

quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2010

ELDER'S DIGEST

A photograph of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, both wearing white, flowing robes. The hands are positioned with the index fingers pointing upwards, towards the top of the frame. The background is a soft, warm, golden light, suggesting a divine or heavenly atmosphere. The hands appear to be emerging from the robes, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fabric and the skin of the hands.

TRINITY IN THE BIBLE

WORSHIPPING JESUS—THE “ETERNALLY BLESSED GOD!”

FEATURES

- 6 MY TESTIMONY TO GOD’S LOVE
- 8 CELEBRATING PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY
- 9 SOME PROBLEMS WITH “ADVENTIST” FUTURISM
- 10 IS MY BOOKMARK MOVING?
- 12 SHARING THE LOAD AND THE BLESSINGS
- 21 FROM WOMAN TO WOMAN: THINK BEFORE ACTING
- 22 TRINITY IN THE BIBLE – WORSHIPPING JESUS— THE “ETERNALLY BLESSED GOD!” PART 1
- 28 HOW LEADERS CAN ENCOURAGE PASTORS
- 31 THE BEST-KEPT SECRET IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH



- EDITORIAL 3
- NEWS 4
- SERMONS 15
- QUESTION & ANSWER 20
- HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS 27
- THE ART OF SPEECH 30

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A NEW YEAR'S VISION

The approach of the new year is an excellent time to envision what you want your church to accomplish in the next 12 months. It is important for you as a leader to think through your vision for your church in 2011, and it's up to you to create—and share—that vision. As Solomon wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). Don't let your congregation perish because there is no clear vision for 2011!

Creating an inspiring vision for yourself and your church members takes time and thought. Here are a few tips to help you start the process.

Ask a question. "What went well in 2010?" It is easier to build your vision if you concentrate on accomplishments and on things that worked well. Start by writing down the top 10 things that went well for your church in 2010. After you have identified these 10 things, look at each item and ask yourself, "What would I have done differently?" When looking at the past, it is best to focus on what could be done differently, not on what went wrong. There is probably plenty that went wrong, but focus on what you can change to do things right. Ellen G. White reminds us, "If in the old year we have made failures, let us commence the new by rectifying these errors as far as we can. If the old year has borne into eternity a spotted record of opportunities neglected and privileges slighted, let us see that that of the new year is free from these blemishes" (*The Signs of the Times*, January 1, 1885).

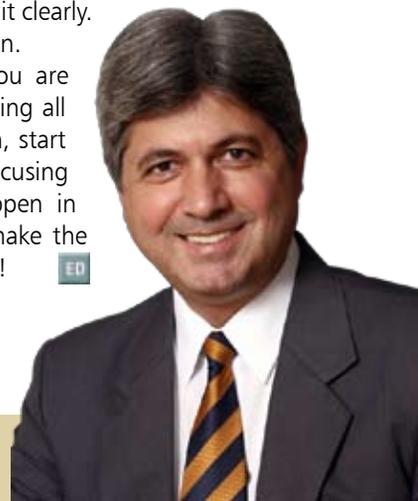
Now you have at least 10 things that you hope to improve on in 2011. Maybe there are more than 10 things on your list! Sometimes it's good to have a longer list because as you pare it down, only the most important things stay on the list.

Prioritize. This step is so important that it bears repeating. Prioritize! What are the most important items on the list? Which will make the biggest difference for the congregation? For the young people? For your community? Put those items at the top of your list. Don't waste time and energy on minor tasks. Minor tasks may be easier to accomplish than the important items, and doing lots of little things may make you feel good, but it will prevent your making 2011 a year of significance and genuine spiritual growth.

Plan. Once you have made your list, sketch out a general plan to share with other leaders in your church. Don't fill in every detail; later you will encourage others to help decide the details so that they take ownership of the activities and goals.

Take action. Don't hesitate. What needs to be done first? Gather helpers and begin—one step at a time, one day at a time. Think of it as laying a brick foundation. Strong foundations are not built all at once. Your year-end vision will help you build a strong foundation. To reach your goals by year's end, visualize your foundation as it will look in 30 days, 90 days, 180 days, and so on. Picture it clearly. Now get busy and take action.

If, at this year's end, you are looking back and remembering all that you did not accomplish, start the new year off right by focusing on what you want to happen in 2011. Use these steps to make the new year your best year ever!



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



Jerry N. Page was elected to serve as the secretary of the Adventist Church's Ministerial Association at the church's General Conference Session in Atlanta on July 1. His wife, Janet, will serve as leader of the denomination's Shepherdess International program.

Ted Wilson, with wife Nancy, on the platform following his election as Adventist Church president.



Josef Kissinger / Adventist News Network

G.T. Ng, with wife Ivy, speaks after his election as secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during its World Session in Atlanta.



Gerry Chudleigh / Adventist News Network

Ted N. C. Wilson, a vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the son of a former church president, was elected to serve as president of the 16.3 million-member global Protestant denomination.

Wilson was appointed by the church's 246-member Nominating Committee and confirmed by the General Conference Session delegation, which is an international body of 2,410 appointed members and the highest governing body in the church. He replaces Jan Paulsen, who has served as president since 1999.

"This is not just an organization, this is not just another denomination. This is God's remnant church," Wilson said in an address to delegates after his appointment.

"I do not know everything, but I shall seek wisdom from counselors and from the Bible and from the Spirit of Prophecy," he said, referring to the writings of church co-founder Ellen White.

"The Spirit of Prophecy is one of the great gifts God has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Wilson said. "It applies to the past and to the future. And, we are going home soon."

Wilson asked that church members ask for God's guidance "and pray that the Holy Spirit would bring us revival and reformation."

Ng, a native of Singapore, began his ministry in war-torn Cambodia in the 1970s where he and his wife fled before the capital city Phnom Penh was taken by the Khmer Rouge political party. He later worked in various positions in Asia, including that of professor, and eventually received a call to the church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he serves as the secretariat liaison between the GC and three of the church's 13 world regions. He replaces Matthew Bediako, who was elected in 2000.

Robert Lemon, with his wife Sherry, speaks after he was elected treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists during the world session in Atlanta.





Robert East / Adventist News Network

Jerry N. Page, president of the church's Central California Conference, became Ministerial Association secretary by unanimous vote.

The Ministerial Association provides resources, training and support for more than 16,000 credentialed pastors around the world. It also provides support for pastors' spouses under the Shepherdess International program, which will now be coordinated by Page's wife, Janet.

Page fills the position left vacant by James A. Cress, who died in November, 2009.

World church Treasurer Bob Lemon was re-elected to another five-year term. Lemon, treasurer since 2002, said his appointment "was a real privilege and an honor" to work with treasury staff from around the world. He asked that delegates pray for every Adventist member and worker around the globe.

In brief remarks, he also said, "We need to change the soft currency of this world into the hard currency of eternity." The biggest challenge facing the church over the next five years, Lemon said in a brief interview after his appointment, is the need to increase involvement among young people.

ANN World News Bulletin is a review of news issued by the Communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters and released as part of the service of Adventist News Network.



Gerry Chudleigh / Adventist News Network

NEWS REPORT FROM THE ELDER'S DIGEST BOOTH

"Please take one . . . or two . . . or three . . ." the sign at our booth read. To our utter amazement, "one, two or three" turned into a total distribution of all 31,800 *Elder's Digest* magazines at the 2010 GC Session in Atlanta. We saw the Lord's hand at work as elders, pastors and other church leaders stopped by and shared the blessings of having such a magazine available to them. Over the past five years, our circulation has grown from 5,000 copies to over 100,000 extending to all 13 divisions. Each quarter, the magazine is translated into over 10 languages, making a total of 200,000 copies. The enthusiasm at our booth was phenomenal! The Holy Spirit's presence was evident as individuals stopped by to chat, pray and share personal experiences as leaders. Our prayer is that this magazine continues to serve our churches as an innovative resource and tool for all church leaders. Please refer to our website at www.eldersdigest.com to subscribe, as well as to view our archives. Also, feel free to follow us on Facebook and Twitter. A personal word of appreciation to all those who stopped by our booth. It is my prayer that you continue to be blessed through this magazine. Now, pray, read, and share with one . . . or two . . . or three . . .

-Ricardo Bacchus is the production assistant of the *Elder's Digest* magazine.



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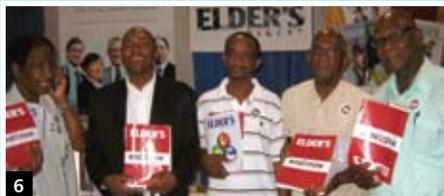
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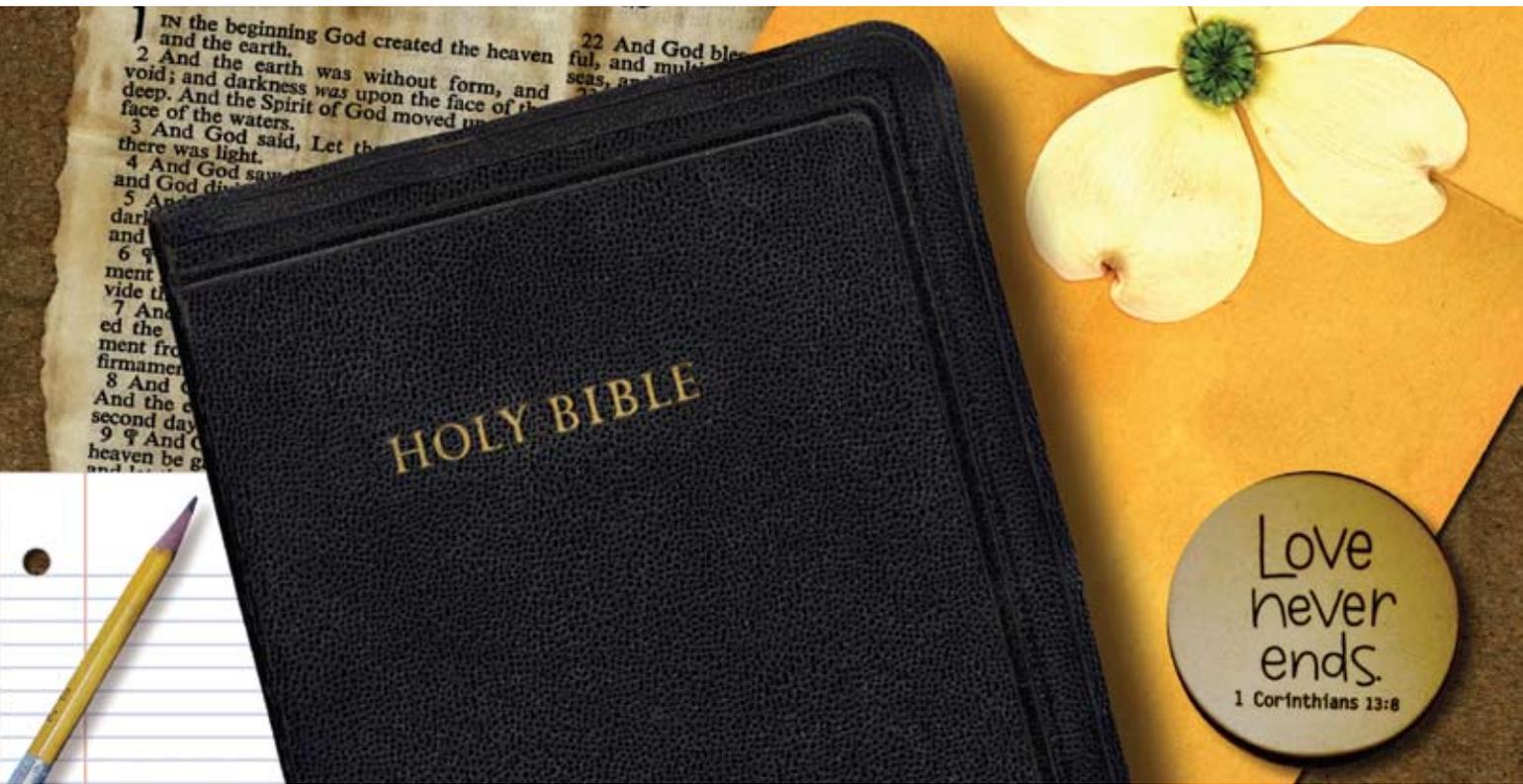


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1. Elder Richard Black, a pastor from the Zimbabwe Conference, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, taking back copies for his 15 elders. 2. A Junior Deacon, excited about the idea of becoming an elder someday, was ready to pose with his magazines. 3. Elder Daryl Joshua, from India, Southern Asia Division, eager to get Jonas Arrais' signature, the author of 'A Postive Church in a Negative World.' 4. The Elder's Digest booth team: (left to right) Gerald Bacchus, Ricardo Bacchus, Jonas Arrais 5. The Figueroas' family of elders, Miami Springs SDA Church, Florida Conference. 6. Elders from the Beulah SDA Church, Greater New York Conference, avid readers of the magazine. 7. The last magazine passed out comprising a total of 31,800 copies. All smiles!



MY TESTIMONY TO GOD'S LOVE

It started and ended with love. I was born in Mumbai, India, to a Zoroastrian couple. Zoroastrians are the original inhabitants of Persia (now Iran), descendents of such powerful and mighty kings as Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes.

When my mother was carrying me, I was very dear and special to her. Because of her past childbirth problems, she did not want to lose me. But after I was born, my mother developed complications in the hospital and passed away a few weeks later. So my sister and I were raised by our father and grandmother. My father wanted the best for us, and he worked two jobs to provide for us and give us the best education.

It was no coincidence that my father, who was very open-minded and respectful of all religions, sent me to a missionary school in Mumbai. He wanted me to have an excellent education.

In His infinite wisdom, God had a plan for me. At an early age, I was introduced to the Lord. Students at the missionary school attended chapel services every day and had daily prayers. Like most kids, I was very inquisitive. Often I came home from school with questions about Jesus, which my father

could not answer to my satisfaction. So one day, he allowed my sister and me to visit a church. Learning about Jesus at school and attending church now and then were the first pieces in my life's puzzle.

After graduating from high school, I went to college with unanswered questions. I wondered about life's true purpose. There had to be something more than growing up, getting an education, finding a job, getting married, having children, growing old, and dying.

Slowly but surely the Lord was leading me to Him. He was preparing me, mentally and spiritually, for the plan He had for my life. My father had done an exceptional job of teaching me moral values and giving me a good upbringing, and God did the rest; He filled my heart with an extra portion of love and compassion for all. The love which my mother was not there to give was given to me by the Lord.

After I graduated from college, I was caught up in the routine of life and something was missing. There was an emptiness in my heart, and I turned to worldly amusements to fill that void. But these pleasures were short-lived, and the questions and emptiness returned. I was working at an airport and

was clueless about the plan God had for me. I could never have imagined that He would send someone halfway around the world to Mumbai to become a special person in my life or that that person would bring me to Him.

One morning while I was working at the lost-luggage counter, I noticed a young lady walking toward me. She had arrived from Dallas and the airline had lost her luggage. She asked me to help her find it. I tried to locate her suitcase but could not. In the process, we introduced ourselves, and I learned that her name was Margaret. While she spent a few days in Mumbai, we got better acquainted. I was very interested in her, and when my father met her, I was worried that he would be upset since Margaret was from a different religion. But he told me, "Son, do what your heart tells you."

But things did not go smoothly. Satan knew where this was leading, and he put different obstacles in the way of our relationship. For example, Margaret's parents objected because I was a Zoroastrian and she was a Seventh-day Adventist. Our relationship seemed nearly impossible, but with God, all things are possible. After a few years, and with hesitant approval from her parents, Margaret and I were married in Dallas. I started going to church with Margaret and her family, but I was still a Zoroastrian. I struggled to give up my religious beliefs, but I felt I should find out for myself what was right for me, and I prayed about it. The outcome was astonishing. First, the Lord gave me the desire to read His Word, and understanding followed. I began to read the Bible and understand the scriptures better through Sabbath School classes. The Lord was slowly tugging at my heart, inviting me to come to Him. I was slow in responding to His calling, as Satan tried his best to take me away from Him.

As time went on, Margaret and I had children, and I wanted to be a good example to them. God used my children to show His love for me.

Early one morning, my son had a severe asthma attack and was gasping for breath. Knowing that the situation was life-threatening, we raced to the hospital, praying that the Lord would save our son's life. We spent all day and night at the hospital. The next morning, the nurse brought us the good news

that our son was out of danger. The Lord was there for us! He performed a miracle to help our son get well.

A few years later, our daughter, who was only a few months old, could not keep any food down; the pediatrician called it an intolerance to baby formula. We changed her formula, but the problem continued. As our daughter's health deteriorated, our worry grew. Margaret and I both prayed, and it occurred to us to take our little girl to Children's Medical Hospital. A specialist there correctly diagnosed the problem. The Lord came through for us a second time, and our prayers were answered as our daughter started to improve.

These miracles showed me that the Lord was good and that His love endures. When Satan tried to frustrate us with problems, the Lord was on our side. I began to understand God's endless love and care for us. Opening my heart, I made a commitment to serve Him, fulfill His will, and share His love and goodness with everyone. Soon I was baptized, and ever since that time I have accepted the Lord's calling. I have even been called the "minute man" of my church because I am always happy to fill in for those who are unable to fulfill their platform duties.

If the Lord, through a miracle, can change a non-believer like me into a believer, surely He can perform the same miracle in your life and in the lives of those around you. As church elders, we have been entrusted to invite others to accept Him as Lord and Savior, to assure them that all they need to do is open their hearts to Him, surrender all to Him, rely on Him, trust Him, and let Him take control of their lives.

Elders, surely the Lord has a plan for each one of us. He uses us to complete His unfinished work and to spread the gospel to our families, neighbors, and communities. When we show our willingness to accept His calling, He blesses our efforts and takes us to the next level. When we accept His call, He reveals His plan and helps us fulfill it.

It started and ended with love. Correction: God's love never ends—it continues throughout eternity. 

Sharukh Cooper is head elder of the Dallas First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Dallas, Texas, USA.

“
Opening my
heart, I made a
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CELEBRATING PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY

October has been designated as Pastor Appreciation Month, and on many Seventh-day Adventist calendars, the fourth Sabbath in October is Pastor Appreciation Day. This is a wonderful time to let pastors know, in various ways, how much their spiritual guidance, encouragement, and leadership mean to the congregation.

A possible theme for the day could be “Preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2), with a focus on the central role of pastors. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you,” and we are encouraged to remember our pastors both in prayer and with our appreciation.

Pastor Appreciation Day provides an opportunity to express gratitude to the pastor; however, the sermon itself should not focus on your pastor because the purpose of the sermon is to nourish the members and draw them to God. Words of appreciation to the pastor and the pastor’s family could be expressed during the announcement period or between Sabbath School and the church service; this could also be done during a potluck meal after the service, if that is practical for your congregation. A special presentation could be made during a youth meeting, where an interview with the pastoral family would be very appropriate, or the young people could plan a program around the theme of gratitude toward the pastor.

There are many ways that Pastor Appreciation Day can be used to let pastors know how much they are valued and appreciated. But perhaps it is even more important to look for ways to thank, encourage, and support pastors throughout the year.

Here are just a few suggestions; no doubt your congregation can think of many more!

1. *Express gratitude for the pastor’s sermons.* Since preaching God’s Word is one of the pastor’s most important responsibilities, show your gratitude through words of sincere appreciation.

2. *Support the pastor in unexpected ways.* Offer to help when your help is not expected, perhaps by making hospital visits, painting the Cradle Roll room (or the pastor’s kitchen), or even providing babysitting services so the pastoral couple can enjoy an evening out.



3. *Celebrate the pastor’s birthday.* A small gift or a party might be welcomed by the pastor and enjoyed by the members.

4. *Recognize the pastor’s accomplishments.* Be the first to appreciate the good things your pastor is doing for the church, district, and community, and let others know about them.

5. *Organize a prayer team to pray for your pastor.* Encourage the church to pray publicly and privately for the pastoral family and staff.

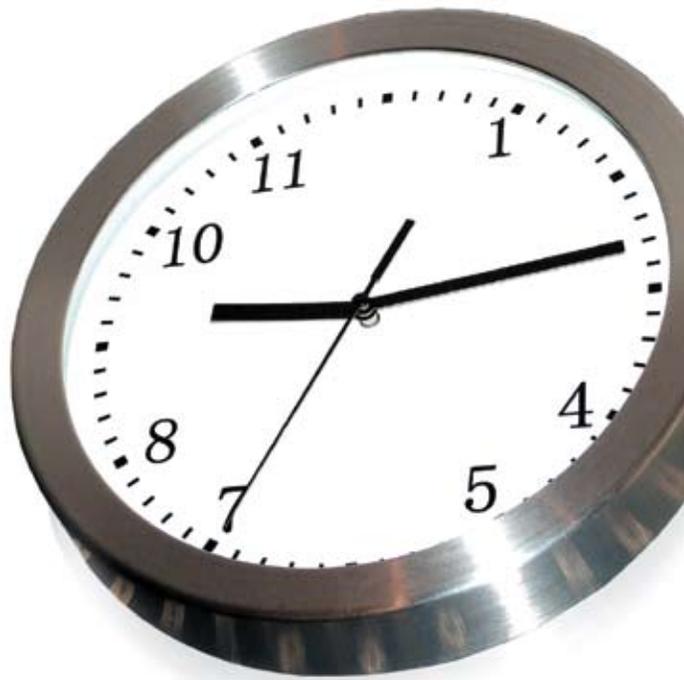
6. *Always speak well of your pastor.* Be a strong supporter and do your part to squelch gossip and criticism.

If your church doesn’t already celebrate Pastor Appreciation Day, why not start this year? As an elder, you may be the one to introduce the idea, but this does not mean you must do everything by yourself. Invite several members to work together to plan and implement activities that are appropriate for your congregation. Remember, everyone thrives on appreciation, including pastors and their families.



General Conference Ministerial Association

SOME PROBLEMS WITH “ADVENTIST” FUTURISM



There is among some Adventists an obsession with prophetic speculation. The present time of relative peace and waiting is disturbing to them, leading them to reinterpret apocalyptic prophecy along futurist lines. In the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, they find predictions related to some of the contemporary nations of the Middle East and even identify prominent political and religious leaders as specific fulfillments of prophecy. In doing so they commit two errors about which Ellen G. White has alerted us.

1. **Misapplication of Prophecy.** By misapplying biblical prophecy they reach wrong conclusions. How does this happen? She explains: “Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined.”¹ This statement rejects the introduction of futurism into Adventist prophetic interpretation, through the reapplication of prophecies, and makes two points about those who would try to do so. First, they have forgotten that the adversary is constantly at work upon human minds. Therefore Bible students should be wary of personal interpretations of prophecy. Second, they ignore the Lord’s past leading of His people in the interpretation of prophecy. They detach themselves from the rest of the body of Christ by coming up with their own personal interpretation of biblical prophecies.²

2. **Emotional Excitement.** A false sense of excitement will damage the image and message of the church. There are some who, when studying not only prophecy but the Bible more generally, “have a burning desire to get out something new and strange to

present to the flock of God. The rebuke of God is upon all such teachers.”³ When this becomes known outside the church its reputation is damaged. Ellen G. White wrote, “It is the desire and plan of Satan to bring in among us those who will go to great extremes—people of narrow minds, who are critical and sharp, and very tenacious in holding their own conceptions of what the truth means Through the work of a few of this class of persons, the whole body of Sabbath keepers will be designated as bigoted, pharisaical, and fanatical. The work of the truth, because of these workers, will be thought to be unworthy of notice.”⁴ When it comes to eschatology the Scripture provides only an outline of eschatological events; it is dangerous to try to fill in every gap. Our eschatology should be placed within the soteriology of the New Testament, emphasizing hope as its primary content. ED

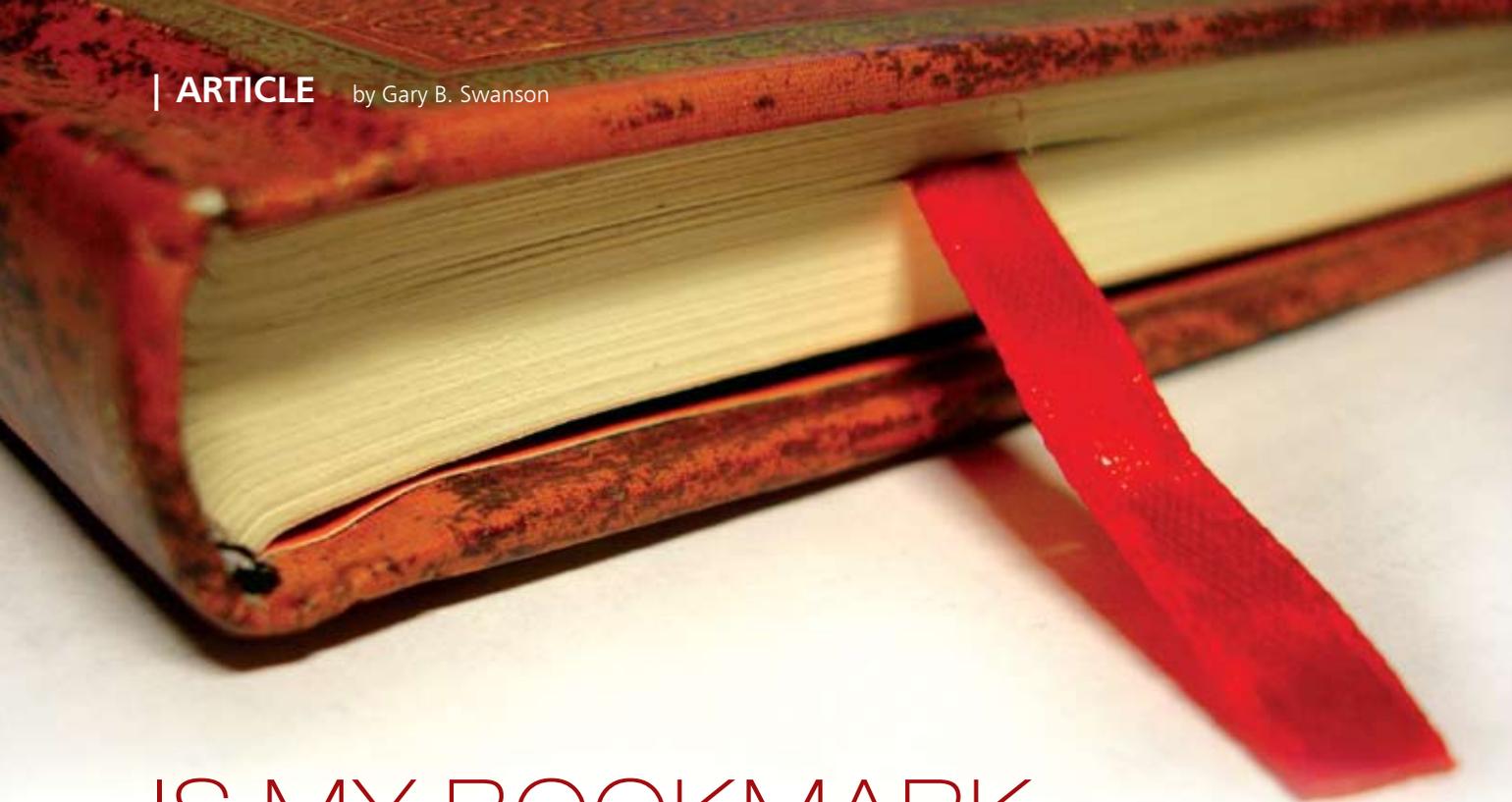
Ángel Manuel Rodríguez is director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. This article comes from *Reflections*, the BRI Newsletter, Number 30, April 2010. Reprinted with permission.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, 195.

² Ellen G. White comments: “It is true that there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled. But very erroneous work has been done again and again, and will continue to be done by those who seek to find new light in the prophecies, and who begin by turning away from the light that God has already given But the Lord does not lay upon those who have not had an experience in His work the burden of making a new exposition of those prophecies which He has, by His Holy Spirit, moved upon His chosen servants to explain” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 15).

³ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, 61.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry*, 269.



IS MY BOOKMARK *moving?*

In many areas of the world today, owning a Bible is a freedom that is taken for granted. In the past, however, although God's people have treasured His Word, they have not always had access to the Scriptures as they may have wished.

The Tyndale Bible was the first English New Testament to be printed. In 1526, the bishop of London ordered that anyone in England owning a copy of the Tyndale Bible (which was printed in Europe) would be excommunicated from the church. An English merchant named Packington, who had a large number of Tyndale Bibles in stock, sold them all to the bishop so they could be burned. This certainly may have seemed like a great setback for God's work, but Packington gave all the money he'd made from that sale to Tyndale, who used it to print even more Bibles.

Today too many Christians—even Seventh-day Adventists, perhaps—let the Bible sit untouched for days, weeks, or months at a time; it just seems that there is no time in their busy lives to sit down and read the Bible as they should. Or, when they do have time to read it, they are either too tired or too distracted to give it serious attention.

Robert Boardman, a long-time country leader for the Navigators, offers four reasons for what he calls "the neglected exercise [of Bible study]":

Entertainment media. Television and the Internet consume a great deal of time. Boardman says that the excuse rings hollow when someone who spends 40 hours a week with the media claims he doesn't have time to read Scripture.

Christian media. Boardman cites the proliferation of books, magazines, tapes, and seminars (not to mention blogs, podcasts, and social media that didn't even exist at the time of Boardman's article back in prehistoric 1989) that take up so much of our time that should be set aside for the development of spiritual disciplines.

Emotionalism. Though emotion has a valid role in the Christian life, it isn't the proper basis for one's faith. Yet emotionalism can sometimes become a substitute for the discipline of Bible study.

A "shortcut" mentality. "The microwave method has permeated our churches, youth groups, and Christian organizations," Boardman says. "Pop it in, set the timer, and out it comes in a few seconds. If Bible reading can be tedious and

time consuming, our culture tells us it must not be right.”¹

Certainly there are many other personal and societal influences—good and bad—that could be added to these four. But at the end of the day—metaphorically and literally—serious Bible study gets scant attention. Occasionally, even in Sabbath School seminars, one hears the complaint that the *Adult Bible Study Guide* expects the reading of *too much* Scripture. Seriously!

Though his life became somewhat checkered, Hall of Fame running back Barry Sanders, an American football player, was known early in his career as a Christian who lived his religion. When he received a \$25-million bonus for signing to play his rookie year with the Detroit Lions, he returned a 10-percent tithe to his home church back in Kansas.

Barry Sanders was also known for the importance he placed on daily Bible study. During the 1989 football season, Barry often dropped into the office of his head coach, Wayne Fontes. Fontes always kept a Bible on his desk, and Barry would suggest Scripture verses that he thought would encourage his coach.

After a few months, Barry gently chided Coach Fontes: “You haven’t been reading your Bible.”

“How do you know I haven’t been reading my Bible?” Fontes asked.

Barry replied, “Your bookmark hasn’t moved since August.”

God’s Word was given to us as a guide to life. It offers the greatest of wisdom. “Understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.”² With all the distracting influences that permeate our culture, it is difficult to maintain singleness of purpose. But it doesn’t make sense to claim that we’re Christians if we don’t even bother to read God’s Word—if our bookmarks don’t move.



¹ Robert Boardman, “The Neglected Exercise,” in *Discipleship Journal*, Issue 49, January/February 1989, CD-ROM.

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 599.

Gary B. Swanson is Associate Director of the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



As an elder, do you ever feel stressed? Quite often, I have had to pray for the sick while I myself was sick. I have comforted the bereaved while my own family was grieving. I have prayed for unemployed church members while one of my own family members was desperately looking for a job, and so on. From time to time, we all get stressed. But how should we deal with stress?

Because elders have leadership roles in their churches, how they deal with stress may have a ripple effect in their congregations. For that reason, it is important for elders to be exemplary in how they handle stress. A Christian writer wrote, “For most Christians, stress boils down to the idea—lack of trust in God.” David said, “Lord, you are all I need. You are my inheritance and my future” (Ps. 16:5, Clear Word).

Dear Elder, how do you deal with challenging moments? How is your trust in God in times of trouble? May God help us as elders to completely trust in Him in all circumstances, thereby encouraging our congregations to also trust the Lord in stressful times.

Misheck Ndebele has been an elder in the Orange Grove Seventh-day Adventist Church in Johannesburg, South Africa for the past seven years.

BIO GRAPHY



MARTHA INGGAWATI

Martha Inggawati has been a local church elder at the Pasaruan Church in the East Java Conference of the West Indonesia Union Mission (SSD) for the past 16 years. She is the only church elder in a congregation of 108. She has three adult children and has been widowed since 2004. When asked how she is able to keep serving her church, she responds, “Though there are many challenges in being an elder, I am very happy to serve God and work for Him in various capacities. I look forward, with anticipation, when elders can be added to help the church. In the meantime, the church members fully support me and my plan is to serve God until the day He comes.”



Sharing the load and the blessings

"I'm tired of being an elder," said a gentleman, approaching me at a church where I was to present a seminar. "There's too much work to do in my church, and I feel like I'm doing it all by myself. I'm tired."

"How many members does your church have?" I asked.

"Around 300 members."

"It must be really hard to lead such a large church by yourself," I said to him. "Have you ever tried delegating some responsibilities to other members?"

That afternoon I was scheduled to present a seminar on the duties and responsibilities of a church elder. I hoped to give some pointers that would help my new friend learn ways to delegate, to share responsibility—and as a result, to help other members develop their talents.

Unfortunately, in some churches, there are members who tackle too many responsibilities and become exhausted because they do not know how to share the load. Some may even fear that if they delegate responsibility, they may lose their authority or control.

Becoming an effective leader means learning to trust the members, inviting them to help with the many duties involved in creating a vibrant, growing church. It means nurturing them as they develop their skills. And it means giving them the chance to fulfill their tasks. When you encourage member participation and involvement in church activities, members feel happier and more valued. And the elder will not be a one-person drone, but a leader.

A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF DELEGATING

Exodus 18:13-26 gives us an example of the need to delegate. Moses is leading the Israelites to Canaan. He has

accepted the task the Lord has given him, but it is a huge challenge, too much for one man. His father-in-law, Jethro, sees that Moses is exhausted and says to him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself." Jethro recognized that when a consecrated leader fails to delegate appropriate responsibility and authority to others, he or she ends up exhausted and frustrated.

Jethro advised Moses to share the responsibility and the decision-making, delegating these tasks to trustworthy individuals. He said, "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you" (verses 21, 22).

Sometimes an elder or other church leader may feel there is no one in the congregation with experience enough to be given responsibility, and he or she uses this as an excuse not to delegate. But we must remember that those to whom Moses delegated authority didn't have experience either. They had never held these positions; they had been slaves and brickmakers. However, in this text, the word "able" does not indicate that the people Moses chose had vast leadership experience. It means that he chose honest, reputable, capable people.

Delegating responsibility to members also means providing them with guidance and training. Jethro told Moses, "And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws,

and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do" (verse 20). When we delegate authority and responsibility, we assume the commitment to train. This is important in the development of new leaders.

ADVANTAGES OF DELEGATING

There are many advantages to delegating responsibility.

Delegating facilitates the pastor or elder's job. Just as with Moses, today's Christian leaders may burn out if they attempt to carry the entire load of church responsibilities. Delegating frees leaders, giving them time and energy to fulfill their major obligation of spiritual nurture.

Delegating increases productivity. When people are involved in the church, results will be greater and efforts will be more efficient. The church's needs will be better supplied.

Delegating prepares others for leadership. The best way to prepare future leaders is by recruiting members and trusting them with responsibilities appropriate to their gifts and abilities. This gives them the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Delegating reduces stress and increases time. A leader overloaded with church activities will become exhausted and will not be effective in carrying out his

or her responsibilities. Carrying too heavy a load will also crowd out essentials such as personal devotions and family time.

Delegating values people. When we delegate responsibility to someone, we are saying, "I trust you. I know you are capable." Members who accept responsibilities will feel valued and happier.

Delegating increases the member's motivation and commitment to the church. Members receive spiritual benefits when they perform the activities delegated to them. They become more involved with and committed to the church program.

All church leaders can benefit by writing out a list of their responsibilities and then circling in red at least half that can be delegated. Begin now to share the load—and the blessings. Delegating is a win-win-win situation which benefits the leader, the one who receives new responsibility, and the entire congregation. Leading without delegating is not genuine leadership.

During His earthly ministry, Christ chose 12 inexperienced, uneducated men to whom He would delegate the task of sharing the good news of the Gospel. He taught them, and He entrusted them with responsibility. This is an example for Christian leaders to follow. ED

Jonas Arrais is editor of the *Elder's Digest* magazine.

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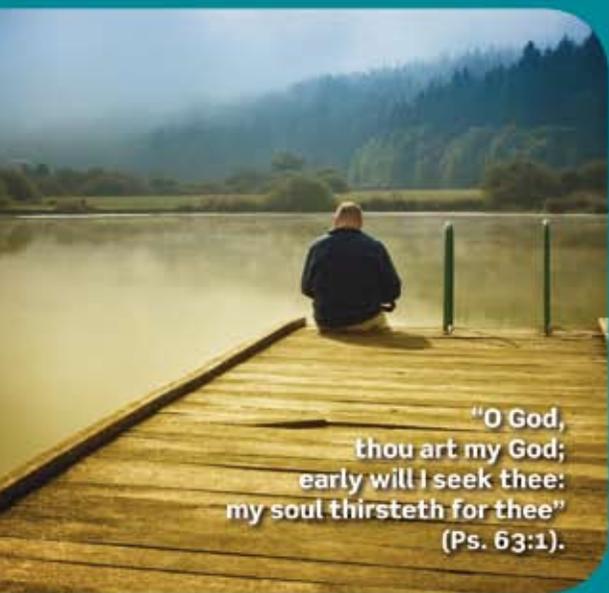
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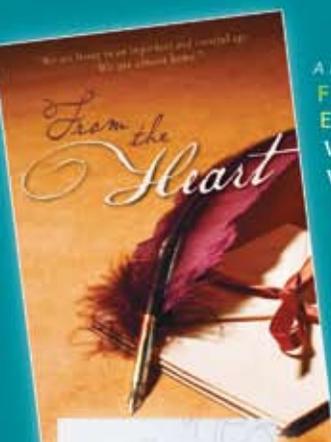
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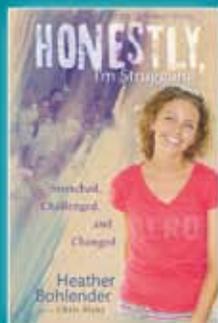
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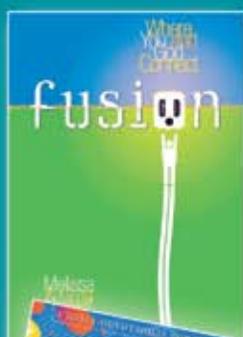
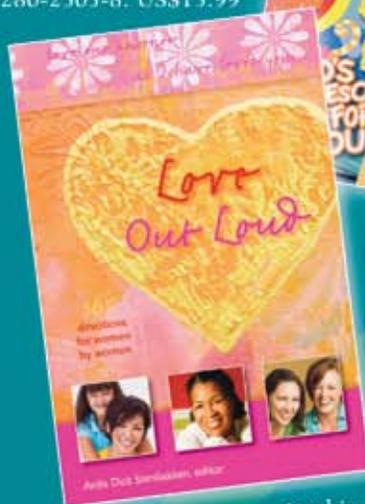
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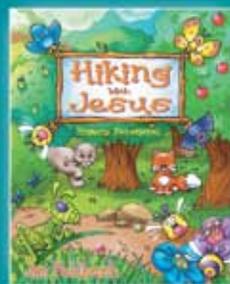
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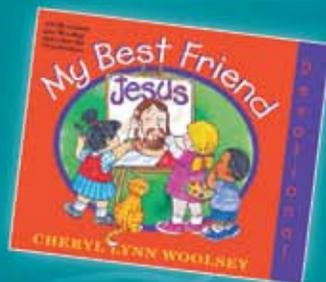
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SABBATH AT CREATION

GENESIS 2:2, 3

Sabbath has a central place in our worship. As Creation's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath reveals that God is the Creator and we are His creatures.

Sabbath had its origins in a sinless world; it is a special gift from God that enables the human race to experience a small taste of heaven here on earth. According to Genesis 2:3, God performed three acts that day to indicate the importance of the Sabbath: He rested, blessed, and sanctified it.

I. SABBATH'S ORIGIN

A. *God rested on the Sabbath.* The verb "rest" (shabat) means to cease labor or activity. Thus God's rest was not the result of exhaustion or fatigue, but an interruption from His previous activities. God rested because it was His intention that people should rest; the Creator set an example that should be followed by human beings.

B. *God blessed the Sabbath.* "The blessing upon Sabbath implied that it was reserved as a special object of divine favor and a day that would bring blessings to His creatures."¹

C. *God sanctified the Sabbath.* To "sanctify" means to make something sacred or holy, separated and destined for sacred use. The Sabbath was set apart to enrich our relationship with God. God blessed and sanctified the seventh day because on that day, He ceased all His work. He blessed and sanctified Sabbath for humanity, not for Himself. It is His presence that brings blessing and sanctification to the Sabbath. God did not set aside or sanctify any other day of the week.

II. THE PURPOSE OF SABBATH

Sabbath is a time to stop and reflect on the fact that God is the Creator of all things and the Supreme source of everything we have and are. Sabbath is a separate time that has been set aside for us to enjoy in a special way our relationship as children of God.

Sabbath reminds us of redemption (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:12-15). When Christ performed miracles on Sabbath, He emphasized the redeeming character of that day.

Keeping the Sabbath holy is a sign of loyalty to God (Exod. 20:8). Sabbath observance will become extremely important in the last days of this earth's



Had the Sabbath always been sacredly observed, there could never have been an atheist or an idolater.



Ellen G. White
Counsel for the Church, 270.

history. When materialistic and atheistic philosophies deny that God is the Creator of all things, Sabbath reminds us that God is the Creator (Rev. 14:6, 7). At the heart of the Ten Commandments, the words "Remember the Sabbath day" are proof of our trust, love, and submission to our Creator.

III. SABBATH OBSERVANCE

How do we keep the Sabbath? The Bible shows us how to keep the Sabbath through principles and orientations that can be applied to each dimension of life. Three important points related to Exodus 20:8-11 should determine our attitude regarding Sabbath observance:

A. "Remember" involves our family, employees, guests, animals, and even our partners.²

B. "Remember" suggests that every seven days we have an appointment of supreme importance with our Creator, the King of the Universe, when we offer Him praise and worship.

C. "Remember" means that, at the beginning of the week, we should plan the commitments and activities of the week so that at sundown on Friday evening, we are ready for the Sabbath's entrance. Sabbath should be remembered every day of the week, and that remembrance involves the entire family.

The prophet Isaiah teaches us that the observance of Sabbath involves more than not working; it includes our words, thoughts, and attitudes (Isa. 58:13, 14).

Therefore, we should avoid unnecessary trips and physical activities such as playing ball and swimming.³ We should set aside our secular activities. How can we attend school, do homework, take exams, visit exhibitions, or watch games on Sabbath? How can we listen to radio programs, read novels, go to social meetings and picnics, or habitually neglect attending worship? How can we read secular magazines, do chores, go shopping, spend unnecessary time in physical rest, or go out to satisfy selfish desires? How can we do any of the things that take our mind off of God and our Christian's illuminated conscience?

We should also keep the Sabbath with our words. "The fourth commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things or by engaging in light and trifling conversation."⁴

In His ministry, our Savior valued the Sabbath and led by example. Christ did not nullify the Sabbath; on the contrary, He proclaimed Himself Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) and showed the true purpose of Sabbath when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man" (verse 27).

CONCLUSION

Dear brothers and sisters, the seventh-day Sabbath is much more than a day; it is a sign of our loyalty to God. Through the observance of the seventh day of the week, we confess our faith in God the Creator and give Him our worship and loyalty.

No other relationship prospers unless we dedicate time to Him. We also need to dedicate time to the people we love. The Sabbath is set aside for us to strengthen our relationships with our Creator and with our family. The seventh day is a special time for us to show our love and loyalty, especially to God.

Finally, let us remember the words of Jesus in John 13:17: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."



¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:220.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 245.

³ —, *Selected Messages*, 3:258, 265.

⁴ —, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:704.

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SABBATH AT THE CROSS

Colossians 2:13-17

Although the Sabbath has a central position in Scripture, revealing the reasons why God should be honored, there are some who argue that the Sabbath no longer has meaning for the believer. They quote the passage from Colossians which reads, “[Christ] having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. . . . Let no man therefore judge you in . . . respect of a holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come.” Basing their contention on these verses, they claim that the seventh-day Sabbath no longer has significance because it was “cancelled,” “removed,” and “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:13, 14, 16, 17).

Does the text really say that? Does the expression “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16 refer to the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment?

The key to understanding the apostle’s statements is found in verses 14 and 17.

I. “BLOTTING OUT THE HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES” (COL. 2:14)

Paul uses three important words in this text.

A. The first is the Greek participle *exaleifo* (“erase,” “cancel,” “nullify,” “clean”). In the secular Greek, this verb was used to indicate that something written had been erased or cancelled.

B. The second word is *jeiografon*, which means “handwritten document,” “certificate of debt,” or “bill of debt,” similar to a promissory note signed by the debtor.

What was cancelled? Some believe this text is saying that the moral law, including the fourth-commandment Sabbath, was cancelled. However, there is no linguistic or theological basis in the context of Colossians to equate this *jeiografon* with the moral law. The text does not refer to the Ten Commandments. The *jeiografon* is a “promissory note,” a bill of debt.

C. With the third word, Paul identifies what was cancelled in the *jeiografon*: the *dogmasin* (“decrees,” “ordinances,” “statutes,” “prescriptions,” “requirements”), which were “entirely removed” and “nailed to the cross.”

The phrase “handwriting of ordinances” could be better translated as “the document with its requirements” (or, “the



Christ’s death on the cross is an unanswerable argument in favor of the changeless character of every precept of God’s holy law.



Ellen G. White,
The Review and Herald, Dec. 20, 1898.

document with its statutes,” “with its prescriptions”).

Note that all ordinances mentioned in Colossians 2:16 pertain to the sacrificial system of the Hebrew sanctuary: “food,” “drink,” “day of feast,” “new moon,” “Sabbaths” (Heb. 9:2-8; see, particularly, the summary in Lev. 23:37; compare to 2 Chr. 2:4; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 45:17; Hosea 2:11).

The context of these passages is related to the sanctuary services in regard to the offering of food, drink, and festive ordinances established until the time of reform. Since Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption for the believer in His complete and sufficient expiatory sacrifice on the cross, He cancelled the sacrifices prescribed for these ordinances of the ceremonial law (Heb. 9:6-12). Jesus Christ is the most perfect sacrifice for the believer.

So is it defensible to state that the term “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16 refers to the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the Lord’s Day? Absolutely not, for two reasons:

First, the word “Sabbaths” is plural, and it refers to the festive Sabbaths of the ceremonial-law ordinances (Lev. 23:7-8 [Passover]; 21 [Pentecost]; 24 [Trumpets]; 27, 32 [Day of Atonement]; 35-36 [Tabernacles]). This would exclude the Sabbath of the fourth commandment (23:3, 38).

Second, all ceremonies mentioned by Paul in Colossians 2:16 belonged exclusively to the ordinances to which he refers in verse 14. These ordinances, including the ceremonial Sabbaths, were the ones that were “cancelled,” “taken out of the way,” and “nailed to the cross,” an interpretation which is strengthened by the statement in verse 17.

II. “WHICH ARE A SHADOW” (COL. 2:17)

The phrase “which are a shadow” (verse 17) is the key to understanding the statement in verse 16. The Greek word *skiá* (“shadow,” “prefiguration”) is used only three times in the New Testament (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1). In Hebrews 8:5 and 10:1, Paul uses the word *skiá* to explain that the earthly sanctuary and its ordinances are a “figure,” “shadow,” “type,” “representation,” a kind of prophetic announcement of the “heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5) and “good things to come” (10:1).

According to the typological interpretation of Hebrews, the rituals of the earthly sanctuary announced Christ’s death and His priestly ministry of atonement (Heb. 9:11-14; 8:1-2). Paul tries to divert the attention of the Hebrew readers from the temple and their rituals as ends in themselves and to refocus their attention on the greatest “Reality” of all “shadows,” “types,” or “prefigurations” of the Old Testament: Jesus Himself, His death, and His priestly ministry before God the Father.

The same occurs in the context of Colossians 2:17. The festivals, new moon, or ceremonial Sabbaths are a shadow “of things to come.” Therefore, when it says “Let no one judge you . . . regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths” (Col. 2:16), it does not apply to Sabbath, the day of rest of the fourth commandment of God’s Law, whose function was never prefigurative. Only the ceremonial Sabbaths were “cancelled,” “taken out of the way,” and “nailed to the cross”!

CONCLUSION

Does the word “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16 refer to the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment? Absolutely not! The context of Colossians 2:14 makes clear that Paul refers to the ceremonial ordinances of the earthly sanctuary in their temporal function, including the ceremonial Sabbaths. These ordinances were the “shadow,” “type,” and “representation,” a prophetic announcement of the “heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5) and “good things to come” (10:1)—the work of love Christ was to accomplish at the cross through His death and resurrection. 

Roberto Pereyra is the director of postgraduate studies for the Theological Seminary at Sao Paulo Adventist University in Brazil.

SABBATH IN TODAY'S FAMILY

Acts 16:13-15

A business woman—Lydia—and her family received great blessings on the Sabbath day. The environment, the actions, and the results in Lydia's family occurred because of the preaching of the gospel on the Sabbath day. As we consider Lydia, the seller of purple, let us analyze three aspects of the Sabbath and its impact on modern families.

I. ADEQUATE TIME AND PLACE FOR WORSHIP

Paul mentions that they had gathered by the riverside where "prayer was customarily made." That means it was a habit for the group of believers to gather in that place on Sabbath. It is probable that this group of faithful people did not have a specific place (temple or synagogue) to gather, but they had chosen an environment in which they could worship God.

Lydia, a woman dedicated to her business, certainly waited anxiously for the moment when she could withdraw from her daily worries and, together with her family, enjoy that exclusive time to meet with her Creator. She surely faced the same challenges that parents face today: too much to do and too little time for their spouse and children.

Ellen G. White affirms that "much of this time parents should spend with their children,"¹ and "happy the father and mother who can teach their children God's written word with illustrations from the open pages of the book of nature; who can gather under the green trees, in the fresh, pure air, to study the word and to sing the praise of the Father above."²

II. THE FUNCTION AND HOLINESS OF SABBATH

Sabbath was instituted by God with a definite purpose: communion with His creatures. On this special day, the act of ceasing work is related to the divine blessing derived from the intrinsic holiness given by God to that day only.

We are told that Lydia, along with her family, worshipped God on the Sabbath. Also, she was joined by other women who were there to listen to God's Word. We can learn three important lessons from this:

A. Paul and his team, as ministers of God, were there by the Holy Spirit's



All who love God should do what they can to make the Sabbath a delight, holy and honorable.



Ellen G. White
Child Guidance, 536.

order, to share the gospel truths (Acts 16:6-10).

B. Lydia, her family, and the other women were accustomed to gathering together to worship God on His holy day.

C. We have a moral obligation to worship together, in a place of worship, to recognize that we belong to a special body of believers that keeps the commandments of God in the last days of human history. This is a basic principle that no Seventh-day Adventist family should disregard.

Parents are in charge of helping their children form good habits, and one of these habits is to place God first in their lives. Children need to learn that Sabbath is a holy time that does not belong to them; Sabbath is God's exclusive property.

We live in a time of moral relativism, when young people are searching for assurance. As they realize that their parents "practice what they preach," children will feel secure in the values taught at home. And one of the most important values is the Sabbath.

III. FAITHFULNESS PRODUCES RESULTS

The Bible mentions that Lydia and her family were baptized that Sabbath. Although we don't know much about Lydia's family, we know that they received the blessing of a new birth.

Also, it is important to note that Lydia's family shared their faith. This should not be an isolated fact; Lydia is a great example of someone who, af-

ter receiving God, went out and shared Him with others. She possessed these three character traits:

A. Faithfulness. As a proof of the faith she professed, she kept her usual weekly meeting with the Creator.

B. Sensible to God's voice. The Bible shows us that by listening to the gospel message, Lydia allowed God to open her heart.

C. Hospitable. She opened the door of her home to receive the ones sent by God. Her home was converted into a place of refuge for the believers in her city (verse 40).

Today, twenty centuries later, circumstances have changed for families. We have divided families, family members who do not share the same faith, and, in some cases, families who are hostile toward religion. How can we achieve family unity in times of crisis? How do we share Christ's love with our children and spouse?

CONCLUSION

Lydia's experience teaches us that in a vital relationship with God and the Sabbath, this solid bond of love will help fight the multiple attacks of the modern world. Do you wish to see your family victorious in the fight against today's challenges? With your example of faithfulness on Sabbath, are you helping your family to become citizens of God's kingdom?



¹ Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, 532.

² ———, *Education*, 251

Heber Pinheiro is dean of the theological seminary at the Bolivia Adventist University in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Sermon Notes:

SABBATH IN ETERNITY

Isaiah 66:22, 23

Abraham Joshua Heschel, a rabbi and leading Jewish theologian of the twentieth century, observed that the Sabbath was given to humanity as an “anticipation of the future world” and as an “emblem of eternity.”¹

1. Sabbath was instituted on the threshold of human history so that the first couple would always remember their origin, learn to rest in God, and live in the expectation of what the seventh day of the week would bring to their experience.

2. Sabbath is an eternal institution, and its observance was required as a permanent obligation for human beings, extending from created Eden to restored Eden.

I. SABBATH IN THE FIRST EDEN (GEN. 2:1-4)

The Bible tells us that, along with matrimony, one of the first institutions Adam and Eve received in Eden was the Sabbath. The first full day of their existence was the Sabbath. This was a day of celebration and thankfulness for what God had given them when He created them. In Eden, God gave the Sabbath to humanity as a memorial of His creative work.

As a result of the contemplation of His created works, God desired that humanity give glory to His name. Through nature, people should learn about God’s goodness, power, and love. The Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:1, 2).

Through the continuous observance of Sabbath, Adam and Eve would remember that God was the Creator and Lord of their lives. The process of creation for all things reached its culminating point in rest. God created Adam and Eve to live eternally in Eden. This means that God did not establish the day of rest as a transitory institution.

Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought disgrace to humanity (Gen. 3:14-24). The first couple had to be removed from the Garden of Eden; however, their disobedience did not nullify Sabbath’s observance. This is clearly indicated by the fact that the mention of Sabbath observance in the Decalogue begins with the word “Remember” (Exod. 20:8-11).

Four centuries later, Christ affirmed, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18). Jesus meant that as long as the heavens and earth remain, the Sabbath will continue to be a day to worship Jehovah.

II. SABBATH IN THE NEW EARTH (ISA. 66:22, 23)

The Bible indicates that God’s original plan regarding man will be made concrete at the end of all things (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1). When God makes a new heaven and earth, His original creative plan will be fulfilled.

There, all trouble will disappear because God will make all things new. Life’s perplexities will be clarified, and a harmony in God’s plan for His children will be seen. The apostle John says that God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Heaven will be a school in which God will be the principal and master of all nations. Once sin is gone, God’s people will be able to relate to God face to face. The apostle John wrote, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them” (Rev. 21:3).

In the new earth, Sabbath observance will once more become the climax of a new, perfect Creation. On that day, the redeemed will again praise God, recognizing the greatness of His works. The new heaven and earth will be a constant reminder of God’s creative and redeeming work.

The redeemed will recover their lost dignity. There will be no more separation or limitations between the visible and invisible. God’s expectations when He created this world for His glory will be completely fulfilled.

III. SABBATH AND THE LAMB (REV. 21:22-24)

Nothing will harm or threaten God’s perfect universe. There won’t be a new proof of loyalty for the redeemed. There won’t be a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The new earth will be the home of the redeemed of all times. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, will be there, as well as the Tree of Life “which bore twelve fruits” and whose leaves are for “the healing of the nations.” Each month the tree will produce its fruit, and each week the redeemed will gather to worship Jesus Christ, Giver of life, Author and Finisher of our salvation.

Sabbath will be a day marked by the harmonious communion of the redeemed of all ages with the angels of God. On that day, the entire family—in heaven and on earth—will assemble to worship the Lamb of God.

The redeemed of every generation will walk under the light of the Lamb who will abide among them and “the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it” (Rev. 21:24).

In the New Jerusalem, the redeemed will be gathered at the end of every week to worship the Author of their salvation. With reverent joy, the redeemed will cry, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

The seventh day of the week was sanctified by God and given to humanity before sin entered the world. When sin entered, God provided the offering necessary for the redemption of humanity. It is around this offering that the consummation of God’s original purpose will be made concrete. That is why, throughout eternity, “from one Sabbath to another,” everyone will come before the Lord to worship Him (Isa. 66:23).

CONCLUSION

Sabbath was given to humanity in Eden as a memorial of God’s redeeming work. Sabbath will be the day kept by the redeemed in the new earth. The meaning of Sabbath in eternity will revolve around the Lamb of God, author of Creation and finisher of human redemption.

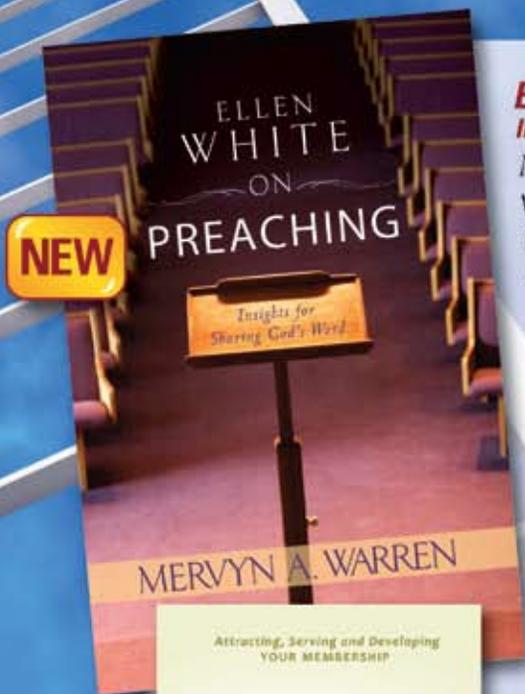
Wouldn’t you also like to become faithful to God in the observance of His Holy day? How about worshiping Him on the Sabbath for all eternity? Why not start today?



¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, 74.

Ricardo A. Gonzalez is the dean of the School of Theology at Chile Adventist University in Chillan, Chile.

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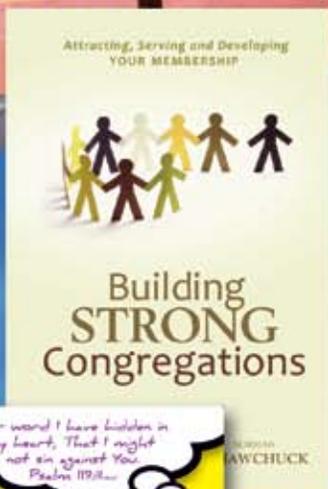
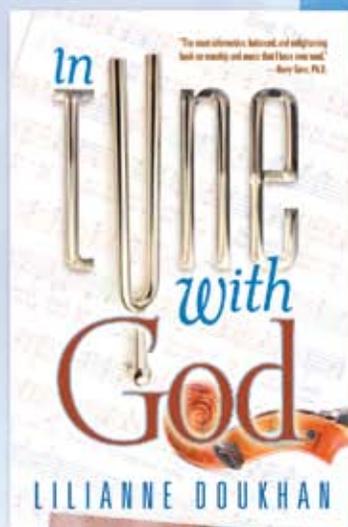


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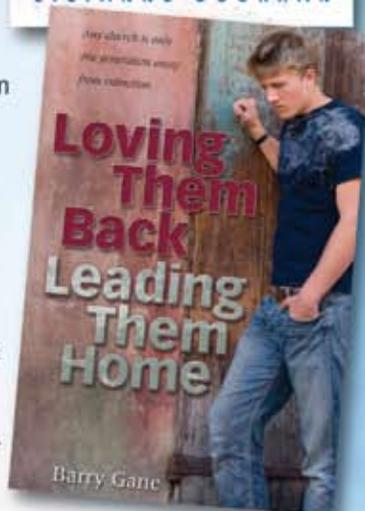
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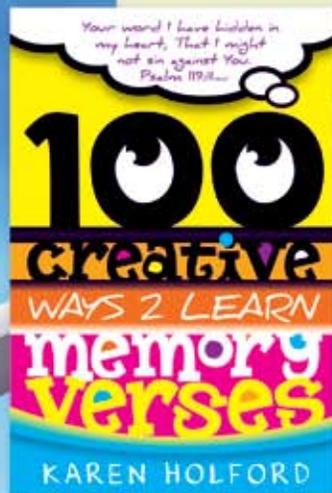
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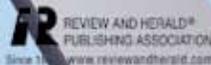
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WAR IN HEAVEN

WHAT IS MEANT BY “WAR IN HEAVEN” AS MENTIONED IN REVELATION 12:7?

Revelation 12:7-9 says: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” The reference to “Michael, the great prince” in Daniel 12:1 (see also Jude 9) suggests that Michael is Christ Himself and not a mere angelic creature, as some interpreters claim. On the other hand, the dragon is identified in Revelation 12:7 as Satan. Thus, it is evident that the war in Heaven was between Christ and His angels on the one hand, and Satan and his angels on the other.

The conflict was marked by Satan’s strong accusations against the government of God, with special reference to the person of Christ. Describing Lucifer’s strategy to persuade the heavenly angels, Ellen G. White states that “Lucifer had at first so conducted his temptations that he himself stood uncommitted. The angels whom he could not bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings. The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon the loyal angels. It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 41).

But the heavenly conflict was not restricted only to a fight of ideas. Revelations 12:7-9 affirms that there was “war” among the celestial beings, and when Lucifer was “cast out,” there was no longer a place for these rebels in heaven. These statements make it clear that a physical conflict resulted in an expulsion of the rebel hosts; it was not just an ideological expulsion from heaven.

Ellen G. White describes the conflict in the following terms: “All heaven seemed in commotion. The angels were marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head. Satan was warring against the law of God, ambitious to exalt himself and unwilling to submit to the authority of God’s Son, heaven’s great commander.

“All the heavenly hosts were summoned to appear before the Father, to have each case determined. Satan unblushingly made known his dissatisfaction that Christ should be preferred before Him. He stood up proudly and urged that he should be equal with God and should be taken into conference with the Father and understand His purposes. God informed Satan that to His Son alone He would reveal His secret purposes, and He required all the family in heaven, even Satan, to yield Him implicit, unquestioned obedience; but that he [Satan] had proved himself unworthy of a place in heaven. Then Satan exultingly pointed to his sympathizers, comprising nearly one half of all the angels, and exclaimed, ‘These are with me! Will you expel these also, and make such a void in heaven?’ He then declared that he was prepared to resist the authority of Christ and to defend his place in heaven by force of might, strength against strength” (*The Story of Redemption*, 17, 18).

In reality, “there was war in heaven. Angels were engaged in the battle; Satan wished to conquer the Son of God and those who were submissive to His will. But the good and true angels prevailed, and Satan, with his followers, was driven from heaven” (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 146). This war and this expulsion were not a mere question of ideological disagreement, as some claim, for “the battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend” (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 176). 

Dr. Alberto Timm, head of Theological Seminaries and a branch director of the Ellen G. White Estate for the South American Division, answered this question.



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



FROM WOMAN TO WOMAN

THINK BEFORE ACTING

Today's fast-paced lifestyle has led us to alter the order of an ancient universal rule: think before acting. This new attitude generates irrational words and actions and often leads to disastrous results. How hard it is to rebuild what has been destroyed by our lack of good sense!

No wonder the Word of God says, "A wise woman builds her home, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands" (Prov. 14:1, NLT). I would like to reflect with you upon this text.

First of all, we need to remember that knowledge is not the same as wisdom. You could say that wisdom is the ability to use properly the knowledge you have. Many people in all walks of life have a high level of knowledge; however, they lack wisdom to use this knowledge in a sensible and prudent way. Knowledge helps you to conquer something, but wisdom helps you to build it. Knowledge is related more to having, and wisdom to being.

As daughters of God, you and I need a good dose of wisdom to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord and that testifies to the efficient power of the gospel. For those who are married to church leaders, this ability becomes even more essential and is noticed in a more intense way by those who look to us for motivation and leadership. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). The secret is in the Lord, who is the author of everything, including wisdom.

Nevertheless, wisdom does not happen by magic or by a mystical touch. Just as thirst is quenched by how much you drink, your need for wisdom is supplied by how much time you spend with Jesus. This contact needs to happen every day. Remember that you need to allow yourself to be influenced by this ac-

quaintance; otherwise, there will be only knowledge—no transformation or self-control, no edification or wisdom. For example, Judas knew Jesus very well. He sat next to Him day by day, but he did not become wise, he was not changed, and he did not develop control over his will or use knowledge adequately. We all know what happened to Judas!

When your experience with Jesus becomes real and significant, your house will be built. Think of your home as more than a place to live. Include in it the idea of a home: your character, your children's characters, the esteem and respect of your husband before the church, and your family before society.

Yes, my friend, your influence is powerful, but for this influence to be valuable, wisdom is indispensable. Wisdom makes you think before speaking and acting. It helps you do the right thing at the right time at the right place with the right person. Better than that, wisdom helps you be the right person.

Do not underestimate the consequences of irrational moments, for they are hard to rebuild, recover, and heal. For this reason, think, reflect, analyze before acting, or do as the good bricklayer does: plan, organize, choose the best materials, and build the foundation of your life and your family. What will the result be? A strongly-built home will bring satisfaction, trust, safety, and the assurance that no matter the intensity of the storm, your house will remain strong on the Rock and won't be shaken.

This is what God desires for you: wisdom. This is what the church expects to see in a leader: a well-built home. Therefore, learn to think before speaking and acting.



Denise Lopes is Women's Ministries Director in the South Brazil Union Conference.

TRINITY IN THE BIBLE PART 1

WORSHIPPING JESUS—THE “ETERNALLY BLESSED GOD!”

Among other issues at the now-famous Bible conference in 1919, leading Seventh-day Adventist administrators and theologians discussed the nature of the deity of Jesus. One aspect of their discussion concerned worship. How could they worship Jesus Christ if He was not eternal God?

This question strikingly reiterates an argument used by Athanasius in the fourth century. The presbyter Arius attacked the church’s teachings of the eternal divinity of Jesus with his claim that the pre-existent Jesus had a beginning. Athanasius powerfully countered, “The whole earth sings the praises of the Creator and the truth, and blesses Him and trembles before Him.” But does not the whole Bible point to Jesus Christ—the Word—as this Creator?

Both in the Adventist movement and in the early church, devotion to Jesus played a major role in the development of what is known as the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the ancient world, the first Christians’ commitment to Jesus did not go without notice. Pliny the Younger, governor of the province of Bithynia, wrote to the Roman Emperor Trajan that they “sing hymns to Christ as to a God.” Everywhere they willingly testified to the full divinity of Jesus and some even died as martyrs because of this confession. On the floor in the earliest Christian church building excavated in Palestine—burned into stone in Megiddo in the early third century—we read the words of dedication “to God Jesus Christ.”

The Christian pioneers ventured into the world with the gospel, proclaiming the risen and divine Savior. But as they carried forth their witness to the Jesus they wor-

shipped, questions and challenges arose. How can you say Jesus is God? What does it mean that He is? Reflecting on and responding to these challenges, the church developed its thinking and its theology—that is, speaking systematically about God.

The journey of the Seventh-day Adventist movement in many ways mirrors the way the early church arrived at its understanding. And just as the true nature of Jesus was a cornerstone for the first Christians, His eternal divinity is important for us today. It still matters because He matters.

JESUS—GOD IN PERSON!

The basis for this discovery was—and is—the Bible. The belief that Jesus is God was not a late invention of the fourth century in order to hide the real truth about Him, as claimed in *The Da Vinci Code* and similar conspiracy theories. Neither is the Bible only calling Jesus the “Son of God” as if this title makes Him less divine, implying that He had a beginning. The claim to the full divinity of Jesus stems from the Bible itself. It arises first from a number of explicit statements. These are not few, nor are they difficult texts to comprehend. They are straightforward and permeate all of the New Testament. Just read the following examples, proclaiming Jesus to be God (emphasis supplied):

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*” (John 1:1, NRSV).
- “*It is God the only Son*, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (John 1:18, NRSV).
- “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the *Christ who is God over all, blessed forever*” (Romans 9:5, ESV).

- “. . . waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our *great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13, ESV).

- “. . . by the righteousness of our *God and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:1, ESV). Christians read further in the Scriptures and observed how a number of texts attribute to Jesus the prerogatives that belong to God alone, such as authority to forgive sins (see Mark 2:5-7), lordship over nature (see Mark 4:41) and power to grant eternal life (see John 17:3).

The early Christians realized that if eternal life depends on knowing Jesus Christ, He must have the basic attributes of God. As the One who is sent, He shares them with Him who sends. This belief, however, presented them with a decisive choice when facing the pagan cultures of the Roman Empire—the choice between one or several gods, monotheism or polytheism.

GOD IS ONE

Accepting the clear biblical testimony that Jesus is God raised the question that came to define Christianity in contrast to all other religions: What kind of God is Jesus?

In the Greek-Roman culture, monotheism was not the norm. The pagans were accustomed to having more than one God. To them, it would not have been strange if the Christians had proclaimed two Gods—a greater God called the Father and a lesser god, namely Christ. So this question became a major challenge for the Christians. How are we to understand the deity of Jesus? And what is our basis for defining what it means to be God?

Anti-Trinitarians—later with the Alexandrian presbyter Arius as their spokesman—chose the pagan understanding of “god,” as someone or something you can become. “Gods” may have a beginning, they are not necessarily omnipotent and all-knowing, and they don’t necessarily have life in themselves. Popular religion of the time taught it, and the philosophers expressed similar thoughts in more sophisticated forms. To the Greeks, only the world—*kosmos*—was eternal. “Gods” came into being. They fought each other, as they were not equally powerful, and they could be fooled. Some Christian philosophers—including Arius—were influenced by this concept of the divine, which became the underlining premise of their understanding of Jesus.

But the Christian church and its theologians chose another basis for defining what it means to be God. The Trinitarian doctrine takes God’s self-revelation in Jesus as presented in the Scriptures as the starting point.

The Bible is not silent on what it means to be God. God is the Creator. He made the world from nothing and, as Creator, God is therefore independent of everything created. He is before all: He has no beginning and He is omnipotent, all-knowing and forever present. This

is what God is as God, and there is no other. A text like Isaiah 44:6 summarizes this basic understanding of the Old Testament monotheism: “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god” (NRSV).

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

So the early church chose the God revealed in Scripture, preferring the Old Testament to Greek and pagan philosophy. But it was not an easy battle. Major opponents wanted to get rid of much or even all of the Old Testament—and even major parts of the New, considered too Jewish, as well. But the Trinitarian doctrine developed on the basis of the whole Bible because Jesus clearly understood Himself as Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament:

- In Revelation 1:17, 18, Jesus quotes Isaiah 44:6, which is spoken by Yahweh: “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (NKJV).

- All Jews knew Yahweh was their shepherd (see Psalm 23:1) and Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:11, NKJV).

- The language of Jesus in proclaiming Himself the great “I am” is a clear reference to the name of Yahweh in the Old Testament and to numerous texts in the second part of the book of Isaiah: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him” (John 8:58, 59, NASV). The Jews well understood that He was claiming Himself to be God and wanted to stone Him for blasphemy.

So the New Testament presents Jesus as one with Yahweh. He is Creator (see John 1:3, Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 3:14). This portrait reflects the clear prophetic statement by Isaiah about the eternal divinity of the Messiah to come, a “mighty God” and an “eternal Father” (see Isaiah 9:6).

ONENESS OF RELATIONSHIP

But how could Jesus be God and God be one at the same time? Some Christians moved toward one extreme position by identifying the Father totally with the Son—and later identifying the Son totally with the Holy Spirit. Doing so would, however, destroy the personality of each and conflict with the Bible, as the “Father” and the “Son” are clearly two distinct persons.

The answer to the question is in part found in the Hebrew word used for “one” in the famous text in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (NASV). It denotes a unity of relationship,

(continued on page 25)

JESUS

THE ONE AND ONLY!

One of the most beloved texts of the Bible is John 3:16. Compare two major translations:

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (NIV).
- "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (NKJV).

Which is it? Is Jesus the "one and only" or is He "the only begotten"? What is the meaning of the Greek word *monogenes*? And what difference does it make?

However *monogenes* is translated, it does not denote a literal birth in our modern sense of the word. I was strongly challenged at a meeting by a group who asked me whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that Jesus is literally the only begotten Son of God? Such language imposes our modern culture on the Bible, and a "yes" to this question presupposes a mother with whom the Father God had intercourse! This would be the meaning if the expressions are to be understood literally. But we are not speaking about humans: we are speaking about God, and our language is, in this case, metaphorical and has clear limitations.

Moreover, we have to understand the expressions against the background of the culture into which the Bible was spoken. "Fatherhood" and "sonship" had different connotations, both in Semitic and Indo-European cultures of biblical times, from what these concepts carry today. In the Bible, a "son" may mean a son but also a descendant, a successor (like Belshazzar, in Daniel 5), students (like the sons of the prophets) or a representative (like the King of Israel, see Psalm 2:7).

So what is the meaning of *monogenes* in John 3:16? Greek scholars have proposed two origins for the word. One theory has been that the word stems from the verb *gennaō*, meaning "to beget" and is generally used only about males, as in the genealogy in Matthew 1. In this case, the meaning of the term *monogenes* with the prefix *mono* (one or only one, as in words like "monogamy" and "monotheism") would be "the only one born to or begotten."

However, this view is rejected by the vast majority of Greek scholars today. Rather, the origin of the word is understood as *genos*, which means "kind or type." The term *monogenes* in John 3:16 (and other New Testament texts) therefore means "the only one of its kind" or—as in the New International Version—"the one and only." In this view, the meaning could but does not have to include the sense "only one born to or begotten." Any "only begotten" son is unique of course but being unique does not necessarily mean you are the only one born.

How is this view substantiated? Let me mention two supporting arguments. One is technical and requires some understanding of Greek grammar; the other, however, is based on the usage of the word and is easily checked without any training in ancient Greek. First, the natural way to form a participle from the verb *gennaō* creates the word *monogennetos*, not *monogenes*. Second, the use in Hebrews 11:17 of the word *monogenes* about Isaac as the unique son of Abraham makes the meaning "only begotten" impossible, as everyone knows that Abraham, in a literal sense, had more sons.

So the meaning "one and only" or "unique" is the natural and obvious meaning of the word *monogenes*. Does this imply Jesus had a beginning? The answer is no, unless you claim Jesus is a different God and entertain a pagan view of the divine. Jesus is the unique representative of the Godhead to all creation. This is what He has always been.

Additionally, when the New Testament speaks about the Father and the Son, it describes a unique relationship. God is mentioned as a Father in only 18 texts in the Old Testament. In the Gospel of John alone, Jesus mentions His Heavenly Father more than 100 times in direct speech.

We know the Father because we know the Son. In part, their relationship is unique because it is eternal. There never was a time when it did not exist. If there was a time when the Son was not, there would have been a time when God would not have been the Father. The unique unity and intimate relationship between the two presupposes that the persons within the Godhead are "co-eternal."

not necessarily a numerical or mathematical oneness (compare the use of the word *echad* in texts like Genesis 2:24; 21:25; and Judges 20:1).

So in establishing the Trinity doctrine, the Christians had to denounce those views that questioned that there are three distinct persons or personalities in the Godhead, admitting that the word “person” is from the human sphere and falls short of fully and exactly describing God. On the other hand, the Christian church had to distance itself from any position presenting Jesus as substantially different from the Father. The language used was that Father and Son share in substance, a term later used by Ellen White when she writes, “Jesus said, ‘I and my Father are one.’ The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes.”¹

The term “substance” is not to be understood as some kind of mystical emanating energy but as the basic attributes without which God would not be God, such as being eternal and without beginning, independent of all created, and thus omnipotent, all knowing and forever present. Only in this way could the early Christians defend the true oneness of God, and avoid worshipping more than one God and thus a return to paganism.

Anti-Trinitarians at the time of the early church either rejected the distinctive personalities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, making them identical persons, or they understood Jesus as having a beginning and, thus, being substantially different from the Father, treating Jesus as a second god. In addition, Anti-Trinitarians of today often perceive Jesus as a second and lesser god, returning to a view based on paganism or Greek philosophy.

THE BASICS OF THE TRINITY

A short outline of the Bible-based formulation that led the early church to the doctrine of the Trinity:

1. Monotheism—God is one!
2. Jesus is God.
3. Yet, the Father and the Son are two distinct persons.
4. There are at least two persons in that one God.
5. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Godhead.
6. These three form a unity.

In this article, we have looked at the first four of these points. The second article in this series will discuss the question of the Holy Spirit.

“SO WHAT?”

But does not the Bible—not least the New Testament—contain a number of texts that speak about the subordination of Jesus the Son? Anti-Trinitarians are quick to point this out by listing texts that do not speak about the eternal divinity of Jesus but about His limitations, humility and humanity. And is He not—by being named the “Son”—lesser and later?

Neither modern Seventh-day Adventists nor the early Christian theologians are silent about these texts. But all these texts speak of the role of Jesus in dealing with the created beings as the full representative of God, both before and after the origin of sin. They do not speak about nor negate the nature of His eternal divinity.

Instead, they highlight the very point of the doctrine. Rightly understood, these texts help us see why it is important because they reveal what the gospel is about. Jesus is the slain Lamb; but He is also our divine Shepherd (see Revelation 7:17). The Christian message is based on the fact that the Creator of the Universe, the eternal omnipotent and all-knowing God Himself, stepped down and became a human being, even to death on the cross. This is what we call the agape love of God. He was fully God, He humbled Himself and became fully human, and He is now exalted above all (see Philippians 2:5-11).

As Trinitarians, Seventh-day Adventists—with the early Christian church—reject any pagan concept of the divine and, based on the Bible, choose to believe in a God of agape love. If Jesus was anything less than “the eternally blessed God” (see Romans 9:5), this love would disintegrate and become a phantom. We would no longer really know God as a person because He, if that were the case, had sent someone else. And Jesus could no longer provide full sacrifice and atonement for our sins because He would not be eternal, and the cross would just be trading with the devil. But the biblical God of agape love was willing to sacrifice Himself in order to not compromise or trade with sin.

This is why the doctrine mattered so much for the early Christian church. Jesus Christ was able to become the perfect mediator between God and human beings (see 1 Timothy 2:5), not because He is somewhere in between but exactly because He is both fully God and fully human. The significance of this truth has not changed and is all-important for the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. 

¹ “The True Sheep Respond to the Voice of the Shepherd,” *Signs of the Times*, November 27, 1893, p. 54.

This is the first article in a series of three dealing with the issue of the Trinity in the Bible, in the early church, and in the Seventh-day Adventist movement. This article has been reprinted, with permission, from *Record* magazine, published by SPD.

Paul Petersen is field secretary for the South Pacific Division, based in Wahroonga, New South Wales.

Worship Planning from the Perspective of the Pew

By Nicholas Zork

In nearly every worship planning meeting that I attend, I hear the same recurring question: "What are we going to do this Sabbath?" And as we discuss the details of the service, this question inevitably reappears in various forms: "How will we begin? What songs will we sing? What will we do next?" But if our purpose in worship is to lead God's people in prayer and thanksgiving, then perhaps we are asking the wrong questions.

Todd Johnson offers this advice to his students at Fuller Theological Seminary: As we think through the order of a worship service, the key question should not be, what will we as worship leaders do next but, rather, what do we want the *congregation* to do next.¹ What will *they* sing? What will *they* pray? What will *they* contemplate? And, most importantly, how will *their* attention be directed to God?

There are of course many things that might prevent people from truly engaging with a worship service. Perhaps a good way to begin encouraging fuller participation is to rethink the questions that drive our worship planning. Maybe it's time to ask ourselves: "Are we planning worship from the *our* perspective or from the perspective of the pew?"

This was originally published in "Best Practices for Adventist Worship," a free email newsletter from the North American Division Church Resource Center. Online signup is available at www.auworshipconference.org.

¹ Todd Johnson is an Associate Professor of Worship, Theology and the Arts at Fuller Theological Seminary. This insight is not in any of his currently published works. As a student of his at Fuller, I have heard him mention the principle in course lectures on worship planning.

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

The White Estate invites Adventists worldwide to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the adoption of the name "Seventh-day Adventist" on Sabbath, October 2, 2010. Although the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was not organized until 1863, the name Seventh-day Adventist was formally voted on October 1, 1860, for use by the fledgling church's publishing house as well as for its local congregations. For more information visit www.150SDA.org



BIOGRAPHY



EDDY CHONG

Eddy Chong is an actively serving elder at the Jurong Seventh-day Adventist Church in Singapore Mission, within the territory of the Southeast Asia Union Mission (SSD). As a financial consultant, his job requires him to deal with people from all different social strata and background and he thanks God for these opportunities and experiences where he can witness to them. He believes all elders must develop healthy, supporting and respectful relationships with everyone, including their local church pastors. This forms the foundation for the local church leadership; any internal strife for power and glory will only result in the weakening of the church. Elder Chong states, "I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve as a church elder for the last four years. I work in harmony with six other elders and we are committed to giving our congregation the best service. I thank God for the privilege and opportunity to be able to lead, strategize and empower the members of the church for evangelism and ministry. I believe if we know and do the will of God, we can confidently serve the flock He has called us to serve."



HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

7 SECRETS FOR TRUE LONGEVITY

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK <

When it comes to living longer, healthier lives, attitude may have more to do with it than we think. Scientific evidence suggests that our attitude has a strong impact on how long we live. Number 6 on our list of tips for longevity is to develop a positive outlook.

Ellen G. White wrote, "Disease is sometimes produced, and is often greatly aggravated, by the imagination. Many are lifelong invalids who might be well if they only thought so. Many imagine that every slight exposure will cause illness, and the evil effect is produced because it is expected. Many die from disease the cause of which is wholly imaginary."¹ Oh, the power of our thoughts! Can our thinking and outlook really determine how long we live?

Science shows that Mrs. White was correct. Today science tells us that what we think regarding our health does have a very real impact on it. In fact, when researchers from Yale Medical School studied 2,800 men and asked them to rate their own health, those who rated their health as "poor" were six times more likely to die earlier than those who considered their health to be "excellent."² Five other studies show similar results, looking at data from more than 23,000 people between the ages of 19 and 94.³

Our minds are powerful, and we sometimes forget that they can create physical changes in our bodies which may bring about disease and accelerate death. A well-known example of the power of our thoughts is "the placebo effect," which researchers find may account for 25-35 percent of the initial beneficial effects of medication. The placebo effect occurs when a person is given what he or she believes is medicine, but it is merely a harmless sugar pill. Because people believe the pill will help them, it does.

Researchers also found that in the treatment of cancer patients, a healthcare provider with an optimistic explanatory style that fostered hope was associated with a 50 percent decreased risk of mortality or early death.⁴ This study suggests that for those patients, having hope for a cure improved their chances of living longer.

God wishes for us to use this power in our brains to protect ourselves from many diseases so we can live full lives and better serve Him. We know that a positive outlook can help prevent and treat depression, the leading cause of disability worldwide. Depression is a common mental disorder; symptoms include feelings of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep, changes in appetite, low energy, poor concentration—all of which may increase the risk of disease and mortality. These problems

can become chronic or recurrent and can lead to substantial impairment in an individual's ability to serve God or manage everyday responsibilities. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide, resulting in the loss of about 850,000 lives every year. Depression is as common among spiritual leaders and people of faith as it is in the world at large, affecting people regardless of gender, age, or background.⁵ In many cases professional help is needed, but an underlying pessimism or inaccurate perception may be the root of the problem. However, there is evidence that helping people develop a positive and realistic outlook through cognitive behavioral therapy can help bring about a lasting cure for depression.

The good news is that our thoughts and perceptions are within our control. We can choose to look at the glass as half-full rather than half-empty. Some may label themselves as pessimists or optimists, but the fact is that all of us can learn to nurture healthy thoughts, which will produce chemicals that reduce negative stress hormones, promote well-being, and result in longer, healthier lives. Positive thinking does require practice, but anyone can master the habit day by day.

So, when you feel discouraged about your future, your spouse, your children, church issues, your job, or your health, or when crises hit and things do not go as you expected, do not let your imagination control your thinking. Instead, choose to have a positive outlook, remembering Paul's counsel:

"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse" (Phil. 4:8, *The Message*).

Determine today to have a positive attitude. It will give you peace and joy and contribute to a longer, healthier life. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 241.

² E. Idler and K. Stanislav, "Health Perceptions and Survival: Do Global Evaluations of Health and Status Really Matter?" in *Journal of Gerontology*, 1991, 46 (2):555-65.

³ *Creation Health Study Guide*, 190, Florida Hospital, 2009.

⁴ T. Maruta, et al. "Optimists vs. Pessimists: Survival Rate Among Patients Over a 30-Year Period," in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, Feb. 2000, 75 (2):140-143.

⁵ World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/index.html



Katia Reinert
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HOW LEADERS CAN ENCOURAGE PASTORS

Long-term benefits from 2010's Year of the Pastor depend largely upon whether church leaders intentionally increase their encouragement of pastors. Try the following suggestions:

Pray for pastors. Praying will change your view of pastors. When we pray for someone, often our attitude toward that individual is changed. Ask God to help you view pastors as He sees them—both in the reality of what they are and in the assurance of what they can become by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray with pastors. You will change their view of administrators. Pastors seldom hear their names lifted in prayer by anyone other than their spouse or family. Take the opportunity to pray with pastors.

Respect pastors. Pastors are on call 24/7 in a high-stress job. Often they attempt great things with limited resources. Many pastors lack basic tools, much less conveniences such as computers or copiers. Respect how much your pastors actually accomplish.

Motivate pastors. Personal example motivates. If you want pastors to be soul-winners, do soul-winning yourself. If you want pastors to be more spiritual, emphasize your own personal devotions. If you want pastors to manage their churches well, manage conference finances in a responsible manner. Also, motivate by high but reasonable expectations. Set objectives that are attainable but that stretch your pastors to increase their effectiveness—and encourage them in the process of reaching!

Value pastors. Pastors are the front-line leaders in spiritual warfare. God's kingdom will advance only to the extent that pastors lead and train their members. Pastors are the key to spirituality in the churches of your conference, to financial income for conference budgets, and to soul-winning for conference objectives. Value their role in producing results that your vision demands.

Include pastors. Bring pastors into the decision-making process. Establish pastoral advisory committees that enlist their participation in the decisions that impact their lives. Also, include pastors in your circle of fellowship. Avoid associating only with your fellow officers and leaders. Seek opportunities to socialize with pastors.

Include pastoral families. One shortsighted leader declared that pastoral families would not be invited to pastoral retreats because the conference could not afford the cost. Unfortunately, you pay the cost one way or another. When families experience insufficient retreat time together, the costs come in increased medical bills and in broken relationships. Plan conference finances to include pastoral families at retreats and plan schedules to give pastoral families time for social interaction.

Stabilize pastors. Economic realities mean that many pastoral homes are financially unstable. Often pastoral families are one paycheck away from disaster. Resist pay parity schemes that widen different scales that do not include pastors. Seek opportunities to reduce inequity. Consider the impact of transfers when pastoral families must move and spouses must lose jobs or seniority.

Feed pastors. Plan pastoral-retreat agendas that are high on spiritual food and low on promotion. Summarize promotional materials and make short presentations—this will accomplish more than if you spent long hours promoting various causes.

Build pastors. Take joy in mentoring pastors to increase their effectiveness. Your own capabilities will be multiplied in the lives of those you train. Share resources and provide opportunities for skill-building and continuing education. Let pastors choose areas in which they wish to develop their talents.

Reward pastors. When you see a pastor doing something well, express your appreciation verbally and in writing. When large churches or departmental jobs need personnel, look first to your own pastoral team. Help them believe that you are most interested in them.

Listen to pastors. Invite their input. Discuss ideas with them—especially plans that will impact their lives or their congregations. Survey your pastors and allow for anonymous responses on sensitive topics to make sure you receive accurate feedback.

Evaluate pastors. When evaluation occurs in a nonthreatening way, it encourages pastors by helping them realize the good things they are accomplishing and their potential for development.



James A. Cress was the General Conference Ministerial Secretary when he wrote this article.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

LEARNING TO VALUE PEOPLE FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

As the city bus pulls up and opens the door, you clamor aboard with seven or eight other people. By now the turbaned driver is no longer a curiosity to you. He arrives each day like clockwork, politely nods in greeting, he delivers you safely to your destination. What else do you need to know?

She works five shifts a week, rain or shine, in a toll booth on a windy expressway. One day you look past her and notice a porcelain bowl of fruit tucked into a corner along with a

couple of sticks of incense. Is there some kind of meaning to that?

On a Sabbath afternoon walk at the park, you notice another nicely dressed family. At first you wonder if they might be Adventists, but then you see that the father and sons are each wearing a yarmulke. They were probably at the synagogue while you were at church. Should you say Happy Sabbath or Shabbat Shalom? Or is it more respectful to say nothing?

Such are the modern day dilemmas of knowing what to do or say when meeting people from other cultures and world religions. Depending on their demeanor, we might feel uncomfortable or perhaps even afraid. Maybe we are curious and would like to make some sort of friendly overture. We'd like our children to feel confident about reaching out to others, but how can we teach them to do that when we are unsure ourselves? Perhaps we worry too much about accidentally offending someone, finding it easier to stay within our own circles of friendship.

According to Gary Krause, director of the Office of Adventist Mission, this is a challenge we need to take seriously. "Research shows that Christians are hopelessly out of touch with non-Christians in their communities," he says. "One study showed that in North America, only 35.6 percent of Buddhists, 22.7 percent of Hindus, and 67.8 percent of Muslims say they don't even know one Christian." He adds, "They live in our neighborhoods, sit beside us on public transport, eat at the tables next to us in restaurants—but they don't know us, and we don't make them our friends."

That is an uncomfortable truth, but now Adventist Mission has produced a new resource to help us. Ganoune Diop, director of the Global Mission Study Centers, has recently produced *Understanding World Religions*, a set of four DVDs that opens the door to comprehending the beliefs, values, and practices of major religious traditions. By identifying areas of common understanding—such as respect, honor, family relationships, justice, love, cooperation, supporting one another—the series can help build bridges between faith groups.

Lectures and interviews with experts filmed throughout the world offer a wealth of useful information about the world's major religions. Dr. Diop and other experts give practical advice for navigating through new friendships with people of other religious cultures without offending them.

Dr. Diop, a cross-cultural pastor, educator and theologian, shares simple yet sensitive ways to understand, appreciate and reach out to people of differing faiths. Perhaps one of the biggest surprises will be not what we can do for others, but how our lives can be enriched in ways we could never imagine, simply by reaching out.

The four-disc set is the first in a series and covers Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Postmodernism. It retails for \$39.99. To order, visit www.AdventistMission.org, or call 1-800-648-5824.

Nancy Kyte is the marketing director for the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference.

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PRAYER AND WORSHIP

PUBLIC PRAYERS SHOULD BE SPOKEN DISTINCTLY AND CLEARLY.

Let those who pray and those who speak pronounce their words properly and speak in clear, distinct, even tones. Prayer, if properly offered, is a power for good. It is one of the means used by the Lord to communicate to the people the precious treasures of truth. But prayer is not what it should be, because of the defective voices of those who utter it. Satan rejoices when the prayers offered to God are almost inaudible. Let God's people learn how to speak and pray in a way that will properly represent the great truths they possess. Let the testimonies borne and the prayers offered be clear and distinct. Thus God will be glorified.

USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE WHEN PRAYING PUBLICLY.

High-flown language is inappropriate in prayer, whether the petition be offered in the pulpit, in the family circle, or in secret. Especially should the one offering public prayer use simple language, that others may understand what is said and unite with the petition.

It is the heart-felt prayer of faith that is heard in heaven and answered on earth.

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE ORDERLY.

I have seen that confusion is displeasing to the Lord, and that there should be order in praying and also in singing. We should not come to the house of God to pray for our families unless deep feeling shall lead us while the Spirit of God is convicting them. Generally, the proper place to pray for our families is at the family altar. When the subjects of our prayers are at a distance, the closet is the proper place to plead with God for them. When in the house of God, we should pray for a present blessing and should expect God to hear and answer our prayers. Such meetings will be lively and interesting.

GOD SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH REVERENCE IN PRAYER.

Some think it a mark of humility to pray to God in a common manner, as if talking with a human being. They profane His name by needlessly and irreverently mingling with their prayers the words, "God Almighty," awful, sacred words, which should never pass the lips except in subdued tones and with a feeling of awe.

IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO KNEEL WHEN PRAYING PUBLICLY.

Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God.

According to the light that has been given me, it would be pleasing to God for ministers to bow down as soon as they step into the pulpit, and solemnly ask help from God. What impression would that make? There would be solemnity and awe upon the people. Their minister is communing with God; he is committing himself to God before he dares to stand before the people. Solemnity rests upon the people, and angels of God are brought very near. Ministers should look to God the first thing as they come into the desk, thus saying to all: God is the source of my strength.

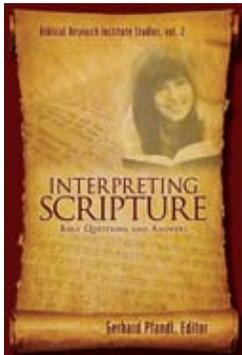
Every one of the congregation, also, who fears God should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with His presence and give power to His truth proclaimed from human lips. When the meeting is opened by prayer, every knee should bow in the presence of the Holy One, and every heart should ascend to God in silent devotion.

The prayers of faithful worshipers will be heard, and the ministry of the word will prove effectual. The lifeless attitude of the worshipers in the house of God is one great reason why the ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear, distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies.

This article was excerpted from the practical resource, *Prayer*, 204-205, by Ellen G. White.

THE BEST-KEPT SECRET IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

I am often asked, "What do you do at the Biblical Research Institute (BRI)?" The short answer is, we research, write, and speak on biblical issues that arise. The BRI has been established as a theological resource for the Seventh-day Adventist church to foster theological unity worldwide. We seek to accomplish this through three main avenues: research and publication, lectures and presentations, and as a consultant to church leaders on biblical, doctrinal, and theological questions. In your vital and challenging work as a church elder, we at the BRI want to help you in every way we can. You can learn more about what we do and find many free resources, including documents and answers on many different subjects on our website: www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org. Here are some other ways in which we may be of service to you:



BRI's latest book.

1. Publications. Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, newly-elected General Conference president, in his sermon at the recent GC session in Atlanta, urged church members to "Utilize wonderful resources such as the Biblical Research Institute's new book on hermeneutics that helps us know the correct way to interpret the Scriptures."¹ Easily one of the most important resources we have ever published, *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, deals with questions like "How did two million or more Israelites cross the Red Sea in one night?" (Exod 14:21-22), "Did Jesus make all foods clean?" (Mark 7:18-19), "Are the evil angels kept in a burning hell?" (Jude 6) and many other passages "hard to understand." In just three or four pages, for each of the nearly 100 Bible passages considered, clear but not overly simple answers are given. Some more general questions are also answered, for example, "Who decided which books would be included in the Bible?" and "Why are there four Gospels?" Two other recent books published by BRI are *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (dealing more generally with how to study the Bible) and *Toward a Theology of the Remnant* (a careful examination of the biblical and theological basis for our understanding of the remnant).

Of course, we also write for a variety of church publications, such as *Adventist World* and *Ministry*. Three from BRI are authors of recent Sabbath School quarterlies: BRI director Ángel Manuel Rodríguez on the atonement, and associate directors Ekkehardt Mueller on the epistles of John and Gerhard Pfandl on the gift of prophecy. Quarterlies from the two other associate directors are forthcoming: Kwabena Donkor on the fundamental beliefs and Clinton Wahlen on the epistle of James. Four times a year we also send out a very helpful electronic publication called *Reflections*. Recent issues have dealt with such subjects as creation versus evolution, homosexuality, law and the Sabbath, and the just-completed GC session. If you are interested in this quarterly



BRI theologians at a 2010 Bible conference in Japan (from right to left): Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (director) with associate directors Clinton Wahlen, Ekkehardt Mueller, Kwabena Donkor, and Gerhard Pfandl

resource, check with your pastor who should be receiving it regularly by email.

2. Speaking appointments. The second area of activity involves travel to the various fields to hold seminars, conduct Bible conferences for pastors, elders, Bible teachers, and administrators, as well as teach intensive courses at our universities and seminaries. This serves to enrich the biblical understanding of church workers and encourage fellowship and dialogue among us on areas of mutual importance or concern. We also speak at workers' meetings, camp meetings, gatherings of theological societies and participate in television programs for the Hope channel.

3. Consultation. Third, BRI acts as a consultant to pastors, elders, and church administrators. For example, we provide input on Sabbath School lessons prior to their publication and on various other committees ranging from issues of science and theology to mission and church policy. We also answer questions that arise from various quarters of the world church. Some of these involve issues specific to a given field and so are best handled through regional Biblical Research Committees which, so far, have been established in seven divisions. Other questions come to us by phone, letter or email. Our aim is to always serve the needs of the church and foster theological unity among us.

As we near the end, we see Satan working even more desperately to introduce doubts and divisions among us. This should not be a surprise inasmuch as Revelation 12:17 shows him making war specifically against the remnant because he knows that his time is short. That is also why the climax of the three angels' messages calls for endurance by God's people through "keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14:12). Our prayer at BRI is that the Lord may use us all, workers and lay members, to understand His Word clearly and share it powerfully and intelligently with those around us.

ED

¹ See the full text of this sermon at: <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=3614>.

Clinton Wahlen is associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE TO SEE THEM IN HEAVEN?

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