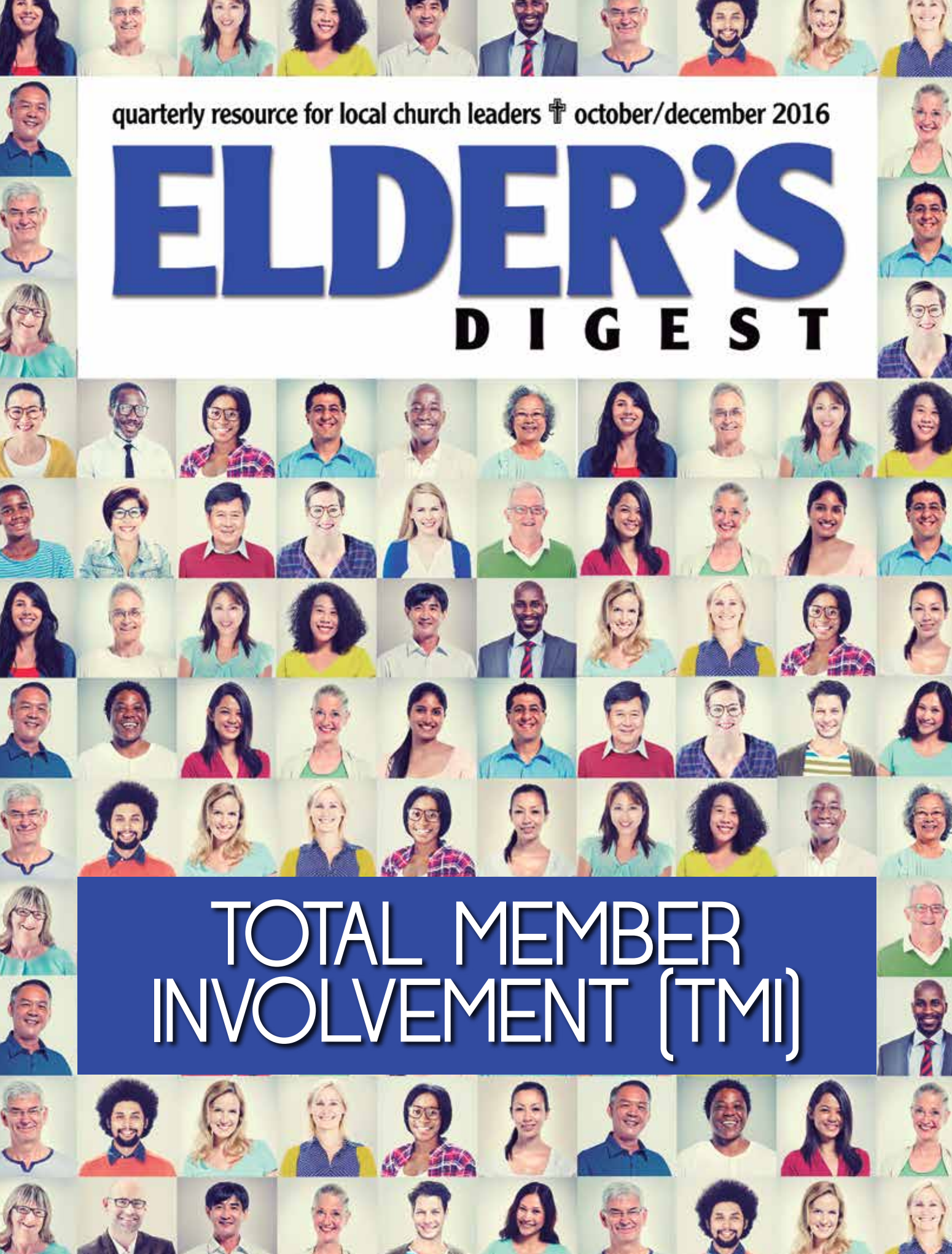


quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2016

# ELDER'S DIGEST



TOTAL MEMBER  
INVOLVEMENT (TMI)

# FEATURES

- 4 TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT: A CALL TO ACTION
- 6 MASSIVE EVANGELISM ON A PERSONAL SCALE
- 8 TMI AND VISIONARY LEADERSHIP
- 9 SERVING DURING THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH: MINISTERING TO THE BEREAVED AND SERVING AT FUNERALS
- 10 WINNING THE WORSHIP WARS - PART 2
- 12 SAFETY WHILE SERVING
- 20 WHY OUR CHURCHES NEED TO BE ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- 23 VALUES/COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND HEALING
- 24 A CHURCH PASTOR'S DREAM LIST
- 26 PREACHING POWERFULLY: IS IT POSSIBLE? PART 3 OF 6
- 28 LESSONS FROM DANIEL 7



EDITORIAL	3
THE ART OF SPEECH	14
SERMONS	15
QUESTION & ANSWER	19
HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS	22
KIDDER'S COLUMN	30

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# TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

**GOD WANTS ALL WHOM HE HAS SAVED TO SERVE HIM IN WHATEVER SITUATIONS HE PUTS THEM.**

**Why** is total member involvement so vital for the church and its members? I believe that every-member mobilization is crucial to the very life and witness of the local church. The growth of any movement, secular or spiritual, is based on its ability to mobilize its membership in effective, continuous, expansion-related activity. The church is no exception.

For this reason, the church must be intentional about helping people find their places in ministry and become members of the believer's priesthood, thus providing the discipleship necessary for service. We should understand and begin to practice the basic habits necessary for spiritual growth and ministry, including intercessory prayer, Bible study, worshipping, and sharing one's faith with others on a personal level.

A good way to reach this goal is to offer specialized training to members for a specific ministry, such as usher, greeter, small-group leader, Sabbath School teacher, outreach coordinator, and other areas of service. Training helps believers maximize their ministry gifts and provides opportunities for them to find a place of

belonging, support, and relationship with others. They develop a sense of community. Ellen G. White says, "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work."<sup>1</sup>

How important it is for church members to discover the meaning and importance of having a ministry! It helps them to understand and accept their identity in Christ. Explaining the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers and the biblical guidelines for using their God-given gifts will help them understand the church's mission. So, teach members about the place of service in their spiritual development. Discuss spiritual maturity and why it is required for effective ministry.

Church leaders must help believers discover their God-given gifts, calling, personality strengths and limitations, interests, abilities, motivations, and skills. People need to discover God's unique design for their lives.

If we are followers of the One who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), we must commit ourselves to the same goal. Think about it!



<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 148, 149.



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT: A CALL TO ACTION

**Imagine** that the New Jerusalem is coming down from heaven at the end of the millennium. Now picture yourself there. You've made it! Although you experienced so many struggles and temptations while on earth, you managed to keep your eyes on Jesus. You know you're only there because of Him, so once again you look at your King and Savior. His majestic and kind appearance moves you to tears. You can hardly believe that 1,000 years have passed since the first time you saw Him.

Then something disturbing happens. You notice that the dead who have rejected salvation are coming back to life. They still carry the signs and consequences of their previous diseases. Although they look like zombies, they are still conscious. As you contemplate the vast numbers assembled, your gaze focuses on someone you recognize. Perhaps it's a family member, a neighbor, or a co-worker. Whom have you known and cared about who has never made a decision for Jesus? Say his or her name.

The city lands on the Mount of Olives, and Jesus is crowned in full view of everyone. The sight is magnificent. Then the books are opened, and God pronounces judgment on those who have chosen evil—they realize this is their final

day. Everyone then watches Jesus' life story being projected in the sky. You see His life and suffering to save humanity.

The person you recognized before is still there. His or her eyes meet yours, and you know they remember you, too. Your friend's face changes from anger to sadness, and you know exactly what he or she is thinking: "If you knew this was going to happen, why didn't you do more to help me?" The thought overwhelms you, and you begin to cry for the loss of those you've loved (Rev. 21:4). But a deeper cry comes for all the things you could have done to help more people choose. So you say to yourself: "If I could go back in time, I would do everything in my power to help the people I love to choose Jesus."

So, here is the good news: there is time, and you can still help others meet Jesus! This is what Total Member Involvement is all about.

Over 100,000 people became disciples of Jesus in Rwanda this year. Months before the event, every Seventh-day Adventist in that country knew very well that if they didn't immerse themselves in mission, people might perish. The General Conference is planning to have a similar outreach in Romania as we depend on God to lead us there also.

However, Total Member Involvement is not only a project, it is not simply an initiative, it is not a campaign, and it certainly isn't a



series of events. Total Member Involvement is a *call to action*. Your part of the world may have different names to explain it, such as “Evangelism, Everyone, Everywhere” in the South England Conference or “Lord, Transform Me” in the Inter-American Division. Regardless of what name your local project has been given, the Total Member Involvement call to action is still the same: every Seventh-day Adventist deeply engaged in mission. The mandate has come from Jesus Himself and, as the final messengers of hope, every one of us must get involved. In fact, Ellen G. White says: “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their effort with those of ministers and church officers.”<sup>1</sup>

### THE TWO PARTS OF CHRIST’S METHOD

As a leader in your congregation, your focus must be to create an environment where Christ’s method is a reality. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>2</sup>

There are two parts to Christ’s method. The first involves compassion. We are called to care deeply about people and their lives right here, right now, in the old earth. The second involves proclamation. We are called to challenge people to choose Jesus because we care deeply about their lives in the earth made new. If we choose only one of these parts, we will never have true success.

Many Seventh-day Adventists prefer only one of these methods. Some prefer to focus only on compassion and seldom move to challenge people to full discipleship. It’s understandable because it is a scary process; people might reject them completely. However, we don’t have an option. Jesus proclaimed discipleship even when He knew they would reject Him (the young rich ruler, for example).

Many other Seventh-day Adventists prefer to focus only on proclamation without true compassion for those they challenge. It’s understandable because they don’t need to be vulnerable in the process. They are right, sinners are wrong—just tell them! And if they don’t choose Jesus, it demonstrates how hardened their hearts have become.

Just choosing one of these parts in detriment to the other is absolutely *not* Jesus’ method. As a leader in your local congregation, you have the divine calling to create an environment where the whole of Christ’s method is carried out. Total Member Involvement is your call to inspire every Seventh-day Adventist under your leadership to be involved in mission, to encourage members to use their gifts, talents, abilities, influence, and resources to fulfill both parts of Christ’s method in your community.

### BECAUSE YOU CARE

From toddler clubs to food distribution, from counseling to small groups, from youth clubs to community activities, from free hugs to financial help—lead your congregation to experience compassion because you care for people right here on earth.

From leaflets to IntelliPaper, from small groups to public meetings, from the *Great Hope* book to the “Tell the World” film, from sermon appeals to intimate dialogues—lead your congregation to proclaim the everlasting gospel because you care for people’s eternal life in heaven.

It is only through Total Member Involvement that we will “Reach the World” and fulfill our mission. ED

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:116.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Samuel Neves is Associate Director of Communication at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



# MASSIVE EVANGELISM ON A PERSONAL SCALE

HOW RWANDA REACHED 100,000  
BAPTISMS THROUGH TMI



**This** past May, for the first time in the history of the Adventist Church, an outreach event took place in Rwanda that is changing the way we look at evangelism. It is not so much revolutionary as all-inclusive, and it yielded astounding results—more than 100,000 baptisms in one climactic month!

What made the difference? Something as simple as a God-inspired novel approach to a well-known method, and a strategy of *total member involvement* (TMI).

In 2004, when Mark Finley led the first historic satellite meetings in Kigali, he preached to a live audience of 30,000 people. This was unprecedented, as were the 10,000 baptized following the meetings. Many felt we had found the key to reaching the world with the gospel message. But it was only the beginning.

So how did we go from 10,000 baptisms in one event to 100,000? The answer is simple: through Total Member Involvement, a new General Conference initiative which goal is to include and involve all church members in the work of reaching out to others with the gospel message.

For the Rwanda project, instead of focusing on one preaching site with one preacher, we planned for multiple sites with multiple preachers. People from all over the world were invited to participate. Amazingly, a total of 2,200 people volunteered—both young and old alike, male and female, with and without prior experience—all who were willing to be used by God. And they were welcomed in Rwanda with open arms.

Churches across Rwanda hosted one or more preaching sites. The volunteer preachers were asked to do just that—*preach*. The local churches took care of everything else—preparatory Bible studies, visitation and invitations, nurturing, health and community events, and a myriad of other duties. Outdoor tents were rented, camp-meeting style, and the people came every night to watch the “Jesus Movie” and the presentations.



Photo Credits: GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department

And the 100,000? It was the modest average of 45 baptisms per site. Some had many more, some had less, but God blessed all the sites. With each one doing a little—as opposed to one person doing a lot—astounding numbers were reached, and Rwanda was lighted with the glory of God’s truth.

Total Member Involvement evangelism was followed in Rwanda and it can be implemented at any level, in any church or conference. Here are a few practical strategies that any church may follow:


1. Plan ahead. Strategize and decide on a date for the outreach.
2. Ask your church’s prayer warriors to organize a prayer chain for the event.
3. Invite church members to sign up for specific duties—from preachers to greeters to Bible workers to parking lot attendants. Make sure there is something for **everyone**. TMI should be all-inclusive.
4. Divide the members into teams—one team per preaching site.
5. Invite other churches in your city or conference to join in blanketing your area with their own simultaneous events.

6. Plan community outreach programs leading up to the meetings—free health classes, music lessons, cooking classes. Be creative—anything that interests the community will be well received.

7. Advertise. Post the free classes in local papers, online, and on grocery store bulletin boards.

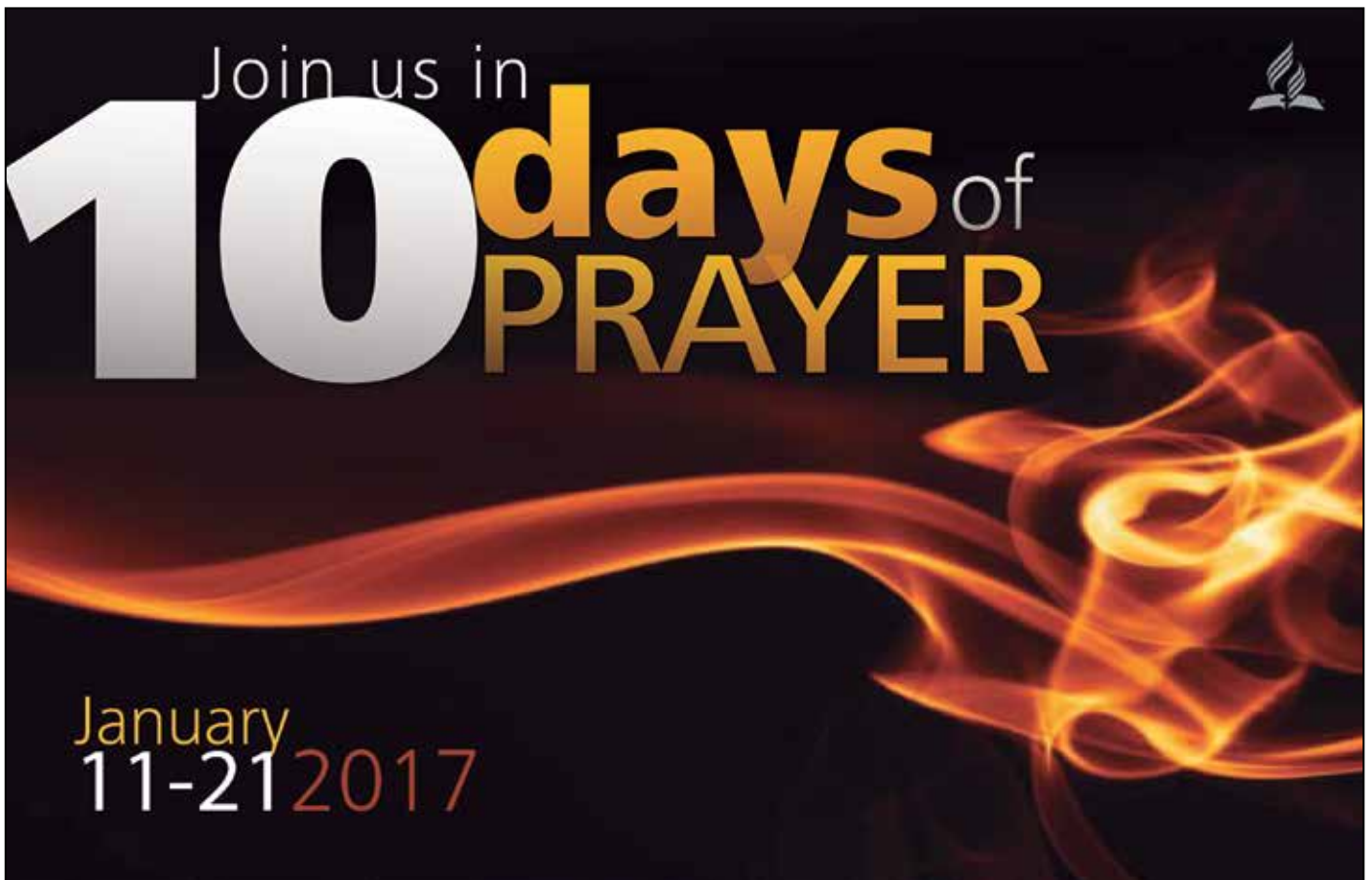
8. Pray, pray, pray. The prayer for souls is always answered. It is not a “Thy will be done,” but a “we claim your promise” prayer.

9. Be enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is contagious. If there is one thing the team experienced in Rwanda, it was joyous, welcoming enthusiasm. It felt like all of Rwanda was on fire for Jesus. Never underestimate the power of Spirit-filled enthusiasm.

10. Rejoice in what God will do. He gave each participant in Rwanda a testimony to share, and He will do the same for you. 

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Duane McKey is a special assistant to the GC President. He is also the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



# TMI AND VISIONARY LEADERSHIP



“An Unforgettable Day” was the theme of the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Festival in the South Veracruz Conference, one of the fastest-growing church entities in the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference. At this historic event, the conference membership totaled 29,314 members worshipping in 256 organized churches in a territory re-structured six times in 26 years. More than 2,400 young delegates and their leaders converged from all pastoral districts to the Hill of the Eagles campsite located on the outskirts of the Catemaco City, Veracruz, Mexico. For them, this event, which testified to a leadership that believes in and exemplifies what Total Member Involvement (TMI) is all about, was unforgettable in that it was the last event under their current Conference structure. A few months later this year, the Conference was reorganized due to outstanding church growth.

The festival focused on the Second Coming of Jesus, and this theme was emphasized throughout—in sermons, seminars, praise time, the theme song, special music, concerts, parades, dramas, contests, a baptismal ceremony, and prayer.

Sixteen young people were baptized in the camp swimming pool. More than 30 chose to be baptized in the future, and the entire crowd of young people accepted direct calls that invited them to commit themselves to Christ and to the mission of the church in preparation for the Second Coming. All attendees were also invited to sign a certificate on “Sexual Purity vs. Sexual Promiscuity” in the context of 1 Thessalonians 4.

As a guest speaker who has visited that territory many times, I was delighted to see them growing to such an exceptional level. I visited that field for the first time when the first administration built the first headquarters under the leadership of Pastor Israel Guizar, and, for many years, I have been gladly following their course of success and excellence. The following are some of the Total Member Involvement strategies they have used in cooperation with the powerful intervention of the Holy Spirit:

1. Mobilization of all forces of the church under a common denominator: mission.
2. Emphasis on membership involvement as a strong strategy of leadership effectiveness exercised by their pastors and elders.

3. Youth involvement in leadership, mission, and public worship. Each year the youth run simultaneous evangelistic campaigns in all churches of their territories.

4. A united, multigenerational church structure which values children, women, and youth.

5. Various evangelistic events during the calendar year when lay preachers, women, youth, and child preachers—in addition to pastors and elders—lead out in public evangelism on a rotating basis.

6. Strong, well-oriented financial investment in public evangelism.

7. Small groups organized in each local church for prayer, discipleship, and outreach.


8. Acquisition of properties and development of building projects to provide temples, schools, and appropriate headquarters to facilitate the work of new churches and conferences/missions.

9. Evangelistic resources provided on a permanent basis.

10. A campsite built and developed for various youth activities and other conference/union events.

11. Presence of pastors and elders at all conference-wide youth events.

12. Establishment and fostering of all youth organizations, including the Youth Society, the Youth Federation, and the Adventurer, Pathfinder, Master Guide, and Youth Leader Clubs. In Mexico, there are three universities owned and operated by the church—Montemorelos, Linda Vista, and Navojoa—where pastors are trained and Youth Ministries operates as a formative institution.

In the closing ceremony, Pastors Benjamin Camacho Jimenez, youth director, and Oved Ortiz Rinza, president of the Conference, were joined by their administrative colleagues, office staff, all district pastors, event organizers, and delegates of that historic occasion. They said farewell to each other knowing that they would never again meet under the banner of that Conference but with the firm determination to be ready and to prepare others for the “Unforgettable Day” when they would never part again. 

Alfredo Garcia-Marenko is editorial assistant for *Elder's Digest* in the General Conference Ministerial Association.



# SERVING DURING THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH:

## MINISTERING TO THE BEREAVED AND SERVING AT FUNERALS

The love of the church for its members and their families is severely tested when death occurs. Deacons and deaconesses can be a tremendous source of comfort during this time. The following are some basic duties that they can perform:

1. “Unless otherwise assigned, the head deaconess has the responsibility of sending flowers from the church to the family of the deceased member.

2. The deaconesses will plan food for the bereaved family on the day of the funeral. Determine the number of relatives expected, so that the needs will be met. Also, plan the most appropriate time to deliver the food. During these periods of grief, both deacons and deaconesses should visit the family as representatives of the church.”<sup>1</sup>

3. If the family is to be served at the church or some other facility, the deacons are to assist the deaconesses with setting up for the meal.

4. At the funeral, the deaconesses are to serve as flower bearers and the deacons as pall bearers if needed.

In addition to performing these basic duties, deacons and deaconesses should constantly seek ways to enhance their ministry to the bereaved. It is important that they become involved with the family at a personal level by providing support and consolation. One of the ways that this can be accomplished is by establishing a funeral committee. This committee should consist of deacons, deaconesses, and other interested church members. So that this committee can provide optimum service, its members must be knowledgeable about the resources and service providers in the community. It is important that they have a good relationship with these providers and be able to network with them.

When the coordinator of the funeral committee is made aware of a death, he or she should contact the pastor and the leaders of the following departments: elders, deacons, deaconesses, hospitality, clerks, ushers, audio-visual, music, nursery, etc. The coordinator will communicate information to these department leaders about the status of the family’s decisions concerning the time, date, and place of the funeral.

Based upon the needs of the family, the funeral committee will provide the following services:

1. A “Things to Do” list to prepare for a funeral.
2. A list of hotels for out-of-town relatives and guests.

3. A list of church members who are willing to house out-of-town relatives and guests.

4. Transportation for out-of-town relatives. Church members can pick up guests from airports and other travel facilities. When guests are ready to leave, provide return transportation for them.

On the day of the funeral, the funeral committee coordinator should designate a few committee members to arrive one hour prior to the viewing, to accomplish the following:

- Set up a room in which the family will meet prior to the service. Provide water, juice, cups, and tissues.
- Arrange for the minister to pray and share information with the family in the gathering room prior to the processional.
- Locate program participants and introduce them to the officiating minister.
- See that program participants have bulletins.
- Assist ushers in reserving pews in the sanctuary for the family and program participants. Place boxes of tissues in the pews where the family will be seated.
- Be available to serve as a messenger for the minister and the family.
- Ensure that arrangements for the meal have been made.
- See that a nurse and a physician are present to handle medical emergencies.

In carrying out the above services, be careful to follow trends in your locale and cooperate fully with the funeral directors and ministers.

The funeral committee coordinator should also assign at least two committee members to do follow-up with the family. The follow-up period may vary from 2-12 months, depending upon the need. It is extremely important to make contact with the family during holidays, on wedding anniversary dates, birthdays, and the anniversary of the person’s death. Contacts should be in the form of personal visits, telephone calls, and cards.

<sup>1</sup> *Manual for Church Officers*, 100.

Vincent E. White, Sr., D.Min., is a retired pastor and author of *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model*; *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook*; and *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses*. [www.avasbookpublishers.com](http://www.avasbookpublishers.com).

# WINNING THE WORSHIP WARS >PART 2



**In** the first part of this series on winning the worship wars, we looked at the place of music in worship. Considering the strong relationship of Adventist history with music as well as the many myths about music and worship being propagated in our midst, I proposed that the first step in winning the worship wars is the “reductionist” approach to church music. This method encompasses at least two aspects: (1) church music should not be viewed as having “heavenly,” mystical, or supernatural qualities but, rather, be viewed as a product of the human experience; and (2) as such, music should be viewed as a tool for human communication and not be given a “spiritual” role in worship.

I recognize that at first glance, this “reductionist” approach may seem to consider music as an unimportant element in worship. So, in Part 2 of this discussion, with the view of music’s primary function as a language, we can now briefly look at *how* music communicates in worship.

Although worship music should not have a central spiritual role in worship (in the sense that its perceived quality or lack thereof impacts the acceptability of worship before God), as a tool for communication, it provides distinct advantages in worship. Singing and music-making are, in fact, mandated throughout Scripture from the psalms to the writings of Paul. How dreary and dark worship would be without

glorious, collective singing accompanied by musical instruments!

As a language, music makes a real and positive impact on the worshiper. Excepting some neurological condition (such as *amusia*, the inability to respond to or make sense of music), human beings are innately sensitive to music. The contours of a song’s melodic line, the combination of pitches to form harmonies, the rhythm, its dynamic changes and loudness or softness—all reach the auditory cortex as sound waves and create a physiological effect.

Not only are human beings sensitive to music, we are also susceptible to it. In general, we respond personally to music. More than any other art form, music elicits a visceral reaction from the listener by affecting the emotions and engaging the brain in a plethora of ways. Musicians are known to develop many untapped areas of the brain. On a much deeper neurological level, music can even heal, as the growing interest in music therapy attests.

For these reasons, music is a perfect fit for worship. It is soothing and inviting. It enhances engagement, responding, and surrendering. When coupled with sacred words, music enriches their meaning and enlivens in a unique way sublime spiritual aspirations that open the way for personal transformation. As the famous music theorist Rousseau (1712–



1778) explains, “Music does not merely imitate, it speaks; and its language, inarticulate but vivid, fervent, passionate, has a hundred times more energy than words.”<sup>1</sup>

So music is very effective in worship because of its ability to engage the worshiper in a unique way. How does this relate to certain discussions of the worship wars in our midst? It does so in at least two ways.

First, although music is intrinsically built to elicit a response from the listener, the intensity of the impact of a piece of music on the listener depends on whether he or she makes a conscious decision to allow such music to cause said impact. Contrary to some views being currently advocated in our churches, the power of music is not “occult” or mystical; neither is it irresistible.

A certain piece of music does not have supernatural powers to control the listener and to inexorably move people to make moral decisions, good or bad. Music stirs human emotions and as such, is responsible for encouraging moods such as joy, sadness, tranquility, agitation, excitement, or ecstasy. Music’s emotional impact helps to create a pathway for the message of the words. But a hymn or worship song does not lead immediately to a decision based on its message; it merely facilitates the communication of propositional truth to which the listener must consciously respond.

Second, we hear much about not bringing music that “we like” to worship God but rather, music that “God likes.” Support for this notion is sought in the story of Cain and Abel as an example of offering what God asks and not what “we like.” But applying the morals of this biblical story to church music is exegetically incorrect. The story has nothing to do with using a certain type of language in worship, it relates to a specific request to “sacrifice.” This misunderstanding fuels erroneous views of music as a sacrifice in worship that must be “acceptable” to God. Ironically, this argument is used to condemn music we do not like, while the music we like is acceptable. Traditional, classical music is usually considered the type of music “God likes,” while contemporary

music is what the “worshiper likes.” To put it more bluntly, “If I don’t like it, God doesn’t like it either!”

This myth must be dispelled because liking a piece of music is directly related to whether it has the desired effect on the listener. We worship best when we sing sacred songs we like. Corporate worship is not necessarily interrupted if a musical style is not to our liking. God is not concerned about our personal artistic sensibilities in worship. In fact, He may not even like *any* of our worship music if He is not at the center of our worship experience (Amos 5:23-27).

Effective worship music invites participation and, to reach this goal, the music must be attractive to the listener in his or her own religious-cultural milieu. Adventist churches that cater to younger generations must be allowed to use music that is pleasing to the audience while providing a richly spiritual, transformative experience. Such music may involve drums, percussion, electric bass, and syncopated rhythms. Churches that prefer classically-oriented church music must be allowed to cater to a community that appreciates this medium; it may involve a pipe organ, harps, or antiphonal choirs. Better yet is a blended worship style that incorporates the best of both worlds. The point here is keeping music as a tool for communication and musical tastes distinct from moral or spiritual principles.

In summary, music is a marvelous tool for the communication of divine truth in worship, in many ways more powerful than the spoken word. Although it should not be given a central spiritual role in worship, it is a very important dimension of worship renewal in Adventist communities today.

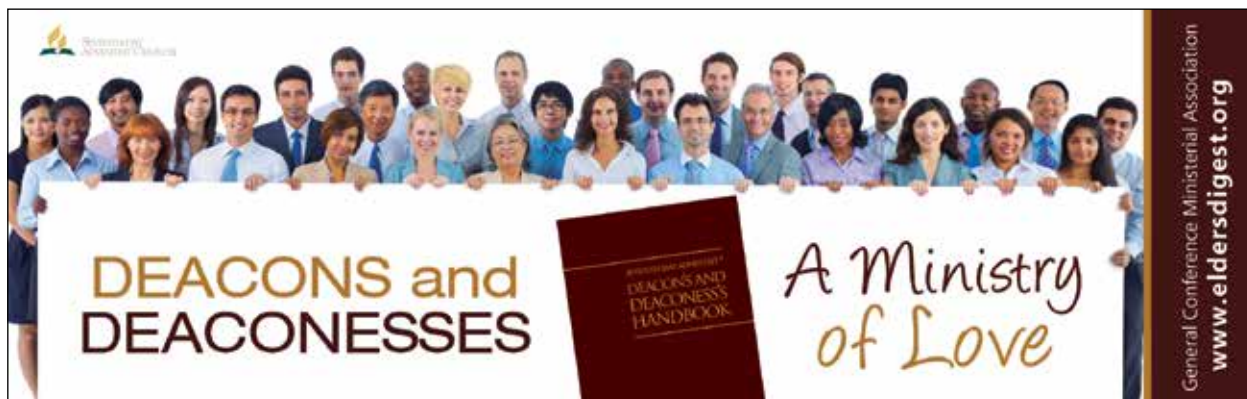
In the next article, I will address the issue of which type of music may communicate best in corporate worship. ED

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<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, *Discours*, 416.

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André Reis has degrees in theology and music and is finishing a Ph.D. in New Testament at Avondale College. This article first appeared in *Best Practice*, January 31, 2016. It has been lightly edited for *Elder’s Digest*. Used by permission.



# SAFETY WHILE SERVING

**Matthew** 11:28 (NIV) says, “Come to me all, who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” As Christians, this command is something we live out daily, especially in this season of giving. Your local church ministries are probably moving into the season of giving right now. This may be through a food drive, a holiday meal at the church for the community, or clothing collection to give to those in need. As church leaders, we collectively make an effort to extend Christ’s rest to *all* that are weary and burdened—including those who are physically and mentally ill.

As a teenager, I attended a church in an urban area that often held prayer services and holiday meals during the season of giving. Church doors were regularly open to members, visitors, and passersby alike.

During one particular service, a man entered the sanctuary doors speaking loudly and calling for help. He was a passerby and unfamiliar with what was going on in the church.

Deacons quickly approached him and addressed his needs in the church lobby. They knew how to handle the situation efficiently and with minimal disruption to the service. They were trained in effective communication and security.

Later I learned that because of the church location, this scenario happened often. Visitors would sometimes have a variety of needs including spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. Church leadership had wisely trained their volunteers in how to address these situations.

When we open the church doors for a food and clothing drive, we always hope for a safe and empathetic event. But we must also anticipate the possibility that sometimes it may not go the way we expect. It’s important to create a plan for the safety of both church members and for those served.

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE AND SERVE SAFELY

*Psychology Today* provides a few guidelines to help us communicate safely:

- **Be respectful:** When someone feels respected and heard, they are more likely to return respect and consider what you have to say.
- **Do not pretend:** If a person is experiencing hallucinations, be aware that the hallucinations they experience are their reality. You will not be able to talk them out of their reality. Communicate that you understand they experience those events. Do not pretend you experience them.
- **Be aware of personal space:** Some people with paranoia may be frightened, so be aware that they may need more space.
- **Avoid making assumptions:** Do not assume they are not smart and will believe anything you tell them. Mental ill-

ness has nothing to do with intelligence level. Do not lie to them, as it will usually break any rapport you want to establish.


- **Have a list of resources:** Keep a current list of community resources, such as shelters and mental health services, that you can suggest to them. Some people will not accept the suggestion, but some will.
- **Take care of yourself—and your safety:** Call for help (police, security, or colleagues) if you feel physically threatened or need help de-escalating the person.

## KEEPING MEMBERS AND VISITORS SAFE

In addition to training your church leaders in safe communication techniques, consider implementing a few security measures. If there’s an emergency inside the church, does your leadership know what to do to keep passersby safe? If an individual outside the church makes a security threat, is there a procedure in place to keep members safely inside the building?

If your church leadership cannot answer these questions with certainty, it’s time to make an emergency plan for your church. Adventist Risk Management, Inc. offers a variety of digital resources. Go to [AdventistRisk.org/Prevention-Resources](http://AdventistRisk.org/Prevention-Resources) to begin creating an emergency plan.

## “COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND BURDENED...”

Every human being is deserving of God’s love, and deserves to have the opportunity to get to know HIM—regardless of their situation. David F. Swink, chief creative officer of Strategic Interactions, Inc., says, “Just because they may be behaving in ways that don’t make sense to us, doesn’t mean that we can’t provide them with service that is part of our jobs to provide any constituent or customer.” 

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# NO HARSH WORDS NOR DEBATING SPIRIT

>PART 1

## **USE OF TRUTH AS A SCOURGE**

In the past you have presented the truth in a fierce way, using it as if it were a scourge. This has not glorified the Lord. You have given the people the rich treasures of God's Word, but your manner has been so condemnatory that they have turned from them. You have not taught the truth in the way that Christ taught it. You present it in a way that mars its influence. . . . Your heart needs to be filled with the converting grace of Christ.

## **NO HELP BY HARSHNESS**

Preach the truth, but restrain the words which show a harsh spirit; for such words cannot help or enlighten anyone.

## **EFFECT OF ONE DROP OF GALL**

Every sermon you preach, every article you write, may be all true; but one drop of gall in it will be poison to the hearer or the reader. Because of that drop of poison, one will discard all your good and acceptable words. Another will feed on the poison; for he loves such harsh words; he follows your example, and talks just as you talk. Thus the evil is multiplied.

## **OUR TONGUE AS THE PEN OF A READY WRITER**

Be careful that you do not rail once. We want the Holy Spirit of God to be life and voice for us. Our tongue should

be as the pen of a ready writer, because the Spirit of God is speaking through the human agent. When you use that wit and fling, you have stirred in some of yourself, and we do not want anything of that mixture.

## **ON GUARD EVERY MOMENT**

Young preachers, and men who have once been ministers, who have been coarse and rough in their manners, making expressions in their conversation which were not perfectly modest and chaste, are not fit to engage in this work until they give evidence of an entire reform. One word spoken unadvisedly may do more harm than a series of meetings held by them will do good. They leave the standard of truth, which should be ever exalted, lowered to the dust before the community. Their converts generally come up no higher than the standard raised for them by the ministers. Men who are standing between the living and the dead should be just right. The minister should not be off his guard for a single moment. He is laboring to elevate others by bringing them up upon the platform of truth. Let him show to others that the truth has done something for him. He should see the evil of these careless, rough, vulgar expressions, and should put away and despise everything of this character. Unless he does this, his converts will pattern after him.

## **CLOSED AND LOCKED DOORS**

Let everyone bear in mind that we are in no case to invite persecution. We are not to use words that are harsh and cutting. Keep them out of every article written, drop them out of every address given. Let the Word of God do the cutting, the rebuking; let finite men hide and abide in Jesus Christ. Let the Spirit of Christ appear. Let all be guarded in their words, lest they place those not of our faith in deadly opposition against us, and give Satan an opportunity to use the unadvised words to hedge up our way. "Do nothing before the time." When God gives a close, cutting message it will be His work, not prompted by the impulse of finite beings. Man's cutting and slashing with the two-edged sword will hedge up our way, so that we shall find doors closed and locked against us. EO

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 238-240 by Ellen G. White.





# STEWARDSHIP AND JOY

Philippians 4:10-23

Poverty and need are not strong enough to rob you of joy unless you let them. As we look at this text, we will see that neither the joy of Paul nor the joy of the Philippians was dampened by their need and/or their poverty.

Now, in many ways, this passage has a lot to say about contentment and also about how we view money, giving, and what we have. So let me say a few things about giving and the basic, foundational biblical principles regarding money and giving. It is always worthwhile to review them, and we need to understand them before we can really understand Paul's message.

## I. THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING GIVING

As you know, in the Old Testament, God's people were expected to give a tithe, which means 10 percent. Ten percent of their gross income was to go to the Lord, and that 10 percent went specifically to the Levitical priestly ministry to fund God's work. Now, on top of the 10 percent, God's people were to give additional gifts to the poor, the needy, the widows, the orphans, and the strangers, and when you totaled it up, the giving in the Old Testament usually reached up to 25 percent or more.

In the New Testament, four principles for giving are laid out in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. In these chapters, Paul tells us that our giving is to be sacrificial, regular, cheerful, and proportional. These are worth noting:

A. *Giving sacrificially.* Ask yourself: Is my giving sacrificial? Does it cost me anything in the sense that I have to sacrifice something else in my life because I give back to God? Many of us are stuck here. Before we give, we want to make sure that we have everything we need and want. What are you willing to sacrifice for the Lord? Cable television? Eating out? An exotic vacation? The new car versus the older car?

B. *Giving regularly.* Regular giving means not just once a year, not just every several months, but on a regular basis—weekly or every other week if that is how you are paid.

C. *Giving cheerfully.* Second Corinthians 9:7 says, "God loves a cheerful giver."

D. *Giving proportionally.* Is your giving proportional to your income?

Every believer needs to apply those four foundational principles to his or her own giving.

## II. WHAT WE SHOULD TEACH

We do not teach prosperity theology; we

preach stewardship. Prosperity theology essentially teaches that if you just have enough faith and if you give to God, then God will bless you with material prosperity. This theology teaches that Jesus wants you to have victory in the sense that if you are just faithful enough toward Him, if you just have enough faith, pray hard enough, and give enough, then He will reward you with prosperity, with the income you have always wanted, with the car and the house and the vacations and whatever else you want. This theology teaches that God is a kind of a financial broker you invest with, and if you invest enough financially with Him, He will bless you financially in return.

What we teach here is stewardship. Stewardship means that we use the money God entrusts to us to advance His church and kingdom. God wants our faithfulness in the little things. If we can't be faithful with the little He gives us, He is certainly not going to give more. If we can be faithful with the little things, He may entrust us with more (Matt. 25:23).

Let's move on and look at Paul's situation and his joy through contentment and the Philippians' joy through generosity.

## III. PAUL'S JOY THROUGH CONTENTMENT

In verses 11 and 12, Paul shows that he has learned to be content. Paul knows that the secret of being content is found in thankfulness and appreciation for what God provides, not in wanting what you don't have. You see, the only way to be content is to be thankful for what God has provided and is providing. And when you are thankful and content, you have joy.

A. *Contentment is a choice.* All contentment is a choice because thankfulness is a choice. You choose to be thankful for what you have; it is a conscious choice to look at God as your Father and understand that He is providing and sustaining you and that every breath you take, everything you eat, and everything you have is a gift from Him—given out of love and care for you.

B. *The opposite of contentment is covetousness.* If there is anything that robs us of contentment, it is coveting—wanting something that belongs to someone else. Paul found contentment, and the secret was in his appreciation of what God provided for him. Even if God didn't provide him the food or the clothing he needed, he trusted that God would provide the strength he needed to make it through anyway (see verse 13). His contentment was based on thanksgiving

and gratitude that filled him with joy. Specifically, he was also appreciative of the gifts that God had provided through the Philippians to him while he was in jail.

## IV. THE PHILIPPIANS' JOY THROUGH GENEROSITY

Paul goes on to comment about the Philippians' gifts and their generosity toward him, and he makes it clear from the very beginning that he appreciates their willingness to share with him. He talks about that in verses 15 and 16 and mentions how, even in the early days of their acquaintance with the gospel, they were willing to give. In fact, when no one else gave, they gave.

A. *Our generosity comes from God's grace.*

The source of our generosity is the grace God has provided on the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is the perfect expression of God's generosity to us—He gave us His one and only Son. In the cross, you see Christ's generosity in His willingness to give everything, including His life, for us. Through the cross, God poured out His grace upon us with incredible generosity. And when you have experienced the grace of God, it will change your heart and life, making you more grace-filled and therefore more generous yourself.

B. *Generosity and joy are intertwined.* From this passage, you see that when you are filled with joy, you will be generous. But the opposite is true, too; generous people are also joy-filled people. The two go hand-in-hand. So, poverty does not take away joy because our generosity comes from God's grace.

When we worship God with our money by giving generously, trusting Him to provide our every need in Christ Jesus, we will find joy. When we worship our money, we will find that we lack the joy we really want.

## CONCLUSION

Joy has nothing to do with material possessions. You can live in complete poverty and have joy. When you are content and thankful to God for what He has provided, you can be generous. Paul makes this clear in verse 19. In other words, God will continue to provide for you "according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Be thankful for what He has given you. Trust that He will continue to meet your needs and be generous. Out of that generosity will come joy!



General Conference Ministerial Association

# FUNERAL MESSAGE

We've come to share in the loss of (name of the deceased). We've come to weep, to feel, to hope, and to wonder in anguish.

We don't come today with any glib answers. Let's face it: This is tough stuff. We're stunned. We're hurting. We don't understand.

It might be difficult to believe, but the Bible says that it's actually good for us to be here today. In Ecclesiastes 7:2, God says, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every person; the living should take this to heart." In other words, God says it's better to go to a funeral than to a party. It's better to be in a cemetery than at a football game. I think there are at least three reasons for this.

First, this is a time for us to celebrate the life that God gave to (name). We're sad but we also want to remember his/her uniqueness. (Read obituary.)

Second, it's a time for us to say good-bye to (name). As hard as it is, this service will help us begin the process of letting go.

And, third, it's a time for us to take a look at our own lives. We are all going to die someday. It's a great time to ask some tough questions, questions like, "Am I ready to die?" When it comes right down to it, this service is more for those who are living than for the person who has died.

## I. A MESSAGE FROM THE BIBLE

And so today, we're going to remember, we're going to say good-bye, and we're going to reflect on our own lives. Some of you are searching for answers today. I want you to know that it's okay to ask those questions. It's natural to wonder why this had to happen.

There's a story in the Bible that addresses some of the same things that most of us are feeling today. It's found in the Gospel of John, in the eleventh chapter. Here we read of a funeral that involved hard questions, deep feelings, and budding hope.

The deceased is a man named Lazarus. He comes from a very close family; among them are two sisters, Mary and Martha. Like (name), Lazarus came from a good family and had a bunch of friends—and one of his best friends was Jesus.

Jesus arrives four days after Lazarus dies, and as He approaches the house full of weeping people, both sisters run out to Him at separate times and say, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

I suspect some of you are asking "if" questions as well. "If only I had spent more time with him/her." "If only I had been nicer." "If only I had done this or that." These kinds of "if" questions are normal. But don't blame yourself. It's not healthy, and it's not right.

Well, if we're not supposed to blame ourselves, then maybe God is to blame for this. That's precisely the implication both Mary and Martha make when they are grieving over the death of their brother: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

I learned long ago that it's really senseless to either accuse God or try to defend Him. But neither is it sinful to question Him. Some of you are wondering why God would allow this to happen. It's okay for you to ask these kinds of questions. Jesus does not scold these sisters for suggesting that perhaps their brother's death was His fault.

You shouldn't feel guilty for wondering if there was something God could have done. God could have kept (name) from dying, but for some reason, He didn't.

## II. IT WAS HIS/HER TIME

Ecclesiastes 3:2 reminds us that there is a time to be born and a time to die. While we don't understand why (name) died, we do know it was his/her time to die.

As we continue with the story of Lazarus, we find the shortest verse in the entire Bible. Surrounded by family and friends, Jesus is deeply moved and asks where the body of Lazarus is. When He views Lazarus, He could have said something profound. Instead, John 11:35 tells us what Jesus did: "Jesus wept."

Here is Jesus of Nazareth, the world's most complete, most perfect man, attending the funeral of a friend and openly weeping, without embarrassment and without apology. In fact, those watching Him said, "See how much He loved him!"

If you feel like crying today, don't hold back. If it was okay for Jesus to cry, it's okay for you to cry. God feels your pain—He wants you to let it out—and to let Him in on your feelings. He wants to help you work through everything you're feeling. He wants to be a part of your life. God knows what it's like to hurt. One day He lost a family member, too, His one and only Son.

(Name) was not planning to die when he/she did, but since life is like a vapor that appears

for a little while and then passes away, it was his/her time to go.

## III. LIFE IS UNPREDICTABLE

Friends, none of us know what will happen to us. Our lives are very fragile, aren't they? Proverbs 27:1 reminds us to not boast about tomorrow because we don't know what a day will bring forth. Some people are always bragging about what they're going to do, and they never do anything. "One of these days I'm going to do this." "I'll tackle that later." But, later may never come.

This passage gives us two very significant reasons why we should never presume upon the future:

- Life is unpredictable. We don't even know what will happen tonight, much less next week or next year. No one can predict the future.


- Life is brief. Our lives are like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. The Greek word here is the word *atmos*, from which we get the word "atmosphere," which is the invisible layer of water vapor that encircles our planet. In the grand scheme of things, our lives are like a mist.

Friends, life is too unpredictable and too brief to live it without God at the center. We count our lives in years, but God tells us in Psalm 90:12 to number our days. The truth of the matter is that all of us are just one heartbeat away from eternity. In 1 Samuel 20:3, David said, "Yet as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."

Our lives are like a vapor—here one minute and gone the next. Decide today to give your life to Jesus. Don't put off this decision.

Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies." Do you believe this? If not, don't waste another minute of the only life you have. Right now, right here, decide to pin all your hopes on Jesus Christ, and Him alone, who exchanged His life for yours, and who, in the next life, will greet you on the other side, if you receive Him into your life now.

## CONCLUSION

Now that (name) is resting, with cherished memories we therefore commit this body to its resting place—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust—knowing that the end of all flesh is the grave; but that in God is our eternal hope. 

General Conference Ministerial Association

# JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Matthew 5:14

When we think of light, we think immediately of the sun. We've been taught that the sun is the center of the solar system, and thus, it is the light of the world. Some figures reveal the sun's greatness. For instance, the sun is 93 million miles from the earth. If a baby started flying to the sun at birth and traveled 150 miles per hour, this baby would be nearly 71 years old upon arrival. Also, astronomers estimate that the diameter of the sun is 109 times that of the earth.

But, in spite of its greatness, the sun is not the "light of the world." The "light of the world" is the Son of God. Jesus declared Himself to be such. He is the One who made the sun, for He existed with the Father at Creation. He is also the One who, with one bold stroke, declared, "I am the light of the world."

## I. JESUS THE LIGHT

God Himself is described as light (Ps. 104:2). In the book of Revelation, Jesus, the Son of Man, is described in this way: "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance" (Rev. 1:16).

So, when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," it was a statement about His glory, but it was more than that. It was about what He came to do (Luke 4). His life was about bringing life to people (John 1:4).

Through His caring acts toward people, Jesus came to display all the goodness of God. He came to teach truth. And He came to bear the punishment for our sin. In all these ways, Jesus is the light of the world.

## II. THE LIGHT'S EFFECT ON US

*A. The light can be repulsive.* Before Jesus proclaimed that He was "the light of the world," the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in the act of adultery and demanded of Him an opinion of her punishment in light of Moses' law. Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground. Then He said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Then He wrote again, and when He looked up, the accusers had fled one by one until only the condemned woman was left. The truth was that the Scribes and Pharisees did not like the light (John 3:19, 20).

Because of this repulsive effect, some people reject Jesus (John 1:11). Can you imagine a dying person refusing to see a doctor? Can you picture a starving person rejecting bread? Yet, the Light was and is rejected by many.

*B. Light reveals truth.* It reveals the truth about ourselves. We will never see our real selves until we see ourselves in the context of Christ. Sometimes it is hard to admit some of our imperfections, but when we compare ourselves to Christ and His Word, we are confronted with our true selves. We are sinners in need of a Savior. It takes humility to receive the light.

The light reveals truth about Christ Himself. As we read in John 8, the Pharisees had a problem with Jesus' claim about Himself. They wanted to argue by way of a legal standpoint. They wanted to discuss, not believe. They wanted a legal battle, not a saving moment. But Jesus confidently stated the truth about Himself. John realized the truth, so he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." After the resurrection, the two men who walked the road to Emmaus finally recognized Jesus in the light of His own revelation.

The light also reveals the truth concerning the way of salvation (John 8:12). This means life in all its fullness. It means eternal life! It comes not by accepting a set of standards to follow, nor by our promise to be good. Eternal life is not inherited by birth but obtained by receiving Jesus.

*C. The light causes growth.* As we absorb the truth and the presence of Jesus, we grow and mature just as plants need sunlight to grow. Jesus' presence in us changes and purifies us. We blossom with godly character. We become rooted in the truth to withstand the storms and every wind of doctrine. And we are filled with joy, thankfulness, and peace. Growth comes by being guided by the light of Jesus in us. Jesus, who is also the Word, "is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

*D. The light gives reassurance.* Like the light of the sun which warms us, creating a place of peace, Jesus, the Light, brings us to a place of peace. We gain peace because the burden of sin is lifted and the path through life and to our eternal home is clear and sure and mapped out for us. We are secure, and that gives us a warm feeling inside. It is like the comfort of seeing the light in the window of one's own house after being gone.

## III. OUR RESPONSE TO THE LIGHT

Once we believe and understand Jesus as the "light of the world" and become truly human as God created us, then, finally, the light in us

calls forth a certain response. We follow. We have the light, and that light cannot be hidden.

*A. Jesus shines through us to the world.* Like Moses, whose face glowed after being in God's presence, we shine because we have Jesus' presence in us. We may not feel very bright at times, but that is our weakness, not Jesus within us. In our humanity, we sometimes dim, squelch, and hide the light in us.

Without Christ in us, the greatest possible impact that we can have is like that of a large ship's impact on the ocean. It leaves a wake which is impressive for the moment but soon disappears without a trace.

Jesus doesn't just say, "I am the light of the world"; to the Christian, He says, "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14, 15). It is only as we strengthen our relationship with Christ that we can be lights to the world. We must always remember that it is the light of Jesus that shines in us, not some self-created light.

The light also connects us to other individuals who believe; we become part of the church. We don't stand alone to face the world. When we stand together as Christians and as a church, which is what Jesus wants, we shine even brighter and stronger.

The church, like the people of Israel, is to be a light to the nations. Live like a believer! Tell the good news! Light your torch from the eternal burning flame of Jesus and carry the light to your family, to your friends, and to the world!

## CONCLUSION

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." This is our Savior who died for us. He transforms us. He leads us. He is light for everyone. Do you have Him in your life? Receive Jesus as your light. Continue to look to Him as your light. And then let Him shine for you and through you. Amen!



General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

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# WHAT IS JESUS TRYING TO SAY?

Even if Jesus never performed a single miracle, His teachings would have secured His place as one of the greatest moral philosophers who ever lived. In fact, Jesus is a moral philosopher in the truest sense: He intends that His teachings be not only contemplated but acted upon. As Jesus Himself says, “But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who builds his house on sand” (Matt. 7:26).

So what did Jesus teach? In short, a lot! It’s from Jesus that we get such familiar statements as “turn to them the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39), “go with them two miles” (Matt. 5:41), “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44), and the so-called Golden Rule, “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31).

And yet, Jesus’ teachings are not entirely new. Much of what Jesus said had already been expressed in the Hebrew Bible, as Jesus Himself admitted. Still, Jesus’ teachings are unrivaled for their penetrating simplicity and enduring appeal. Let’s focus on two of them.

## I. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE BEATITUDES

Jesus gives lectures, or sermons, on a variety of subjects. His most famous is the Sermon on the Mount (so named because, in Matthew, Jesus stands on a mountain when delivering this message). A brief look at this sermon gives us a good idea of what Jesus is all about.

In short, the Sermon on the Mount is a body of moral teachings characterized by an emphasis on sincere devotion to God and a corresponding heartfelt benevolence toward others. As this definition suggests, the emphasis is on the heart; therefore, it is to the heart that Jesus directs His teachings.

The Beatitudes, or Blessings (“Blessed are . . .”), make up the first part of Jesus’ sermon (Matt. 5:3-12). Although scholars speculate that the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation of Jesus’ teachings later brought together into one message, the Beatitudes’ emphasis on personal righteousness and patience in affliction serves as a fitting introduction. Among its teachings, we find:

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
- “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

- “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus attempts to change the people’s attitude toward Moses’ law from external obedience (i.e., “I haven’t killed anyone today”) to internal obedience (i.e., “I have forgiven everyone today”). For example, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said to people long ago, ‘You shall not murder’ . . . But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother . . . will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother . . ., ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ he will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matt. 5:21, 22).

Note the progression of Jesus’ teaching: (1) Don’t murder. (2) Don’t even remain angry. (3) Don’t devalue others by considering them fools.

According to Jesus, when Moses said, “Do not murder,” he didn’t just mean, “Try to make it through the day without killing anyone.” He also meant, “Don’t devalue others by thinking yourself superior to them or harboring anger toward them.” For Jesus, devaluing others is similar to (and ultimately the source of) murder.

Jesus goes through the same process with other commands, including adultery (If you lust over another, you’ve already committed adultery in your heart), oath-taking (Don’t swear oaths, but Let your yes mean yes, and your no mean no), retaliation (If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other as well), and hating your enemies (“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” ESV). And, in case that isn’t enough, Jesus concludes this part of His sermon by saying, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

Jesus’ point in saying “be perfect” is not to make people overachievers or type-A personalities. Rather, Jesus wants people to stop comparing themselves to others, because this leads to a false sense of righteousness. You can always find someone more “morally challenged” than you are, but everyone has room for improvement when compared to God’s perfection.

The tendency toward self-righteousness explains why Jesus then moves to a discussion of religious showmanship, which He describes as: “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.” The

word Jesus uses to describe this false piety is “hypocrisy,” which was a word used to describe actors in a play. To Jesus, those who practice their piety for public consumption are like actors, pretending to be what they’re not.

## II. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

When Jesus prayed the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), He prayed in the context of His teachings against hypocrisy, particularly hypocrisy when praying (for example, saying words you don’t mean or saying long prayers just to impress others). Although it differs slightly in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the overall thrust is the same: It is a prayer of simple devotion to God to express the speaker’s longing for God’s righteous rule on earth, as well as God’s daily provision for food, forgiveness, and protection.

Let’s read together the Lord’s Prayer as registered in Matthew 6:9-13.

### CONCLUSION

The following words of Ellen G. White describe her experience in relationship to the Lord’s Prayer: “This morning my prayer to the Lord is for His rich grace. I never choose to begin a day without receiving special evidence that the Lord Jesus is my Helper, and that I have the rich grace that it is my privilege to receive. In my morning devotions I have regarded it my privilege to close my petition with the prayer that Christ taught to His disciples. There is so much that I really must have to meet the needs of my own case, that I sometimes fear that I shall ask amiss, but when in sincerity I offer the model prayer that Christ gave to His disciples, I cannot but feel that in these few words all my needs are comprehended. This I offer after I have presented my special private prayer. If with heart and mind and soul I repeat the Lord’s Prayer, then I can go forth in peace to my work, knowing that I have not asked amiss.”<sup>1</sup>

How many of you would like to thank the Lord Jesus for the wonderful legacy of the Lord’s Prayer? Would you like to repeat and live the Lord’s Prayer on a daily basis? Please raise your hand if this is your decision. May the Lord bless you! Let’s pray.



<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 8:295.



# CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC

IS IT HONORING GOD? SHOULD IT BE USED IN CHURCH SERVICES?

**Some** fifty or so years ago, dairy farmers discovered the playing of soothing music encouraged cows to produce more milk. Since more milk meant greater profits, farmers began installing sound systems inside their dairy barns. One major dairy producer capitalized on this innovation by advertising “Milk from contented cows.”

Oddly enough, the sweet strains of music very often produce an entirely opposite reaction among Christians. Instead of contentment, hostile disagreements over selections in worship music have become a leading cause of congregational infighting and even church splits! To our shame, there are believers who sulk and fume from their pews if their particular brand of musical tastes is not satisfied. Studies and surveys in churches are showing that music ministers are among the most stressed in Christian ministry.

Musical tastes are as varied as church members themselves. There are those who love the old hymns while others much prefer a more contemporary flavor. Some music ministers have attempted to appease everyone by blending the old with the new. Other churches offer two separate worship services each Sabbath--one being traditional and the other a contemporary service. Still, there are churches that tenaciously cling to old-fashion tradition. I know of a local pastor who is fond of bragging, “You won’t hear any contemporary music in our church! We remain true to the old hymns!” What he fails to

realize is that even the old hymns were “contemporary” when they were first written! In contrast, I once attended a church in which the music was played at an ear-splitting volume resembling that of an armored vehicle crossing a minefield.

There are those who argue the old hymns are a tangible link to our past. This is certainly true, for these hymns have surely withstood the test of time. Many of the old hymns, too, are rich in Christian doctrine. The lyrics of Charles Wesley or Martin Luther, as examples, give magnificent instruction in sound Christian theology.

But can we not make similar statements favoring contemporary Christian music? Yes, we certainly can, for there are some wonderful Christian artists glorifying the name of Christ Jesus with their talents. Should we deny their musical contributions based solely upon the fact their songs are fresh and new? To do so sounds rather legalistic and since when has unbending legalism brought honor to God? Far too often we allow our own personal taste in music to become the standard for what music is glorifying to God. Instead, we should allow, even promote, Christian freedom and grace in musical preferences.

People are always asking if drums or keyboards or, yes, if electric guitars belong in the church. All musical instruments are, in themselves, neither good nor bad—they are amoral. So the question is this: Does a style of music edify believers while bringing honor and glory to Christ Jesus? If so, then what difference does it make if the accompaniment is provided by a piano or a guitar? Perhaps Ephesians 5:19 is the answer to this issue in that it promotes worshipping the Lord and encouraging other believers in three different “styles” of music, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.”



**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).**

General Conference Ministerial Association

# WHY OUR CHURCHES NEED TO BE ON SOCIAL MEDIA



## TIPS TO HELP GET YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MINISTRY STARTED

“Any church that doesn’t have a Facebook page may not be doing relevant ministry,” says Noah Washington, former senior pastor at Allegheny East Conference’s Bladensburg, Maryland, USA, church. Washington and the media team update their Facebook and Twitter accounts with pictures from the church service and videos of their praise team and groups. Bladensburg has a weekly attendance of between 375 and 400, but their Facebook page has more than 1,200 fans. He says that the church’s social media efforts have had a tremendous impact. “We’ve had people attend services because of our Facebook and Twitter accounts.”

David Franklin, pastor of the Miracle City Church in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, uses Facebook to interact with his church community and viewers of *Let’s Pray!*, a Hope Channel show he co-hosts. “We respond to every post and share encouraging messages as a way to provide hope for folks going through difficult and/or dark moments in their lives. Social media is a neighborhood. In the same way that building relationships with the neighbors who live next door can (possibly) result in leading them into a relationship with Jesus and potentially becoming active members of your church, . . . building relationships through social media can [also] grow a ministry.”

Social media has played a big role in how Adventist HealthCare interacts with their consumers and the community in recent years, says Bronson Arcuri, former social media and video specialist at Adventist HealthCare. Adventist HealthCare has more than 26,000 Twitter followers and more than 10,000 fans on their Facebook pages. They also have a blog, <http://blog.adventisthealthcare.com/>, which shares health tips, community and health news, and other useful information. “We’re able to be more accessible to a bigger audience than in the past. This has gone a long way in helping us spread our message of

wellness to the community. It has also helped us address any community concerns brought to our attention,” he says. “It’s kind of cliché now, but it all comes down to speaking with your audience rather than speaking at them.”

Chip Dizárd, social media expert and member of the Chesapeake Conference’s New Hope Church in Fulton, Maryland, USA, agrees that the goal of social media should be listening

### SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FROM ADVENTIST HEALTHCARE:

- *Don’t get discouraged.* Getting social media followers can take a long time, so don’t sweat it if you get stuck at a number. Just keep posting and offering useful, regular updates.
- *Set realistic goals.* If you have a church with 200 members, 100 Facebook fans could be a huge number for you.
- *Publicize your channel.* Make sure your printed materials list your social media addresses so people know they can find regular information there.
- *Post relevant topics.* In addition to sharing information about your group, make sure to share information your followers find useful. A social media site needs to be useful to your followers, not just to your organization.
- *Highlight people.* Highlight individuals as much as you can. It does not have to be all the time, but it’s a great way for people to learn more about your group and the services you provide.
- *Keep it fresh.* Don’t forget to show the personable side of your organization; be informative and approachable.



and giving. “We need to have two-way communication instead of just a push; we need to pull *and* push information out.” Besides regularly interacting with your followers, social media can also encourage your community to interact with you. Washington gets his church members active by encouraging them to tweet quotes during the sermon.

### HOW TO DO IT

Dizárd says content is what will drive people to your church or ministry. “The old stale stock information is no longer relevant in this information age.” He says a church can aggregate content from ministry blogs and then add their own opinions to it; they can also address current world events as conversation starters. One commonly-cited roadblock to starting a social media ministry is the lack of free time or a perceived lack of good content. “I believe you make time for what’s important, and if social media is important, you will find time to share. . . . You create content every week that you preach a sermon.” Dizárd says that transcripts of a sermon, audio of a sermon, tweetable moments from a sermon, and updates about upcoming events are all good content for social media. Larger churches can be active on many platforms. For example, the New Hope

Church runs Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vimeo, and Spotify (goo.gl/YbNk9l) accounts. Smaller churches might not be able to do that. All the social media channels can quickly overwhelm people when they’re first starting out, says Arcuri. “You should start by focusing on being where your audience is, and for most demographics right now, that means Facebook,” he says.

Christopher Thompson, an associate pastor at Allegheny West Conference’s Ephesus Church in Columbus, Ohio, says his church has had a website for years and has ramped up their use of social media in the last couple of years. They use these accounts to share encouragement and information about projects and events and to reach out and stay connected to the people in their circle of influence. He says, “It’s absolutely essential for church leaders to have an Internet presence. . . . When we want to know more, we Google it. It’s even true for people we want to know more about; from presidents to pastors, we just Google them. With that said, I think it’s safe to say that [to many people in today’s world] if you’re not online, you don’t exist.”

EO

V. Michelle Bernard is the assistant editor and digital media manager for the *Columbia Union Visitor*.

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# GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES: HIV-AIDS



**When** we consider health issues around the world, HIV-AIDS continues to be a major concern. According to the United Nations (UN) latest reports, 35 million people are living with HIV globally, with 22 million having no access to antiretroviral therapy. While it is true that new HIV infections have been declining since 2001 (38 percent less among adults and 58 percent less among children), the HIV epidemic continues to outpace this decline.<sup>1</sup> New HIV infections continue to rise in some locations and in populations that are marginalized.

Globally, HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age, the second most common cause of death among adolescents, and the leading cause of death among adolescents ages 10–19 in Africa.<sup>2</sup> Sadly, the majority of these adolescents are girls who often are forced to have sexual contact with HIV positive abusers. These statistics led the UN to include HIV-AIDS among its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG#3), with a bold commitment to end the epidemic of AIDS globally by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

As an elder you may ask: What does that have to do with me and my church? Well, for one, the stigma and shame that come from an HIV-AIDS diagnosis is still a real problem in many parts of the world and many of our members carry this burden. But second, as a people called to extend Jesus' healing ministry to the brokenhearted and ill in our communities, it is our duty to do something, right?

Recognizing that HIV-AIDS is a major cause of pain and early mortality in our communities, the Seventh-day Adventist church has made a commitment to meet this need and be part of the solution of the HIV-AIDS problem since 2002.

It was then that Adventist Aids International Ministry (AAIM) began to make a difference in the African continent as the epidemic was at its height. Members were afraid to share their diagnosis and attempted to hide their shame. But by the pioneer work of Drs Oscar and Eugenia Giordano, AAIM directors, a compassionate environment was created in churches across Africa, and people with HIV felt warmly welcomed and embraced.<sup>4</sup>

Support groups were formed with the goal that each church would become a center for hope and healing for peo-

ple with HIV-AIDS, while education and knowledge was shared and access to treatment was made available.

Today, AAIM continues its mission to coordinate activities and develop resources to bring comfort, healing, and hope to those infected and affected by HIV-AIDS where needed. It also aims to share a message of education and prevention to the general population through churches functioning as centers of hope and healing.

What about your church? Is there an intentional ministry reaching your members or those in the community who may have HIV or AIDS? If not, how can you use your influence as a spiritual leader to facilitate the initiation of a ministry that can benefit those hurting from this diagnosis? No matter which continent you reside on, HIV-AIDS is present and people are hurting from it. How could you help?

It is simple: become engaged in *Comprehensive Health Ministry*. As you develop collaborations among your ministries (Health, Women, Youth, Children, and others) your church can become a center for hope and healing meeting felt needs while demonstrating God's love and compassion.

As we focus on reducing HIV-related discrimination and violence against women and girls<sup>5</sup>, securing equitable access to services for people affected by HIV through the ministry of a Faith Community Nurse, or providing a compassionate church environment free from stigma and shame through a ministry like AAIM, we will be sharing Christ's mission to "heal the brokenhearted," thus bringing them "beauty for ashes" and "oil of joy for mourning," so His name can be glorified.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-3.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.aidsministry.com/>

<sup>5</sup> [www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org)

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 61:1-3 - NIV



Katia Reinert is associate director of the Health Ministries Department for the General Conference.

# VALUES

Seventh-day Adventist values are rooted in the revelation of God provided through the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ. Our sense of identity and calling grows from an understanding of Bible prophecies, especially those concerning the time immediately preceding the return of Jesus. Consequently all of life becomes a growing experience and demonstration of involvement with God and His kingdom.

Our sense of mission is driven by the realization that every person, regardless of circumstances, is of infinite value to God and

thus deserving of respect and dignity. Through God's grace every person is gifted for and needed in the diverse activities of the church family.

Our respect for diversity, individuality and freedom is balanced by regard for community. We are one--a worldwide family of faith engaged in representing the reign of God in our world through ethical conduct, mutual regard, and loving service. Our faithfulness to God involves commitment to and support of His body, the church.



This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, October 10, 2004.

# COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND HEALING

The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms the commitment and objectives of its Health Ministry aiming to achieve the well being of its members and the communities it serves, and improving global health.\*

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists reiterates its commitment to the principles of human dignity and equity, social justice, freedom, self-determination, access to clean food and water, and non-discriminatory universal access to available health care. Through its ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and discipling the Church seeks to represent the mission of Jesus Christ in such a way as to be:

1. Regarded globally as teaching a wholistic model of evidence based healthful living in primary health care.

2. Seen at all times as a trusted, transparent ally of organizations with compatible goals and vision, in alleviating suffering and addressing basic health and well-being.

3. Recognized for the unconditional scope of its embrace of all persons seeking this basic health and well-being.

4. Involved not only administratively but also functionally at every level including each congregation and church member in this ministry of health and healing.



This statement follows the deliberations and recommendations of the Global Conference on Health and Lifestyle held in Geneva, July 2009, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, and calls for cooperation with similar credible bodies aiming to improve global health.



# A CHURCH PASTOR'S DREAM LIST

**Twenty-five** years ago, I served as pastor of a large metropolitan church. At first glance, this church was a magnificent edifice with a large, one-of-a-kind pipe organ; a three-tier sanctuary; and two 30-foot-high motifs, imported from Italy, depicting the three angels of Revelation and the Second Advent. However, in contrast to its beauty and dignity, the church lacked the basics for encouraging members and the community to come and be part of the congregation.

Although it had seating for 1,400, there were only 150 parking spaces. While it had a pastoral staff of five, the building had only one office. And even though the church could be seen easily from the road, there was no way for a person to enter the facility from the other side of the parkway.

If you are currently looking at constructing a new facility, here are six basic elements that every church needs.



1. *External signage.* The church sign should identify the church in large, high-contrast lettering that can be read easily by passersby. A number of church signs that I have seen display the church name in colors and hues that are nearly identical

to the background. I have been amazed by the number of Seventh-day Adventist churches that do not spell the denominational name correctly, omitting the hyphen between "Seventh" and "day" or capitalizing the "D" in "day."

2. *Entrance to the facility.* Adequate lighting is needed for the church's name, as well as for important entrances. The street number must appear in large letters that



can be seen easily from the road. The entrance(s) should be convenient from the street and well-marked. Having a covered entrance for a minimum of two vehicles to unload passengers is a must for weather conditions and for special occasions such as funerals and weddings.



3. *Appropriate parking.* Parking space should be adequate for the largest event you will ever have at your church. Providing special parking spaces for visitors, including parking spots for physically-challenged individuals, pregnant women, and families with small children, is a

great way to welcome newcomers. Trees and shrubs are an added bonus, along with a walkway between the rows of parked vehicles.

4. *Storage.* Inadequate storage rooms are probably the biggest nightmare for deacons and deaconesses. In many cases, the church building committee fails to include a room to store the chairs and tables used for fellowship lunches. This problem extends to the Sabbath School rooms (particularly in the children's divisions), which never seem to have satisfactory cupboards for all the soft toys, flannel kits, books, and boxes of handout items. A child-sized toilet in the bathroom near the classrooms is also a bonus.



A special closet for whiteboards, projectors, TV stands, and other audio equipment is often overlooked. Deaconesses would praise any building committee that included a large walk-in closet with shelves for the items churches use, such as tablecloths, flower vases, and Communion materials.

When planning each room for your new facility, the thinking should be “storage, adequate storage, and more storage.” Even then, you will eventually probably say, “I wish we had more storage.”



5. *Small rooms.* Often much of what happens in the local church involves small groups—working committees, social groups, musical ensembles, spiritual circles, etc. Providing rooms of various sizes makes individuals feel more at home and saves on utility costs. Sometimes having a large room that can be divided by two or three moveable walls can meet the needs of many functions and groups. Remember, the majority of church work is conducted in small rooms.

6. *Church office space.* Every church needs professional office space. This should include a reception area with a secretarial desk and adequate space for computers, printers, and other office equipment. For example, a separate copy

room with lots of table space for assembling bulletins is very helpful.

The building should include two or three pastors’ offices even if your church currently has only one pastor. Evangelists and Bible workers will need these rooms when conducting evangelistic series. The pastoral offices should be designed to face the secretary/receptionist’s office, divided from it by a double-paned glass wall to keep conversations private.

The little things—the attention to details—make a church feel more like a home, which will encourage individuals and families to return again and again.

ED

This article first appeared in *Best Practices*, August 2014. It has been lightly edited for *Elder’s Digest*. Used by permission.

Gordon Botting, recently retired, was the financial educator and stewardship director for the Pacific Union Conference.



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# PREACHING POWERFULLY: IS IT POSSIBLE? >PART 3 OF 6



**Part 2** of this series told of the powerful Protestant preachers who began evangelizing the world in the early 1700s and how the Holy Spirit not only inspired them but gave them great freedom in the pulpit. Part 3 continues the story but shifts the emphasis to Seventh-day Adventist preachers and ministers who have been mightily led by God.

## RENOWNED ADVENTIST PREACHERS

*H.M.S. Richards* (1894–1985) was born in Iowa, USA, and is most famous as the founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Voice of Prophecy radio ministry and as a pioneer in religious radio broadcasting. His preaching style was quiet, with few physical movements or gestures, but his sermon content and vocal appeal were tremendous. Thousands came to Christ as a result of his ministry. The Adventist Church called him “the pastor of pastors.”

*George Vandeman* (1916–2000) started his ministry in college with a weekly 15-minute radio broadcast in Elkhart, Indiana, USA. Later, he worked as a full-time evangelist. He patterned his preaching style after Charles Spurgeon and had a wonderful preaching voice that was easy to listen to. In the mid-1950s, he began the well-known television program *It Is Written*, which surpassed 1.5 million view-

ers in the 1990s. *It Is Written* was one of the first religious telecasts to be aired on Soviet television. In 2000, it was broadcast in eight languages to more than 150 countries. It was a “pioneering force” in Adventist evangelism.

*Fordyce Detamore* (1909–1980) was a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist in North America who prepared thousands for baptism and brought many backslidden Adventists back to a living relationship with Jesus and the church. Detamore encouraged pastors and church leaders to help these well-meaning people go to work for the lost so they could become “fishers of men” instead of “crabs.” Detamore is known for the following acronym: HKWHTA (He Knows What He’s Talking About).

*Kenneth Cox* (1928–) discovered Christ when a literature salesman left a religious tract with the Cox’s neighbor, Mrs. Morgan. She wasn’t interested, so she tucked the little magazine in a catalogue that the Cox family received in the mail, which he and the family read, and, as a result, became interested in spiritual things. Then an Adventist literature evangelist visited them and enrolled the family in a *Voice of Prophecy* Bible Course! Before long, Kenneth and his family accepted the Adventist truth and were baptized. After earning a degree in theology, Cox pastored and conducted evangelistic campaigns with his team, not only in the United States but in more than 12 other countries. Using a unique multimedia concept, his campaign videos have become popular worldwide. He has a clear, convincing preaching manner that easily draws people to the Lord.

*Doug Batchelor* (1957–), son of Florida aviation tycoon and philanthropist George Batchelor and Hollywood film critic/actress/songwriter Ruth



Batchelor, spent his youth searching for his purpose in life, including exploring various religions. While living in a cave in the mountains above Los Angeles, he somehow secured a Bible and began reading it, which over time led to his conversion and baptism into the Adventist Church. Eventually, he became skilled in showing the links between ancient Bible prophecies and current world events. Consequently, Batchelor developed a strong Christian belief system that led him to become the speaker of the national television program *Amazing Facts*. He is an energetic speaker with an unusual ability to communicate not only to church-oriented people but also to those who aren't religious. His spontaneous, lively humor and down-to-earth approach to living the Christian life engages and brings hope and meaning to hearts from every background.

*Dwight Nelson* (1961–) is a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and author, but his primary role is senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He appeals powerfully to the thousands of adults and students who greatly admire not only his evocative and compelling sermons but also his person, which is warm and charismatic. He has pastored at the Pioneer Memorial Church for more than 30 years. He also hosted the television program *The Evidence*. His preaching is dynamic, bold, and fearless. He covers issues many pastors are too timid to address.

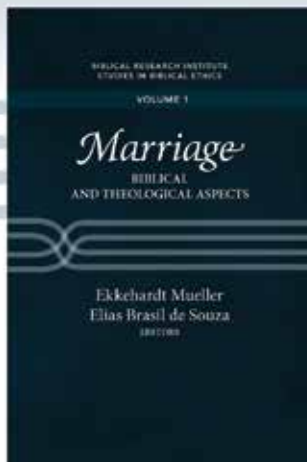
The space would fail me to tell of Mark A. Finley, Charles D. Brooks, E. E. Cleveland, Robert Costa, Salim Japas, Alejandro Bullón, Efraín Murillo, Walter Pearson, Carlton P. Byrd, Carlos E. Aeschlimann, Mike Tucker, Dan Mathews, William Fagal, Braulio Pérez Marcio, Milton Peverini, Charles E. Bradford, Shawn Boonstra, Stephen Bohr, W. C. Scales, Lonnie Melashenko, John Bradshaw, Lawrence Andrews Ewoo, John Carter, and many other Seventh-day Adventist preachers.

It is evident that God has used these pastor-evangelists in a mighty way for generations to further His plan for Planet Earth. To be a preacher is a serious and solemn responsibility. As a direct instrument of God for saving souls, the preacher's behavior can determine the eternal destiny of men and women. Humility, dedication, a close connection with God through prayer, fearlessness, fasting, and courage to do His will regardless of the consequences are the marks of a great preacher. Understanding and taking to heart the apostle Paul's famous statement is vital for success: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

(To be continued)

ED

Lamar Phillips is a retired minister and church administrator who served for 39 years in six world divisions.



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# LESSONS FROM DANIEL 7

**Nations** use images of animals as their representatives, conveying a message about how they see themselves. Some have chosen an eagle, others a lion, and still others a bear or an antelope. Sometimes humans are given animal names. This can be negative or positive. To be called “dog,” “fox,” “wolf,” or “ass” is typically negative. Animal names are sometimes also used as nicknames for loved ones. In Daniel 7 we also encounter various animals. However, these animals are either indefinable or strange mixtures of beasts. All of them are ferocious. This chapter takes us to the prophetic part of the book, although the narrative section of Daniel, chapters 1–6, also contains some prophecies.

## I. STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER

Daniel 7 closely resembles Daniel 2. Both chapters report a vision that is followed by an interpretation. In both of them, four elements appear, which obviously follow each other chronologically, reaching the eschatological climax—the final establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

### A. Outline of Daniel 7

Daniel 7 consists of two large parts—the vision and the interpretation plus prologue and epilogue:

- *Prologue* (vv. 1, 2a).
- *The vision* (vv. 2b–14).
- Four empires and the little horn (earthly scene, vv. 4–8).
- Heavenly judgment and the eternal kingdom of God (heavenly scene, vv. 9–14).
- *The interpretation* (vv. 15–27).
- Daniel’s first reaction (vv. 15, 16).
- First short interpretation (vv. 17, 18).
- Daniel’s second reaction (vv. 19–22).
- Second and more extensive interpretation (vv. 23–27).
- *Epilogue* (v. 28).

### B. Emphases

In the vision proper, each of the animals, as well as the little horn, is characterized by one verse each. However, in the interpretational part, the first three animals appear very briefly and in one single verse only. Extensively described are:

- The little horn (vv. 20–22, 24–26).
- The judgment, including the saints receiving the kingdom (vv. 18, 22, 26, and 27).
- The saints (vv. 18, 21, 22, 25, and 27).

This is of great importance, revealing the major message of the chapter: (1) the little horn attacks the saints, the people of God, (2) the judgment of God takes place in favor of His saints, and (3) the kingdom is given to the saints.

## II. THE DISCUSSION OF THE CHAPTER

### A. The Prologue

**Verses 1, 2a:** Daniel’s vision occurs during the first empire of the book,

the Babylonian Empire, but under its last king. The visions of Daniel 8 and 9 follow the vision of Daniel 7. Daniel will receive them later.

### B. The Four Animals and the Little Horn

**Verses 2, 3:** The four animals represent four world empires that begin with the first in the time of Daniel (v. 17). The sea represents the peoples on earth (Rev 17:15) from which the empires arise. The winds may stand for political events that bring about revolutions, wars, and other problems (Rev 7:1). In number and character these empires remind us of those in Daniel 2.

**Verse 4:** The lion with eagle wings as king of land animals and king of birds is the same as the golden head in Daniel 2—Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The imagery is found in Babylonian art. However, under Nebuchadnezzar’s successors the empire began to lose some of its lion-like characteristics such as boldness and strength.

**Verse 5:** The bear raised up on one side represents the empire of the Medes and Persians (see Daniel 8:3, 20). The three ribs could stand for Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt, which were devoured by the new empire.

**Verse 6:** The leopard with four wings and four heads is a very fast animal. The Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire with unprecedented speed. But Alexander’s kingdom was divided in four, and later three, parts after his premature death (see Dan 8:8, 21, 22).

**Verses 7, 19, 23:** The fourth animal is indefinable. It corresponds to the fourth empire of Daniel 2 (see Dan 2:40). In both cases iron is mentioned. It is the Roman Empire.

**Verses 7, 24:** The ten horns are smaller kingdoms, which conquered Rome and came forth from it. Historically, Rome was captured by the Germanic tribes of Western Europe. Some have identified them as the Alemanni, the Anglo-Saxons, the Burgundians, the Franks, the Herulians, the Lombards, the Ostrogoths, the Sueves, the Vandals, and the Visigoths.

### C. The Little Horn and the Saints

#### 1. Characteristics of the Little Horn

**Verses 8, 11:** (1) It comes forth from the fourth beast.

**Verses 20, 21:** (2) In the beginning it is small.

**Verses 24–26:** (3) It grows and surpasses the other horns.

(4) Three horns are plucked out before it.

(5) It is different from the other horns.

(6) It has human-like eyes.

- (7) With its mouth it speaks great things and blasphemes God.
- (8) It changes times and the law of God.
- (9) The saints are attacked by it and defeated.
- (10) They are in its hand for three and one half times.
- (11) The little horn will be judged by God.
- (12) It will be destroyed.

## 2. Interpretation

- (1) Out of the pagan Roman empire arose papal Rome.
- (2) In the beginning this church was small and persecuted.
- (3) Today it is by far the largest denomination. In the Medieval Ages the pope was not only the religious ruler but also quite often the top political ruler in Europe. The power of the Roman Catholic Church was also extended to other continents.
- (4) Herulians, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were tribes that supported Arian Christianity—that is, they denied the doctrine of the Trinity. As such they were rivals of the bishop of Rome who was about to become the pope. In 493 AD, the Herulians were defeated by the Ostrogoths who then ruled in Rome. The Vandals were defeated by general Belisarius in 534 AD, and the Ostrogoths had to withdraw from Rome 538 AD due to Belisarius and were eradicated later.
- (5) The papacy is a religious-political power, not just a political entity.
- (6) The eyes point to insight, intelligence, and foresight.
- (7) Blasphemy of God happens, for example, through doctrines that limit the work of Christ, such as the veneration of Mary as the mother of God, the veneration of saints, the ministry of earthly priests, etc. Some papal claims sound like blasphemy: The Pope is crowned with a three-fold crown as the king of heaven, earth, and the underworld. . . . The Pope is like God on earth. . . . The Pope has such great authority and power that he even can change, explain or interpret divine laws. (L. Ferraris, "Papa II" in *Prompta Bibliotheca*, vol. VI, p. 25–29).
- (8) The context requires understanding the law as the law of God. The second of the Ten Commandments was eliminated (prohibition of venerating images) and the fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, was changed into Sunday observance.
- (9) The saints are the people of God in general, not special pious people who should be venerated and can intervene for those living on earth (Ex 19:6; Phil 1:1). The persecution of the saints happened, for instance, through having them tried and executed as witches and heretics (see the Waldenses and Huguenots).
- (10) The three and one half times refer to three and one half years or 1,260 days. According to the year-day principle (e.g., Ezek 4:6; Num 14:34) these periods amount to 1,260 years (cf. Rev 12:6, 14; 11:2, 3; 13:5—in symbolic prophecy the time element should also be symbolic, especially if the prophecy covers hundreds or thousands of years). They start in AD 538, when the decree of emperor Justinian of Eastern Rome (AD 533), which demanded to exalt the bishop of Rome as head of all holy churches and head of all holy priests of God, could slowly become a reality. They ended in 1798 BC, when through the French general Berthier the Pope was taken prisoner

and was brought to France where he died in exile. This brought to an end the political power of the Papacy.

- (11) The heavenly judgment began sometime after AD 1798. It is a judgment in favor of the saints.
- (12) The destruction of the little horn is still future.

## D. The Judgment Scene

### 1. Information about the Judgment in Daniel 7

#### Verses 8–14, 22 and 26:

- The Ancient of Days is God the Father who functions as judge. The symbols describing Him point to His purity, experience, wisdom, and omnipotence.
- This judgment is not a secret judgment. Heavenly beings take part in it.
- Records are being consulted.
- The judgment affects the little horn and the other animals.
- At the same time, God vindicates the persecuted saints.
- This judgment happens after AD 1798 and before the Second Coming. Then the saints will finally receive the kingdom.
- In this judgment the Son of Man appears—Jesus Christ. Believers are not directly involved.

### 2. The End Time

It is in this time of judgment prior to the coming of God's kingdom of glory that we live now. It is the end time!

## E. The Kingdoms of God

### 1. Information about God's Kingdom to Come in Daniel 7

#### Verses 14–27:

- It is ruled by the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.
- On His side are the saints.
- This kingdom lasts forever and will not be replaced by another kingdom.
- All opponents and enemies will be gone.
- In this kingdom all people will love God and obey and serve Him. Rebellion will be no more.

We are looking forward to the time of the final establishment of God's glorious kingdom on earth.

## III. APPLICATION

- God's people are not protected against all suffering, hardship, and persecution. To be a Christian does not mean being freed from all that is negative. Christians encounter pain and sorrow too. We should not live with unsubstantiated illusions. Otherwise we may throw away faith in God when distress and grief reach us.
- However, there is One person who notices everything, who is present with us and carries us: Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14–16). So Christians are not alone when they suffer. The One who supports them has Himself experienced most bitter pain and unprecedented suffering.
- In spite of all evil, Christians know about victory. They expect the kingdom of God, which is free from everything negative, disturbing, and distressing. Therefore, they live goal-oriented lives. Christians are people with a realistic hope and deep joy. While they live here and now and see problems with the environment, the economy, warfare, and many other things, they step in and try to make a difference, knowing that the glory of God's kingdom is just around the corner.



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## THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE WE LONG FOR: THE WHY OF WORSHIP

**Think** about the best worship experience you have ever had. Have you tried to replicate it? The book of Psalms gives us powerful insights regarding how and why we are to come to God in order to connect with His heart. God intends for our private and corporate worship to be both enthusiastic and participatory. When we are engaged with God based on His goodness, faithfulness, and love, worship becomes exciting and meaningful.

To cover the topic of worship adequately, I have broken it into three parts. Not all of the parts will be discussed in this article. The first part explores the *why* of worship. Next, I will develop the *how* of worship. Both parts depend on Psalm 100. And finally, I will consider the topic of *praise*, which will be based on Psalm 103.

### **BECAUSE HE IS GOD**

For the psalmist, the why lies in God's very identity and nature. "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture" (Ps. 100:3).<sup>1</sup> We worship the Lord because He is God. Saying "the Lord is God" is much different than knowing it. Friendship may be one of the best examples of this idea. When I know we are friends, I will count on you when I am in need. This knowledge reorients the way I relate to you. If I know God is God, this reality will reorient the trajectory of my life. The psalmist calls us to know, and when we know who God really is, that knowledge creates the foundational why of worship.

### **BECAUSE HE CREATED US**

The reality that God created us defines the inherent nature of our relationship with Him. However, out of His un-failing love for us, He elevated us to being "His people, the sheep of his pasture." What an incredible reason to worship! This is a call to worship that demands that we recognize the real center of life, that we surrender everything—our greed and self-centeredness—to Yahweh (God) who is all-powerful. When we accept this invitation, we acknowledge and confess all that He is. We also accept Yahweh's definition of our identity; who He is determines who we are. Not only do we live in the knowledge of the living God, we also must recognize that God made us and cares for us.

### **BECAUSE HE IS GOOD**

Another reason to worship is "because the Lord is good" (Ps. 100:5). It really is that simple. You worship the Lord because He is good. He has lavished His goodness upon you.

When we worship the Lord, we are proclaiming His goodness. Psalm 95 gives us many examples of this goodness: He is the Rock of our salvation (95:1), He is great (95:3), He is strong (95:4), He is our Maker (95:6), and He is caring (95:7). Regardless of whether I experience it in tangible ways in every situation of my life, God is fundamentally good.

As a pastor, I often dealt with people who experienced pain at the hands of others. They told me stories about the evil they experienced from a loved one. I am so thankful the God I serve is not like that. He is a God who is good, One I

can trust, who's never going to hurt me. I get excited about that kind of God.

### BECAUSE HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Psalm 100:5 goes on to say, "And his love endures forever." That word "love," *hesed*, could be the most important word in the Old Testament—it is used in 241 verses!<sup>2</sup> Some Bibles translate it as "mercy" (KJV, NKJV), some use the word "lovingkindness" (NASB), and others use "unfailing love" (NLT). Psalm 103 uses it four times and explains that "for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love (*hesed*) for those who fear him" (Ps. 103:11). I like to translate it as "loyal love" (NET Bible) because it is a two-pronged word. On the one hand, God has affection for us: "showing love (*hesed*) to a thousand generations of those who love (another word, *'ahab*) me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:6). On the other hand, *hesed* shows God fulfilling His covenant with us. Some commentators even interpret it as "covenant love."<sup>3</sup> This love of God is so much greater than the love we offer to Him. Time and again Israel turned from God, but He always pursued them and called them back into relationship. God is committed to us regardless of how we treat Him (Gen. 32:10). God's love will pursue us no matter what—no matter what we do, where we

come from, or where we go. God is madly in love with us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39). What could motivate us to worship God more than this?

### ENDURING PRAISE

I've found that when I do not feel like worshipping, I need to take time to reflect on God's character. This is what inspires me for worship: God is holy, just, loving, gracious, powerful, merciful, and so much more. When we truly know this God, we will want to worship Him. He is a great and awesome Lord.

In the next article, I will explore how we worship the One who is the true creator God, full of goodness and whose love endures forever.

ED

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations come from the New International Version (NIV).

<sup>2</sup> Strong's H2617. The importance of this word can be seen in the fact that it is the word God uses to describe Himself in Exodus 20:6. (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, 698).

<sup>3</sup> *TWOT*, 698.

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