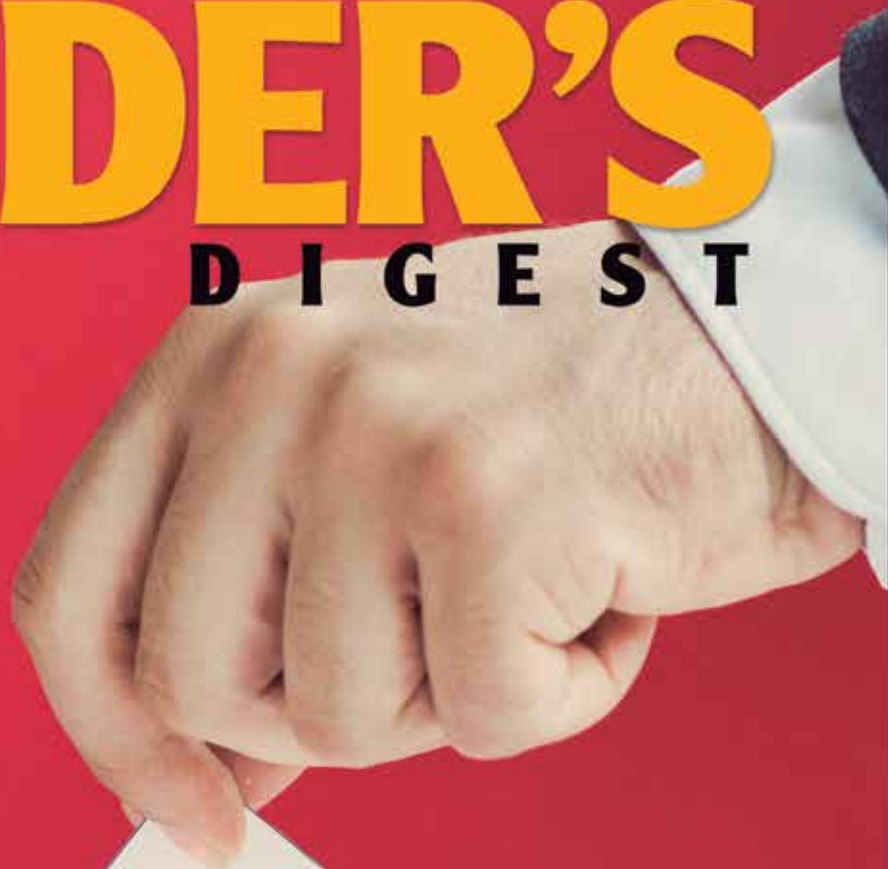


quarterly resource for local church leaders † july/september 2020

ELDER'S DIGEST



**NOMINATING
COMMITTEE:
MINISTRY MODELS**



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NOMINATING COMMITTEE

It has been said that the church nominating committee is one of the most important committees of the church. Its members have the responsibility to seek out and elect leaders who will guide the congregation to fulfill its mission. The committee's purpose is to identify and recommend church members who may perform various roles and duties for the next ecclesiastical term.

Their work is essential. The congregation is called upon to pray for their deliberations and decisions. Before the nominating committee gathers for its first meeting, it is good to list the names of the committee members in the church bulletin or newsletter. Ask the congregation to pray for wisdom for each one of them.

This is vital because the committee, by means of deciding who is nominated, strongly affects the direction, the internal work, the future mission, and the dynamism of the church. Thus it is impossible to underestimate the importance of their work.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*¹ contains good suggestions regarding the nominating committee and the election process. It is always a good practice for the chair and committee members to read that section and follow the instructions presented there. For example, the *Church Manual* says:

“Officers are elected every one or two years (see p. 72) through an appointed nominating committee. This committee brings its report to the church, which then votes on the names presented. This procedure enables the church to give careful study to each name prior to election and avoids the competitive element that may arise when nominations are made from the floor.

The nominating committee shall study the needs of the church and inquire into the fitness of members to serve in the different offices. This is another reason

officers shall not be nominated from the floor or by general ballot.

The size of the nominating committee will range from five members in a small church to a larger number in a large church. The number to be chosen is left to the discretion of each church and should be studied by the board. A suitable recommendation then will be brought to the church, using a minimum of time in the Sabbath worship hour.”

It is always highly recommended that each member of the church nominating committee be familiar with the useful instructions of chapter 9 in the *Church Manual*, where you will find clearer instructions on:

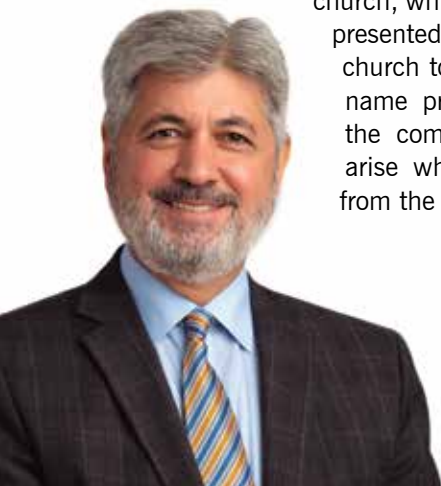
- When and How the Nominating Committee Is Appointed
- How the Process Works
- Who Should Be Members of the Nominating Committee
- Work of the Nominating Committee
- Members May Appear Before the Nominating Committee
- Nominating Committee Discussions Are Confidential
- Reporting to the Church
- Objections to the Report of the Nominating Committee
- Filling Vacancies Between Elections

By following these wise guidelines, your church nominating committee members will accomplish their task with a high level of efficiency and spirituality. As a spiritual leader, you are charged by God to lead His church with knowledge and wisdom (Jer 3:15).

It is also good to remember that we are Christ's body—His arms, hands, tongue, legs, and feet. Working as a member of a church committee is one way to serve the mission of Christ's church. So, pray for the work of the nominating committees as they seek to serve the Lord and His church.

Be wise, righteous, and godly in your contribution and choices in this important committee. Blessings on you!

ED



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2016), 110–113.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE: MINISTRY MODELS

What words and phrases come to mind when I say “nominating committee”?

Unfortunately, in some churches, the words would be “manipulation,” “never-ending,” “arm-twisting,” “status quo,” “gossip,” “power hungry,” “control,” “tiring,” etc.

But fortunately, in a growing number of churches, the words would be “refreshing,” “Spirit-led,” “empowering,” “thrilling,” “fun,” etc.

How can your church’s nominating committee process better reflect the wonderful Jesus we serve and the exciting mission He has called us to, rather than the devil we have turned our backs on?

Here are three ministry models for nominating committees that I wish I had known when I was a young pastor wading through a tedious and nerve-grating process. Using these models, I can truly say that our church looked forward to the process each year because it took only one day and was a chance to see God at work raising up new leadership and affirming continued leadership for our church in the coming year. Each model is fully in harmony with the counsel in chapter 9 of the 2016 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. Make any changes to the process gently and kindly. It may take a few years to fully transition to this simplified (and joyful!) process. Feel free to use, adapt, or discard these models in your ministry. Remember, a MODEL can Make Our Difficulties Easy and Light!

1. Church Board Positions Only. We want *everyone* in the church to serve and share Jesus. But doing this through our nominating committee would take forever!

So our nominating committee only fills church board positions as listed in the *Church Manual*. Then the church board members are responsible for mentoring the entire congregation and mobilizing them in ministry and mission. At our first church board meeting of the new year, each board member/mentor makes recommendations of people they would like to serve on their team during the new year. For example, our head deacon (who has had a chance to visit with deacons from the past year and talk with others who might be added to the team) recommends people to serve as deacons during the new year. This is discussed then voted on by the church board.

2. Insist on Three or More Names for Each Position. When things are going well in a particular church position, it is easy for the nominating committee to not really consider anyone except the current leader in that position. But this might prevent that person from being considered for another leadership role they might be better suited for, and can keep other growing leaders from ever having a chance to lead. So, for each position we went through these steps:

- Collect names—from a variety of sources, not just the committee.
- Place all names for the position on the white board. Do not remove names or allow anyone on the committee to prevent a name from being listed.
- Do not stop listing names until you have at least three names for the position (five to seven names in larger churches). This will stretch the thinking of the committee, but it also has the effect of revealing more potential leaders.

- Identify each person on the list. No speeches or discussion, pro or con, are permitted. You are not looking for reasons to take names off the list, but rather to allow the best potential leaders to rise to the top of the list.

3. Vote by Secret Ballot with a Weighted Average for Top Three Choices. Secret ballot voting allows people to vote their conscience without fear of being misunderstood or intimidated. Voting a weighted average allows all on the committee to see the strength of the vote for each nominee and sense God’s leading. Here are the steps to follow:

- All names for a particular position are now on the white board (including the person who has served for the current year, unless no one suggested their name). Each nominee has been identified but not discussed.

- There is time for prayer that the Lord will lead in filling this position with the right person for the new church year.

- Each committee member has a ballot. On the ballot they list their top three choices for the position and write “3” (points) beside their first choice, “2” beside their second choice, and “1” beside their third choice.

- The nominating committee secretary picks someone to read and verify each ballot and someone else to

record the points beside each name as read. Everyone watches as points are added beside names. When all ballots are read it is easy to identify the first, second, and third choice of the committee. If there is a tie, a new ballot may be used.

- Repeat the process for each church board position. You will ultimately have a first, second, and third choice for each church board position.

- Identify which committee members will contact the people for each position. But before anyone is contacted, the nominee’s name must be confidentially cleared by the clerk (confirm membership locally and that there are no ministry restrictions) and treasurer (confirm regular giving to tithe and local church budget). If the requirements are not met, their name is removed.

- The first qualified person in each position should be called. If they decline, then the second qualified person is called, etc. Within two weeks all positions are generally filled and a first and second reading and vote are taken by the entire congregation. ED

Dan Serns is Director of English Evangelism for the Texas Conference. This article was first published in *Best Practices*, November 11, 2019, and has been lightly edited for *Elder’s Digest*. Used by permission.

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SUNDAY OR SABBATH?

Sometimes things are different from what they seem to be at first glance. A book of adventure stories reports that certain areas in a desert were marked by poles so that travelers and caravans would not get lost. However, there were also so-called pole men who displaced the poles. Travelers followed these false poles, then, exhausted and perplexed, were attacked and robbed of their belongings. Deception!

Christianity at large keeps Sunday, but the Bible calls the Sabbath God's day of rest.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY

1. The Ten Commandments state, "Keep holy the Sabbath day."
2. For God all days are equal.
3. The "Lord's Day" mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.
4. The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.

5. We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.

6. The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.

7. The early church celebrated Sunday.

8. Sunday is part of the church's tradition.

ARGUMENTS REVIEWED

1. The Ten Commandments state, "Keep holy the Sabbath day."

This sentence is not found in Scripture. The Sabbath commandment is worded differently and specifies the seventh day—not just any day—as the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11). However, the sentence is found in catechisms.

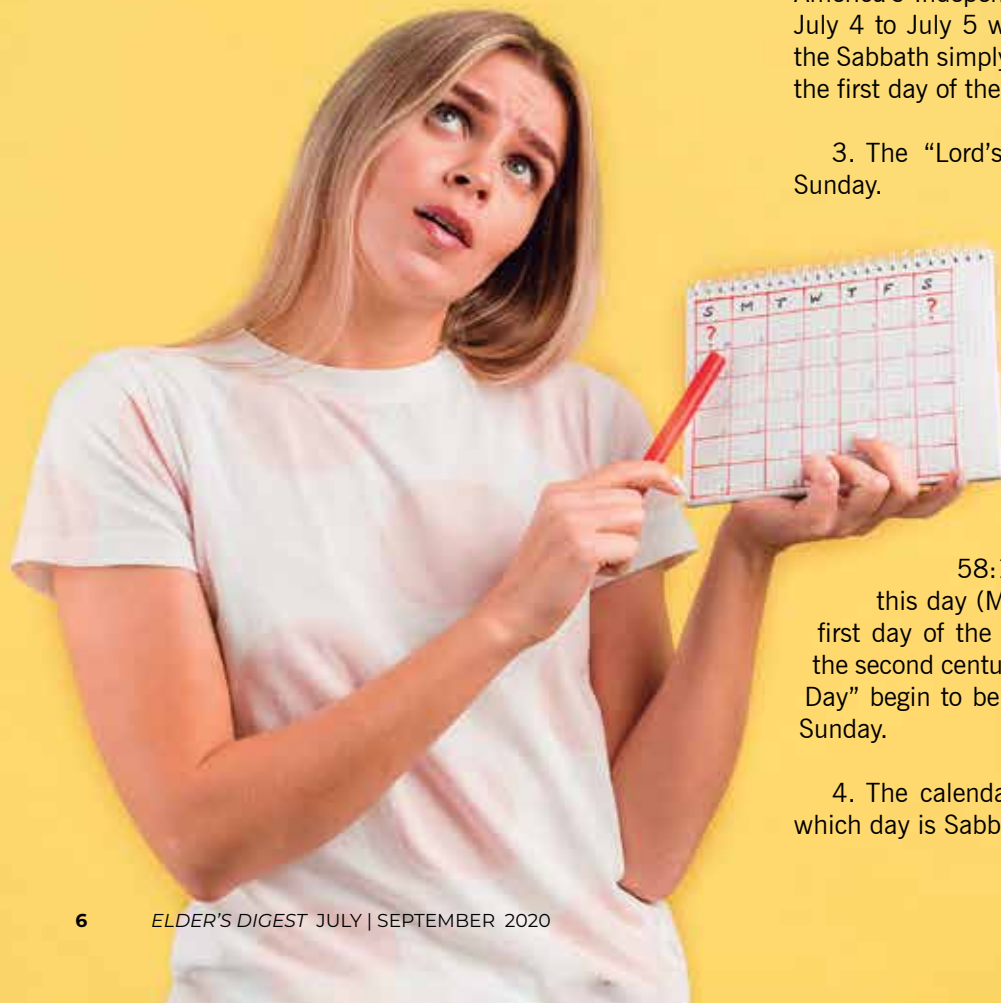
2. For God all days are equal.

If this were the case, why did God give the fourth commandment? Jesus kept the Sabbath and urged the correct way to keep it holy (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:23–28)? Why would Jesus wish that Christians would observe that day if it did not matter (Matt 24:20)? America's Independence Day cannot be moved from July 4 to July 5 without losing its meaning; nor can the Sabbath simply be moved from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

3. The "Lord's Day" mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.

The term is found in Revelation 1:10. A unique Greek term is used to describe the day as specifically belonging to the Lord (as also in Exod 20:10). A similar expression, translated "the Day of the Lord," describes God's day of judgment (2 Pet 3:10; Joel 2:1, 11), but only the Sabbath does God call "My holy day" (Isa 58:13). Jesus calls Himself the Lord of this day (Mark 2:28). John calls Sunday "the first day of the week" (John 20:1, 19). Not until the second century in Rome did the term "the Lord's Day" begin to be used by church fathers to refer to Sunday.

4. The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.



James Robertson from the United States Naval Observatory wrote in 1932, "We have had occasion to investigate the results of the works of specialists in chronology and we have never found one of them that has ever had the slightest doubt about the continuity of the weekly cycle long before the Christian era. . . . There has been no change in our calendar in past centuries that affected in any way the cycle of the week." When Pope Gregory XIII made a change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, the order of days was not affected. In 1582, Thursday, October 4 was followed by Friday, October 15. If the weekly cycle had changed before Christ, we can assume that Jesus would have told His contemporaries which day the Sabbath really was.

5. We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.

Neither before nor after His resurrection did Jesus command the keeping of Sunday in remembrance of His resurrection (see His last words before His ascension in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20–21). Instead Jesus expects His disciples to keep the Sabbath also in the future (Matt 24:20). It is not the day that memorializes Christ's resurrection, but baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom 6:3–6; Col 2:12; 1 Cor 11:2–26). Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), is the Creator, and He has instituted the Sabbath (Col 1:15–16). He alone has the authority to change or abolish the Sabbath commandment. Nowhere has He done this.

6. The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.

Christians more or less keep the Ten Commandments. The problem is that many take liberty with the fourth commandment, or declare it among all the others as ceremonial in nature. However, the Sabbath commandment is not ceremonial but a reminder of creation and liberation. Jesus did not transgress the Sabbath commandment (John 8:46); otherwise He might have been stoned to death (Num 15:32–36). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pointed out the real intention of the law (Matt 5:17–20). While the Bible knows different laws, the Ten Commandments are still valid (Rom 7:7, 12; Jas 2:10–13). There is a new covenant in the New Testament, but this new covenant is based on the Old Testament covenants and includes the internalization, not abrogation, of God's law (Heb 8:10). On the other hand, Daniel predicted that a power would come and change times and the law (Dan 7:25).

7. The early church celebrated Sunday.

Traces of Christians keeping Sunday can be found

in the mid-second century, but not in the New Testament.

The meetings of the disciples were not worship services. The disciples hid because they were afraid of their enemies (John 20:19, 26).

Acts 20:7–8, 11 describes a farewell meeting. According to Jewish reckoning, the day begins and ends with sunset (Lev 23:32). If the Jewish reckoning is used here, it was Saturday night, and Paul set out on his journey on Sunday. According to Roman reckoning, the day begins and ends at midnight. If this method is used here, it was Sunday night. The breaking of bread took place on Monday. Neither option supports the sanctification of Sunday. Furthermore, even today churches have meetings during the week without keeping the respective day holy (see also Acts 2:46).

The money should be laid aside at home (1 Cor 16:2). A worship service is not pictured here.

Colossians 2:16 has to be understood in its context, which deals with different heresies (vv. 8, 18, 20–23). It may be that the Sabbath mentioned in verse 16 was observed in the wrong way, or Paul may have ceremonial Sabbaths in mind (see Lev 23:26–32), which foreshadowed the plan of salvation and were fulfilled in Christ.

8. Sunday is part of the church's tradition.

The sun was worshipped even in ancient times. In the Roman Empire, the unconquered sun god (*deus sol invictus*) was worshipped. In AD 321 Emperor Constantine issued the first official Sunday law. But already before that time a great number of Christians observed Sunday, sometimes in addition to Sabbath. Reasons for observing Sunday may have included the desire to differentiate themselves from Jews and to enable Gentiles to become Christians more easily. Only after AD 321 was keeping Sunday enforced by civil and, later, church laws.

However, Jesus rejected traditions when opposed to the will of God (Matt 15:3, 9, 14).

GOD'S SABBATH AND ME

In His love God has given us the Sabbath in order to bless us richly. Jesus observed this day. Peter calls us to follow Christ's footsteps (1 Pet 2:21). Jesus is our Savior. He is also an example for us. We decide to follow Him and keep the day that He Himself kept. ED

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THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 5

A BIBLICAL THOUGHT—1

“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith.’ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, ‘The person who does these things will live by them.’”—Galatians 3:10–12

The previous biblical thought focused on two important concepts found in Abraham’s experience: blessing and election. Both movements from God, contrary to human religion, do not find their goal or end in the one who is blessed or elect. God elects those who respond to His calling to serve others, and every blessing He gives is only a means to bless others in service! So Paul uses the example of Abraham,

who believed in God’s Word by faith and shaped his life around the promise, to show how we should live in Christ: only and exclusively by faith in the promises and actions of God. The true Israelites, in all of human history, were not those who objectively “kept all things” (remember Jesus’ words to the rich young ruler!) but those who trusted that the law was a means, a bridge, for us to exercise our faith in God’s provision and action. Without trust and faith, every action, devotion, and work is useless.

In Galatians 3:10–12 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to show that anyone who tries to depend on the objective keeping of the law for life is truly under a curse. Why? Because the law was only effective when it led the individual to the action of God: sacrifice. By faith the individual was to trust that the sacrifice presented to God pointed to a future act of God, to

the sacrifice of Jesus Himself (as anticipated in Genesis 3:15). So the keeping of the law leads to sacrifice, to death. If one does not believe in the sacrifice of Jesus by faith, and remains under the law, he/she is cursed! For the law requires death.

For centuries, the relationship between law and faith has brought much confusion to Christians, including Adventists. Humanity is drawn to legalism; it is our first instinct when we commit any sin. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit and discovered their nakedness and shame, the very first thing they did was attempt to cover themselves up. Legalism, the attempt to use works to justify ourselves, is the most ancient religious impulse recorded in the Bible! When we fall, we are easily convinced by ourselves and others that the way to deal with it is to cover ourselves up with good actions—as if these good actions could justify us! The story of Adam and Eve helps us understand that only God is able to cover our nakedness. The battle between righteousness by faith and by works is found in the very first pages of Scripture.

So the question is: will you trust in your own works, and eventually find yourself under the curse of the law, or will you allow God to do the work you cannot do? Will you still attempt to follow the law written in stone by your own efforts? Or will you allow God to write the law in your heart, so that by His Spirit and in love you will know how to live in the freedom Christ gives us from the curse of the law itself? May we never forget that the righteous are not those who trust in their own devotion to the law, but those who live by faith in the faithfulness of the God who became a curse so we could live in faith, hope, and love.

A BIBLICAL THOUGHT—2

“Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith.’ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, ‘The person who does these things will live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”—Galatians 3:11–14

The message of this biblical thought is a continuation of the previous one: the individual who attempts to maintain a relationship with God through objective devotion to the law is under a curse. The law demands sacrifice and, in Paul’s argument, Jesus

THE RIGHTEOUS ARE NOT THOSE WHO TRUST IN THEIR OWN DEVOTION TO THE LAW, BUT THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE GOD WHO BECAME A CURSE SO WE COULD LIVE IN FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE.

Himself became curse for us so that we might live in the Spirit through faith alone. If a Christian maintains devotion to the law, the law will still require sacrifice. So either the individual accepts Jesus’ sacrifice, or he will be killed by the letter of the law.

Think about this: The promise to Abraham, the blessing of Abraham, through Jesus, has reached all of us. Now we can live a life of faith, like Abraham! But instead of looking forward in

faith to the death of Jesus—like Abraham did—we can look back in faith and trust in His completed sacrifice. So our life becomes a life of faith that sees everything through the reality of a new day, thanks to Jesus’ sacrifice for us.

For those who believe religious life consists of going in and out of church meetings for a few hours a week, this should be a surprising concept: Through His sacrifice, Jesus frees us toward life—to a life of faith! You might think that a life of faith is one that simply stops every once in a while for prayer, Bible study, or any other one of the familiar disciplines. But a life of faith is a *life* of faith, where prayer, study, and everything else take on a completely new dimension. Because Jesus became curse for us and died so we could have life, the prayerful life is not one of only words. Henri Nouwen understands that a prayerful life “is not a life in which we say many prayers, but a life in which nothing, absolutely nothing, is done, said, or understood independently of Him who is the origin and purpose of our existence.” He adds, “To walk in the presence of the Lord means to move forward in life in such a way that all our desires, thoughts, and actions are constantly guided by him.” Jesus saves us to a life of sensibility to Him and, consequently, toward others.

In every circumstance of life—even within our brokenness—we have the opportunity, in Christ, to live a life of faith that not only looks back and trusts in the sacrifice of Jesus, but that also looks forward, with the eyes of Jesus, and sees a new world of possibilities for good, for love, for beauty, for joy, and peace. We see with new eyes our family members, coworkers or fellow students, and even people on the street. We stand before them and before God in a constant awareness of what has been done for us, and consequently of what can now be extended to others. So may you, my dear reader, become the extension of the blessing of Abraham to others—in life, and every day. ED

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SADVENTIST, GLADVENTIST, BADVENTIST, OR . . . ?

The other day, as I sat thinking about what kind of an Adventist I am, it suddenly occurred to me that one of the elemental questions for all believers in Jesus is: What kind of Christian am I? How do I behave? How do I respond to my spouse, my children, my friends, my pastor, my church? Am I joyful? Am I bored? Am I committed? Do I attend church regularly? Am I active? How do I relate to the church of my choice?

As a retired employee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which I served for nearly forty years in various roles (pastor, educator, editor, and a director in many countries of the church's community development program, ADRA), I came in contact with a wide spread of Adventist believers and their behaviors. For the large part, I was greatly pleased with what and whom I encountered. But in some cases, I was not so pleased; although as a dedicated Christian, I loved them anyway.

What did I see? Let us start with "Sadventists." These are people who seem to be doubting. Unsure of their faith and unsure of the Church's doctrines, though they are usually faithful attendees, they have questions about the veracity of the Church as God's chosen end-time vessel to bring the final, true, Bible-based message to a dying world. They cannot quite make the satisfactory mark of complete trust. I like what Arthur G. Daniells says about doubt and disappointment:

The student of Scripture will readily recognize that in the past God's people have repeatedly been disappointed in their expectations,—just because they have misunderstood God's providences. Many times they have been perplexed and discouraged, and often have passed through strange experiences,—all because of the failure of some hope based upon faulty understanding of the prophetic word. Some have even been perplexed by the direct word of the Lord.¹

What do Sadventists need? Maybe a deeper study of the Word; a more profound trust in the Church's theologi-

cal scholars; a stronger belief in Ellen G. White and her wonderful writings; and, more importantly, a closer walk with Jesus. The evidence from these men and women of trust gives assurance of who we are.

Moving on, we come to "Tadventists." These members are somewhat similar to the Sadventists. The difference is they attend church sporadically—a tad now and a tad then—partly as a result of their questions about the veracity of the Church. Or they may be more interested in financial prosperity, which keeps them busy on their farm or with their business on the Sabbath—not always, but when it seems necessary. They allow non-Adventist friends, who unexpectedly visit them on Sabbath morning, to turn them away from attendance. They may have a slight cold or just feel sleepy after a bad night in bed. It is easy to skip under these circumstances. But, is skipping Sabbath services correct?

During my pastoral ministry, I learned five things that Sabbath services bring to the soul: The first is the lesson and inspiration we learn from the *sermon*. A good sermon will bring new determination to follow the Lord more closely. It will give us new insights into a broad range of subjects that ennoble us. Then there is the *lesson study*. Here we learn more about many important themes of the Bible—how to live a better Christian life, how to witness, and how to know more about heaven and what it holds for us. We also gain a clearer understanding of the prophecies, which tell us where we are in earth's history, and, perhaps more importantly, what God wants us to do with our life. The *music* is also uplifting. It brings rejoicing to our soul. And so is the *fellowship* with our brothers and sisters in church. Socializing with one another enriches us. And finally, there is *prayer*, a spiritual exercise that deepens our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Then we have "Madventists." They are unhappy about how they have been treated by some member in the church, disgusted by the behavior of the pastor, and

insulted by sermons dealing with specific problems in their own lives. They have a hard time understanding that we are judged by our own actions, and not by those of others. God will judge those we think have offended us; it is His responsibility, not ours. Our loyalty is to God *and* to His Church. David has the solution: “Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered. Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind” (Ps 26:1–2).

Next are the “Fadventists.” These are the people who follow every trend of style—a hairdo, the length of the skirt or dress, the color of the shoes, the way they wear their shirt, or the type of suit currently in fashion—never mind if it offends others or fellow church members. To dress contrary would be an embarrassment. They are somehow driven to follow every trend, even when it may be contrary to Christian principles. In today’s society, just about any type of dress is okay, so why be offended if you dress modestly, in keeping with Christian standards? Unless you have your dress dragging on the floor or your pants hiked up above your belly button, you should not be a spectacle. Remember: we are witnesses to the Lord. One of the best ways to do that is to dress in a way that honors God.

Then there are the “Gadventists.” The Gadventists have no compunctions about where to go or when. Back when I was a boy, we called them gadabouts. They just loved to always be on the move, going here and there, visiting friends or going shopping, with no real purpose or agenda—basically wasting time, when those moments could be spent on something noble for the church or the Lord and their salvation. Perhaps the worse manifestation of the Gadventists is the tendency to move from church to church, to visit one church after another. There is no settling down in one congregation where they can be useful in some way or another. Gadventists miss the fellowship, since good fellowship is built on permanent friends (and some new ones). And the elevating experience that results from the lesson study is often lost since many Gadventists skip the lesson study when cruising from church to church. Permanency in a single church is enriching as fellowship with one another and the pastor deepens, as involvement in church activities grows.

Next are the “Badventists.” The Badventists are always making trouble in the church—gossiping, slandering, condemning, challenging, and arguing. Oh yes, a Badventist is a faithful church attendee who regularly participates in the communion service, pays an accurate tithe and gives a generous offering, likes to sing, belongs to some church activity, believes in all the doctrines, and claims to love Jesus. But the Badventist has hurt more than one fellow church member, and has more than once told the pastor something negative about the sermon. Yes, the Badventist is a problem. What he or she needs is a true conversion, and a softening of the heart.

Perhaps worst of these types are the “Hadventists.”

These are the ones who have left the Adventist Church, usually for good. It might have been due to some snub they received by a fellow member, or because they believed one of the doctrines was theologically untenable, or perhaps because they were incensed by a problem with some leader in the church. What they need to understand is that for those who offend, the problem is theirs; they must give account to God, and let Him deal with them in His own way. The firm Adventist believes unequivocally that church attendance is a demonstration of one’s loyalty to God. Abandoning the Church sometimes leads to a worldly lifestyle, or nonattendance to any church, or, as is the case in many situations, an unhappy life. Permanent absenteeism is a disappointment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, there are many “Gladventists.” The Gladventist loves the church, is genuinely happy to belong to the remnant church, loves the doctrines, loves all the church members—even the ones who haven’t always treated him or her very nicely—and loves Jesus. The Gladventist goes about with a smile, always thinking positively, is a great supporter of the various church activities, and is warm and friendly to everyone, even the adversaries. Yes, even in the face of some adversity, the Gladventist never gets discouraged. A wonderful upshot of this behavior is the inspiration it brings to many other church attendees—often even to those who are discouraged, who may be Sadventists and Badventists. The Gladventist is a wonderful testimony of the love of Jesus in our lives.

Finally, there are the “Gradventists.” These are the Adventists who share their faith at every opportunity. In other words, they have taken a step beyond being Gladventists; they are graduates—postgraduates, if you please—who feel inspired to share their Lord and their beliefs with everyone possible. These are the ones who bring growth to the church, and their hearts are filled with deep satisfaction and peace. Some of these become leaders in their local church. They may even become formal church employees, or establish a lay-operated organization that helps spread the gospel. Gradventists are to be congratulated, given thanks, and lifted up. These happy members are a testimony and encouragement to all. Oh that the church were filled with a vast number of these wonderful members!

So who are you? Are you a Sadventist, a Tadventist, a Madventist, a Fadventist, a Gadventist, a Badventist, or a Hadventist? I trust you are none of these. What God wants of you is to be a Gladventist—and better yet, a Gradventist! ED

¹ Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, “Gift Renewed in the Remnant Church,” in *Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1936), 254.

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DISCIPLES KEEPING DISCIPLES:

SHARING STORIES >PART 3

It was 12:30 a.m. when my phone went off. I answered the call, awakened from my deep sleep. A familiar voice apologized to have disturbed me at that hour but requested I talk to him. I got out of the bed, went to my reading room, and began to speak with him. He was sharing a story of distress. One hour passed. I sighed to end the conversation. But he asked me to be on the line for a little more time. He shared his story full of burdens for well over ninety minutes before we ended with a prayer.

SHARING STORIES

People want to share their stories. It could be the person seated next to you at church. Even when church members know each other and address each other by name, they may fail to notice others' joys and pains. We take notice only through sharing stories, but not many opportunities are provided for members to share their stories. By sharing stories, we not only know others' names, but also who they are.

The Bible encourages us to share our stories with one another. The psalmist says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story" (Ps 107:2). Paul shared his story whenever he had the opportunity (Acts 26), which brought people to listen to him. Paul instructs, "Bear one another's burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:12). While bearing a burden means helping carry another's weight, emotionally and spiritually it means to share what is in the heart—a heart burden—to one who can be trusted.

Joshua Gowin writes in *Psychology Today* that when someone shares a story to a friend, he or she can transfer that experience directly to their brain. The receptor can feel what the remitter feels. The listener empathizes with the storyteller.¹ Philip Pullman affirms Gowin, stating, "After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."² He states further that sharing stories brings people together. When people share openly about their experiences, challenges, hopes, and joys,



they connect with others on a deeper level.³ I believe the deeper level of sharing stories involves personal spiritual practices.⁴ By sharing personal stories, both the teller and the receiver develop trust and a sense of acceptance and oneness. When one shares in full trust, the other shares as well. The bond is created for further conversation and prayer. I know that sharing stories comes with the challenge of gossiping. But when it is done prayerfully, people go from sharing day-to-day stories to sharing spiritual and transformational stories.

KAYAMUYA

In my church I introduced what I call *kayamuya* time. This is a fifteen-minute period between Sabbath school and the divine hour of worship. *Kayamuya* simply means “chitchat.” Those fifteen minutes are allotted to chitchat and sharing stories, and the church and foyer become a little noisy. But I feel that is where God’s people share their stories and bond together as one body of Christ. When the opportunity is provided to share stories with one another, the acceptance level between the members improves. Genuine sharing also may protect against gossiping and judgmentalism. Sharing stories connects people—especially those who feel isolated, neglected, marginalized, and stigmatized—by giving them an opportunity to call someone a confidant and feel included in the church.

ADVENTIST HERITAGE

“Social meetings” and “Adventist hotels” were key to inclusivity and engagement among the early Adventists. They were instrumental to the growth of the Adventist movement. Social meetings occurred in places of systematized worship service. These meetings were informal worship services where believers prayed together and shared personal testimonies.⁵ Adventist hotels were just Adventist homes, where many Adventists gathered for their quarterly meetings. So many believers stayed overnight in different Adventist homes, which were well supplied with spare beds. All women helped with the housework. There were interesting things to talk about. On these occasions, ties of friendship were strengthened, never to be broken.⁶

LET US SHARE OUR STORIES

Sharing stories can be part of the regular worship service: During meet-and-greet time, the pastor in charge asks the members to turn to someone other than their own family and ask a specific question to engage in conversation. The pastor proposes a question or inquiry, which is not too personal, to begin a conversation. Such questions could be:

1. Tell me about your week.
2. What specific challenges has life thrown at you?
3. Tell me something interesting that happened to you this week.
4. Tell me about your hobby.
5. What do you like the most in the church?
6. What is your favorite dish? Why?
7. What tools do you use to help you in your spiritual journey?

As the plan is implemented, and after the people get accustomed to the different model, the questions can be designed to evoke more emotions. This exercise will enable people to know each other in person, connect at a meaningful level, grow closer, and begin to feel included and accepted.

Ellen G. White says it is our love, embracing all humanity, that proves we are members of the family of God.⁷ Once members attain this level, they are more likely to stay, for they will have friends with whom to share their joys and sorrows. ED

¹ Joshua Gowin, “Why Sharing Stories Brings People Together,” *Psychology Today*, June 6, 2011.

² Philip Pullman, “Sharing Stories to Bring Us Together,” Family Councils Ontario, February 15, 2017, <https://fco.ngo/blog/sharing-stories-bring-us-together>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Published by Willow Creek Association, 2007), 70.

⁵ Theodore Levterov, “Early Adventist Worship, 1845–1900,” in *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodríguez, Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 3 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016), 55–79.

⁶ Luella B. Priddy, “Stories of a Pioneer Church,” *Youth Instructor*, January 19, 1926, 10.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing: Health and Happiness* (n.p., 1990), 104.

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CREATING A HEALTHY SLEEP SCHEDULE FOR YOUR FAMILY

Many of us remember having a strict bedtime checklist when we were children: brush your teeth, read a bedtime story, and lights off at eight. As we compete more and more with distracting screens and busy schedules, the idea of such a tight routine can feel like an impossible feat most nights! But research proves the positive impact that a simple, consistent routine before sleep has on children's health and well-being—both short- and long-term. Looking at phones or eating sugary snacks before bed can make it harder to fall and stay asleep throughout the night.

A bad night's sleep can manifest during the day some behavioral problems like restlessness and moodiness. It can also falsely increase your kids' appetite and affect their ability to concentrate and pay attention at school.

Many people may not know that the optimal amount of sleep is about ten to thirteen hours for three- to five-year-olds, nine to eleven hours for six- to thirteen-year-olds, and eight to ten hours for teens.

Research from YouGovGalaxy found that more than two-thirds of parents (sixty-eight percent) say their child's school performance is affected when they don't have enough sleep.

In fact, the team from the University of Notre Dame, Australia, found that almost half (forty-three percent) of all children regularly use screen-based devices at bedtime, with one in four (twenty-six percent) reporting sleep problems as a result.

The good news is that working out a healthy sleep schedule doesn't have to interfere with your complex

lives. Getting that routine nailed down will help your little ones (and you!) live their big lives with as much energy as possible.¹

HEALTHY BEDTIME ROUTINES

Make bedtime fun. Try adding fun yet relaxing activities before bedtime, like reading a bedtime story or writing together in a journal. For older kids, writing in a diary before bed can help shake any anxiety that might keep them up.

Create restful bedrooms. Help your child connect their room with "restfulness" by making them electronic-free zones. Remove devices like phones, TVs, and tablets and as much clutter as possible on and around the bed. It also helps to keep the room dark and at a comfortable temperature—18°C to 22°C is best for kids at night.

Switch off stimulants. Power down as a family thirty minutes before bedtime and do something mellow like a jigsaw puzzle or crossword. For older kids, exercise or sports in the afternoon can help shake off any excess energy. ED

¹ To learn more about children's health and well-being, see Christine Bennett, Victor Nossar, and Sharon Mullin, *Little People, Big Lives Report* (Fremantle: University of Notre Dame Australia, 2019), available at sanitarium.com.au/biglives.

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RESURRECTION: MESSAGE FROM AN EMPTY TOMB

INTRODUCTION

The author of the book *When It Was Dark* describes a situation in which a wealthy atheist decides to destroy Christianity. So he hires a venal archaeologist to create a fraudulent find in Israel, to bring to light the contrived discovery of the supposed remains of Christ.

The result is catastrophic. A new Ice Age descends on the earth. Hope goes out like a candle in the wind. Joy disappears from life. Missionaries return to their native lands. The lights in the churches go out, and the doors are locked for good. The law of Sinai is exchanged for the law of the jungle. The Sermon on the Mount gives way to savagery in the street. Hope dies—all because of a lie.

The fact is the tomb of Jesus was empty. So, is there a message from the empty tomb for us today? I suggest there are three.

I. THE EMPTY TOMB IS A MESSAGE OF PROMISE

Firstly, though the tomb was empty, it speaks a message of promise.

In the history of the world, only one tomb has ever had a rock rolled before it, and a soldier guard set to watch it to prevent the dead man within from rising: that was the tomb of Christ on the evening of the Friday called Good. What spectacle could be more ridiculous than armed soldiers keeping their eyes on a corpse? But sentinels were set lest the Dead walk, the Silent speak, and the Pierced Heart quicken to the throb of life. They said they knew He was dead; they said He would not rise again. And yet they watched! They openly called Him a deceiver. But would He still deceive? They remembered that He called His body the temple and that in three days after they destroyed it, He would rebuild it; they recalled too that He compared Himself to Jonah, and said that as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, so would He be in the belly of the earth for three days before rising again.

But they need not have worried because Jesus' biography was written before He was born. From the sixth-century-BC promise that forecast the place of His birth (Mic 5:2), to the manner of his death (Ps 22:16-17), to not having his bones broken (Ps 34:20), and to being buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa 53:9)—all these promises were kept. But there was yet another more dramatic promise: He would arise on the third day (Hos 6:2). True to the prophetic word, He emerged, escorted by an angel.

The fulfillment of those promises serves a double purpose. First, they authenticate

Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, the Son of God; and second, those kept promises are the basis of our certain hope of resurrection and reunion with all those who have died in the Lord (1 Cor 15:51-55). The empty tomb is proof that God keeps—and will keep—His promises.

II. THE EMPTY TOMB IS A MESSAGE OF HOPE

For many centuries innumerable people with tear-stained faces have stood beside yawning, open graves, and watched the remains of their loved ones lowered into the earth, wondering, *Beyond the dark cavern of this pit, is there anything beyond?*

Then, early on a Sunday morning as the first piercing rays of a reddening sky heralded the onset of a new day, the Son of God stepped forth from the grave and declared that there *is* something beyond, and that one day a heavenly Father will be waiting with outstretched arms to wipe away the tears and welcome us to a land where no one will ever say goodbye! How tragic it would be if it were not so.

But it is true. No bones of the Lord have been or ever will be discovered, for Jesus Christ on the first day of the week arose from the dead. He is alive forevermore!

The greatest historical evidence for any historical fact is that an institution be built upon that fact. The greatest and largest institution in the world, the Christian church, was built on a hole in the ground with nothing in it.

By contrast, you may go to the tomb of Mohammed, and they will tell you,

“Here lie the bones of the great prophet.”

You may go to the tomb of Napoleon, and they will tell you,

“Here lie the bones of the Emperor of France.”

You may go to Moscow and see the tomb of Lenin, and they will tell you, “Here lies the body of the founder of Soviet Communism.”

But you may go to the garden tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem, and you can see for yourself that “here lie the bones of no one. He is not here. He is risen, as He said He would.” The message from the empty tomb is a message of hope.

III. THE EMPTY TOMB IS A MESSAGE OF GRACE

The empty tomb is a message of promise, of hope, and of grace—amazing and astonishing—that the Creator of the uni-

verse would come and die for the creatures' sin. We were born with a death sentence, for the wages of sin is death. And there, at Calvary, and at the tomb, those wages were paid in full—signed, sealed, and delivered. Signed in blood, sealed by the Romans, and delivered into the tomb. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. That atoning death was payment for our sins. What manner of grace!

Theologians divide the work of Christ into two parts: the humiliation of Christ and His exaltation, or glorification. The first He did for us; the second we do for Him. He left heaven for us. He endured the mockery of men. He endured the pain and agony of spikes driven into His quivering flesh. He endured death as our substitute. Vicariously in our stead, He did it all for us.

But now in His exaltation, He rises from the dead with us, and He calls us to rise with Him. He ascends into heaven and calls us to do the same. He sits at the right hand of the Father and invites us to take a seat. He judges the world and invites us to have a part in the judgment of the world. All these things, including our glorification, we have with Him. What manner of grace!

CONCLUSION

Do you know that you can experience resurrection right now in this life? “You have been quickened [made alive] which were dead in trespasses and sins,” says the Bible (Eph 2:5).

You can experience a spiritual resurrection. If you do not know that resurrection of a changed life, you will never know the resurrection of the body unto eternal life. Have you experienced that transformation?

Today, roll away the stone from the door of your heart and ask Him who came out of an empty tomb to come into your empty heart and fill it with His joy, His hope, and His grace. Then you will know that when they lower you into the ground, it will not be the end. You will have the joyful hope of resurrection in a land without sorrow or tears. Let's pray. ED

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SERMON NOTES

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RESURRECTION: REALITY AT THE EMPTY TOMB

INTRODUCTION

Easter is not an argument for immortality; it is an affirmation of the resurrection. Immortality implies a quality of man that is indestructible. Resurrection implies the transcendent power of God, who, because He created, can re-create, and who, because He gave, can give again.

Unlike ancient Greeks, who emphasized immortality of the soul, New Testament Christians focused on the resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew reports that toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and “the other Mary” went to the tomb provided for their Lord’s burial by Joseph of Arimathea. To their astonishment the stone was not in place. Standing in a mood of wonder, they heard a voice: “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead.’”

Filled with awe and joy, the women ran to tell the disciples. En route, Jesus met them and said, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Confusion continues as to what actually transpired in Joseph’s garden: Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield in *The Passover Plot* claims that Jesus did not die on the cross. He was drugged, taken down as dead, and placed in the tomb. Later he was revived, talked to friends, then expired and was buried elsewhere. There are those who believe that the disciples, being mentally unstable, experienced a holy hallucination. Rudolf Bultmann asserts that we cannot accept the biblical framework of thought in which the resurrection story appears; Scripture must be demythologized to arrive at its essential message. On the other hand, Karl Barth declares, “We must not transmute the resurrection into a spiritual event.” But, notwithstanding the perceived contradictions in the various accounts of the resurrection, one clear, indestructible fact runs through the New Testament: Christ was alive!

From the encounter of the two Marys on Easter morning, to the discouraged and frightened disciples behind closed doors, to Cleopas and his companions walking toward Emmaus, to the more than five hundred individuals who encountered the risen Lord in the forty days and nights following His crucifixion, to the miracle of Pentecost, one glimpses the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, the early disciples made no attempt to explain the resurrection; it explained them.

Note then, three realities of the resurrection:

I. THE RESURRECTION REALITY IS A CONTINUOUS ACT OF FAITH

The reality is that life as we know it will someday be changed. Death takes no holiday. It is inevitable. Yet, we live in a day when death is carefully camouflaged—from reporting of casualties on highways and in war, to impersonal funeral services, to cosmetic treatments by the mortician, to the virtual isolation of the dying from the living. All these point to the make-believe world we prefer.

We all act differently to death. Louis XV, king of France, decreed that the word “death” should never be uttered in his presence. On the contrary, Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, commissioned a servant to come before him every morning and announce, “Remember, Philip, thou must die.” Dag Hammarskjöld declares, “In the last analysis it is our concept of death which decides our answers to all the questions life puts to us.” Paul says it even better: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:56–57).

Early Christians believed death was dead. Therefore they were invincible.

II. REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

Paul believed in a bodily resurrection. He believed the faithful would possess a new kind of body, more than a resuscitation of a corpse. He referred to a re-created nature, a newness, a definable self.

The Easter message is more than a promise we shall live forever, or synonymous with endless life. Easter affirms that nothing can destroy Jesus Christ and those who love Him. If you trust this approach, then life becomes precious indeed.

Recently a journalist conducted a poll to ascertain purposes for which people lived. He discovered that ninety percent of those interviewed were living for some imagined tomorrow, a suspended fulfillment. These were characteristic answers: A college senior said he could not wait to graduate, “get married, settle down, and have a family.” A weary mother replied, “I hope I can stand the strain until the children are grown and married and my husband and I can be alone and have a life of our own.” A Hollywood actress confessed, “I am just existing until I can get my divorce and marry ‘X’ and then I will really begin to live.”

We are acquainted with such people because we are such people. Wisdom of the

world, pains, and appetite of the body dictate, “Live it up. You can’t take it with you.” By contrast, Christian faith asserts, “If you can’t take it with you, you don’t have it.”

The King County Medical Center in Seattle has been experimenting with malfunctioning kidneys. The clinic has a faceless advisory committee of seven laymen and physicians who make recommendations as to who may be eligible for treatment that costs over \$10,000 a year. Admission criteria include emotional maturity, duration of the disease, ability to pay, value to the community, and potential for rehabilitation. This program has been referred to as “Who shall live?” What a haunting question!

Transformed Paul puts life in perspective when he writes, “For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

The question is: is my faith a sentimental attachment to a dead hero or identification with a living presence? Christian faith is more than a credence. Faith is more than intelligent assent to what the Bible and the church teach about God and Christ. Faith is more than a form of knowledge. It is a fact of experience. It demands an individual encounter with Jesus. Faith, therefore, requires action. It is living in the eternal now! This is more than an extension of time. It is a dimension of life. Life everlasting does not begin at the second coming, but with the moment of spiritual birth—or rather, should we say, rebirth?

The impact of the resurrection was so powerful that early disciples expected to see Jesus wherever they went. In time He disappeared from their eyes, but never from their hearts (Heb 13:5, NKV; John 14:3, ESV; John 14:27, KJV).

CONCLUSION

Easter confirms the fact that God has kept His promise. What Jesus was to early disciples, He may be to us: Lord! He is alive and present in ministry; present in work, in learning, in forgiveness; present in service; present in prayer. When we invite Him He comes, as of old, to comfort and forgive; to convert and generate personal power; to bring healing and hope in the sickroom, direction in dilemma, courage and faith in the future. That is resurrection reality! How many of you would like to thank God for the empty tomb and invite Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? Let’s pray. ED

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RESURRECTION: HEALING AT THE EMPTY TOMB

INTRODUCTION

On Friday afternoon they took Him down from the cross, as dead as a man can be. On Sunday afternoon He walked most of the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus with two of His disciples. He had broken through the death barrier, and was alive and well once more on planet Earth. For forty days before withdrawing to the glory where He now lives and reigns, He appeared to those who had been His followers and friends. Why? Because He loved them, and wanted them to have the joy of seeing Him alive; because He had to explain to them His saving achievement and their role as witnesses of Him; and, last but not least, because some of them were in emotional and spiritual distress, and needed the therapy that was uniquely His. All this is reflected in the Emmaus Road story (Luke 24:13–35).

Now picture the scene: Up from behind comes a stranger, walking faster, and falls into step beside them. Naturally they stop discussing their private misery, and there is silence. When we know that grief is written all over our faces, we avoid looking at other people because we do not want anyone to look at us. I imagine this couple swiveling their heads and never facing their traveling companion at all. Certainly, “they were kept from recognizing him” (v. 16), so if anyone had asked them, “Is Jesus with you?” the reply would have been, “Don’t be silly, He’s dead, we’ve lost Him. We hoped He was the one to redeem Israel but clearly He wasn’t. We shan’t see Him again, and nothing makes sense anymore.”

The heartbreaking perplexity of God-given hope apparently wrecked by God-ordained circumstances is a reality for many of us today, just like the Emmaus disciples. What did Jesus see as the root cause of this couple’s distress? His dealings with them show that His diagnosis as the Great Physician was of *unbelief*, caused by three things.

I. THEY WERE TOO UPSET TO THINK STRAIGHT

It was beyond them to put two and two together. They had slid down the slippery slope from discouragement to distress, and through despair into what we call depression. This is the most common of twenty-first-century diseases, for which one in every four North Americans has been treated medically. Folks in depression are marvelously resourceful at finding reasons to not take comfort, encouragement, or hope from anything you say to them. They know you mean well, but they defy your efforts; they

twist everything into further reasons to be gloomy and hopeless (“It’s all right for you, but it’s different for me,” and so on). They are resolved to hear everything as bad news. That is exactly what we find here in Cleopas’ narrative concerning the empty tomb.

“It is the third day since all this took place,” says Cleopas. Continue reading verses 22–24. The implication is that there is nothing in this wild talk of Him being alive; someone must have desecrated the tomb and stolen the body, so as to deny it decent burial. Thus Cleopas announces the empty tomb as more bad news, despite Jesus’ repeated promises that He would rise on the third day (Luke 9:22; 18:33; Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19). Straight thinking about the empty tomb, in the light of these predictions, would have evoked the response, “He said he would rise; the tomb’s empty; he’s done it!” But both were too upset to think straight.

Jesus diagnosed this as their root cause of their unbelief—namely, they were ignorant of the Scriptures. Read verses 25–26. As ignorance of Scripture was the basic trouble on the Emmaus Road, so often it is with us. What does Jesus do?

II. JESUS EXPLAINED THE SCRIPTURES

He showed them that what had been puzzling them—the death of the one they thought would redeem them in the sense of ending the Roman occupation—had actually been prophesied centuries before as God’s way of redeeming in the sense of ending the burden and bondage of sin. He must have gone over Isaiah 53, where the servant who dies for sins in verses 1–9 appears alive, triumphant, and reigning in verses 10–12. He produced many passages that depict God’s Messiah traveling to the crown via the cross, and kept them in a state of dawning comprehension and mounting excitement (their hearts “burned,” v. 32) till they reached home. Thus healing proceeded.

The principle here is that the most healing thing in the world to a troubled soul is to find that the heartbreak at the root of isolation, hopelessness, and hatred of all cheerful cackle is actually dealt with in the Bible—and in a way that shows it making sense after all, in terms of a loving, divine person. So if you are hurting because of what you feel God has done to you, and you do not find Scripture speaking to your condition, like these disciples, you do not know it well enough. Ask wiser Christians to open Scripture to you in relation to your pain, and you will find it so.

III. JESUS REVEALED HIS PRESENCE

“Stay with us,” they said to Him on reaching Emmaus. At the table they asked Him to give thanks, and as He did so and gave them bread “their eyes were opened and they recognized Him” (v. 31). Whether recognition was triggered by seeing nail prints in His hands, or by remembering the identical voice and action at the feeding of the four or five thousand, we do not know. Now, as then, Jesus’ ways of making His presence known are mysteries of divine illumination about which you can rarely say more than that something was said, read, or remembered—it happened. So it was here; and thus healing was completed.

To be sure, the moment they recognized Him He vanished. Yet plainly they knew that He was with them still. Otherwise, would they have risen from the table in their weariness and hurried back to Jerusalem through the night to share their news? Sensible Palestinians did not walk lonely country roads at night, fearing thugs and muggers. But it is evident that they counted on their Lord’s protecting presence as they went about their business. “Stay with us,” they had said, and inwardly they knew He was doing just that. Thus their broken hearts were mended, and their sorrow replaced by joy.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, is the same today as yesterday, and it belongs to true Easter faith to take to our own hurts the healing of the Emmaus Road. How? First, by telling Jesus our trouble, as He invites us to do each day. He remains a good listener, with what the hymn calls “a fellow-feeling for our pains,” and only as we lay aside prayerless resentment and self-pity and open our hearts to Him will we know His help. Second, by letting Him minister to us from Scripture, relating that which gives us pain to God’s purpose of saving love, which means regularly looking to the Lord’s human agents in ministry, as well as private Bible study. Third, by asking Him to assure us that as we go through what feels like fire and floods He goes with us, and will stay with us till the road ends. That prayer He will always answer (see Heb 4:15–16).

The Emmaus Road story urges us to do as He says, and it also shows us how. How many of you would like to accept the company and guidance of Jesus in your life? **ED**

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RESURRECTION: WHAT WAS LEFT BEHIND IN THE EMPTY TOMB?

INTRODUCTION

In the tiny Swiss village of Dono d'Ossala there is a mimic Calvary. The shrine consists of a series of chapels in memory of various scenes in our Lord's passion. The first depicts Christ before Herod; the second, Christ receiving the cross; the third, Christ taking the cross on Himself; the fourth, Christ bearing the cross. The climax of the scenes is in the church itself, where there is a great picture of the cross raised, with Christ upon it, and in the skies astonished angels gazing down at the tragedy of human sin and divine love. Up to this point the path was well worn by the feet of devout pilgrims. For years they had come to witness anew the sufferings of their Savior. But there they stopped. Their Christ was dead.

Beyond the church there was another shrine, but the path became grass covered. Evidently nobody went any further. But when you go through the long grass to the summit, there is a chapel of the resurrection! The testimony of the grass-grown path is a witness that the worshippers never got beyond Calvary.

We must look *backward* to the death of Christ, but not to the neglect of looking in retrospect, and view it *through the resurrection*. For beyond death is life. Beyond sacrifice is glorious victory. Beyond the cross is the risen Christ. Beyond Calvary is the central fact of human history: He "is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34, NKJV).

But did Jesus leave anything behind in the empty tomb? The question is important because it is a fearful thing to believe that one day our life will end. When Mohammed died, Omar rushed from his tent, sword in hand, and declared that he would kill anyone who said that the Prophet had died.

In the Bible, while death is viewed as something completely unnatural—an alien, a horror, an enemy—death has been decisively defeated in the atoning death of the Savior (2 Tim 1:10). Further, whoever believes has everlasting life *right now*. Christ has abolished death. Not only has Christ risen, but we have risen in Him (1 Pet 1:3). Though we sleep, we fall at death into the gracious hand of God and will rise as surely as Jesus rose. So we look with expectant hope beyond Calvary. We see this hope clearly from four things left behind in the tomb.

I. CHRIST LEFT FRAGRANT SPICES IN THE TOMB (JOHN 12:2–7)

Six days before Good Friday, Mary of Magdala poured costly perfume from a broken alabaster box to anoint the feet of Jesus. From Mary's "broken and contrite

spirit" came this other broken thing in dim prefiguration of His death. At His birth, the wise men brought myrrh for His death and burial; now, at the close of His earthly life, Mary did the same. She was making an offering to Him as the victim for the sins of the world. The effusion of ointment was an anticipation of the embalming of His body. This woman saw, at last, the reason of His coming—not to live, but to die and live again.

Mary broke the precious alabaster box of His resurrection so that its perfume would go beyond the empty tomb to fill the world. He said to her, "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father'" (John 20:17). This was the first time He ever called His apostles "My brothers." Before we could be adopted by the Son of God, Jesus had to die. Read John 12:24; it shows that it took the crucifixion to multiply His Sonship into other sons of God. But there would be a vast difference between Himself as the natural Son and human beings. Hence, as always, He made a rigid distinction between "My Father" and "Your Father." Only by grace and adoption, then, are we the sons of God (Heb 2:11).

II. CHRIST LEFT LINEN CLOTHES IN THE TOMB (JOHN 20:6)

He also left His linen clothes. Now, in that fine white linen of our Lord's righteousness we are clothed by faith. You can see battered, threadbare flags hanging in British cathedrals—memorials captured from the enemy in wartime; memorials of great victories. The clothes that Christ left behind were like those the high priest left behind in the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement when he changed into his robes of glory. Those glorious robes are symbols of a great victory: the tomb has been conquered. When Jesus rolled away the sin of the world, just as that stone outside the tomb was rolled away, we were all delivered. When we are with Him in faith, His victory is ours. Our challenge is to live in the conscious appropriation of Christ's resurrection power that stands available to us. The marvel of the resurrection is that Christ has taken up His abode in us—the Shekinah Glory of the ages alive in us (John 1:14; Col 1:18–19, 27). What genuine godliness and holy living that should bring to our lives (Col 3:1–4).

III. CHRIST LEFT THE BURIAL FACE-CLOTH (JOHN 20:7)

The burial facecloth was left there as a promise that He will dry our tears.

The certitude of that promise is clear, for Jesus said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!" (Rev 1:18). "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (John 11:25–26; cf. 1 Cor 15:52).

Therefore the tomb is just a moment in the care of God. It is not a blind alley. The night is not forever. Life closes with the twilight, but for the believer it will open with the dawn, and then "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev 21:4).

IV. CHRIST LEFT THE ANGELS AT THE TOMB (JOHN 20:10–12)

The angel was one keeper more than the enemies had placed about the Savior's grave—one soldier more than Pilate had appointed. The angel's words were the first gospel preached after the resurrection. The angel's words—"See the place where they laid him"—confirmed the reality of His death. Tombstones bear the inscription *Hic jacet*, or "Here lies," followed by the name of the dead. But here, in contrast, the angel did not write, but expressed a different epitaph: "He is not here."

Today, when we lose a loved one, the angels are there. They mark the spot. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants" (Ps 116:15). The angels are there, and what is more, the door is open.

CONCLUSION

The resurrection to which the Scriptures bear witness, first revealed in the soft light of that early Easter morn, points to another resurrection that may be very near as we look for the coming of our Lord. Until then, may we let that one "who loved us and gave himself for us," live out His life through us, for His glory and our good. May the Lord bless you so you can see what was left behind in the empty tomb and accept and live for the wonderful Savior of the empty tomb! Let's pray. ED

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

SERMON NOTES

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ADVENTIST GIVING: GOOD, BAD, OR INDIFFERENT?



An article published in the *New York Times* in 2016 had this rather alarming title: “Donations to Religious Institutions Fall as Values Change.”¹ For much of its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has enjoyed an abundance of generosity from church members who give their tithes and offerings—perhaps out of habit, or because of parental example and persuasion, or simply due to their belief in God and the church. However, in recent years, that has changed somewhat, almost paralleling what is happening in the rest of the religious world in North America.

Back in the “good old days,” which we remember fondly, a pastor could say to his congregation, “God said to give, so you must give,” or something in a similar vein, and church members generally gave without questioning. That is no longer true, and whenever it is mentioned that generous giving has taken on a different dimension, pastors nod in solemn agreement.

Today, members want to know what happens with their money. They expect to have a voice, they want reports, and they want to know just what their money is used for. If they do not receive answers to their questions, they may well do one of three things: stop giving, lessen their giving and channel their funds elsewhere, or demand more attention as donors. And yes, the word “donors” is not just relegated to secular causes. The giving habits of most church members and their expectation for information and recognition have become nearly parallel with those traditionally labeled “donors.”

Although religion is still the largest recipient of overall donations in the United States, at about a third of the total giving (\$373.25 billion, according to the report from *Giving USA*), that is down from around fifty percent in the mid 1980s to early 1990s. And it should be clarified that this category of research refers to churches—not organizations like Adventist colleges or even community service organizations.

In the past, members gave generously because there was a certain level of trust in the church as an

institution: people had more “blind” faith and didn’t question as much, and, in spite of conflicts or decisions that weren’t always compatible with everyone’s beliefs, people still remained loyal. Giving was engrained in the church member and was seen as an obligation or duty.

These qualities of generosity have changed. So what is a pastor to do? Here are some suggestions, from a practical viewpoint, based in biblical perspectives:

- Be transparent in the management and reporting of funds.
- Ensure that promises are kept. If someone gives to a specific aspect of the church, that money *must* be used for that purpose.
- Do not take giving for granted, even though it is a biblical injunction and principle.
- Involve key individuals in the reporting and management of funds, not just the treasurer or pastor.

The good news is that the “more important religion is to a person, the more likely that person is to give to a charity of any kind. . . . Among Americans who claim a religious affiliation, the study said, 65 percent give to charity. Among those who do not identify a religious creed, 56 percent make charitable gifts.”²

Religion does motivate generosity, both to the church and to good causes. We just need to recognize that the “good old days” of giving are gone, and move on with the proclivities and attitudes of our members today. ED

¹ Alina Tugend, “Donations to Religious Institutions Fall as Values Change,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2016.

² Alex Daniels, “Religious Americans Give More, New Study Says,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, November 25, 2013.

This article was first published in *Best Practices*, July 23, 2017. It has been lightly edited for *Elder’s Digest*.

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FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others

in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as “the household of faith” which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:
 - a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
 - b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
 - c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling with Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community.
 - d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
 - e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships.

Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.

f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.

g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.

2. To strengthen family life by:

a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.

b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.

c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.

d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this re-

sponsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.

3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

(The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; I Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2-3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.)

ED

This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on August 27, 1996, and was sent for consideration by the Annual Council in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996.



“Remember your leaders,
who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the
outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

HEBREWS 13:7 (NIV)



PASTOR'S APPRECIATION DAY
OCTOBER 10, 2020



CHRIST'S PLACE IN THE GODHEAD > PART 3

A COLLECTION OF STATEMENTS ON THE TRINITY

III. THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD

1. Three Persons in Heavenly Trio. “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ” (*Evangelism*, 615).

2. Godhead United in Redemption. “The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption” (*Counsels on Health*, 222).

3. Three Great Powers of Heaven. “Those who proclaim the third angel’s message must put on the whole armor of God, that they may stand boldly at their post, in the face of detraction and falsehood, fighting the good fight of faith, resisting the enemy with the word, ‘It is written.’ Keep yourselves where the three great powers of heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, can be your efficiency. These powers work with the one who gives himself unreservedly to God. The strength of heaven is at the command of God’s believing ones. The man who takes God as his trust is barricaded by an impregnable wall” (*The Southern Watchman*, February 23, 1904).

4. Cooperation of Three Imperative. “Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then co-operate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf. Doing this you will reveal to the world the principles of righteousness” (*The Signs of the Times*, June 19, 1901).

5. Three Eternal Dignitaries. “The eternal heavenly dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit—arming them [the disciples] with more than mortal energy, . . . would advance with them to the work and convince the world of sin” (*Evangelism*, 616).

6. The Three Highest Powers. “We are to co-operate with the three highest powers in heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and these powers will work through us, making us workers together with God” (*Evangelism*, 617).

7. The Threefold Name. “Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 6:91). ED



1 PETER 3:3–4

IS IT TRUE THAT 1 PETER 3:3–4 SHOULD BE TRANSLATED “YOUR BEAUTY SHOULD NOT SO MUCH COME FROM OUTWARD ADORNMENT . . . BUT RATHER IT SHOULD BE THAT OF YOUR INNER SELF”?

The translation you quote implies that Peter is not condemning or rejecting the use of jewelry for personal adornment by Christians, except in cases where it is not accompanied by a life of service to the Lord. In other words, the use of jewelry for personal adornment is not necessarily incompatible with a Christian lifestyle, and moderate use would seem acceptable.

You are raising a question about the biblical basis for the Adventist standard on personal adornment—more specifically, the use of jewelry. I have been working on this topic now for some time, and here I will deal with your specific question on 1 Peter.

1. The Translation Problem. What we have here is a phrase of negation followed by a contrasting phrase. This type of construction is introduced by a negative adverb (“not”) and closed by an adversative particle (“but, rather”). This is what we have in Greek: “Let not their adornment be the outward consisting of . . . but that of your inner self . . .”

In other places, the New Testament Greek allows for a translation of this construction similar to the one you found. It could be translated “not so much [this] . . . as [this],” implying that the first part of the sentence is not totally negated (e.g., Mark 9:37). But the same construction can also be translated “not this . . . but this,” totally rejecting the first element (e.g., Matt 5:17). The question is: how can we decide the meaning of the construction in 1 Peter 3:3–4?

The New Testament construction in this passage, “Not [this] . . .,” is a denying phrase in the imperative. The following “but [this]” introduces the contrasting subject, and it means “but on the contrary.” Thus the first element is totally negated. Therefore, the translation you found is an interpretation that introduces into the text that which is not there.

2. Jewelry for Adornment. My study of biblical materials indicates that in the Bible, jewelry has different purposes and functions. In this particular case Peter is dealing with jewelry whose basic purpose is adornment. He is not addressing other functional usages of jewelry.

3. The Foundation of Peter’s Command. Was Peter reflecting the attitude toward jewelry as adornment found in Greco-Roman society? If yes, then his counsel was applicable only to the church of his day, and not to the church today. Of course, we could still retain the principles behind his command, but not the specific command. Fortunately, the text itself tells us the source of his command: “For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves” (v. 5). Peter goes back to the Old Testament for support.

4. Nature of the True Adornment. Against the specific outward adornment that Peter rejects, he identifies the adornment that pleases God. It is an inner beauty consisting of “a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (v. 4). The ultimate criterion for proper adornment is that which is precious in God’s sight.

A gentle spirit is based on trust in the Lord (Matt 5:5; cf. Matt 11:29). A quiet spirit refers to a disposition of tranquility as a result of being at peace with God. Its absence generates personal and social turmoil. Peter is suggesting that there is a type of external adornment that is an expression of pride and self-reliance instead of an expression of submission and dependence on the Lord. When contrasted with a “quiet spirit,” such adornment becomes an expression of a restless attitude, a symbol of a need—even a quest for inner peace that is unsatisfied, but that should be fully met through the gospel. Hence this adornment is incompatible with the fruits of the Christian message. ED

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

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DIACONATE: THE CHURCH THEY SERVE

[IN ORDER FOR DEACONS AND DEACONESSES TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY WITHIN THEIR LOCAL CHURCHES, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH. THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES AN OUTLINE OF THAT NATURE AND FUNCTION, AS PROVIDED IN THE *SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MANUAL*.¹ THESE SELECTIONS, WHILE NOT EXHAUSTIVE, ARE FROM THE *CHURCH MANUAL* AND INCLUDE SUPPORTING STATEMENTS FROM SCRIPTURE AND THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE.²]

THE CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST

To belong to the church of God is a unique and soul-satisfying privilege. It is God's purpose to gather out a people from the far corners of the earth to bind them into one body, the body of Christ, of which He is the living head. All who are children of God in Christ Jesus are members of this body, and in this relationship they may enjoy fellowship with each other and fellowship also with their Lord.

IN CHRIST: NO WALL OF PARTITION

Christ sought by precept and example to teach the truth that with God there was to be no dividing wall between Israel and other nations (John 4:4–42; 10:16; Luke 9:51–56; Matt 15:21–28).

Nor is there to be among Christ's followers any preference of caste or nationality or race or color, for all are of one blood. The elect of God are a universal brotherhood, a new humanity, "all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

"Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in

one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Savior has a boundless love for every human being" (7T 225).

THE CHURCH: SUPREME OBJECT OF CHRIST'S REGARD

Those in Christ's service who are called to leadership are to "take care of the church" (1 Tim 3:5).

"I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church" (TM 15).

As the bride of Christ and the supreme object of His regard, the church is expected in all its functions to represent the order and the character of the divine.

ORGANIZATION AND AUTHORITY

Church organization is based on God's principles. "Never allow anyone's ideas to unsettle your faith in regard to the order and harmony which should exist in the church. . . . The God of heaven is a God of order, and He requires all His followers to have rules and regulations, and to preserve order" (5T 274).

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt and chose them as His peculiar people, He provided for them an impressive system of organization to govern their conduct in both civil and religious matters.

"The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were 'captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens,' and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties" (PP 374).

The New Testament church showed the same perfection in its organization. Christ Himself, who formed the church (Matt 16:18), "set the members, each one

"FOR AS THE BODY IS ONE AND HAS MANY MEMBERS, BUT ALL THE MEMBERS OF THAT ONE BODY, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY, SO ALSO IS CHRIST" (1 COR 12:12)

and individually members of one another" (Rom 12:4-5). "And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col 1:18).

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:4-5). "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor 12:27-28).

IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATION

Just as there can be no living, active human body unless its members are organically united and functioning together, so there can be no living, growing, prospering church unless its members are organized into a united spiritual body, all performing their God-given duties and functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority. Without organization no institution or movement can prosper. A nation without organized government would be chaos. A business enterprise without organization would fail. A church without organization would disintegrate and perish.

For the sake of the church's healthy development and for the accomplishment of its task of carrying the gospel of salvation to all the world, Christ gave it a simple but effective system of organization. Success in its endeavors to achieve its mission depends on loyal adherence to this divine pattern.

"Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent" (TM 489).

"Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorga-

of them, in the body just as He pleased" (1 Cor 12:18). He endowed them with gifts and talents adequate for the functions devolving upon them and organized them into a living, working body, of which He is the head.

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ,

and individually members of one another" (Rom 12:4-5). "And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col 1:18).

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:4-5). "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor 12:12).

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor 12:27-28).

nize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the Word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time” (TM 489).

PURPOSES OF ORGANIZATION

“As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable” (TM 26).

THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL

The Savior’s commission to the church to carry the gospel to all the world (Matt 28:19–20; Mark 16:15) meant not only preaching the gospel but ensuring the welfare of those who accepted that message. This involved shepherding as well as housing the flock, and also meeting relationship problems. Such a situation called for organization.

At first the apostles constituted a council that directed the activities of the church from Jerusalem (Acts 6:2; 8:14). When the company there became so large that the administration of its practical affairs became a problem, the church appointed deacons to care for its business (Acts 6:2–4).

CHURCH ORGANIZATION TODAY

The Seventh-day Adventist form of governance is representative, which recognizes that authority rests in the membership and is expressed through duly elected representatives at each level of organization, with executive responsibility delegated to representative bodies and officers for the governing of the Church at each separate level. This form of governance recognizes also that ordination to the ministry is recognized by the Church worldwide.

“Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every

institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference” (8T 236, 237).

OUTLINE OF DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The current organizational system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church consists of the following levels, beginning from the local church consisting of a group of members to the worldwide unified expression of the church through the General Conference:

1. Local Church
2. Local Conference [Mission/Field]
3. Union of Churches
4. Union Conference/Mission
5. General Conference and Its Divisions

The church organization thus conceived recognizes the importance of each level, which is organized and empowered to function as specified in the *Church Manual*. While the local church consists of members who gather to worship, fellowship and witness as a congregation within a defined location, several such local churches come under a local conference/Mission that exercise jurisdiction over the functioning of its constituent churches. A group of conferences/missions within a larger geographical area is organized by the General Conference to function as a Union of Churches, or a Union Conference/Mission. The General Conference, the highest administrative body of the church, consists of all the Unions. Its worldwide functions are exercised through regional offices known as Divisions. The General Conference meets as a full executive body at least twice a year to vote annual budgets, to review policies, and to promote worldwide mission, evangelism, growth and unity. The entire world church meets once every five years through a representative system, and this meeting is known as the General Conference in Session, which is considered as the voice of the Church. ED

¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011).

² While the selections are quoted verbatim from the *Church Manual*, subheadings are adapted from the original to reflect the core point of the selections. The Bible passages and quotes from the writings of Ellen G. White are placed in quotation marks, but selections from the *Church Manual* do not carry quotation marks. Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts are from the New King James Version. Scripture references are spelled out in full.

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BE A LEADER-MAKER



When I discuss the importance of training people to do ministry and evangelism, I present the audience with the following case study: If a church has one hundred people in attendance in a given year, and one hundred more people come to that church in that same year, what would the attendance be at the end of the year? Now, take the same church and assume that no one was added to the church during that particular year. What would the attendance be at the end of the year? In the first scenario, people tell me that by the end of the year, attendance will be 150, 200, or even 250, because some of those who come will bring their families with them, so attendance will be higher than two hundred. In the second scenario, some will say eighty or one hundred.

What is the correct answer? Based on our research in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the answers in the second scenario are correct. Attendance at the end of the year will be about seventy-five to eighty people. Why? Because every year someone dies, someone leaves the area, and others become inactive. Also, since nothing happens during the year, a negative mood and a feeling of pessimism permeate the congregation, which means that even maintaining the current membership is very difficult. In the first scenario, our research shows that when a church adds one hundred members to its current attendance of one hundred, its membership will *still* be one hundred at the end of the year—unless the church does the following things:

1. Increase the base of ministry
2. Increase the base of leadership
3. Focus on the family
4. Offer inspiring and dynamic worship
5. Increase the level of spirituality
6. Offer a note of hope

Every church grows in correlation to its effectiveness at meeting people's needs in discipleship and ministry. Common sense says that if you want to attract families with children, you need to have a ministry for kids. If you want to keep people in the church, you need a discipleship ministry. In this article, we will focus on increasing the base of ministry and leadership.

THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF TRAINING: A CASE STUDY

Suppose we have a wonderful, dynamic church member named Michelle. (I am choosing a woman here because in our research, we discovered that the number of women who do this ministry of nurture is many times higher than the number of men who do so.) Michelle loves God, His people, and her church. She ministers to four families (whether she does it intentionally or intuitively is not important here). She visits the first family when they are missing from church, she has Bible studies with the second family, she socializes outside of church with the third family, and she is discipling the fourth family to do ministry. If any of these families does not come to church, she calls on them; if one of them is in need or in trouble, she ministers to them.

Now, let us assume that her church is very active, and throughout the course of the year, it adds twenty new families. The church pastor knows that unless someone discipled these new families, they might leave the church. He does not have enough leaders and ministers, so he goes to Michelle and says, "Michelle, you are the best when it comes to discipleship. No one does it as well as you do. You know the Lord has blessed our congregation this year. He gave us twenty new families! But if we don't disciple them, we're going to lose them." Then he says to her, "Could you add three or four more families to your load?"

Michelle could answer in two ways—yes or no. Michelle might say yes, but because of her limited time and resources, four families to take care of may be her limit. If she takes on more than she can handle, she will become resentful, burdened, overworked, or angry. What Michelle should have done all along is raise other leaders to do what she is doing. And this is what every one of us should do in the church.

Every church grows in proportion to the number of ministries it has. The more ministries the church has, the more likely it is to grow. But all ministries depend on a leader inspired by God. Every minister and leader in the church should pray and seek earnestly to duplicate themselves. The base of ministry will never grow

unless the base of leadership increases. An important responsibility of leaders is to duplicate themselves and make sure that everyone else is successful in what they do.

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

You have heard the old question: “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” That question is settled when it comes to ministry and leadership: leaders always come first. Without strong, committed leaders, there would be no ministry. There are hundreds of ministries that every church might do but cannot because of a lack of leadership or resources. God must birth in the heart of a leader a burden for a particular kind of ministry or leadership. When God puts it in the heart, He also gives the passion, desire, and skill to do it, and He provides the resources along the way.

The need to build leaders is so fundamental that Jesus spent three and a half years in full-time leadership/discipleship formation. In fact, if Jesus had not built His disciples, there would not be a church today. And if we do not build a new generation of leaders, there will be no church in the future.

The New Testament church followed in the footsteps of Jesus. Not only did they baptize new believers daily through their Spirit-filled witnessing and preaching, but they were also intentional in raising a new generation of leaders. Acts 6 says that the apostles selected and called other disciples to help them do ministry and leadership in the church and in the world. Soon they also began to understand, practice, and preach the priesthood of all believers. Peter says, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). Everyone was considered to be a disciple and had a ministry to perform.

Paul was in the habit of having an apprentice. Early on he took Barnabas with him; later on he mentored John Mark. But one of the most powerful examples of mentoring was Paul’s work with Timothy. Paul invested his life to training, equipping, motivating, and inspiring the young pastor. What is so interesting is that Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to do the same with others: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2).

People often ask me, “How do you find new leaders in the church?” My answer is to pray about it and claim God’s promise. One of the most neglected leadership promises in Scripture is found in Matthew 9:35–38: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teach-

ing in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. *Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*’” (emphasis supplied).

Jesus selected leaders through prayer. He stressed that the harvest is plentiful. Lost people, needy people, hurting people, and sick people are all around us, but the workers are few. We need to pray that God will send us the right leaders to work with various groups of people and their needs. The traditional way of finding leaders is to take whomever is willing, or outspoken, or can be talked into accepting. But God wants us to pray that He will lead us to His choice—to someone who is filled with the Spirit of God, has wisdom, and has the favor of the people. God’s choice will come with God’s passion to minister. God will birth in the hearts of His leaders the ministry they are wired for and are gifted to do.

Jesus demonstrated this model to us when He selected the apostles. He spent the whole night in prayer so God the Father would lead Him to the right people: “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor” (Luke 6:12–16).

THE BEST WAY TO TRAIN PEOPLE

I am also frequently asked about the best way to train people in the church. I answer, “On the job!” The pastor and elders should create a culture of equipping, training, motivating, and encouraging accountability. Every leader should be training a new leader. Building a new generation of leaders fulfills Jesus’ mandate to equip new believers for effective ministry and evangelism. Moreover, if the church is not intentional about building a new generation of leaders, there will be no increase in attendance. There might be growth on the books, but not in the number of people who come to church. Effective leaders meet the needs of others; they are the ones who bring people to church, minister to them, and keep them in the church. ED

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STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN LIGHT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH RENEWS ITS CALL TO ENDITNOW!

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enditnow[®] is the most important stand the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever taken regarding violence against women and girls. Through this campaign, more than seventeen million Adventist church members—men, women, and children—are expected to create a global movement that will be mobilized within their own communities, where each person will actively work to create awareness and share solutions on ways to end this global problem.

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

enditnow[®] continues the Seventh-day Adventist Church's commitment to respond to the needs of all human beings¹—namely, to stand up in favor of human rights, tolerance, the well-being of children, freedom of expression and conscience, and the protection and integrity of families. It is a call to action for all Adventists and supporters to stand up and put into practice those principles we hold true. **enditnow**[®] seeks to extend God's vision of love and compassion for all His children.

Domestic violence has been documented as a major issue within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Incidences of abuse follow trends documented in the general population. This is why **enditnow**[®] seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement to effectively help end violence against women and girls in every family and community.

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Although **enditnow**[®] primarily seeks to mobilize Adventist church members, all individuals, church congregations of every faith, social groups, schools, and businesses are invited to join. **ED**

¹ Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Ending Violence Against Women and Girls" (official statement, voted and approved June 23, 2010, released June 24–July 3, 2010, General Conference Session, Atlanta, GA), <https://www.adventist.org/articles/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>.

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Duane McKey is President of Adventist World Radio at the General Conference World Headquarters.

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