

quarterly resource for local church leaders † april/june 2016

ELDER'S DIGEST



REACH the **WORLD**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

REACH UP TO GOD · REACH IN WITH GOD · REACH OUT WITH GOD



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

FEATURES

- 4 REACH THE WORLD
- 7 TMI: A NEW APPROACH TO FULFILLING THE GOSPEL COMMISSION
- 8 WHO CAN THE CHURCH LOVE?
- 9 SERVING DURING THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH: DEACONS AND DEACONESSES AT BAPTISMAL SERVICES
- 10 PREACHING POWERFULLY: IS IT POSSIBLE?
- 13 PREACHING STYLES: THE TEXTUAL SERMON
- 20 MINISTERING IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY
- 23 PORNOGRAPHY
- 24 EVERYBODY BELONGS, EVERYBODY SERVES: INCLUSIVE WORSHIP FOR THE DISABLED
- 26 LESSONS FROM DANIEL 5
- 30 CRAVING ANSWERS IN UKRAINE



| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| EDITORIAL | 3 |
| THE ART OF SPEECH | 12 |
| SERMONS | 15 |
| QUESTION & ANSWER | 19 |
| HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS | 22 |
| KIDDER'S COLUMN | 28 |

EDITORIAL

EDITOR

Jonas Arrais

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alfredo Garcia-Marenko

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION SECRETARY

Jerry N. Page

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Robert Costa, Willie Hucks II, Anthony Kent, Derek Morris, Janet Page

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Erika Miike

PUBLISHER

Ministerial Association - General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

MARKETING MANAGER

Cathy Payne

DIVISION CONSULTANTS

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Musa Mitekaro

EURO-ASIA

Victor Kozakov

INTER-AMERICAN

Héctor Sánchez

INTER-EUROPEAN

Rainer Wanitschek

NORTH AMERICAN

Ivan Williams

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Ron Clouzet

SOUTH AMERICAN

Carlos Hein

SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN

Passmore Mulambo

SOUTHERN ASIA

Victor San Cherukuri

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Houtman Sinaga

SOUTH PACIFIC

Branimir Schubert

TRANS-EUROPEAN

Patrick Johnson

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Daniel Opoku-Boateng

TO WRITERS: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcome and may be submitted to eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org or *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. *Elder's Digest* is published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association © 2016, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

SUBSCRIPTION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: One-year subscription, US\$18.00. Three-year subscription, US\$47.00. Please subscribe at www.eldersdigest.org or send check to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. Please send address changes to garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

BIBLE CREDITS: Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

OUR WEBSITE: www.eldersdigest.org

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER AND LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

DESIGNER: Erika Miike - erika@emiike.com.br



AN ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY

Anyone in a position of leadership must possess basic leadership qualities. This holds true for church leaders like you. These qualities are essential for being a good leader. In this editorial, I would like to emphasize just one quality: good communication.

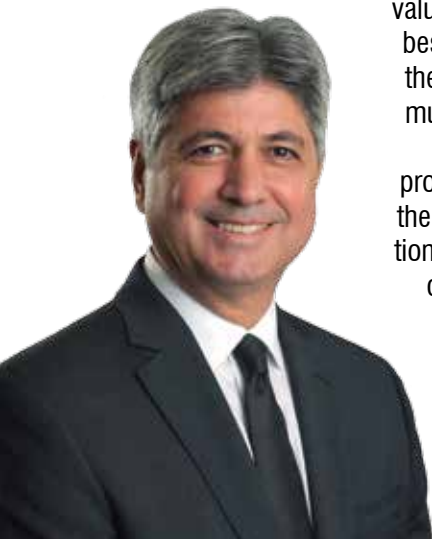
In my opinion, good communication is crucial and vital in any kind of leadership environment. Good leaders are good communicators. There's no mystery here. The best leaders are first-rate communicators. Their values are clear and solid, and what they say promotes those values. Think about it: How do the best leaders motivate and inspire their people? Through clear communication.

Have you ever experienced problems in your leadership due to the lack of effective communication? A church leader with limited communication skills is far from ideal in building a good ministry in the church. Good communication is essential not just for building good relationships with

people; it also allows leaders to effectively communicate the church's plans, goals, and vision.

Reach the World is a new church program for this quinquennium. It joins many other initiatives: *Total Member Involvement*, *Revival and Reformation*, *Mission to the Cities*, and others. As a church leader, you are key in promoting these plans and strategies to your congregation, and this will be almost impossible without a good communication method.

Words are the most valuable tools in a leader's toolbox. Words can motivate the languid, encourage the disheartened, strengthen the weary, bring hope out of darkness, establish relationships, give direction to the confused, bring understanding to the ignorant, and promote ideas to everyone. A good leader has learned to wield words gracefully and effectively. This skill is not intrinsic to our nature; it is one that needs to be learned. Learning how to resolve misunderstandings, convey ideas correctly, mediate disputes, and endear people to our vision are skills that are gained with time and experience. In learning how to communicate well, we must remember that our communion with God is the greatest source of all improvement we need in our spiritual life and ministry. ED



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



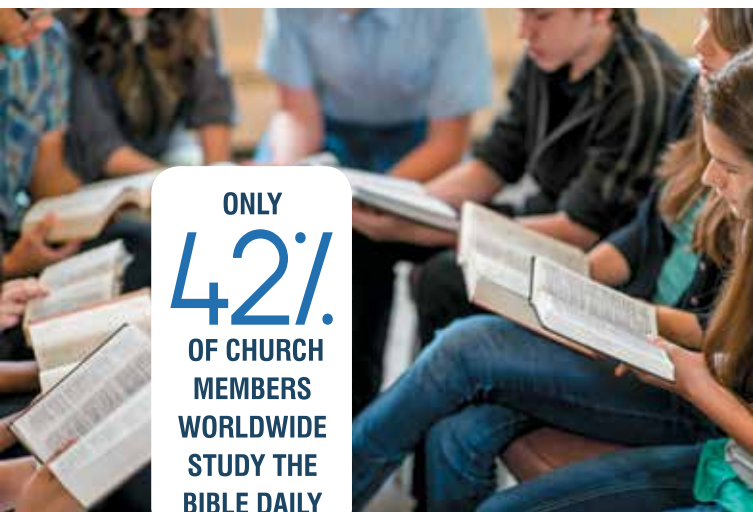
REACH THE WORLD

Reach the World is the reason the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized and exists—to reach the world with the “everlasting gospel” of Our Lord, Creator, Savior and High Priest, Jesus Christ. *Reach the World* is also the title and theme of the world church’s global strategic plan for 2015-2020.

The very language of the plan, *Reach the World*, is drawn from Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and Acts 1, Christ’s commission to His followers to go unto the uttermost parts of the earth. It is drawn from the prophecies of Revelation 10:11 and 14:6 that foretell of a movement whose destiny, indeed whose divinely ordained task, is to proclaim the everlasting gospel to many nations and peoples. So *Reach the World* is an outflowing of our collective self-understanding of our purpose as a people and of the mission statement of this prophetic movement.

It is also, however, a product of unparalleled research and analysis of the state of the world church. The Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) of the General Conference (GC) directed five major research projects, conducted in 2012 and 2013. In the course of that research, 35,000 Seventh-day Adventists from all around the world were interviewed, or received and completed questionnaires, about their beliefs, attitudes, experiences in the church, and spiritual-life practices. The data generated is unique in its richness—both in breadth and depth. There was a separate study of over 4,000 pastors, one quarter of our total work pastoral force, drawn from every division, over 90% of our unions and more than two-thirds of our conferences and missions; a separate survey of 1,500 recent graduates of Adventist colleges in North America; and yet another separate study of nearly one thousand former church members.

So, in terms of the subject matter and the number of respondents, the research carried out in the past quinquennium was unprecedented. In addition to this quantitative data, the GC-based planning group requested every division president and GC departmental director to submit their own analysis, based on their experience, of important global trends, opportunities, and challenges. As a result, the planning group also had qualitative data on which to draw: the considered views of knowledgeable and experienced church leaders, about what is happening in their areas. The *Reach the World* plan that was drafted by the GC-based planning group was based on this collection of quantitative and qualitative data, drawn from across the globe and every part of the world church. Even then, there was a twelve-month consultation period, in which the draft plan was shared with the world church leaders and the Executive Committee twice, at the 2013 Annual Council and 2014 Spring Meeting. Division input was requested and received, and the plan revised, before finally it was voted at the 2014 Annual Council.



So, when the *Reach the World* plan identifies key issues and sets priorities for the world church, it is based on something substantial, rather than merely anecdote or hunch. Indeed, the major initiatives that are already in place for this quinquennium reflect what the data revealed.

For instance, we discovered that only 42% of church members worldwide study the Bible daily (and only 74% study it more than once a week); furthermore, while 74% of church members worldwide say they “wholeheartedly embrace” confidence in Ellen White’s prophetic gift, only one out of six read the Spirit of Prophecy daily—and just 47%, less than half, read Ellen White even once a week. One in five have never read Ellen White’s writings. So we now have not only a Bible-reading program, as we did last quinquennium

(*Revived by His Word*); but also a program to encourage church members to read the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible, *Believe His Prophets*.

We also found that one quarter of Seventh-day Adventists said they strongly agreed with the statement “Although I am religious, I don’t let it affect my daily life”; thankfully one third say they strongly disagree, but it became clear we needed to get our church members involved: *Total member involvement*.

In addition, statistical research that ASTR undertook revealed that only one Seventh-day Adventist in six lives in large cities: that the ratio of people to church members in urban areas of more than one million is around 550 to 1, in contrast to 390 to 1 in the world as a whole. Thus we know that we will need to prioritize the world’s great cities.

There were many other insights, and I reported on some of these at the 2013 Annual Council (the report is available at <https://www.adventistarchives.org/ac-research-report-2013-revised.pdf>) but one needs to be stressed: a very large percentage expressed strong skepticism about the imminence of Christ’s second coming—so large, in fact, that we concluded many respondents must have misunderstood the question. But also so large that even if that were the case, it is clear that a sense of the urgency of Christ’s return is dwindling. That is something that can’t be acceptable for people who call themselves *Adventists*. We need therefore to recapture the urgency of our pioneers.

So, the plans that are outlined in *Reach the World* are based on a wealth of data, information and analysis. We have committed ourselves, as a world church, to working towards 21 objectives, which reflect the reality we discovered by the process of research and reflection.

They are divided into three categories:

- *Reach Up to God*, which focuses on our relationship with God and our need to be spiritually in communion with Him.
- *Reach In with God*, which deals with nurturing each other, feeding Jesus’s sheep (as He bade Peter), and the Christ-commissioned process of discipling.
- *Reach Out with God*—once we have been spiritually empowered by being connected to God and have put things right in the Church, we have a solid foundation for outreach: for bringing new sheep into the fold, and for growing God’s kingdom on earth, even as we look forward to the heavenly kingdom.

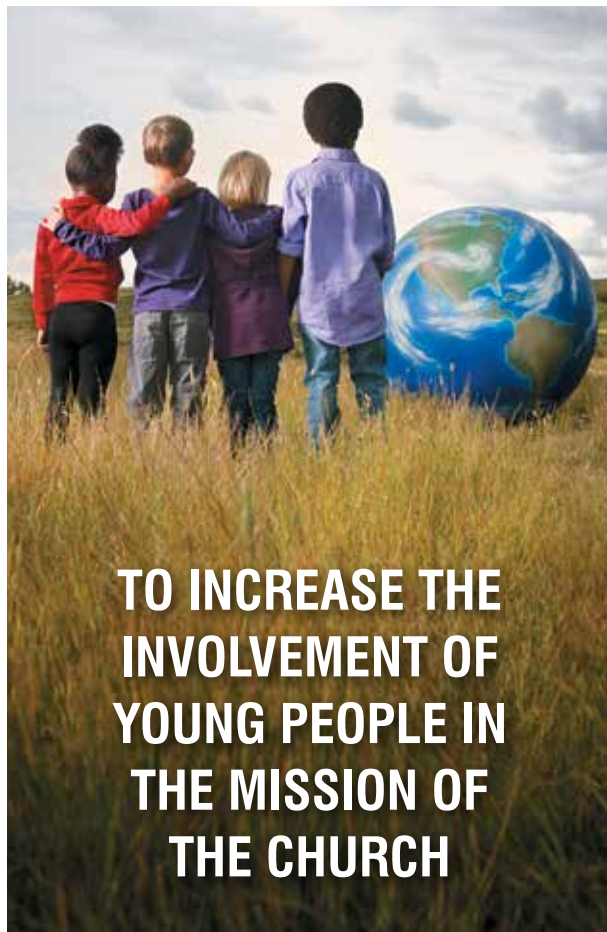
Reach Up to God

1. To involve Adventist members in daily Bible study.
2. To engage all members in doctrinal study, as essential for spiritual maturity.

3. To make all members better acquainted with Ellen White's counsel and prophetic ministry.
4. To increase the engagement of church members in biblically authentic spiritual practices.
5. To foster among pastors, teachers, members, and students in denominational institutions, greater appreciation for and insight from a study of Scripture that uses the historical-grammatical method and historicist approach to interpretation, including the understanding of prophecy.
6. To encourage church members to adopt regular patterns of worship.

Reach In with God

7. To enhance unity and community among church members.
8. To nurture believers in lives of discipleship and to involve them in service.
9. To increase the engagement of young people in the life of the church.
10. To affirm the administrative role of pastors in organizational leadership.



TO INCREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

11. To improve leadership practices in order to enhance the credibility of, and trust in, the church organization, its operations, and mission initiatives.

Reach Out with God

12. To enhance Adventist outreach and presence across the 10/40 Window.
13. To enhance Adventist outreach and presence in large urban areas worldwide.
14. To make planting new groups of believers a priority in all parts of the world.
15. To substantially reorient our understanding and methods of mission.
16. To engage all church members, pastors, and leaders in full partnership.
17. To increase the involvement of young people in the mission of the church.
18. To encourage local churches to take the initiative in communicating the three angels' messages and carrying out the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
19. To raise the profile of mission to non-Christian religions and belief systems.
20. To strengthen the world church's global resources for mission.
21. To optimize communication plans and methodologies so as to empower the work and witness of the church.

Each of these 21 objectives has a series of associated Key Performance Indicators (or KPIs). The world church will test the progress we have made in meeting those 21 goals and achieving the KPIs through research. The research we did last quinquennium was not a one-off; it will be repeated again in this coming quinquennium. We need your assistance to do that—we cannot do it without you.

In conclusion, the plans that have been made and the objectives that have been agreed, while crucial, will be meaningless unless we involve our local churches—something that is, indeed, the focus of several of the *Reach the World* objectives. We need *all* Seventh-day Adventist pastors, elders, and church members to ask themselves, as Ellen White suggested, this key question: “What can I do to proclaim the third angel's message?” (*General Conference Bulletin*, March 30, 1903). The world church needs the help of its local church officers to mobilize every church member to help fulfill the extraordinary prophetic mission God has given to His remnant church. Let every Adventist ask: “What can I do to reach the world?”

EO

David Trim is director of the office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

TMI: A NEW APPROACH TO FULFILLING THE GOSPEL COMMISSION

May Ford wanted to do something for Jesus. Her church was having an evangelistic series and the pastor was urging everyone to get involved. But her physical limitations and her natural shyness discouraged her from joining in any activities.

She decided to ask God to show her what she could do. Soon it occurred to her that she could pray. So she pulled out her telephone directory and chose 15 names at random and faithfully prayed every day for those people.

Three years passed, and one day she heard that her church would be having a baptism. One of the names sounded familiar—Noah Greenman. She knew that name—he was on her prayer list!

Incredibly, as the months passed, eight of the 15 people on her list were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Coincidence? Absolutely not. Could Mrs. Ford have done things differently? Maybe. But when we do something for God with a willing heart, it gives Him an avenue to bless.

Imagine for a moment what our world church would look like if God could find in each of us an avenue through which to bless others. There would be no limit to what God could do through us!

That's why the General Conference is launching a bold new initiative called TMI—Total Member Involvement. It's a full-scale, world-church evangelistic thrust that involves every member, church, administrative entity and every type of public outreach ministry. Jesus is coming soon, and God longs for a Spirit-filled church that can receive and pass on His blessings.

How can you and your church participate? Here are three simple steps:

PRAY

Challenge your church and each member to pray for specific requests. Pray asking God to show you what He wants you to do. Pray daily for a family member, a friend or a neighbor, that they may accept Christ. Pray for wisdom in mapping out a strategy for your church.

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask" (*Great Controversy*, p. 525).

PLAN

Prayer must go hand-in-hand with planning. The most effective way to accomplish total member involvement is through a calendar-driven program. Unite as a church in scheduling outreach and evangelism-driven events. Then divide in small groups for group planning. Sabbath School classes can function as *Disciples in Action* units, praying together and planning group outreach. The possibilities are endless—health seminars, Bible studies, youth projects, and multiple Christ-centered, prophetic evangelism events.

ACT

I recently returned from Zimbabwe, where 30,000 people were baptized! How was this accomplished? It took prayer and planning, but the members didn't stop there. They took action. A total of 980 meetings and seminars were held throughout the country, which included a health initiative. As the people's physical needs were met, they responded to the gospel message.

We can praise God for these results. Some may say, "But that was Zimbabwe, where things like this are possible." That may be true, but if we don't believe we can win a soul for Christ, we won't win anyone. God can only bless when we are willing to be used.

I want to challenge you to plan a strategy this year for your church, your Sabbath School, your institution, and ultimately, for yourself. I know I do, because only as we reach out to others can God's Spirit work through us, and give us the greatest blessing of all. "He who seeks to give light to others will himself be blessed" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 142).



Duane McKey is a special assistant to the GC President. He is also the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



WHO CAN THE CHURCH LOVE?



Jesus' ministry was a ministry of inclusion, not exclusion, and that makes perfect sense. After all, what would be the point of dying for people and then excluding them from experiencing God's love and the opportunity to accept His grace? Doing that would be inconsistent, not smart, and would perhaps be a waste of Jesus' time on earth and of His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. It is simple and Jesus knew it: you cannot save people by excluding them. Jesus was crystal-clear: if He was going to have a shot at saving humanity, people needed to see His love for them. That's why He came and dwelt among us and became one of us.

I met an 18-year-old man who shocked and saddened me when he unapologetically told me that he had found in his church more evidence for Satan's existence than for God's existence. When I inquired further, he showed me two tattoos on each side of his neck and said, "No one in my church ever acknowledges me or says anything to me. They look at me funny and move on, as if I had a contagious disease. I definitely don't belong there."

I saw, with my own eyes, how a young lady was asked to leave church on a Sabbath afternoon because she was wearing pants. When my wife and I stood up for her, she told us it had been a while since she had last been to church, but, feeling unworthy and inadequate to come to the morning worship service, she had decided to come in the afternoon. We were holding a special prayer session for an upcoming evangelistic series we were about to launch in that area. As soon as she walked in, she was told she could not enter the sanctuary wearing sweatpants. Turns out she was pregnant out of wedlock and trying to hide her belly.

WHO CAN THE CHURCH LOVE?

If the church of Jesus cannot love guys with tattoos, ladies who wear pants, girls who are pregnant out of wedlock, and people who smell like smoke, among others, who can God's church love? What, then, is the purpose of the church? Why do we even exist?

If the church of Jesus cannot love all sinners as Jesus

did, then it is not a church, and it is not of Jesus. Jesus loved all sinners and was always ready to minister to them, regardless of their sin. If you don't love sinners, you will have a hard time reaching, retaining, or reclaiming them.

Jesus did not baptize all the people He healed, fed, and counseled; yet He still healed them, took away their hunger, and blessed them because He loved them.

IS YOUR CHURCH FILLED WITH PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT WALKS OF LIFE?

If your church is not filled with people of different backgrounds and walks of life, perhaps it is because they don't feel that your church is a safe place for them. Jesus loved tax collectors, prostitutes, Jews, Gentiles, poor, rich, children, men, women, and Pharisees. This is why people from different walks of life approached Him and followed Him.

The church of Jesus must be willing to love people who sin differently than we do. Jesus died for them as much as He died for me and you.

WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

Where do we draw the line? The answer is simple: We draw the line where Jesus did. When a woman who had just been caught in the act of adultery was brought to Him and her accusers looked to Jesus for approval to stone her, He said, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." Then He told her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

We are much more like Jesus when we are inclusive with other sinners. We reflect His character best when the doors of our churches are opened to people of different walks of life and backgrounds. We are much more effective in reaching, retaining, and reclaiming when we are filled with the love of God and the compassion of Jesus.

Let's just try it! Jesus did!



Pastor Jose Cortes Jr., is an Associate Ministerial Director and leads evangelism for the Adventist Church in North America. This article first appeared in *Best Practice*, May 21, 2015. It has been lightly edited for *Elder's Digest*.

SERVING DURING THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH:

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES AT BAPTISMAL SERVICES

Jesus is emphatic about the necessity of baptism. He told Nicodemus, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5, NIV). Deacons and deaconesses are major participants in this important service; they have the privilege of serving the baptismal candidates in many practical ways. The *Church Manual* states, “At the baptismal ceremony the deacons should make necessary preparations and also assist male candidates into and out of the water. The deaconesses should assist female candidates. Care should be exercised to see that proper attire is provided for the candidates, preferably robes of suitable heavy material. If robes are not available, the candidates should dress in modest attire.”¹

From this, we can see that the role of deacons and deaconesses is invaluable to the candidates. The following are some of the preparations that deacons and deaconesses should make for baptismal services:

1. The deacons should clean and fill the baptistry in plenty of time before the service so that the water level and temperature are appropriate.

2. The head deaconess should make sure that enough robes (proper sizes), bath towels, wash cloths, bathing caps, and socks are on hand before the day of the service. (White is an appropriate color for these items.) If possible, items should be stored in a secure location close to the dressing rooms.

3. The head deacon and head deaconess should have extra clothing and robes on hand for persons who decide to get baptized at the last moment. The head deaconess should also have nail polish remover and wipes handy.

4. Before the service begins, the head deacon and head deaconess should privately call the pastor’s attention to candidates who are wearing colorful cosmetics and jewelry.

5. The head deacon and head deaconess should obtain instructions from the pastor regarding the order in which the candidates are to enter the baptistry. They should have each candidate place his/her name, address, telephone number, date of birth, and date of baptism on a 3x5 card before the service begins. All cards are given to the pastor in the order that the candidates will be baptized.

6. One or two deacons and deaconesses are to help the candidates get dressed in sufficient time for the service. If the baptism takes place during the divine worship service, they may sit with the candidates on the front rows during the worship service to make sure they feel comfortable. After the pastor reads the baptismal vows to the candidates, the deacons and deaconesses can escort the candidates to the baptistry.

7. As each baptized female candidate descends from the baptistry, a deaconess should wrap her with a sheet or heavy towel and escort her back to the dressing room. A deaconess is to be stationed outside of the dressing room door, to secure the privacy of the candidates. A deacon does the same for the males.

8. After the baptism, the candidates dress and are escorted back to the sanctuary to receive the right hand of fellowship.

9. Upon completion of the service, the deacons and deaconesses gather the church’s items so they can be laundered and properly stored until needed again.

10. The deacons are responsible for draining the baptistry. However, if the water is to remain for another baptism in the near future, chlorine should be placed in the water.

11. After sunset, a thorough cleaning of the dressing rooms and areas leading to the baptistry should be done by the deacons and deaconesses.

Other important items for deacons and deaconesses to consider are:

- The color of the baptismal robes (the preferred color is white or black).

- Heating and cooling in the dressing room. If possible, dressing rooms should have adequate space with heating and air conditioning; deacons should check the baptistry heater periodically to keep it in good operating condition.

¹ *The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 39.

Vincent E. White, Sr., D.Min., is a retired pastor and author of *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model*; *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook*; and *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses*. www.avasbookpublishers.com. To schedule training seminars, email avasbp@att.net.

PREACHING POWERFULLY: IS IT POSSIBLE? >PART 1 OF 6

Preaching is a gift of God, and although some elders may not be as adept at it as others, all can, with God's blessing, become effective in the pulpit and deliver an important spiritual message to the congregation. It has happened countless times by thousands of elders in unnumbered churches around the world.

CALLED TO PREACH

Are you an elder? If so, God has called you to minister to His flock. You, along with the pastor, are one of the chief leaders in your church. The deacons and deaconesses are also called, and they are your colleagues. Together, you are a team called by God to give direction, support, and spiritual guidance to your church members. You can serve by teaching a Sabbath School class, aiding your pastor in a communion service, visiting the sick and the needy, giving Bible studies, and, yes, even preaching. Preaching is a high calling and a high responsibility. All of you are an important segment of the local church membership.



GOD INVENTED PREACHING AND ENDOWED CERTAIN MEN AND WOMEN WITH THIS GIFT IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION.

But preaching, you say? Yes, preaching is perhaps the most important part of the church service, and as an elder (or deacon or deaconess), when you are called on by your pastor due to absence or illness, you must meet the challenge. If you are a new elder, you may squirm at this challenge. I can assure you, however, that if you lay this burden at Jesus' feet, He will help you rise to the occasion. And if you peruse the following instructions carefully and thoroughly and practice them, you can become as

good a preacher as your pastor.

In several of the countries where my wife and I worked over the years, it was the elders who ran the local church, especially in large, multi-church districts such as in Mexico, Bolivia, the Philippines, Haiti, and various countries in Central America. Some of these districts contained 10, 15, or 20 churches, companies, and unorganized groups, making it impossible for the district pastor to visit them more than three or four times each year.

How were these churches attended to and what made them successful? The good management by the elders, deacons, and deaconesses made this possible. We saw elders who performed all the duties of their district pastor—communion services, board meetings, Bible studies, and preaching. Some elders were dynamic presenters of the Word, and some were successful local evangelists. Many of these men held no formal college or university degrees or had ever progressed beyond the elementary school level. It was obvious that they were deeply imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit.

As an elder in your local church, have you ever been asked to preach? What was your answer? Did you say "Yes" because you believed you had been called to church work but felt incompetent in some areas? Did you say "No" because you were too timid? Perhaps you would have liked to preach but didn't know how.

This article is about preaching. It intends to tell you how to be a good preacher. I can assure you that if you follow the principles in this article carefully and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, you can become a dynamic preacher of God's Word. And, as that happens, you will be thrilled and deeply, humbly satisfied. There is nothing greater than preaching and winning souls for God's kingdom.

BACKGROUND OF PREACHING

First, you should know something about preaching and what the Bible says about it. The early church had some great preachers: Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Silas, and others who are mentioned in the book of Acts. We can safely assume, however, that these great early-church missionaries trained elders and local church members in operating the local church established by these apostles. As these missionaries moved on to new territory, the local church members and especially the elders stepped up to take their place.

Paul said, "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe . . ." (1 Cor. 1:21, KJV). And Paul said further, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). God invented preaching and endowed certain men and women with this gift in order to promote the gospel of salvation. Through the unction of the Holy Spirit, the dedicated early Christians brought millions to the foot of the cross. Since then, through preaching, millions more have been brought to salvation, and the practice continues today.

On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 were saved by Peter's preaching through the unction and power of the Holy Spirit, who imbued all the disciples that day (Acts 2:38, 41). Peter was an evangelist, and God used him mightily. He was a powerful preacher because he was *totally converted* to Jesus Christ, but only after he had made his decision to follow Jesus all the way upon recognizing the terribleness of his denial and subsequently repenting of it. His sermon on the Day of Pentecost was not short (see Acts 2:40). People's hearts were pierced because the Holy Spirit was working hand-in-hand with Peter and the disciples on that glorious day. The same miracle can take place today, in your pulpit, though it may be just one or two—or maybe even more—souls as you deliver your Christ-centered sermon from time to time in your own church's pulpit.

FACTORS WHICH AFFECT THE PREACHER'S CREDIBILITY AND HIS OR HER SUCCESS

Remember, preaching is a tool of the Holy Spirit to assist in bringing men and women to repentance, as well as to hold them in the pew. Human beings are the medium through which the Holy Spirit uses the tool. The intensity to which the tool is useful depends on several factors which are essential for dynamic preachers.

The *spirituality* of the preacher is the most important virtue of the preacher; without a deep spiritual life, his/her ministry will only be partially effective. "Ministers must seek God for His Holy Spirit, in order that they may present the truth aright."¹

The *dedication* of the preacher is also important:

- *Devotion to God* calls for regular contact with God. Prayer is the single most important activity that a preacher can exercise. Without a deep prayer life, a preacher can never have the piety that his or her congregation expects.

- *Devotion to soul-winning* is part of preaching—it calls for loving people and their salvation.

Humility is one of the most important traits a preacher must have. Egotism or pride almost always shows through and spoils the presentation and reduces respect.

The preacher must be *sincere*—the behavior must match the message. Sincerity is a mockery when a preacher's actions don't match his or her words.

The *scholarship* of the preacher means thorough study. John Ruskin said, "A sermon is 30 minutes to wake the dead." The preacher ought to spend an hour of preparation for every minute he or she preaches. This is what used to be taught, but probably few preachers today spend such a great amount of time; however, the more time spent in preparation for a sermon, the more powerful that sermon will be.

The *reading habit* of the preacher is important—reading extensively on a wide range of subjects, especially the Bible, underlining the important material, making notes of what is seen as useful, and filing those notes in alphabetical order by subject. This will greatly enrich the pastor's sermons.

The *organizational ability* of the preacher, particularly of the sermon, refers to the sequence of thought and the natural flow of ideas.


The *wisdom* of the preacher in choosing the proper content for his or her sermon means that the message will be meaningful to the particular target congregation.

The *sermon delivery* focuses on how the message is shared: Body language, gestures, eye contact, voice inflection, facial expressions, and pauses (which can be very powerful).

The *courage* of the preacher means:

- Calling sin by its right name, in love but with firmness and good taste

- Making altar calls

These challenges may seem rather daunting to you as an elder. Just remember that you will not be an accomplished speaker the first time you're in the pulpit—and neither were the great preachers of history. As you review the various items in this article, seek to apply them, and call upon God to aid you, your speaking ability will continually improve. So, don't despair. Remember, God is with you. (To be continued). 

¹ Ellen G. White, *MS 127*, 1902.

Lamar Phillips is a retired minister and church administrator who served for 39 years in six world divisions.

LOVE AND KINDNESS

>PART 2



LASTING IMPRESSIONS THROUGH LOVE

In His providence God impresses people to attend our tent meetings and church services. Some come from curiosity, others to criticize or ridicule. Often they are convicted of sin. The word spoken in the spirit of love makes a lasting impression on them. How carefully, then, should these meetings be conducted. The words spoken should be of authority, that the Holy Spirit can impress them on minds. The speaker who is controlled by the Spirit of God has a sacred dignity, and his words are a savor of life unto life. Let not unsuitable illustrations or anecdotes be introduced into the discourse. Let the words spoken be for the edification of the hearers.

CUTTING BY THE TRUTH, NOT BY OUR WORDS

In the presentation of unpopular truth, which involves a heavy cross, preachers should be careful that every word is as God would have it. Their words should never cut. They should present the truth in humility, with the deepest love for souls and an earnest desire for their salvation, and let the truth cut.

REFORMATION, NOT EXASPERATION

God is calling for reformers who will speak strong, uplifting words from our pulpits. It is when men speak their own words in their own strength, instead of preaching the Word of God in the power of the Spirit, that they are hurt and offended when their words are not received with enthusiasm. It is then that they are tempted to speak words that will arouse a spirit of bitterness and opposition in their hearers. My brethren, be advised. Such words are not to come from the lips of Christ's ambassadors. Sanctified lips will speak words that reform, but do not exasperate. The truth is to be presented in the meekness and love of Christ.

FROM BROKEN, CONTRITE HEARTS

My brethren, let your hearts become broken and contrite. Let expressions of sympathy and love, which will not blister the tongue, flow from your lips.

SPIRITUALITY IN PREACHING

Brother B's preaching has not been marked by the sanction of God's Spirit. He can talk fluently and make a point

plain, but his preaching has lacked spirituality. His appeals have not touched the heart with a new tenderness. There has been an array of words, but the hearts of his hearers have not been quickened and melted with a sense of a Saviour's love.

FOR TEACHERS, THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST

I have an earnest desire that you shall every day be learning of the Great Teacher. If you will first draw nigh to God and then to your students, you can do a very precious work. If you are diligent and humble, God will daily give you knowledge and an aptitude to teach. Do your very best to impart to others the blessings He has given you.

NO PASSIONATE WORD OR GESTURE

In educating the children and youth, teachers should not allow one passionate word or gesture to mar their work, for in so doing they imbue the students with the same spirit which they themselves possess.

NO IRRITATION BY TEACHERS

Instructors who are under the discipline of God receive grace and truth and light through the Holy Spirit to communicate to the children. They are under the greatest Teacher the world has ever known, and how unbecoming it would be for them to have an unkind spirit, a sharp voice, full of irritation! In this they would perpetuate their own defects in the children.

NO LACK OF KINDNESS, EVEN TO EVILDOERS

If the teacher, through the grace of Christ, is self-controlled, and holds the lines with a steady, patient hand, he will quell the boisterous element, keep his self-respect, and command the respect of his students. When once order is restored, let kindness, gentleness, and affection be manifested. It may be that rebellion will rise again and again, but let not the hasty temper appear. Do not speak sharply to the evildoer, and discourage a soul who is struggling with the powers of darkness.

EQ

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 209-212 by Ellen G. White.

PREACHING STYLES:

THE TEXTUAL SERMON - PART 2 OF 3

A note from the editor:

Preaching the Word of God is one of the greatest privileges entrusted to humanity. It is also one of the greatest responsibilities for pastors and elders. Choosing a preaching style is an essential aspect of sermon preparation.

In this series, Dr. Rex D. Edwards presents and analyzes three types of sermons: the biographical sermon, the textual sermon, and the topical sermon. In this issue, he deals with the textual sermon. This style is usually based on one relatively short portion of Scripture. In fact, as the name suggests, it usually concentrates on one Scripture "text." It involves choosing an appropriate statement of Scripture, investigating it, analyzing it, and discovering all the truth it contains. Then the pastor or elder presents that truth in an orderly and progressive manner that is easy for the hearers to assimilate.

I hope you enjoy this series!

"A preacher is a professional plagiarist," declares George E. Sweazey. "Those who come to hear him assume that the best of what he gives is not his own. A minister can preach only because he has been preached to from the Bible."¹

But what makes his preaching biblical? John Knox warned his students about the danger of preaching "a quite unbiblical sermon on a biblical text." John Bright offers this useful definition: "the exposition of a biblical text . . . and the proclamation of that as normative for Christian faith and practice."² In other words, a biblical sermon is an ellipse around two foci of the Bible and a present need. A lecture about the Bible is not a biblical sermon. Biblical preaching must continue the redemptive act as the ancient word is made effective in the present situation. The timeless and the timely are the twin foci for all biblical preaching. Until the sermon links the past and the present, the sermon is incomplete. It is a Bible lesson, not a sermon. The ultimate test of biblical preaching is the answer to the question posed by James S. Stewart: "Did they, or did they not, meet God today?"³

DEFINITION

J. Daniel Bauman defines it this way: "The textual sermon is based on a verse or two from the Bible. The main theme and major sermon divisions come from the text. The thought of the sermon must always be consonant with the text."⁴ The

divisions of a textual sermon may be based upon a clause, a phrase, leading words, or suggested by something in the text.

For example, suppose Ezra 7:10 is selected as the basis of a textual sermon. The text reads: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." (NASB) The verse centers around Ezra's purpose of heart from which three main divisions are suggested:

1. A heart that was set on *knowing* the word of God: "Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord."
2. A heart that was set on *obedience* to the word of God: "and to practice it."
3. A heart that was set on *teaching* the word of God: "and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."

Note that each main division, according to the above definition, is now used as a line of suggestion. They indicate what the preacher is to say about the text.

METHODOLOGY

But how is a biblical sermon developed? Whether the sermon pattern is biographical, textual, or topical, James T. Cleland suggests that there are three stages in developing a biblical sermon. Stage 1 is *investigation or exegesis* of the Word of God, which deals with the "then." Stage 2 is *interpretation or exposition* of the good news at the heart of the message, which deals with the "always." Stage 3 is the *application* of the eternal good news to the contemporary situation, which deals with the "now."⁵ Adhering to this threefold process assures the preacher that the listener will understand the Scriptural reference better after they know its connection with their lives.

Let me now suggest four principles that will guide in the preparation of a textual sermon.

1. *The textual outline should be centered around one main thought in the text.* In other words, the preacher's first task is to discover the dominant idea in the text from which the main divisions will be an amplification of the central thought. For example, in Romans 12:1, the elements of a believer's sacrifice emerge as the dominant idea: "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (NASB). The following outline naturally emerges from the central thought:

- a. The reason for the believer's sacrifice: "the mercies of God."
- b. The totality of the believer's sacrifice: "to present your bodies."

- c. The conditions of the believer's sacrifice: "a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God."
- d. The obligation of the believer's sacrifice: "which is your spiritual service of worship."

2 *The textual outline is formed by principles or truths suggested by the verse.* For instance, the nature of God's gift of Jesus in John 3:16 suggests the following divisions:

- a. It is a love gift: "God so loved."
- b. It is sacrificial gift: "that He gave His only begotten Son."
- c. It is an eternal gift: "should not perish but have eternal life."
- d. It is a universal gift: "that whosoever."
- e. It is a conditional gift: "believeth in Him."

3. *The textual outline can either be in logical or chronological sequence.* It is not always necessary to follow the order of the words in the text, but the main divisions should indicate a progressive development of the dominant thought. For example, John 3:36 reveals important facts about salvation:

- a. The provider of salvation: "the Son."
- b. The condition of salvation: "believeth."
- c. The availability of salvation: "He that."
- d. The certainty of salvation: "hath."
- e. The duration of salvation: "everlasting life."

An example of a chronological outline is suggested in Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

- a. A great command: "Believe."
- b. A glorious person: "on the Lord Jesus Christ."
- c. A grand result: "and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy family."

4. *The textual must be faithful to the context of the verse.* This principle is foundational to a correct interpretation of Scripture. To disregard this hermeneutic will result in a serious distortion or complete misapprehension of the passage. For instance, if the context of Paul's admonition to the Colos-

sians—"Touch not; taste not; handle not"—is ignored, then a defense for asceticism might be argued.

CONCLUSION

The Bible provides unlimited opportunities for textual sermons. The Old Testament contains 33,214 verses, of which Esther 8:9 is the longest. The New Testament has 7,959 verses, of which John 11:35 is the shortest.

Preaching from a single text has special advantages. It is biblical and therefore restrains the preacher from perpetuating his or her personal ideas. Proper exegesis allows the text to be understood contextually and thus interpreted accordingly. It also affords the opportunity for study in depth; that is, an intense scrutiny of a single biblical concept found in a verse or two of Scripture. Further, a good text will be remembered, which will help the sermon and its message to be remembered.

Preaching on the great texts of the Bible stores them like treasures in people's hearts. When they are known "by heart," they are there when they are needed.

Finally, a text can open up illimitable truth. As John Calvin reminds us, a text "is full of hidden power, which leaves nothing in man untouched." So, a text could be only a picture which decorates a wall, but a good text, rightly used, can be a window through a wall which opens up on boundless vistas. EO

¹ George E. Sweazey, *Preaching the Good News* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), 161.

² John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 163.

³ James S. Stewart, *Preaching* (London: The English University Press, Ltd. 1955), 28.

⁴ J. Daniel Bauman, (*An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Book House, 1972), 102.

⁵ See James T. Cleland, *Preaching to be Understood* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), 77.

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

Ministerial Student Writing Contest

Ministry, International Journal for Pastors, announces its fifth Ministerial Student Writing Contest. All students enrolled in a full-time ministerial preparation program on the undergraduate or graduate level may participate.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All submissions must be received no later than **JUNE 30, 2016.**



www.ministrymagazine.org/swc

THE ANSWERED QUESTION

Leonard Bernstein once conducted the New York Symphony in a rendition of Charles Ives's "The Unanswered Question." The director explained to his television audience the meaning of the composition: Six times the trumpet repeats a phrase representing the question, "Why am I here?" In each instance, the woodwinds respond with increasing confusion, reflecting man's unsuccessful attempts to answer this question. For the seventh time, the trumpet repeats the question. There is no answer—only the soft background of the orchestra intended to represent the movement of the stars in space. The composer seems to be saying, "There is no answer to man's question, 'Why am I here?'"

A boldly confident man writing a letter in a Roman prison 21 centuries ago raises his hand in protest. With settled conviction, this man says, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (1 Tim. 1:12). "Why am I here?" was an *answered* question in Paul's mind, and the answer was centered in Jesus of Nazareth. This affirmation in Paul's letter to Timothy has brought meaning to the lives of untold millions of people.

I. FIRST PART OF THE TEXT

"I know whom I have believed." This passage may be translated, "I know Him whom I have been trusting." The tense of the verb indicates a trust that began in the past and continues into the present. This is a picture of a constant, unwavering faith. How did Paul arrive at this kind of experience? How did he know? Imagine him reviewing his life as he paced his prison cell. He may have recalled Stephen's sermon on the day of his martyrdom and the witness this man of God made for his Lord. He doubtless remembered vividly the light that shone on the Damascus road and the voice that spoke to him on that occasion. He lived again those years of preparation, preaching Christ in Damascus, retiring in Arabia, visiting with Peter and James in Jerusalem.

In memory he traveled again the Roman roads of the Mediterranean world, preaching the risen Christ to all who would listen. To the jailer in Thessalonica who asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul had a quick answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." To the skeptical philosophers on Mars' Hill in Athens, Paul preached what was to the audience the greatest scandal of all—the resurrected Lord. Then there was that dark night in Corinth where things were going badly. "One night

the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you . . .'" (Acts 18:9, 10). And there was another dark night following his arrest in Jerusalem, when His Lord stood by him again and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

No doubt Paul often relived his recent, stormy voyage on the prison ship to Italy. Could there have been a more heroic moment for Christianity than that perilous day when he announced to the sailors, "Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul'" (Acts 27:23, 24).

Out of a storehouse of experiences such as these Paul brought forth this gem: "I know whom I have believed." His life has been built around his relationship with Christ. There were no doubts, no quibbles, no uncertainties in his experience. He *knew* without question the Master to whom he had devoted his life.

He knew the presence of Christ in his own life—an experience he described 164 times as being "in Christ." He knew Christ as a conscious, thinking, loving, communicating Being. If Christian theologians and biblical scholars would share Paul's knowledge of Christ, Christianity might find the "renewal" for which it is seeking.

II. SECOND PART OF THE TEXT

The second part of our text, as translated in the King James Version, says, "And [I] am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Some of you who read modern versions of the Bible may have noticed that this familiar passage is often translated in a different way. For example, the Phillips translation says, "And I am perfectly certain that the work he has committed to me is safe in his hands." The New English Bible says, "And [I] am confident of his power to keep safe what he has put into my charge." The meanings are opposite: "that which I have committed unto him" vs. "what he has put in my charge." Why the difference?

It happens that one word of the passage in Greek makes it capable of two translations, either of which is grammatically correct. The question as to which meaning was intended by Paul can be determined only by the context. A similar expression is used in two other passages in Paul's letters to Timothy: 1 Timothy 6:20 ("Guard what has been entrusted to your care") and 2 Timothy 1:14 ("Guard the good deposit that was entrusted

to you"). Judging by these verses, it seems that modern-language translations are probably correct. It seems that Paul was, in effect, saying to Timothy, "Timothy, after you and I are both gone, Christ is able to guard that gospel that He has committed to us."

There is a tremendous lesson here for us. We need to be persuaded that Christ is able to guard the gospel that He has committed to us. We must not be an anxious group, huddling around a flickering fire, trying to keep it from going out. The gospel is an unquenchable flame—it may flicker, but it cannot be extinguished. We are asked to guard this flame, but we are reminded that the One who lighted it in the first place will see that it continues to burn.

III. THIRD PART OF THE TEXT

The third part of the text comprises three very significant words—"against [until] that day." Look at the sweep of this text. The first part deals with the past: "I know whom I have believed." The second part is in the present tense: "I am persuaded." The final thrust of the text is toward the future: "against that day." There is no place in Paul's teaching for the type of "immediacy" that is unconcerned about the past and the future.

We who live in this age must not forget "that day." If it was important to Paul, it should be doubly important to us. The message of the coming Christ is a vital part of the gospel. It is in harmony with the character of a God who will not allow suffering, hunger, and sin to go on forever. This great truth of the return of our Lord must not be used as an escape from the realities of life, but it is an authentic hope for the Christian.

CONCLUSION

In an age like ours, only a fool can face the future without concern. There is no guarantee against atomic war. There is no solution in sight for the world's population problems. Pollution is not an imaginary problem. There is no obvious remedy for the world's economic ills. Your dreams and mine may not come true. But we have a Lord who will finish what He started. His gospel will not fail.

This is the final answer to man's eternal question.



This sermon by Norval F. Pease is excerpted from the book *If I Had One Sermon to Preach*, edited by Herbert E. Douglass. It has been used with permission and lightly edited for *Elder's Digest*.

THE UNRESTRICTED GOD

1 Kings 20:28

The Syrians, in their blindness, decided that God was restricted in His capacity. He was a “God of the hills” but not of the valleys. The Syrian army has just been roundly defeated at the siege of Samaria. Why did they fail? Samaria was situated on a hill and, if they fought on the plains, the people reasoned, their victory would be assured.

The ancient world was accustomed to local deities associated with some natural feature like a mountain or a stream. This God of the Hebrews, the Syrians concluded, was a hill god. After all, had not God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was not God’s temple in Jerusalem a city on a hill? Samaria was similarly located. When the Syrians planned their next war, they would fight on a plain rather than on a hill—and this would assure their victory! A God of the hills would be helpless in the valley, right? How mistaken they were!

Many today subscribe to this Syrian misconception of God. He is a God of the hills. After all, does He not make Himself known in the high places of spiritual experience? And there is this persistent notion that somehow the valleys are out of God’s domain. We are tempted to associate the activity of Almighty God exclusively with the striking and unusual occasions of life and virtually banish Him from the realm of the routine and ordinary. Therefore, we crave the mountaintop and forget that the humdrum valley also belongs to the Lord.

It may be that God is about to challenge us through this Old Testament text. We need to be taught that what is required of us is not “some great thing” but obedience and faith in that which seems small and unimportant. There are three salient features of this verse.

I. THE LIMITATIONS OF UNBELIEF

The Syrians had a restricted view of God. Being faithless pagans, their outlook was narrow and incomplete. Yet modern unbelievers have a different distinction between belief and unbelief. They complain about the restraints imposed by faith and claim that theirs is the broader viewpoint. On the contrary, however, no life is so narrow as one that is hemmed in by unbelief.

In his book *Your God Is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips argues that those who discard the revelation of Scripture and the fullness of Christianity live in a shrunken world. They confine God to a “box” of their own making or confine God to the pages of

the Bible or to the four walls of a church. They are so out of touch with spiritual truth that, to them, God is no more than a vague benevolence with about as much moral authority as Santa Claus! Their world is a vast emptiness. They are left with what H. G. Wells called a “God-shaped blank” in the soul. But if they could see the “bigness” of God in the Milky Way to remind them of the vastness of His creation, or a bowl of flowers to remind them of His love and beauty, or the structure of the eye to remind them of His meticulous accuracy as a designer, then they might be led to abandon the inadequacy of their ideas. Blaise Pascal declared, “If you say that man is too little for God to speak to him, you may be very big to be able to judge.” If we rush to the conclusion that God is confined to the hills, we may discover, to our cost, as the Syrians did, that He reigns in the valleys also.

That leads us to the second feature of this text.

II. THE EMANCIPATION OF FAITH

Not far from the place where the Syrians suffered their setback, Jesus talked to a woman by a well. He taught her that God is not of the hills only. “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain [Gerizim, the headquarters of the Samaritan cult]; and ye say [that is, as a Jew] that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Note the drift of the argument: God is the God of the hills. In effect, she is saying, “but which hill is it to be—Gerizim or Zion?” Jesus’ answer makes it clear that He is the God of the valleys as well as the hills. To borrow the terms used by the Bishop of Woolwich in his controversial book *Honest to God*, He is “down here” as well as “up there.”

If we are to know God at all, then we need to see Him in a form we can understand. He must “speak our language” and live with us. That is exactly what He has done. In the Incarnation, God becomes a man in the person of Jesus Christ. The enfleshment of God! It takes your breath away. But what does it mean? The incarnation makes possible our emancipation from sin, for upon Him “was laid the iniquity of us all”; it makes it possible for us to be what He Himself is, and because He is Emmanuel (“God with us”), He will be with us in the valleys (see Hebrews 2:14-18).

Our Christianity must be lived out down here on the plains of earth. But, on this journey, we are never alone. Wherever we are or whatever our

need, He is there—in the valley or on the mountain! This truth will indeed “set you free.”

But there is a further and final feature of this text.


III. THE DEMONSTRATION OF REALITY

The verse before us sets two sayings in opposition. The Syrians claimed, “The Lord is the God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys.” But God declared, “Therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” What was the proof? God demonstrated that He was as powerful in the valley as on the hill. Down on the plain, 100,000 Syrian infantrymen were slain, and the 27,000 who fled to the heights of Samaria’s city of refuge were crushed when a great wall collapsed on them. God’s victory was in the valley as well as on the hilltop.

That is what God is waiting to do in your life and mine. He knows what your particular need is. It could be the valley of fear, depression, temptation, or moral defeat. Whatever it is, God is there and will enable you to conquer. No situation is too big for Him. He is *El Shaddai*, the “Enough God”—enough for all, enough for each, enough forevermore.

CONCLUSION

So, what is your conception of God? Is He the God who cannot or can? Is He only a God of the hills who leaves you in the lurch down in the valley when you need Him most? No, He is the God of hills as well as the valleys because when Christ is ours, this God is ours. This God, in the words of Isaac Watts, is:

“That God that rules on high, that all the earth surveys, / That rides upon the stormy sky, and calms the roaring seas: / This awful God is ours, our Father and our love: / He will send down His heavenly powers, to carry us above.” 

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

Sermon Notes:

A PRODIGAL GOD: GENEROSITY UNLIMITED

2 Corinthians 8:9, NEB

I will always remember Monday morning worship at Vanderbilt University. The dean would remove his Hebrew Bible from the folds of his Geneva gown and, preaching from the Psalms, talk about the prodigal God: a God who is wasteful with His mercy. In this verse (2 Cor. 8:9), interjected in a practical discussion on Christian liberality, the apostle Paul, in four trenchant sentences, encompasses the generosity of God's salvation.

I. THE WEALTH OF CHRIST: "HE WAS RICH . . ."

This sentence points to the fact that Christian religion does not start on earth; it starts in heaven. It does not begin with the stable and the manger; it begins at the throne of God. In breathless tones of wonder, the apostle explains that it is a God who came down to humanity. Bethlehem and Calvary must be seen against their proper background. Jesus was rich!

Is this remote theology, irrelevant in a world of nuclear weapons, inflationary spirals, and high technologies? No! It is the one faith realistic enough and down-to-earth enough to make an impact on the problems we face today. Let us be clear that what we celebrate in church is not the life and death of a religious genius who taught wonderful lessons. What Paul bears witness to is that Jesus Christ "was rich" but left it all and sunk Himself into human flesh in order to make us what He is Himself. So now, behind our sufferings and tragedies, is the magnificent availability of infinite grace to help us in times of need. Live by it! Exult in it! Why? Because "he [God] has means for the removal of every difficulty."¹

II. THE POVERTY OF CHRIST: "FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR . . ."

Look at the record of that life: born in a stable; toiling at a carpenter's bench; authoring no books; never receiving the applause of listening senates; knowing the human ache of weariness and the disenchantment of ingratitude; a victim of bigotry; buried in a borrowed grave. But at the back of that humiliation, the splendor and glory of God! That glory was His true home. There He rightfully belonged. And now He has been stripped of every atom of glory, every shred of power.

And, says Paul, still writing to us, it was "for your sake." This is the great principle: you

can't help others unless you get right alongside them. Caring for others is always linked to sacrifice. Their burdens, troubles, defeats, and complications become your own. And it is here that the Christian revelation breaks in with a trumpet-toned "How much more God!" To help this broken world, God came right alongside its misery and frustration. "He was made sin for us," says Paul of Jesus in words that startle and shock. "He became a curse for us." Herein is our hope in our deepest darkness: God is veritably present.

But there is a third point in this compass of salvation.

III. OUR POVERTY APART FROM CHRIST: "SO THAT THROUGH HIS POVERTY YOU MIGHT BECOME RICH . . ."

This implies that, in ourselves, we are as poor as beggars. Now, suppose by some unthinkable calamity, this revelation of God in Christ were suddenly taken out of your life. Suppose it was finally demonstrated that Jesus' teaching and the truth for which He died was a lie. Could anything in this world compensate for a loss so terrible? All the riches of human intelligence, skill, and planning will not rescue us from chaos unless God first meets man at the level of his sin. Take away God's mighty act in Christ and what is left? Dust and ashes, emptiness and regret. It was to save us from this impoverishment that heaven stooped down to earth at Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary and the empty tomb. You know this grace of Christ, cries Paul, and know and proved it, and you know you are bankrupt without it!

"The whole treasury of heaven," writes Ellen G. White, "is open to those He seeks to save. Having collected the riches of the universe, and laid open the resources of infinite power," He says, "all these are for man."² Believe it! No wonder a little girl repeating the twenty-third psalm said it this way: "The Lord is my Shepherd, that's all I want!"

IV. OUR WEALTH IN UNION WITH CHRIST: "SO THAT THROUGH HIS POVERTY YOU MIGHT BECOME RICH . . ."

Can we fully grasp it—the fabulous wealth that Christ holds out to us; the strength, healing, and confident serenity He can bring to life?

What does it mean to find the Kingdom? Jesus once drew a picture of it. A poor farm

laborer was out plowing a field. His wages were a mere pittance; the family in the cottage could never make ends meet. And then one day, suddenly, out in the field, this man's plough struck something—buried treasure! He dashed home and, babbling almost incoherently, cried, "It has happened! Our troubles are over; we are rich beyond our dreams!" Something of that order, said Jesus, is what it means to find the Kingdom.

Do we really believe it? Mother Teresa once had only five shillings to build a new orphanage. She was scoffed at. She responded: "With five shillings Teresa can do nothing; but with five shillings and God, there is nothing Teresa cannot do!"

"All things are yours in Christ," cries Paul. Forgiveness is yours, hope and peace and courage are yours, the very power in which Jesus and the apostles lived is yours. Through the grace of Jesus, there is no trial you can't meet like a conqueror, no overpowering perplexity you can't master in the here and now, no piercing thorns you can't wear as a kingly crown. Thank God with all your heart for Him who, though He was rich, for your sake became poor, that through His poverty you might become rich!

CONCLUSION

So Paul's words have taken us around the four points of the compass of our faith. In the plainest terms, he reminds the Corinthians and us that Christ did this colossal, overwhelmingly generous thing for humanity. Will you not do a very minor thing for Him?

It is this practical challenge that matters for us all. There is something God is asking each of us to do for Him, some gift we have been holding back, some sacrifice we are disinclined to make, some personal interest we will not surrender. But we know the stupendous generosity of God, the heights and depths of Christ's self-sacrificing grace. And, knowing it, can we hold back? Shall we not lay our tithes, offerings, and ourselves at Jesus' feet?

ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 481.

² ———, *Sons and Daughters of God*, 123.

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

WHAT YOU GIVE MEANS . . .

Some years ago, a Barna research study found that only 8 percent of born-again Christians give 10 percent or more of their income. This is a sad statistic. Ellen G. White says: "In this life our possessions are limited, but the great treasure that God offers in His gift to the world, is unlimited. It comprehends every human desire, and goes far beyond our human calculations. In the great day of final decision, when every man shall be judged according to his deeds, every voice of self-justification will be hushed; for it will be seen that in His gift to the human race the Father gave all He had to give, and that they are without excuse who have refused to accept the gracious offering. We have no enemy without that we need to fear. Our great conflict is with unconsecrated self. When we conquer self, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us."¹

I. THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GIVING

A. *Who owns your money?* "That's pretty obvious," you respond. "I own my money." Wrong! The Bible teaches us that everything we own belongs to God. First Corinthians 4:7 says, "... what do you have that you did not receive?"

Ellen G. White says, "Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means is the Lord's. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they see fit. But in this they mistake. All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny, it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves."²

Everything we have, we have received from God. When I understand that, suddenly the focus isn't on my generosity ("I'm giving God 10 percent of my money") but on God's generosity ("God is graciously letting me use 90 percent").

B. *What makes you feel safe and secure?* A lot of people feel safe because they have a high-paying job or a lot of money in the bank. The Bible teaches us that our safety and security come not from our paychecks but from the knowledge that each of us is a child of the King. Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"

C. *Will there be a report card?* This ties in with the first question. Many of us believe that our money belongs to us, so we don't envision any accountability for what we do with it. Matthew 25:14-30 makes it very clear that we will be judged on how we handled the money entrusted to us. Our checkbook reveals a lot about our priorities. Before collecting an offering, someone once prayed, "O Lord, no matter what we say or what we do, here is what we think of You."

As I've asked these questions, perhaps you've realized that your giving is not what it needs to be. Now, I want to give you some positive reasons for improving your giving. The only reason some people can think of for giving is "because I have to" or "because I feel guilty if I don't." But I want you to look at giving not as something you have to do but as something you want to do.

II. THREE REASONS YOU SHOULD WANT TO GIVE

A. *What you keep, you lose; what you give, you keep!* Most of us think, "The utilities I paid for and the stereo I bought—at least I got something for my money. But the money I gave to the church, it's just gone." That's not true; in fact, that idea is completely backward! All the stuff we bought, we'll leave behind when we leave this world. But the money we gave that the Kingdom of God might increase, we will see the dividends of that as "treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). Investment firms say, "Invest for the long term." I couldn't agree more: invest for eternity.

B. *Giving will bring you more joy than hoarding!* Where did we get the unwise idea that we can get more joy out of buying something else for ourselves than we can out of giving generously to someone? If you want more bang for your buck, try spending your money on someone else. Their joy will bring you lasting joy.

C. *You cannot outgive God!* Luke 6:38 says, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. . . ." Second Corinthians 9:6 says, "He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, but he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully." I'm not talking about a shallow health-and-wealth, God's-gonna-make-you-rich gospel, because God's greatest blessings are rarely in the form of money. I simply mean God desires to bless you in so many ways. If your giving is not where it needs to be and you've decided this morning that you want to do better, where do you start?

III. A COUPLE OF QUICK SUGGESTIONS

A. *You've got to commit to an amount to give.* If your finances are a mess and you can't commit to a tithe or offering right away, you can commit to tithe and to a specific dollar amount for offerings each payday that will come off the top. If you only give from what is left over, you're not going to give God anything. Ellen G. White says, "If you have refused to deal honestly with God, I beseech you to think of your deficiency, and if possible to make restitution. If this cannot be done, in humble penitence pray that God for Christ's sake will pardon your great debt. Begin now to act like Christians. Make no excuse for failing to give the Lord His own."³

Consider also what she says: "The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had, and then gave Himself. The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour. The principle there illustrated is to give, give, give. This, carried out in actual benevolence and good works, is the true fruit of the Christian life. The principle of worldlings is to get, get, get, and thus they expect to secure happiness; but, carried out in all its bearings, the fruit is misery and death."⁴

B. *Commit to increasing the amount you give.* You might decide every year that you're going to increase a specific percent in offerings. You find the timing and amount that are plausible for you. As your finances straighten up, you can slowly move toward the level of giving you want to be at based on the systematic benevolence plan.

CONCLUSION

This is not about you and the church budget; this is about you and your relationship with God. Ellen G. White says: "The most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice is self-denial."⁵

Does your giving "stop" at nothing, or does your giving stop at "nothing"?



¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 21, 22.

² ———, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 351.

³ ———, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

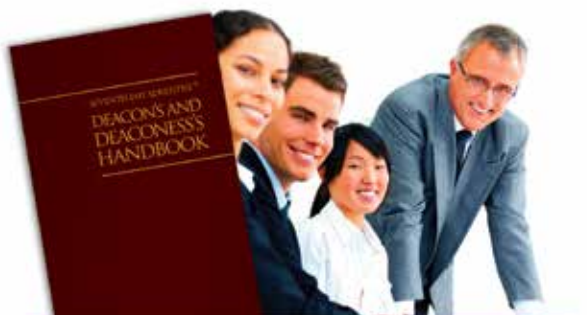
PASTOR'S SALARY

BECAUSE HE DIVIDES HIS TIME BETWEEN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES IN HIS DISTRICT, THE PASTOR SPENDS VERY LITTLE TIME AT THE LOCAL CHURCH. SHOULD HE RECEIVE FROM THE TITHE, CONSIDERING THAT THE LOCAL WORK IS PERFORMED BY VOLUNTEER MEMBERS?

If you have a question about church policy or procedure, let us know! Every quarter we address these issues in our "Question and Answer" column, and we would love to hear from you! E-mail us at garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

The Levites and even the priests from Aaron's family dedicated much less time to the Tabernacle or Temple than a pastor dedicates to the church today, and that did not take away their right to the tithe. If it's based on the time dedicated to the service of the church, the pastor's dedication is much greater than the leaders in Bible times. On the other hand, in most cases the pastor ministers to several churches but does not receive a salary from each one of them; he receives one salary to take care of all. As for the working time of the Levites, even when they were still a small tribe, they totaled thousands of members (Num. 4:47-49; 1 Chron. 23:1-4) who lived in their "cities of refuge" (Num. 35) and only went to work in the service of the temple following a schedule system which did not include working every day or every week. Not all of them had priestly duties. Thousands served as judges, administrators, and other officials. Some would serve for their entire lives as gatekeepers, wood providers, musicians, keepers of part of the sanctuary, etc. (See 1 Chron. 23:4 to chapter 25). They worked for 25 years but received wages from the tithe all their lives, before and after they reached 50 years of age, when they became counselors of the younger generation (Num. 8:24, 25). In fact, their pay was based not on what they did in the temple but on their total and exclusive dedication as ministers for life. They would teach, administer, and represent their God before the people—they were doctrine-keepers. This is the type of ministry God expects as described in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. Despite its imperfections, Adventist ministry follows the biblical example. This type of work cannot be evaluated with the criteria used to measure other common duties. ED

General Conference Ministerial Association



DEACONS and DEACONESS
www.eldersdigest.org



www.eldersdigest.org
VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE

MINISTERING IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY

Tragedy is a fact of life. In the past year, terrorist bombings, active shooter incidents in schools and churches, and natural disasters occurring worldwide claimed many lives and critically injured more. As ministry leaders, we cannot shield ourselves or our congregations from heartbreak.

Christ warned us tragic times would come. He also promised He would be with us through every moment (Matt. 28:20). This knowledge gives us hope and comfort and helps us cope with loss and grief.

THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDST OF TRAGEDY

Ministry leaders are primary points of contact for the bereaved. When a tragedy occurs, church leaders provide emotional support and spiritual guidance for those who experience loss. Tragic deaths, such as young person's suicide or mass shooting casualties, affect an entire congregation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The church's greatest strength is its ability to provide hope and comfort in a time of grief. As spiritual leaders, reach out to those who are hurting and provide for their spiritual needs. Pray with the bereaved and remind them of God's love through their time of suffering. Demonstrate compassion and sympathy through the use of active listening skills. Bereaved individuals are reassured when they believe you hear them, and their emotions are validated.

Equally important is the ability for church leaders to create a safe place for people to grieve together. Open the worship space for prayer vigils. Hold a community meeting to discuss the tragedy. Creating a safe space for those not directly impacted gives other church members the chance to mourn and find support from each other.

Another option is to hold a meeting with the congregation following a service. Members can then openly dialogue with each other and their spiritual leaders about their experiences, emotions, and concerns about the situation.

These events do not have to be structured, but someone must be designated to make certain all members have a chance to be heard. It is important that everyone involved understands that these meetings are not meant to be group

therapy sessions. Limit conversations to the subjects of the tragedy and those directly impacted.


WHEN TO SEEK OUTSIDE SUPPORT

Many times church and spiritual leaders are sought after by bereaved members to render counseling services. Unless the leader has been trained in clinical counseling or another counseling discipline, providing psychological therapy goes beyond their scope of practice. It may be necessary to meet with the individual(s) once or twice to determine if their needs are of a spiritual or psychological nature.

If the needs are of a psychological nature, such as grief counseling or family therapy, refer the bereaved to trained professional counselors. Ministry leaders should have a referral list of appropriate counselors and social workers for domestic and child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, marriage and family therapy, and individual counseling.

When an event affects an entire congregation, leaders can network with local professional counselors or aid agencies on behalf of their members. Churches can also assist bereaved members by posting flyers, brochures, or contact information for trusted organizations such as Adventist Community Services, The American Red Cross, The Volunteers of America, or Children's Disaster Services. Organizations such as these are trained to provide aid and mental health counseling for those coping with large-scale disasters.

GIVE LOVE AND HOPE

Utilizing outside help is not a sign of weak faith or distrust in God. God knew that the hardships of a sinful world would threaten to overwhelm us; therefore we are counseled to bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2). As Christians, the greatest help we can give to those who are hurting are the gifts of love and hope. Love for each other and hope in a loving God who watches over us, grieves with us, and longs for the day when He can gather us to Himself to wipe every tear from our eyes. 

Asheley Woodruff, writing on behalf of Adventist Risk Management, Inc. in this piece, is a licensed clinical counselor and writer. She has authored articles on bullying prevention and is a contributor to the 2015 parenting devotional, *Help! I'm A Parent*. Asheley lives with her family near Washington, D.C., USA, where they enjoy hiking, camping, and visiting the sites in the nation's capital.



Adventist Risk
Management, Inc.



There's no place like home.

Home can be many places. Grandma's house, the neighborhood playground, or your father's shoulders. As Seventh-day Adventists, we find spiritual comfort in our home church. But what happens when we can't go to church because of flooding, roof damage, or equipment failure?

With Adventist Risk Management, Inc., your home church is protected from the top of the steeple to the floorboards beneath the pews. You can have complete peace of mind when you're home away from home.

...our ministry is to **protect** your ministry[®]

AdventistRisk.org



GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES: NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND YOU

As mentioned in my previous column, the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organizations (WHO) have renewed their commitment to improve the health of communities, countries, and the world by identifying 17 new health-related goals for the next 15 years, calling them *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG).¹

SDG goal #3 is devoted to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,” and one of its three top priorities is to “reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases [NCD] through prevention and treatment, by 2030.”² According to a WHO report, 63% of global deaths in 2008 were due to NCDs—especially cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases—and as the years pass by, deaths from NCD continue to rise worldwide affecting both high and low income populations.³ NCDs are the most frequent causes of death in most countries, except in Africa, but even in African nations, deaths from NCDs are rising fast and “are expected to exceed communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases as the most common causes of death by 2030.”⁴

The good news is that a large percentage of NCDs are preventable through the reduction of four main health behaviors: tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy diet.


What does this have to do with mission and how can we make a positive impact for Christ in our community? Because many of these SDGs refer to key global health issues, we can use Christ’s method found in the book *Ministry of Healing* (p. 143), and help meet these needs. This is one of the relevant ways each elder can participate in the effort to *Reach the World* with a message of hope.

So, how to do this? First, by our example. Choosing healthy behaviors that may reduce premature death in our own lives will benefit not only us, but motivate others to do the same. We can become more intentionally involved, for instance, by increasing the amount of fruits, vegetables and whole grains daily or by prioritizing physical activity and tracking it daily through fun programs such as *InStep for Life*.⁵

Secondly, we can promote these health behaviors in innovative and positive ways among all age groups using the many resources available through *Comprehensive Health Ministry* resources. We will feature some of these resources as they relate to the top NCDs in the next issues.



As we answer the call for *Total Member Involvement* in our mission, our example and our efforts to reach others are important. The inspired counsel we have received reminds us, “Let them find out what constitutes true health reform and teach its principles, both by precept and by a quiet, consistent example.”⁶

May God be glorified as we consider ways we can become more intentionally involved in sharing His love by meeting the health needs of individuals, families, and communities around us, remembering that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, it should be all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). 

¹ World Health Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/media-centre/events/meetings/2015/un-sustainable-development-summit/en/>. Or <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>.

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

³ http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report_summary_en.pdf?ua=1

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <http://www.adventistsinstepforlife.org/>

⁶ EGW, *Counsels on Health*, 334.



Katia Reinert is associate director of the Health Ministries Department for the General Conference.

PORNOGRAPHY

Diverse courts and cultures may debate the definitions and consequences of pornography (the literature of sexual deviance), but on the basis of eternal principles, Seventh-day Adventists of whatever culture deem pornography to be destructive, demeaning, desensitizing, and exploitative.

It is destructive to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is demeaning, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is desensitizing to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is exploitative, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization." -Saturday Review of Literature, Sept. 20, 1975.

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

Wise, indeed, is the counsel of Christianity's first great theologian: "If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good" (Philippians 4:8, 9, *Phillips*). This is advice that all Christians would do well to heed.



This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Welcome to the Family
By Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

Welcome to the Family will help you integrate newly-baptized members into the local congregation. It involves inviting the entire church to attend one program per week over a period of six weeks.

Each two-hour program begins with a fellowship meal and music, followed by a time of learning about health, spiritual and church dynamics, and, most importantly, family and relationship issues.

Programs include:

- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Love Works
- Parenting
- Growing in Christ
- Celebrating Your Church Family

Improve new member retention by hosting a *Welcome to the Family* program in your church and helping all members build friendships, strengthen family bonds, and improve their relationships.

Includes a CD with PowerPoint presentations and handouts.

Catalog #351794
US\$19.95 each

Find more resources at
www.adventsource.org or call 402.486.8800

AdventSource

EVERYBODY BELONGS, EVERYBODY SERVES:

INCLUSIVE WORSHIP FOR THE DISABLED

In his article “Gospel Accountability: When Can Special-Needs Adults Understand the Gospel?” Gene Nabi states, “Anyone with a disability, however severe, can come into God’s kingdom. They can be as receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit as anyone else. To question whether anyone has the capacity to come into the kingdom questions the power of the Holy Spirit.” Since differently-abled individuals are given the capacity to come into the kingdom (created and called by God and able to respond to God’s calling—Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:10), how much more we should embrace that they, too, should also minister for the kingdom (specially gifted and invited to participate in ministry by God—1 Cor. 12:4, 7)?

Many times churches offer only two options for those with disabilities: miraculous healing or heroic suffering. Neither option is acceptable to people with disabilities. According to the Bible, the church’s role is to promote wholeness and abundant life in Jesus (John 10:10). Wholeness does not always mean that disability or illness will be removed. When people are accepted as they are, they are empowered to move toward wholeness. The healing ministry of Jesus was concerned with the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. This meaning has been obscured wherever persons with disabilities become “victims” of healing rather than persons whose lives are healed.

Your church’s planning for worship inclusion can provide for wholeness of mind, body, and spirit by building on four principles:

- All people are created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26).
- All people are called by God (Eph. 2:10).
- All people have special gifts (1 Cor. 12:4).
- All people are invited to participate in God’s ministry (1 Cor. 12:7).

Beyond signing ministries or wheelchair ramps, little evidence can be found for our purposeful attempts to include everyone in the worship and activities of the church. As part of your weekly worship planning, consider strategies that will enable all people to feel included as they participate in worship. Persons with disabilities are wonderful ministers to others; they are not solely to be the recipients of ministry. Expand your disability ministry and provide information to both your congregation and the community regarding your inclusive worship opportunities.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Instead of offering only a Sign Interpretation Ministry, broaden it to Disability Ministry and look for opportunities to address other disabilities.
2. Conduct a basic assessment of your church’s accessibility or bring in a consultant for a full and formal assessment.
3. Make sure church members know it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people.
4. Train pastors, elders, ministry leaders, and church staff on disability awareness.
5. Many of the people in our congregations are elderly and may have developed disabilities, particularly physical or sensory impairments. As the age of a congregation increases, so does the incidence of disability. Therefore, we need to be aware of people’s needs on an ongoing basis.
6. Review church activities regularly to make sure they are accessible to disabled people.
7. Review your church website to consider its accessibility.

WORSHIP PLANNING SUGGESTIONS

1. When planning worship services, consider the abilities and disabilities of those you hope to include. Consider persons with disabilities who might serve as liturgists, ushers, communion servers, and preachers—all the ways people who are able-bodied might share their gifts with the church.
2. Ask people with disabilities how they want to participate in the sacramental celebrations of the church. Don’t presume to know or make decisions on their behalf.
3. Develop an awareness of the forms and amount of physical movement involved in worship. Consider the amount of time spent standing, kneeling, and sitting in worship. The flow among these movements may seem appropriate, but for some people—whether able-bodied or disabled—too much time may be spent in one of these postures. Solicit and be receptive to feedback. Help create worship services and spaces that welcome diverse forms of physical participation. Communicate clearly, both in attitude and in print, that anyone may choose not to participate in any action on the basis of comfort or conscience.
4. Provide general guidelines to your greeters and ushers on

how to interact with persons with various disabilities, including hearing impairment, speech impairment, mobility impairment, learning disabilities, and other disabilities.

5. Encourage the use of multiple cues in worship. Combine simple printed directions in the bulletin with oral and physical cues that facilitate the participation of all people in worship. For example, when the congregation should stand, a simple indication in the bulletin combined with the verbal cue "please rise as you are able" and the physical cue of raising one's arms effectively provide multiple cues to the congregation.

DISABILITY-SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

- *Inclusion of people with intellectual impairment.* People with an intellectual disability tend to learn more easily by using their senses of sight, touch, smell, and taste, rather than listening to words. Active learning is more effective than passive learning. The use of physical and visual props is very effective. Therefore, the use of drama, mime, music, and visual effects is very effective when including people with intellectual disabilities in worship, and, in fact, for the inclusion of all people.

- *Inclusion of people with physical disabilities.* Mobility and access will be the two crucial issues for the inclusion of people with physical disabilities. Once the disabled person is in the building, help him or her find an appropriate place to sit. Ask what his or her preference is for seating. It is often helpful to

position a wheelchair within the body of the congregation rather than in an isolated position. A person with a walker or a cane will probably be more comfortable at the end of a row so that access is more readily obtained.

- *Inclusion of people with visual impairment.* Ask the person where he or she wishes to be seated. The position of lighting may be important. The provision of large-print hymnals, Bibles, orders of service, and well-lit and positioned hymn number boards or screens are important for those with little or no vision. It is important to have someone to accompany the person so that a commentary can be given on aspects of the service that are not auditory.

- *Inclusion of people with hearing impairment.* A clear amplification system that doesn't distort the spoken word is essential. Speakers need to speak distinctly, not too quickly, and should always face the congregation. A hearing loop facility is also necessary. Visual cues—hymn number boards, designation of readings, and printed orders of service—should match the spoken word whenever possible. The gestures and facial expressions of worship leaders are also important. ED

Michelle Riley Jones is Minister for Music and Worship at the Capitol Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C., USA. This article first appeared in *Best Practice*, August 31, 2015. It has been lightly edited for *Elder's Digest*.

SOLUTIONS ALLTECH OFFERS THE BEST TECHNOLOGY FOR RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, AND CORPORATE SEGMENTS.

We serve all World Divisions with shorter delivery time and competitive prices. We will be glad to guide you in the best video and audio purchase for your church.

Have you Church Equipped
Special Package for Easter Week

Infocus Projector IN112

With 3200 Lumens
SVGA Resolution
3D Ready



Portable PA System Sw212

Speaker and
Wireless Mic
Recommended for a 300
Member church or Less



Price

\$ 879.00

dollars

AmpliVox Sound Systems S222 Audio Portable Buddy

It's perfect for all presentations. Increase your vocal stamina for those long business meetings, increasing your sales with sound and multimedia clean clear presentations. Reach a wider audience with clear and clean loud sound, no matter what the occasion for an audience of 1000 people. The S222 comes with 50 watts stereo amplifier and battery up to 200 hours. Product Dimensions: 11"H x 13.5"W x 4.5"D. Product Weight: 4 lbs. without batteries, 8 lbs. with batteries



WE SELL THE ONLY PROJECTOR
WITHOUT LAMP CASIO PROJECTORS.
DON'T EVER BUY PROJECTOR
LAMP AGAIN!!



SOLUTIONS
ALLTECH
GROUP

WWW.SOLUTIONSALLTECH.COM
WWW.ALLTECHBR.COM.BR

Phones
(954) 740-1715- Cell
(561) 530-3495-Office

Solutions Alltech Group
102 NE 2nd ST - Suite 354
Boca Raton, FL 33432- USA
waller@solutionsalltechgroup.com

LESSONS FROM DANIEL 5

IN THIS CHAPTER THE LAST BABYLONIAN KING APPEARS: BELSHAZZAR. IN THE PAST, CRITICS HAD CONSIDERED THE BOOK OF DANIEL TO BE HISTORICALLY UNRELIABLE. AT THAT TIME NOT A SINGLE HISTORIAN NOR OTHER MATERIAL WAS KNOWN TO MENTION BELSHAZZAR. THEN THE CYLINDER OF CYRUS AND A NUMBER OF CLAY TABLETS APPEARED AND CONFIRMED THAT BELSHAZZAR HAD LIVED. HE WAS CO-REGENT WITH HIS FATHER NABONIDUS. WHILE NABONIDUS STAYED OUTSIDE THE CITY OF BABYLON, BELSHAZZAR WAS RULING IN BABYLON, AND IT IS WITH BELSHAZZAR THAT DANIEL CAME IN CONTACT. SO THE BOOK OF DANIEL IS RELIABLE. THE BABYLONIAN KINGS AFTER NEBUCHADNEZZAR WERE AMEL-MARDUK (EVIL-MERODACH), NERGAL-SHAREZER (NERIGLISSAR), LABASHI-MARDUK, NABONIDUS, AND BELSHAZZAR.

I. DISCUSSION OF THE CHAPTER

A. The Banquet

1. **Verses 1-4**—*Although the Medes and Persians besieged the city, a huge banquet was held at the Babylonian court. What was the problem with the banquet?*

- The attendant guests and court officials got terribly drunk.
- They lost their sense of reality, and the group ignored the impending danger of the siege.
- The party desecrated the holy vessels of the Jerusalem temple (cf. 2 Chron. 36:18-21). Nebuchadnezzar insisted on not blaspheming the God of the Hebrews (Dan. 3:29).
- Idols were worshipped.
- *What are the effects of alcohol?*
- It decreases inhibitions—for example, with regard to sexuality—and encourages foul speech and blasphemy.
- The capacity of reaction declines.
- Self-control diminishes.
- One's health suffers. In some cases, permanent damage is done.

Obviously Daniel himself abstained from consuming alcohol (Dan. 1:8). The Bible warns us against drinking alcohol (see Prov. 23:31-35). But even if people consume alcohol and are intoxicated, they are still responsible for their actions. So was Belshazzar.

“His father Nebuchadnezzar”—In Scripture the term “father” also refers to grandfather, ancestor,

and even predecessor. Jesus is called “Son of David,” although many generations had passed between him and David. Nebuchadnezzar was quite likely Belshazzar’s grandfather.

B. The Writing on the Wall

1. **Verse 5**—Praising the Babylonian gods meant at the same time to blaspheme the God of the Jews. God reacted immediately. Fingers wrote on the wall. However, God does not always react immediately. In some cases the judgment comes later—sometimes only at the final judgment. *Which examples come to mind?*

- Immediate judgments: Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Achan (Josh. 7), and the man collecting wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).
- Later judgments: David and the consequences of his adultery (2 Sam. 12-18), Pilate’s banishment, Moses’ death outside the Promised Land (Deut. 34:4).
- Final judgment: the murderers of Jesus (Rev. 1:7; 20).

2. **Verse 6**—*What might Belshazzar have felt and thought when he saw the handwriting on the wall?*

- Horror and fear.
- Guilt.
- Impotence.

He must have been almost paralyzed, and his legs trembled.

3. **Verses 7, 8**—Belshazzar turned to his astrologers and wise men for an explanation of the phenomenon. He promised the third position in the kingdom

to the one able to interpret the writing. (While Pharaoh promised Joseph the second position in the kingdom, Belshazzar was only able to offer the third position. As co-regent with his father he himself was the second ruler.) Again the wise men and magicians proved their inability to interpret divine messages.

4. **Verse 9**—*Why did Belshazzar become more terrified when the wise men had no interpretation?*
- It may have dawned on him that this was a supernatural event.
 - Obviously, he expected some kind of disaster.
 - Possibly he feared a god that could harm him.
- The other dignitaries and guests were also affected.

C. Daniel is Introduced

1. **Verses 10-12**—*The queen or queen mother encouraged Belshazzar and pointed him to Daniel. Why was Daniel not one of the wise men brought to the king earlier? According to Daniel 2:48 he was their chief administrator.*
- It is quite likely that he no longer held that position.
 - He may have no longer served at the royal court.
 - Nebuchadnezzar's successors pursued different political goals. They may have known about how God revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar but rejected God. So they most likely also rejected Daniel. This may have been a reason why under the Medes and Persians Daniel quickly reacquired a high position.

D. Belshazzar and Daniel

1. **Verse 13**—Again Daniel was being discriminated against. In spite of the high position under his grandfather, Belshazzar addressed him as a prisoner.
2. **Verses 14-16**—The king admitted his helplessness and mentioned Daniel's wisdom. Again he promised a reward.

E. Daniel's Speech and Interpretation of the Handwriting

1. **Verse 17**—*Why did Daniel reject the reward*
As a prophet of God he did not work for pay (cf. Mic. 3:11, 12).
- Belshazzar had blasphemed God.
 - Daniel knew about the fall of Babylon. A high office in the Babylonian kingdom could have been dangerous.
 - He did not want to become selfish.
2. **Verses 18-23**—*Daniel was again very courageous and willing to speak his mind. Of what does he accuse Belshazzar?*
- That he did not learn from Nebuchadnezzar's experience.
 - That he opposed the true God and Lord who has everything in His hand (vv. 18, 19, 21, 23; see also Dan. 4).
 - That he was proud as Nebuchadnezzar had been.

- That he did not use his knowledge in a responsible way.

Daniel's talk consisted of a review of Nebuchadnezzar's experience and a rebuke of Belshazzar.

3. **Verses 24-28**—*The writing was in Aramaic. Why then did the wise men not understand it?*

Possible answers:

- A few of the words made the meaning of the message unclear.
- The consumption of alcohol may have hindered the people from understanding the message.
- The writing was only readable and/or understandable by receiving divine illumination.

"Weighed and found deficient" is true also today. There is a judgment of God that affects all human beings. Where do I find myself?

F. Daniel's Reward and the Execution of the Judgment

1. **Verse 29**—The king fulfilled his promise.
2. **Verse 30**—Belshazzar died the very same night. Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. Jeremiah's prediction (Jer. 51:31, 32, 56-58) was beginning to be fulfilled with the events that took place in 539 BC. The Jews were able to return from exile. One cannot play games with God.

II. APPLICATION

- Reasons for the judgment (vv. 20, 22):
 - (1) Humanity's pride. People are opposed to God and separate from Him (consider humanism and materialism).
 - (2) The pleasure principle. People live only for pleasure.
 - (3) No willingness to learn. Knowledge that would be available is not being utilized. The Scriptures are accessible to almost all of us but we may ignore them. Jesus wants to live in us, and we may allow Him partial access only. This is unbelief.
- Effects of the judgment (Dan. 5):
 - (1) Death of the sinners.
 - (2) Justification of God.
 - (3) Liberation of the people of God. How to escape the judgment: Committing one's life in faith to God (John 5:24).

III. CONCLUSION

We should not fear God in the negative sense. His goal is to save humanity. On the other hand, we should not feel free to disregard His will. It is unbelief and disobedience that bring about judgment.



Ekkehardt Mueller is an associate director for the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference World Headquarters. This article has been reprinted, by permission, from *Reflections*, the BRI Newsletter, edited by Elias Brasil de Souza.

HOW TO SPEND AN HOUR IN PRAYER

As we look at the life of Christ, we see a life of continual connection with God. Jesus often spent time alone in prayer early in the morning (Luke 5:16) and in the evening (Matt. 14:23). He also spent entire nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). “His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.”¹ And yet we, who look to Christ as an example, ask, “How can anyone possibly pray all day—or even for an entire hour?” Below is a guide for how to structure an hour in prayer with 10 scripturally-based aspects. Conveniently, each hour can be divided into 10 six-minute points of focus, allowing specific time for each of these vital areas. Of course, some of these aspects may require only a minute, while others—such as intercessory prayer for the world—will require far more than a mere six minutes.

Before we can begin our prayer, we should take time to quiet our minds and remove distractions when coming into God's presence (Ps. 37:7; Isa. 40:31; Lam. 3:25). This may be done through the reading of a devotional or by listening to spiritual music. It may mean going to a special corner



of your home, one that is set aside for time with God. This preparation involves simply taking time to let God love you and to bask in His presence.

1. *Praise/adoration* (Ex. 15:1, 2; Ps. 63:1-5; Matt. 6:9-10; Rev. 4:6-11; 5:12; 19:6). All prayer should begin with recognition of God's nature. The Lord's Prayer—our model for all prayers—begins with “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” Praise is that aspect of prayer which vocally esteems God for His virtues and accomplishments. There are four reasons for adoration:

- a. Adoration sets the tone for the entire prayer.
- b. Adoration reminds us of God's identity and inclination.
- c. Adoration purifies the one who is praying.
- d. God is worthy of adoration.

2. *Confession* (Ps. 51; 139:23, 24; Jer. 3:12, 13; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 John 1:9, 10). The psalmist asked God to search his heart for unconfessed sin. He knew that sin was one of the greatest roadblocks to answered prayer. Early in our prayers, we need to make time for confession. This clears the way for powerful praying. Confession has three primary benefits:

- a. Your conscience will be cleansed.
- b. You will be flooded with relief that God has a forgiving nature.
- c. You will feel free to pray.

3. *The Word* (Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 119; Jer. 23:29; 2 Tim. 3:16). “The commandment of the Lord [his Word] is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:7). When we bring God's Word into our prayer, we are opening our eyes to new possibilities in God. Here we bring actual Scripture into our prayer. We take the example of Peter and John in Acts 4:23-30 as they prayed for the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Old Testament, acknowledging the power of God against those who wanted to harm them. Read God's Word and pray God's Word. We can never pray out of God's will when we pray God's Word.

4. *Intercession* (Ps. 2:8; Matt. 9:35-39; John 17; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2). Our prayer now centers on intercession for a lost and dying world. This means praying for others who have desperate needs. Pray for:

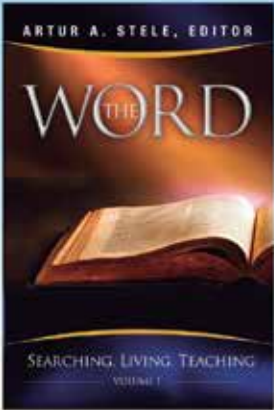
- a. Ministry.
- b. The spiritual and physical needs of people in the church and around the world.

- c. Family.
 - d. Friends and colleagues.
5. *Petition* (Ps. 23; Matt. 6:11-13, 33; 7:7-11; Luke 11:1-13; James 4:2, 3). This aspect of prayer concerns our personal needs. Petition is included in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." To petition God is to present our need to God through prayer.
6. *Thanksgiving* (Ps. 100; 136; Phil. 4:6). When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he instructed them to offer prayer and supplication "with thanksgiving." Thanksgiving differs from praise in that praise recognizes God for who He is, while thanksgiving recognizes God for specific things He has done. Thank God for:
- a. Answered prayers.
 - b. Spiritual blessings.
 - c. Relational blessings.
 - d. Material blessings.
7. *Singing* (Ps. 111-113; Col. 3:16). "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Many Christians have learned the beauty of singing a "new" song unto God during prayer. These songs may be psalms or hymns, or they may come straight from the heart with the Holy Spirit creating the melody. To sing unto the Lord is to worship Him.
8. *Listening* (1 Kings 19:11-14; Ps. 37:7; 40:1; Eccl. 5:1-3; John 10:2-4). Whether through His written Word or by the inner "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit, God speaks to praying Christians. But we must take time to listen.

- a. Don't be uncomfortable with silence.
 - b. What you hear from God will be in harmony with His Word.
 - c. God may tell you of personal changes to be made or of people to reach, or He may just tell you that He loves you.
9. *Commitment* (Ps. 31:5; 37:5; Prov. 16:3; John 13:17). When we pray, we should take time to recommit and dedicate ourselves to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Each day we should make a new commitment to walk with our Creator and be submitted to His will.
10. *Praise* (Ps. 135; 150; Matt. 6:13). We began our prayer by recognizing God's nature, and we end in similar fashion, praising Him for His sovereignty. Jesus taught this when He ended His prayer with the statement, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."
- Everyone has a different prayer life, and what I have outlined above are just suggestions. Developing a prayer habit will lead you into a ministry that changes you and the world around you. ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 93.

S. Joseph Kidder is a professor of church growth and leadership at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.




The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching


Arising from the International Bible and Mission Conferences held worldwide, this book is a first! Designed to provide busy pastors and teachers with the best thinking on current topics of discussion including the nature of inspiration, the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, the Trinity, the Incarnation as a model for mission, contextualization, and many more. Several chapters are also devoted to key issues in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Altogether, the book's nineteen chapters represent clear and concise treatments of the most important subjects for Seventh-day Adventists today by sixteen well-known authors, teachers, and church leaders.

Regular price US\$17.99 plus S+H



SOON AVAILABLE ON



adventistbiblicalresearch.org | 301.680.6790

CRAVING ANSWERS IN UKRAINE



Marina headed for work with a light heart, her face turned up to the sunny sky. Spring had finally arrived after the long months of frigid winter, and she relished seeing the cheerful colors of the season's first flowers.

Nearing her workplace, Marina saw some strange marks on the ground. Moving closer, she peered at what appeared to be ashes. Marina knew what that meant, and her blood ran cold. She sprinted home as quickly as she could, with one thought in her mind: "I'm going to die."

It was April 1986, and Marina's job was near the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine. The ashes she had seen were the result of the atomic block's catastrophic explosion, and Marina was frighteningly aware of the effect radiation has on the human body. Her whole life had just been turned upside down.

Miraculously, Marina survived, with no ill effects. She moved to another city, got married, and had children. But she was constantly haunted by the feeling that her life would soon come to an end.

In 1998, she accidentally found a radio program about God. Within a week, Marina and her children began eagerly waiting for the next broadcast of a program called *The Voice of Hope*.

Marina requested the Bible studies that were offered on the program, and as soon as she had completed the entire course, she was baptized. Today, Marina and her family are enjoying a close walk with God and are members of the Adventist church. The fears that haunted Marina for so long have disappeared.

SPIRITUAL RE-AWAKENING

"Traditionally in Ukraine, people rarely attended church, but they still considered themselves believers, usually in the Orthodox church," says Konstantin Halchynskiy, the new manager of AWR Ukraine. "As a consequence of the military operations in the east part of the country, people have started to become more interested in spiritual things and are even starting to attend Prot-

estant churches, becoming more active in church activities, and requesting baptism. People are interested in politics, although they are very disappointed in it. Their top issues are safety and thoughts of their future."

Adventist radio outreach is thriving. The five permanent employees of AWR Ukraine—a manager, three presenters, and an editor—are young and active, promising and purposeful. One or two employees of Hope Channel Ukraine (TV) also make audio programs for *The Voice of Hope* radio program.

MAJOR INVESTMENT IN NEW STATIONS


AWR has been broadcasting Ukrainian programs for 20 years, on shortwave and two large networks: Ukrainian National Radio 1 and 2. This network encompasses cable radio, 68 ultra-shortwave transmitters, 4 medium-wave transmitters, and 108 FM stations. Together, these broadcasts reach 15 million homes.

But Adventist leaders in Ukraine have an even greater vision for sharing the gospel through radio. When the government made more than 30 new licenses available last year, AWR funded the church's applications.

"We were hoping that the Ukraine Union Conference would receive one license," says AWR president Dowell Chow, "but they were granted nine! We never expected that! There were a lot of big players also applying, but the Lord rewarded the church's efforts."

AWR will fund all of the equipment for the new undertaking, and will provide financial assistance for production and operating costs over the next five years, until the union is able to shoulder the full costs. This investment by AWR will amount to between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

People in the large capital city of Kyiv (Kiev) can hear short weekly segments on the current national network, but this new expansion will increase the potential audience by half a million listeners. Small local production teams will be developed over time in some locations, augmented by programs shared by the central studio in Kyiv. "The church leaders in Ukraine had this dream, and their tremendous enthusiasm speaks volumes," Chow says.

"In some regions, radio is the only way for people to communicate with the outside world, the only way to hear about God," Halchynskiy says. "Radio reaches places where we can't even reach with television. In the current war situation, radio is a kind light that warms people and gives them hope." 

Shelley Nolan Freesland is Adventist World Radio Communication director at the General Conference world headquarters.

In Ukraine, 15 million listeners have been hearing AWR on the national radio networks. Now, we are helping to launch 9 new FM stations across the country.

AWR's ministry continues to grow around the world, reaching more and more people with the voice of hope.

"On Sunday morning, I wait for the time of your voice, telling us that Jesus is standing and knocking at our doors."

- Stephan, Listener in Ukraine



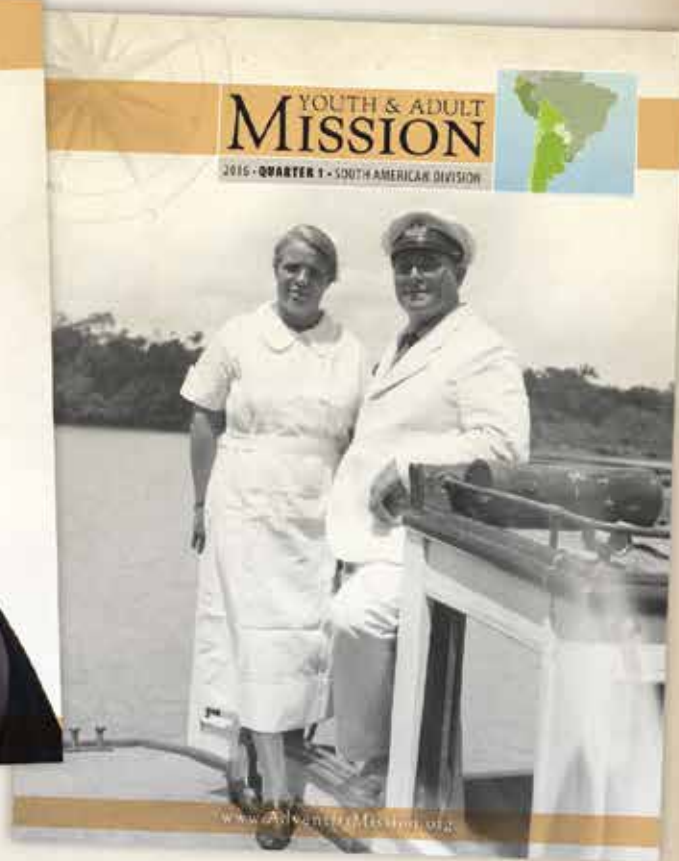
ANNUAL OFFERING

MARCH 12, 2016

learn more at AWR.ORG | [@AWRWEB](https://twitter.com/AWRWEB) | [AWRWEB](https://www.facebook.com/AWRWEB)

AM/FM | SHORTWAVE | PODCASTS | ON DEMAND

TELL ME A STORY



We're never too young—or too old—to enjoy a good story!

Each week your *Mission* quarterly contains exciting and inspiring stories featuring people around the world. These stories can be shared just about anywhere, anytime—Sabbath School, children's stories, worships, Pathfinder meetings, prayer meetings, and more!

Don't miss out! If your Sabbath School or church isn't receiving the *Mission* quarterlies for youth and adults, and for children, just send an email to missionquarterlies@gc.adventist.org for an absolutely free subscription! Or download your copy today at adventistmission.org.

