiny for eternity

hangs on a decision—perhaps the very decision he will make now. A decision will be made before you leave his presence. You have a solemn obligation to do all in your power, without violating the person's freedom of choice, to secure the decision for eternal life. You should, therefore, believe that with the Spirit's help you can get this person to make the right decision.

You know that you cannot win everybody, but our attitude should be, "This time, with this person, I will succeed." Act as though deciding the right way is the only decision your prospect can make. After all, have you not spent time on your knees asking for the right word at the right time?

Know when to clinch the decision

The time to try for decision is when you are satisfied that the person believes the truth and is motivated to accept it as a part of his life. This means that the person must have passed through the stages of conviction and desire. Because no two persons are the same, no two prospects will go through the steps to decision at the same rate of speed.

How is the soul winner to know how much talking is enough? The answer lies in the multiple-clincher technique. This means that the soul winner should have many methods of asking for a decision. He can then make an attempt to clinch the decision every time he sees a favorable opportunity. If the prospect does not decide, the worker for God can continue his appeal and try again. Each time he appeals for a decision, his chances of gaining a favorable response increases. Also, the reaction to the attempt to clinch the decision will reveal what is on the prospect's mind. In that way the soul winner discovers what needs to be done.

How can you recognize a good opportunity to try for a decision? If you will remain alert, you will observe what may be termed decision signals. Decision signals are things the prospect does or says that indicate a readiness to decide.

Here are some examples of things the person may say that indicate he is thinking in terms of making up his mind:

"Will I have to give up tea and coffee?"

"My family will not like this."

"Will I have to give up my jewelry?"

"I don't think my boss will give me Saturdays free."

"My friends will think I am crazy."

Sometimes the decision signal is in something the prospect does.

He may:

(1) *Take a deep breath and sigh.*

(2) *Scratch his chin and smile.*

(3) *Pull his ear and smile.*

(4) *Lean forward to listen more attentively.*

(5) *Lean back in a relaxed manner.*

Whenever you receive one of these signals, you should stop talking and ask for a decision. To continue talking is to run the risk of losing the decision altogether. At this point you should make it easy for the prospect to act. The devil wants to make it difficult; you should make it easy.

Seven methods of taking decisions

You should make it a habit to make no less than three attempts to get a favorable decision during one interview. Some methods of asking for a decision suit certain kinds of personalities better than others, and you should vary your methods of clinching every time you ask. Here are seven methods I have used with amazing success.

1. The green light

In this method you ask a question that tells you whether the way is clear to move on to ask your prospect to kneel in a prayer of surrender. "Don't you think the Lord will be pleased to see you baptized on Sabbath morning?" "Based on what you have told me, don't we agree that you should follow the example of Jesus in this matter?" An affirmative reply here is the green light for you to kneel in a prayer of complete surrender.

2. The challenge method

This is especially effective with young people. "A decision for baptism is a big and a wise decision. Is it too hard for you? Of course not. You love the Lord, and He will give you the courage you need to do the right thing." At this point you should hand the person a decision card to firm up the commitment.

3. The minor point method

One very easy way to get a decision is to ask for the decision on a minor point. "Would you like to go into the water alone or with a friend?" "Would you prefer your baptism in the morning or in the evening?"

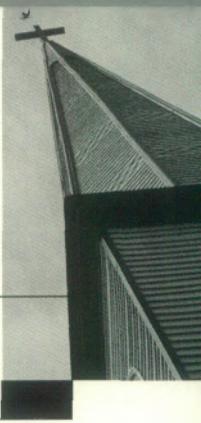
4. The concession method

This is a potent method to use with self-assured individuals who don't like to believe you can per-

(Continued on page 31)



James A. Cress



Slippery slope

Prophecy indicates God's church of the last days will experience the same challenges as the early church. "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30, NKJV).

The first steps down any slippery slope seldom appear dangerous. In fact, many begin a fatal spiral believing they are strengthening Christ's kingdom and following God's will. However, most independent groups follow virtually the same tragic path.

Good intentions. Even worthy plans need the balance of the entire body. Scripture warns against one body part attempting to be all or do all. Nothing is quite as dangerous as someone with only one good idea. Despite their best attempts to reform the church, such narrow focus rejects a broader picture or varying viewpoints and ends up harming the very body they intended to enhance. "These one-idea men can see nothing except to press the one thing that presents itself to their mind."¹

Reject counsel. Refusing the counsel of leadership demonstrates disregard for the God of heaven who places individuals in positions of responsibility. Although God does not require uniformity of opinion or methodology, an independent spirit which rejects good advice reflects more the sociological attitudes of our culture than spirituality, or even creativity. "These devoted souls consider it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They will not take any man's say-so. They are amenable to no man. I was shown that it is Satan's special work to lead men to feel that it is God's order for them to strike out for themselves and choose their own course independent of their brethren."²

Harbor resentments. Corrective guidance, perceived insults, slights—whether real or imagined—too easily form a root of bitterness which poisons

the once-tender mind until fruitful ministry is devoured. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:14, 15, NKJV).

More responsible management. Unchecked, such resentments soon metastasize into expressed opinions that the organized church cannot be trusted to expend the finances through voted, budgeted, and audited processes. Advocacy of independent agendas and personal priorities soon ripens into receiving offerings, soliciting tithe, and attacking others. Fervent solicitations disguise irresponsibility, unvoted priorities, and undocumented utilization.

Narrowed focus. Independents, concentrating on recruiting individuals or resources from the established church, inevitably neglect the wider task of winning the lost. Self-focused interests become so consuming that the very evangelistic mission which may have originally propelled their agenda is neglected.

Subtle distinctions. Independents quickly realize the brevity of their window of opportunity to recruit the attention and money of loyal members. Even while professing adherence to the doctrines and mission of the church, they urge subtle distinctions designed to demonstrate their holier, historical position. Typically, these are minor points blown out of proportion into major issues. "We sought most earnestly that the Scriptures should not be wrested to suit any man's opinions. We tried to make our differences as slight as possible by not dwelling on points that were of minor importance, upon which there were varying opinions. . . . Men will make a world of an atom and an atom of a world."³

Masked disloyalty. Claims of loyalty to God's prophetic gift, presents an appearance of piety, devo-

tion, and education. Lengthy quotations are selected to substantiate assertions of error. "It will be found that those who bear false messages will not have a high sense of honor and integrity. They will deceive the people, and mix up with their error the *Testimonies* of Sister White, and use her name to give influence to their work. They make such selections from the *Testimonies* as they think they can twist to support their positions, and place them in a setting of falsehood, so that their error may have weight and be accepted by the people."⁴

Belief abandonment. Down sliding is as spiritually dangerous as backsliding. Remember, slipping and sliding is never skiing or sledding. If it seems easier to continue careening down the slope than to accept heaven's help to change, pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal your spirit of godless independence. If tempted to follow such sophistries, remember: "He [God] is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people."⁵ **E**

1. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 216.
2. ———, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1923), 29.
3. *Ibid.*, 25, 165.
4. *Ibid.*, 42.
5. *Ibid.*, 61.

James A. Cress is the Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

(Continued from page 27)

Toward a theology of Christian leadership

kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights." (Proverbs 31:4, 5).

Wisdom literature is realistic, down to earth, pedestrian. If the leader wants to be successful, he must be aware of the concrete situation. He needs to be in touch with what is happening among the people. The wise men take the great prophetic pronouncements, reducing them to maxims that can be easily called to mind conventional wisdom. "They propounded rules as indicators that there is a unified moral principle in life." (R. B. Y. Scott, *Anchor Bible*, Volume 18, p. xvi.)

The authority to which the sages appeal is "the disciplined intelligence and moral experience of good men." (*Ibid.*, p. xvii.) They were concerned with skill in living, the ability to live in harmony with an ordered moral universe. Leaders need to

give attention to wisdom, common sense. "A clever man's wisdom makes him behave intelligently." (Proverbs 14:8). **E**

Dr. C. Bradford is a former president of the North American Division and has a reputation for being a wise and dynamic preacher/leader/administrator.

(Continued from page 29)

Personal work for decisions

suade them. "I am not sure I will be permitted to baptize you. The church board will have to approve of your baptism, and I am not sure they will. I will promise to do my best for you. If the board should approve of you, you will be happy to follow the Lord and be baptized, won't you?" Bear in mind that a decision card should be used after each of these methods. Always seal a decision with prayer and firm up the decision with a signed card.

5. The inducement method

"After you are baptized, you will receive a beautiful certificate of baptism. Write your name here the way you want it spelled on your certificate."

6. The distraction method

In this method you distract attention from the rite of baptism and focus it on some related subject. "How many people are you planning to invite to your baptism ceremony?"

7. The straightforward method

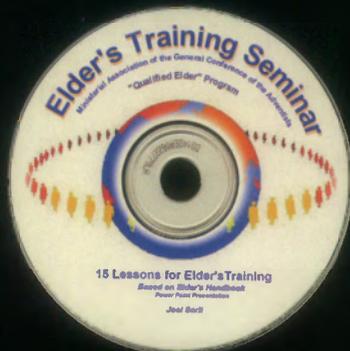
"Many people who love the Lord are planning to be baptized on Sabbath. I will be very happy to baptize you then also. Simply read and fill in this card."

An excellent time to use one of these clinchers is after you have answered an objection. In fact, I consider an objection to be a decision signal. Always try for a decision when the prospect agrees that his objection has been answered. If an objection is offered when you attempt to clinch a decision, give the prospect the "Why?" treatment.

Find out why the objection is made and why it seems so important. A new excitement will flood your life as you see people baptized you never dreamed would unite with the remnant church. Remember! Ask for a decision at least three times during an interview and use a different method every time you ask. Do this and watch your results skyrocket to the glory of God and the pleasant satisfaction of your soul. **E**

Kembleton S. Wiggins is a former evangelist from the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

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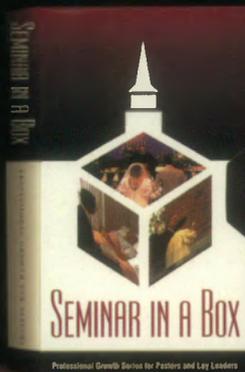
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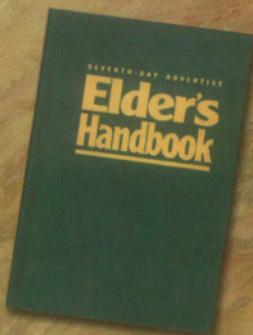
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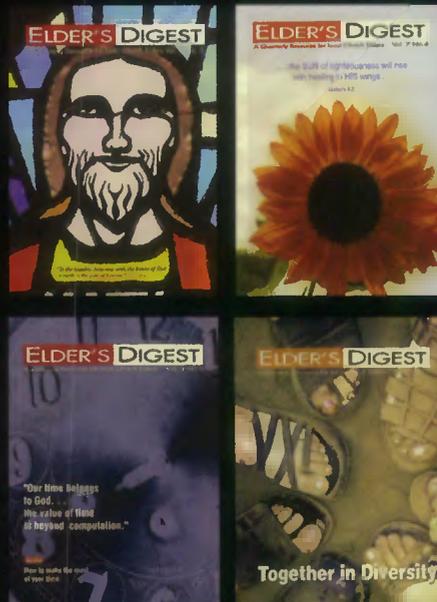
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