

quarterly resource for local church elders † july/september 2009

ELDER'S DIGEST



**CHURCH
ADMINISTRATION**
THE NOMINATION FOR THE OFFICE OF ELDER

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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 RATES AND ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send all subscriptions and address changes to eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org or *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6516.

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FACING THE FUTURE *with* CONFIDENCE

Some Christians respond successfully to adversity. By "successfully," I mean that despite the adversity in their lives, their faith is strengthened, their walk with God grows, and they continue to draw close to Him and receive His blessings and provision for their lives.

Unfortunately, not every Christian responds well to adversity. Some people are defeated rather than victorious as they face life's many problems. Instead of praising God and walking in faith and perseverance, they develop a "woe is me" attitude. Adversity has no beneficial effect because of their response. There are certain principles we can apply that will help us respond to adversity successfully.

EXPECT ADVERSITY

The key to overcoming adversity is to realize it is the norm in the Christian life. This does not mean that believers should seek out adversity or trouble. This does not mean we should consider every problem an attack from Satan. It just means we should realize that, like all people, God's blessed and loved people will face adversity.

Because this is true, none of us should be surprised by adversity; rather, we should expect it. Jesus Himself said, "In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The apostle Paul said, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The apostle Peter said, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12). James, Jesus' brother, said, "Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2).

No matter how spiritual or faithful, every believer will face troubles and trials. We should expect adversity; recognizing it will help us overcome adversity successfully.



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

PERSEVERE DURING ADVERSITY

If we want to be spiritually successful and experience the blessed life God intends for us, we must be strong in our faith. This will enable us to persevere during adversity.

Life can be unfair. People and circumstances can harm you. Those you trusted may steal from you—possessions, position, or reputation. When this happens, you will have a choice: to look back at what has been lost or to look ahead in faith, waiting for God to provide.

BELIEVE GOD WILL BLESS

Christians must persevere to overcome adversity. I do not believe humans by themselves are capable of overcoming any obstacle to ultimately achieve success. Believers persevere, not because they believe in the power of perseverance, but rather because they believe in the power of God. Believers are able to endure and persevere because they know that God can bless them despite adversity. We are able to overcome adversity if we believe God can bless us in spite of it. We must be able to say, "God blessed me once, and He can do it again."

GOOD CAN COME FROM ADVERSITY

We will be able to face and respond to troubles and trials with courage if we recognize the good that God can bring out of them. You may say to yourself, "I can see that God can bless despite adversity, but does anything good really come out of it?" The answer is "Yes!"

Our troubles can actually become blessings. How? First, they can draw us closer to God. Adversity can bring us into a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father, the One who loves us beyond measure.

The second possible good result of adversity is that others may see the wonderful way in which the Lord is working through our adversity. The problems in our lives often provide an opportunity for others to see and glorify God!

Perhaps you are experiencing setbacks, opposition, failures, heartbreak, or loss. Do not give up. Remember these four principles, and keep your faith in God's strength so that you can overcome adversity successfully.



HOW TO TEACH ADULTS

Ricardo Norton was born in Costa Rica and has lived in the United States for 40 years. With two doctorate degrees in Ministry, he is currently completing a doctorate in Leadership. He has worked as a pastor for more than 20 years, and since 1996, has been a theology professor at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He is married and has two children. Norton often travels to other countries, teaching postgraduate classes. One of his specialties is "Methods of Teaching Spiritual Themes to Adults." This is the topic of this interview.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE "SPIRITUALITY"?

Spirituality is difficult to define and is often misinterpreted to mean introversion and mysticism. The word derived in the person of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it should be understood in relation to Him. The importance of the Holy Spirit is emphasized by the apostle Paul when he declares that the children of God are those who are "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:14). The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and leads us to truth. A spiritual person is not mystical; rather, he or she is someone who displays the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5).

HOW CAN LEADERS DEVELOP THEIR MEMBERS' SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality is linked to Christian practices such as reading the Bible, visitation, private devotions, family worship, and prayer. By promoting these practices, church leaders may encourage the spiritual development of their members. Prayer in particular is very important for the development of spirituality and the acceptance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus declared that God will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask" (Luke 11:13).

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PREACHING AND TEACHING?

One of the main differences between preaching and teaching is that preaching usually tends to be a monologue, while true teaching promotes participation. In general, preaching has the objective of intentionally transforming the believers' morals, while teaching concentrates more on the intellectual transformation of the listener.

SHOULD THE CHURCH TEACH MORE THAN PREACH?

Yes, especially because Jesus' charge involves two key tasks: to make disciples and to teach (Matt. 28:19, 20). Although these two functions do not exclude preaching, their purpose is intrinsically instructive. As one can observe in the Scriptures, it is evident that Jesus' communication with His disciples had a more pedagogical character (teaching) than homiletic communication (preaching). Jesus is more popular as a Rabbi and Master than as a preacher. Ellen G. White emphasizes the importance of teaching for spiritual growth, indicating the value of limiting preaching in order to dedicate more time to the preparation of members to share the gospel.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "CONTINUING EDUCATION" WITHIN A CHURCH SETTING?

Ellen G. White tells us that each Adventist church should be a place for ongoing education in spiritual matters, a place where church members are prepared for ministry. Each church can be encouraged to function as a small seminary in which the church members are the learners and the pastor is the instructor. The "classes" can deepen members' understanding of the Bible and the principles that Christ Himself taught (Matt. 28:20). This ongoing spiritual education should be continuous because new members need to be instructed, and there are always new outreach challenges.

WHAT SHOULD A CHURCH DO TO BE ATTRACTIVE?

Churches that grow are churches that attract—their own members and the community around them. An attractive church is magnetic. A magnet has the ability to attract a metal object. That object in turn is magnetized and attracts another. A magnetic church has magnetic members who attract others to church. In biblical terms, believers do not go to church; they become a church. What attracts them is the friendship they find in the fellowship of believers. A magnetic church also has magnetic preaching. This kind of preaching is relevant because it focuses on the basic needs of the listeners. It is presented in a style that reaches the heart and the mind. A magnetic church has magnetic programs and is a place where adults and children may learn about Jesus from dedicated, competent teachers.

HOW CAN WE APPLY TEACHING TO CHURCH?

Teaching applies especially to the Sabbath School class. I reiterate that teaching is not preaching. Often the adult Sabbath School teachers are tempted to preach, not teach. They are telling instead of teaching. The good teacher should instead be a moderator who asks key questions and promotes participation by each member of the class.


WHAT KINDS OF SERMONS DID JESUS PREACH?

Classifying Jesus' sermons within the homiletical taxonomies of our day would be a job corresponding to a doctoral thesis. However, two types of sermons are clearly identified in Jesus' preaching: thematic sermons (the Sermon on the Mount, for instance) and narrative sermons (parables and other metaphors).

WHY DID JESUS' PARABLES RECEIVE SO MUCH ATTENTION?

Jesus' parables were usually based on events and stories in the listeners' everyday lives. Each time the listeners observed something similar, they remembered Jesus' teachings.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TEACHING ADULTS EFFECTIVELY?

When teaching adults, it is vital to remember that they bring a wealth of experience to the class, seminar, or Bible study. They are used to being valued, listened to, and treated as equals. The teacher's approach must be one that encourages participation and values what each student has to offer. Everyone benefits when the class is viewed as a collaborative effort involving the entire group. The goal is to involve all in searching the Scriptures and preparing to share the gospel. 

This interview first appeared in the Portuguese edition of *Elder's Digest*.

KINGSLEY WHITSETT



Kingsley Whitsett lives in Buckhannon, WV, U.S.A., where he resides with his wife, Nancy, after 40 years of denominational work as pastor, teacher, departmental leader, conference secretary, and conference president, serving in the Georgia-Cumberland, Chesapeake, Florida, Missouri, and Potomac Conferences, and with the last half of those years in the Mountain View Conference. In 1986, when they first moved to Mountain View, he became pastor of the Buckhannon Church, while also serving as the conference Pathfinder/Youth Director. At that time, Rick Cutright, a West Virginia coal miner, was head elder of the church. Years later, when Elder Whitsett was Conference Secretary, he encouraged Rick to enter the gospel ministry. Today, in retirement, Elder Whitsett serves as the head elder of the Buckhannon Church where Elder Rick Cutright is now his pastor!

Elder Whitsett says, "It's a privilege, in my retirement years, to continue my ministry for the Lord as a church elder along side of one whom I have endeavored to mentor in gospel ministry. While we may retire from our jobs, we never retire from active service for the Lord in uniting with pastors to prepare hearts for His eminent return."

BIOGRAPHY

IS YOUR CHURCH A RIVER CHURCH?

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

During 2008 many people around the world had traumatic experiences with flooded rivers. In May, rivers in Myanmar were overwhelmed by Cyclone Nargis, which caused flooding that brought widespread devastation and harm—killing more than 84,000 people. In July, tens of thousands of homes in Ukraine were covered with floodwaters. The United States experienced a springtime punctuated with overflowing rivers across America's Midwest. Wherever these rivers flowed, destruction followed.

The Bible has river stories, too. One of my favorites is found in Ezekiel 47; however, the Ezekiel 47 river does not bring destruction—it brings healing and life. When this river floods, it heals the damage and destruction done by Satan.

Ezekiel reports his river vision: "The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east [for the temple faced east] . . ." (Ezek. 47:1, NIV).

If you look at a map of Ezekiel's part of the world, you will see that east of Jerusalem is the Salt Sea (also known as the Dead Sea), the lowest body of water on earth. It is not called the Dead Sea for nothing; it is so salty that nothing can live in it. Between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea is approximately 13 miles (22 km) of thirsty desert country.

Ezekiel saw water flowing from under the threshold of the temple through the desert to the Dead Sea. The temple, God's church, is portrayed here as the center and source of health and prosperity for the community.^a

"As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was *ankle-deep*"^b (verse 3, NIV, emphasis supplied). This can be likened to the Colorado River in the United States that begins in the Rocky Mountains as a shallow brook.

"He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was *knee-deep*" (verse 4, NIV, emphasis supplied). The little brook is getting deeper as it becomes a river that makes its way into the desert around the temple. The Colorado River does the same thing as it continues downstream.

"He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was *up to the waist*" (verse 4, NIV, emphasis supplied). The temple river is now up to the waist. It is getting deeper and bigger, just as the Colorado River does as it continues toward the Gulf of California.

"He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was *deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross*" (verse 5, NIV, emphasis supplied). As the Colorado River continues its journey from the Rocky Mountains, certain parts of it become very deep, just as the temple river starts very small and becomes colossal.

When you read verses 6-10, you see a very exciting picture. The bottom line is that "where the river flows, everything will live" (verse 9, NIV).

Wherever the river that comes from God's church flows, there is life—and the river becomes deeper and wider. Maybe a compassionate project or ministry to your community seems small and insignificant at the beginning, but, by God's grace, it will grow until it transforms the area where you are serving and floods it with compassion, healing, and new life!

"The Salt Sea will teem with fish" (verse 9, NIV). You say, "That's impossible! Nothing can live in the Salt Sea!" But nothing is beyond the reach of God's grace. Where God is at work, there is no hopeless situation, no group of people who are beyond redemption, no heritage from an unhappy past which need condemn us to a future of pain and despair.^c

Here we have the message of the Gospel, the result of the compassionate ministry of Jesus to which He has called us. Through us, He can achieve the impossible, giving abundant life to those who are discouraged, despondent, and dying!

Someday, community members whom God has healed and made alive will be transferred with you to the Place where there is another River—the ultimate River flowing from the throne of God. There will be no deserts, no dryness, no death there. This is Eden restored, which also had a River of Life (Gen. 2:10).

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1, 2; c.f., Ezek. 47:12).

In the meantime, while we wait, God wants our churches to be "river churches" from which flow healing and life—abundant life—to the community around us. He wants to work through us to revitalize and transform the deserts and Dead Seas in our territory. Jesus, through us, will come to the people we meet and bring them abundant life (John 10:10), which is the holistic Adventist message in a nutshell!

THE "RIVER CHURCH" IN SANDTOWN

In May 2008, I visited the New Song Community Church, a "river church" in Sandtown, a neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. This church emerged from the devastation caused by the flood of racial riots of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Sandtown was a flourishing community in the 1950s and early 1960s, vibrant with life. But it had become like a desert wasteland. The majority of families in Sandtown had moved away in search of better neighborhoods, leaving behind a trail of abandoned, rundown tenements. Businesses moved out and drugs and crime moved in, further making Sandtown a very undesirable place to live.

In 1986 Pastor Mark Gornik and Allan and Susan Tibbels and their two daughters arrived in Sandtown. They rehabbed vacant houses and moved in. Pastor Mark and the Tibbels hung out on the streets, attended community meetings, and caringly mingled with the remaining folks who hadn't fled from Sandtown. They were Caucasian, and the people in Sandtown were mostly African-American. The residents of the community wondered what these "whites" were trying to do in their neighborhood.

As Pastor Mark and the Tibbels continued to show their deep love for the community, they established a church—New Song Community Church—with families from the neighborhood. The members of this new church prayed that God would show them how to transform their neighborhood's seemingly hopeless situation. Because they desired to "satisfy the needs of the oppressed" (Isa. 58:10), the Lord guided them continually, strengthened them, and enabled them to

be "like a spring whose waters never fail" (verse 11). He guided them to begin working on a very obvious need—housing. They partnered with Habitat for Humanity and began recruiting volunteers to join them in restoring the rundown tenements all around them. From the "spring" within their small faith community, a river of healing started to flow out into their neighborhood.

The church focused on 15 of Sandtown's 72 blocks. Street by street, they rebuilt the ruins, leaving a trail of lovely, affordable, restored homes and happy new homeowners. The new owners of these homes worked with the volunteers (providing "sweat equity") and were given the keys to their new homes in a community-wide ceremony when each home was completed.

The river of healing continued to flow out into the community around this congregation, growing deeper and deeper. They raised money and built a new \$5 million school for the children of the revived community. The healing river deepened as they started a health center, a job development program, and a drug rehab center. The Sandtown Children's Choir is nationally famous, traveling far and near to share the experience of hope revived in a community that flourishes once again.

"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundation; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" (Isa. 58:12, NIV). God continues to use the New Song Community Church (also known as New Song Worship and Arts Center), a church from which a river of healing flowed and transformed a dying community. Wherever the river flows, everything lives (Ezek. 47:9).^d

IS YOUR CHURCH A RIVER CHURCH?

Does a river of healing flow from your church? Is this river growing deeper or shallower? Is your church healthy within, having "a spring whose waters never fail" (Isa. 58:11) so a healing river can flow outward?

Earnestly ask God to continually guide your church as you seek to discover and meet the needs in your community. By His grace, make your community a better place because your church is in it.

Go and flow! Be a source of a great healing flood to transform your community for Jesus' sake!^e

May-Ellen Colon is Assistant Director of the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

^a *The Interpreter's Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 6:328.

^b All emphasis supplied.

^c *Ibid.*

^d See *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*, by Mark Gornik, for the rest of the story.

^e For more information on doing community-based transformational ministry with your church, see *Keys to Community Services*, available from www.adventsource.org. Click Adult/Adventist Community Services/Store.



CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

THE NOMINATION FOR THE OFFICE OF ELDER THE ROLE OF THE CANDIDATE AND OF THE CHURCH WHEN CONSIDERING GOD'S CALL

When choosing His leaders, Jesus used the same principle that God used when choosing a king for ancient Israel. In Samuel 16:7, we read that “the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, . . . For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” In her book *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen G. White explains that Jesus completely ignored the secular notions always observed when choosing people for offices or representative functions. Most of the disciples were common

people with no formal education and no apparent talent for leadership. But Jesus called them, instructed them, and enabled them with power (pages 295-297).

After Pentecost, the disciples assumed leadership of the church as an extension of Jesus’ ministry. From this perspective, they also became God’s agents in the calling process (Matt. 18:18), whose only objective was to proclaim the virtues of He who “called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

With the expansion of their ministry, the apostles realized that more people were needed for the adminis-

tration of the church’s activities, first in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2, 3) and later in other places (Acts 14:23). The Bible makes it clear that God is the One who calls His servants, “according to His own purpose” (2 Tim. 1:9). He calls believers to take over offices, perform missionary services, and support the ministry, giving them diverse gifts for the fulfillment of the call. The church of Corinth is mentioned in the Bible as a model of this procedure (1 Cor. 12:27-30).

The conviction that God is the One who calls “according to His own purpose” is reinforced by Paul in his introductions to the epistles (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 2:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; and 2 Tim. 1:1).

THE PERSON AND THE CALL

The people called by Jesus to be part of the body of discipleship immediately left their businesses to accept the call. Levi Matthew is one example. “As [Jesus] passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him” (Mark 2:14).

The same disposition to answer the call was seen in Paul, according to his own report to the Galatians: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15, 16).

While biblical evidences are clear that prophets were called in the Old Testament and apostles and missionaries were called in the New Testament, Paul says that “if a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). This statement suggests that each person is free to make his or her decision as to whether to be a church elder, apart from God’s call.

The Bible gives no indication that the desire to assume the office of elder automatically qualifies one for such office. In 1 Timothy 3:1, we read that to desire such office is an “excellent” thing. The immediate context of this verse only presents restrictions for possible candidates for eldership instead of encouraging the ambition for such office.

The concepts given in Deuteronomy 18:20; Jeremiah 23:30; Isaiah 6; and Jeremiah 1:4-10 reinforce the position that God is the One who elects and calls His messengers. In the New Testament we see this same principle in Acts 10:28 and Colossians 4:17.

Those called to be elders should feel a strong confidence that God has called them and given them gifts for the job. Erwin Lutzer describes the unfolding of the call as “an interior conviction given by the Holy Spirit, which is confirmed by the Word of God and by the body of Christ” (*The Call to Pastoral Ministry*, 133).

Ellen G. White does not see the call as an experience

limited to some believers but as an opportunity given to all who have surrendered themselves to Christ: “Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education” (*The Ministry of Healing*, 395). Through the prism that the call is for a missionary and not for an office or specific place, there is an indication that any child of God (i.e., all who are living in harmony with the Scripture and the Church) may minister in the way best suited to their gifts. “Seeing that all believers are called to be ministers of God, all become evangelists in one way or the other” (*Elder’s Guide*, 76). However, not all are called to become elders.

THE CHURCH AND THE CALL

The Bible does not present systematic instruction about the procedures for the election of elders; it suggests norms regarding how they should be nominated for their sacred posts (Acts 14:21-23). One consideration is that they cannot nominate themselves.

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2). This is a biblical quote that involves the *God* that calls, the *people* who are called, and the *church* that confirms the call. Although the primary origin of the call is restricted to God, the rendering of the call depends on the individuals called as much as on the church, [which] recognizes the gifts of the elders for leadership and elects them as officers” (*Elder’s Guide*, 24). Usually, two aspects of the call are considered: the inner call, which is the call for the individual in particular; and the exterior call, which is the confirmation of God’s call to a person, through the local assembly of believers.

There are some questions you may ask to ascertain whether you are indeed qualified for the office of elder:

- Do others recognize my gifts and abilities in this area?
- Have other people requested me to serve in activities of leadership?
- Have others encouraged me to preach and teach?
- Has someone suggested my name to be church elder?
- Do I feel God is leading me in that direction?

Serving as church elder is a significant responsibility. It requires a call from God and a deep spiritual commitment. In choosing those to serve as elders, church leaders should study the biblical principles and examples with much prayer so that God may be honored by those who serve.

Paulo Pinheiro is editor of the Portuguese edition of *Elder’s Digest*.

YOUR CHURCH: WHERE IS THE EMPHASIS?



According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, "Under the pastor and in the absence of a pastor, the local elder is a spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for fostering all departments and activities of the work. The elder should maintain a mutually helpful relationship with all other church officers" (p. 51).

In fostering the various lines of church activity, it is important to remember what the ultimate objective of each of these activities is, lest it be little more than keeping the wheels of the church machinery going.

THE SUPREME BUSINESS OF EVERY CHURCH

The supreme business of every church and every Christian is the saving of souls. The apostle Paul declares, "And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11, 12). Weymouth's translation reads, "In order to fully to equip His people for the work of serving." Moffatt renders it, "For the equipment of the saints, for the business of the ministry."¹

This makes it clear that persons who are won to the church should at once become active in working for

others. They are saved to serve. Ellen G. White declares, "Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members at work" (*Evangelism*, 353, 354). She continues, "Personal responsibility, personal activity in seeking the salvation of others, must be the education given to all newly come to the faith" (p. 354).

The apostolic church was first organized as a missionary agency for carrying out the Savior's commission. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was likewise first organized for the work of evangelism. It was born in the evangelistic mold, and when it ceases to be evangelistic in its concepts and mission, it might as well cease to exist. "The church of Christ on earth was organized for missionary purposes" (*Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 29).

This concept alone will keep the church alive as a Spirit-filled movement. The church may survive without evangelistic outreach; it may even be a busy organization with endless activities. But activity alone is no assurance that the true goals of the church are being met. Unless members of the church are being trained, equipped, and engaged in the work of soul-winning, the purpose of the church is not being realized.

LOVE OF LOST SOULS

Unfortunately, there are some

churches that have lost their missionary zeal and are happy to have it so. A pastor of such a church remarked, "My members want to hear a good, comforting sermon on Sabbath and then be left alone the rest of the week." And in a large city where there were a number of churches, one pastor said of his congregation, "They are not interested in adding new members. The church is just the size they like. They don't want it to get larger."

During the summer of 1968, some members of a congregation in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, generated a movement to remove their pastor. The pastor was young Peter Marshall, son of the late pastor of the large New York Avenue Presbyterian church in Washington, D.C. and chaplain of the U.S. Senate. After the young pastor had been in Cape Cod only a few months, a number of people wished him to be removed. Why? Apparently he was too successful. As one member put it, "This is a little church, and we want to keep it that way."

While a few people see growth in this light, the great majority of our members welcome it. But how many members are really doing something to produce growth?

Pastors, elders, and other church officers have a solemn responsibility in this area. We are counseled: "The elders and those who have leading

places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability. . . . It is very essential that such an education should be given to the members of the church that they will become unselfish, devoted, efficient workers for God; and it is only through such a course that the church can be prevented from becoming fruitless and dead" (*Christian Service*, 62).

That too many of our churches may even now be "fruitless and dead" is a concern. How can they be kept alive?

"Let [the minister] seek to keep the church alive by teaching its members how to labor with him for the conversion of sinners. This is good generalship; and the result will be found far better than if he should seek to perform the work alone" (*Evangelism*, 357).

If the church is to fulfill its mission, it is vital that the total membership assume personal responsibility for reaching those who have not yet heard the message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord. The negative attitude many members have toward personal soul-winning places a limit upon evangelistic possibilities in the congregation. Where such attitudes persist, they must be changed. This calls for positive spiritual leadership.

In his excellent book *Evangelism That Evangelizes*, Dr. Carl M. Zweasy puts it this way: "We must see that evangelism or reaching the lost for Christ and the church is the primary program of the whole church. Today in many churches this program is playing second fiddle to other programs within the church, many of which are totally unrelated and irrelevant to the command of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature. We need to restudy and reevaluate

each committee and organization of the church in the light of the Great Commission. Is the winning of lost souls to Christ still pertinent, still paramount? Have we who determine the total program of the church any very profound conviction that the supreme mission of the whole church is to reach the last person, old and young, for Christ? If so, then it is our responsibility to see that every organization participates in the attainment of that end. Not a single group, of whatever size, age, or importance, should be overlooked or bypassed in this matter. Only when this program has been successfully promoted in each organization within the church, may that church be properly said to be evangelistic" (24).

Producing an evangelistic consciousness throughout the church, within every department and function, is one of the greatest challenges confronting pastors and church leaders today. As a local

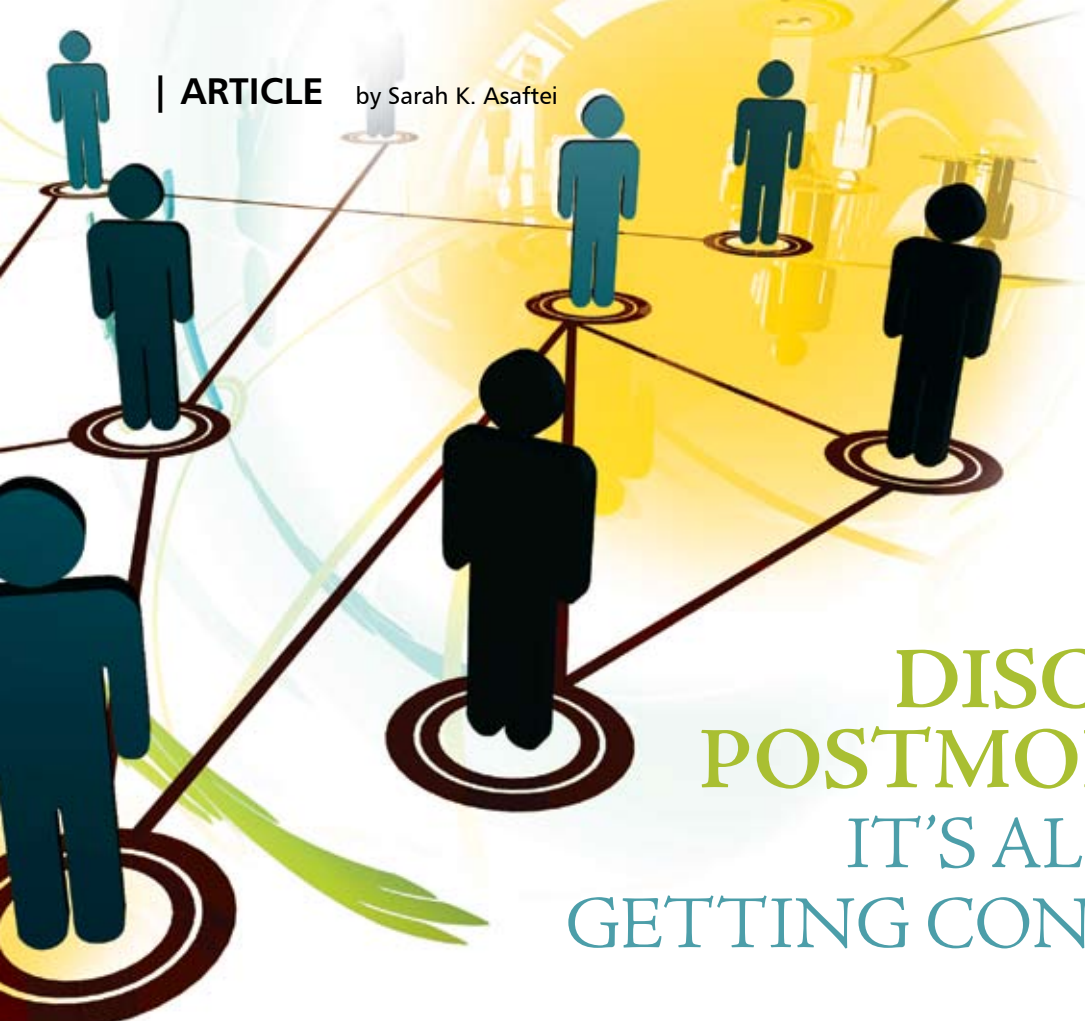
elder, let this be your great burden, the subject of earnest prayer and personal endeavor. The accomplishment of this grand objective may depend largely upon your personal influence and labors.

Pray this prayer with me: "Dear Lord, Thou hast awakened me to a new sense of responsibility. I have failed, and we as a church have failed in doing what is expected of us in reaching those about us for Christ. But Lord, forgive and grant that new life and zeal may come into our labors. Give me a new burden for souls and wisdom to know how I can best be used of Thee to help arouse our total membership to greater evangelistic endeavor. Amen." ED

¹ From *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt. Copyright 1954 by James Moffatt.

Orley M. Berg was Associate Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference when he wrote this article.

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DISCIPLING POSTMODERNS: IT'S ALL ABOUT GETTING CONNECTED

Get connected.
Share your story.
Make disciples.

Does it sound familiar? Although society shifts and changes through each generation and from culture to culture, the basic principles of biblical evangelism haven't changed since Jesus lived on earth.

While some Christians invest immeasurable time and energy in creating new ways to evangelize, we often need to return to those concepts Jesus gave long ago—get connected with people, share what God has done for you, and make disciples. It's what He did while He was here.

There are many missionaries working cross-culturally around the globe, tirelessly attempting to contextualize the gospel message into local vocabulary and culture. But in more developed countries it's often easy to forget just how many unchurched are in our own communities.

According to a recent study by George Barna¹, the United States now boasts 100 million unchurched. That's one in three of the adult population. In the United Kingdom, only about 13% regularly attend church.² In Australia the figure is even more staggering: 92.5% are unchurched.³

Our current evangelism strategy can benefit from a renewed focus on the unchurched western population. Just as we create tailored mission resources for other vast unchurched people groups, such as Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims, we need resources to reach the unchurched in our own backyard.

In the past the Adventist Church has mainly focused on providing Bible study courses for individuals who have an established relationship with Christ and are ready to study Scripture for doctrinal orthodoxy. But there is a need for resources to pique the interest of the unchurched, those who are not overtly classified under a regular "mission field."

When a new believer is baptized into membership there is a need for nurture, support, accountability, and equipment for service as they begin a lifetime of growth into Christian maturity. Where can pastors obtain authentic resources for contextualized evangelism and discipleship within the unchurched postmodern context?

The Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies (CSPS) at the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission is working to provide discipleship pathways and other evangelistic supplements. CSPS is directed by Dr. Miroslav Pujic, who worked in ministry to postmoderns for more than five years and developed the LIFEdevelopment discipleship pathway.

CSPS researches postmodern culture and works to create resources based on Christ's biblical methods of outreach. Consequently, the materials offered through CSPS focus on the full spectrum of evangelism, not just the Bible study segment. Instead, they start with creating video clips and sharing magazines, encouraging daily mingling with neighbors and friends, and Internet outreach—building social capital in the local community. Using discipleship principles, pastors and lay members are encouraged to begin small groups and Bible studies and then to continue actively training and equipping new believers.

In addition to research of postmodern culture and the development of fresh and relevant resources, CSPS provides regular international *reframe* events, weekends of training for pastors and lay members on how to understand and connect with the unchurched in their communities. These weekends, presented by the CSPS director Dr. Miroslav Pujic, facilitate a deeper comprehension of the underlying patterns of contemporary culture through dynamic and engaging activities.

"This reframe weekend was the Rubicon in my ministry," says Pastor Sam Chetty from Seattle, Washington. "I am hooked on this! It is absolutely relevant."

"Postmoderns are a distinct people group, just like any other mission field," says Pujic, "requiring the same purposeful research and contextualization as people groups in distant lands."

One of the main evangelistic resources provided by CSPS is the LIFEdevelopment discipleship pathway. LIFEdevelopment or LD focuses on reaching out through three aspects of evangelism: friendship, process, and nurture. It uses a multi-sensory approach including personal testimony, DVD, books, magazines, and interactive small groups.

The LD concepts of community, active involvement, and authentic relationship are also especially appealing to young Adventists. "I've tried to share Jesus with people of a postmodern mindset before, and it has been frustrating not knowing how to approach them," said Carlos Cirilo, theology major at Southern Adventist University. "I can't wait to learn more about how to apply LD principles in my own ministry as a young pastor."

"Without paying close attention, we may take cultural shifts for granted," says Pujic, "and miss golden opportunities. Sometimes we need to adapt what we've learned about discipleship in the past to meet the needs of the present without altering our foundation in biblical truth."

LD is an evangelistic update for a specific culture group. It doesn't throw out what's tried and true but builds on what we already know while encouraging us to return to our biblical evangelistic roots. Built around the concepts of getting connected with people (friendships), walking together in a journey of sharing (process), and encouraging the postmoderns in their newfound belief and faith (nurture), LD helps you understand how to relate to secular

people in a biblical way.

The LD model was initially implemented in 2002 in the United Kingdom, and has since spread globally to include events in Denmark, Norway, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada, Slovenia, Serbia, and the United States. LD materials are available to pastors and lay members throughout the world church through the CSPS office.

CSPS also seeks to link practitioners and scholars together in a global network. You can browse links to churches and ministries on their website. Or search "Centre for Secular & Postmodern Studies" to find the CSPS group on Facebook.com and dialogue with others around the world. You can subscribe online for *reframe* (the CSPS newsletter), to read news, share ministry tips, and enjoy profiles of men and women active in relevant ministry.

While culture continues to change and shift around us, we have tremendous opportunities to get connected with the unchurched. In His ministry on earth, Jesus befriended people, met their needs, and only *after they had a relationship of trust* did He urge them to follow Him. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, Follow Me."⁴

Has your evangelism outreach integrated this essential component? LIFEdevelopment training and materials will help you and your congregation develop purposeful friendships with the unchurched.

¹ The Barna Group <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=267>

² European Social Survey

³ Wikipedia.com

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, page 143

Sarah K. Asaftei is assistant director of the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies for the Office of Adventist Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters.

The Office of Adventist Mission operates five Global Mission Study Centers in key locations around the world, including the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies. Under the direction of Dr. Ganoune Diop, their purpose is to build bridges of understanding with people from major world religions and philosophies. Drawing from years of research and experimentation, the Study Centers equip church members and leadership with more effective means for sharing the everlasting gospel with people from different world views. To learn more about the Study Centers, www.AdventistMission.org.

CENTRE FOR SECULAR & POSTMODERN STUDIES

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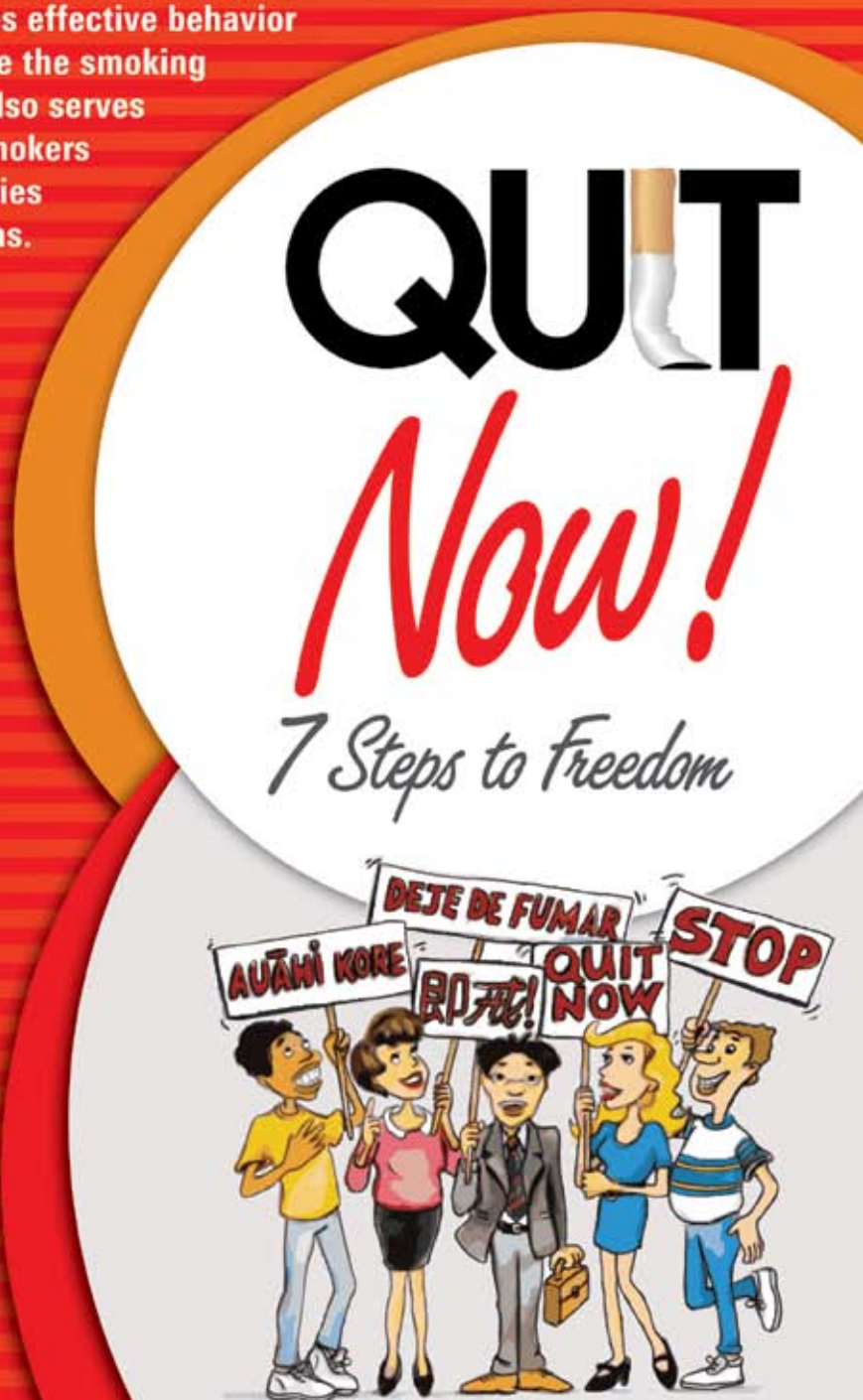
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YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

Exodus 20:14

Adultery is not a topic we like to discuss, but we must talk about it so as to find forgiveness for sin or to prevent this pain in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

I. GOD IS OFFENDED BY ALL TYPES OF ADULTERY.

A. *Physical but not emotional.* There is no commitment in this relationship; it simply fulfills a physical desire. It is the easiest to justify in one's own mind because the offender may still love his/her spouse. It is often excused as just meeting a physical need, like eating food or drinking water. One might classify David and Bathsheba's relationship in this category.

B. *Emotional but not physical.* This happens when you give your emotions and your heart but would not consider having a physical relationship. Online relationships could fit into this category.

C. *Physical and emotional.* This is probably the most damaging for a marriage, but recovery is possible because Jesus Christ can bring healing. There can be forgiveness. There can be restoration. He who brought the dead back to life can surely give life to a dead marriage.

D. *Spiritual* (Hosea 4:12, 13). In Revelation 2:4, God accused the church at Ephesus of having left its first love. Is there anything in your life that you are more passionate about than your relationship with Jesus? Would you be satisfied with a husband or wife who was 85 percent faithful? Of course not. Yet we expect God to be happy with us when we are less than 100 percent faithful to Him.

II. GOD SEES THE CAUSES BEHIND ADULTERY.

A. *Adultery comes from our minds* (Matt. 5:27-28; 15:19). Like any other sin we might commit, the battle against adultery is fought in the mind. That's why Paul considered it so important that we allow our minds to be transformed by God's Word and God's Spirit (Rom. 12:1, 2).

B. *Adultery comes from our arrogance.* "It won't happen to me. I'm above that." "Those laws don't apply to me!" "I can do this and get away with it!" Do you flirt with other men or women? If so, you are playing with fire (Prov. 6:27, 28).

C. *Adultery comes from our failure*

to recognize it as sin against God (Lev. 20:10; Ps. 51). God expects exclusivity in marriage because He expects exclusivity in our relationship with Him. The marriage relationship is to be a reflection of our relationship with Him. That's why God is so offended by broken marriages.

Adultery is not just a matter of one spouse sinning against the other. It is a matter of sinning against Almighty God who is your Creator and who is your Judge (Heb. 13:4).

Adultery is an offense against God because it destroys trust. It breaks the vow that two people have made to one another. When that trust is betrayed, it is much harder for the person who experienced betrayal to trust in God and believe His promises.

D. *Adultery occurs when we devalue our commitment* (Ps. 15:4). Commitment is viewed negatively because it limits our ability to feel independent and free, to experience new things, to change our minds spontaneously. We focus on self-gratification rather than on loyalty to others.

E. *Adultery comes from our emphasis on personal pleasure* (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:19-23). Adultery comes from our failure to build a strong, loving relationship with the one we vowed to love and cherish.

III. GOD CAN HELP KEEP US FROM ADULTERY.

A. *Pray for yourselves and others.* The dangers to marriages today are greater than they have ever been—especially because of Internet pornography and the ability to develop relationships with other people online. There is no accountability, no responsibility, and no need for honesty. No work is involved except typing.

Some of you have been faithful to your spouse for decades. Pray that the marriages of young couples in your church will be just as strong as yours is. Some of you are not yet married. Pray that God will build in you the character and patience needed for you to be faithful to your spouse. Parents, pray that God will send godly men and women into your children's lives for them to marry and that their marriages will be strong.

B. *Teach your children.* Let your children see how much you love your spouse. Let them see you hug one an-

other. Knowing that mom and dad love each other will give your kids a sense of security. Teach your children age-appropriate information about sex and show them how to relate to persons of the opposite sex. They are going to learn about sex somewhere; let them receive honest, accurate information from you.

C. *Watch for warning signs.* Remember, adultery starts in the mind. You can stop it before it starts by changing what you think about.

D. *Give your spouse emotional intimacy.* For families with young children, emotional intimacy is almost a thing of the past. It's difficult to find time to talk about the day's events, much less about anything significant or about feelings. Be sure to plan time for just the two of you. Show each other that you are the most important people in your life.

E. *Build a love relationship with Jesus.* My relationship with Jesus is the hub of my life. When that is right, every other relationship will be right. Being in a right relationship with Jesus will make me a better father, a better husband, a better person. It will make me more patient, more giving, more thoughtful, more sacrificial, and more caring. When my relationship with God is broken, every other relationship will be broken, too. I will become selfish, angry, careless, and ungrateful.

F. *Give complete control to the Holy Spirit* (Gal. 5:22, 23). Allowing the Holy Spirit to rule in your life will enable you to love your spouse more; to have joy in your relationships; to have peace even when things are not going as well as you would like; and to have self-control when there is an opportunity for you to be unfaithful to your spouse.

IV. GOD OFFERS HOPE TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY GIVEN IN TO TEMPTATION.

If you have committed adultery, admit that what you have done is sinful. Believe that Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient to provide payment for your sin. Confess your sin to God and to other affected parties and seek forgiveness. Determine that you will make the necessary changes so that it will not happen again.

General Conference Ministerial Association

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob had traveled about 70 miles on his 400-mile journey to Haran. He needed to rest for the evening, so he set up camp in a "certain place." This place was not especially noteworthy; it does not even have a name. There was nothing particularly holy about this place; it was just a place of dirt and stones. Jacob had no reason to expect anything unusual. Soon after falling asleep with his head on a rock (common practice in ancient times), God came to Jacob in a dream.

In the dream, Jacob saw a stairway going from earth to heaven, with angels going between the two realms and the Lord (*Yahweh*) at the top. Jacob understood that the stairway symbolized a place where there was access to God.

The main point of the dream was to affirm to Jacob that the Lord and His angels were present and active even though, as verse 16 attests, he had been unaware of them. Most of us will not have special dreams as Jacob did, but it has been revealed to us through the Bible that God is present and active even when we are unaware of His presence.

God sometimes shows up at unexpected times and in unexpected places. In Genesis 28:13-15, the Lord speaks to Jacob, and it is from that speech that we learn the four points to remember in uncertain times.

I. IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES.

The first thing God did was to remind Jacob of the promises He had made (verse 13). In uncertain times, we are to remember God's promises. The principle is true not just for Jacob but for all of us. When facing difficult or uncertain times, we need to open our Bibles and let the Holy Spirit remind us of what God has promised.

Ellen G. White says: "Every promise in God's Word is ours. . . . When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word. All its strength is yours" (*The Faith I Live By*, 23).

II. IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, REMEMBER GOD'S PRESENCE.

If we are to face the future with confidence, we must remember that God is with us. Jacob needed to know this



We have rich promises in the Word of God, if we only believe and trust in Him. We are in danger of trusting to our own poor human efforts, and not putting our trust in God.



Ellen White
Our Father Cares, p. 239

also. In verse 15 God said very clearly, "I am with you!" Jacob may have felt alone, but he was never alone and neither are we! God is always with us. Remembering His presence in uncertain times has been a source of encouragement for all the saints (Ps. 23; Matt. 28).

III. IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, REMEMBER GOD'S PROTECTION.

God next reminded Jacob of His protection. In verse 15 He said, "I am with you and will watch over [keep] you." In other words, I'm going to protect you on this perilous journey. This did not mean that nothing hurtful or bad would ever happen to Jacob, but it did mean—just as it means to us—that God will protect us so that His plan, which is good, comes to fruition. Jacob did not have to worry about his brother's anger, about bandits, or about wild animals. He trusted that God would protect him.

In the same way, we do not need to fear the dangers we face in today's world. Terrorists, disease, crime, financial loss, natural disasters—God has promised to watch over us, and certainly that is enough.

IV. IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, REMEMBER GOD'S PROVISION.

The promise in verse 15 to "watch over you" had a dual meaning. The Hebrew word for "watch" meant "to

protect" and "to provide for or to take care of." The Hebrew word is first used in Genesis 2:15, when God instructed Adam to "take care" of the garden, i.e., provide for its needs. In the story of Jacob, God was promising to provide for his needs as well as to protect him from harm. Jacob clearly understood this because he expected God to watch over him on his journey and provide food and clothing for him, as we see in verse 20.

God has promised to provide for all the needs of His people. Jesus reminds us that the Father knows what we need, and just as He provides for the birds of the air, He will certainly provide for us.

Ellen G. White reminds us: "All who keep the commandments in truth and integrity reveal to the world that they are under the rule of God and are dependent upon Him for their temporal and spiritual victories. With God's presence and favor, His people are safe, although they may suffer persecution for the truth's sake. His goodness and the riches of His grace are their protection and salvation" (*Sermons and Talks*, 2:329).

These are the bases of our certainty in uncertain times: God's promises, God's presence, God's protection, and God's provision. Each of us will face uncertain times, but we can be encouraged because God is with us and for us.

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

YOU SHALL NOT LIE

Exodus 20:16

One morning a minister ended his sermon by saying, "Next week I am going to preach on the subject of liars. And in preparation, I would like you all to read the seventeenth chapter of Mark." The following week, the preacher began his sermon by asking, "Now, all of you who have done as I requested and read the seventeenth chapter of Mark, please raise your hand." Nearly every hand in the congregation went up. "Very good," said the preacher. "You are precisely the people I wish to speak to this morning. There is *no seventeenth chapter of Mark!*" (*Bible Illustrator*).

God considers lying a very serious matter, regardless of whether the consequences of that lie are immediate and deadly (Proverbs 6:16-19).

I. COMMON LIES

See if you can find yourself in this list:

- The policeman asks you, "Do you know how fast you were going?" You reply, "Was I speeding?"
- Someone calls on the phone for you, and you step outside the door so that your spouse or child can say that you are not in at the moment.
- You'd rather not go to work on Monday, so you call in sick and go shopping.
- You convince yourself that if you buy a certain car, you will be wealthy and popular.
- You promise to spend more time with your family, but never get around to it.
- The fish gets bigger every time you tell the story.
- On Sabbath morning, your wife asks how you like the new dress she just bought. You hate the dress, but you say, "It looks beautiful" so as to not hurt her feelings.

II. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TELL THE TRUTH?

• *Telling the truth gives evidence of a change in your life* (Col. 3:9, 10). Lies give evidence that you are still a liar. In John 14:7, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth." When you accepted Jesus as your Savior, you received the Holy Spirit who now lives within you and will help guide your conduct.



Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible.



Ellen White
My Life Today, p. 331

- *Truth provides protection for you* (Phil. 4:8; Eph. 6:14; Isa. 28:15).
- *Truth shields you from further lies*. Many times one lie leads to another, but the truth guards you from evil and keeps you safe.
- *Truth identifies you with the Father* (John 14:6; Heb. 6:8). What if God could lie? What if all His promises were lies? You may have had persons who made promises to you but broke their promises because they were weak human beings. God is not like that. God cannot lie (Num. 23:19). The greatest promise God ever made was that He would send a Savior to pay the debt for man's sins. What a promise! When I fulfill my promises, when I tell the truth regardless of the cost, I glorify God. I am a "truth-teller," a "promise-keeper."
- *Truth creates a spirit of trust* (Ps. 31:5, 6). Lies create a spirit of deceit and hypocrisy, but when you consistently tell the truth, it is easier to remain honest. On the other hand, it is hard to be friends with a hypocrite because you never know what he or she is saying behind your back.
- *Truth exposes danger to be avoided* (1 Tim. 2:4). Lies open you up to destruction. The more truthful you are, the more hardships you can avoid. Lying only leads to havoc and ruin. You may think you are getting away with a lie, but in re-

ality, you are causing a lot of pain down the road.

• *Truth sets a good pattern for your life*. Lies set an evil pattern for your life. Jesus gave us a principle that applies here: the one who is faithful in small things will be faithful over great things (Matt. 25:23). If you are faithful in telling the truth about small issues, you are establishing a pattern that will enable you to tell the truth on the big issues, too.

• *Truth frees* (John 8:32). Lies enslave. Mark Twain was right when he said, "The difference between a person who tells the truth and one who tells a lie is that the liar's got to have a better memory." Lies trap you because you have to live in the false world you have created. You can't allow anyone to see the true you. You have to keep pretending.

CONCLUSION

If you were to ask Jesus, "How do I look?" what would He say? What sign(s) would He hang around your neck: "Liar," "Hypocrite," "Cheater"? We all carry those signs to some extent. You've broken promises to your family and to your friends; you've broken promises to God. When you asked Jesus to be your Savior, you promised Him your life.

Maybe you have been lied to so many times that not only do you have trouble trusting others, you have trouble trusting Jesus. Remember, Jesus is not like us. It is impossible for Him to lie. He has kept every promise to you that He has ever made. He promises salvation to those who call on Him. He is honest and true. He is our example. Let us, with His help, become honest, truthful, sincere followers of the One who is Truth.

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

WHERE IS THE FLOCK GOD HAS GIVEN TO US? Jeremiah 13:20

Jeremiah 13:20 contains an important question God asked His people in the past and which He might ask us in the near future: "Where is the flock God has given to you?"

This question was asked to the leaders of Judah, in a dramatic moment for the nation. The enemy, Babylon, was coming from the north (Jer. 6:22), and the final destruction was almost inevitable. The testimony of history is conclusive: in 605, 597, and 586 B.C., the Chaldeans subdued the Israelites in overwhelming defeats.

The same question is asked of us today: "Where is the flock God has given to you?"

I. RAISE YOUR EYES.

A. *It is a warning.* Even more than that, it sounds like an order from the Lord: "Lift up your eyes and see those who come from the north" (Jer. 13:20). The approaching Chaldean army meant the imminent destruction of the people and the city. Babylon took the children of Israel captive. Babylon meant the end of the kingdom of Judea.

B. *God always warns His people.* The message originally sent to Judah applies to us as well: Open your eyes, He says, and look at the signs. The end is near!

C. *The leaders of Judah were not concerned.* Although the situation was critical, the leaders in Judah didn't seem to have any notion of the danger. They did not advise the people and did not take care of the flock. What is our reaction today? Are we so concerned about the world's business and even the church's business that we don't have time for its greatest asset, our children?

II. WHERE IS THE FLOCK?

A. *This question did not need an answer.* The Lord used the prophet Jeremiah to urge the Israelite leaders to think. It was not necessary for them to respond, however, because the "flock" was already being given to the enemy. That was the sad reality.

B. *In our hands.* The same question is asked today of church leaders, parents, and teachers. God has entrusted precious lambs to our care, to instruct, to educate, to save.

C. *Rendering account.* God will ask

“
Are the shepherds faithfully caring for the flock as those who must give an account? Are the ministers of God watching for souls, realizing that those under their care are the purchase of the blood of Christ?
 ”

Ellen White
Pastoral Ministry, p. 150

that we, as His chosen shepherds, be accountable for our flocks.

III. THE BEAUTIFUL FLOCK

A. "The work that lies next to our church members is to become interested in our youth; for they need kindness, patience, tenderness, line upon line, precept upon precept. Oh, where are the fathers and mothers in Israel? There ought to be a large number who would be stewards of the grace of Christ, who would feel not merely a casual but a special interest in the young" (Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 41, 42).

B. *A father's story:* "As I walked by the pier, I saw a crowd and I rushed to see what the problem was. They told me a boy had fallen into the deep waters and someone had rescued him. A man was bent over him, giving artificial respiration. Others told me they [had been] battling for the boy for a long time without noticing any sign of life. I was told they had done all that was possible to save the boy's life. I also agreed they had done their part. However, motivated by a sudden impulse, I approached the fallen body and was horrified to find out that it was my son who was lying there, apparently dead. You can be sure I no longer thought everything possible [had been] done for him.

"Taking my jacket off, I bent over the boy, blew into his nostrils, breathed into his mouth, during the whole time asking God to bring him back to life. I worked and prayed until sunset, and just at that moment I noticed a soft breathing. Thank God, my son had revived! That day, I learned the lesson of my life: never again [will I] look at another boy drowning without removing my jacket and doing all that is possible to save him" (Dr. Scott).

CONCLUSION

The destruction of Judah was near when God asked the great question to his leaders: "Where is the flock I have given to you?"

We are living at the nightfall of this world, and God asks us the same question: "Where is the flock I have given to you?" The sheep are worth much more than we can imagine. Their value is the price of Jesus' blood: they are priceless.

Jesus is the ideal model. If we have to lead children to identify themselves with Jesus, (which is the only real form of conversion), we have to lead them to admire and love Him. Christ needs to live in us. It is only then that we will be able to answer the question "Where is the flock I have given to you?" with the same words used by Jesus when He presents the redeemed to God: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me" (Heb. 2:13).

Francisco Lemos is an editor at the Brazilian Publishing House.

Sermon Notes:



HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

SEVEN SECRETS OF LONGEVITY

God's wish is for us to experience long, productive lives to glorify His name and serve Him. Simply living long is not enough; quality of life is what counts. Many today live to be 80 or 90 years old, but their lives are not necessarily productive for God. I suggest to you that the longevity God wishes for us is exemplified in the life of Moses, who climbed Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah at age 120. We are told that "his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated" (Deut. 34:7, NASB). True longevity means living a long life while being physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fit. Christ underscores this in John 10:10: "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly."

As we study the body and how it is made, we realize that the body was designed to be physically active. Thus, the number-one secret of true longevity is regular physical activity. Here are some interesting facts:

- People who walk half an hour daily cut their heart-attack risk in *half* compared to those who seldom exercise.
- People who are physically active are happier, better able to cope with stress, experience less depression, and sleep more soundly.
- A British study found that people who maintain aerobic fitness may delay biological aging by up to 12 years.¹
- The Adventist Health Study found that the best predictor of a long, healthy life is a person's level of physical activity.
 - If you walk half an hour daily, you will burn the equivalent of 15 pounds of fat in a year.
 - Regular exercise may help to prevent some of our most common cancers, including breast, colon, prostate, and endometrial cancer.
 - Exercise can help you reduce your risk for diabetes, stroke, and hip fractures, as well as lower your blood pressure and keep your weight controlled for life.²

Perhaps, like many Adventist leaders, you already know all this. The question is, are you exercising every day? Research shows that knowledge alone does not necessarily translate into healthy behavior. Despite all the knowledge and counsel regarding exercise, my patients often say, "I don't have time" or "There is too much to do. Exercise does

not fit into my schedule." Does that sound familiar? In this fast-paced world, with responsibilities for family, job, and church ministry, time is precious. However, what we don't realize is that we have only one choice when it comes to exercise and our schedule: We must ask ourselves, what best fits my schedule: walking 30 minutes a day or being dead 24 hours a day? It may seem an exaggeration, but it is true.

Recently I read that Steve Jobs, CEO for Apple computers, is taking a six-month leave of absence due to health issues.³ Jobs battled pancreatic cancer four years ago. Now he is again forced to take time from his busy schedule to regain his health. Some of us may have a tendency to put more value on our health after it is compromised. Perhaps caring for our health becomes a priority only when we are on the verge of losing it. It does not have to be that way. We can start today and, with God's help, adopt healthier behaviors.

You may ask, "How do I start? What is the best exercise?" Research and inspiration tell us that walking is first on the list. In fact, we read that "a walk, even in winter, would be more beneficial to the health than all the medicine the doctors may prescribe."⁴ The North American Division recently launched a new program, "InStep for Life," to encourage church members to become physically active (www.InStepforLife.com). Wouldn't it be wonderful if pastors and elders would motivate others by example and thus help the church experience God's desire for each of us to have an abundant life? It is all about choice, and the choice is yours. Isn't it time you included walking (or some other form of exercise) in your schedule? Start today and take one day at a time. If you do, God's name will be honored, and the benefits will be yours for a long, productive life. ED

¹ BMJ Specialist Journals, news release, April 10, 2008.

² www.InStepforLife.com/benefits

³ www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/jan/15/steve-jobs-apple-nasdaq

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, 57.

Katia Reinert
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SABBATH OBSERVANCE

GUIDELINES - PART 2 - FINAL



CHURCHES AND CHURCH INSTITUTIONS

In establishing specific guidelines and policies for the corporate church and church institutions, the church is setting an example of Sabbathkeeping for the membership at large. It is the responsibility of the members to apply true Sabbathkeeping principles in their own lives. The church can assist by providing Sabbathkeeping principles as found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, but it cannot be conscience for the members.

Churches—Role of Church and Family in Sabbath Afternoon Activities. The pastor and the local church leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of providing carefully planned Sabbath activities for children, youth, adults, and the elderly, and for families and singles, emphasizing the importance of making the Sabbath a day of joy, worship, and rest. Church activities should complement rather than replace family and home activities.

Churches—Sabbath Music. Music has a powerful impact on a person's moods and emotions. Church leaders will select music and musicians that will enhance the worshipful atmosphere of the Sabbath rest and the person's relationship with God. Sabbath choir rehearsals should be avoided during regularly scheduled Sabbath meetings.

Churches—Community Outreach. Although Christians may participate in certain types of social work for students, youth, and the poor in inner cities or in suburbs, they still will exert an exemplary influence of consistent Sabbathkeeping. When engaged in an extension school or special school for children and youth, they will select subjects and classes that are different from the ordinary secular subjects or classes for the week, including activities that contribute to spiritual culture. Nature or neighborhood walks may replace recesses; nature walks or field trips of minimal effort can replace secular subjects and classes.

Churches—Ingathering. The general practice of Seventh-day Adventist churches is to do Ingathering on days other than the Sabbath. Where there is a practice to do Ingather-

ing on Sabbath, the plan should be implemented so as to bring spiritual benefits to all participants.

Churches—Fund-raising on the Sabbath. The doctrine of Christian stewardship is found throughout the Scriptures. The act of giving has a definite place in the worship services. When appeals for funds are made, they should be conducted in such a manner as to uphold the sacredness of the service as well as of the Sabbath.

Churches—Sabbath Weddings. The marriage service is sacred and would not in itself be out of harmony with the spirit of Sabbathkeeping. However, most weddings involve considerable work and almost inevitably a secular atmosphere develops in preparing for them and in holding receptions. In order that the spirit of the Sabbath not be lost, the holding of weddings on the Sabbath should be discouraged.

Churches—Sabbath Funerals. In general, Adventists should try to avoid Sabbath funerals. In some climates and under certain conditions, however, it may be necessary to conduct funerals without delay, the Sabbath notwithstanding. In such cases, arrangements should be made in advance with morticians and cemetery employees to perform their routine tasks for the deceased in advance of the Sabbath day, thus reducing the labor and commotion on the Sabbath. In some instances a memorial service could be held on the Sabbath, and interment take place later.

Seventh-day Adventist Healthcare Institutions. Adventist healthcare institutions provide the only contact many people have with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventist hospitals are to be more than merely healthcare delivery systems. They have a unique opportunity to bear a Christian witness 24 hours a day to the communities they serve. In addition, they have the privilege of presenting the Sabbath message by example every week.

In healing the sick and loosing the bonds of the physically infirm, even on the Sabbath, Christ set an example that we look to as the basis for establishing and operating Adventist healthcare institutions. Therefore, an institution of-

fering medical care to the public must be prepared to minister to the needs of the sick and suffering without regard to hours or days.

This places a great responsibility on each institution to develop and implement policies that reflect the example of Christ, and to apply the principles of Sabbath observance as found in the Scriptures and taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Administrators have a special responsibility to see that all departments maintain the true spirit of Sabbathkeeping by instituting appropriate Sabbath procedures and by guarding against laxity in its observance.

The following applications of Sabbath-observance principles are recommended:

1. Provide emergency medical care willingly and cheerfully whenever needed, with high levels of excellence. However, neither Adventist institutions nor physicians and dentists should provide the same office or clinic services on the Sabbath as they do on weekdays.

2. Discontinue all routine activities that could be postponed. Usually this means a complete closing of those facilities and departments not immediately related to patient care, and the maintenance of a minimum number of qualified people in other departments to handle emergencies.

3. Postpone elective diagnostic and therapeutic services. Decisions as to what is necessary or of an emergency nature should be made by the attending physician. If this privilege is abused, it should be dealt with by the hospital administration. Nonadministrative institutional employees should not become involved in making these decisions, nor should they be obliged to confront the attending physician(s). Misunderstandings may be avoided by making it clear in medical staff bylaws that only surgical, diagnostic, or therapeutic procedures that are not postponable because of the condition of the patient will be done. A clear understanding with all who are appointed to staff membership at the time of appointment will do much to avoid misunderstandings and abuses.

Convenience and elective surgery should be discouraged or limited on Fridays. Procedures thus scheduled allow the patient to be in the hospital over the weekend and hence lose fewer days at work. However, this places the first post-operative day, usually with the most intensive nursing care, on the Sabbath.

4. Close administrative and business offices to routine business. Although it may be necessary to admit or discharge patients on the Sabbath, it is recommended that the rendering of bills and the collection of money be avoided. Never should the keeping of the Sabbath be a source of irritation to those we seek to serve and to save, but rather a hallmark of "the children of light" (Eph. 5:8; *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 260).

5. Make the Sabbath a special day for patients, providing a memory of Christian witnessing never to be forgotten. Meaningful Sabbathkeeping is much easier to achieve in an institution that employs a predominantly Adventist staff. Presenting the Sabbath in a proper light can be accomplished by the believing workers employed in patient care, and may well be a convicting influence in the lives of

those not of our faith.

6. The direct care of the sick is a seven-day-a-week activity. Illness knows no calendar. Nevertheless, when scheduling all personnel, healthcare institutions should take into consideration the sincere religious beliefs, observances, and practices of each employee and prospective employee. The institution should make reasonable accommodation for such religious beliefs unless it is demonstrated that such accommodation would place an undue hardship on its operation. It is recognized that the consciences of individuals vary in regard to the propriety of Sabbath employment. Neither the church nor its institutions can act as the conscience for its employees. Rather, reasonable accommodation should be made for individual conscience.

7. Resist pressures for relaxing Seventh-day Adventist standards. Some institutions have been pressured by the communities, the medical staffs, and/or the employees (where a majority is comprised of non-Adventists) to abandon or weaken Sabbathkeeping principles and practices so that the Sabbath would be treated as any other day. In some cases pressure has been applied to maintain full services on the Sabbath and reduce them on Sunday instead. Such action should be vigorously resisted. Compliance would cause serious reexamination of the relationship of such an institution to the church.

8. Educate employees who are not Seventh-day Adventists concerning Sabbathkeeping principles practiced by the institution. Every non-Adventist, at the time of employment at an Adventist healthcare institution, should be made aware of Seventh-day Adventist principles, especially institutional policies regarding the observance of the Sabbath. Though non-Adventists may not believe as we do, they should know from the very beginning how they are expected to fit into the institutional program to help it reach its objectives.

9. Foster an attitude for continuing Christian witnessing by Adventist employees. The only contact that many non-Adventist workers may ever have with Seventh-day Adventist workers may be in the institution employing them. Every relationship should be friendly, kind, and expressive of the love that exemplified the life and work of the Great Physician. Compassion for the sick, unselfish regard for our fellowmen, an eagerness to serve, and unstinted loyalty to God and the church may well prove to be a savor of life unto life. The keeping of the Sabbath is a privilege and an honor as well as a duty. It should never become burdensome or obnoxious to those who keep it or to those about us.

Sabbath Work in Non-Adventist Hospitals. While it is essential in medical institutions that a minimum of labor be performed at all times in order to maintain the welfare and comfort of the patients, Seventh-day Adventists employed in non-Adventist institutions in which Sabbath hours bring no relief from routine duties are under obligation to remember the principles that regulate all Sabbath activities. In order to avoid situations in which our church members may be faced with problems of Sabbathkeeping in non-Adventist institutions, it is recommended that:

1. When Seventh-day Adventists accept employment in non-Seventh-day Adventist hospitals, they make known

their Sabbathkeeping principles and request a work schedule that will exempt them from Sabbath duties.

2. Where work schedules or other factors make this impossible, Adventists should clearly identify the duties, if any, they can conscientiously perform on the Sabbath and the frequency thereof.

3. Where the above accommodations cannot be arranged, members should make loyalty to God's requirements paramount and abstain from routine work.

Seventh-day Adventist Educational Institutions. Seventh-day Adventist secondary boarding schools have a major role in shaping the Sabbath observance habits of future generations of members of the church, and Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities do much to mold the thinking of the church's clergy and professional class. It is important, therefore, that both the theory and practice of how to maximize the joyful blessings of the Sabbath be as close as possible to the ideal in these institutions.

Applications of this principle should include:

1. Adequate preparation for the Sabbath.
2. Demarcation of the beginning and ending of the Sabbath hours.
3. Appropriate school-home activities: worships, prayer bands, witness, etc.
4. Keeping necessary duties to a minimum, preferably entrusting them to people who volunteer their service rather than to those who do the same work for pay during the week.
5. Inspiring worship services, preferably modeling what is expected to characterize such services in the churches of the school's constituency.

6. Adequate and varied activities on Sabbath afternoon.
7. Structuring the weekly program so that the Sabbath will be a lingering joy and the climax of the week, rather than a prelude to contrasting activities on Saturday night.

a. Cafeteria Sales. School cafeterias are designed to serve students and their visiting parents and bona fide guests; they should not be open to the public on the Sabbath. To avoid unnecessary business transactions during sacred time, each institution should make provision for payment outside of the Sabbath hours.

b. Attendance of Faculty at Professional Meetings. In some countries, Seventh-day Adventists are privileged to attend professional meetings in order to keep abreast of current developments in their given field of specialization. It may be tempting to justify attendance at these meetings on the Sabbath. However, it is recommended that academic personnel join fellow members in worship rather than fellow professionals at work.

c. Radio Stations. College radio stations can be a blessing to their communities. To maximize the blessings, programming during the Sabbath hours should reflect the philosophy of the church. If fund-raising appeals are made on the Sabbath, they should be conducted in such a way as to

“
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word.
”

Isaiah 58:13

the experience of a genuine renewal of the Sabbath joys in their own life as well as in the life of their church.

f. Sabbath Examinations. Seventh-day Adventists who face required examinations given on the Sabbath in non-Adventist schools or for certification by professional governing boards face special problems. In dealing with such situations, we recommend that they arrange for administration of the examinations on hours other than the Sabbath. The church should encourage its members in careful Sabbath observance and, where possible, intercede with the appropriate authorities to provide for both reverence for God's day and access to the examinations.

SECULAR EMPLOYMENT AND TRADE AS RELATED TO THE SABBATH

Statement of Principle. The biblical view of the Sabbath includes both a divine and a human dimension (Matt. 12:7, 8). From the divine perspective the Sabbath invites the believer to renew his commitment to God by desisting from the daily work in order to worship God more freely and more fully (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:15, 16; Isa. 58:13, 14). From the human perspective, the Sabbath summons the believer to celebrate God's creative and redemptive love by showing mercy and concern toward others (Deut. 5:12-15; Matt. 12:12; Luke 13:10-12; John 5:1-17). Thus the Sabbath encompasses both cessation from secular work for the purpose of honoring God and performing deeds of love and kindness toward fellow beings.

Essential and Emergency Work. In order to uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists must make wise choices in matters of employment, guided by a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Experience has shown that there are hazards in choosing vocations that will not allow them to worship their Creator on the Sabbath day free from involvement in secular labor. This means that they will avoid types of employment that, although essential for the function of a technologically advanced society, may offer problems in Sabbath observance.

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy are explicit about our duties as Christians to our fellowmen, even on the

uphold the sacredness of that day.

d. Promotional Trips. In order to maintain the worshipful nature of the Sabbath, promotional tours should be planned in such a way as to minimize travel on the Sabbath and to provide maximum time for worship with fellow believers. The Sabbath hours should not be used for travel to provide a Saturday night program.

e. Sabbath Observance in Education for the Ministry. Pastors have a large responsibility for shaping the spiritual life of the church by their personal example. Therefore, institutions training ministers and their spouses need to help their trainees form a sound philosophy of Sabbath observance. Proper guidance received at school can be instrumental in

Sabbath day. In the modern context, many employed in occupations involved with the saving of life and property are called upon to deal with emergencies. Arranging for regular weekend work requiring the use of the Sabbath hours for gainful emergency employment or accepting work only on weekends in emergency occupations to augment the family budget is out of harmony with Sabbathkeeping principles given by Christ. Responding to emergency situations in which life and safety are at stake is quite different from earning one's livelihood by routinely engaging in such occupations on the Sabbath, which are often accompanied by commercial, secular, or routine activities. (See Christ's comments on rescuing oxen or sheep from ditches and helping people in need: Matt. 12:11; Luke 13:16.) Absenting oneself from God's house and being denied fellowship with the believers on the Sabbath can have a chilling effect on one's spiritual life.

Many employers in so-called essential service areas willingly make accommodations for Sabbathkeepers. Where such is not granted, members should carefully review biblical principles of Sabbathkeeping and in that light examine the type of activity, environment, requirements of the job, and personal motives before committing themselves to working on the Sabbath. They should ask of the Lord, as did Paul on the Damascus road, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When this attitude of faith prevails, we are persuaded that the Lord will lead the believer to discern His will and supply strength and wisdom to follow it.

Moral Decisions Regarding Sabbath Observance. Sabbath privileges are sometimes curtailed or denied by military, educational, political, or other organizations. To prevent and/or alleviate these regrettable situations, the following suggestions should be considered:

A competent church official, preferably the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director, should be appointed to keep abreast of developments that could undermine freedom of worship on the Sabbath. When necessary, this official will approach responsible authorities to intercede when an adverse impact upon Seventh-day Adventists is present in any contemplated measure or legislation. [This course of action may prevent enactment of laws that could curtail or deny Sabbath privileges.]

Adventist members should be encouraged to stand by faith for the principle of Sabbathkeeping regardless of circumstances, resting in the assurance that God will honor their commitment to Him.

Church members should offer spiritual, moral, and, if needed, temporal help to other members experiencing Sabbath problems. Such support will serve to strengthen the commitment to the Lord not only of the individual member facing Sabbath problems but also of the church as a whole.

PURCHASE OF GOODS AND SERVICES ON THE SABBATH.

1. The Sabbath is designed to provide spiritual freedom and joy for every person (Ex. 20:8-11). As Christians we must be supportive of this basic human right granted to each individual by the Creator. As a general rule, the purchasing

of goods, eating out in restaurants, and paying for services to be provided by others ought to be avoided because they are out of harmony with the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping.

2. Furthermore, the above-mentioned commercial activities will turn the mind away from the sacredness of the Sabbath (see Neh. 10:31; 13:15ff.). With proper planning, adequate provisions can be made in advance for foreseeable Sabbath needs.

Sabbath Travel. While Sabbath travel may be necessary for engaging in Sabbath activities, one should not allow Sabbath travel to become a secular function; therefore, preparation should be made in advance. Automobile fuel and other needs should be cared for before the Sabbath begins. Travel on commercial carriers for personal or business reasons should be avoided.

Treating a Specific Employment Problem. When a member of the church finds it necessary to resign from a position, or loses his job because of Sabbath problems, and is reemployed by the denomination in similar work, and where the new job, because of its essential nature, requires the member to work on the Sabbath, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. A careful explanation of the essential nature of the work will be given to the member.
2. All efforts should be made by the organization to ascertain that only the essential aspects of the new job will be performed on the Sabbath. Administrators should also explain to the new employee the religious purposes and basic objectives of the employing organization.
3. A rotation schedule will be adopted in order that the member who can conscientiously accept such work on the Sabbath may frequently be able to enter into a fuller celebration of the Sabbath day.

Shift Work. When a Seventh-day Adventist works for an employer where shift work is the rule, he may be requested to work on the Sabbath or a portion thereof. Under such circumstances the member involved is encouraged to consider the following:

1. The member should strive to be the best possible worker, a valuable employee whom the employer cannot afford to lose.
2. If a problem develops, the member should seek to resolve it by appealing to the employer personally for an accommodation based on goodwill and fairness.
3. The member should assist the employer by suggesting such accommodations as:
 - a. Working a flexible schedule
 - b. Taking a less desirable shift
 - c. Trading shifts with another employee; or
 - d. Working on holidays
4. If the employer resists an accommodation, the member should immediately seek assistance from the pastor and from the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department in countries where they are involved in such activities.

General Conference Ministerial Association

| QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

AS YOU KNOW, THE BIBLE SAYS THE ELDER SHOULD BE "THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE" (1 TIM. 3:2). IS THAT CURRENTLY A REQUIREMENT? IF A PERSON HAS BEEN MARRIED AND DIVORCED, IS HE OR SHE FOREVER UNABLE TO SERVE AS AN ELDER?

Paul's intent in stating that a man must be the "husband of one wife" isn't that a man must be married to become an elder, but if he is married, he must be faithful to his wife in a monogamous relationship. A person doesn't need to be married to become an elder. If we insist that all elders be married, then to be consistent we would have to require them to have more than one child ("having his children in subjection with all gravity" 1 Tim. 3: 4). Again, if we press Paul's words beyond his original intent, we could argue not only that a potential elder must have at least two children but also that his children still live at home with him. The point is not that children must be living at home; however, if his children are living at home, he must manage them well, and they must be respectful and obedient.

A potential elder must honor, love, and be devoted to his wife and her alone. This view allows for the possibility of an elder being remarried after the death of his wife or after a divorce, although the phrase in question does not directly address that situation. The situation of a divorced man must be treated carefully, however. If he was the "innocent" party in the divorce and was not unfaithful, and he then gets remarried according to the Bible instructions, he would sometimes need to prove himself in his new marriage. In this case, such a person isn't disqualified from becoming an elder again, but the final decision belongs to the church board and church members.

IF AN INDIVIDUAL RETURNS TO CHURCH AND IS RE-BAPTIZED AFTER GOING THROUGH A DIVORCE, IS HE OR SHE QUALIFIED TO BE AN ELDER OF THAT CHURCH?

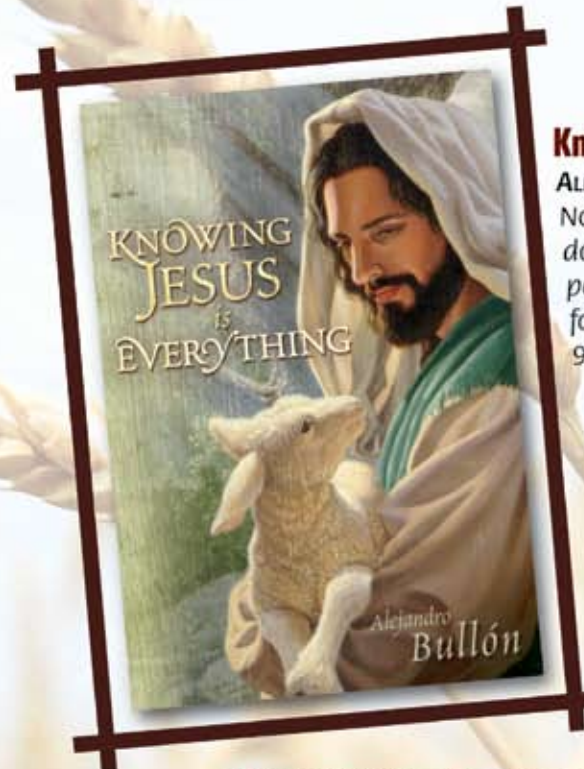
First of all, please note that there are no membership categories in our church. Every church has but one membership list. All church members are considered to be in regular standing unless they are under church discipline. If a member is disciplined, he or she can still retain membership, but risks the chance to continue to perform duties for the church. However, if a member is disfellowshipped from the church and returns and gets re-baptized, the person can again be elected for duties, if approved by the church board and members. So the answer is 'yes', but it is up to the church to make the final decision.

It is also vital to remember that when we look for qualifications in an elder, some key characteristics include: spiritual and moral credibility, capacity and knowledge, and availability and time. If an elder does not have these qualities, he or she might not be qualified to be an elder in the first place. Considering this point, a person who has returned to church through rebaptism may not be the best person to be elected as an elder if their past reputation, for some reason or another, affects their present state.

General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



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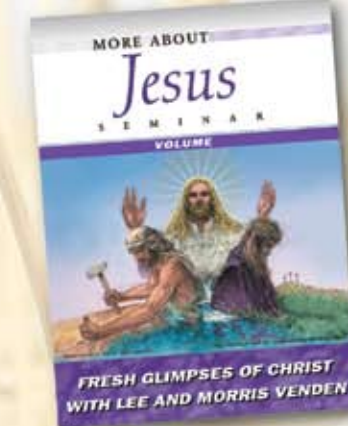
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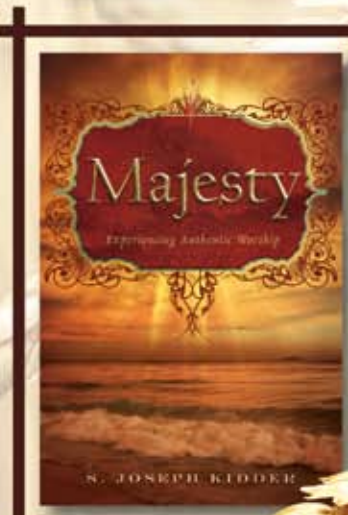
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The art of speech

COMMUNICATION: MORE THAN WORDS

Pretend you are in a town where there are only two doctors. The first doctor seems very unconcerned about personal hygiene, and his cluttered office is located behind an old pharmacy. The other doctor is well-groomed and has a beautiful office downtown. Both charge the same fee. You need to see a doctor. Which doctor would you choose?

In this situation, as in many others, we may decide based only on appearance. Communication doesn't involve just speech; good speaking ability is not enough. When we look at others, we first notice what is on the outside, and it is the same when they look at us. Our appearance communicates.

We are reminded, "You cannot expect the Lord to give you the fullest success in winning souls for Him unless your whole manner and appearance is of a nature that will win respect. The truth is magnified even by the impression of neatness in dress" (Ellen White, Letter 336, 1908).

DO WE LOOK LIKE AMBASSADORS?

To present a good image, we must be sure that our exterior appearance is in harmony with our interior. Clean, well-ironed clothes, shined shoes, and neatly combed hair communicate for us even before we open

our mouths. Our smiles and personal hygiene reveal how we take care of our bodies.

How do you think others will respond to your current image? Look in the mirror. What image do you present? What affect may this have when you are going to talk about Jesus? If you consider yourself an ambassador for the King of Kings, how will this affect your appearance?

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER . . .

As we think about how we communicate, we must also consider how our actions reveal our characters. Our non-verbal communication reflects who we are on the inside. It's no use dressing up nicely if our internal character defects reveal themselves in the way we behave. Our behavior must glorify our Father. As faithful messengers, we need a special garment, the robe of Christ's righteousness. We need to dress ourselves with Christ and seek to develop a character like His. If His character qualities—gentleness, courage, meekness, strength, goodness, energy, perseverance, honesty, integrity, temperance, and vitality—become part of our characters, they will speak louder than our words. ED

Alexandra Sampaio is a speech therapist in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

FAITH AND FINANCES IN THE END TIMES



The lure of riches has apparently always been a stumbling block for people, even Christians. The New Testament frequently cautions us against the desire for wealth. Jesus said, "You can't serve God and money" (Matt 6:24). And Paul warns that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:10, 17) and that "in the last days men will be lovers of money" (2 Tim 3:1, 2). Obviously, these passages underscore the perils of our times. But what does Ellen White write about money in the end time? Here is an overview.

NATIONAL RUIN?

In response to the economic crisis of the last four months of 2008 many have expressed the idea that "national ruin" is upon us. However, all of the relevant statements by Ellen White state that national ruin follows national apostasy – referring to the spiritual apostasy of enforcing Sunday observance.¹

We are told that "those who hold the reins of government. . . are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis."² In this context she states that Sunday observance is encouraged to restore "divine favor and temporal prosperity."³ So, even though there is a financial crisis now, according to Ellen White, things will get much worse after the national Sunday law suggested by Revelation 13 comes into force.

It is interesting that many of those who point to the downturn in the economy as a sign of the end have counseled what people ought to do to "survive," when, in actual fact, the counsel should be how to do the work of warning the world of an approaching God.⁴

Ellen White makes clear that money will be a major factor in the

end-time scenario and that Satan's strategy is to lead people "to lay up their treasure here and fix their affections upon earthly things" so that means will not be available for "the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom."⁵

The devil knows that if he can keep us focused on money it will separate us from God and eternal life. God's strategy is to allow poverty to come on the world so that men will trust in Him rather than their money: "The very means that is now so sparingly invested in the cause of God, and that is selfishly retained, will in a little while be cast with all idols to the moles and to the bats. Money will soon depreciate in value very suddenly when the reality of eternal scenes opens to the senses of man."⁶

FAITHFULLY RESPONDING TO THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

What do genuine Christians do in response to the financial crisis? Do we hunker down in survival mode? No, in fact, just the opposite is true.

• *Our giving will increase.* "In the last extremity, before this work shall close, thousands will be cheerfully laid upon the altar. Men and women will feel it a blessed privilege to share in the work of preparing souls to stand in the great day of God, and they will give hundreds as readily as dollars are given now."⁷

• *Our giving will prepare us for heaven.* Bible-believing Christians know that someday soon everything on this earth will be burned up at the second coming of Jesus (2 Pet 3:10). So they put their money into God's cause so it will do some good before getting burned up. "The work of God is to become more extensive, and if

His people follow His counsel, there will not be much means in their possession to be consumed in the final conflagration. All will have laid up their treasure where moth and rust cannot corrupt; and the heart will not have a cord to bind it to earth."⁸

• *Our giving will put God and His kingdom first.* The counsel from God's Word is more valid than ever. Put God first and stay in covenant relationship with Him. "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (Prov 3:9, 10). And Jesus counseled those who were concerned about food, clothing, and shelter. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:33). Most important of all, we need to ask God for wisdom to help us make good earning, saving, and spending decisions: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov 3:5, 6). ED

¹ See *Last Day Events*, p. 134.
² *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 13.
³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 590.
⁴ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 228.
⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 472-73.
⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63; cf. p. 240.
⁷ *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 40.
⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

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This article was written by G. Edward Reid and has been reprinted from *Reflections*, the Biblical Research Institute Newsletter, edited by Clinton Wahlen, Ph.D.



LEADERSHIP DURING THE DELAY

Leaders demonstrate their character more clearly in adversity than in prosperity. Contrast the vacillation of Aaron with the faithfulness of Moses during Israel's delayed expectations.

When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. "Look," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don't know what has happened to him" (Exodus 32:1).

Fed up with waiting, the people demanded immediate action. Moses was out of sight and they were out of faith. Unfortunately, when he should have stood strong, Aaron caved to their demands for visible, multiple gods and collected their offerings.

Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf. The people exclaimed, O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt (vs 4). Although he would later claim that a miraculous occurrence produced the golden calf, Scripture describes Aaron actively fashioning the idol and, subsequently, leading the congregation in false worship. When Aaron saw how excited the people were about it, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." So the people got up early the next morning to sacrifice . . . After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and indulged themselves in pagan revelry (vs. 5-6).

Heaven, however, was not caught unaware by their rebellion. Then the Lord told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! The people you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves. They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought

you out of Egypt.'" Then the Lord said, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my anger can blaze against them and destroy them all. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation instead of them" (vs 7-10).

The wages of sin is death and God was fully prepared to penalize Israel for their rebellion, a sin He declares equal to witchcraft. But as a true pastor, Moses began to intercede, asking that his own life be cut off if God could not spare the people. Moses even urged God's own reputation as reason to spare the people. But Moses pleaded with the Lord his God not to do it . . . "The Egyptians will say, 'God tricked them into coming to the mountains so he could kill them and wipe them from the face of the earth.' Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you are planning against your people! Remember your covenant." So the Lord withdrew His threat (vs. 11-14).

Just as God had previously responded to Abraham's entreaties for Sodom, He now extended mercy in response to Moses' plea. Mercy did not avert judgement, however. Moses saw the calf and the dancing. In terrible anger, he threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it (vs. 19-20).

Notice their radically different leadership styles as Moses demands accountability from Aaron who tries to shift the blame for his own behavior to the people. "What did the people do to you?" he demanded. "How did they ever make you bring such terrible sin upon them?" (vs. 21).

"Don't get upset, sir," Aaron replied. "You yourself know these people and what a wicked bunch they are. They said to me, 'Make us some gods to lead us, for something has happened to this man



All of you who are on the Lord's side, come over here and join me.



Moses, who led us out of Egypt.' So I told them, Bring me your gold earrings. When they brought them to me, I threw them into the fire and out came this calf!" (vs. 22-24). Imagine! Aaron's apostasy is so bound up with the rebellion that he declares his own efforts (the basis of every false religion is salvation by works) to be a miraculous consequence.

Aaron's leadership failure coupled with the nation's rebellion demanded a call for repentance and reformation, especially in light of the scandal their behavior had brought upon God's name and reputation in full view of nonbelieving enemies.

So Moses confronted the issue directly. When Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control and much to the amusement of their enemies, he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "All of you who are on the Lord's side, come over here and join me." And all the Levites came (vs 25-26).

Today, when our Lord's return appears delayed, God still seeks leaders who will discern the truth, stand for right, and call for radical faithfulness to God's plan. How will you and I lead?

James A. Cress
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INTERSECTION

Your Faith, Your World

Kincaid Chance is about 11 or 12 years old. As the narrator in a 1990 novel, he has three older brothers and two younger twin sisters. His mother is a devout Seventh-day Adventist. Though his father is unchurched, he supports his wife's staunch insistence that Kincaid and all their other children attend church faithfully every Sabbath morning. Kincaid is somewhat less than impressed.

Throughout the book, the author, drawing unmistakably on autobiographical experiences, describes various scenarios in the Adventist subculture: potlucks, Pathfinders, worship services, and Sabbath School. In fact, Sabbath School is a scene that recurs quite regularly throughout the book. And Kincaid always wishes he were elsewhere.

"Any questions?" asks Brother Beal [Kincaid's embattled Sabbath School teacher], looking even more church-scrunched and bleached-out than usual. And my heart goes out to him, because it's so clear that there can never be questions, because his words ask no questions. . . . 'Any comments then?' he asks. And I want to shout: Yes! . . .

"But I say nothing."^a

What was Sabbath School like for you as a child? This is a question whose answer should be considered seriously even if our responsibility is only for *adult* Sabbath School. It is important because the answers focus on some principles that pertain to Sabbath School for children, youth, and adults.

It is a reminder that those who attend our Sabbath School classes are not all the same. First, in any given adult Sabbath School class, the members are different developmentally. Some may be brand-new converts to Christianity; others may be lifelong, mature Christians. Second, members are also different educationally. Some may have advanced degrees; others may never have completed elementary school.

At the most basic level, the members of any given Sabbath School class have varying degrees of biblical literacy. A book recently published in North America points out that most of society has little knowledge of the most basic aspects of biblical knowledge. The author suggests that this has resulted from a time in the nineteenth century when "churches . . . started focusing on loving Jesus rather than on listening to him."^b

Certainly biblical literacy is essential. If Christians do not know what information is contained in their Bibles, there is a problem. But knowledge is something more than just mere facts, more than just an awareness that Jesus loves us. In Scripture knowledge is relational and transformational.

Ellen G. White writes, "As long as individuals are content with a theory of truth and are yet lacking in the daily operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart, which is manifested in outward transformation of character, they are cutting themselves off from the qualification that would fit them for greater efficiency in the Master's work."^c

In Jesus' time, it was the experts in religion, those who knew Scripture best, who rejected Him. Mere information is not enough. "Even the demons believe" (James 2:19, NKJV).

"If we ever know the truth, it will be because we practice it. We must have a living experience in the things of God before we are able to understand His Word. This *experimental knowledge* is what strengthens the intellect and builds us up into Christ our living Head."^d

The expression "experimental knowledge" appears about 300 times in the Spirit of Prophecy. Careful reading of the context in each use of this term indicates that it refers to knowledge that is lived in one's life. It means a knowledge that transforms behavior, not just knowledge of mere facts.

The psalmist writes, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart" (Ps. 26:2, NKJV).

Sabbath School should be a place where we try our minds *and* our hearts. It should be an intentional effort to try the minds and the hearts of our Sabbath School members. It seeks to be more than mere information; its goal is transformation. ED

^a David James Duncan, *The Brothers K* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 94.

^b <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070401/9qa.htm>

^c *Selected Messages*, 2: 56, 57.

^d *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 97, emphasis supplied.

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One of the most common criticisms leveled at the Christian church is that it's "too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good." Dispelling this myth—showing the profound role faith can play in everyday life—is one of the central aims of a new television program that began airing on the Hope Channel earlier this year.

Intersection: Your Faith, Your World is a half-hour weekly program that explores issues as current as today's headlines, but from the unique perspective of Seventh-day Adventist faith and values. The concept for Intersection came from world church president, Pastor Jan Paulsen, who wanted a program that focused on the real-life impact of faith, and which reminded people that religion is not something that should be locked away behind church doors.

"My hope is that this program will allow us say more clearly: 'Look, the values we hold to—the values of God's kingdom—are alive!'" says Pastor Paulsen. "They are not just dusty theological statements; the principles of Scripture find their best expression in everyday life, in the mundane and the routine."

"Look around you and see what concerns your neighbor: things such as family, community, relationships, personal growth, finances, worries about the future. Does our faith have something significant to say about all these things? Of course. And this is the intersection—between faith and life—that this program explores."

This theme of a faith that speaks to current issues in society is one that Pastor Paulsen has often highlighted. "I want the world to know," he said in a Christmas message broadcast in December last year,

"that our faith has something profound to say about issues in today's headlines: the environment; public health; freedom; religious tolerance. I want the world to know we will do more than simply talk about the Scriptures; we will live its principles. And because of this we will inevitably be drawn into positive, constructive engagement with our communities."

This is the message that Intersection aims to deliver, through stories, interviews and panel discussions with lay people, administrators and experts. Bettina Krause, senior producer and host of the program, says that the discussions are lively and often surprising. "We're hearing from viewers that these programs make a great starting point for discussions at home, or for small groups, Sabbath School classes or youth groups," she says.

Recent episodes have focused on topics as diverse as "Standing for what is Right," "The Problem with Guilt" and "Secrets of a Happy Marriage". Rajmund Dabrowski, communication director for the world church and executive producer of the program, says the goal is to help people step away from preconceived ideas and to look at an issue from someone else's point of view. "For instance, in one program—'Understanding other Religions'—we interviewed the communication director from an Islamic organization here in Washington, D.C.," he says. "Her personal perspective on the impact of religious discrimination was truly eye-opening."

You can find out more information about Intersection and download programs at <http://intersection.adventist.org/> Broadcast times and information is available at www.hopetv.org.



INTERSECTION

Your Faith, Your World

Where faith, ideas and life come together

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Intersection is a half-hour, weekly television program broadcast internationally by the Hope Channel. Find local listings at

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Communication Department of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church.