

ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 9 No. 4

"Behold,
I bring
you good
tidings of
great joy..."

Luke 2:10

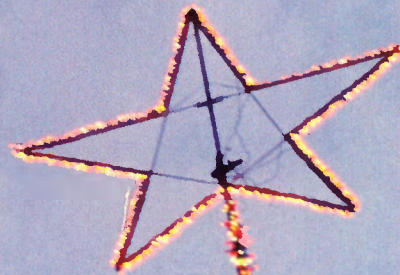


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Spiritual revival—the key factor in church progress

Joel Sarli



I was a young pastor at the time Elder Robert Pierson became the president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I still remember the impact in my own life and in the life of the church the emphasis on Revival and Reformation that marked his administrative period.

It seems that at certain times we repeat the mistakes done by others of being deceived by the power of numbers and statistics. In some way we forget the beautiful teaching of the palmist:

“Blessed is the man. . . that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither, whatever he does prosper” Psalm 1:1-3. According to the writer of Psalm number one, fruits are the direct result of being planted by the streams of water.

Progress in the church is the result of spiritual sensitivity and response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not of a specific method or any human effort. “Instead of living in expectation of some special season of excitement, we are wisely to improve present opportunities, doing what must be done in order that souls may be saved. Instead of exhausting the powers of our mind in speculations in regard to the times and seasons which the

Lord has placed in His own power, and withheld from men, we are to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, to do present duties, to give bread of life, unadulterated with human opinions, to souls who are perishing for the truth. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892.

Revival and Reformation are the methods by which progress

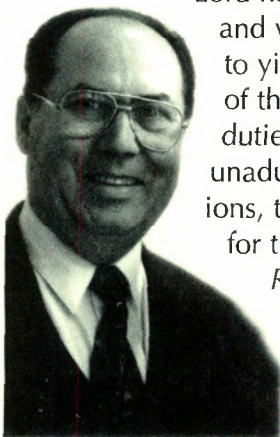
occurs in all other realms of human expression. In light of this, we can approach their recurrence in religion free from bias, and even scum, which has been popularly considered the right attitude. It is in this area that the word revival gains a new intensity, for religion deals with the awesome and immeasurable. It goes deep into men's and women's spiritual consciousness. As interesting as other revivals may be, they are shadows when compared with the importance of revivals in the individual and the Church. Though they occur in this mysterious realm, they are not necessarily erratic or arbitrary. The supreme discovery is that nothing is erratic in God's universe. Characteristics common to all revivals may be found.

When we examine revivals in the spiritual life, we are confronted with a mass of interesting material. Revivals are used by God to stimulate individual and corporate spiritual life and to advance spiritual education and progress. They are characterized with the same frequency and fluctuations as revivals in other areas.

First, we discover fluctuations in the common experience of men and women before decisions about Christianity are made. Let's remember the past before your conversion. There were times when you were conscious of definite, spiritual influences moving you powerfully to Him. Then there were long periods in which you seemed to have no consciousness of any spiritual pressure. After months or even years of spiritual lethargy, the influence would return.

This ebb and flow of spiritual experience is still characteristic in life after conversion. No life is maintained at the same level. The Psalms reveal the varying nature of the divine life in the believer's heart. Caught by the inflowing wave, the writer's heart rejoices in God. Then in the trough of the wave, the Psalmist cries out for help, with his heart in despair. From this, God rescues him. He is then carried forward on a new tide of joy.

(Continued on page 21)



Vision of a young elder

Jonas Arrais



The Central Church of Curitiba, with a thousand members today, and almost half of them young men and young women during the Sabbath program, constitutes a “young church” which functions with its Sabbath School leadership, deacons, deaconesses, and its elders, making a total of ten elders. Is very active in music, the social program and missionary work. Eduardo Valenzi, 31 years old and married, Fábio Freitas, 24 years old and single, and Walter Satyro, 27 years old and married; are three young elders who were interviewed by Pastor Jonas Arrais. They discussed the challenges faced today by young people.

Elder: Is it difficult to be the elder of a young congregation?

Eduardo: It is not difficult since we work with a team of well qualified elders and we have a pastor who gives us ample support. It would be extremely difficult if the help at leadership level were minimal. Since the majority of leaders are delighted to work for the Lord, everything becomes easier because there are more heads thinking and are more readily available to help.

Likewise I feel that it's a great responsibility. I asked myself up to what point I'm really worthy of such a responsibility. I thought about the personality of the elder, as an example of a Christian, jealous for the principles and leadership. In talking with the pastor of that young congregation of those days I felt more motivated and confident.

The promise that the Holy Spirit would qualify me to confront such a great challenge made me

accept the invitation.

Elder: Which are the three main characteristics needed in order to be a good church elder?

Fábio: Dedication, unselfishness and communion with God.

Elder: How has the relationship between the young elders with the rest of the main church been?

Walter: They have been very good; the majority takes the position of co-workers where we help each other. As young people we benefit very much from their experience. There is always a committee, at the beginning of the year, to evaluate and direct, with all the elders including the young ones in which we have the opportunity to contribute and mainly to learn from the more experienced ones how to administer the church.

Elder: How does the church evaluate the work of the elders in a young congregation?

Eduardo: Some with very much attention and respect approach the young elders hoping to furnish new ideas in developing the activities of the church; others inform that experience and maturity are necessary. Many members are of the opinion that the elder must be a person of a certain age and that it is not the white hair that confers knowledge and the needed responsibility to have a part in the Lord's work.

Elder: In your opinion which is the greatest difficulty in leadership?

Fábio: To involve the youth in church activities and helping them to actively participate in preach-

ing the gospel. But it is necessary to train them, motivate them and equip them for the task.

Elder: How is the church coping with the influence of gospel music in its program?

Walter: The church has tried to maintain an equilibrium concerning music style. We have endeavored to select music that is solemn, joyful and edifying. In our church we have no gospel music. The first thing I noticed, when I knew this church, was the refined musical choices. Thus I find it difficult to be influenced by this style of music which practically has not a constructive word and that it mixes rhythms that in the majority of cases are worldly.

Elder: The young church of Curitiba has excelled in music. Is that a deciding factor to keep the youth in the church?

Eduardo: Without a doubt. Those who participate are much more involved in church activities and established in the faith. In other words, those who participate remain longer than those who just come to church. If the church is singing beautifully and with intensity it's because they have much for which to praise and thank the Lord. Therefore the praise expressed produces a very favorable environment for conservation and conversion. But the music alone does not keep the youth in the church. What will keep them in church is only and exclusively a close connection with God and total surrender. It is fundamental that there be a sincere surrender at the feet of the Savior.

Elder: What strategies has the church been using to attract and evangelize the youth?

Fábio: The young person likes new and different things, an important challenge for young people is to always innovate and at the same be practical, just as modern life is fast and practical. To do that today, we are practically working in three fronts. First, through the friendship that the young Adventist has among his fellow workers or students. The young people enjoy friendship, trust them and through them a door is opened to invite them to the church activities. That calls for planning and presenting special programs for visitors, topics dealing with modern life and how these facts announce the soon return of our Savior. We are having good results with the strategy of bring-

ing friends to organize small groups. Second, one question that is very popular is solidarity. We see in the media different works and groups that help the needy and based on that we initiate activities such as delivery of snacks to road dwellers, beggars, visits to hospitals and to needy children. The third strategy is based on planning and the use of the internet. Our church already has some on-line discussion groups and we are now thinking about displaying short messages that would be like "virtual pamphlets." In order to do that we must make careful preparation of the texts and topics, since they must be small, attractive and objective.


Elder: In your opinion, which are the main causes for apostasy among the youth or what is the church doing to help them?

Walter: The main causes for apostasy are centered on friendship and our principles. Friendship can help a young person to bring people to the knowledge of our faith or it can be a way for those who are weak in the faith to apostatize. Concerning the strengthening of the principles, we are always promoting the study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, inviting pastors and intellectuals of the church to lead out in seminars and to interchange arguments and knowledge with the youth.

Elder: In your opinion, what are the areas in which the youth is asking for help? Where is most difficult to offer help?

Eduardo: The areas in which the youth have more doubts are those related to love, type of entertainment that they can frequent, discussion on topics related to religion in an academic setting to defend their faith, music and style (wearing of jewels, certain types of styles of clothing). I agree that the most difficult is the one about relationship, since they involve feelings and the attraction of the media with relation to sex.

Elder: In your opinion, which are the main difficulties facing the young elders?

Fábio: The lack of experience on how the elder should act in his church, with the membership, and his work in the administration of the church. His lack of experience in matters of counseling, since most of the time we lack that experience about people who come to us clamoring for help. 

Giving *glory* to God



Orley M. Berg

The first angel's message of Revelation 14 declares, "Fear God, and give glory to him." This is timely counsel, always appropriate, but especially so in the light of the judgment hour in which we now live. "To fear God" does not mean "to be afraid of Him," but implies a reverent awe, recognizing that He is the Holy God and we the creatures—yea, sinful creatures.

This was the experience that came to Isaiah when as a young man standing in the portico of the Temple he saw God "high and lifted up." His response was "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King" (Isa. 6:5).

This was also the experience of Peter when after the miraculous draught of fish he cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man."

With the recognition of the holiness of God and us as His undeserving creatures comes the further call "Give glory to him." Our lives are at all times and in all circumstances to glorify God. They will bear fruit. There will be good works. But only to glorify God. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

The light we radiate, the works we perform, are to direct all men to the Source of light, the Foundation of all good works. Whenever we as leaders in the church fail in this we become problems rather than solutions, we become barriers to the progress of the gospel rather than useful instruments for its accomplishment.

Self-centered service

The human nature is self-centered. It cries out for self-recognition. It is easily offended. It seeks its own good and glory. It sees all things in the light of how his own status will be affected. His motive in service is self-inspired.

Christ had much to say about motive in service. He denounced most severely the self-seeking religious leaders of His day. Seeking their own glory, they were totally unprepared to think in terms of cross bearing. The Messiah they wanted was a king of power in whose temporal kingdom they could occupy seats of authority and prestige.

This danger among church leaders has always existed. Satan being who he is, the danger becomes more persistent as the end draws near. We must be aware of this and be on our guard, lest we take our eyes off the Christ we are committed to serve.

The apostle Paul exclaimed "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." To this dedicated apostle the thought of glorying in self was abhorrent. Considering what Christ had done for him, the chief of sinners, he could not say or do enough for Him. For him, to live was Christ. To the Corinthians he wrote, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Later he declared, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities" (2 Cor. 11:30). He would glory only in those things that would help to keep him humble.

Christ's concern

During Christ's last days with His disciples before His death, His great concern was that true humility characterize their work in their leadership role of the church.

Following Peter's bold acclamation at Caesarea Phillippi, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," He made the first plain announcement of His coming death, followed with the important appeal, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Returning to Galilee, and after the Transfiguration experience a week later, Jesus stood a child up before the disciples with the words "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

Thereafter, on His final approach to Jerusalem, the proud mother of James and John came to Jesus seeking for them the highest position in His kingdom. Again Jesus reminded them of the nature of his mission and the spirit of self-denial that was to characterize His followers. "Ye know not what ye ask," He declared, adding, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22).

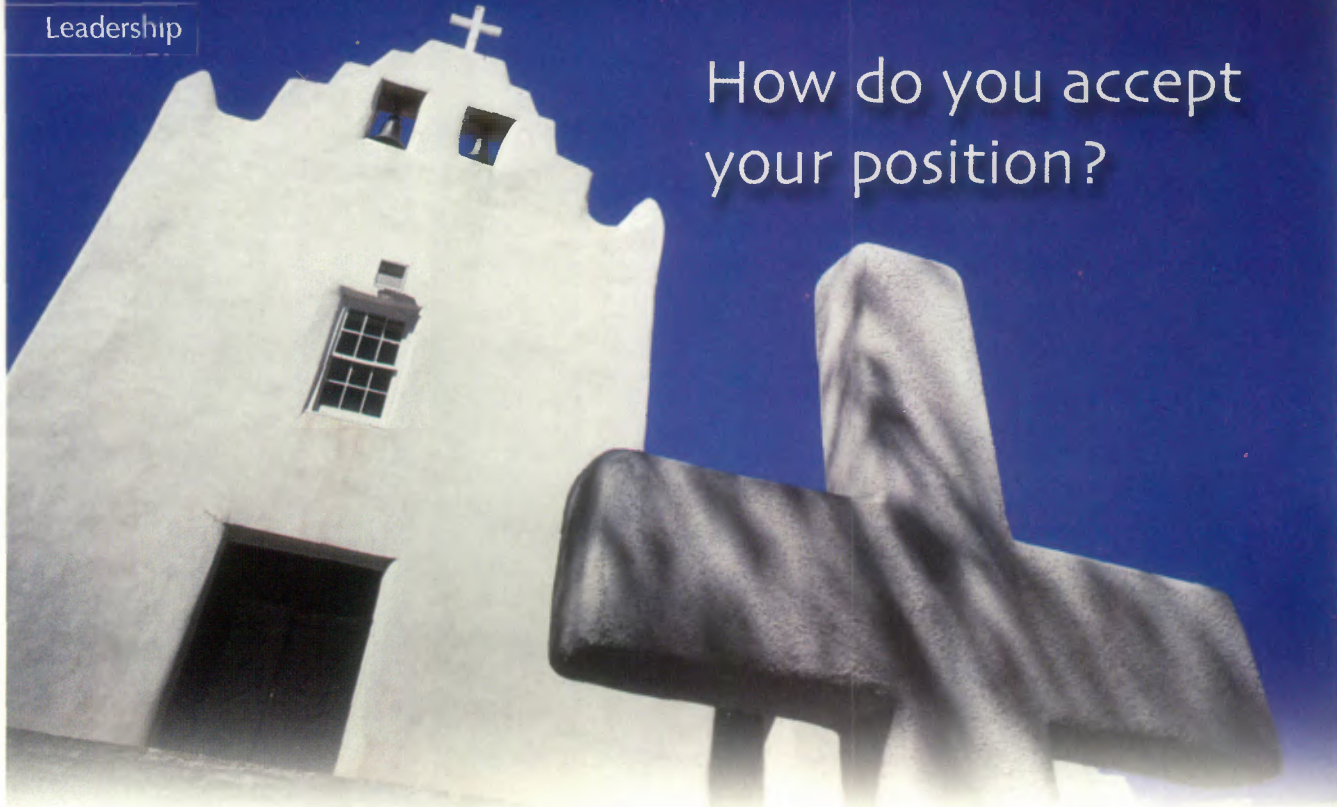
Then and now

It was after Peter's conversion, following the denial of his Lord, and the change that came to all the disciples save Judas, that the Holy Spirit came upon them and they went forward to turn "the world upside down." Then only—with self hidden in Christ, and their holiness, His glory, and the advancement of His kingdom their only aim—was it possible for His power to attend in such a marvelous way.

When this experience becomes ours, we will also have the experience called for in the message of the last-day flying angel of Revelation. Then we will indeed "fear God, and give glory to him." Then, also, will the messages of Revelation go with a loud cry and the earth will be enlightened with His glory. **E**

Orley M. Berg wrote this article at the time he was Associate Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

How do you accept your position?



Robert H. Pierson

Perhaps you have recently been placed in a position of responsibility in your congregation. The church has elected you to be the first elder, or you have been asked to serve as the treasurer or you have been appointed to any other position of leadership. It can be a heady experience for the uninitiated. How have you accepted your position?

Recently I was reading Solomon's prayer at Gibeon, recorded in 1 Kings 3:5. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and challenged him with an amazing offer: "Ask what I shall give thee," God said.

King Solomon might easily have asked for greater power, greater wealth, or many other things attractive to the human heart. But the young and inexperienced ruler fell upon his knees and cried out in humility, "O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a

people?" (verses 7-9). Solomon's expression of need and appeal for help pleased God. He was granted not only the wisdom he so much needed, but was also rewarded with many of the material blessings for which he did not ask.

May I share with you a thought from *Prophets and Kings*? "The language used by Solomon while praying to God before the ancient altar at Gibeon reveals his humility and his strong desire to honor God. He realized that without divine aid he was as helpless as a little child to fulfill the responsibilities resting on him. He knew that he lacked discernment, and it was a sense of his great need that led him to seek God for wisdom. In his heart there was no selfish aspiration for a knowledge that would exalt him above others. He desired to discharge faithfully the duties devolving upon him, and he chose the gift that would be the means of causing his reign to bring glory to God. Solomon was never so rich or so wise and as truly great as when he confessed, I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in," page 30. This warms and stirs my heart with a desire to manifest the spirit of Solomon in my leadership.

What a lesson we should learn from Solomon's prayer. When God calls us to a position of leader-

ship He calls us at the same time to be examples of God's men before others. The more responsible the trust placed in our hands, the more we must realize we are as "a little child," and plead with God for an "understanding heart."

Perhaps you have occasionally discerned in someone an insatiable craving for positions compelling motivation to be the head of the elders, to become a conference president, to be elected an officer of a much larger congregation. There is nothing evil in excelling in your work under the blessing of God. In fact, if you are satisfied with mediocre achievements something is wrong with your attitude. But when you have done your best, leave the rest in God's hands. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Ps. 75:6, 7).

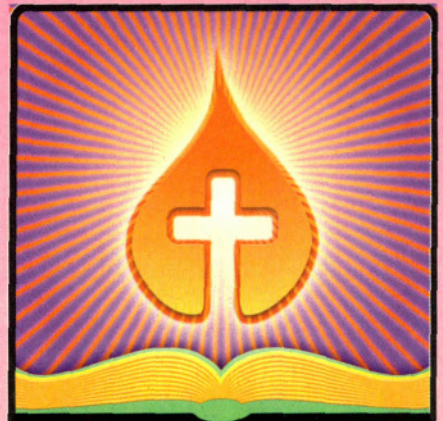
Leadership in the church of God is not all—or even much—glamour and glory. The leader who is out in front may well be the one who is the object of criticism. Perhaps this is God's way of keeping us humble and much in prayer.

When you and I in humility seek wisdom and understanding to carry out our assigned responsibilities of leadership, God has promised us help. God answered Solomon's prayer. He will answer ours. How do you take promotion? If God were to present you with the challenge with which He tested Solomon: "Ask what I shall give thee," how would you respond? May the Lord keep us humble and feeling our dependence upon Him when "promotion" comes!

Robert H. Pierson was a former president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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Jesus Christ

The need for doctrinal preaching

Arthur H. Stainback

There is too much prejudice against doctrine in our day, especially against doctrinal preaching. Some hold that doctrines are too obscure, too difficult to explain to the lay mind, and that, since there are so many different opinions, such discussions and sermons result in confusion rather than knowledge. Sadly, some have gone so far as to claim it does not matter what a man believes so long as he behaves himself and attends church.

How can a man live right if he does not understand the Bible? Why should he be interested in and faithful to a church if he does not understand its position on matters of faith? Doctrinal preaching

is simply teaching the Bible.

The spiritual anemia in our church life is due to these prevailing ideas and this dread of doctrinal preaching. Church members very often do not know where they stand on matters of faith. It is not uncommon to hear a layman or even a pastor discuss a doctrine contrary to the prevailing position of his church. It is a sad state of affairs that so many of our church members are doctrinal infants.

We can never have a full-blooded, mature church or a strong Christianity until we have mature Christians. To be mature, we must know doctrine. We desperately need a revival of doctri-

nal preaching from our pulpits. Theology will then be clear and we will automatically eliminate our conflicts and many differing opinions. This will also bring about a Bible-reading, thinking, and faithful membership.

We must be concerned about this deep-rooted ignorance which concerns every position we hold dear. Hazy ideas and hearsay are often the only knowledge many have on great cardinal doctrines. As goes the preacher, so goes the church. Therefore throw out stunts and campaigns, and preach doctrine to fill those empty pews. Preach doctrine and dust off the balcony seats. Hold fast sound teaching and avoid those book reviews, and watch the evening congregation swell. Preach tomorrow's newspaper written centuries ago. Let your members know that when you preach, the world is left outside. Stir their souls with the word of God. Stop talking about a better Christian world until your members know what it is to be a Christian.

Trim your sails to suit men and you will trim your effectiveness for Christ. Sweeten your sermons with the soothing talk of men and you will give your congregation spiritual diabetes. Preach on popular ideas and your folks will try the way of the world and bring its dregs to your door. Preach on the great doctrines and let them know God and the riches of His word.

This old world is hungry and knows not the nature of its own appetite. It is hungry for the Bread of Life, the word of God, the authority for life and eternity. Preach doctrine, and these hungry hearts will be filled. Preach doctrine, and we will shake this old world and awaken it to a realization of its God-given responsibilities. We will then turn people back to God and into paths of peace and happiness. Our people are growing lean on the things of the world and only slumber in their own confusion as the alarm is sounded. Preach God's word and doctrine regularly and carefully until at last there stand about us strong, mature believers ready for the fray against sin, ready to carry the gospel to the world. **E**

Arthur H. Stainback wrote this article and it appeared in *Signs of the Times*.

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Such as I have

Margarida F. Sarli is responsible for the selection and adaptation of the material in this section.

Text: Acts 3:6.

A. Introduction

1. *The Book of Acts takes up the story of Christianity where the Gospels leave off.*

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came in a unique way, and the apostles moved forward dynamically and daringly to tell the story of the risen Christ.

2. *Of course, the Book of Acts tells only a few of the many wonderful events that must have occurred.*

a. The Holy Spirit led Luke to record the visit of Peter and John to the temple, where they healed the man who had been lame from birth.

b. How strange Peter's words must have sounded when he said, "Silver and gold have I none;" but how exciting Peter's deed when he took the man by the right hand, lifted him up, and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, healed him.

c. A double miracle occurred that day!

d. The man learned to walk and leap at the very moment he was healed.

3. *A great stewardship lesson is present in this story.*

We are to do "what we can with what we have where we are for Jesus' sake today" and never wait for a greater opportunity nor for a time when we have greater abilities and resources.

B. Money isn't everything

1. *Too often when we speak of stewardship, we think of money.*

a. How thrilling to see a story where money is not set forth as the most important thing.

b. In fact, Peter even came close to minimizing it. He said plainly, "Silver and gold have I none" and then proceeded to work the miracle.

2. *Does the time ever come in the life of a church or a religious organization that money can actually be a stumbling stone?*

a. Illustration. Thomas Aquinas, an outstanding religious leader of another generation, once visited the pope and was shown all the treasures of the Roman Church. The pope said to Thomas, "Well, Thomas, no longer can the church say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Thomas replied, "Yes, Holy Father, but have you ever thought that the church is in danger of also not being able to say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk?' "

b. We must be careful, in our day, not to evaluate our local churches and even our mission boards in terms of budgets alone.

c. Pastors and missionaries of other days were not nearly as concerned about a "cost of living" raise as they were a "cost of loving" raise.

d. Let us be careful, very careful, to keep our priorities correct!

C. But money is important

1. *The preceding paragraph is true, but something else is true also.*

It takes money—cold, hard cash—to carry on God's work in today's world.

2. *God's Word says much about the stewardship of possessions, the giving of money.*

In his Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul devoted two chapters —8 and 9— to the matter of giving.

He said, "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" — 2 Cor. 8:7.

He pointed out that our supreme example in giving is the Lord Jesus Christ who, though rich, became poor in order that through His poverty we might become rich.

3. *God has given to some people the ability to make "big money."*

Their duty is to set aside an even larger part of that money to the work of the gospel.

In Old Testament days, the tenth was the minimum.

Certainly a Christian would not want to give any less to the spread of the Christian faith than the Old Testament Jew gave for his faith.

In fact, counting all of the special offerings and supplementary tithes, the Old Testament saint was commanded to give far more than a tithe.

4. *Money is important!*

a. We live in a world far different from that of Peter, John, and Paul.

There was, of course, a monetary system in that day, but money is far more essential as a means of exchange than it has ever been before in the world.

And more than ever before, the importance of propagating our faith is clear.

b. We must lead people to Christ, and soon; or our way of life, as we know it, is in serious jeopardy.

D. What do you have?

1. *What we have to offer God in service*

a. A generation ago the emphasis was on "talents and abilities," but today we speak of "gifts".

b. There may be a fine distinction between the two, but we are not interested in that distinction at this moment.

Rather, the question comes to all of us, "What do I have to offer my Lord?"

c. Another question follows closely, "Am I willing to give myself—including my talents, abilities, and gifts—to be used any way that God sees fit?"

d. Illustration. When General Pershing landed in France with the American Expedition Force in World War I, he presented himself and his army to General Foch, Commander of the Allied Forces, and said, "Our men, our equipment, our resources, all that we have are yours. Use them as you see fit."

God is certainly waiting to hear every Christian say, in essence, the same.

Stewardship is giving "such as we have" to our Master unreservedly for use in the service of His kingdom.

E. Conclusion

1. *Everyone who believes in Christ and is dedicated to Him actually has great possessions.*

a. They are, however, spiritual resources.

b. He should find his greatest joy in sharing with others the gospel by lip and by life.

c. This, however, does not relieve him from the responsibility of supporting God's work financially.

2. *A true believer in Christ should be a liberal person with large sympathies and great compassion.*

a. We cannot evade our responsibility in financial things by rationalizing that we are "spiritual" and, therefore, are not required to bring financial gifts.

b. In the Old Testament, even the Levites gave tithes of the tithes.

c. On the other hand, giving money does not release us from the duty of serving in other ways.

Stewardship involves both finances and lifestyle.

d. It is not a case of "either/or" in relationship to stewardship.

We are obligated to the "both/and" principle.

Time, talent, tithe, influence—all that we have belongs to God!

"The foundation of the plan of salvation was laid in sacrifice. Jesus left the royal courts and became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich. All who share this salvation, purchased for them at such an infinite sacrifice by the Son of God, will follow the example of the true Pattern. Christ was the chief Cornerstone and we must build upon this Foundation. Each must have a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The life of Christ upon earth was unselfish; it was marked with humiliation and sacrifice.

(Continued on page 21)

Where is Jesus?

Text: Mark 16:19.

A. Introduction

1. New life in the church is desperately needed today.
2. The hope of the church is Christ Himself. The basic question is, where is Jesus?
3. The answer to this question enables us to praise Jesus Christ for His position now in God's eternal plan.

B. Where is Jesus?

1. *His ascension was His home-going.*
 - a. It was His going back to His Father.
 - b. It was the restoration of the glory He possessed before the world was. — John 17.
 - c. Jesus longed to be there. — Matt. 21:33.
 - d. He talked about being "lifted up" — John 12:32.
 - e. He talked about preparing a place for us — John 14:3; and He announced, "I go unto my Father" — John 14:12, 28; see also 16:5, 7.
2. *He is exalted to the Father's right hand.* — Mark 16:19 — In Acts 2:33 Peter proclaims His "being by the right hand of God exalted."
3. In Philippians 2:9-11, Paul beautifully concludes, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. . ."
4. However, Ephesians 1:19-23 even more fully describes where Jesus is and what it means.
 - a. This describes His victory.
 - b. His work was finished.
 - c. He was ready to sit because He had done all the Father had told Him to do. He experienced victory over Satan, sin, the world, the flesh, and death.
 - d. This is also His new position. It describes His sovereignty and superiority. It describes His authority. He is Lord of all, Lord of heaven and earth, the highest authority of all.
 - e. From where He is, what is He doing? This is the second important question.

C. What is He doing?

What kind of ministry is Jesus performing today?

1. *His is a drawing ministry.* — John 12:32.
 - a. He is drawing all men to Himself. — Acts 4:12.
 - b. He is doing this right now in the world, through His Spirit, through His love, through His Word, and through His people. So, from heaven He is drawing on earth!
2. *His is an interceding ministry.*
 - a. He stands between us and the Father. Romans 8:34.
 - b. First John 2:1-2 teaches that Jesus Christ is our Advocate, our heavenly lawyer, our Counselor. He represents us before the Father. Satan accuses us to the Father and the Father to us, but Jesus represents our case before the Father. What hope and encouragement this is!
3. *His is a directing ministry.* — Ephesians 1:22-23.
 - a. He is the Head of the body; and as the head leads the body, so Christ leads the church. He tells the church what to do.
 - b. As the Head He does two things for the church.
He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit, then and now — Acts 2:33, 38.

He gives spiritual gifts to believers, by which He directs the ministry of the church — Rom. 12:6.

4. *His is a building ministry.* — Matthew 16:18.

a. Acts 2:47 describes saved people being added to the church.

b. Acts 6:7 reveals that the Lord is not satisfied just in adding to His church, He is multiplying it. This is His work and desire today for His churches!

5. *His is a preparing ministry.*

He is doing something in heaven. — John 14:2.

6. *His is a sharing ministry.*

a. His desire for us is expressed in John 17:24.

b. The reality of this desire is expressed in: — Ephesians 2:5-6; Romans 8:28-30.

c. His victory is our victory! — 1 John 4:17.

All He has, we share with Him. All He does, we do with Him. His new position and ministry in heaven is our new position and ministry on earth!

D. Conclusion

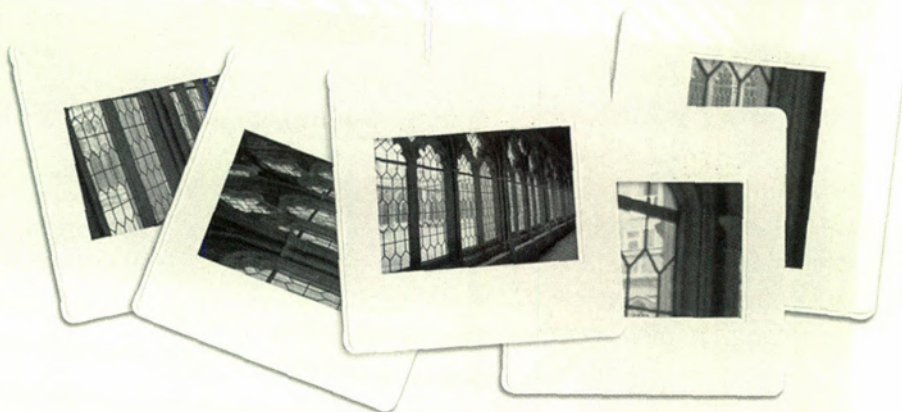
1. Christ's new position is the basis of knowing victory in our Christian life.

2. We are in Him. We are identified with Him.

3. This means victory over the world and every circumstance.

"Those who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to God, will constantly receive a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth His highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls."

Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 112.



The worship recognized by heaven



Claudio Hirle

Jesus Christ foretold the great disappointment which many Christians will suffer in God's "judgment day," when they realize that their religious belief and manner of adoration of an entire life has been totally empty. They will discover that their prophecies, exorcisms, miracles, singing and worship were not accepted by God (Matthew 7:22, 23; 15:19). What a disappointment!

Worship is the central theme in the great struggle, and deserves special attention in the last days, when the unsanctified is very close to the sacred. In the end, what constitutes an acceptable worship to God? What type of adoration is recognized by heaven?

The apostle Paul writing to young Timothy recommended: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convict, rebuke, exhort, with all long-

suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside for fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

This, undoubtedly, is one of the most solemn texts for these days. Today, as a matter of fact, many people are not supporting a true Bible doctrine. It is time to return to the Scripture. There is no other way in which we can be sure concerning the truthfulness of our worship, unless it is founded in the Scripture, since it testifies about the sound doctrine. It's the Scripture that normalizes worship. In today's world, there is a search for that which is sensitive, a demand for excitability. In worship and in churches there is no difference. People want excitement. But worship based on the Scripture is reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

The importance of the Scripture in worship prepares the individual for true worship. It's the word of God that gives meaning to our moments of adoration and reveals our attitude and spirit as we praise the Lord.

The importance of the Word – Therefore, a great mistake is committed when a program is presented, or a meeting is held in church, without having the Bible occupy a prominent place. In church any program is of no consequence if the Word is not given preeminence.

Any meeting in church, be it of young people, or a musical program involving art or culture, if it doesn't include the Word it will produce any reaction, but a spirit of worship.

Though art can be impressed or become emotional, it's the Word that has the power to transform. The presentation may attract attention but the one who will convince is the Word presented in the power of the Spirit (Heb. 4:12). Ellen G. White expressed it this way: "One single sentence from the Scripture is of much more value than ten thousand ideas and human arguments." *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 110.

Therefore, the Bible must occupy a central position during worship. Otherwise the worshipers are deprived of the means to offer true worship and lose their contact with heaven. It can be said that worship without revelation or a religious meeting without the Bible is as an empty table, hungry congregation, a multitude without bread and a gathering without God.

The false and the true – When we search the Bible for true worship, we find the needed information to identify its nature. There are two biblical scenes in which true and false were identified. These serve as reference to analyze two kinds of worship.

The confrontation of true and false worship is old. It dates from the time of Adam's sons. Cain established his own model of worship (Gen. 4:3, 5). Abel, instead, followed the model established by God (Gen. 4: 4). Concerning Cain's worship, it was colorful, attractive, appealing, one worthy of excitement, but Abel's was simple, pure, and obedient.

Cain used a human model, based on human rationalization. Already true worship is legal and regulated, not by man's will, but by the "Thus says the Lord." It was on this basis that Abel's worship was established, and later authenticated by the Lord. "Fire descended from heaven and burned the sacrifice." – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 71.

The story of Cain and Abel reveals that there is only one way to worship authorized by heaven: the pattern that God himself established in His Word.

Another biblical episode very enlightening is the

encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The contrast between attitudes assumed by each side is very clear. The prophets of Baal called on their gods as they "leaped, shouted and cut themselves." – *Prophets and Kings*, p. 149.

The difference between those two forms of worship was characterized by the noise and the exhibition. There was no answer, and there was no fire to consume the sacrifice.

The nature of Elijah's was different. The worship attitude was observed. He "prays a simple and fervent prayer." *Idem*, p. 52. The nature of his worship was different because the nature of his God is different. And what is the nature of Elijah's God? Ellen G. White comments on 1 King 19: 11, 12 sheds some light on this point: God wanted to teach Elijah that "It is not always what makes the loudest demonstrations the best chosen to carry on His plans." – *Prophets and Kings*, p.168.

Let us not deceive ourselves. God is not in the noisy "strong wind." God is not in the spectacular "earthquake." God is not in the leaping and hysterical shouting "fire." God is in the "tame and soft breeze" of the Holy Spirit.

Divine pattern – That's the nature of the God of the Bible: decency, order, and solemnity. The true worshiper behaves according to the nature of his God, following His example.

The nature of true worship is, therefore, what distinguishes the true from the false. As established, the Word plays a fundamental role. The Word is Jesus.

To do away with the Word is to do away with Jesus. Without Jesus there is nothing, except empty sensations.

When the controversy between the true and false worship intensifies let us return to the Bible. In it we find the type of worship recognized by heaven, which, according to Paul is rational, and centered in the Bible; according to Abel's model, it follows a divine and not a human pattern.

According to Elijah's example it is simple, fervent and solemn, considering that our God's nature is different from that of Baal.

It is not manifested in shows, contortions or noises. It appears in the soft and delicate voice of His Spirit. **E**

Claudio Hirle is a district pastor in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

“Confirmed on you”



Paul H. Eldridge

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth, he included among his words of greeting this unique expression: "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."

In these brief words, Paul captured the very essence of the gospel program. His long journeys, his tireless missionary endeavor, his survival of harassment and persecution, his concern for the spiritual prosperity of his converts, all found ample reward and fulfillment when he could say, "Confirmed in you."

During recent years we have been hearing frequent mention of a disconcerting situation known as the "credibility gap." It is a rather picturesque description of the difference between what is said and what is true.

Actually, there is nothing new about it. Satan accused God of a credibility gap way back in the Garden of Eden.

Ever since that time, suspicion has been one of the most uncomfortable by-products of sin. This inherent skepticism keeps us constantly looking for evidence to support or deny what we hear. We have come to accept the necessity of furnishing adequate proof for our own statements, and we call this proof "confirmation."

Frequently my telephone rings, and I find it is the cable office calling. The voice will say, "We have a cable for you," and then proceed to read me the message. It is a fast, efficient system, but it has its

hazards. The girl at the cable office may misread. I may mishear. Or perhaps I will make insufficient and inaccurate notes. Aware of these possibilities, the cable company wisely sends a messenger who, a few hours later, delivers a teletype version marked, "Confirmation."

Confirmation is tangible evidence. It is visible affirmation of something we may have heard but for which we desire proof. We demand it. We need it. We appreciate it.

To a skeptical world has come God's message of hope. It sounds good, and there are many who would like to believe it. They are intrigued with the possibility of forgiveness, the apparent social benefits of Christian fellowship, the amazing potential of eternal life. But how can they be sure? What proof do they have that the message is authentic, that there is no credibility gap?

They have you.

This was Paul's great confidence. This is the church's greatest asset. This is where God rests His case. "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." **E**

Paul H. Eldridge was president of the former Far-East Division when he wrote this article and is reprinted by permission from the *Far Eastern Division Outlook*.



Children's Story

1 Sheep, the faithful

Object: A picture of a dog.

Lesson: To be faithful in everything that comes to us.

Did you ever hear about Sheep, the faithful dog of Fort Benton, Montana? Sheep—a big, shaggy, cross-bred collie—belonged to a shepherd. He dearly loved his master, but one day his beloved master died. They took his body in a coffin to the station and put it on a train. Sheep made as if to follow, but the station agent said, "Sorry, old fellow, this is one time you can't go with him."

Sheep did not realize he would never see his beloved master again, and he refused to leave the station.

For five and a half years Sheep made his home at the depot. He met each of the four trains that came in daily and looked carefully at each passenger, hoping that one would be his master. But his master never came back. For five and a half years Sheep kept up his vigil. People came from far to see the dog whose faithfulness had become a legend.

As the years went by, Sheep got older, his movements got slower, and one day he was unable to jump to safety in time, and a train hit him. He was given an honorable burial, and money poured in from all over the country for a memorial to his faithfulness. A Sheep fund was started in his memory, and the children in the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, in Great Falls, Montana, have received many wonderful benefits as a result of the far-spreading fame of Sheep's faithfulness.

Sheep was only a dog, but he showed more faithfulness to his master than most human beings do to their heavenly Master.

Faithfulness—keeping on when circumstances are discouraging, keeping courage up, being reliable—is a trait we need to have if we are to see Jesus.

Let us resolve to be faithful today in our schoolwork, our home duties, in everything that comes to us.

Suggestion: Read Christ's words about being faithful, in Matthew 24:42–46.

2 Heirs with Jesus

Lesson: All who believe in Jesus are adopted as His heirs.

Outline

1. Some people inherit a fortune.
2. Who wouldn't be happy to be heir to a big sum of money?
3. However, we can be heirs to something much better than a fortune. We can be heirs of God's kingdom.

Little two-year-old Johanna lived with her father and mother in London. When the war broke out, her parents sent her away to the United States so that she would not be in danger from the air raids that went on for years in that great city. A woman in New Jersey took Johanna into her home, and her cunning ways and her bright mind soon won the woman's heart. She dreaded the thought of parting with her when the war should end.

But before the war ended, Johanna's father, an infantry officer, was killed, and later her mother married again and went to make a new home in South Africa. Johanna's foster mother adopted her for good, gave her a good home, sent her to good schools, and finally to college.

When she was in her senior year at college, Johanna learned to her sorrow one day that her foster mother had died, and a few weeks later Johanna was told by the family lawyers that she had inherited all her foster mother's fortune—more than one million dollars.

Johanna was heir to a fortune. No doubt she was very happy to have so much money all of a sudden. Who wouldn't be happy to be heir to a big sum of money or a vast estate? Few of us have that good fortune.

However, Galatians 3:29 tells us that we can be heirs—heirs to something much better than a fortune or an estate on earth. We can be heirs of God's kingdom. We can have the prospect of living without troubles, without wants, and without sorrow in a much more beautiful and better world that Jesus is preparing for us now. Yes, every one of us can be an heir — we can all inherit the kingdom of heaven if we choose.

Let us pray that we may live so that we can inherit the kingdom Christ has gone to prepare for us.

Suggestion: Read what Jesus said about being heirs, in Matthew 5:3, 5. **E**

Celebrate the **PASTOR'S DAY**



Ideas for elders to help the local congregation to express gratitude to the pastoral family.

Many Evangelic churches choose the month of October as the "Appreciation Month for Pastors." In the same way there is a specific day in the calendar to celebrate certain professionals; we take a day to remember the pastor and his function. As a Seventh-day Adventist church, we set apart in our denominational calendar the fourth Sabbath of October as "The Pastor's Day." Meanwhile, we show appreciation and recognize our spiritual leader every day of the year.

Why is this day necessary?

The nature of the services rendered by the pastor and his family are very unique. God trusted them with one of the most precious responsibilities—to take care of the spiritual well-being of His flock.

When a pastor fails in this objective, the church members are greatly hurt. In this context, the family pastoral team has a great responsibility to the church they serve.

The expectation of the church in general is that the pastor should have a model family, perfect children, always smiling and available. Better yet, and in addition of being a man with an always-ready answer, he needs to have an elegant posture and never a conflict. Some members are disappointed when the pastor is depressed, have family or personal problems. The pastor's family lives in a glass house or a fish bowl, where the congregation sees every movement they make. Certainly, it never crosses the member's mind to think that he may be the cause of the pastor's worries or failures.

This is the reason why God instructs us to honor

His servant and spiritual leader. "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" 1 Tim. 5:17.

The good news is that we, as church members, should make a difference in the pastor's life. The Pastor's Day is an opportunity to express our love and appreciation for his ministry and the influence he exercises in our lives.

What can we do?

There are at least two ways to celebrate the Pastor's Day in a manner he would feel appreciated.

1. The first one is understanding what you can do personally to honor him. A simple note; a telephone call; a lunch invitation; a special prayer; wash his car; give him a gift or speak encouraging words to him.

2. The second one is sharing the concept of the Pastor's Day with the congregation. At that time the members can present some type of public recognition, promote a lunch at the church, give a gift from the members, plant a tree in his honor, etc.

There are no limits to the imagination.

Doesn't the pastoral family deserve this honor? Take the initiative to make plans to celebrate the Pastor's Day in your church and give value to the ministry instituted by God to be a blessing to His children. **E**

Translated by Gladys B. Ríos from the Brazilian magazine: "Revista do Anciã" in Portuguese, from the South American Division.

(Continued from page 3)

Spiritual revival—the key factor in church progress

This same experience characterizes all Christian church life. The spiritual life within any congregation is never constant. Each church has times of being in a spiritual desert followed by times of awakening and revival. Even in the first century Church the believers longed for greater manifestations of God's word and power (Acts 4:23-31).

Progress never occurs in an unbroken sequence. The pressure of the Holy Spirit upon the life of an individual and the Church is never uniform. The reason is not difficult to discover. A constant pressure becomes a mere condition of our life. We adjust to it, without its attracting our attention, but a pressure that is occasional and variable captivates our attention. The Holy Spirit demonstrates His sovereignty in nurturing change in us and captivates our interest by varying His influence at different times, for it is by this method that the conscience is reached and the heart is won.

In the influx of the tide, there are not only tiny ripples, but also tumultuous waves and mighty breakers. In the inflowing tide of human spiritual progress there is the same variety of waves. There are revivals which affect the individual. There are larger movements which affect separate congregations, and even larger ones that affect whole geographical areas and spread beyond.

Intentionally we can help the Holy Spirit in His effort to bring spiritual power to us individually and collectively to the congregation. We can plan something to avoid deserving the rebuke that once the Lord sent to our people. "At our meetings there are far too few revival efforts made. There is too little seeking of the Lord. Revival services should be carried from the beginning to the close of our meetings." — Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p.64.

The history of revivals reveals large movements, infrequent in their appearance, but monumental in their character. They change life's conditions and deeply alter the history of the world. In looking at some of these movements, we discover certain laws which govern their prosperity and progress. How they work becomes more apparent, the effect more convincing and overpowering that speaking about our methods and numbers. For what was common to all great spiritual movements can be

present in our own individual life and in the life of our congregation.

Thus we need to acknowledge the part that spiritual revivals play in God's plan for us as individuals and for the church as the body of Jesus Christ. Spiritual progress occurs only through spiritual revival. May this prayer be yours as you lead God's people.

Baptize us anew
With power from on high,
With love, o refreshes us!
Dear Savior, draw nigh.
We humbly beseech Thee,
Lord Jesus, we pray,
With love and the Spirit
Baptize us today. **E**

(Continued from page 13)

Sermon #1 Such as I have

And shall men, partakers of the great salvation which Jesus came from heaven to bring them, refuse to follow their Lord and to share in His self-denial and sacrifice? Shall the world's Redeemer practice self-denial and sacrifice on our account, and the members of Christ's body practice self-indulgence? Self-denial is an essential condition of discipleship." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 387, 388.

Don't forget the children

C. Lloyd Wyman

Want to pastor a growing church filled with members who love Christ? Who practically fall into your arms when you extend an invitation to commit their lives to His service? Who have years of witness before them and who seldom apostatize? The material for such a productive ministry sits before the pastor in practically every church.

The children.

Wrote Dr. Torrey: "No other form of Christian effort brings such immediate, such large, such lasting results as work for the conversion of children. It has many advantages over other forms of work. First of all, children are more easily led to Christ than adults. In the second place, they are more likely to stay converted than those apparently converted at a later period in life. They also make better Christians, as they do not have so much to unlearn as those who have grown old in sin. They have more years of service before them."¹

Dr. Spurgeon once said, "I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into the church than I have in the spiritual condition of the adults thus received. I will go even further than that. I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the gospel and a warmer love for Christ in the child convert than in the adult convert."

Spurgeon went on to say that "87 percent of adult converts fall away within five years, but not more than 40 percent of child converts, in the same time."²

The child's quick acceptance and long usefulness were emphasized by Dr. George W. Baley: "Less time and effort are necessary for the winning of twenty children to Christ than one adult, and a child is worth more in the extension of the kingdom than many adults."³



Sometimes we fall into the error of thinking that a child must be ready to shave or date before he or she can make a meaningful commitment to Christ. But Matthew Henry gave his heart to Christ at the age of 11; Isaac Watts committed himself at the age of 9; Jonathan Edwards was only 7; and Count Zinzendorf while only 4 is known to have signed his name to "Dear Saviour, do Thou be mine, and I will be Thine."

How early should ministry for the child start? While he is in his mother's arms. A woman once asked the famous educator Francis Wayland Parker, "How can I begin the education of my child?" "Well, when will your child be born?" Parker asked.

"Born!" she gasped. "Why, he is already 5 years old."

"Woman," he cried, "don't stand there talking to

me! Hurry home! Already you have lost the best five years."

Other experts on children support this judgment: "Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil."⁴

"Children should virtually be trained in a home school from the cradle to maturity."⁵

"You are to teach your little ones to know Christ. This work you must do before Satan sows his seeds in their hearts."⁶

The pastor's ministry, then, should be only an extension of the parents.

Our theology of the dignity of man and the church's being the body of Christ should encourage us to minister to the young as well as the adult. Yet, far too frequently we pass by the younger saints and sinners to concentrate on the older members, not perceiving that the child is often the key to the parents' heart.

My experience as a pastor has taught me five things:

1. If you treat children with respect and concern, you earn the respect and appreciation of their parents. Children should not be "used," but they can be an excellent avenue to the hearts and minds of parents.

2. Love begets love. As you love the children and show them your interest, they will love you in return and there is no love more genuine than the sweet, unadulterated love of a child.

3. The rapport a pastor establishes with children will remain throughout their mutual lives. When the children reach the difficult teen years, or when things are going rough at home or at school, they will come to the pastor, their established friend, for counsel and understanding.

4. A message understood by children is understood by all. And lessons learned by children may be a blessing to their parents too.

5. The child who respects his pastor will respect the ministry also, and this happy relationship will encourage love for his church and loyalty to it that can last a lifetime.

The pastor's ministry to the children within his church should begin, I believe, with this understanding: It's not easy to be a child in church. Lavern G. Franzen emphasizes this point in his book: *Smile! God Loves You*:

"On the one hand is the reality of adult concerns that children be properly quiet, immobile, and

attentive. On the other hand is another reality of the adult world. For a child it is a world in which pews are several sizes too large, hymns several stanzas too long, and sermon words several syllables too complex. There is little to claim a child's interest, little to attract his attention, and even little to invite participation. The adult church offers a child little to convince him that God's love is exciting and real or that he is already a significant part of the sharing of that love.

"Yet the church hopes the child is so convinced. After all, children are the church. The Christ of the adult is their Christ now, and if the gospel is God's good news about man's bad situation for the grown-ups, so it is for young Christians. God's people need to share it as that good news."⁷

Here are five suggestions to make it just that:

1. Begin the church service with a three-to-five-minute story or lesson. Win your church board's approval for the service and its frequency. I would encourage you to do it at least every other Sabbath.

Should you bring the children down front? By all means, Yes. You give them special recognition when you invite them forward. You say by that invitation, "You are important to my ministry and to this church. Your life counts with God and with us here."

2. One Sabbath a quarter, plan a storytime when one or more children share a witnessing experience. This kind of "sermon" will encourage other children and adults, to live their faith before neighbors and others.

3. Try a children's Sabbath. Once a year or a quarter, let the children take as many parts of a worship service as you can prepare them to do. Direct the sermon that day to the children, on their level; drive home the points by repetition. Use visual aids, if you can, and get the children to respond to points of truth, if the message lends itself to such a plan. Children love to respond and remember what they repeat. From time to time a children's choir may fit the conclusion of a story or a sermon. A child's prayer may be very meaningful.

Seek to have a children's choir even if only to sing several choruses. More children can take part in a chorus than in a story or sermon and what parent does not like to see his "angel" performing? With training, the children can move from simple verse in unison to two—or three—part songs.

4. Have a potluck dinner following a children's

(Continued on page 31)

God has **work** for you to do

Ellen G. White

The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.¹

The words "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15) are spoken to each one of Christ's followers. All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. The same longing of soul that He felt for the saving of the lost is to be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place, but for all there is a place and a work. All upon whom God's blessings have been bestowed are to respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom.²

Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God's Spirit convicts sin-

ners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are "like apples of gold in pictures of silver."³

God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositories of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be com-



municated to the world. The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Christ declares to His followers: "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5: 14. To every soul that accepts Jesus the cross of Calvary speaks: "Behold the worth of the soul. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Mark 16: 15. Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity. The love that Jesus manifested for the souls of men in the sacrifice which He made for their redemption, will actuate all His followers.⁴

Christ accepts, oh, so gladly, every human agency that is surrendered to Him. He brings the human into union with the divine, that He may communicate to the world the mysteries of incarnate love. Talk it, pray it, sing it, fill the world with the message of His truth, and keep pressing on into the regions beyond.⁵

Christ's true followers will witness for Him

Were every one of you a living missionary, the message for this time would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to every people and nation and tongue.⁶

All who would enter the city of God must, during their earthly life, set forth Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, His witnesses. They are to bear a plain, decided testimony against all evil practices, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He gives to all who receive Him, power to become the sons of God.

Regeneration is the only path by which we can enter the city of God. It is narrow, and the gate by which we enter is strait, but along it we are to lead men and women and children, teaching them that, in order to be saved, they must have a new heart and a new spirit. The old, hereditary traits of character must be overcome. The natural desires of the soul must be changed. All deception, all falsifying, all evil speaking, must be put away. The new life, which makes men and women Christ-like, is to be lived.⁷

My brethren and sisters, do you desire to break

the spell that holds you? Would you arouse from this sluggishness that resembles the torpor of death? Go to work, whether you feel like it or not. Engage in personal effort to bring souls to Jesus and the knowledge of the truth. In such labor you will find both a stimulus and a tonic; it will both arouse and strengthen. By exercise your spiritual powers will become more vigorous, so that you can, with better success, work out your own salvation. The stupor of death is upon many who profess Christ. Make every effort to arouse them. Warn, entreat, and expostulate. Pray that the melting love of God may warm and soften their icebound natures. Though they may refuse to hear, your labor will not be lost. In the effort to bless others your own souls will be blessed.⁸

Let none feel that because they are uneducated, they cannot take part in the Lord's work. God has a work for you to do. He has given to every man his work. You can search the Scriptures for yourselves. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119: 130. You can pray for the work. The prayer of the sincere heart, offered in faith, will be heard in heaven. And you are to work according to your ability.⁹

Heavenly intelligences are waiting to co-operate with human instrumentalities, that they may reveal to the world what human beings may become and what, through their influence, they may accomplish for the saving of souls that are ready to perish. Christ calls upon us to labor patiently and perseveringly for the thousands perishing in their sins, scattered in all lands, like wrecks on a desert shore. Those who share in Christ's glory must share also in His ministry, helping the weak, the wretched, and the despondent.¹⁰

Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the church a benefit to it in preference to himself, it can do far better without him. It is in the power of all to do something for the cause of God. There are those who spend a large amount for needless luxuries; they gratify their appetites, but feel it a great tax to contribute means to sustain the church. They are willing to receive all the benefit of its privileges, but prefer to leave others to pay the bills.¹¹

The church of Christ may be fitly compared to an army. The life of every soldier is one of toil, hardship, and danger. On every hand are vigilant foes, led on by the prince of the powers of darkness, who never slumbers and never deserts his post. Whenever a Christian is off his guard, this powerful adversary makes a sudden and violent attack. Unless the members of the church are active and vigilant, they will be overcome by his devices.

What if half the soldiers in an army were idling or asleep when ordered to be on duty? The result would be defeat, captivity, or death. Should any escape from the hands of the enemy, would they be thought worthy of a reward? No; they would speedily receive the sentence of death. And is the church of Christ careless or unfaithful, far more important consequences are involved. A sleeping army of Christian soldiers, what could be more terrible! What advance could be made against the world, which is under the control of the prince of darkness? Those who stand back indifferently in the day of battle, as though they had no interest and felt no responsibility as to the issue of the contest, might better change their course or leave the ranks at once.¹²

A place for each member of the family

Women as well as men can engage in the work of hiding the truth where it can work out and be made manifest. They can take their place in the work at this crisis, and the Lord will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Spirit of God, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Savior will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and this will give them a power that will exceed that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their work is needed. Discreet and humble women can do a good work in explaining the truth to the people in their homes. The Word of God thus explained will do its leavening work, and through its influence whole families will be converted.¹³

All can do something. In an effort to excuse them, some say: "My home duties, my children, claim my time and my means." Parents, your chil-

dren should be your helping hand, increasing your power and ability to work for the Master. Children are the younger members of the Lord's family.

They should be led to consecrate themselves to God, whose they are by creation and by redemption. They should be taught that all their powers of body, mind, and soul are His. They should be trained in various lines of unselfish service. Do not allow your children to be hindrances. With you the children should share spiritual as well as physical burdens. By helping others they increase their own happiness and usefulness.¹⁴

Our work for Christ is to begin with the family in the home. The education of the youth should be of a different order from that which has been given in the past. Their welfare demands far more labor than has been given them. There is no missionary field more important than this. By precept and example parents are to teach their children to labor for the unconverted. The children should be so educated that they will sympathize with the aged and afflicted and will seek to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and distressed. They should be taught to be diligent in missionary work; and from their earliest year's self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others and the advancement of Christ's cause should be inculcated, that they may be laborers together with God.¹⁵

Witnessing by moving into new localities

It is not the purpose of God that His people should colonize or settle together in large communities. The disciples of Christ are His representatives upon the earth, and God designs that they shall be scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, as lights amidst the darkness of the world. They are to be missionaries for God, by their faith and works testifying to the near approach of the coming Savior.

The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. None should move into new places merely for the sake of worldly advantage; but where there is an opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. They should feel a love for souls, a burden of labor for them, and should make it a study how to bring them into the truth. They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become

acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings. Thus they can let their light shine in good works.

Let the workers stand alone in God, weeping, praying, laboring for the salvation of their fellow men. Remember that you are running a race, striving for a crown of immortality. While so many love the praise of men more than the favor of God, let it be yours to labor in humility. Learn to exercise faith in presenting your neighbors before the throne of grace and pleading with God to touch their hearts. In this way effectual missionary work may be done. Some may be reached who would not listen to a minister or a colporteur. And those who thus labor in new places will learn the best ways of approaching the people, and can prepare the way for other labourers.¹⁶

Visit your neighbors and show an interest in the salvation of their souls. Arouse every spiritual energy to action. Tell those whom you visit that the end of all things is at hand. The Lord Jesus Christ will open the door of their hearts and will make upon their minds lasting impressions.

Even while engaged in their daily employment, God's people can lead others to Christ. And while doing this they will have the precious assurance that the Savior is close beside them. They need not think that they are left to depend on their own feeble efforts. Christ will give them words to speak that will refresh and encourage and strengthen poor, struggling souls who are in darkness. Their own faith will be strengthened as they realize that the Redeemer's promise is being fulfilled. Not only are they a blessing to others, but the work they do for Christ brings blessing to themselves.¹⁷

A great work can be done by presenting to the people the Bible just as it reads. Carry the Word of God to every man's door; urge its plain statements upon every man's conscience, repeat to all the Savior's command: "Search the Scriptures." John 5:39. Admonish them to take the Bible as it is, to implore divine enlightenment, and then, when the light shines, to gladly accept each precious ray and fearlessly abide the consequences.¹⁸

Among the members of our churches there should be more house-to-house labor in giving Bible readings and distributing literature. A Christian character can be symmetrically and completely formed only when the human agent regards it as a privilege to work disinterestedly in the

proclamation of the truth and to sustain the cause of God with means. We must sow beside all waters, keeping our souls in the love of God, working while it is day, and using the means the Lord has given us to do whatever duty comes next. Whatever our hands find to do we are to do it with faithfulness; whatever sacrifice we are called upon to make, we are to make it cheerfully. As we sow beside all waters we shall realize that "he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Corinthians 9:6.¹⁹

Practical manifestation of religion

Anything less than active, earnest service for the Master gives the lie to our profession of faith. Only the Christianity that is revealed by earnest, practical work will make an impression upon those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Praying, humble, believing Christians, those who show by their actions that their greatest desire is to make known the saving truth which is to test people, will gather a rich harvest of souls for the Master.

There is no excuse for the faith of our churches to be so faint and feeble. "Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Zechariah 9:12. There is strength for us in Christ. He is our Advocate before the Father. He dispatches His messengers to every part of His dominion to communicate His will to His people. He walks in the midst of His churches. He desires to sanctify, elevate, and ennoble His followers. The influence of those who truly believe in Him will be a savor of life in the world. He holds the stars in His right hand, and it is His purpose to let His light shine through these to the world. Thus He desires to prepare His people for higher service in the church above. He has given us a great work to do. Let us do it with accuracy and determination. Let us show in our lives what the truth has done for us. It has cost self-denial, self-sacrifice, indomitable energy, and much prayer, to bring up the various missionary enterprises where they now stand. There is danger that some of those now coming upon the stage of action will rest content to be inefficient, feeling that there is now no need of so great self-denial and diligence, such hard and disagreeable labor, as the leaders in this message experienced; that times have changed; and that since there is now more means in the cause of God, it is not necessary for them to place themselves in such try-

(Continued on page 29)



Understanding your Bible

Elder's Digest explains the Bible.

John 3:13

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven . . ."

The subject of conversation between Christ and Nicodemus centered in the mysteries of the Holy Spirit and the new birth. Nicodemus professed ignorance concerning the subject of conversion, and Jesus reacted with surprise. Then He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" John 3:12, 13.

In other words, Nicodemus would have a harder time accepting Christ's words about heavenly things because no man had even been there to come back and report on it. Jesus alone had come from there to testify about those heavenly things, and Nicodemus would have to accept it purely by faith. The question was: Who is qualified to testify of those spiritual, heavenly truths? Jesus said, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things. And no man hath ascended up to heaven."

Throughout the chapter we are pointed back to the point of His own authority and credentials as a truthful witness of heavenly truth. "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for

God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" John 3:31-34.

Jesus assured Nicodemus that He was a reliable and true witness of the truth because He came down from heaven with the Father's words. No man could make such a claim; therefore a man could only speak of earthly things. Some have used these verses to support a theory that no one has been, or ever will go to heaven. This could not be true because of texts to the contrary. The saints will certainly be there for 1,000 years before the Holy City descends to this earth. Here's the evidence:

1. John 13:36-14:3. Here Jesus promised Peter that, afterward, he would follow Him where He was going. Then Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." All the saints will follow Jesus to that place in the Father's house, when He comes the second time.
2. Matthew 5:12. Jesus promised a reward "in heaven" to those who were persecuted for His sake.
3. 1 Peter 1:4. Peter spoke of the incorruptible inheritance "reserved in heaven for you."
4. Revelation 19:1. The Revelator "heard a great voice of much people in heaven." This group of people in heaven is later identified as the bride of Christ, which is the church (v. 7, 8).
5. Revelation 4:1-2, and 5:1, 9. These verses clearly describe a multitude in heaven that has been redeemed from the earth.

John 5:24

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

The Christian receives everlasting life as a gift

when he accepts Jesus. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

Are these verses talking about temporal life or eternal life? Does accepting Christ save us from the first death or the second death? The answer is obvious. Jesus said, "He that . . . believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and . . . is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Please note that this death had to be the second death. Receiving everlasting life did not take away the first death—only the second. Although Jesus had eternal life (John 5:26), He still suffered the first death. Paul said "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). This is true of good or bad, saved or lost.

Please note that the eternal life received when we accept Christ does not save us from the first death, but only from the second. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:11). Only the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8). Because the Christian has life through the Son he will never die—the second death cannot touch him and he will live for eternity. Dying the first death will not take away that promise of life without end, which is the gift of God.

John 7:39

"But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

This does not mean that the Holy Spirit had not operated before Pentecost, but only that He had not been manifested in His fullness. Only after Jesus was glorified (ascended) were the assembled, praying, waiting disciples to receive the Holy Spirit according to the promise (Acts 2: 1-4). The Holy Spirit had been manifested at the creation (Genesis 1:2) and just before the flood (Gen. 6:3). David prayed, "Take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). The Scriptures record also that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14). But only after tarrying at Pentecost did the disciples receive the promised blessing of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, time appointed by Christ.

(Continued from page 27)

God has work for you to do

ing circumstances as many were called to meet in the rise of the message.

But were there the same diligence and self-sacrifice manifest at the present stage of the work as at its beginning, we should see a hundred times more than is now accomplished.²⁰

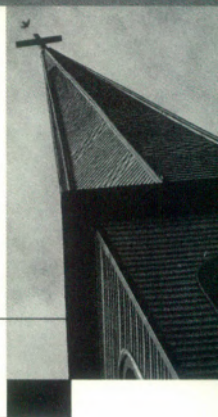
Our profession is an exalted one. As Sabbath-keeping Adventists we profess to obey all God's commandments and to be looking for the coming of our Redeemer. A most solemn message of warning has been entrusted to God's faithful few. We should show by our words and works that we recognize the great responsibility laid upon us. Our light should shine so clearly that others can see that we glorify the Father in our daily lives; that we are connected with heaven and are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that when He shall appear in power and great glory, we shall be like Him.²¹



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- (1) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 117.
 - (2) *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 16.
 - (3) *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 69.
 - (4) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.
 - (5) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 30.
 - (6) *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 438.
 - (7) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 23.
 - (8) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 387.
 - (9) *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 433.
 - (10) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 30, 31.
 - (11) *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 18.
 - (12) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 394.
 - (13) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 128, 129.
 - (14) *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 63.
 - (15) *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 429.
 - (16) *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 244, 245.
 - (17) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 38, 39.
 - (18) *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 388.
 - (19) *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 127.
 - (20) *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 417-419.
 - (21) *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 16.



James A. Cress



What shall I preach

Every minister's recurring question is "what shall I preach?" I hope you are asking earlier than the evening before your sermon. Friday night specials are as deadly as a handgun to your church.

Our approaching Year of World Evangelism encourages every congregation to plan special outreach activities. What a harvest will result from uniting in concentrated soulwinning efforts!

Also consider the evangelistic potential of your regularly-scheduled services. The times when your members already come together provide excellent opportunity to preach with the purpose of expanding the numbers and deepening the spirituality of your members.

Now is the time to plan your preaching for an entire year. Heaven will bless your planning process and the Holy Spirit will awaken you to deeply spiritual facets of the themes you intend to proclaim. Of course, God cannot bless you with advance insight if you have not planned. How would you even comprehend God's voice if you are unaware of what you expect to preach?

So what shall I preach? Preach Jesus!

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers" (*Gospel Workers*, page 315).

Preach Jesus as Heavenly Seeker who came for the specific purpose of redeeming lost humanity.

Portray Jesus emptying Himself in order to live among us—God with us! Make the gospel simple. "I deserved to die, Jesus took my place."

Preach Jesus as incarnate Word. Show how His life and His words give power. Build confidence in the authority of Scriptures and the transforming power of spiritual communion through study and prayer.

Preach Jesus as Creator. Increase faith by pointing to the choice of belief in a literal six-day creation. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

Preach Jesus as Conqueror. Just as He made full atonement for our sins at the cross, Jesus came forth from the tomb with glorious victory over death and the grave. In the great controversy between good and evil, the ultimate triumph of God's love is assured.

Preach Jesus as Compassionate High Priest. Just as He secured our salvation at Calvary, Jesus applies the benefits of His redemption through His powerful ministry of intercession on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary.

Preach Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath. The seventh-day sabbath will become hollow and empty ritual apart from a dynamic relationship with the lovely Lord of the Lords Day. Demonstrate the beauty of a sanctuary in time devoted to rest, worship, and fellowship.

Preach Jesus as Desire of Nations. Although peace on earth is unlikely to occur until His kingdom is established, Jesus can reign as Prince of Peace in our hearts to establish love for neighbors, empathy for strangers, justice for the disenfranchised, and to eliminate racism, abuse, violence,

and class or gender discrimination among His believers.

Preach Jesus as Empowering Lord. Salvation by grace alone through faith in His marvelous gift leads believers to follow Jesus own example of good works. Obedience is never the method, but always the result of a saving relationship. All His biddings are enablings and through Christs strength we can do all things.

Preach Jesus as Exemplary Model. Do you want to raise the standards? Lift up Jesus. Avoid behavioral check lists and advocate Jesus own wholistic pattern. Portray Jesus as the founder of marriage, the friend of children, and the partner who shapes families for eternity. Show how Jesus gives abundant life now and invite the respose of faithful use of time, talents, treasure, and testimony.

Preach Jesus as Judge. Good news in the judg-

ment shows Jesus as our judge, our defense advocate, and our brother as He stands for His people. Justified, sanctified, and glorified by Jesus. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

Preach Jesus as Enabling Head of His Church. God has raised a prophetic people to accomplish His purpose. He provides His churchs needs through the Holy Spirits gifts so that we lack no good thing to fulfill His great commission.

Preach Jesus as Coming King. Keep the blessed hope alive in the minds of your members. Develop joyous anticipation of resurrection reunion and focus on the promises of His near return.

When you have exhausted these topics, then ask the question again. What shall I preach. The answer will remain the same. Preach Jesus! **E**

(Continued from page 23)

Don't forget the children

Sabbath, with parents present, of course. Make special mention of the part the children have in the dinner, and highlight their importance to the church.

5. In smaller churches it works well to have an afternoon with the pastor (usually an hour long). The children come to the church (a Sabbath afternoon works well), and the pastor, with the help of his lay people, participates in a program including crafts, short Bible stories, acted out by children, songs, and perhaps a continued story told by the pastor. Children can be encouraged to invite friends. Many a neighbor has been won to Christ through the influence of a child working with his children.

Now, let me tell you a story I have told the children of my church. It is a lesson my mother emphasized when I was just a lad. I usually tell it two or three weeks before the nominating committee begins its work. Mother taught me that whenever I was asked to do something, I should say, "I'll be glad to." She even taught me how to sound enthusiastic about it. "Now, Lloyd," she would say, "you have not been given an abundance of talents, perhaps, but what God has given you He wants you to use to His glory. Whenever you are asked to participate in meetings to sing, to give the mission story, or to hold an office in

Sabbath school don't make people beg and urge you. Just say, 'I'll be glad to!'"

In telling the story I get the children to sing out several times, "I'll be glad to!" Parents are not deaf. In every church I pastor, it was only a little while before adults were responding to a request for their services with a resounding "I'll be glad to!" Now, what do you say about expanding your ministry to include the children? **E**

1. Quoted in Theo' F. Frech, *The Junior Leader's Handbook* (L. H. Higley, publisher, 1910).
2. Quoted in *Lessons for Child Evangelism Institutes* (General Conference Sabbath School Department), p. 8.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1954), p. 21.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 7 Lavern G. Franzen, *Smile! God Loves You* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), preface.

Lloyd Wyman was Secretary of the Ministerial Association at the Pacific Union Conference when he wrote this article.

Great Resources for Elders

2

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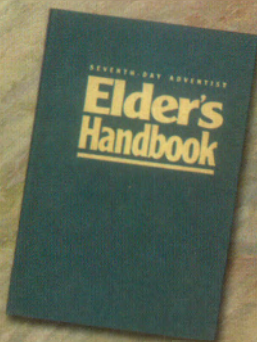
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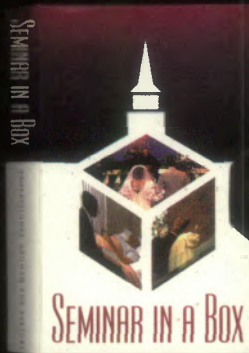
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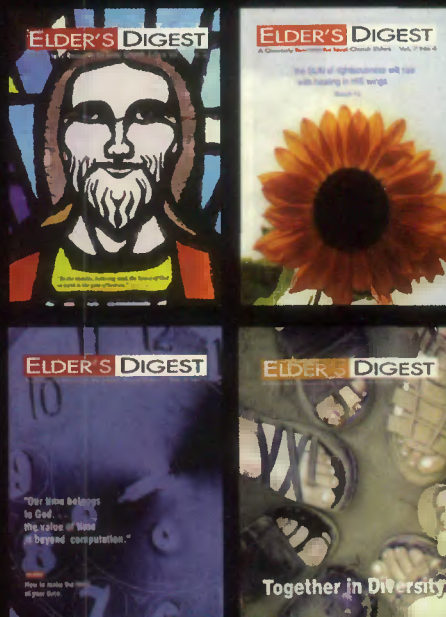
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