MINISTRY

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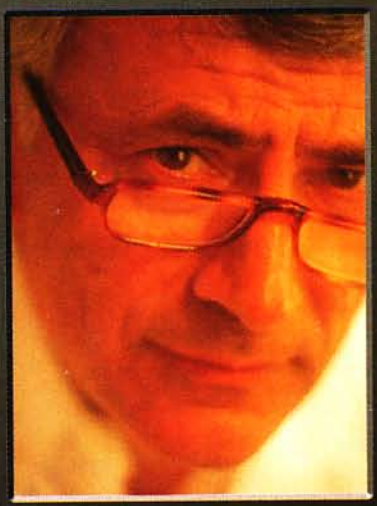

BREAKING THE WORRY HABIT

PASTORAL PRESSURE POINTS

FIRST IN A SERIES

FIRST GLANCE

MINISTRY

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IT PROMOTES THE HEALTH OF BOTH THE CONGREGATION AND THE PASTOR TO HAVE MECHANISMS ALREADY IN PLACE TO HANDLE DIFFICULT ISSUES BEFORE THEY ARISE.

The rapture

I am surprised to find that in the three articles on the "pre-tribulation rapture" by Gerhard Pfandl, Steve Wohlberg, and Hans LaRondelle (September 2001) no mention is made of the charismatic revival that occurred during the great Advent Awakening in the British Isles (1825-1835).

From 1826 onward, Dr. Samuel Maitland and his cohorts demolished the Historicist interpretation of prophecy and opted for a Futurist antichrist reign of 3½ literal years. In the same year, Jesuit Manuel de Lacunza's *The Coming of the Messiah* came into the hands of Edward Irving, a powerful Historicist and advent preacher. . . .

Irving joined with James H. Stewart's intensive publicized call for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A charismatic revival broke out in western Scotland (1830) complete with healing, tongues, and prophecy. Central to the revival was 15-year-old Margaret MacDonald's portrayal of the Second Advent that introduced a secret rapture and a two-stage Second Advent. . . .

These charismatic phenomena took off, confirmed by Irving, and emerged in the Catholic Apostolic Church (1833). There is evidence that John Darby studied the publications in circulation at the time. . . . Of course Darby did not follow Margaret MacDonald to the letter, when he systematized all these views into what we now call Dispensationalism . . . It is interesting to note that everything coalesced in Darby's scheme, with his dynamic presentation at a Prophetic Conference in Dublin, 1833, at which time, as if to give credence to Futurism, an abridged English version of Lacunza's book went into circulation in Ireland.

—Ron Thompson, retired pastor, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

The lonely pastor

It is always rewarding to hear one speak to the life of the pastor. I especially liked Larry Yeagley's article ("The Lonely Pastor," September 2001) as it addressed an issue where so many of us live. Loneliness has been called the common cold of mental health. How we deal with loneliness affects our emotions and our view of life, which in turn affects how well we perform. I also appreciated this article because when I was a new minister, Larry was my supervising pastor. I was most fortunate not to have to experience any of the horror stories other ministerial interns told. Larry lives a life of concern for and dedication to those in ministry.

—Dick Tibbits, Orlando, Florida.

In response to Larry Yeagley's article, I would like to point out that congregations often contribute to their pastors' loneliness by the ways in which they deal with difficult issues and difficult members.

The pastor is often left to his own devices in resolving situations that he/she should not have to face alone. It promotes the health of both the congregation and the pastor to have mechanisms already in place to handle difficult issues before they arise, so that neither the clergy nor the lay leadership are caught completely off-guard.

I highly recommend the book *Clergy Killers,* by G. Lloyd Rediger (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997; ISBN 0-664-25753-4) to both clergy and lay leaders for a proactive pastoral approach to such preparation.

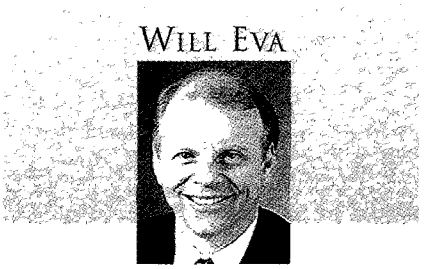
—Patrick E. Wadsworth, Lafayette, Louisiana.

Creation and ecology

Thank you for the fine article "The Case for Creationism" and the editorial "Christian Ecology" (September 2001). It is fitting that these two articles appeared in the same issue because they complement one another well. Whereas the former supports the reliability of the biblical creation account, the latter highlights something of its enduring relevance and value. And the two are closely connected, for if Christians don't believe the biblical account to be true, its theological value for them is surely diminished. Moreover, embracing another view of origins such as progressive creation, undermines, among other important biblical teachings, the character of God and the plan of salvation. Because the subject of life's origins is hotly debated in today's Christian circles, I am grateful to *Ministry* for proclaiming the truth of the biblical story of creation as well as its theological message for God's church today. Keep up the good work. ■

—Greg A. King, chair, religion department, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Holy wars?



Most Western Christians find it difficult to see the present conflict between America and her allies and certain radical religious fundamentalist groups as a religious war. But Andrew Sullivan, has said "this surely is a religious war."[1] While this characterization is not all that significant in itself, it is Sullivan's next step that is significant to Christian clergy.

He contends that the present conflict "has . . . gentler echoes in America's own religious conflicts—between newer, more virulent strands of Christian fundamentalism"[2] that battle against other expressions of Christianity. Sullivan sees this kind of religious combat to be burgeoning significantly in America and elsewhere.

Osama bin Laden has said that this present conflict is a religious war waged against unbelief and unbelievers. Anyone who has been around Christian churches for any length of time knows that this rhetoric certainly has its "gentler echoes" in the sanctuaries and hallways of contemporary Christian communities. Many well-meaning Christians have a way of establishing standards of belief and behavior that they use to judge and question other Christians, often in painful ways.

It is increasingly plausible to believe that these "new wars of religion—[in which the] victims are in all likelihood going to mount with each passing year,"[3] portend certain significant events in the not so distant future. In other words, maybe now it will be easier to believe, as Seventh-day Adventists and others do, that in the eschatological throes of life on this planet there will be climactic manifestations of religious repression with their roots in the prides and prejudices of groups such as bin Laden's and in their gentler, and thus more subtle Christian counterparts.

What is it that happens among us when we begin to assume this rather warlike stance? Here are a few observations:

✦ It begins when, often quite unwittingly, we make religion and the church, rather than God Himself, the defacto center of our faith. When we do this we become preoccupied with the word of the church—what the church values, believes, proclaims and orders—rather than the transcendent word of God. Among other things, this tendency usually leads us to concentrate on dubious, quasi-biblical customs and traditions that quickly become systematized into avowed mechanisms used to judge the validity of the faith and behavior of other human beings.

✦ It happens when, rather than living to proclaim truth, we become preoccupied with identifying error. When we allow this negative orientation to dominate our religious experience, our primary purpose becomes one of rooting out all the unsightly evils threatening the purity of the church or the world, rather than actually lifting up the glorious Christ as both the Savior and the Standard. Our predominant imperative becomes one of keeping others straight, regardless of how destructive we feel justified in becoming as we do so.

✦ It happens when we believe we alone have truth, and that because of our superior way of life and conviction we are the exclusive apple of God's eye.

I must say clearly that I am not equating either "conservatism" or even "fundamentalism" per se, with this warlike, combative attitude that rises so quickly to the surface these days, for the same spirit can by all means find nurture in the soul of the "liberal" also. I am rather trying to identify that aggressive, repressive outlook or disposition that ends up treating people with a potent brand of spiritual or ecclesiastical "violence."

When we come to believe we must have our own standardized version of a purified church or world, indeed that it is the only proper option, we are not far from feeling justified in using ecclesiastical or political power in God's name, to make it happen. We have in a real sense set ourselves up next to God upon the throne of rectitude.

Walking this road, we also have serious trouble dealing with nuance or imperfection of any kind. We tend to see everything in all or nothing terms and this inevitably leads us to seriously exaggerate the evils we see in those with whom we disagree.

But isn't it critical to our duty as healthy people of faith, to lead, to reprove, and to discipline? Hasn't God told us not to mute the prophetic voice among us, and above all to keep the faith pure? Of course!

What, then, are we supposed to do?

It is perhaps hardest for us to embrace the ultimate message of the Bible: that there is no law, not even God's, that can cure us of the heavily destructive impulses that lurk within as we seek to be faithful in proclaiming the will of God when it is being ignored or trampled, and that our only viable option, therefore, is most truly to be

continued on page 22

Breaking the worry habit

Editorial note: *This article is the first in a six-part series by Dr. Hart. The articles will appear in the January, March, May, July, September, and November issues of* Ministry. *They will deal with some of the most common and challenging psychological stresses facing today's pastor and the members of his/her congregation. Each article will appear under the general title "Pastoral Pressure Points."*

ARCHIBALD D. HART

Don't worry." It's so easy to say it. I've seen it emblazoned on T-shirts and bumper stickers. But it isn't easy not to worry. It's like telling someone who is overweight, "Just don't eat so much." It's true enough advice, but it's not really helpful! Many Christians are confused about how to respond to their worry. They are troubled by such scriptures as Luke 12:22 where Jesus tells His disciples not to worry about their lives.

Counseling people who worry excessively, let alone addressing the problem in oneself, is a vexing problem that faces many pastors today. Not only is it a common problem (referred to in mental health circles as "the common cold of the emotions"), but the tendency to worry also resists any logical approach.

For instance, trying to assure someone that what he or she is worrying about is extremely unlikely to happen will fall on deaf ears. In these days of fear following the terrorist attack on the United States, there is a lot of worry.

Worry is not only damaging to a person's tranquility, but it also threatens a person's spiritual confidence. Those who worry fear that there may be something wrong with their faith in God. So the more a pastor or Christian leader knows about the causes of worry the better he or she will be able to help himself or herself, or someone who suffers from it.

I recommend that pastors preach on this topic regularly so that people can know the truth about it. This will help to relieve a lot of unnecessary guilt in those who suffer from its barbs. It will help to point them to a healthier emotional and spiritual life. Ignorance, after all, is one of Satan's greatest weapons.

To overcome worry one needs to understand what causes worry and come to see how useless it is to just worry. Finally, one should know how to turn worry into concern which is far more constructive.

What causes worry?

Worry is part of a much larger emotional challenge—that of anxiety in general. Worry itself is a form of anxiety, but there are many other forms of anxiety that are even more damaging. While worry is, and always has been, the most common form of anxiety, a more serious form of anxiety is called "panic anxiety." This kind of worry is as different from other forms of worry as night is from day, so the two should not be confused with each other.

Panic anxiety usually starts suddenly and occurs in people who are high achievers and are therefore placing themselves under a particularly potent form of specific stress. Striking as many as ten percent of us, it is now considered to be an epidemic in our modern society. I will address this in a future article, but for now will restrict myself just to worry anxiety.

At some time or other we all go through a period of worry. It could happen when we discover a lump somewhere or when a loved one suddenly becomes ill. These life events are fundamentally threatening to us, so our anxiety comes up to warn us of some impending danger. That's when worry takes over.

There is nothing wrong with these short bursts of worry. In fact, they are designed into us by God and serve as important "warning signals." We need to attend to them because they can help us to take the action necessary to remove a given threat. So a healthy response to worry is to go to the doctor and have the lump checked, or to get as much information as possible about our loved one's condition.

Different kinds of worry

"But isn't it healthy to worry sometimes?" someone asked me once. I hesitated before answering—it's one of those trick questions. It all depends on how you define "healthy." Let's rephrase the question so as to make it answerable. "Is it impossible to go

through life without worrying sometimes?" Yes it is.

The only people who never worry are those we call sociopaths—they are sick because they never feel anxiety over anything. I don't want to live next to them nor do I want to drive on the freeway with them. They are dangerous! Someone with no capacity to worry could easily be recruited to be a terrorist.

Yes, we all worry sometimes because worry is a form of anxiety that helps to alert us to danger. Worry only becomes unhealthy when it either persists too long or when it never leads us to a constructive solution. Understanding this distinction can point us to a better understanding of how we can deal with worry.

Worry becomes a problem, then, when it gets out of hand. Jesus commanded us not to worry (e.g., Luke 12:22). This and other passages of Scripture that refer to worry are not a judgment on the short periods of worry we all experience while we are trying to understand what it is that threatens us.

It is prolonged worry, that form of worry that is almost obsessional, that grabs and holds us and will not let go; this is the worry that Jesus asks us to give up by exercising our faith in God. Prolonged worry can become a habit. It undermines our trust in God's provision for all our needs and can even lead us into physical illness.

The most important point to remember about this form of worry is that it usually focuses on totally imagined threats and therefore cannot lead us to any concrete, constructive solution. No wonder Jesus tells us in Luke 12:25: "'And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?'" (NKJV).

Persistent worry is not only unproductive in that it can never change anything, but it gets in the way of living a vibrant, fulfilling life. People who worry too much are incapacitated by it. They literally go round in circles and cannot find the exit. Furthermore, research shows that persistent worry is actually bad for your health. It can cause headaches, lowered immune systems, and can be the source of stress that can lead into the panic anxiety zone.

Turning worry into action

Excessive worrying can become a habit of the mind. When this happens to us, we need to learn how to break this habit without ignoring the danger that might be causing it. The most effective way to do this is to take the time to sort out what part of our worry is useless (because it cannot change anything), and what part is constructive (because it can help us avoid a danger).

BUT HOW IS CONCERN (WHICH IS HEALTHY) DIFFERENT FROM WORRY (WHICH CAN BECOME DESTRUCTIVE)?

What this means is that we must find a way to convert our worry into something called "concern." If we can cut off the useless part of our worry and clearly find what should be of concern to us, we can learn to break our worry habit, and will be effectively following Jesus' command not to worry.

But how is concern (which is healthy) different from worry (which can become destructive)?

Simply put, worry is that kind of unproductive mental activity that keeps thoughts revolving endlessly in our minds. It gets stuck in its own painful rut, contributing nothing to help solve the problem.

On the other hand, concern is a kind of mental activity that focuses on a problem with a view to taking some action that can resolve it. I can worry about a lump in my body and do nothing about it, or I can turn that worry into concern and take some action—to go and see my doctor!

Again, this distinction is extremely important. Without it we cannot reasonably deal with worry and it could easily imprison us. Since the "warning system" underlying the phenomenon of worry is part of God's design, we cannot totally remove all worry. Thus, learning to turn our worry into "concern" preserves the warning system, and points toward a healthier way of resolving the worry.

Another form of worry

Before describing some practical ways for doing this, however, let me address one form of worry that has no redeemable value. It's that form of worry that is often driven by the irrational belief that if we worry about something it won't happen. Early in my life, I found myself doing this more often than I would have liked. Even though we know that worry won't change anything we often tend to perpetuate our worrying because we unconsciously believe that we must keep thinking about it, and even praying continuously, or else the event we are worrying about will happen.

Clearly this is irrational, and we should challenge the underlying belief. Of course we must pray and commit to God anything that bothers us. But then we must leave it with God. He has heard your prayer. It is not a lack of faith to stop praying at that point, but an expression that we do trust God.

We do not follow a deaf God. Believe this, leave what troubles you in God's hands, and you will truly begin to know His deepest peace.

Five steps to convert worry into concern

What are some practical ways that Christians can try and resolve a persistent worry problem? Here are five practical steps.

1. *Monitor your thinking so as to catch yourself worrying.* You can do this by keeping a notebook close at hand, and as soon as you catch yourself worrying, write it down so that you can come back to it. Doing this relieves your brain of the need to keep reminding you of it.

2. *Having written down what bothers you, intentionally postpone your worrying to a later time when you have a few minutes to spare.* I call this "making a date with worry." Doing this helps you to feel that you are in control of your worry. This simple assertion of your control helps your mind "let go" of what is worrying you until the appointed time.

3. *Set a time limit for your worrying.* When the appointed hour comes for you to worry, set an alarm or a kitchen cooking timer. Set it for no more than five minutes. Research has shown that if you limit worrying to less than five minutes, you can avoid it becoming a habit. Longer than five minutes reinforces worry.

4. *Concentrate on worrying.* So, start the timer and devote the next five minutes to worrying about what it is you wrote down. Do it in an attitude of prayer, but force yourself to focus on and think about what's worrying you. Try to find a solution. Ask yourself, "What can I do to deal with this worry?" In this way you will be able to change some of your worry to "concern." When you have figured out a few steps that you can actually take, write these down in you notebook.

5. *When your worry time is up put away your notebook and stop your worrying.* If you have figured out a course of action then go ahead and take this action. If you haven't, then hand it all over to God in prayer and go about your business. Your worrying isn't going to change anything, so try to ignore it.

This technique, while not perfect, has helped many cope with worry. It works because it helps you to confront your worries directly and not avoid them. It prevents what is called the "incubation" of worrying, a pattern that reinforces worry.

A story

Some years ago, I heard the story of a woman who had learned to change worry into concern in a healthy way. A reporter visited this unusual woman, a widow, who had raised six children of her own and had adopted six others to give them a home.

"How have you been able to raise all these children by yourself—and do it so well?" asked the reporter.

"It's been very simple," replied the widow. "I'm in a partnership."

"A what?" asked the surprised reporter.

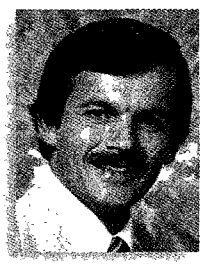
"A partnership," replied the widow calmly. "One day, a long time ago, I said to the Lord: 'Lord, I'll do the work if You will do the worrying,' and I haven't had a worry since."

Try helping yourself and your people to form such a partnership with God. I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how well it works to keep your and their mind at peace! M

Archibald D. Hart, Ph.D., F.P.P.R., is professor of psychology at the Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, California. He is the author of the book The Anxiety Cure, *published by Word, that can provide additional help for the reader.*

Why Christianity lite is less filling

Jack R. Van Ens



Jack R. Van Ens, D.Min., is an Evangelical Presbyterian minister serving with MAJESTY Ministry in Vail, Colorado.

Her eyes told me that she wanted to hear more than Yuletide jingles on Christmas Eve. As she accepted a festive poster announcing a free worship service at the Vilar Theater on Christmas Eve, featuring heirloom carols, her eyes danced.

"I'll be working a 12-hour day at the shop on December 24. I was worried that I'd be too tired to hear a caroling service. Now I can flop down in the grand, yet intimate, Vilar Theater for the Performing Arts, nestled in the Vail Valley."

MAJESTY, the ministry I participate in, moves at a deeper level than religious entertainment. Using improvisational talent, MAJESTY helps people get in touch with God. This is precisely what the shopkeeper I spoke with yearned to encounter on Christmas Eve.

The character of "Christianity Lite"

Popular religion's cultural counterpart in America may be seen to be Lite beer. Both appear refreshing in a frothy sort of way and less filling for both the beer and the religion connoisseur. Christianity Lite really is less filling. It's entertainment with a worship twist. Signs of Christianity Lite are hawked in many religious communities. Christian aerobics are pumped up as a neat way to lose weight for Jesus, taking precedence over being caressed by the still, small voice of the Divine.

Prayers of confession are ditched because they are too morose for people who want spiritual pep talks. Liturgies of contrition are banned because they supposedly lead worshipers down the slippery slope of negative thinking. Sanctuaries are turned into auditoriums where stage shows feature praise band pits but no place for the cross. Jesus becomes the star of infomercials for crowds wanting to be serenaded with bouncy tunes and maudlin stories about how Christ makes life as bright as cosmetically whitened teeth. What's hyped is performance rather than praise to God, lost in wonder, honor, and awe.

Christianity Lite worship is fun to experience. But it seldom gets worshipers to reflect deeply, think largely, and struggle intensely with the Christ Child who came to us. There are few worshipers in a Christianity Lite crowd like mother Mary who, upon giving birth to Jesus, "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19, RSV).

Shallow entertainment or sublime encounter

When we ponder, we sit down with ourselves. Our gaze shifts from what's shallow to what's sublime. Pondering doesn't mesh with cursory glances, giddiness, and sentimental stories. Those who ponder are often uncomfortable with themselves. Our weaknesses are exposed. What we have hid from others is magnified in our souls.

No wonder people jam into auditoriums for their spiritual fixes where music is loud, preachers sound like thin reeds, and we are verbally petted like lap dogs. We settle for entertainment because the Christ who corrects us is hard to take.

Michael Crichton's book, *Timeline*, portrays a character who finds our entertainment-crazed society less than filling. Crichton writes of our fascination with what's cute and cuddly, easy to absorb, and mind numbing. We are drugged with pleasing, pleasurable sensations that pass for solid religion.

"Today, everybody expects to be entertained, and they expect to be entertained all the time. Business meetings must be snappy, with bullet lists and animated graphics, so executives aren't bored. Malls and stores must be engaging, so they amuse as well as sell us. Politicians must have pleasing video personalities and tell us only what we want to hear. Schools must be careful not to bore young minds that expect the speed and complexity

of television. Students must be amused—everyone must be amused, or they will switch: switch brands, switch channels, switch parties, switch loyalties . . .

"In other centuries, human beings wanted to be saved, or improved, or freed, or educated. But in our century, they want to be entertained. The great fear is not of disease or death, but boredom. A sense of time on our hands, a sense of nothing to do. A sense that we are not amused."[1]

Getting spiritual traction

A man who heard MAJESTY wrote us about how hard it is to encounter God, even in sanctuaries that advertise themselves as "His House of Praise." He intimated that the praise is usually boisterous, the music banal, and the preacher too slick for any listener to get spiritual traction. This worshiper mentioned that whenever music stabs awake the heart and gets us to ponder the imponderables of life, Christ is near.

He referred to J. R. R. Tolkien's classic tale between good and evil, *The Lord of the Rings.* Moreover, he zeroed in on Silmarillion, an earlier Tolkien work, depicting what happened during the First Age of the Earth. He pointed out that in the beginning, before anything existed, "the music and the echo of the music went out into the Void and it was not void."[2] Music that arrests our attention and quiets the storm-tossed soul fills the void in ways that Christianity Lite serenades miss. They only tickle our fancy but rarely teach what's choice, holy, and above reproach.

In the depths of our souls we all desire music that does more than serve Christianity Lite entertainment. We want to be lifted well and truly into the presence of God. ■

1 Michael Crichton, *Timeline* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 400, 401.

2 Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 1-3.

Preaching Christian doctrine

Derek Morris interviews Marguerite Shuster

Marguerite Shuster, Ph.D., is professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California.

Derek Morris, D.Min., is pastor of the Calimesa, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church and an adjunct professor of preaching at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Derek Morris: Dr. Shuster, in both teaching and writing, you have become an advocate of preaching Christian doctrine. And yet, in your essay entitled "Preaching the Trinity," you state: "I am well aware, then, that I am swimming against a powerful tide when I plead for a rebirth of doctrinal preaching."[1] Why is there such a resistance to preaching Christian doctrine?

Marguerite Shuster: Many people are laboring under a rather stereotypical view of what doctrine is—that it is a matter of splitting hairs about material that is abstract, incomprehensible, and unconnected to daily life; and that you have to have several years of graduate education even to know what the discussion is about. So as soon as people hear that you are pleading for the rebirth of doctrinal preaching, the responses range from anxiety, to terror, to flight!

DM: You share with your students that every preacher preaches some kind of doctrine, whether they do it well or not. So how do you define the kind of doctrinal preaching that you are wanting to hear?

MS: Well, let me first of all reinforce the fact that most pastors and others do not avoid or neglect preaching doctrine because they have thought about it consciously. Every time we open our mouths, we express some kind of implicit understanding of what, let's say, our view is of human freedom over against divine sovereignty, or what the relationship of God's love is to God's wrath. Every time we say, "Trust Jesus," we're assuming that there is something particular about Jesus. Otherwise, why not trust somebody else?

So everything we say relies in the end upon doctrine. And my concern is that we not leave it all implicit, that we at least make our affirmations explicit. When I think of preaching Christian doctrine, I think of giving explicit attention to addressing the content and consequences of some aspect of Christian belief and its meaning; and that we do it from both an intellectual and a practical point of view.

DM: Once preachers accept the challenge to preach Christian doctrine, you suggest that one major challenge they will face is that "persons in the average congregation are stunningly ignorant of Christian fundamentals."[2] So how do you meet that challenge? You want to be faithful in preaching the doctrine and yet you've got biblically illiterate people in your congregation.

MS: Yes, and to make it worse, we have enormously transient congregations. So it's very hard to build from week to week. If you had people that you could count on being there over a period of time, you might actually be able to make some progress at the level of complexity. But that's not real life in most of our congregations.

So what I tell my students is that they need to take a bite-size piece of doctrine that counts and that they will discover that people's taste for the material will grow. All preaching needs to be the kind of preaching that is sufficiently clear, so that a person with a minimal understanding or even a child gets something from the preaching. Persons with greater comprehension will also observe that there are some depths there for them to plumb.

DM: So you've got to start with a bite-size piece, so that even a person with little background can take that first step of understanding.

MS: Yes, in doctrinal preaching we need to make clear to people what we are talking about, whether we use technical vocabulary or not. And if we don't throw around high

flown words, but we do instead deal with substance. In this way, people can grab hold of it and say, "Aha, so that's what this is all about!"

DM: Which raises another challenge. Besides the lack of biblical knowledge in our hearers, a lot of the vocabulary we preachers use when we speak on doctrinal issues is totally foreign to the hearer.

MS: As a matter of fact, the doctrinal language is often more foreign to the preacher than the hearer! For example, when you ask a person to preach a sermon on the atonement, that person first has to know what is involved in the word and in the concept of atonement. And I don't think there is one preacher in twenty who can articulate that intelligently. That's one reason why preachers are afraid.

DM: It sounds like you're asking for much more careful study in preparation for doctrinal preaching.

MS: I wish preachers valued the whole of their preparation more, including the whole of their seminary preparation in terms of their systematic theology and in terms of their biblical studies. For me, all of that should come together in the sermon. And if pastors haven't been well grounded in the loci of systematic theology, they face tremendous hurdles. They can pick up a bit from dictionaries and so on, but it will feel superficial, and such pastors will feel as if they are skating on thin ice.

DM: What are some of the risks that a preacher faces when preaching doctrine?

MS: One special temptation is that we want something we can nail down. We can put tremendous demands on preachers, and preachers can feel the pressure of those demands in such a way that they make everything too easy, too tidy.

There are, of course, some things about our faith that are, in some kind of fundamental way, simple. God does intend in Scripture to make Himself known. He is not playing hide and seek. We believe that an honest reader may without special education or special tools receive what they need for salvation simply by reading God's Word. But that which is sufficient is in no way exhaustive. Mystery remains.

Many of God's ways remain hidden to us; and this fact is especially pressing for people when it comes to the problems of sin and evil. There is sin in their own lives with which they cannot deal effectively and finally. There is evil around them that involves not only the suffering of the innocent but also structural evil. Such things don't mesh easily with any kind of tidy and simple moralistic approach.

The other side is simply saying, "It's all a mystery," and throwing up one's hands; or else trying to play out every aspect of it in a way that

becomes so complex that a person simply bogs down, leaving nothing that one can affirm, nothing upon which one can rely.

DM: Is it acceptable, then, to raise questions that you don't have an answer for? You talk about the honest or thoughtful skeptic who might think it's a sign of failure to even ask a question. Could the preacher raise a question even if there isn't an easy answer for it?

MS: Absolutely. If preachers don't raise it, they are simply ignoring the fact that practically everybody in the congregation already has. That can make the people suppose that the preacher lives in an entirely different world where this question has never occurred.

I will almost always raise difficulties in a sermon. I would hope that there is something that one can set beside the difficulties that helps to show a way forward, but that doesn't mean that the difficulties are dissolved or cast aside. In fact, another danger is raising difficulties and then simply dismissing them as if they didn't matter. That's condescending, it's demeaning, it's undermining of a faithful person's integrity.

DM: Is there a difference between writing about Christian doctrine and preaching about it?

MS: Yes. For example, contrast Karl Barth's Dogmatics and his sermons. Even when Barth was preaching to a university crowd, as opposed to, say, when he was preaching to prisoners, the sermons have an emotive power and a basic simplicity and a fundamental affirmation of Christian hope that can be taken in on a wide variety of levels—from the most primitive perception that there is help from someone named Jesus, to fairly sophisticated nuancing if one is familiar with the sweep of Barth's theology. But the sermon itself doesn't sound anything like the Dogmatics even if one may find, as I do, that there is great devotional value in the Dogmatics.

DM: In your writings on preaching doctrine, you seem to differentiate between a thematic approach, where you try to cover everything the Bible says in 25 minutes, and the approach of taking a portion of Scripture and addressing the Christian doctrine upon which it sheds light. Can you unpack that for us?

MS: I came upon that approach when the late Paul Jewett was writing the first volume of his systematic theology and wanted to include doctrinal sermons.[3] He believed that there is something wrong with doctrine that can't be preached.

He asked me to take on the task of writing certain sermons that would in some way embody doctrinal themes. I found it to be doable, challenging, and exciting. If one tries to preach a sermon on "faith," one ends up saying almost nothing. C. S. Lewis once said, "Everything is a topic on which not much can be said."

If you're trying to cover too much, there really isn't any way of bringing it down to earth. But if you take a particular passage that might have to do with somebody's faith or somebody's doubt, you can explore that slice of it in a way that the hearer will say, "Ah, that's where I live my life."

For this to work well, the preacher needs to deal primarily with that piece, but she or he must also know where the piece fits. And that's why I tell my students that, although I want them to base their sermon on the exegesis of the passage, I also want them to consult dogmatic works on the doctrine so that the broader context that informs the way they shape the sermon will also be faithful to the whole.

DM: Is it appropriate, then, to draw on other passages of Scripture or should the preacher stay with one primary text?

MS: I do believe it's possible to use supporting texts in a responsible way. However, most of the time when I hear people do it, they get engaged in proof-texting. They don't take into account the actual context of the supporting pieces they're using. Or if they do, they start running off on rabbit tracks and preaching the other texts.

I would rather that they be aware that the other texts exist and that they not speak in a way that would embarrass them in the light of the other texts. Sometimes referring to other texts will simply be a way of the preacher raising in his or her own mind the kinds of questions and objections that an engaged group of hearers will have in their minds without necessarily running to a direct exploration of those passages.

DM: That's very practical counsel. Do you see the need for illustrative material in doctrinal preaching?

MS: It's absolutely critical. You don't have a sermon unless you have material that connects with both heart and head. Of course, the proportions may be different in different kinds of sermons. But any sermon that doesn't make a contemporary connection hasn't done most of what a sermon needs to accomplish.

Now, when I say "illustration," I don't necessarily mean an anecdote. There are lots of ways to provide the supporting material that will make plain the contemporary relevance of the piece. I'm not leaving out anecdotes. I just do not want to limit the ways in which we illustrate.

DM: How important is the task of writing a manuscript when preparing for doctrinal preaching?

MS: Karl Barth believed that writing out a manuscript was simply part of the discipline of preaching. You didn't necessarily bring it into the pulpit but it was part of the discipline. And many others, like Martin Marty, have said that at least for the first ten years of their ministry, they considered that writing out a manuscript was essential to the piece having coherence, integrity, and all of those other things that we want. But careful preparation does not necessarily dictate what one brings into the pulpit. Different preachers will make different choices in that regard.

DM: What are your recommendations regarding the specifics of sermon design when the pastor accepts the challenge of preaching doctrine?

MS: I counsel variety. If every time you preach a doctrinal sermon you've got three points and a poem or you pull out the overhead and put up something incomprehensible or hand out an outline for people to fill in, you send the signal that this is a head trip. So I counsel variety of form for all preachers.

I have three underlying rules for a sermon: it needs to be biblical, it needs to be interesting, and it needs to make sense. If it's not biblical, I don't think it's a sermon. If it's not interesting, I won't listen. And if it doesn't make sense, I can't follow it.

DM: How would you respond to the criticism that postmodern secular people just aren't interested in Christian doctrine?

MS: Well, first the preacher had better believe it's relevant. Then, the preacher needs to show in very concrete ways, how what we believe addresses, challenges, and subverts ordinary assumptions about human life; how it confronts us in our deepest distress as human beings; how it eases our darkest fears; how it adds new fears and concerns that maybe we hadn't known we ought to be anxious about.

Preaching may raise anxieties, of course, as well as alleviate them. Suppose we're saying that Jesus has something to offer. Why Jesus? You cannot answer that question without doctrine. So how do you express what you believe about Jesus in a way that does indeed connect with people's deepest needs?

Somebody who is threatened by drought may not be experiencing the same need as somebody who is worried about drive-by shootings. So the way you shape matters obviously depends on your context. But if we believe that Jesus Christ is good news for all people, then it seems utterly incumbent upon us to find ways of talking about Him that are real for the real people we address. ■

1 Marguerite Shuster, "Preaching the Trinity: A Preliminary Investigation," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity.* Edited by Stephen T Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 372.

2 Ibid., 358.

3 Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology; with sermons* by Marguerite Shuster (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991). See also Paul K. Jewett, *Who We Are: Our Dignity As Human: A Neo-Evangelical Theology;* edited, completed, and with sermons by Marguerite Shuster (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996).

Taps

Oliver Jacques

Oliver Jacques is a retired pastor and lives in Fallbrook, California.

It's Memorial Day. I'm with a gathering of people as the president lays a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It's a solemn moment. Heads bow in remembrance of men and women who died so freedom and freedom-loving people might live. The president has talked about the value of an individual life, about sacrifice, love of country, love of life. Here and there, a handkerchief appears. A gray-headed mother seeks her husband's embrace. Members of the honor guard stand respectfully at attention. An old man blows his nose.

As a soldier raises a trumpet to his lips, each member in the audience anticipates an unforgettable experience, the deeply moving sound of the instrument. They know what to expect: a flawless rendition of "Taps," which is played at close of day in honor of lives spent for the common good. All anticipate the clear, pure, measured tones that speak of peace, dedication, and resolution as the strains gently wash over a thousand graves.

But there is a hideous surprise. As the soldier activates his instrument, he begins tapping his foot. His body, once erect, loosens. The trumpet weaves with a heavy beat. Unique variations in time and tune embellish his act as he slides through the performance. People are restless. Some express shock. In a surge of anger, I shout, "No! No! Stop!"

My wife Fredonia, awakened by the noise, grabs my shoulder. "What's the matter, dear?"

"Oh," I cry, "I've had a scary dream! Thank God, it's a dream, only a dream! But it was awful!" I am wet with sweat.

It's Sabbath morning. With a friend, I'm in a beautiful new church situated in rolling, green hills, a church with an impressive membership that consists mainly of young professionals and lots of children. As we enter, I see a table covered with a white cloth. "Communion! Good!" I say to myself.

Informally conducted, the service is prefaced by the singing of "praise songs." Everyone sings. Nearly everyone. The old man seated next to me appears nervous. He's not singing, probably worried about his children.

"Nothing wrong with the songs, really," I murmur. "Simple messages." Curiously, though, I don't hear about Adventist themes: Christ's death for us, the judgment, His second coming, the Sabbath, or even heaven! Repetitive? Yes! Emphasis? Lots of "I's" and "we's." Tunes wandering over the musical score. Extra words squeezed between irregular measures.

"Lively, innovative piano; snippets of honky tonk? The praise choruses? Minimal mental content, really." I try to reconcile the apparent sophistication of the worshipers with the artless, simplistic songs.

Special music? Guest artist with recorded orchestra accompaniment. Gospel rock. Loud. Demanding beat. Mischievous flashes of backbeat between verses. Lyrics? I try, but I can't understand them.

There isn't much to the Scripture reading. Good prayer, though. Thoughtful homily. Pastor seems sincere. Handsome fellow! The bread and wine are blessed and served. Piano background music? A daring mix of swing and ragtime. "She's really pushing the envelope!" I muse as I watch the pianist.

Growing uneasy, I scratch my head and mutter to myself, "Isn't the purpose of this service to celebrate the Lord's Supper, which (says Paul) is to help us 'discern' (Greek = 'thoroughly judge, examine') the Lord's body? Unless we do that, he says, we partake of it 'to our damnation.'" Damnation? That's what he says. (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Didn't Jesus give us the Communion service to lead us to the scene of His crucifixion, where His body and blood are offered for us? When we eat and drink the sacred symbols, do we not memorialize and accept into our

continued on page 28

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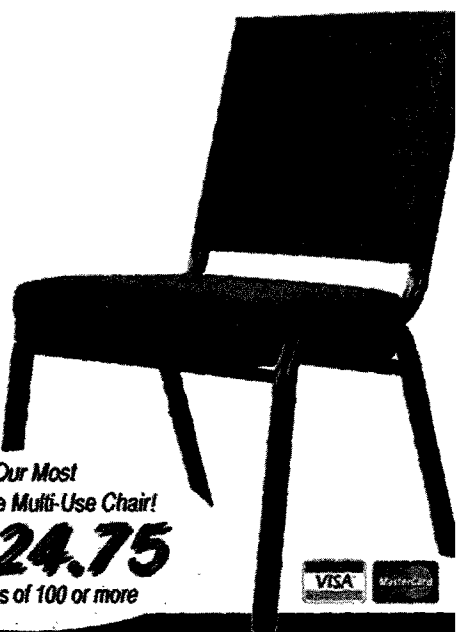

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Preaching with freedom (part 1)

The case for preaching without notes

Walter Mueller

Walter Mueller, D.Min., is interim pastor of the William and Mary Hart Presbyterian Church in Leggett, North Carolina.

Preaching isn't easy! What is easy is to find excuses for not spending the time necessary to prepare a sermon. There are so many important things to do! But I believe preaching comes first.

I retired several years ago. When I wasn't preaching, my wife and I attended different churches. I had heard complaints about the sorry state of preaching but had no idea it had gotten as bad as it has.

One Easter Day my wife and I went to church with a sense of expectancy. The church was filled to overflowing. Chairs in the aisles were filled. As the pastor was preaching I glanced around the sanctuary. I saw some whose eyes were closed, though not in prayer and meditation. Others were reading the church bulletin. Still others were doing what I was doing—people watching.

The one message communicated by all was, "This is boring!" I could understand why many of these people would not return to that church until Christmas. It would take at least that long to forget the ordeal of that morning.

It's a sin to bore anyone, especially with the gospel. But that is what some preachers do every time they step into the pulpit. Just ask the people in the pews. Or, maybe ask the people who aren't in the pews. Many will state without hesitation that the reason they don't go to church is that it is boring. If you push them, most will admit that it's the sermon they find boring.

When hearing this, preachers may become defensive and assign blame in various ways. We can place the blame on the listener—"He isn't spiritual." Or, we may justify our inability to captivate a congregation by saying, "I'm not here to entertain; I'm here to preach the gospel." At other times we may try to avoid blame for preaching boring sermons by striving to become the object of our church members' pity—"You just don't realize how many hours I work each week. I don't have enough time to prepare my sermons."

There may be elements of truth in each of these responses but we must realize that God has called us to be preachers. God has equipped us to preach by indwelling us with His Holy Spirit. He expects us to do our best in the handling of His "good news." I would assert that if our "best" is a consistently boring sermon then we should give serious consideration to whether or not God has actually called us to preach. This is not said to discourage, but to encourage us to strive to give what is really our best and not be satisfied with mediocrity.

What is the reason for this problem? Donald G. Bloesch says: "Most pastors give up study first, then prayer usually follows. John Calvin insisted that study is almost as important as prayer. This study, moreover, should entail not only the Bible but theology, for at its best theology is commentary on Scripture for the present age."[1]

Boring sermon or faulted culture?

Is it fair to level all the criticism against the preacher? Isn't our culture at least partially at fault? Haven't our expectations regarding what a pastor is to do with his time changed over the years? At the end of the nineteenth century pastors were expected to spend their time in the study preparing to preach. Elders today who see their preacher poring over a stack of books are likely to think he or she is being lazy and neglecting other more important tasks.

Or, maybe the accusing finger should be pointed at our seminaries. After all, isn't it the task of the seminary to teach the would-be pastor the importance of preaching? Look through a seminary catalog and you will see that the course offerings are so many and varied that it may be possible to graduate and be

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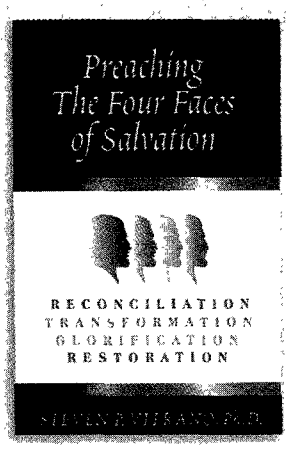

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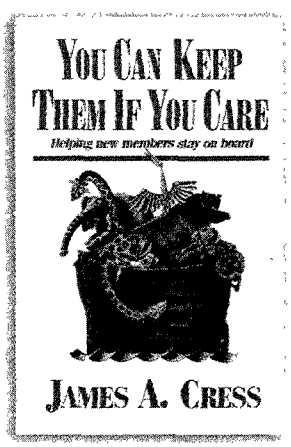

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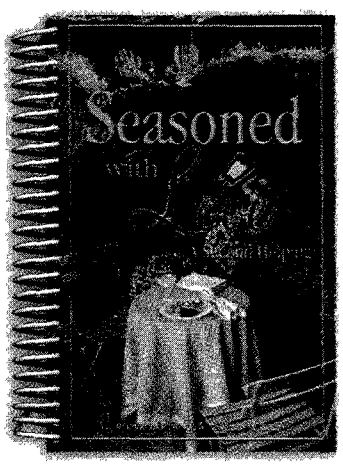

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ordained to the ministry having taken only one or two courses in preaching. And what about what is actually taught at the seminary when it comes to preaching?

Granted, all of the blame cannot be leveled at the preacher. However, the ultimate blame does fall squarely into the lap of the preacher if that person doesn't do something to enhance his or her ability to preach.

The case for preaching without notes

One of the best ways of making preaching more communicative and interesting is to master the art of preaching without notes.

How is this to be accomplished? If the problem is that preachers have lost a sense of the primacy of preaching, the solution is to recover that sense. Hence the question: How do we know that preaching has achieved primacy in our ministry? One sign is that the Word of God is so soaked in the mind and heart of the preacher that he or she breathes the Word, meditates upon it, lives under its power, that at any time he or she is called to preach, is ready to let the Spirit speak through their words.

The preacher who is able to stand in the pulpit, look at the congregation and preach a 20-30-minute sermon without referring to a note is going to impress his or her listeners with the idea that what is being said is of primary importance.

I am making a case for preaching without notes. I want to discuss the importance of being able to communicate unhampered by sheets, or even a single sheet, of words on paper. There are compelling reasons for developing the ability to do this. Even a person who seemingly has no ability to memorize, is able to develop the ability to address a congregation with a total freedom from the constraint of notes.

It is easy to say, "I can't do it! It's just not for me. There are all kinds of legitimate ways of going into the pulpit to preach." Instead of dismissing the possibility of preaching without notes, be willing to take a more positive approach by saying, "Maybe I can."

Remember what God asked Moses, "Who gave man his mouth? . . . Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exod. 4:11, 12, NIV).

Recall your own experience of listening to someone who was tied to his or her notes or maybe even read the presentation word for word. What was your reaction? Boredom? Maybe there were other reactions as well. One of my responses would be, "If he needs to read his message he doesn't know his subject very well." Another would be, "If she needs to read that, she isn't very excited about her message." Both of these are negative reactions and when presenting the gospel we certainly don't want to cause a listener to react negatively to, or possibly even reject that which we wholeheartedly believe.

Manuscript preaching

Reading a sermon does several things. First, it destroys the sense of urgency and excitement a sermon should have. A sermon should come both from the Word of God and the depths of the preacher's being—from his or her heart, soul and mind. If it comes also from a printed page, this tends to interfere with the conveyance of this sense of excitement from the preacher to the listener.

Karl Barth once wrote, ". . . when the bells ring to call the congregation and minister to church, there is in the air an expectancy that something great, crucial and even momentous is to happen."[2]

Reading a sermon destroys the eye contact between the speaker and the hearer which is so important to the effectiveness of real communication. The preacher who is able to make a point while looking into the eyes of the congregation is a preacher who

will maintain the needed level of interest. The preacher who is able to allow his or her eyes to scan the congregation, rather than a manuscript, will maintain a contact with the listeners that is impossible to achieve if the speaker's eyes are always looking down or if they are constantly looking up and down.

Preachers who read their sermons sometimes lose their place or misread what they have written. I have listened to a number of manuscript preachers who, when this happens, will go back and reread an entire section of their sermon. This has a negative effect on one's listeners.

Another problem faced by manuscript preachers is that often their sermons are literary gems. Is this a problem? It can be! A sermon should be a living, vital communication addressed to one's mind and heart through the ears. A literary gem is for the eyes. The written word may be savored, read, and reread. This cannot be done with the spoken word. A listener either catches the meaning the first time or that meaning is lost. If the hearer stops to savor what has been said, what is said next will be lost.

Manuscript preachers will often defend their practice by saying that they want to use precisely the right words. I maintain that it is possible to use those "right words" even when preaching without a manuscript or notes.

Another justification often offered for manuscript preaching is that it protects the preacher from rambling. This may be a legitimate criticism of much preaching without notes. However, when a sermon is properly prepared the preacher will not succumb to this temptation.

Some counter the suggestion that they preach without notes by saying that the only other alternative is to memorize the sermon and that this is unacceptable for several reasons. "It would take too long to memorize a sermon" and "A memorized sermon sounds memorized." Neither of these criticisms are necessarily valid.

There is a way to preach without a manuscript or notes and still use words chosen in the preacher's study without consciously trying to memorize those words.

There are preachers who are able to preach from a manuscript without keeping their faces buried in their notes. Some are so good at this that a congregation usually won't even know that they are reading their sermon. If this is so, the preacher knows the sermon's content so well that the manuscript is unnecessary anyway.

Such preachers, if they would try just once to preach without manuscript, would find such freedom in preaching that they would never go back to manuscript preaching again. Again, if a preacher is "good" when using a manuscript, that preacher will be "better" if the manuscript is left behind when entering the pulpit.

Preaching with limited notes

How about preaching with limited notes? Admittedly, this would be better than reading a sermon but in my opinion it is still lacking. We want to grasp and maintain the attention of our listeners.

When Jesus preached His Sermon on the Mount He did not rely on notes or a manuscript. When Peter preached his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost he didn't read it. When Paul spoke to the Athenians at the meeting of the Areopagus it is very unlikely that he used notes.

Why preach without notes? There are any number of reasons. But most important, it will increase the effectiveness of your message as it strikes the heart of your listener. ■

Note: *This article is the first of a two part series. The final part will appear in the March issue of* Ministry *and will be entitled: "How to Preach Without Notes").*

1 Donald G. Bloesch, "Whatever Happened to God?" *Christianity Today,* February 5, 2001, 54f.

2 Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* Douglas Horton, tr., (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), 104.

Recovery and pastoral ministry

Marvin Moore

Marvin Moore, editor of Signs of the Times, *writes from Nampa, Idaho.*

The word "recovery" has been traditionally understood to refer to ideas such as bouncing back from financial distress or regaining one's health after an illness. In recent years our culture has adopted a spiritual meaning: recovery in the sense of overcoming the character defects that create emotional pain and strained relationships.

Two key concepts in recovery circles are addiction and codependence. Addiction may refer to a bad habit such as alcoholism or sexual excess that one is incapable of overcoming in one's own power. Addiction is also a modern term for besetting or cherished sin—something like the slavery to sin that Paul discusses in Romans 6 and 7. All of us are addicts in one way or another.

Codependence has to do with the relationship that those close to the addicts take toward their abnormal behavior: Covering for their mistakes, obsession over their condition, and trying to control it. We all have codependent attitudes and behaviors, whether or not we are in a relationship with an addict. And since all of us are addicts and codependents, we all need "recovery."

Personal testimony

My wife Lois and I became seriously involved in a recovery program in the early 1990s when we attended the Bridge, an addiction and codependency recovery center in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The Bridge is operated by Paul and Carol Cannon, both graduates of Andrews University.[1] After leaving the Bridge, Lois and I attended many twelve-step meetings, including Alcoholics Anonymous (though neither of us has ever touched alcohol), Codependents Anonymous, Workaholics Anonymous, and Alanon. For the past eight years we have also led out in a weekly Christian twelve-step meeting at our home church in Caldwell, Idaho.

Prior to attending the Bridge Lois and I had no idea how broken our family relationships were. Today, thanks to the recovery principles our whole family has learned, our relationships are very positive. On a personal level, I have made significant progress in overcoming character defects that had plagued me for years, and I now have the healthy self-esteem that I used to wish for.

Recovery from addiction and codependence requires brutal honesty—a willingness to admit one's own character defects and the negative impact they have had on interpersonal relationships. It also involves intense effort to overcome those defects. I am reminded of Ellen White's statement that "a noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. . . . It is formed by hard, stern battles with self."[2]

The twelve steps and other recovery concepts provided me with new tools for dealing with my character defects. Yet I have come to realize that the tools are not new: They are all found in the Bible (see sidebar on page 21).

Pastors and recovery

Recovery can enhance the pastor's ministry in a variety of ways. Consider the minister's sense of well-being, which permeates everything the pastor does. I will elaborate on three ways in which my ministry has become more effective.

Preaching. The Bible has taken on a whole new meaning to me since getting into recovery. I'm continually discovering ethical and relationship issues that had escaped me before. I am profoundly impressed by Jesus' life in light of recovery principles. His ability to discern what was going on in the minds of others is astonishing. He had extremely healthy boundaries, and He absolutely refused to be controlled by those around Him, regardless of how angry or manipulative they were.

Sharing these biblical insights from the

pulpit has made my preaching less theoretical and far more practical than it used to be. Books and magazine articles dealing with recovery principles have also been helpful, including those written from a secular perspective. But I always make sure that I present these concepts from a biblical perspective. Biblical preaching has a power that is absent in the secular self-help sermon.

Administration. An understanding of recovery principles can make a significant difference in the way the pastor relates to administrative responsibilities, especially in the area of control. Most church conflicts are, at their foundation, control issues. Members try to control the pastor, and the pastor tries to control the members. Usually, neither side has a clue what's really going on, and even less do they understand how to solve the problem.

Pastors who have experienced a significant degree of recovery will quickly recognize when people are trying to control them, and they will know instinctively how to deal with it. As the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says, "We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us."[3] I can honestly say that that is a true statement. Today I often size up very quickly the dynamics of interpersonal relationships that used to totally confuse me. And because I'm no longer confused, I'm able to relate much more appropriately.

Pastors who have experienced significant recovery can also teach their members what they've learned. By their relationship to tense situations in board meetings and the responses they give when people try to control them, they are teaching the members to relate more appropriately to each other, to the pastor, and to issues in the church. Even in situations when they have to set tough boundaries—and effective pastors will do that—they are modeling healthy behavior to people who are enmeshed in codependent relationships.

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TWELVE STEPS

Step 1 Admit you are powerless over alcohol [or any other addiction], and that your lives have become unmanageable. It's certainly a biblical truth that the beginning point for victory over sin is to acknowledge the sin, its devastating effect on our life, and our powerlessness over it.

Step 2 Believe that a power greater than yourselves can restore you to sanity. In the context of victory over addiction, "come to believe" is a simple form of the biblical principle of righteousness by faith.

Step 3 Decide to turn your life and will over to the care of God. Surrendering one's life to God is surely a biblical principle if ever there was one!

Step 4 Be fearless and searching in making a moral inventory of yourself. Paul said "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Cor.13:5).

Step 5 Admit to God, to yourself, and to another human being the exact nature of your wrongs. This step is not about confession, which comes later. It's about honesty and repentance, both of which are foundational biblical principles for Christian living.

Step 6 Be entirely ready for God to remove all these defects of character.

Step 7 Humbly ask Him to remove your shortcomings. The Bible teaches that we need God's help to overcome sin, that He can help us only when we are willing, and that we must ask for His help.

Step 8 Make a list of all persons you have harmed and be willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9 Make direct amends to all such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 1 John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Step 10 Continue to take personal inventory and when you are wrong admit it promptly. This step encourages us to make the principles of the previous nine steps a part of our everyday life.

Step 11 Seek through prayer and meditation to improve y our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for you and the power to carry that out. Prayer is one of the key biblical principles for Christian living.

Step 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, try to carry this message to other alcoholics [addicts], and to practice these principles in all your affairs. James 5:20 says "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins."

Helpful books on recovery

- Pia Mellody, *Facing Codependence* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989). A good introduction to the meaning of codependence and how it damages our lives.
- Carol Cannon, *Never Good Enough* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1993). Carol Cannon is the head therapist at the Bridge. She describes a variety of addictions and the devastation they create in our lives.
- Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992). The authors describe faulty boundaries and how to develop healthy ones.

Change won't come overnight, but with time and patience, pastors who practice and teach recovery principles will create a healthier environment for the entire congregation.

Counseling. One of the areas in which personal experience with recovery will be most helpful to pastors is in counseling of individuals and families. They will quickly pick up on control issues, enmeshment, and enabling behaviors in their counselees that will help them to give much more practical advice.

You will notice that I said the pastor's "personal experience with recovery" will make this possible. Recovery is not just a set of principles that can be read out of a book and handed on to others. In each of the areas I have discussed, these principles must become an instinctive part of the pastor's way of responding to relationships, especially his or her own family relationships. And healthy family relationships are particularly essential in the area of counseling. The pastor whose spouse and children have experienced significant recovery will most quickly recognize the problems in the lives of others and will be able to offer the most practical advice.

Learning recovery

I think I'm safe in saying that while most pastors have probably heard of recovery, few have actually experienced it to the extent that it is making a significant difference in their ministry. So how can pastors to whom these concepts are new make them a part of their life and ultimately a part of the life of his church? I will suggest several ways.

First, read up on addiction, codependence, and recovery. The sidebar lists several books that I have found helpful. My own book *Conquering the Dragon Within* applies recovery concepts in a biblical context.

Second, both pastor and the spouse attend twelve-step meetings. If possible, both should choose a meeting in an area of addiction that they themselves are struggling with. Attendance at half a dozen meetings isn't enough. In order to make these principles a way of life, regular attendance over a period of years is essential. Pastors need not fear that others in the church will find out that they are attending, say, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. All twelve-step groups are scrupulously careful about maintaining confidentiality.

Third, ingrain recovery principles by journaling. Write down your thoughts and feelings, reflections on your relationships with each other, in the light of what you are learning from reading and attendance at meetings. Prayer is an important part of journaling—asking God to reveal character strengths and weaknesses and the meaning of confusing emotions.

I wish every pastoral couple had the opportunity of attending a recovery program such as the one that is offered by the Bridge. I particularly urge any pastor with a major addiction to seek the help that a recovery program can provide. These programs are expensive, but divorce and ruined careers are even more expensive!

Recovery and sanctification are about overcoming character defects, and both are the work of a lifetime. While I'm grateful for what I've gained, I know I have a long way to go. I'm glad I got started. I encourage every pastor and every pastor's family to make the same start. ■

1 The Bridge is a member of Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI).
2 Ellen G White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1900), 331.
3 *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1976), 84

Holy wars?

continued from page 4

heart-and-soul disciples of the living Christ.

Jesus expressed in Himself the profoundest model for dealing with wrong. He was uncompromising in His rebukes (see Matt. 23), but most significantly, His attitudes were unsullied. Jesus was magnificent in the way He melded law and grace. He embodied both (John 1:17).

So much is said of Jesus—and of us—in the highly suggestive story of James, John and the Samaritan village that spurned them as they traveled through it. In the face of this prejudice-charged rejection, the disciples suggested that they call down fire on the people of the town! "Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village" (Luke 9:55, 56, NIV).

It is said that Abraham Lincoln was once criticized for being too solicitous to his enemies and was reminded that it was his duty, in fact, to destroy them. His reply deserves its immortalized endurance: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

True, not even Jesus could always do that, but so very much more of the time, it is most veritably our highest calling to try![4] ■

1 Andrew Sullivan. "This Is a Religious War." *The New York Times Magazine* (October 7, 2001): 45.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1972), 132.

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Where is the church going?

Setting new directions for the ministry

James R. Newby

James R. Newby, D.Min., is spiritual growth minister for the Society of Friends Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

Einstein was on a train out of New York City. As the conductor came through the passenger coaches, Dr. Einstein began to look frantically through his coat pockets for his ticket. By the time the conductor arrived at where the renowned scientist was seated, he had turned out all the pockets in both his trousers and coat, and was proceeding to search through his briefcase.

The conductor, recognizing Einstein, said "Don't worry Dr. Einstein, I trust you," and proceeded to collect the tickets from the rest of the passengers.

After about 30 minutes, the conductor came back through the car. By this time the Princeton professor was blocking the aisle, down on his hands and knees, looking and feeling for his ticket under seats and baggage.

Seeing him, the conductor repeated, "Dr. Einstein, please don't worry about finding your ticket. I told you that I trust you." Einstein answered, "Young man, this is not an issue of trust. It is an issue of direction. I have no idea where I am going!"

Today as a church, we are faced with the issue of direction. It's a time of changing paradigms and disturbing trends. Magazines like *Newsweek* run articles such as, "Dead End for Mainline Religion: The Mightiest Protestants are Running out of Money, Members, and Meaning."[1] We all struggle to understand why? Where are we going?

In the midst of all the change, we have an opportunity to create a new paradigm for the church. Out of the chaos of the present, Christians can begin the process of renewal. As the old traditions, structures, and ways of doing things begin to crumble, a new ideal of what it means to be a part of the fellowship of Jesus Christ can be formed.

This new ideal can be thought of in terms of the following five movements toward a new paradigm. They by no means represent all that is in the process of change, but they can provide a basis of hope as we move into the future.

Five factors

1. *If the church is to make a difference in the new emerging world, it must move from being a pseudo-community to becoming a real community.* For too long, many churches have claimed to be communities of faith when in reality they were merely ecclesiastical social clubs.

Acts 4:32 describes what it means to be in real community: "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (RSV).

To be "of one heart and soul," means that each cares for the other because we are all spiritually interconnected. It means to give freely of what we possess for the good of the whole community of faith.

Followers of Christ are not lone individuals filling the pew. Christians are organically connected, each helping the other to build the kingdom of Christ. In a world built upon the premise of "everybody for him or herself," the Christian has the opportunity to model the better way of "one another." And people today are hungry for this kind of love and caring.

2. *If the church is to be a healthy institution, involved in the task of real ministry, it must move from pain repression to pain expression.* Like some families, some churches are dysfunctional. Many churches have repressed years of corporate pain. John Savage says: "Strong emotions not worked through build over time."[2] If these emotions are not expressed, then they can sap the energy that should be used for creative mission and ministry.

In his book, *The Wounded Healer,* Henri Nouwen says, "The minister is called to recognize the sufferings of his time in his own heart . . . his service will not be perceived as authen-

tic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which he speaks."[3] To raise the issue of corporate pain within the life of the church, pastors need to be willing to share their own pain, and acknowledge that they are, indeed, wounded healers.

3. *The leaders of the church of the future must move from a position of the stoic authoritarian leader, to the servant leader.* Jesus spoke the most revolutionary sentence of all time when He said, "'The Son of man came not to be served but to serve'" (Matt. 20:28, RSV). This pronouncement of His purpose turned the world's understanding of leadership completely upside down.

Jesus was, indeed, a leader. His followers called him "Master." He was, however, a "servant leader," and a "servant master." I have sometimes wondered whether Jesus would have wanted to be called "Reverend" Jesus or "Dr." Jesus. Somehow that just doesn't sound right. The servant master rejected the world's understanding of pride, power, and prestige. Are we not called to do likewise?

4. *The emerging new church paradigm should move from a focus on worship, to a focus on ministry.* In an interview I conducted with Elton Trueblood for my book, *Between Peril and Promise,* he said, "It gives me hope that in some places people see that ministry is actually more significant than worship, . . . Worship we have always had, and I suppose always ought to have. . . . But ministry is Christian."[4]

The idea that we gather chiefly to prepare for ministry in the world is a powerful idea. Page after page of the New Testament focuses on ministry. In our day, however, the worship service has become a substitute for ministry, leaving the "church attender" with the feeling that his or her Christian duty is accomplished for the week. The new paradigm which is emerging should focus on ministry.

5. *The church of the future should move from the ministry of a few, to the ministry of all.* Although an understanding of "the priesthood of all believers" has been a part of the church since Martin Luther and, with few exceptions, every successive Christian generation since then has sought to make this understanding a part of its practice, we are still struggling to make it work.

At the present, ministry is not something that is understood as involving the whole people of God. And most clergy seem unable to help laity to identify in specific ways how they can link their faith with their work-a-day world.

An old Quaker story tells about a visitor coming into the silence of a Friends' Meeting for worship and asking the person sitting next to him, "What time does the service begin?" The Quaker's response: "When the worship is over." This is an important story in the genre of understanding the ministry of all Christians. Service, i.e. ministry, is everyone's task. If we do not connect our personal life experience to our biblical faith we can be highly religious personally without being the Christian minister's God is calling each of us to be.

Where are we going?

So where are we going? I would like to think that we are moving . . .

- From pseudo-community to real community,
- From pain repression to pain expression,
- From stoic authoritarian leadership to servant leadership,
- From a focus on worship to a focus on ministry, and
- From the ministry of the few to the ministry of all.

These moves can help to create a renewed spiritual vitality, and a new paradigm for the church. It is a positive response to a new generation of Christian seekers. ■

1 See *Newsweek,* August 9, 1993.
2 John Savage, "Corporate Pain: What Can We Do About It?" in *Quaker Life Magazine,* September 1991.
3 Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), xvi.
4 James R. and Elizabeth Newby, *Between Peril and Promise* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 13, 14.

Affirmation: Crippling or healing?

What makes the difference?

Julia Vernon

Affirmation is an essential tool of pastoral care. But its overuse led a colleague to refer to therapists as a profession that should be hyphenated: "the-rapist." We intrude into someone's worst nightmares and all too often affirm things that shouldn't be. When we do, we rape away their best chance at a healthy life.

Affirmation was the big watchword when I was trained. We were taught to engage the other person, listen for their feelings and issues, and affirm them. A great tool, but it can go to extremes. Our instructors occasionally modeled what they taught us about affirmation—a little overenthusiastically at times.

The extreme use of affirmation

One day the bus I was on broke down. I was late for a supervisory session with one of my instructors. When the instructor expressed displeasure at my tardiness, I apologized and explained what had happened.

His response was, "I'm really pretty angry and a little bit hurt because you're late."

I asked, " It sounds like you're still upset. How come?"

"Are you saying I have no right to be hurt and angry with you because you were late? I think I have every right to be upset," he answered.

"Yes, that's what I'm saying. I understand that you were hurt and angry when you thought I was late because of my own carelessness. Now that you know I made every effort, but failed because my bus broke down two miles from here, I don't think its appropriate for you to keep being angry with me."

"Wrong," he scolded. "You need to affirm my feelings. You need to let me know I have a right to feel the way I do and that it's OK for me to feel that way. If you can't learn when to affirm, you won't do well in pastoral care."

"I don't think those feelings should be affirmed," I told him. "It isn't appropriate for you to keep on being upset under the circumstances. It's just not good pastoral care to affirm behaviors that are inappropriate." The supervisory session went downhill from there.

When affirmation is inappropriate

There are times and circumstances where affirmation is ludicrous. There are also times when it affirms the irrational and feeds pathology.

I came into the pastoral care scene with some deep pain rooted in a background of child abuse. My supervisors and instructors modeled the healing techniques we were to learn by using them on me. There were times, however, that I doubted they knew what they were doing. I seemed to be weaker and sicker after their care. Sometimes, I came away feeling more stuck and hopeless than ever.

Then, I began to listen to find out what part of their care connected with those feelings. Often enough, it was when they made inappropriate use of affirmation. I grew less and felt more hopeless when I was "affirmed where I was at." It actually worked the opposite of healing.

On the other hand, when affirmation was confined to the role of an active listening tool, and someone honestly confronted my issues and feelings, real growth and healing happened.

What makes it inappropriate?

What was going on? I found an answer as I was browsing in the pastoral care library at work. In an old article, I found a statement that said that while some people with lots of higher education and lots of time on their hands respond well to tools like affirmation and leading questions that direct them to a gradual self-knowledge and discovery of their own cure, many more people do not.

People in a lot of pain, people with a heavy

Julia Vernon is chaplain of the Hospice of Bountiful in Grantsville, Utah.

workload, and people from middle-class and poor backgrounds, the article said, responded better to direct interventions that included identifying problem areas, confronting them, and suggesting remedial steps.

When I first read the article, I laughed. It was completely outdated. I'd been taught better. Now, I'm not laughing. I've seen more of what the universe of pastoral care offers and know it wasn't outdated.

Two key concepts

When do we affirm and when do we confront? Two Christian concepts hold the key—honesty and free choice.

Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). No matter how wrecked a life might be, there is some light. There are windows of opportunity and bits of knowledge that offer potential healing for spiritual sickness.

A person may have inappropriate outlooks and behavior patterns as a result of emotional abuse. He or she may have substance abuse problems whose roots are in trauma. No matter what the deficit, however, each one has some knowledge of right and wrong, and some spiritual light. Each person can be honest. Each has distinct windows of opportunity through which they can choose to look for that light.

Part of spiritual pathology is choosing *not* to act honestly on that limited supply of light. I have never met an abusive parent who did not know that child abuse was illegal and socially unacceptable. That knowledge is why they hide their activities. I have never seen an addict or alcoholic who did not know on some level that something was wrong with their lifestyle. That knowledge is why they make excuses and cultivate enablers. I have met many who choose not to confront that knowledge honestly—who hide behind the idea that since they are damaged souls, they cannot help what they do. Affirmation in the wrong places helps to entrench that idea.

When is it wrong to affirm?

What is the wrong time for affirmation? Anytime it conflicts with honesty or hampers free choice is the wrong time. Our ultimate model for pastoral care is Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). When affirmation turns into guile, it has crossed the line from pastoral care into rape.

Affirmation used as a manipulative tool to obtain a desired result from a counselee rapes their chance to have a model of honesty. Affirmation of a counselee's "right" to think, feel, and act in inappropriate ways rapes their chance to choose between right and wrong.

Let's look at examples of those two misuses of affirmation. A parish counselor was having a difficult time getting a troubled parishioner to return for a follow-up visit because she expected to be confronted with the wrongness of her behaviors. Trying to gain compliance, he told her, "I hear you saying you feel I might put you down for some of the things you've confided to me. But, you know, you have a right to feel the way you do." The counselee heard this pastoral "white lie" as pastoral permission to continue those harmful behaviors.

A more honest way to secure compliance might have been, "I hear you saying that you feel I might put you down for some of the things you've confided to me. I'll be honest with you, I don't approve of some of what you're doing. But I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to listen and help. This is a safe place for you to come and talk. Can we make an appointment to meet next week?"

At a Christian counseling center, a client from an abusive background, who behaved in a hostile way toward co-workers was told, "It's understandable for you to react that way. You have lived your whole life around people who threatened your well-being. It's understandable that you protect yourself now by warning peo-

ple off." True, it was understandable. But the client heard the unqualified affirmation as, "You can't help behaving the way you do because life has damaged you."

A better approach might have been to both affirm the person and confront the behavior. "It's understandable that you've learned to react that way as a defense against being hurt by people. But I also hear you saying that you know it isn't the best way to deal with it." That way, the client would be affirmed as a person who has genuine feelings; while at the same time being encouraged to seek growth in what he knows is right.

A right time to affirm

What is the right time to affirm? Any time it strengthens a positive item, lets the other person know you really hear them, or to establish that you are taking their needs and issues seriously.

When a counselee says, "I know I need to stop beating my kids," affirm it as a positive step. "You're moving in the right direction. Can we talk about some things that can help you reach that goal?"

When someone tells you they are having trouble with alcohol because of a chronic pain problem, affirm it with active listening feedback. "So what you're saying is that, because of the pain from your accident, you began drinking to manage the pain."

When someone says, "My spouse is confined to a nursing home, so I've been meeting my sexual needs with someone else," affirm that you understand that they have a real heartache, including the heartache of sin. "It sounds like you've gone through a lot of grief—losing your spouse in such a tragic way. Meeting your needs in a way that is at odds with your faith makes it even more painful."

Affirmation is a tool. Like most tools, it isn't good or bad by itself. How and when we use it makes the difference between crippling and healing results. If we affirm inappropriate or harmful behaviors and mindsets, we may cause harm by depriving people of the knowledge that they need to change. If we use affirmation as a way out of confronting the inappropriateness of others, our dishonesty gives permission for wrongdoing. If we affirm the truth and confront in love we preserve the right of our counselees to be told the truth, grow, change, and find real healing. ■

Taps

continued from page 14

innermost beings His life of love, obedience, and sacrifice? Didn't He die so we might live, to be free of sin and the baggage it carries? Isn't that what Christianity is all about?

Leaving the sanctuary, I'm troubled. My mind isn't focusing on the message, on the thrust of the sermon. I do not forget the music, however!

Is this another bad dream? No. It is the residue of painful impressions from this and other recently attended services.

As we drive to his home, we talk about church and music. My friend is Mr. Congeniality, a good listener.

"It isn't just here," I contend. "Pop music, even rock, can be heard in other churches and schools, as well as on broadcasts—Christian broadcasts!"

"What they say," my friend explains, "is that Christian lyrics make pop, and even rock, OK. The snag is, most of the time, neither the words nor the music say very much."

"What gets me," I reply, "are the 'special music' selections performed by artists whose concentration so often seems to be on performing just the music rather than expressing the beauty and wonder of a truly worthy theme. The piano or recorded orchestra with that relentless beat so often overpowers the message. What we do get, of course, is acoustical gain, along with tunes that remind one of a rocket out of control, a rogue rocket!" I'm trying to be clever.

My friend looks thoughtful. "What disturbs me," he adds, as we turn into his driveway, "is what often appears to be a kind of mime, an attempt to copy the style of 'in' artists of the general culture as we 'perform' our songs in worship."

I agree. "Should we be swinging and dancing our way to the Cross and into the worship of our God?"

Yes, says my friend, "Sing them as they were meant to be sung." ■

Communion preparation

JAMES A. CRESS

Too often we act as if confession means nothing more than a quick acknowledgment of our propensity to sin coupled with a standardized apology for affronting God's holiness.

Sometimes we are prompted by the Holy Spirit or a guilty conscience to repair a damaged relationship with our spouse, children, or colleagues.

Seldom do we relate a specific act or attitude to disobedience of God's will as revealed in His Ten Commandments.

In order to prepare us to receive the Lord's Supper, Pastor Peter Bath wrote and led our congregation through the following confessional of specific sins against our Lord. You might want to adapt this responsive reading for your congregation's next communion.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed.

By what we have done and what we have left undone.

We have not loved You with our whole hearts.

Nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent.

We confess that we have taken other gods before you.

The gods of power, wealth, and pride have been worshipped as we spend our time and energies seeking them, making us indifferent to the suffering of others here and around the world. The hungry, the homeless, the orphaned—we have not loved as we ought. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have let graven images into our lives that do not speak of Your love or power.

Lord, we have surrounded ourselves with images of power and security. We worry more about retirement portfolios or savings accounts than we do living through Your grace. We rely upon strength and stuff, not on Your love and grace. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have taken Your name in vain.

Our lives do not always reflect Your will or Your character. The focus of our desire is not Your glory, but our own egos. We carry Your name but live under an alias. Forgive us Lord.

We confess that we have not lived to honor You as our Creator, giving full voice to the meaning of Sabbath.

We care for Your created dominion as it is convenient for us. Too often, our lifestyle is more important than Your Lordship. As You call us to care for the strangers within our gates, we confess that we are unaware of the strangers in our church, homes, neighborhoods, or cities. Yet You call us to care. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have not always honored the mature, the wise, and the parents entrusted to us.

Forgive us, Lord, for the phone calls we don't make, the visits we keep putting off, the cards we don't send, the hugs we forget to give, the honor we deny. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have oppressed, denied, and taken life.

Lord, we have slain others with our words and thoughts, we have oppressed through our greed and ignorance of other's needs, we have denied life its full potential through politics and power, through selfishness and self-centeredness. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have been unfaithful to our vows of fidelity, spiritually and relationally.

Our wandering eyes and unfulfilled desires often control our passions. Our affections are squandered on the illicit, to our shame and sorrow. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we have taken what is not ours.

Forgive us, Lord, for the time we steal from those we love, the affections we deny our spouse, children, parents, friends, and neighbors. We confess that we do not give to others the way You have given to us. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we bear false witness through our lives and words.

Lord, the evidence of our lives betrays the struggles of being faithful and consistent witnesses to Your love and power. How easy it is to turn away from need, to deny the opportunity to love or serve. Forgive us, Lord.

We confess that we struggle with envy and jealousy.

What we want seems more important to us than what we need, interrupting the flow of Your grace and gifts. Help us be satisfied with what You give us as our true desire. Forgive, us, Lord.

O Lord, hear our words of confession.

Forgive us, Lord, for we have sinned against You. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us for all we have done. Grant Lord that we may live in the newness of life offered through Jesus, that we might serve You and please You to the honor and glory of Your name. This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. ■

SHOP TALK

The Return to premiere on satellite

The Return, the latest prayer meeting resource from Adventist Communication Network (ACN) designed to attract community members, will premiere on satellite, Sabbath morning, February 23, at 11:00 a.m. ET. Shawn Boonstra, co-presenter of the series and speaker for It Is Written Canada, will introduce the seminar during ACN's Adventist Worship Hour. The meetings will then continue for six Wednesday evenings. It is expected that as many as 500 churches will use *The Return* as an entry event for NET 2002, *In Light of Revelation,* a full-message series beginning October 18, and seen live at 7:30-8:00 p.m. ET, each Wednesday evening between February 27 and April 3. For registration information and more details about this event, visit ACN's web site, www.acnsat.org, or call 800-ACN-1119.

Baby dedication certificates

While searching in Christian bookstores for attractive baby dedication certificates, I had little success. I began to realize that I could create better-looking certificates on my computer. I quickly looked through stock artwork I had available from various programs, found some that I really liked, and imported the ones I wanted into my word processor. (Note: Be sure to check copyright and usage restrictions on any artwork used.) Using a simple script type font, I put in the pertinent information: name of the child and parents, the date and location of the dedication, and a line to sign as the officiating minister. I printed out the certificate, on my inkjet printer, using good-quality, acid-free paper with a matching envelope, and had just what I wanted. Certificates can be printed in color if you have a color printer and personalized further by using a scanned picture of the child or family, if desired. Other types of personalized certificates would be just as easy to produce.

—Clarence Small, Moline, Illinois.

The greatest of these is: Delegate

One of the hardest things for most leaders to do is delegate responsibility. The reason usually is that it seems no one can be trusted to follow through and do an adequate job. Ted Engstrom, in his book *The Making of a Christian Leader,* develops six principles of delegation that should help toward a more satisfactory experience with future delegation:

1. Select the jobs to be delegated and get them organized for turnover.
2. Pick the proper person for the job.
3. Prepare and motivate the delegate for his assignment.
4. Hand over the work and make sure it is fully understood.
5. Encourage independence.
6. Maintain supervisory control—never relinquish the reins.

The oil can is still mightier than the sword!

—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas.

Trust Me tour

My desire to be in contact, fellowship, and develop relationships with retired people in my congregation lead me to developing a siteseeing ministry named "Trust Me Tour." The basis of the Trust Me Tour is that only the coordinator, church secretary, and myself know the final destination for the day trip. Those who sign up have to "trust me."

The challenge to this every-other-month event is to discover places to visit within an hour-and-a-half of the church, where the participants have never been. On some occasions, a mystery guest is invited to the noon luncheon. Usually, the mystery guest is either a church member who works in the city being visited, a city official, or a local church leader of our denomination or another denomination.

The tour coordinator or myself make an advance visit to schedule the designated site for the upcoming Trust Me Tour.

The cost is kept to a minimum with free or inexpensive places to visit and selecting unique dining facilities in the modest price range, and a small charge for the transportation. Our church has a 15-passenger van, so the transportation cost is for the gasoline used for the trip.

Some of our tour sites have included historical homes, a stained-glass artisan's studio, a glass-blowing shop, museums, area factories, a cathedral, and a radio station. You will be surprised about the sites you can discover within an hour-and-a-half of your church.

Hopefully, you will hear what the tour coordinator and I have heard from participants: "I have lived here all my life and I did not know this place even existed."

—Terry Shumaker, pastor, Decatur, Indiana.

BOOK REVIEW

Cries of the Heart. *By Ravi Zacharias (Nashville: Word Publishing 1997).*

Ravi Zacharias writes with philosophic passion. He owes his philosophy to his roots and his passion to his confronta-

tion with Christ. Born and brought up in India, he is no stranger to the riddles of life or to the strange route philosophy takes in interpreting those riddles. But when he chose to study theology in Canada and prepare for the ministry, he had a strange meeting with his Lord. And ever since he has been speaking and writing on what life is all about—outside of Christ and within Christ.

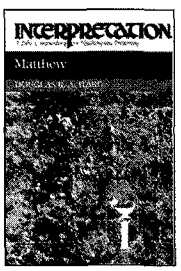
The contrast comes through clear in this work. He lets history, his own personal experience, and his public ministry inform him of the various cries of the human heart: the cry to know God, to feel the pangs of faith, to understand suffering, to interpret guilt, to excel in freedom, to suffer in silence. Each of these cries is illuminated by stories—real stories involving real people, such as Lewis, Eichmann, Freud, Muggeridge, Doestovsky, Wesley, Luther and many more. No pastor can miss the thrill these stories can bring to his or her congregation.

But the author does not stop just with an exposition of the cry. He offers a solution, not from his philosophic cup or theological jar, but from God's Word. The message is clear: the cry is for the moment, the joy is for ever. In Jesus. So the last chapter of the book turns to God's cry for His people. You will not want to miss this book.

Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. *(Louisville, KY: John Knox Press). 17 volumes covering the New Testament.*

John Knox Press has done a commendable work for Christian scholarship and proclamation by publishing this new and dynamic set of New Testament commentaries. Seventeen scholars attempt to offer a complete interpretation of the New Testament material, including historical context, theological purpose, homiletical relevance, and spiritual direction. No preacher or Sabbath School teacher will find the commentary too hard to understand, too out-of-reach or boring. The commentary has the distinction of being true to the original language without humbling the lay reader for want of Greek knowledge.

Pastors will find the commentary especially useful in their homiletic task. Each New Testament book is clearly outlined, and within the outline, the commentary pursues both an expository and theological task. While Adventists who have a unique understanding of eschatology may find some of the interpretations of the Apocalypse and the last-day events not to their liking, there is plenty of background material even here as to be of critical usefulness for biblical preaching. For example, the study of the seven churches has much to offer to our preaching on the subject.



Some readers may disagree with the hermeneutic or the expository model employed by various commentators in the set. One need not agree with every thing said, but the commentary as a whole exalts the central theme of the New Testament: God revealed in Christ for our reconciliation and for the creation of the Kingdom of God.

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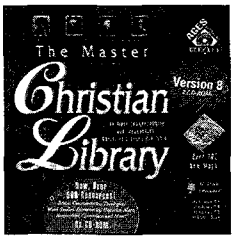

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