

quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2014

# ELDER'S DIGEST

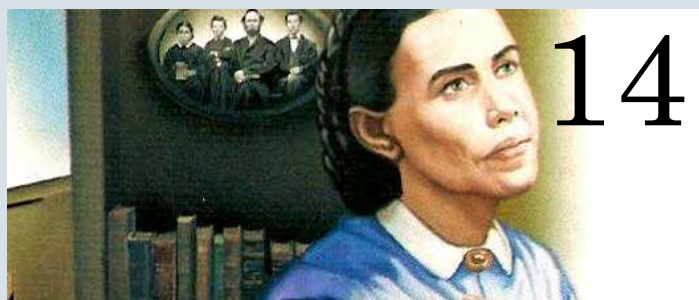
## THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S

UNDERSTANDING OF  
ELLEN WHITE'S AUTHORITY

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF ELDER'S DIGEST

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# A GIFT TO THE HUMAN FAMILY

The gift of prophecy is one of God’s special gifts extended through the Holy Spirit to the human family (1 Cor. 12:4-11). This gift is also called “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17), which is defined by the same inspired writer to be “the spirit of prophecy” (19:10).

God’s purpose in providing and bestowing the prophetic gift is to re-establish and maintain communication with man, who has been estranged and separated from Him through sin. This gift operates through prophets by means of visions, dreams, inspiration, and revelation.

The product, prophecy, is a divine message from God to the human family. The great Book called “the word of God” (Heb. 4:12) and the “Holy Scriptures” (Rom. 1:2) came to mankind through the gracious operation of the prophetic gift (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

The prophetic gift is not the message itself, nor is it the gospel or the Bible; rather, it is the method, the process, the means by which the divine message comes from

God to man. It is an essential and inseparable part of the great plan of redemption.

The gift, therefore, dates back to the day when the Lord resumed communication with Adam after his banishment from Eden. This gift has never been withdrawn; it is still God’s abiding gift to the human family. Through this channel, He has been revealing Himself and giving His messages to the world ever since our first parents left their Eden home.

There have been periods, some short and some long, when the gift has not been manifested in “open vision” (1 Sam. 3:1), but the gift has never been permanently withdrawn. At such times as God has deemed best, the manifestation of the gift has reappeared, and, through the medium of visions and dreams, prophets have brought divine messages to the Lord’s needy people.

In this issue of *Elder’s Digest*, you will find, among other relevant topics, a special emphasis on both the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *Elder’s Digest* reaching that historic landmark in 2014, and helpful information regarding the “gift of prophecy.” The year 2015 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ellen G. White’s death. We honor her memory, ministry, and legacy to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Enjoy your reading!



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# ELDER'S DIGEST 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!

THE YEAR 2014 MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE *ELDER'S DIGEST* MAGAZINE AS A RESPECTED AND WELL-LIKED JOURNAL THAT STANDS THE TEST OF TIME SERVING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE WORLDWIDE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH.

This special edition appropriately combines the celebration of 20 years of successful editorial venture of our magazine with the introduction to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of Ellen G. White to be reminisced in 2015—as mentioned by the editor, Pastor Jonas Arrais.

The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is engaged in the important work

of providing to our pastors and other leaders of our Church the necessary resources to inspire, inform, train, and empower them at the local congregational level where most of them serve as volunteers. The *Elder's Digest* magazine, one of the three journals published by the General Conference Ministerial Association, is printed quarterly with a menu of relevant articles with leadership strategies, didactic tools,



health tips for elders, Seventh-day Adventist Church statements, news around the world, sermon outlines, worldwide initiatives of our Church, questions and answers, and other biblical-sound topics for leaders.

*Elder's Digest* was founded in 1994 and is intentionally designed to attend the needs of local church leaders around the world and to keep them focused and connected. It is prepared to help elders and company directors to grow in their skills and abilities as leaders. It is recognized as the best way to equip them while sharing and promoting church programs and initiatives at the local church level around the world.

At its inception in 1994, approximately 5,000 copies of *Elder's Digest* rolled off the press and into the hands of local church elders and pastors each quarter. Today, about 100,000 copies in English are delivered each quarter. *Elder's Digest* is also printed in multiple languages around the world. Overall, more than 220,000 copies are printed each quarter and delivered to over 100 countries, including all of the world divisions. And we are still growing, but with an unbearable desire to reach a greater amount of local church elders who are not receiving this valuable resource.

Beside the publication of the magazine in English, the *Elder's Digest* editorial office sends each quarter to all world divisions the PDF files in advance for translation purposes.

More than 200,000 leaders around the world are getting the *Elder's Digest* magazine in 14 languages so far—English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Polish, Bulgarian, Italian, Romanian, Indonesian, Tagalog, Bahasa, Chinese, and Swahili. Praise God for His wonderful blessings and for the hard work of the Ministerial Association counterparts around the world leading the translations process into those languages!

After 20 years of uninterrupted editorial work we pause to express our gratitude to the Almighty God for His providential guidance and abundant blessings every step of the way. We also send a big THANK YOU to each one who has contributed to the honorable success we celebrate at the closing of this year—former and present editors, assistants, writers, the General Conference and Division Ministerial teams, donors, translators, copy editors, proofreaders, Web masters, summer student workers, designers, workers of our publishing houses, subscribers, advisors, and partners—including the General Conference, Division, Union, and Conference/Mission administrators. We request your patronage and prayers as we pledge our commitment for greater realizations to continue building the kingdom of God in these end times. ED

Alfredo Garcia-Marenko is editorial assistant for the *Elder's Digest*.



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# THE END-TIME REMNANT

## AND THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

**Throughout** history God has had faithful followers (Rev 12). By making such a statement we also acknowledge that the Old and New Testaments also recount the apostasy of God's people (Ezek 23; Rev 17; 2 Thess 2:1-4). The faithful followers of God are called remnant.

### I. THE END-TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION 12

#### 1. Historical Background

- Rev 12:1-2 The woman in Revelation 12 is a symbol, representing the people of God (Isa 54:5-6; Eph 5:25-32).
- Rev 12:3 The dragon is Satan (Rev 12:9).
- Rev 12:4-5 He tried to destroy the male child, Jesus Christ, who was taken to God.
- Rev 12:6 With only the church left, Satan persecuted the true believers for centuries (see also verses 13-16).
- Rev 12:17 Finally, he turns against the last descendants of the church, the remnant.

#### 2. Major Characteristics of the Remnant

- Rev 12:17 They keep the commandments of God [the Ten Commandments (including the Sabbath) which were placed in the ark of the covenant—Rev 11:19; the Sabbath commandment is alluded to in Rev 14:7] and have the testimony of Jesus.
- Rev 14:12 They have also patience and faith in/ of Jesus. Jesus takes center stage in their lives.

#### 3. What is the testimony of Jesus?

- Rev 1:2, 9 The testimony of Jesus is the prophetic message, which includes the content of the Book of Revelation and the gospel.



- Rev 19:10 The “testimony of Jesus” is also defined as “the Spirit of prophecy.” It is the Holy Spirit that gives the gift of prophecy.
- Rev 22:9 This verse closely parallels Revelation 19:10. Here “the brothers who have the testimony of Jesus” are the “prophets.” That means the faithful remnant of God treasures Scripture and accepts prophetic manifestations that accord with Scripture.

### II. PROPHECY IN THE ADVENTIST MOVEMENT

New movements and philosophies emerged in the beginning of the nineteenth century such as the theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin and modern spiritualism. Belief systems were shaken and there arose people who



claimed to be prophets of God, but were fanatics instead. In that challenging time, God intervened through the genuine gift of prophecy.

**1. William Foy.** As a Baptist he was preparing for the ministry. He believed in the soon coming of Jesus. On January 18, 1842 he had his first vision about the reward of the believers and the judgment of the unbelievers. He had a second vision on February 4, 1842. He was asked to proclaim what he had seen. He received a third vision shortly before October 22, 1844, the day of the Great Disappointment. And because he did not understand the vision, he refused to proclaim it.

**2. Hazen Foss.** Foss had a good education. He also believed in the soon return of Christ. He had his first vision shortly before October 22, 1844. When during his second vision he was asked to proclaim it, he refused. In his third vision he was warned of the consequence but persisted in his refusal. When due to strange feelings he finally called for a meeting to share what he had seen, he was not able to relate it. Instead of proclaiming God's message he declared himself a lost man. He lived for another forty years but lost his interest in spiritual matters.

**3. Ellen Gould White.** E. G. Harmon, later White, was quite sick during her childhood. So she managed to have only three years of schooling. At the age of twelve she was baptized. The entire Harmon family was disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church due to their connection with the Millerites and their expectation of the soon coming of Jesus. At the age of seventeen Ellen had her first vision and, in spite of opposition, she proclaimed the messages received. When God requested her to write down the visions, the task was taxing in the beginning but after some time it became easier. Later she experienced relatively good health and died in 1915 at the age of 87. She affirmed biblical doctrines that others had found through intense study. She wrote many books, strengthened individuals and the Adventist Church as a whole. She never held an ecclesiastical office. She claimed having received divine revelations in a supernatural way. Foy still lived when Ellen White related her visions. He declared that he had seen the same scenes. Foss was once in the house of his sister in which some Adventists met to hear Ellen White. Later he confirmed that the visions were taken from him and given to her. Indeed, Foss had already rejected his visions, when Ellen White received her first vision.

### III. PHENOMENA THAT OCCURRED TO ELLEN WHITE DURING HER VISIONS

Before a vision, people sensed the specific presence of God. When Ellen White received a vision typically she would exclaim "Glory to God." She lost her strength and fell to the

floor. Sometimes she received extra strength. For instance, she was able to hold an eighteen-pounds Bible with outstretched arm for half an hour. She did not breathe; however, heartbeat, pulse, and skin color were normal. With opened eyes she intensely observed events that others could not see. Her eyes were not fixed like in a trance. Physicians investigated her when she was in a vision, and many witnesses testified what happened.

When in vision, she had no awareness of what was going on around her. She was sitting, standing, walking, or laying down during a vision. Her gestures were always graceful. Toward the end of a vision she took a deep breath. Gradually her normal breathing resumed and her normal physical strength returned. After a vision her state of health was improved.

These phenomena remind us of the ones experienced by the prophet Daniel. The content of her visions dealt with the past, the present, and the future like with the prophets of old (see her book *The Great Controversy*).

### IV. WAS ELLEN G. WHITE A PROPHET?

An appropriate answer to this question requires the application of the following biblical tests:

**1. No materialistic attitude**—Micah 3:9-12. She did not prophesy for money.

**2. Full agreement with the Holy Scriptures**—Isaiah 8:19, 20; Deuteronomy 13:1-4. She taught what Scripture teaches (e.g., the Godhead, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, etc.). At times she commented on a detail in a biblical verse or passage, which would require knowledge of the original languages. But she did not know Hebrew or Greek and seldom used academic works dealing with Scripture. This indicates that she was inspired by God.

**3. Recognition of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior who had become fully human**—1 John 4:1-3. She clearly recognizes that one of her purposes was to uplift Jesus as our Savior and Lord. See her crucial books *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages*.

**4. Good fruit, that is, an exemplary conduct of life and an effective ministry**—Matthew 7:15-21. Her exemplary Christian life received recognition not only from the vast majority of Adventists but also from public newspapers in the United States. Edith Dean said about E. G. White: "Certainly, she was a spokesman for God. Like the prophets of old, her life was marked by humility, simplicity, austerity, divine learning, and devotion" (*Great Women of the Christian Faith*, 230). Her influence continues today, and her books still lead people to God.

**5. Not only proclamation of messages that people like to hear**—1 Kings 22:4-8. Her letters and books contain ad-

## THE END-TIME REMNANT THAT HAVE THIS “TESTIMONY OF JESUS” ARE COMMITTED TO JESUS AND YET ARE STILL STRUGGLING BELIEVERS, LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING UNITED WITH GOD AND BEING FREED FROM ALL TRACES OF SIN.

monition and rebuke. She did not follow rules of political correctness that avoid tricky issues, but she also presented divine promises and comfort.

**6. Fulfillment of predictions**—Deuteronomy 18:22. She warned against (1) the potential danger of x-rays, (2) the pollution in the cities and the problem that they may become a health hazard, (3) brain damage done by alcohol, (4) animal fat (cholesterol), (5) tobacco as a kind of poison. (6) She also spoke of electric currents in the brain decades before these facts were known. (7) Furthermore, she made some unequivocal predictions: In 1902 she predicted a judgment on San Francisco and Oakland; in 1906, the great earthquake happened. She mentioned the worldwide spread of spiritualism when its modern form had

just appeared. She talked about millions of dead people, the destruction of entire fleets twenty-four years before the beginning of World War I. She also addressed issues such as the increase in crime, extremely difficult economic conditions, and disintegration of society.

As a result of the above observations is the inescapable conclusion that Ellen G. White was a genuine prophet.

### V. THE PURPOSE OF HER MINISTRY

The purpose of her ministry as described by herself was probably fivefold: (1) exalt Scripture and bring people back to the Bible, (2) clarify and apply the biblical principles for daily living, (3) rebuke sin and call people to obey God and His commandments, (4) lead people to Jesus and present to them hope and comfort, (5) prepare people for the final days of earth’s history and Christ’s Second Coming.

### VI. ELLEN WHITE AND SCRIPTURE

Although E. G. White shares in the inspiration of the biblical writers and in this respect is not different from them, her writings do not take the place of Scripture but are subordinate to it. Therefore, we recognize that although her writings are authoritative, the Bible remains supreme. Scripture contains

what is needed for salvation and a relationship with God. Nevertheless, the genuine gift of prophecy leads people back to the Scriptures they have neglected or misunderstood.


“The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. . . . The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, vii).

The gift of prophecy has been provided by God’s grace, and we should be extremely thankful for it, use it, and follow it. This God-given gift does not replace the Bible but remains vital because we need it.

### VII. HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET ELLEN WHITE’S WRITINGS?

As the Bible needs to be interpreted (Luke 24:27), E. G. White’s writings need interpretation too. Here are some principles: (1) Focus on the most important issues, (2) do not take passages out of context, (3) try to understand the historical situation in order to determine whether her advice is universal or applies to a certain case under certain circumstances only. (4) If you study a topic, investigate it in all of her writings, (5) keep in mind that she oftentimes does not strictly interpret biblical texts but applies them to specific situations, (6) look for the principles that she stresses, (7) discover the theological themes that she highlights and makes a special contribution to, (8) if others use or mention her, be sure she has really said what these persons claim.

### CONCLUSION

The end-time church has specific characteristics that are pointed out by Jesus. Among them is the gift of prophecy. This gift is revealed in Scripture and in genuine prophets that God may send. Prophecy is a gracious gift of God that we treasure and follow. The end-time remnant that have this “testimony of Jesus” are committed to Jesus and yet are still struggling believers, looking forward to being united with God and being freed from all traces of sin. In addition to them, there are other faithful people in apostate organizations. They are called to join the faithful remnant of Jesus—Revelation 18:2 and 4—and with them live godly lives and proclaim the last message, waiting for the appearance of their beloved Lord. 

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



# ELLEN G. WHITE'S MINISTRY

DO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE THAT THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE ARE EQUAL TO, OR AN ADDITION TO, THE SCRIPTURES? IF THE BIBLE IS ALL-SUFFICIENT, WHY DO WE NEED ELLEN WHITE'S WRITINGS?

Seventh-day Adventists do not place Ellen White's writings on the same level as Scripture. "The Holy Scriptures stand alone, the unique standard by which her and all other writings must be judged and to which they must be subject" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 227). Another way of framing this question is to ask why the church should need any of the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White answered this question in the Introduction to her book *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*:

"In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V.).

"Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the Word.


"The Spirit was not given--nor can it ever be bestowed--to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. . . .

"In harmony with the Word of God, His Spirit was to continue its work throughout the period of the gospel dispensation. During the ages while the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament were being given, the Holy Spirit did not cease to communicate light to individual minds, apart from the revelations to be embodied in the Sacred Canon. The Bible itself relates how, through the Holy Spirit, men received warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction, in matters in no way relating to the giving of the Scriptures. And mention is made of prophets in different ages, of whose utterances nothing is recorded. In like manner, after the close of the canon of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue its work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. vii, viii).

HOW MANY BOOKS AND ARTICLES DID ELLEN WHITE WRITE?

At the time of her death Ellen White's literary productions totaled approximately 100,000 pages: 24 books in current circulation; two book manuscripts ready for publication; 5,000 periodical articles in the journals of the church; more than 200 tracts and pamphlets; approximately 35,000 typewritten pages of manuscript documents and letters; 2,000 handwritten letters and diary materials comprising, when copied, another 15,000 typewritten pages. Compilations made after her death from Ellen White's writings bring the total number of books currently in print to more than 130.

WHAT DID ELLEN WHITE BELIEVE REGARDING THE GODHEAD?

Ellen White never used the term "trinity," although she did refer to the "three living persons of the heavenly trio" (*Evangelism*, p. 615). She believed in the full deity of Christ, stating that "Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore" (*Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906). She also referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Third Person of the Godhead" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671). Her comments, as collected in *Evangelism*, pages 613-617, suggest that she believed that the Scriptures taught the existence of three co-eternal divine persons. 

These and other questions and answers regarding the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White, can be found at [www.whiteestate.org](http://www.whiteestate.org).

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

# THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF ELLEN WHITE'S AUTHORITY

EXHIBIT ONE. FROM THE *ADVENTIST REVIEW*, DECEMBER 23, 1982.  
ALSO APPEARED IN *MINISTRY*, FEBRUARY 1983.  
THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE WRITINGS  
(TEN AFFIRMATIONS AND TEN DENIALS ON ELLEN WHITE'S AUTHORITY)  
ISSUED BY THE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

## A STATEMENT OF PRESENT UNDERSTANDING

*In response to requests, a statement on the relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Bible was prepared initially by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference. The statement was published in the July 15 [1982] Adventist Review and August [1982] issue of Ministry with an invitation to readers to respond to it. Suggestions from readers and from several groups have led to a refinement of the statement to its present form. Although it is not a voted statement, we believe that the worldwide participation in its development makes it a reflection of the views of the church on the topic it addresses.—Biblical Research Institute.*

In the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Dallas in April, 1980, the Preamble states: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Paragraph one reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, while paragraph seventeen reflects the church's understanding of the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Scriptures. These paragraphs read as follows:



## 1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. Support is found in these Bible passages: 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Psalms 119:105; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Isaiah 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12.

## 17. THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White—the Lord's messenger. Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Support is found in these Bible passages: Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10.

The following affirmations and denials speak to the issues which have been raised about the inspiration and authority of the Ellen White writings and their relation to the Bible. These clarifications should be taken as a whole. They are an attempt to express the present understanding of Seventh-day Adventists. They are not to be construed as a substitute for, or a part of, the two doctrinal statements quoted above.

### AFFIRMATIONS

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.
4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.
5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.
6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.
7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy

Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists.

8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings, with prophetic urgency, to the spiritual and moral life.
9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.

### DENIALS

1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.
2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of Sacred Scripture.
3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture.
4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.
5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.
6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.
7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.
8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.
9. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are the product of mere Christian piety.
10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature.

### EXHIBIT 2: THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

[Excerpt from *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 28 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), pp. 258, 259.]



**The Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible.** The writings of Ellen White are not a substitute for Scripture. They cannot be placed on the same level. The Holy Scriptures stand alone, the unique standard by which her and all other writings must be judged and to which they must be subject.

**1. The Bible the supreme standard.** Seventh-day Adventists fully support the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, the Bible as its own interpreter and the Bible alone as the basis of all doctrines. The founders of the church developed fundamental beliefs through study of the Bible; they did not receive these doctrines through the visions of Ellen White. Her major role during the development of their doctrines was to guide in the understanding of the Bible and to confirm conclusions reached through Bible study.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White herself believed and taught that the Bible was the ultimate norm for the church. In her first book, published in 1851, she said, “I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged.”<sup>2</sup> She never changed this view. Many years later she wrote, “In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”<sup>3</sup> In 1909, during her last address to a general session of the church, she opened the Bible, held it up before the congregation, and said, “Brethren and sisters, I commend to you this Book.”<sup>4</sup>


In response to believers who considered her writings an addition to the Bible, she wrote, saying, “I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the Church*, given for the people of God. . . . You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God’s Word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God’s inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings.”<sup>5</sup>

**2. A guide to the Bible.** She saw her work [p. 228] as that of leading people back to the Bible. “Little heed is given to the Bible,” she said, therefore “the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”<sup>6</sup> “The Word of God,” she wrote, “is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the Word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and

pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the Word that they have neglected to follow.”<sup>7</sup>

**3. A guide in understanding the Bible.** Ellen White considered her writings a guide to a clearer understanding of the Bible. “Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.” “The written testimonies are not given to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed.”<sup>8</sup>

**4. A guide to apply Bible principles.** Much of her writings apply the Biblical counsels to everyday life. Ellen White said that she was “directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time specify the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals, that all might be warned, reprovéd, and counseled.”<sup>9</sup> Christ had promised such prophetic guidance to His church. As Ellen White noted, “The fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings.”<sup>10</sup>

*The Challenge to the Believer.* Revelation’s prophecy that the “testimony of Jesus” would manifest itself through the “spirit of prophecy” in the last days of earth’s history challenges everyone not to take an attitude of indifference or disbelief, but to “test everything” and “hold on to the good.” There is much to gain—or lose—depending on whether we carry out this Biblically mandated investigation. Jehoshaphat said, “Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper” (2 Chron. 20:20). His words ring true today, as well. 

<sup>1</sup> Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, pp. 208-210; Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), pp. 91-132; Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, pp. 103-293.

<sup>2</sup> White, *Early Writings*, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

<sup>4</sup> William A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1937), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 664, 665.

<sup>6</sup> White, “An Open Letter,” *Review and Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903, p. 15, in White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1953), p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 663.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 665.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 660.

<sup>10</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

# CLARITY AND PURITY OF UTTERANCE >PART 3 OF 3

**Proper Expression in Oral Reading:** The science of reading correctly and with the proper emphasis is of highest value. No matter how much knowledge you may have acquired in other lines, if you have neglected to cultivate your voice and manner of speech so that you can speak and read distinctly and intelligently, all your learning will be of but little profit; for without voice culture you cannot communicate readily and clearly that which you have learned.

To learn to tell convincingly and impressively that which one knows, is of special value to those who desire to become workers in the cause of God. The more expression you can put into words of truth, the more effective these words will be on those who hear. A proper presentation of the Lord's truth is worthy of our highest efforts.

**Distinctness in Every Word:** When you speak, let every word be full and well-rounded, every sentence clear and distinct to the very last word. Many as they approach the end of a sentence lower the tone of the voice, speaking so indistinctly that the force of the thought is destroyed. Words that are worth speaking at all are worth speaking in a clear, distinct voice, with emphasis and expression.

**Angel Voices in Union With Human Voices:** Let the voices of the followers of Christ be so trained that instead of crowding words together in a thick, indistinct way, their utterance may be clear, forcible, and edifying. Do not let the voice fall after each word, but keep it up so that each sentence will be full and complete. Will it not be worth disciplining yourself, if by so doing you are able to add interest to the service of God and to edify His children? The voice of thanksgiving, praise, and rejoicing is heard in heaven. The voices of the angels in heaven unite with the voices of the children of God on earth as they ascribe honor and glory and praise to God and to the Lamb for the great salvation provided.

**Uncomely Gestures, Uncouth Speech:** The workman for God should make earnest efforts to become a representative of Christ, discarding all uncomely gestures and uncouth speech. He should endeavor to use correct language. There is a large class who are careless in the way they speak, yet by careful, painstaking attention these may become representatives of the truth. Every day they should make advancement.


**THE MORE  
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BE ON THOSE  
WHO HEAR.**

They should not detract from their usefulness and influence by cherishing defects of manner, tone, or language. Common, cheap expressions should be replaced by sound, pure words. By constant watchfulness and earnest discipline the Christian youth may keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile.

**The Spirit's Help in Distinctness of Speech:** The teacher of truth is to take heed how he presents the truth. He is to speak every word plainly and distinctly, with that earnest conviction which carries conviction to hearts. If the

words spoken are crowded upon each other, the impression that should be made is lost. The talent of speech needs to be cultivated, that the truth be spoken not excitedly, but slowly and distinctly, that not a syllable may be lost. Rapidity of speech can and should be corrected.

If the words of truth are of sufficient importance to be spoken before an audience, they are of sufficient importance to be spoken distinctly. The guidance of the Spirit never leads to indistinctness of speech. The Spirit takes the things of God and presents them through the human instrument to the people. Then let them come from our lips in the most perfect manner possible.

**Our Words a Channel for the Communication of Truth:** We should receive the education essential in the line of conversation that we may know how to speak right words and how to speak in a proper tone, that our words may be a power for good. The truth is no truth to us unless it is brought into the inner courts of the soul. When this is done, our words are a channel through which truth is communicated to others. As you speak to others, lift your heart to God, praying that He will prepare their hearts to receive the heavenly seed. 

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 187-189, by Ellen G. White.

# CONFIDENCE IN THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

**We,** the delegates assembled in Utrecht for the fifty-sixth session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, express praise and thanksgiving to God for His gracious gift of the Spirit of Prophecy.

In Revelation 12, John the Revelator identifies the church in the last days as the “remnant . . . which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (verse 17). We believe that in this brief prophetic picture the Revelator is describing the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which not only keeps “the commandments of God” but has “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which is “the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

In the life and ministry of Ellen G White (1827-1915), we see God’s promise fulfilled to provide the remnant church with the “spirit of prophecy.” Although Ellen G White did not claim the title “prophet,” we believe she did the work of a prophet, and more. She said: “My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there” (*Selected Messages*, Book One, p 36); “If others call me by that name [prophetess], I have no controversy with them” (*ibid.*, p 34); “My work includes much more than this name signifies. I regard myself as a messenger, entrusted by the Lord with messages for His people” (*ibid.*, p 36).

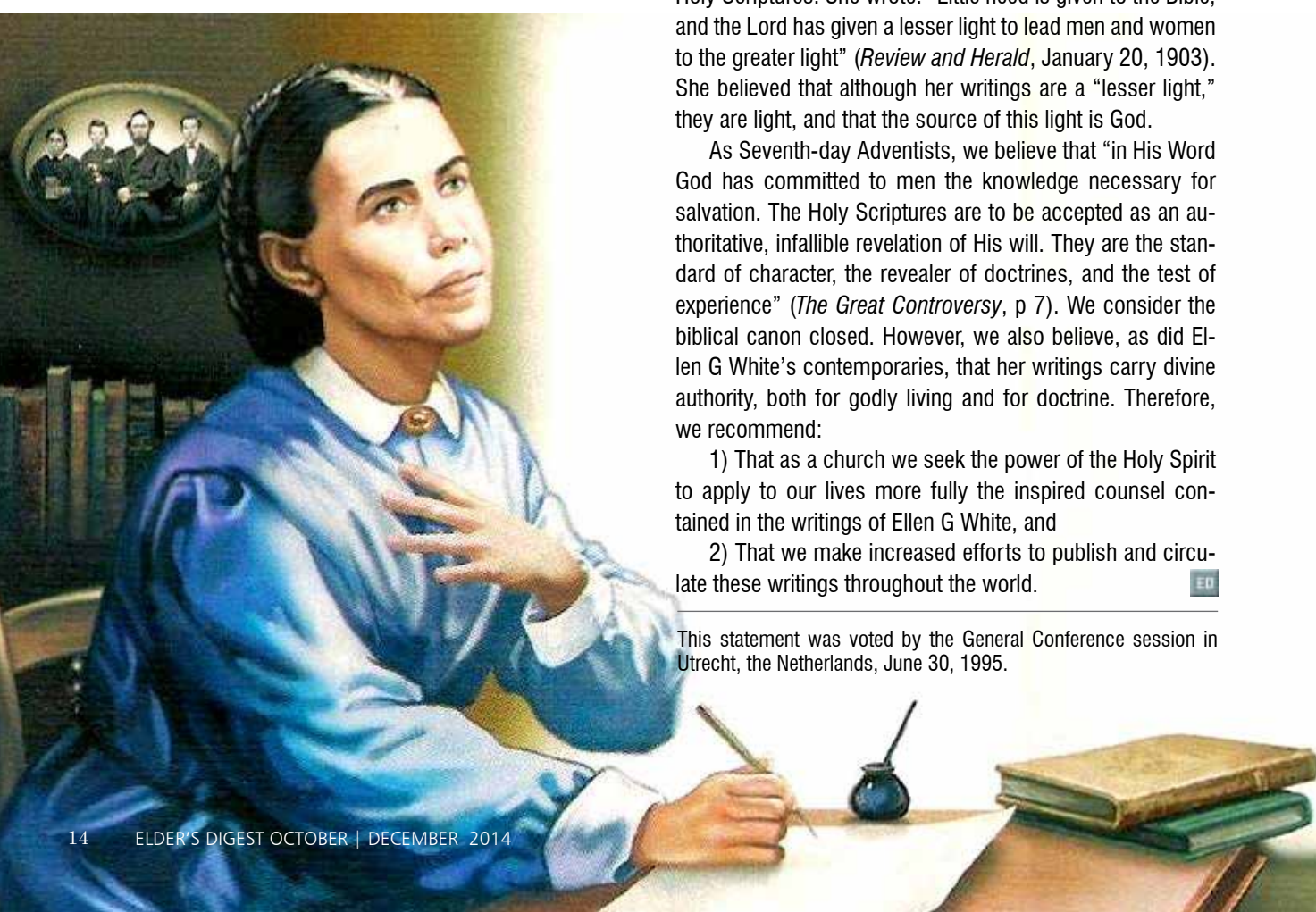
Ellen G White’s chief burden was to direct attention to the Holy Scriptures. She wrote: “Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light” (*Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903). She believed that although her writings are a “lesser light,” they are light, and that the source of this light is God.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that “in His Word God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience” (*The Great Controversy*, p 7). We consider the biblical canon closed. However, we also believe, as did Ellen G White’s contemporaries, that her writings carry divine authority, both for godly living and for doctrine. Therefore, we recommend:

- 1) That as a church we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G White, and
- 2) That we make increased efforts to publish and circulate these writings throughout the world.

ED

This statement was voted by the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 30, 1995.





# JESUS: THE GREAT SOUL-WINNER

John 4:1-30

In John 4, Jesus is presented as the great Soul-Winner. He genuinely cares for the fallen and is willing to reach out to all who crossed His path, whatever the cost. This story is no exception! In these verses, we can watch Jesus doing that which He does best: bringing sinners to salvation.

As we read through these verses, we can learn from the Savior's example. He longs to use us to reach a lost world. Following His example in reaching the lost is far better than any program or any course we can take. Let's join Jesus as He meets the woman at the well and demonstrates Himself to be the great Soul-Winner.

## I. THE ENCOUNTER WITH A SINFUL WOMAN (VERSES 1-8)

A. *The Savior* (verses 3-6). In these opening verses, Jesus is shown in His compassion and humanity. While Jesus was God, He was still a man, and He was acquainted with the trials and problems of life. He demonstrates that He does indeed care about the lost.

1. *He is seen walking.* He chose to live like the common man. Jesus knows what we face in life (Heb. 4:15); this is why He has such compassion for the lost.

2. *He is seen as willing.* Verse 4 declares that Jesus "must . . . go through Samaria." Most Jews went dozens of miles out of their way to avoid going through the land of the Samaritans; so great was their prejudice and hatred of people who were a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles. Jesus, however, was unaffected by the prejudice of the Jews. There was a woman in Samaria who was going to be called to salvation, and Jesus was determined to see that she had the opportunity to be saved.

There is no person beyond the reach of God's grace. All are sinners in need of salvation. Jesus loves them all, and we are commanded to love them as well.

3. *He is seen as wearied.* Again, this demonstrates Jesus' humanity. As God, Jesus never tired; yet as a man, He was prone to the same physical weaknesses as we are. It is no coincidence that Jesus was wearied. Jesus was here on a mission, and that mission is clearly stated in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

4. *He is seen waiting.* Jesus is seen waiting for this dear woman to come His way. He

has a wonderful gift that He wants to give to her. She never imagined meeting a Jewish rabbi at the well. Jesus, however, knew she was coming, and He waited patiently to rescue this one lost sheep.

B. *The sinner* (verse 7a). The second person in this great play is a woman, a woman who is sinful and in need of salvation. According to verse 6, it is about the sixth hour. According to the Jewish clock, this would have been around 12 noon. The woman probably came to the well at this time, alone, to avoid the insults and attacks of the other women. The reason for her ostracization is evident in verses 16-18. Even her own people hated her.

C. *The scene* (verses 7b-8). Notice that it is just Jesus and the woman. All the distractions of her life have been removed. None of her five ex-husbands are present. None of the women who so intensely hated her and her lifestyle are to be found here. It is just her and Jesus.

## II. THE CONVERSATION WITH A SINFUL WOMAN (VERSES 9-26)

A. *They talked of wells* (verse 9-12). When Jesus asked her for a drink, He apparently had no means by which to draw water (verse 11). The woman responded with amazement that a Jew would ask for a drink from a woman, much less a Samaritan. Jesus then offers her a drink of "living water." She confuses the physical with the spiritual. Salvation is not a transaction that can be explained in human terms. It is a spiritual transaction. At this point, she is not ready for salvation. She is a little sarcastic, but Jesus is leading her in the right direction.

B. *They talked of water* (verses 13-15). Jesus tells her that she can drink from Jacob's well every day, and she will still get thirsty and have to come back and draw again. Jesus is telling her, "I can give you one drink of living water, and you will be satisfied forever."

C. *They talked of wickedness* (verses 16-19). In an effort to awaken her to her spiritual need, Jesus plainly touches on what must have been the sorest spot in her life. He pointed out her sinfulness! This may seem cruel of the Lord, but nobody will ever come to Jesus for salvation until he or she is first awakened to his or her own personal need.

D. *They talked of worship* (verses 20-24). Since they are on the topic of religion, the woman proceeds to show Jesus that she is no

slacker in that area either. She tries to start an argument about the proper place to worship. Jesus simply ignores her point and tells her that true worship is never found in external rituals and substitutes for God; true worship can only be found in the spiritual worship of the Lord, that is, in worship that comes from His indwelling Spirit.

E. *They talked of wisdom* (verses 25-26). This lady displays openness to the words of Jesus. She reveals that she is concerned about salvation and about the things of God. Jesus simply reveals Himself as the Messiah she needs.

In these verses, Jesus gave this woman all that she needed to make a decision about her salvation.

## III. THE CONVERSION OF A SINFUL WOMAN (VERSES 27-30)

A. *It was immediate* (verse 28a). As soon as Jesus revealed Himself to her, she responded in faith, and her salvation was instantaneous. There was no mourner's bench, no praying through, no holding on, no 12-step program. She simply trusted, and she was instantly justified.

B. *It was incredible* (verse 28b). She ran off in her excitement and forgot why she even went to the well. She just left her water pot behind. She forgot the plans and the pull of her old life when she met Jesus. She came to the well for physical water and discovered spiritual water. She met Jesus and was forever changed.

C. *It was compelling* (verses 28c-29). She ran to the city to tell others about this Man she had met. She felt compelled to tell others about the salvation she had just experienced.

Salvation will give you a message to share and a heart from which to share it. When you meet Jesus, you want to help others find their way out of sin, too.

## CONCLUSION

What was it that took this woman from being a hardened sinner who was dead to spiritual things and be transformed into a powerful witness for the Lord? It can be summed up in one word: Jesus! He makes the difference in any life He touches. I invite you to come to Jesus today.

EQ

General Conference Ministerial Association

# JESUS: THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

John 5:1-9

The primary goal of the Gospel of John is not to give us a historical treatment of the life of Jesus; John's purpose is to exalt the person of Jesus so that we may believe on Him and be saved (John 20:30, 31).

Let's observe Jesus as He delivers a man from the bondage of his affliction. As we do, remember that Jesus can do the same for you if you will give Him the opportunity.

## I. A SICK MAN (VERSES 1-5)

A. *His wretched condition* (verse 5)

1. *He is disabled.* According to the Scriptures, this man had lived with this infirmity for 38 years. He had been sick longer than Jesus had been on the earth! The Bible says that this man had an "infirmity." This word means that he had some weakness or frailness that prevented him from walking about as other men did.

What a picture of the sinner who is lost and separated from God by his sins (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23). Regardless of what he tries, the sinner is still lost and unable to walk in the ways of the Lord.

2. *He is desperate.* The very fact that the man is here at this pool in his condition is proof positive that he is desperate for healing. Imagine him dragging his broken body toward that pool.

Sadly, there are too few sinners who are desperate about their spiritual condition.

3. *He is disappointed* (verse 7). The man tells Jesus that every time he is about to get into the water, someone else beats him to it and goes away with healing instead. Year after year, he has seen his hopes and dreams shattered as another person beat him to the healing waters.

Again, we can see the sinner in this scenario. A man can try many things to bring peace and salvation to his soul. He can try works, religion, goodness, giving, prayer, etc. But none of these things will ever be able to save anyone. Salvation requires the blood of Jesus.

B. *His wretched companions* (verse 3). This man was surrounded by others who were in the same condition he was. They offered him no comfort or help. They wouldn't have helped him anyway, because they needed healing for themselves!

Again, these sad people mirror the sinner in all of his helplessness, brokenness, blindness, and uselessness before the Lord (See also Eph. 2:12).

## II. A SYMPATHETIC SAVIOUR (VERSE 6A)

Jesus is pictured here as the compassionate Savior. He is shown doing three great works that prove this true:

A. *He is shown choosing the sinner.* According to the Bible's own witness, there was a "great multitude" there that day. Jesus could have gone to any person in that place, yet, for His own reasons, He went to this man. That was nothing but pure grace!

What a picture of Jesus and His work of salvation! He knocks on our heart's door (John 6:44). He reaches out to us in love and calls us unto Himself (Jer. 31:3; Matt. 11:28). When the sinner responds in faith (Rom. 10:9-10), Jesus comes in and does the work of salvation in our hearts and lives (verse 13). This is a work of grace and grace alone!

B. *He is shown caring for the sinner.* Jesus knew everything there was to know about this man. He knew that he was crippled, unable to walk, unable to stand, and unable to carry his own bed. Jesus knew that this man was totally dependent on others for everything he had in life. Yet, Jesus reached out to him anyway. What a picture of His grace! In fact, the pool was named "Bethesda," which means "house of grace."

Jesus knows all about the sinner's condition. He knows that we love our sins, that we cannot control our passions, and that we desire the things of the world that gratify this old flesh. And yet, He loves us still! Jesus refuses to see us as we are and chooses rather to see us as we can be through the power of His grace.

C. *He is shown coming to the sinner.* In what may be the greatest move of all, Jesus literally comes to where this poor man is lying and reaches out to him in genuine grace and love.

There are three ways in which Jesus comes to the sinner:

1. *He came as a sacrifice.* The first time Jesus came, He came to die. He went to Calvary and gave His life as a ransom for the sinner. He took your sins upon Himself and paid the price for your redemption. He became your sin and suffered the awesome wrath of God so you wouldn't have to (2 Cor. 5:21).

2. *He comes as a Savior.* Today, when Jesus comes to the sinner, He comes as Savior. He comes and offers eternal life to all who will receive Him into their hearts and lives.

3. *He comes as sovereign.* One day, if the sinner doesn't respond to the gospel message and come to Jesus, he will find himself facing Jesus as judge. The same Jesus who has the power to save you today will one day have the power to sentence you to death (Rev. 20:11-15)

## III. A STRIKING MIRACLE (VERSES 6B-9)

A. *There is an offer.* Jesus asks the man if he would like to be healed. The man responds by appealing to the flesh and tells Jesus that he has no one to help him into the pool.

This man is guilty of the same thing that so many others are guilty of: confusing the physical with the spiritual. Even today, Jesus comes to the lost sinner and makes an offer of salvation.

B. *There is an order.* Jesus tells the man to get up and walk. Jesus told this man to do something that he hadn't been able to do in 38 years, if ever. To me, this is a pretty incredible command! However, all that was required of this man was simple, childlike faith and obedience to the call of Jesus.

When the call comes to the sinner lost in sin, the only necessary response is faith!

C. *There is an outpouring.* When this man responded to Jesus' command by faith, he was immediately healed and was able to get up and walk. This miracle required no input from the crippled man; all he had to do was get up and walk at Christ's command.

Salvation works exactly the same way. Jesus comes to the sinner and calls him to salvation. All that is required of the sinner is humble obedience to the call of Jesus. When this obedience comes, the sinner is immediately and instantly made right with God, transformed into God's child, delivered from wrath and made an heir to all that heaven has to offer.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus demonstrated His power as the Great Physician by healing this man's body. However, there is no indication that this man ever became a believer in Jesus (verses 10-15). How sad—to come face-to-face with Jesus, experience His power and know His touch, and yet continue in sin without Him. The Great Physician is not only able to heal the body; He can heal the soul!



General Conference Ministerial Association

# JESUS: THE GREAT ENCOURAGER

John 14:1-31

In this great chapter, Jesus addresses some very important areas of life and offers hope in each of them today. In the hour of His greatest need, He takes the time to encourage the hearts of His disciples and of every person who takes the time to read and heed these words. Join me as we encounter Jesus, the great Encourager.

## I. JESUS OFFERS HOPE (VERSES 2, 3)

He speaks of:

A. *A heavenly home* (verse 2). Jesus tells us about a prepared place for a prepared people! While we do not have detailed information about the wonders of that heavenly city, I can tell you that when we arrive there, we will be at home! We will dwell in the Father's house and in the Father's presence, free from sin, sorrow, suffering, separation, or any other thing that would hinder the glory of heaven (Rev. 21:4, 27).

Paul had seen it but couldn't find the words to describe what he had seen; therefore, he was reduced to telling us that whatever was over there was "far better" than what we have down here (Phil. 1:23).

B. *A heavenly hope* (verse 3). In this verse, Jesus reminds us that one day, He will return for His people. Paul sheds a little more light on this monumental event (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thes. 4:16, 17). Men may doubt it and mock it, but Jesus is going to come again. The best advice I have for you is to be ready (Matt. 24:44)!

C. *A heavenly homecoming* (verse 3). The disciples are upset with the notion that Jesus is going away; therefore, He tells them that where He is going, they can also come.

John saw Him and described Him this way (Rev. 1:13-19); however, the greatest description ever penned about our risen Lord is found in Revelation 5:6. That is the Jesus we will behold in glory!

## II. JESUS OFFERS HELP (VERSES 4-31)

There is help from Jesus in the matter of:

A. *Salvation* (verses 4-11). In these verses, Jesus tells the disciples that there is only one plan of salvation for all men. He declares Himself to be the only access to God for any man! He goes beyond that revelation and says that He is, in fact, the representation of Almighty God. Jesus is the only means of

salvation for all humanity! Acts 4:12; 16:31; and John 3:16 all bear testimony to the truth that salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

B. *Service* (verses 12-14). As we live in the here and now, we can rest assured that Jesus will aid us in His work. He gives us a threefold promise related to the matter of our service.

1. *He will honor us.* Jesus declares that we will be able to do greater works than those, which He did.

2. *He will hear us.* Here we are given the blessed assurance that when we call upon the name of the Lord, He will hear us in our time of need. Knowing that we do not serve alone but that we have His presence and His attention to our prayers makes serving Jesus much easier. We serve a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God (See also Jer. 33:3).

3. *He will help us.* Not only does Jesus promise to hear our prayers, He also promises to move in such a way as to bring about an answer. He listens, and then He goes to work on our behalf! We serve a Lord who is able to help us in our need (Matt. 7:7, 8)!

C. *Surrender* (verses 15, 19-24). In these verses, Jesus speaks about our surrender to His authority. He declares that our surrender to Him should be based in love! He tells us two great truths that must not go unnoticed:

1. *The proof of love.* Jesus makes it clear that our obedience to Him and His Word is the absolute proof of our love to Him.

2. *The promise of love.* The promise to those who are obedient to the Lord Jesus is that God will manifest His love to them.

D. *The Holy Spirit* (verses 16-18, 26). These verses tell of the coming of the Holy Spirit. We are given several truths about Him and His ministry to believers that need to be studied today:

1. *His person.* Jesus promised the disciples that when He went to the Father, He would ask the Father to send the "Comforter." This Comforter is the Holy Spirit.

2. *His permanence.* When the Spirit of God takes up residence in the hearts of His believers, He comes to stay forever!

3. *His purpose.* The purpose of the Spirit in the believer's life is manifold. These verses describe His plans for us and His purpose in coming into us at conversion:

- *To indwell* (verse 17). At the moment of salvation, the believer literally becomes the Temple of God. God, in the form of His Spirit, comes in and takes up permanent residence.

- *To empower* (verse 21). He fills us with the power to live and labor for the Lord. Without Him, we could accomplish nothing of glory for Jesus' sake. However, when Jesus fills us and leads us, we have the ability to accomplish things that would otherwise be impossible (Phil. 4:13).

- *To instruct* (verse 26). One purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to instruct us in the things of God. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches about the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the deep things of God to us.

- *To remind* (verse 26). When we become discouraged, the Holy Spirit in our soul rises up and wraps the comforting arms of heavenly love and protection around us and reminds us that we belong to Him. He encourages us to keep running, to keep going, to keep living for Jesus.

E. *Stillness* (verses 27-31). As Jesus concludes the thoughts of chapter 14, He speaks to the disciples' troubled hearts once again. He reminds them that He is still the Prince of Peace and that just because He is leaving doesn't mean that He will remove His peace. Here, Jesus tells the disciples that even though their world is about to be shattered, they can face it with the assurance that they have His peace to keep them during the difficult hours ahead.

## CONCLUSION

I am glad that when I do not understand what is going to happen, when it seems that everything is falling apart, when I don't know which way to turn, I can count on Jesus! He has given us all we need today. Whether the need is for salvation or for peace of heart, the remedy will be found in Him. I invite you to come to Jesus today and cast your cares upon Him.



General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

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# JESUS: THE GREAT GIFT-GIVER

John 16:7-15; 14:16-18

As Jesus and His disciples made their way from the Upper Room to Gethsemane, He taught them many valuable truths. These men were understandably upset at the notion that Jesus was going to be taken from their midst. Because of their distress, Jesus gave them the truths contained in chapters 14–16 to encourage them and comfort them concerning the future. In this passage, Jesus is telling them of His Spirit. He promises that when He goes away, He will deliver unto them a great gift. That gift is the Holy Spirit of God.

Let's look into these verses and see a portrait of Jesus, the great Gift-Giver. While the passage is all about Jesus Christ, the emphasis is on the gift.

## I. THE WORTH OF THE GREAT GIFT (VERSE 7)

Jesus told His disciples that it was “expedient” that He go away. This word simply means that it is best for Jesus’ disciples if He leaves. How is that possible? Well, to understand the worth of this great gift, we must first understand something of Jesus’ nature. Consider the following:

A. *The personality of the great gift.* Notice that the Spirit of God is a “He,” not an “it.” He is co-equal with the Father and the Son and is as much God as they are (1 John 5:7). However, His status as a Person is further illustrated by the Bible’s use of pronouns when referring to the Holy Spirit. Notice John 16:7, 8; 15-13; 14:16-18. Look at every instance of “He” and “Him.” Other truths that let us know that He is a Person:

1. *He can be “grieved”* (Eph. 4:30). The word “grieve” means to make sad or sorry.
2. *He can be “quenched”* (1 Thes. 5:19). To “quench” means to put out a fire.
3. *He can be “lied to”* (Acts 5:1-11).

Two other facts are worthy of special notice:

a. In John 14:16, Jesus referred to the Spirit as “another Comforter.” The word “another” comes from the word *allos*, which refers to “one of the same kind or quality.” It implies a state of equality and sameness.

b. According to John 15:26 and 16:13, 14, the Holy Spirit will never promote Himself. He is in the sole business of pointing men to Jesus.

B. *The power of the great gift.* Note that the Spirit is called by the name “Comforter.” This word comes to us from the Greek word *parak-*

*letos*. It refers to an assistant, a helper, one who comes alongside of another to offer aid. It would be absolutely impossible to live the Christian life without the presence of the Holy Spirit.

C. *The permanence of the great gift.* According to the Bible, the Spirit of God comes into a life at the moment of conversion (1 Cor. 12:13) and never leaves (John 14:16).

## II. THE WORK OF THE GREAT GIFT (VERSES 7-15)

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7, we are told of the Spirit’s restraining ministry. In John 3:5, we are told of the Spirit’s regenerating ministry. In these verses, we are told about the Spirit’s reproofing ministry.

A. *In the lives of sinners* (verses 8-11). In relation to those outside of Jesus, the Spirit of God performs a two-fold work:

1. *He convicts.* He points out wrong and sin.
2. *He convinces.* He points the lost person toward the truth. He reveals the truth of God to hearts that have been opened to it through the ministry of conviction. This ministry involves conviction and convincing in the areas of:
  - a. *Sin.* The Holy Spirit convicts lost sinners of their sinfulness. He makes Romans 3:23 and 3:10 real to the hearts of the sinners and points out their sin!
  - b. *Righteousness.* The Holy Spirit convicts the lost man of the need to get right with God. He produces in the heart of the lost a deep-seated feeling of filthiness.

The righteousness of Jesus will be “imputed” to anyone who receives Him (Rom. 4:24). There is hope! Don’t run from Jesus; rather, run to Him!

c. *Judgment.* The Spirit of God convicts the heart of man about the reality of approaching judgment and condemnation.

B. *In the lives of the saints* (verses 12-15). While the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of unbelievers, He is also very active in the lives of God’s people. There are several ministries that He conducts in our lives:

1. *Indwelling* (John 14:17). He lives inside every child of God!
2. *Instructing* (John 16:13). He is present to give direction in the way of God, the will of God, and the Word of God.
3. *Infilling* (Eph. 5:18). The Spirit of God desires to fill our lives with His presence and

power so that we might be able to serve the Lord in an abundant and glorious manner.

4. *Enabling* (Acts 1:8). What transformed the disciples from a group of terrified men hiding in an upper room into a group of men who took the world by storm? The power of the Holy Spirit!

5. *Encouraging* (John 14:18). The Spirit of God carries out a blessed ministry of encouragement in the lives of God’s children. He knows every trial we face, and He is able to support us, aid us, and keep us during all of life’s difficult times. How is this possible? He is ever with us (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20). He even helps us in our prayer lives (Rom. 8:26, 27).

## III. THE WONDER OF THE GREAT GIFT (JOHN 14:16-18)

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift should be abundantly clear by now. However, I would like to point out three great truths that illustrate the wonder of this great gift.


A. *The wonder lies in His presence in our lives* (verse 17). Just the simple truth that every child of God is a living, breathing temple of God is astounding (1 Cor. 6:19).

B. *The wonder lies in His permanence in our lives* (verse 16). Once a person is saved by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in that person’s life (Eph. 4:30).

C. *The wonder lies in His performance in our lives* (verse 16). The Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood, most neglected, and most frequently-ignored member of the Trinity. Yet, as far as our day-to-day lives are concerned, He is most active in our lives and the One on whom we are most dependent.

## CONCLUSION

Did this message come to you as you are struggling in sin? That is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Or did this message find you already saved but living in your own power and energy? My challenge is that you confess your sins to the Lord. He will forgive you and use you again for His glory.

Did this message find you saved but struggling with the difficulties and burdens of life? My challenge to you is that you also lay your burdens out before the Lord, who cares for you and who will come alongside of you in the Person of His Spirit to help you through this difficult time. 

General Conference Ministerial Association

Your members are likely connected online. Do you know where? Find out, and make sure your congregation is with them online, too.

Your church Communication director can create a Facebook page and Twitter account and regularly post photos, tweets and videos. These will keep members informed of upcoming events and offer encouraging thoughts throughout the week. Similar news content can be sent to members as a weekly email news bulletin.



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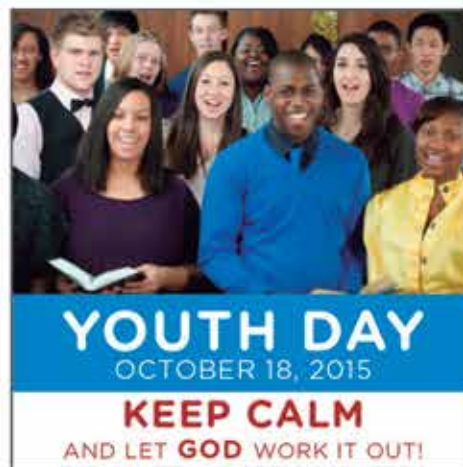
Staying connected helps create community among your church family.

You can also post content from the Adventist world church social media accounts to connect members with their world family. On Facebook: [fb.com/theadventistchurch](https://www.facebook.com/theadventistchurch) and Twitter: [@adventistchurch](https://twitter.com/adventistchurch)

## Examples showing how to stay **CONNECTED!**



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HIS love never fails, never gives up, never runs out! Join us this Sabbath and find out how. [www.FakeWebsite.org](http://www.FakeWebsite.org)

## 5 STEPS to HELP YOU GET STARTED!

- 1 Identify social media talent in your church for possible volunteers.
- 2 Find out where your members are active online to join them there.
- 3 Create an account in those social media platforms.
- 4 See what other churches are sharing through their social media accounts and how they interact with their members and community.
- 5 Develop a strategic plan for how often to post and what content to share. Make sure to follow your plan!

For more information, see these resources on doing social media at your local church:

- Article: <http://bit.ly/1kPpYOT>
- Three-part series of videos from Adventist Risk Management: <http://bit.ly/1n9MSVX>

# WHERE IS GOD ALREADY ACTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## AND HOW CAN YOU JOIN HIM?

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 ISSUE OF *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THIS ARTICLE PROPOSED “FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS’ MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME<sup>1</sup> AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES THAT WOULD UNPACK THESE COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL.<sup>2</sup> THIS ARTICLE, THE EIGHTH IN THE SERIES, FOCUSES ON THE TENTH “FARMING COMMANDMENT.”

The members of the Newport, Tennessee, Seventh-day Adventist Church wanted their church to make a difference. They decided to partner with their community to bring comfort and joy to abused and hurting children.

Newport Church member Carole Colburn directs an outreach ministry called “It’s My Very Own” (IMVO). Fifteen women from churches of various denominations in the community join Newport members at the Adventist Church on Monday mornings to produce “Bags of Love” for the IMVO ministry. The IMVO project is done in partnership with Child Protective Services in their neighboring 10 counties.

These ladies lovingly make beautiful quilts and large, colorful cloth bags for the quilts. They also add toys, stuffed animals, personal care items (comb, hairbrush, toothbrush, toothpaste), books, etc. The bags are then delivered to Child Protective Services.

When children are forcefully removed from their homes, they generally can’t take anything with them to foster homes. Receiving a “Bag of Love” from Child Protective Services gives them something to call their very own. Each quilt has a tag that reads:

*“It’s My Very Own” Bags of Love  
Made for you by the hearts and hands of the people of your  
community*

*Sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

So far, the ladies have made over 1,600 quilts and bags. Because of confidentiality issues, they may never know most of the reactions to their loving work. But some statements have reached their ears: “These bags make such a difference to the kids. They come into our office scared to death. But the minute they are given these bags that are their very own, it’s like Christmas.” “Even the teenage boys come into the office with their quilts thrown over their shoulders.” A foster parent telephoned Carole Colburn and said: “I’m so glad to reach someone who is involved in making these quilts and bags. Just recently we were given two children to keep—a boy, age 6, and a girl, age 9. When they came to us, they brought these bags with them. And now they will hardly let the quilts out of their sight. Even though the weather is warm, every night they insist on sleeping with them. And the little boy is apparently really missing his father—because he calls his teddy bear ‘Daddy’ and sleeps with him every night.” Over and over, this foster mother repeated, “You don’t know what a difference these bags make to these children. What a difference, what a difference! Now they have something they can call their very own.”

Carole commented, “Any good we’re doing here can only be credited to the Lord. He has sent the right people to help and has given us a very rewarding little mission with the needed church and community support. We just pray it will mean souls saved in the kingdom.” Some of the ladies from the community who are involved in IMVO are attending the Newport church regularly. Carole rejoices that the Lord impressed Barbara



Neher in Kentucky, USA, to start the IMVO work several years ago, and to share it through ASI (Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries).

This touching IMVO story leads right into Farming Commandment 10: "Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate." Since I presented this commandment in the "How to be A Good Farmer—Even in a City" article in the January–March 2011 issue of *Elder's Digest*, I have thought of a better way to express Commandment 10: "Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Thou shalt join Him by collaborating with community organizations."

From a leadership standpoint, what is the difference between "cooperate" and collaborate?"

To "cooperate" implies "co-operating"—operating at the same time but not necessarily together. It could imply operating in a hierarchal mode—at different levels—one person above or below another. Also, it could be territorial: "Don't cross the line into my territory!" "This is my portion of the pie, and that is your portion of the pie. Who gets the bigger portion?"

To "collaborate," on the other hand, implies "co-laboring"—working together for a common goal. There is no hierarchy with one person above the other. Organizationally, it is like a "flat circle"—with everyone working together at the same level—no one above or below the other. For example: "How can we work together (combine our resources and people power) to make one better pie?"<sup>3</sup>

The Newport Church "collaborates" with various entities in its community: churches of other denominations and Child Protective Services. They work together for a common goal—and combine their resources and people power to accomplish the goal of bringing comfort and joy to abused children in their community. Together they accomplish more than each could alone.

It is encouraging to realize that your church need not work alone in ministering to your community. When your church partners with the community, you build bridges of friendship and trust. You increase your "social capital."<sup>4</sup> If you follow Farming Commandment 8 and become aware of and network with organizations in your community, you will be more likely to spring into action in collaboration with these organizations. Here are some possible types of relationships in your community through which you can partner and collaborate:

- Businesses
- Public schools
- Community coalitions
- Churches
- Community organizing coalitions
- Public boards and committees
- National organizations
- Government, urban/suburban church partnerships

What other community relationships can you add to the list?

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). The purpose of salt is to mix with other ingredients and enhance their flavor. Salt does more good when it is out of the saltshaker and collaborating with other ingredients. Are your church members following the example of the Newport Church and getting out of the church "saltshaker" and collaborating with the "ingredients" of your community to transform it for the better—in Jesus' name?

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The last article in the series will discuss a bonus "Farming Commandment"—the eleventh.

<sup>1</sup> The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method and pray for...; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn "Social Capital;" (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate. . . . and an eleventh Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore Commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple, preserve the harvest!).

<sup>2</sup> So far, these follow-up articles have appeared in *Elder's Digest*: (1) "Once a Month Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand . . ." (October–December 2011); (2) "Our Community Does Not Know Us . . ." (January–March 2012); (3) "Help, Lord! I've Been Asked to Plant a Church!" (July–September 2012); (4) "As I Walked Around and Looked Carefully. . ." (January–March 2013); (5) "You're the First Church That Ever Asked . . ." (July–September 2013); (6) "We Can't Afford Not to Have Someone Like This in Our Community . . ." (October–December 2013); and (7) "Strategic Ministry Planning So Your Church Will Make a Difference" (January–March 2014). To access these articles online, go to [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org). Click on Adventist Community Services, and "Articles & Media." To access a comprehensive curriculum about community outreach, click on "Resources" and "ICM Community Services and Urban Ministry Certification Program Curriculum." For a direct link, go to [www.sabbathschoolpersolministries.org/acs\\_iicm](http://www.sabbathschoolpersolministries.org/acs_iicm)

<sup>3</sup> Explanations of "cooperate" and "collaborate" are adapted from presentations by Sung Kwon, Executive Director, Adventist Community Services, North American Division.

<sup>4</sup> As explained in a previous article in this series ("We Can't Afford Not to Have Someone Like This in Our Community . . ." [October–December 2013]), "Social Capital consists of positive, productive relationships which are just as valuable as money in the bank." The eighth "Farming Commandment" emphasizes mingling/networking with community organizations so that your church can form positive relationships in the community. Networking obtains "Social Capital." The tenth "Farming Commandment" emphasizes springing into action (acting on your strategic ministry plan—ninth commandment) and accomplishing community transformation in partnership/collaboration with organizations with whom you have positive relationships. Collaborating spends the "Social Capital." Commandments 8 and 10 overlap somewhat.

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# 10 THINGS

## PASTORS WISH THEIR CONGREGATIONS WOULD DO

**1. PRAY** for your pastor. The pastor is the spiritual catalyst for the church. That makes the pastor a great big target for the enemy. Pray for the pastor's spiritual health. Pray for protection. Pray for wisdom. Pray that the catalytic gifts of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, evangelism, and shepherding will grow strong in your pastor. The most affirming words that a pastor ever hears is "pastor, I'm praying for you everyday" (*Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11*).

**2. AFFIRM** your pastor. Pastoring may be one of the most difficult jobs in the world these days. Pastors live in a highly concentrated environment where they see the results of sin on a daily basis through caring for humanity. While the average person may see a death, injury, illness, or family conflict occasionally, the pastor lives through these things on a weekly basis. Though pastors don't live for affirmation, words of validation do provide a lifeline of strength through treacherous times. Those little notes saying 'pastor, you're making a difference,' may be the very thing that helps your pastor make it through another day (*Acts 4:36*).

**3. BLESS** the pastoral family. Pastoral stress leaks into families and is enough to test all the family bonds. Throw in a few wild expectations about how a pastoral spouse and pastoral kids are supposed to behave and you have a recipe for a family meltdown. The antidote is the blessing. Bless the spouse. Bless the kids. Let go of any expectations and treat the family with a rich blessing of heaven's grace. And of course to relieve the financial pressure, return a faithful tithe so that the pastor is secure in getting a regular paycheck (*1 Corinthians 9:14*).

**4. RELEASE** the pastor from constant ministry so renewal can take place. Pastors who go 24/7 for days, weeks, and months on end will inevitably self destruct. Mandate that your pastor takes weekly breaks for spiritual renewal as well as annual extended breaks for study leave and vacation. It is a small price to pay for the rich spiritual energy that comes as a result of regularly releasing your pastor from ministry (*Matthew 14:23*).

**5. TALK** with your pastor, not about or around. Complaining about the pastor to someone else is corrosive for the entire church family. Writing anonymous critical notes to the pastor are acts of spiritual terrorism (by the way, smart pastors just throw them in the trash without reading them). If you have a problem with the pastor, talk directly to the pastor and try to work it out. If resolution can't be found, then bring a spiritual leader with you and seek resolution. And then (and only then) if resolution is not found, bring together a larger group to dialog with the pastor. Challenge privately. Affirm publicly (*Matthew 18:15-17*).

**6. FORGIVE** your pastor for falling short of your expectations; because no pastor will perfectly satisfy your ideals. Remember that your vision of what a pastor should be is probably unique to you. Everyone else in the congregation also has unique expectations. Many of the expectations are mutually exclusive. Your pastor will also make some mistakes. All pastors do. Extend to your pastor the same



grace that God extends to you. If your pastor knows that he/she practices ministry in a safe, grace-filled congregation where risk taking is expected and stagnancy is deplored, your church can become spiritually turbocharged (*Matthew 18:21, 22*).

**7. FEED** yourself spiritually. Don't expect to live on a limited spiritual diet of thirty-minute weekly sermons. Going seven days without eating makes one weak. Even with the best sermons you will spiritually starve to death. The role of the shepherd is not to stick grass in the mouths of sheep but to lead the sheep to green pastures. As you listen to the great sermons that your pastor preaches may you be inspired to get into the word yourself everyday in prayer filled Bible Study (*Psalms 23:2*).

**8. BOND** with a small group. Don't expect the primary pastoral care to come from the pastor. It is mathematically impossible, and primary care is not his/her role. Regular spiritual support occurs in small groups. When you are plugged into a weekly small group you will grow together, pray for one another, care for one another, and support one another through all the ups and downs of life. The pastoral staff and lay pastors can serve as a safety net for those not in small groups as well as care for those in life transitions (*Matthew 18:20*).

**9. FOLLOW** the leader. The pastor is not the CEO of the congregation, that role is reserved for Jesus. However the pastor has been given the gift of apostleship and you should take your cue from the pastor and follow after Jesus. Let your pastor lead. With leadership comes change. Things will be different. Since the founding of the church God has brought a succession of quality pastors, each one with leadership to take your church to the next level. God gives your pastor vision. Help the pastor flesh out the vision and then do your part to turn the vision into reality (*Hebrews 13:17*).

**10. EXERCISE** your spiritual gifts. Pastoral gifts don't do much by themselves. However if you let those catalytic gifts energize your gifts, you will come alive spiritually. Let the pastor equip you so that your church family can reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure the fullness of Christ. Take advantage of the teaching and ministry opportunities at your church. Place yourself in optimal places for spiritual growth (*Ephesians 4:11, 12*). ED

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# LOVING THOSE WHO WORK FOR US

**There** is a saying that goes, “Life is full of changes. Sometimes they are painful, other times they are beautiful, but most of the time they are both.” A church always goes through changes: the arrival of a new member, another member’s transfer, children who grow and begin to participate in different ministries of the church. Considering the dynamics of the Lord’s work, it is common to go through changes. However, nothing mobilizes the church as much as a pastor’s transfer and another pastor’s arrival. Truly, this is a painful moment that may become pleasurable and sublime. But how?

In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, we find an excellent advice: “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thes. 5:12, 13). The apostle’s brief advice has two practical aspects that could help us to face changes in a better way.

## ACCEPTANCE

As a pastor, Paul understood the importance of being accepted and respected. In his ministry, he noticed that it was impossible to be in contact with people without allowing them to be part of his life. He also understood that this relationship would not always exist in close proximity; there would be a farewell moment for one minister and a welcome moment for the new minister. As an evangelist, he understood the church’s need for different pastors with their own characteristics, to occupy, with their gifts, the different branches of the Lord’s work while heartily accepting their members.

That is exactly why he talks about acceptance. Acceptance is an attitude that refers to experimenting with a new situation without pretending to change it, recognizing that, by agreeing with the new reality, he is contributing to his spiritual and emotional growth. Acceptance is contrasted with resistance. Resistance generates discomfort and, if lengthened, may harm the church’s purpose in fulfilling its mission of worshiping God and evangelizing the unreached.

## LOVE

The apostle does not disconnect, at any moment, this relationship from love. When he talks about acceptance, acceptance “with appreciation” prevails, meaning that it is not given by imposition or obligation but with an attitude motivated by Christian love. He who belongs to Christ should never react with contempt. We should never forget that on a different occasion, Paul said that even if our actions are perfect from a human perspective, if there is no love, we will be nothing. Love should be the central element in our lives, for it leads us to true worship and unity. “We are to be distinguished from the world because God has placed His seal upon us, because He manifests in us His own character of love.”<sup>1</sup>

Because the elder’s family is recognized as a spiritual and religious example in the local church, your atti-




tude of respect may be a channel to facilitate this process of acceptance. One of the good memories I have from childhood is from my church's leadership. They always received new pastors with warmth, and part of the merit went to the first elder's family, particularly to his wife. She was always willing to help in the church services. There was a special touch in everything she led. She knew very well how the church worked, she related well to all members of the church, and her home was a pleasant place. However, what impressed me the most was her special way of welcoming new church pastors.

Before the pastor was presented in church, she tried to get more information about his family. She always offered a meal at her home after the Sabbath service, and from the new pastor's very first day at the church, she provided a friendly environment. Because the first elder and his wife were much respected in the community, this warm reception helped with the church's acceptance of the new pastor's family. The other members felt secure and also helped the new leader when dealing with areas of greater need in the church.

This does not mean we should forget others who have passed through our lives and left memories. Saint-Exupéry wrote in *The Little Prince*, "You become eternally responsible for those you captivate." Church members rarely for-

get the pastor who was with them for a certain period of time, taking care of them, guiding, exhorting, and leading them to a deeper and more meaningful Christian experience. Love-prints remain. The pastor also keeps in his heart an appreciation for the church and the memory of friendships he had there. After all, at each church he leads, he becomes a part of everyone's spiritual and emotional growth. Ministerial ties make narrower the shepherd/sheep relationship, so this is another reason to welcome with love and dedication those who are sent as God's ministers.

As God's cooperators, the elder's family has an important role during this time of transition. They ensure that the change of pastors (which might sometimes be painful) is an enriching experience and that there is acceptance and unity from the church. If the attitude is one of respect and comprehension, the response will certainly be positive and will be imitated. Let us not forget that it is the time we spend with someone that makes him or her so important, and that the more we love people indistinctively, the more our lives will be full of God's light. 

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 37.

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# WHAT IS A DEACON?

In the Bible, words have meanings, and in the original language, the word “deacon” means servant. The title itself is as descriptive as any job description could be. Here is how the word has been defined in its various forms:

- *Diakoneo* and its derivatives, as their etymology suggests, are used mainly for personal help to others.
- *Diakonia* is found 34 times in the New Testament. It means service at the table (Luke 10:40; Acts 6:1, etc.).
- *Diakonos* is found 29 times in the New Testament. Its primary meaning is one who serves at tables.

In Philippians 1:1 and in numerous references in early Christian literature outside the New Testament, bishops and/or elders and deacons are mentioned together, with deacons mentioned last. Because of this order and because of the natural connotations of the word *diakonos*, most interpreters believe that, from the beginning, deacons served as assistants of church leaders.<sup>1</sup>

## THE OFFICE OF DEACON

1. *It was created for the purpose of handling the benevolence ministry.* The biblical account is quite clear about the

founding of the deaconship, and nowhere does Scripture repeal the original purpose:

“Now about this time, when the number of the disciples was greatly increasing, complaint was made by the Hellenists [Greek-speaking Jews] against the [native] Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked and neglected in the daily ministrations [distribution of relief]. So the Twelve [apostles] convened the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not seemly or desirable or right that we should have to give up or neglect [preaching] the Word of God in order to attend to serving at tables and superintending the distribution of food. Therefore select out from among yourselves, brethren, seven men of good and attested character and repute, full of the [Holy] Spirit and wisdom, whom we may assign to look after this business and duty’” (Acts 6:1-3, Amplified).

2. *It was established to free the apostles to pray and to minister.* The apostles, in dealing with the benevolence ministry problem at the Jerusalem church, told the congregation that “it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-4, NKJV).

Some have understood this passage to mean that it is the role of deacons to oversee the business of the church. First, the text says “this business,” not “the business,” and the business being referred to is the business of benevolence. Second, as Dr. Robert Naylor points out, that would be a misrepresentation of the meaning of the word:

“The word ‘business’ should be discussed a little to prevent any misunderstanding. The Greek word is *chreia* and basically means ‘need.’ It is so translated 25 times. This is the only place it is translated ‘business.’ Hence there is no Scriptural authority for the deacons to make financial decisions of the church. Church decisions must remain church decisions.”

## THE EARLY DEACONS WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3 expound on the qualifications for the office of deacons; the former contains what could fairly be called the “core qualifications”:

- “Men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3).
- “And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5).





Often, when someone is discussed as a possible deacon, one hears a remark such as “He attends regularly and is a good giver.” But God is looking at men with an internal dynamic which cannot be determined in a superficial way.

### **DEACONS ARE TO BE CAPABLE OF SERVING THE LORD IN SPIRITUAL WAYS**

The original seven deacons were men who were able to serve the Lord in ways that were more spiritual in nature than merely delivering food. Stephen was a man of spiritual power: “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8, NJKV). Philip was not just a deacon; he was also gifted in evangelism (Acts 8:5-7).

### **THE OFFICE OF DEACON REQUIRES A FIRM GRASP OF SOUND DOCTRINE**

A church is content-oriented. It is a doctrinally-driven community built on truth. Every member should have this approach in this fellowship—leaders such as deacons, not less but more so. “They must possess the mystic secret of the faith [Christian truth as hidden from ungodly men] with a clear conscience” (Acts 6:9, Amplified).

### **THE PRESENCE OF DEACONS SHOULD ADVANCE THE UNITY OF A CHURCH**

When the apostles laid out the plan for the creation of this office, “the saying pleased the whole multitude” (Acts 6:5, NKJV). The complaints about the benevolence ministry stopped. The Hebrew-speaking Jews who were chosen for this ministry obviously bent over backwards to preserve the church’s unity, for all the men selected had Greek names. It is still true today: Any time a church has deacons who are properly doing their jobs, the church is more likely to experience unity.

### **THE PRESENCE OF DEACONS SHOULD ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF EVANGELISM**

The immediate impact of the creation of the office of deacon was to eliminate the controversy in the church and to get the church back on course in fulfilling its mission. The Bible says that “then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:8, NKJV). Again, it is still true. When a church has deacons who are in God’s will, the cause of world evangelization will be aided.

### **CHARACTER QUALIFICATIONS**

The dominant idea among New Testament leaders was that the ministry belonged to the entire believing community. The selection of leaders was primarily comprised of individuals with proven maturity and character to lead so the whole church could function effectively in worship, in service, in out-

reach, and in the fulfillment of individual spiritual gifts.

There are more than 12 significant qualities expected, which include:

- Spiritual preparedness, self-control, social graciousness, domestic order, and holy living (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; Titus 1:6-7).
- Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3) in conduct and morality (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:6-7); in the truths of the faith; in managing family affairs; and in maintaining unity and confidentiality.
- Faithfulness to God’s house; to church services; in tithes and offerings; and in prayer.

### **QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS**

1. *Men of dignity (semnos)*. The deacon is one who has a spiritual quality that causes others to have a sense of awe and respect when around him.

2. *Not double-tongued (dilogos)*. The deacon is not a man who gossips or speaks with hypocrisy. He never gets caught up in mischief. He speaks with integrity, consistency, and grace.

3. *Not addicted to wine (prosecho)*. The deacon should avoid any kind of alcoholic beverage.

4. *Not greedy for money*. The deacon will not use his office for personal gain. Deacons should not have a greedy spirit, nor should they use the respect they garner from being deacons to gain an advantage in business.

5. *Holding to the faith with a clear conscience*. Deacons are men who should have biblical knowledge and the ability to live with a clear conscience because they live what they believe.

6. *Tested (dokimazo)*. This is an ongoing test and not just a probationary period. Deacons are consistently evaluated on their knowledge of the Word and upon their lives of servant leadership.

7. *Above reproach (anegkletos)*. Deacons are above reproach. Deacons must not have a blot on their lives or anything for which they could be accused, arraigned, or disqualified.

8. *Husband of one wife*. The focus is on the man’s character. The issue here is moral character, not marital status. Deacons are to be sexually pure.

9. *Good managers of the home*. Deacons are to prove their spiritual character in the most difficult arena, the home. They are to have their houses in order by capably managing their money, possessions, and relationships with their wives and children.



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<sup>1</sup> “Deacon, Deaconess,” Fred A. Grissom, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Holman, 1991.

# OPEN YOUR BIBLE:

## ENTER THE GATEWAY OF GOD

### FOUR POINTS TO REMEMBER – PART 1 OF 2

#### I - BAPTISM

*"All men who have lived . . . are the raw material awaiting the stamp of the Divine Original. But in order to be like Him . . . a sharer of His Divine Life, must be struck off that die. And the Baptismal font is the new Bethlehem where the copies are made, for there men are re-born again to the life of God."*—Fulton Sheen

##### 1. Baptism is a commanded ordinance (Acts 10:48; John 3:5).

The Scriptural basis for baptism is overwhelming:

- (1) The noun "baptism" is mentioned 21 times.
- (2) The verbs "baptize, baptized, baptizeth" is mentioned 55 times.
- (3) The participle "baptizing" is mentioned 4 times.

##### 2. Baptism is a positive requirement of the Gospel

- (1) Jesus made baptism mandatory for salvation (Mark 16:16).
- (2) Baptism is a condition to forgiveness (Acts 2:38).
- (3) Baptism is the visible seal of the remission of sins (Acts 22:16).
- (4) Jesus gives assurance that He saves those who obey (Heb. 5:9).
- (5) Baptism was practiced by the early Christians:
  - (a) Peter and the Pentecostal converts (Acts 2:38).
  - (b) The Apostle Paul (Acts 9:17, 18).
  - (c) Cornelius the Roman centurion (Acts 16:15).
  - (d) The Philippian jailor and his family (Acts 16:33).

##### 3. Baptism requires immersion (Eph. 4:4).

- (1) The etymological evidence: There are 8 Greek words denoting the application of fluids and *baptizo* is the only one that means to immerse. *"Native Greek scholars affirm that the Greek word 'baptizo' has but one sole acceptation: it signifies literally and always to plunge."*—Dr. A. Diomedes Kyriasko

- (2) Jesus' example (Mark 1:9-11).
- (3) An Apostolic example of baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39).

##### 4. Baptism memorializes Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4).

*"Whilst the candidate for baptism in water is immersed, the death of Christ is suggested; whilst immersed and covered with water, the burial of Christ is shown forth; whilst he is raised from the waters, the resurrection is proclaimed."*—Cardinal Paulus

##### 5. Baptism symbolizes a transition to a new life (Col. 2:12).

- (1) It means a state of transference from the state of legal condemnation to that of living in union with Christ (1 Pet. 4:1, 2).
- (2) It represents a marriage ceremony in which the candidate takes the name of Jesus and thereafter shares His life. Christ alone can make the inward grace correspond to the outward sign (Col. 3:1-10).
- (3) It is the candidate's ordination to ministry through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-4 cf. Matt. 3:16; 4:17).

##### 6. Baptism requires pre-requisite instruction (Matt. 28:19, 20).

- (1) The age of the candidate presumes that:
  - (a) The person is old enough to understand belief in Jesus (John 3:16).
  - (b) The person is old enough to pray (Rom. 10:13).
  - (c) The person is able to understand confession and repentance (Rom. 10:10).
  - (d) The person is able to participate in the life of the church (1 Cor. 12:7, 13).
- (2) This instruction enables new believers to follow Christ (1 John 2:6).

#### II - THE CHURCH

*"A Christian church is a body or collection of persons, voluntarily associated together, professing to believe what Christ teaches, to do what Christ enjoins, to imitate his example, cherish his spirit, and make known his gospel to others."*—Robert Fleming Sample

##### 1. The identity of the church

- (1) The word church is the English rendering of the one word *ekklesia*, made up of two Greek words meaning "out from among" and "to call," therefore, church is "a called out assembly."
- (2) The church then is not a building; it is a people in union with God (1 Pet. 2:9). [The church is only described as a building metaphorically (Eph. 2:21).]
- (3) The word "church" is used in four ways in the New Testament:
  - (a) As the whole body of Christ's redeemed (Heb. 12:23; Acts 2:47).
  - (b) As a designation of a local assembly of believers (Col. 4:15; Acts 11:26).
  - (c) To indicate a group of local churches (Acts 16:5; Rom. 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:19).
  - (d) The visible church or body of professed believers (1 Thess. 2:14; 1 Cor. 11:18).

##### 2. The inauguration of the church

- (1) The church of the Old Testament (Acts 7:37, 38).
- (2) The church of the New Testament inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2:1).
  - (a) After His ascension Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (John 7:39 cf. Acts 2) to form His Body of which He, Christ, is now Head (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:30; Rom. 12:4, 5).

- (b) At Pentecost the disciples were made members of that body, and by extension all who are now redeemed (1 Cor. 12:13).

##### 3. The Church is the object of the redemption which the Bible proclaims

- (1) It was to save the Church that Jesus came and died (Eph. 5:25).
- (2) God purchased the Church at the cost of Christ's blood (Acts 20:28).
- (3) It is through the Church that God makes known his redemption (Eph. 3:10).
- (4) It is within the Church that individual Christians find the ministries of grace, the means of growth, and their primary sphere of service (Eph. 4:11-16).

##### 4. The purpose of the Church

- (1) To continue the Messianic ministry (John 14:12; Acts 1:8; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:9).
- (2) To be an extension of the life of God (Eph. 2:22).
  - (a) To reveal Christ in our walk, witness, and fellowship (Col. 1:10; Eph. 5:2).
  - (b) To instruct persons for discipleship and ministry (Eph. 4:11, 12).
  - (c) To serve persons in Christ's name (1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:9; 6:1).
- (3) A portrait of a growing church (Acts 2:40-47).  
A preaching (v. 40), baptizing (v. 41), teaching (v. 42), praying (v. 42), ministering (vv. 44, 45), worshiping (v. 46), and respected church (v. 47).

##### 5. The characteristics of the true Church

- (1) A church that is obedient (Rev. 12:17).
- (2) A church that preserves the apostolic faith (Rev. 14:12).  
*" . . . the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard"*—Ellen G. White

# CHOICES FOR LIFE:

## THE BENEFITS OF UNSELFISH SERVICE



**The** Bible says, “More blessings come from giving than from receiving” (Acts 20:35, CEV). And it’s true: there is something gratifying about volunteering. The Greek philosopher Aristotle once noted that the essence of life is “to serve others and do good.” If research is any indication, serving others might also be the essence of good health.

Studies suggest that those who volunteer their time to help others feel more socially connected and experience less loneliness and depression. However, the benefits are not only for social and emotional health. Studies show that tangible benefits for physical health are also noted, such as lower blood pressure and longer lifespan.<sup>1,2</sup>

Here is some scientific evidence that highlights the health benefits of service:

- In a recent study, people who volunteered for at least 200 hours each year were 40 percent less likely to develop hypertension than those who did not volunteer. The specific type of volunteer activity did not seem to be a factor, but the amount of time spent volunteering led to increased protection from hypertension. Other studies have found that volunteering for as little as 100 hours annually has similar benefits.<sup>3</sup>

- One key for deriving health benefits from volunteering is to do it for the right reasons. A study found that participants who volunteered with some regularity lived longer, but only if their intentions were truly altruistic. Thus, they had to be volunteering to help others, not simply to make themselves feel better.<sup>4</sup>

- Not surprisingly, volunteers and non-volunteers in general tend to spend their time in very similar ways, including during work, leisure, and other activities. However, volunteers give up more than one hour of TV per day to engage in service. On average, those who have never volunteered watch 436 more hours of television each year than volunteers.<sup>5</sup>

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only about a quarter of the population aged 16 and older volunteered in 2009, and those who volunteered were most often Caucasian, female, college-educated, and between the ages of 35 and 55. In fact, the most likely person to volunteer is a woman with a job and children.<sup>6</sup>

Every week consists of 168 hours. How many of those hours do you dedicate to service? I have good news! In your ministry as an elder, you likely spend time visiting individuals and families, listening to their needs, praying with them, or giving Bible studies. The hours you dedicate to serving God and others in this capacity count as volunteer work! Seek to combine family time with volunteer service, and the benefit will be maximized.

Many of the current studies on volunteering emphasize that mentally stimulating activities, such as tutoring or reading, may help to maintain memory and thinking skills, while volunteer activities that promote physical activity may be beneficial for cardiovascular health.

If you can manage time outside your role as an elder, consider what community service you may be able to do. Albert Schweitzer, a theologian-physician, once said, “The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” Spending even a few hours each week in community service will not just benefit the people you serve; the benefits will also be returned to you, mostly in overall health and well-being. Perhaps that’s what Luke 6:9 means when it reminds us to “give away your life; you’ll find life given back [. . .] with bonus and blessing” (The Message).



<sup>1</sup> Rodlescia S. Sneed and Sheldon Cohen, “A Prospective Study of Volunteering and Hypertension Risk in Older Adults,” in *Psychology and Aging*, June 2013, 28(2), 578-586.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Konrath, Andrea Fuhrel-Forbis, et al. “Motives for Volunteering Are Associated with Mortality Risk in Older Adults,” in *Health Psychology*, Jan. 2012, 31(1), 87-96.

<sup>3</sup> Sneed and Cohen.

<sup>4</sup> Konrath, Fuhrel-Forbis, et al.

<sup>5</sup> Volunteering in America research brief (2008). “How Do Volunteers Find the Time? Evidence from the American Time Use Study.” Retrieved October 8, 2012 from [http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/ATUS\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/ATUS_Brief.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Feb. 22, 2012). “Volunteering in the United States, 2011.” Retrieved October 8, 2012, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>.



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# FIVE WEB TOOLS

## YOUR CHURCH NEEDS

**Churches** are *finally* beginning to recognize the power of the Internet for their ministries. What was once just a way to engage with the community and invite people to a church event has been completely revolutionized. Churches now do online marketing, digital evangelism, and discipleship and connect regularly with people through email, social media, and blogs.

### YOUR CHURCH'S WEB SITE

The church Web site should include information a member or visitor might need: forms for church activities, sign-up sheets for church events, a blog to communicate your church's heart, and an online archive for video sermons.

### YOUR OWN CHURCH APP

While a responsive Web site is an important part of every church's programming, an app is the perfect tool for your ministry. Not only do people always carry their phones with them (thus eliminating the need for print bulletins), apps are a great way to direct people to your Web site, give them access to small-group information and prayer-group times, provide sermons to watch or listen to later—all of these things can be done within the app.

If you are not new to church technology, this is no surprise. The issue now is: Do churches use this technology well?

One of the most difficult aspects of church technology is not how to maintain what you already have; the hard part is coming up with new things for your church to implement and getting everyone on board. Here are some things you can do to help your church have a bigger online impact.

### YOUR OWN WAY TO ONLINE GIVING


Numerous statistics say that a church that invests in online giving will see an increase in tithing and year-end revenue. Think about it: a family goes out of town but can still give. A college student does not carry cash but has a trusty debit card. An online donation page is the perfect way for your congregation to give.

### YOUR OWN GREAT WEB SITE DESIGN

A terrible Web site is definitely awful to look at, but that's not the worst part. Terrible navigation can drive people away from your site. Not having Search Engine Optimization (SEO) features means that you are actually hidden from search engines. Unstructured content can make people feel confused and frustrated. A non-responsive Web site design makes your Web site look bad on mobile devices. A great Web site design can fix all of these problems and more.

### YOUR OWN NEWSLETTER

Too many churches are still creating print newsletters and mailing them to the congregation. Often, the mailing list is out of date, and mailing recipients may be annoyed by the process. A great online newsletter is your solution.

A good Web site can help your church have a more effective ministry and become more visible in the community. 

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# TRAINING WORSHIPERS: A KEY TO EFFECTIVE WORSHIP



**Most** Christians would say that corporate worship is critically important to the life of their congregations. Yet, in church after church, the worship service is woefully underdeveloped. To be more frank, this centerpiece of the Christian community is often dull and lifeless. As a result, worshipers check out. They either leave the service mentally, filling their minds to pass the time, or they look for a church where God actually attends. The tragedy is this: It does not have to be that way in any Christian church!

Every local congregation can have dynamic celebration services if leaders are willing to make serious investments in worship. Obviously, this means directing prayer, planning, and resources to this ministry. But, in addition, pastors may discover that training is a critical ingredient for effective worship. It should not be assumed that people become knowledgeable in worship simply because they attend church services. Leaders should develop a format for teaching believers to be effective worshipers.

There are several key concepts that pastors would do well to teach church members regarding corporate worship.

1. *The priority of worship.* According to the Bible, humanity's highest calling is to glorify God. Therefore, worship must be the top priority in the local church. Worship is serious business that deserves a congregation's greatest investment.

2. *The purpose of worship.* Worship is primarily an activity of declaring the attributes and glory of God. As worshipers learn to magnify God's name and declare His mighty deeds through songs, prayers, testimonies, words, and praises, they do battle against the evil one and usher people into the dynamic presence of God.

3. *The principles of worship.* Worship services should seek to glorify God, focus upon Jesus Christ, edify believers and appeal to visitors. I have discovered that instructing people in these principles of worship leads to a better understanding of and participation in a corporate service of celebration.

4. *The practices of worship.* Because they see their congregations participating in the celebration service, leaders wrongly assume that believers understand the meaning of worship forms. By instructing worshipers in the background, meaning, and purpose of worship forms, leaders equip men and women to wholeheartedly engage in the activity of praise.

5. *The power of worship.* The activity may be engaging apart from God's presence, but it is never life-transforming. Only God's Spirit heals the broken and redeems the lost. As such, the Holy Spirit must be a congregation's most welcomed and honored Guest. Practically, this means instructing worshipers to pray for His infilling.

Pastors, elders, and worship leaders should make maximum use of a variety of media formats to instruct believers in the concepts discussed above. There are at least five specific ways in which this instruction can take place within the context of a local church:


1. *Prepare a philosophy-of-ministry-and-worship document.* Every church should develop and distribute a philosophy-of-ministry document. It will serve as a guide regarding the theological priorities of the congregation. The five concepts of worship should be included, providing a knowledge base for further worship training.

2. *Develop a visitor's guide to worship.* Most visitors approach the worship service with a certain degree of anxiety born of the unknown. Relieve their minds as much as possible by developing a guide that clearly defines the purpose and practice of worship at your church. It will enhance their participation by increasing their understanding.

3. *Discuss the five concepts of worship in membership classes.* Membership classes are very important to the health of a congregation. Newcomers are able to learn, understand, and embrace the priorities of the body before making their membership covenant. If worship is in fact the *top priority*, be sure to address it during at least one session of the membership instruction series. The two points already discussed—the philosophy-of-ministry document and the visitor's guide—will provide preparation for this focus.

4. *Instruct worshipers during the weekly celebration service.* The church I pastor regularly experiences dynamic celebration services. At least once a month, the worship coordinator includes "Words of Worship" during the service of celebration. This highlights one particular form or practice of worship that may require more understanding or application within the body. This consistently leads to new freedom and participation in the service.

5. *Develop a series of sermons on worship.* Each pastor and elder have the opportunity to strike a serious blow for worship if he or she will preach on worship. Great weight is placed on what is said from the pulpit. A spiritual leader would do well to develop one topical sermon on each of the five concepts of worship.

No responsible corporation would encourage its employees to participate in their industry without proper training. The more critical the area of responsibility, the more vital the preparation. How much more should the local church invest in equipping men and women to be effective worshipers! Of all the activities of the local church, worship is the *top priority*. 

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NOVEMBER 8

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