

MINISTRY



International Journal for Pastors

November 2002

Start By
Learning
Their
Names

REACHING OUR CHILDREN

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Email: MinistryRenewals@triad.rr.com

ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org

Fax: 301-680-6502

Phone: 301-680-6503

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A LADY SAID TO ME RECENTLY.
"I NEVER LOOK AT THE PREACHER
BECAUSE HE NEVER LOOKS AT ME."

Preaching with freedom

Every article I read in the March issue of *Ministry* was worth far more than the price of the journal. "Preaching With Freedom" (Walter Mueller), "Not Yet—The Holy Ghost" (Calvin Rock), and "The Christian and the Postmodernist" (Gary Swanson) helped me to relate my Christian ideals as a pastor to more effective operational techniques. To have one without the other is to be "weighed in the balance and found wanting." Diversity, substance, and relevance are the hallmarks of this journal. Thanks for doing such a good job.

—Warren S. Banfield, retired pastor,
Washington, D.C.

I would like to comment on the articles by Pastor Walter Mueller on preaching without a manuscript, in your January and March 2002 issues. I have been preaching in this way for a number of years and was pleased to see the articles encouraging other pastors to try this.

I concur with Pastor Mueller's comments in his first article; however, I prepare for preaching a little differently than the method he laid out in the second article. I agree that all preaching must begin and continue with prayer. I was affirmed by his first few steps in preparing to preach—choosing a focus, noting supporting texts and examples, and making a very brief outline. However, at this point, our methods diverge. I never write out a manuscript.

Instead, I "speak" my sermon, adjusting the "outline" as needed during the first couple of speaking sessions.

I think of the sermon as a journey with a definite starting point and an intended destination. The "points" in between are signposts along the way. I practice my sermon whenever I have a few minutes—in the car, shower, or while taking a walk. The final step is always to preach it from the pulpit, as if to the congregation.

Thank you for producing such a fine journal and making it available to a large "audience" of pastors.

—Barbara M. Wills, pastor, St. Peter
Lutheran Church, Garavillo, Iowa.

One point regarding the sermon manuscript. I do as Mueller does, except the final moment: I take the manuscript into the pulpit, having highlighted the outline phrases in each paragraph. In this way I preach freely, with the outline strategy imbedded in the manuscript before me.

The discipline of a manuscript enhances variety of expression. We should strive not to speak in such a way that your congregation can finish your sentence before you speak it.

—F. A. Hertwig, Lincoln, Missouri.

The two articles by Dr. Walter Mueller were both excellent and timely. As a more frequent pew-sitter now, having retired, I find that preaching in British

Methodism seems to be experiencing a "low." It needs the challenge which Dr. Mueller gives.

Although retired, I still preach frequently, but failing eyesight has forced me to do so without notes. The freedom I have had, as well as the impact of the message (so I have been told) have been dramatic. I have always prepared myself meticulously along the lines which Dr. Mueller suggests—full manuscript, shorter notes, and many rehearsals before presentation, but never until recently, note-free. Oh, that I had learned to do this 40 years ago!

This approach is hard work and time consuming. It is not always easy to dispense with notes when one is the minister of a central city pastorate, which demands preaching two sermons every week to the same congregation, at least 46 times per year! That does not happen so much in Britain today, but it is certainly not good enough to write out a sermon, carry the script to the pulpit, and read it, head down, with never a look at the congregation. A lady said to me recently, "I never look at the preacher because he never looks at me."

I once heard Professor James S. Stewart preach with a foolscap sheet of notes. He said that though he may have preached a sermon several times before, he always spent an hour or so with it each time, just to make it his own again. Dr. Edwin Sangster of Westminster, who

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If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.

Embracing the whole

For the last 25 years or so, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been tussling over "righteousness by faith." This is not an unusual happening, either in terms of the Adventist Church or Christianity as a whole. The truth is, of course, that contention over how God sees human beings goes back to the days of Martin Luther, Paul, and even Cain and Abel.

In the Adventist setting, the role of "justification" and "sanctification" (if we still dare to use such tired words!) has been at the center of the debates.

As the debate has developed, it has assumed increasingly defined nuances and distinctions, making the differences more numerous and difficult to handle. This contention hardened into competing theological, ecclesiological, and interpersonal poles, until what had once been a simple, beautiful experience that changed people's lives, became all but insipid, and for many, something to be suspected and avoided.

Early in my own experience I discovered the blessing of the *inner* work of Christ (sanctification). The wonder of this experience took deep root in me. Later, however, I saw that I by all means still needed the forgiveness and grace of Christ. I needed the perfect goodness of Another to cover my own failures, and even the best of what I did for God. And so God opened the eyes of my heart to His work *for* me (justification). This has been surpassingly valuable to me.

Each of these two aspects of the whole represent long periods of my adult spiritual life. It's not as though I ever jettisoned one in favor of the other. But while embracing the one, I often placed it above the other, and then got into debilitating ecclesiastical debates defending my position.

Recently, I have begun to make more authentic long-term peace between

WILL EVA



these two great aspects at the core of the New Testament message. The peace began to dawn when I decided to revisit and rediscover my early "sanctificationist" roots. I was finally ready to unite the work of Christ in me with what He has done for me, honestly coordinating the two biblically and experientially.

And so, elementary as it may seem to some, a third conviction has emerged, one as strong as either of the other two: That we have a great need to gather up all of the work of Christ, both that done in us and that done for us. It is not as though we should do this by collecting fragmented, competing theological viewpoints, but that we bring the essential parts of the biblical whole together into a living, cohesive organism that evokes the profound experience it was designed to stir up in us.

Doing this calls for the healthy integration of justification and sanctification; combining the objective and the subjective elements of the work of Christ. Doing this we come to see how each complements the other in our experience, and how together they complement the whole, so that each is given its due influence in our daily experience.

Very significantly, I have also come to realize that it is when the Holy Spirit and His work are embraced, that the two are made one in the human soul.

In a thought-provoking summation,

Laurens van der Post exposes the innate tendency of human beings to divide the indivisible: "I have always believed that the balance between primitive and civilized values has never yet been fairly struck in any society. . . . I would suggest that the primitive [a state that Van der Post consistently championed] is a condition of life wherein the instinctive, subjective, and collective values tend to predominate; the civilized condition of life is where the rational, objective, and individual take command. Throughout history the two have been at one another's throats because it appears that the value of one depends on the rejection of the other."¹

In this valuable insight, van der Post does not, of course, have the Christian gospel in mind, but he nevertheless describes a general human tendency that certainly manifests itself in the way Christians all too often manipulate the gospel and present their dichotomized arguments about it.

As we like to point out, the brain and the heart are distinct and yet inseparable, so within the body of the gospel each part performs its unique function, but in absolute unity with each other. As with heart and brain, there are obviously distinctions to be noted and honored, but in the end, the two are persistently one, a single unit working together to sustain life itself.

That which God has joined together, let not man put asunder. *We do not have the authentic whole until we have brought together all its parts.* It is our greatest privilege to bond the realities that God has united in the core message of the Bible and emphasize their original, biblical purpose in our lives and in the lives of our people. ■

¹ Laurens van der Post. Quoted by J.D.F. Jones: *Storyteller* (London: Scribner, 2002), 272.

Start by learning their names . . .

Ron and Karen
Flowers



Ron and Karen Flowers are directors of the Department of Family Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

It could have been almost any town, any place. The kids were acting out sexually and chemically, and the adults were worried. Worried enough to throw a lot of money into prevention. In fact, no one could ever say they hadn't put their money where their mouth was. They had brought in the big guns with the best resources and the most engaging props. The kids had even said Thanks! They *liked* it! But here again were the town fathers a year later, with the same teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse statistics staring them in the face. From all appearances, little had changed. That was the reason for the town meeting. And that was the reason for the speech.

He was an unlikely speechmaker, the lanky rancher sitting on the back row in his cowboy boots, and his speech wasn't long. It was just profound. "If you want to know what I think," he drawled, "I think we should start by learning their names."

Anyone who has lived in the same house with a teenager knows the wonder and delight of watching these incredibly interesting creatures emerge from the cocoon of childhood. In the same wrapping, of course, come the challenges and worries of responsible parenthood through this delicate adolescent season of drying wings and flight lessons. There are so many influences, so many risks, and so many life decisions to be made. So many adjustments as relationships

transition from parent-child, to parent-teen, to parent-young adult.

We have enough data to know that the town meeting could just as well have been an Adventist town hall. A study conducted among Seventh-day Adventist youth attending 69 Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools throughout the United States and Canada¹ measured the extent to which Seventh-day Adventist youth use drugs and alcohol and engage in sex outside of marriage. There was some good news. Overall, the Adventist youth surveyed reported lower levels of substance abuse and were less sexually active than their counterparts in the culture at large.

There was also bad news. The study clearly showed that Seventh-day Adventist youth are not immune to behaviors that put their well-being at high risk. Significant numbers of Adventist students are using drugs and alcohol. Some begin as preteens. Nearly one in five Adventist students participating in the study reported having engaged in premarital sex.

The Adventist Family Study initiated by the General Conference Department of Family Ministries, with more than 8,000 respondents from seven world divisions, confirmed that the world church faces similar concerns to those raised by the North American Division study. The global impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—a totally preventable disease that threatens to obliterate whole generations and is in many cases contracted between the ages of 15 and 25—has heightened the urgency of finding the keys to better life choices.

Let's not misunderstand this study. It's not as though the concerns are new. It's not that modern moms and dads don't love their teenagers and try to be good parents to them. It's not like adults in churches, schools, and communities have put little energy into an active ministry to children and youth. On the contrary, the many positive outcomes of their efforts should be applauded! It's just that the problem hasn't gone away, and the back-row cowboy's words of wisdom may just provide us with a further hint at what is important when it comes to these issues.

Know the kids' names!

It's amazing how much difference something as simple as knowing someone's name can make.

A friend of mine told me a story. She goes to a rather large church. It's easy for a kid to get lost in a big church, particularly a kid who goes to public school or doesn't particularly shine otherwise. My friend discovered a young girl in her large congregation who had the same name as her daughter. So she introduced herself to the girl. She showed her a picture of her own daughter, now grown and moved away, and told her how seeing her in church

Squinting and scrunching up his nose as if unable to be completely sure, he inquired, "Are you Grandma?" (We have no biological grandchildren, but we have adopted many.)

"Why, yes!" Karen responded. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

"Well," he announced, lest she may have forgotten, "I'm Andrew." And with that he took the dollar and moved along.

Is this too simple or anecdotal? Actually, we have it on very good

tably. Setting high expectations and clearly communicating our disapproval of risky behaviors. Becoming a reliable source of good information. Listening with undivided attention. Watching out for the vulnerable.

Drs. Gary Hopkins and Bruce Heischouer,³ physicians at Loma Linda University with expertise in youth at-risk behavior, wrote a seminar for parents on building connections that make a difference in the lives of children and youth. Here is their bottom line.

Connectedness takes time and requires genuine interest in young people and their issues. It means going where the kids are. It involves listening and dialogue as well as talking. Connectedness is about warmth and caring and love and friendship. It is also about setting limits and supervision. It's about building trust and holding on during the hard times.

Connectedness is about mentoring and making wholesome values attractive. It requires a willingness to negotiate and release responsibility to young people, in keeping with their growing maturity. Connectedness is about getting involved and giving of yourself. It is about looking out for kids who are discouraged or troubled. Connectedness is about helping someone who has made a mistake to begin again. Connectedness is about supporting parents and families. It means opening our families to include others in the circle of caring and fun. Connectedness is about becoming community.

But it can't happen until people like us start learning names. ■

ADOLESCENCE IS BEHIND THE GIRL NOW. SHE IS MARRIED, AND SHE IS ALSO STILL IN CHURCH. HER BOND WITH MY FRIEND REMAINS. IT STARTED JUST WITH A NAME.

and knowing they shared the same name made her think warm thoughts about her family.

After that, my friend made a special point of connecting with her daughter's "namesake" every Sabbath. The girl struggled through adolescence, and had a baby before she was married. But week by week my friend was there with a friendly smile and an encouraging word. Adolescence is behind the girl now. She is married, and she is also still in church. Her bond with my friend remains. It started just with a name.

Last week we were back in our pew in our local church after nearly two months of travel for our work. Karen, along with a team of five other people, is responsible for the children's story each week, so all the children are her friends. During the worship hour, as the children go to the front for their story time, they collect offerings for Christian education. As Karen offered a dollar bill to a favorite three-year-old passing by, he stopped dead in his tracks and put his hands on his hips.

authority. In 1997 the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (AdHealth) was launched across the United States, collecting data from 90,000 teens and 18,000 of their parents. This study provides a suitable capstone to the growing body of research that undergirds our understanding of the factors that predispose today's children and youth to involvement in high-risk behaviors and those factors that are most likely to protect them from harm. The one word that encapsulates all this research is *connectedness*. In short, kids who feel connected to family, church, school, and community are far less likely to participate in behaviors that put them at risk.²

Keep kids connected

The question is, "What makes kids feel connected?" Remembering that Susie has a biology test today and promising to pray for her. Taking time for fun. Opening our homes to kids and their friends. Setting sensible limits while maintaining reasonable flexibility. Being available. Asking questions that show interest in kids' lives and pursuits. Noticing a job well done. Treating kids fairly and equi-

1. G. L. Hopkins; J. Hopp; M. H. Hopp; C. and G. Rhoads, "AIDS Risk Among Students Attending Seventh-day Adventist Schools in North America" *Journal of School Health*, 68 (1998), 4:141-145.
2. R. W. Blum and P. M. Rinehard, *Reducing the Risk: Connections That Make a Difference in the Lives of Youth* (Minneapolis: Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota, n.d.).
3. G. L. Hopkins; B. Heischouer; and K. Flowers, "Connections That Make a Difference: Risk-Proofing Youth in a High-Risk Society," *Family Ministries Planbook: Facing Family Crises* (Silver Spring, Md., 1999), 45-62.

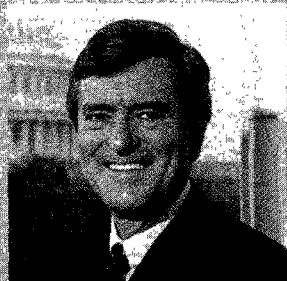
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Unmasking male depression

Do men get depressed? They certainly do. In this, the last of this series of articles, I would like to explore what I consider to be one of the most significant challenges facing many cultures today—the issue of male depression.

Because male depression is widespread, deeply misunderstood, and too often misdiagnosed, it desperately needs our attention. Pastors, in particular, need to be well informed on this topic; otherwise, the effectiveness of their ministry to men will be compromised, as will their understanding of themselves, if they are male.

As I reflect on more than 30 years of clinical experience, I am appalled at the realization that I have all too often misdiagnosed male depression. Of course, it was not really my incompetence that was to blame. The truth is that there's been a "cover-up." For decades, perhaps centuries, society has seen depression as a woman's condition. As a result, the symptoms of depression have become "feminized," and we have become indoctrinated with the idea that depression is a "woman's problem." We have become so accustomed to seeing how depression manifests itself in women that we don't expect to see the same symptom pattern in men. It is no surprise, then, that many deeply depressed men go untreated.

How to recognize male depression

Women are diagnosed as suffering from depression, mainly by exploring their *feelings*. Men are better diagnosed by paying attention to their *behavior*. Or, to put it more succinctly, *women feel their depression; men act it out!* Women get sad and try to "connect" with friends or seek to take care of someone else—called the "tend and befriend" response.

ARCHIBALD D. HART



On the other hand, men give vent to it through frustration and anger. They become irritable and moody. They don't connect, but withdraw, retreating into their cave while they give their loved ones the "silent treatment." It is this "masking" of depression that characterizes male depression.

Let's look at a typical example that illustrates how men experience depression. Stan is an up-and-coming insurance broker. This past year, because of the slump in the economy, he is failing to make the sales goals that his superiors have set for him. When he gets the news that he will not receive his anticipated year-end bonus and is reprimanded and given a warning that his job may be on the line if he doesn't improve, he doesn't go home sad, tearful, and grieving (which is what a healthy response to such a loss should be). He certainly doesn't seek out his wife to see if he can share his disappointment with her. No, Stan barges in the front door, throws his briefcase across the floor and screams at the kids who are making too much noise for his liking. He heads for his recliner in front of the TV, reaches for the remote, and tries to escape his problems.

From previous experience his wife knows that she had better not ask him how his day has gone, nor is it an opportune time to tell him that the washing machine is making strange noises. It is because Stan doesn't "con-

nect" with his feelings of depression that he exacerbates them—he creates a chain of further losses and alienation, called a "depression spiral." It may take weeks before he comes out of this spin.

I have done many radio programs with male depression as their theme and have talked to many wives in the process. Only a few have been able to accurately describe the classic symptoms of male depression. They say something like this: "He becomes irritable, short-tempered, withdraws into a shell, refuses to talk. When he responds, he overreacts; whether it be to the news, his dissatisfaction with his meal, or the kids' noise." A lot of spousal abuse could have depression as the cause or trigger. Essentially, *any* change in how a man expresses hostility and anger needs to be looked at as possible evidence for an underlying depression.

How men mask depression

Masked depression is one of the most prevalent disorders in modern society, yet it is perhaps the most neglected category in psychiatric literature. Our modern world is full of ways men can run away and hide from their depressive pain.

The reason is that depression can be *overt* or *covert*.

In overt depression the symptoms include the traditional sadness, lethargy, negativity, and mood changes. These are the hallmarks of classic depression—female, that is. For men, depression is more covert. After all, we raise boys to be emotionally strong, and not to be "sissies" or "cry babies." It's not surprising, then, that when depression strikes the typical male, it doesn't connect so much with the feelings as on the behavioral level. It is not that sad feelings aren't there. If you dig deep enough you will find them. Rather, these feelings are shoved out of the way

by distracting behaviors or numbing preoccupations of some kind. It is these distracting behaviors and preoccupations that "mask" male depression.

What are the common masks?

Among others, here are just four of the most common. Identifying these will help us get a better understanding of what men do with depression.

Anger, rage, and pent-up resentment. This mask is the dark side of male depression, and I have already alluded to it. It brings pain and hardship to the loved ones who must live with a depressed male, and along with the increase in the stresses of modern life, it is obvious that the incidences of depression have escalated proportionately, as have the occurrence of male rage.

Road rage, airplane rage, work rage, even rage on high school campuses (the Columbine syndrome) is everywhere. I suspect that much of this fury has some unrecognized depression as its root cause. Why? For one thing, I have seen it in myself and in many of

my clients. Shortly after the Columbine incident in Colorado, it was discovered that at least one of the two young male shooters was on an antidepressant.

Workplace rage, in which a supervisor or colleague is killed, is always precipitated by a major loss, such as being fired. While other motives may be present, the experience of loss is a major cause of psychological depression. When the depression is successfully treated, the rage and anger subside. Men, therefore, need effective help in dealing with loss.

Workaholicism. Here we have both a cause and effect for depression. Work can be a major distraction when it totally engrosses a man. Overwork, particularly when it is demanding (and what work isn't?) is the most significant cause of stress in our society. In some societies, people literally work themselves to death.

The Japanese have a label for it—*Karoshi!* Americans call it "workaholicism." It has been turned into a respectable mask for men. Whatever the

name, it still devastates the serotonin neurotransmitter system in the brain causing depression. But again, work not only causes depression, it also serves as a mask for depression.

Avoidance of intimacy. The last thing a depressed male wants to do is "connect" in any form, especially if it involves intimacy. However, for the typical male, sex is not necessarily an expression of intimacy, so this is not always excluded. The depressed male becomes cold and indifferent to his wife, family, and friends. He withdraws and clams up.

If this isn't bad enough, he takes it one step farther and begins to search his environment for reasons for his down feelings (he hardly ever calls it "depression"). This quest often focuses on his family and may result in a lot of faultfinding and blaming when it comes to those who are close to him.

Sexual compulsions. If there is one biological and psychological mechanism with the power to relieve depression's pain, at least temporarily, it is sex. Except in severe depression, most

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melancholic men don't totally lose their desire for sex. As I've observed many of my male clients, I have formed the opinion that many of those obsessed with sex are so because sex provides them with some pleasurable relief from their low mood. For them, sex becomes a self-medication of sorts.

Causes of depression

I cannot cover all the causes of depression here, but Christian leaders will find that some understanding of the causes of depression will be helpful as they try to help others overcome it.

Earlier I mentioned that a *significant loss in a person's life* can cause depression. The more significant the loss is, the greater the depression. This form of depression is called "reactive depression" and is a form of grief.

Usually, medication is not of any help, and the man needs to be helped in the grieving process. Getting fired from a job can be just as devastating to a man as the death of a parent or close friend.

Genetic factors can also cause depression. We may well see severe depression in several members of the same family. Fortunately, this form of depression is probably the easiest to treat since antidepressant medications are specifically designed to counteract the effects of the gene on the brain's neurotransmitters, or chemical messengers.

Hormonal and thyroid problems (common in women) can also cause depression. Something called the "serotonin/depression dance" explains why women get depressed when their estrogen levels drop (each month, after childbirth, and with the onset of menopause). The drop in serotonin pulls the serotonin level down, and this causes depression. Here too, antidepressants can work wonders. But these causes don't explain the epidemic of male depression we are now seeing. The only explanation is that *stress is the culprit*, and in some respects this also exacerbates female depression.

How does stress cause depression?

The stress hormones, called "glucocorticoids," are the culprits, especially

one called "cortisol." It targets at least two areas of the brain: the synapses, where it reduces the number of neurotransmitter receptors, and the hippocampus, where it disturbs the brain's capacity to renew its cells. That's the bad news about stress.

The good news is that the condition is reversible by lowering your stress and, if necessary, using the same antidepressants that are effective in genetic forms of depression. However, when combined with psychotherapy you have the greatest chance of beating it! And then, of course, there is also the resource of spiritual guidance, because depression can make it feel as if God is far removed from you.

So the message is clear. We have to help men become more aware of when they are depressed and encourage them to seek appropriate help. Men typically don't seek help. They see depression as a sign of weakness. But their cowardice in not dealing with their depression is the real weakness!

Living with a depressed man

It is most unfortunate that many depressed men, including those who are Christian, refuse to go for treatment. Some who seek treatment don't respond satisfactorily. And even when treatment is successful, a depressed male can still be a bear to live with! Wives, mothers, and daughters of depressed men need all the help they can get to pull themselves through these difficult times.

Why is it so much more difficult living with a depressed man than with a depressed woman? Husbands of depressed women can at least escape in their work or retreat to a hobby or golf course. Wives of depressed husbands have nowhere to hide. Many quit their jobs just to take care of their husbands. Also, men are the ones who are supposed to be strong, not weak, and wives often struggle with this "reversal" of strength and dependence, finding that the adjustment is not easy for them to make. They hate having to be strong for both themselves and their husband!

Depressed men also frustrate and

alienate those they love most. It's almost as if they have a need to blame someone for their depression, and the one who loves them the most is the easiest to target. So the more women love their depressed husbands, sons, or fathers, the greater is the potential for them to cause hurt. Those who glibly say, "Don't take it personally," don't really understand what's going on. It's easier said than done.

What is the most important thing that a woman can do for the depressed male in her life? Without a doubt it is to *communicate love and acceptance with all the power she can muster*. It may take a supernatural intervention, so help her to rely on God for the grace and patience that will be needed.

Emphasize that a woman's loved one has not intentionally chosen to be depressed. Although there may be a few exceptions, most men would gladly give up their depression if they could. So we need to try to help the loved one understand that the male's "bad" behavior is coming from his depression.

With God's help, in the long run, unconditional love can make a difference for both husband and wife, and also for other family members. Even though the depressed man may never show any appreciation for this love at the time, the day will come when the wife or mother will look back with satisfaction over the way she has handled the depressive reactions of the man in her life. For her, as with other challenges in her life, God's promise to Paul applies: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9, NIV). ■

Archibald Hart, Ph.D., is senior professor of psychology and dean emeritus, Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

For more help in how to deal with depressed men, we highly recommend Dr. Hart's book, Unmasking Male Depression (Dallas: Word Publications, 2001).

Bonding our children to Christ

Virginia L. Smith

Seventh-day Adventists in the 1960s numbered around 1.55 million worldwide. Tom Ashlock, then an associate in the General Conference Sabbath School Department, wondered what would have happened if the Church had never done any evangelism but had consistently retained all the children growing up in Adventist homes.

He got out his calculator, started with the number of Adventist families in 1848, considered the average family size in each generation up to the time he was working, and made a shocking discovery. Without evangelism, but just by maintaining Adventist children in the Church, there would have been 128 million Adventists at the time of his calculation: the 1960s!

On any given Sabbath morning, the largest group of people missing from the church—and needing to be reclaimed—are the children. Not the little ones, but the ones who used to be in the church when they were little.

What's wrong? How can we keep the children in the church? How can we reclaim the ones who have left?

The Beginner and Kindergarten Sabbath Schools are happy places. The eager children are participating and enjoying themselves. In Primary Sabbath School it is much the same. But something different takes place among the Junior and Earliteen age groups. Many of them lose interest in Sabbath School. They are

likely to be found hanging around in the hallways or outside the building. Major physical, emotional, and mental changes are involved, but these do not entirely explain the disinterest that develops in church attendance during the Junior/Earliteen years.

Just when they are beginning to think for themselves, we notice the young people missing. But that is not the first time they are making decisions about Jesus Christ and the church. Those first serious thoughts came long before, probably when they were as young as five or six, and their first decisions were not made on the basis of doctrines and Bible study. Rather, they were based on you and me.

Adults stand in the place of God in the mind of a child. In a child's early years, unconscious questions arise: Is it nice to be with adults? Do I feel loved and appreciated when I am with them? So, they begin deciding what they will do when they are free to choose for themselves.

The goal should be for us to bond the children to us and to the church, because in that way they have the best possible chance to ultimately bond with Jesus Christ. Here are four ways to accomplish the goal of bonding.

Bonding the children

1. *Be their friend.* Smile, don't frown. Talk to them, especially about God and His Word. Listen to what they say, and be shock-proof. As long as they see you as a friend, you have a tremendous influence on them. If you cut them down to size whenever they say something you don't like or agree with, they will soon stop talking to you. You may think that a normal generation gap has silenced them, but actually they lost confidence in the trustworthiness of your commitment to hear from them and what they are thinking and feeling.

If we listen respectfully to children's ideas, they in turn will be willing to listen to some of what we say. As trust builds, we will learn things we never dreamed of, and we will have continuing opportunities to influence children's thoughts and actions. Children go where there is excitement; they stay where there is love.

2. *Involve each one of them in your local church.* People of all ages are more likely to attend if they feel needed and appreciated. At an early age children should be given some responsibility. It could be as simple as helping



Virginia L. Smith, Ph.D., is the Director of Children's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

the adult greeters at the front door, straightening the chairs in a particular room, or even turning the lights on and off—something that will give them pride of possession and the significance of contributing.

As they grow, we need to increase their responsibilities: junior deacon or deaconess, elder for the children, assistant in one of the children's departments. All of them may not be totally dependable in doing the job. Neither are adults. Support, encourage, and affirm in every possible way to help the children grow in their capabilities. Each child who gains a sense of inclusion and significance is most likely to remain in the church.

3. *Provide opportunities for children to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (see 2 Peter 3:18). Grace is all the wonderful gifts of love, mercy, repentance, peace, and comfort that

God gives to us. Knowledge of His Word is how He communicates with us. Grace and knowledge must go hand in hand for real Christian maturity to develop. Consider the secular influences surrounding children today: TV, videos, computers, sports, music, friends, etc. The list is long, and children are exposed to it most of the day. By contrast, the list of opportunities children have for spiritual nurture is shorter, but taking stock of them is helpful indeed:

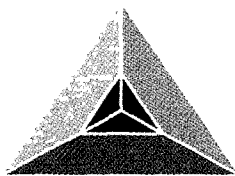
- ◆ Sabbath School, one hour a week.
- ◆ Family worship—maybe (surveys consistently find that only 25 percent of Adventist homes have this kind of worship).
- ◆ A divine service that is interesting to children and provides ways for them to participate.
- ◆ Every local church can have Pathfinder and Adventurer Clubs, but not all do.

- ◆ Vacation Bible School—one week a year.
- ◆ Perhaps a camp meeting for one week a year.
- ◆ Of course, there is church school, but how many children attend?

The difference in the quantity and quality of what we offer the children and what the culture in general offers will change if we are truly serious about bonding our children to us, to the church, and, by all means, to the Lord.

4. *Baptize them before they are teenagers.* It is wonderful to see teens and young adults come into the church with their enthusiasm and eagerness. What they discover in the Bible is exciting and meaningful to them. But it is seldom that way for the young people who have grown up in a local church. The Bible is an old hat to them. They've been there, done that, heard that before.

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Surveys in several of our Adventist world divisions have revealed that 85 percent of young people who are not baptized by age 14 are lost to the Church. Only the other 15 percent will request baptism at a future date.

Some adults in the church take the attitude, "They are only children. They will learn when they grow up." Actually, it is only when they are children that we have the window of opportunity to bond them to us, to give them a sense of inclusion, to fill their minds with thoughts of God and His Word; in short, to do our part in their salvation.

The teenage years are turbulent. The reality and even the memory of their earlier baptism is a wall of protection even if they slip, and it creates a greater likelihood that they will remain in the church, continuing to grow in grace. Our part is to overlook mistakes in our desire to encourage and support our children's continued growth. For the future good of our youth, and even if our only concern is for church growth, baptizing the children at a sensible age is important.

Bringing back the children

What is our responsibility to the children who remain in our fellowship? Is it to criticize, command, "preach," or cajole? On the other hand we should not lose an opportunity to say a word to encourage and inspire hope. We cannot tell how far-reaching our words of kindness may be, or our Christlike efforts to lighten some burden. "The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love."* Two simple principles apply:

1. *Be friends.* As long as teens see us as friends, we still have the chance to influence them. We can determine by God's grace never to criticize or confront them about their behavior. We can watch carefully to "catch them being good" and affirm them in every way we can. They haven't forgotten what they learned in church. Their memory is better than ours. In the long run, our attitude toward them

Pathways of the Pioneers

In 1978 Elder Anthony "Tony" Castlebuono described the need for a Seventh-day Adventist dramatized history series for youth. Jon Woodard was hired to write the original scripts. In 1988 Ellen Bailey, Paul Gordon, and Jim Nix spent considerable time carefully reviewing, researching, and editing the scripts. Then in 1997 Fred Meseraull was hired as producer to take the stories through the post-production process.

Pathways of the Pioneers is a series of 117 dramatized 8-12 minute history stories about the development and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They cover the time of William Miller and his call from God to "Go tell it to the world," until the death of Ellen G. White. It also recalls many of the exciting and challenging events of the years between.

This series is available at some Adventist Book Centers and the Lake Union Conference Office of Education. (269-473-8276).

will probably determine whether they feel safe in making good choices.

2. *Pray for them.* It is a fact that God loves our young people more than we do and will use every means at His disposal to turn them to Himself. Furthermore, Jesus died to give every person a free choice.

Social involvement

One more principle is at play when relating to our people, both those who are in the church and those who have lost interest:

Provide social activities. Almost worldwide, Saturday night is an accepted time for social activities. We may not feel the need for these kinds of things. We may be old enough to appreciate a quiet Saturday night at home, but young people want to be with their friends on Saturday night. Capitalize on this by making Saturday night a part of the bonding process to the church.

When it comes to these church-

centered weekend activities we should have a committee of young people to do the planning. It is good to provide some mature, friendly guidance in this planning. We need to open these activities up to all young people in the church and their friends. Some families mistakenly open their homes to a certain group of young people. The others are left out, and the negative feelings generated by this make it more likely that some young people will look outside the church for social activities.

Not every child will choose to be on God's side, no matter how perfect the environment, but by God's grace we can and must determine to do all in our power to bond the younger members of God's family to us, the church, and the Lord, so we can have joy together here and now, and be together in the world to come. ■

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 5:613.

Pastor, you tell the story

Melynie Johnson
Tooley

Back from our beach vacation, we hadn't been in the house five minutes when my nine-year-old daughter blurted out, "I have to call Pastor Baer right now!"

"Why?" I asked.

"Because," she stated, "I haven't talked to him in two whole weeks!"

That is when I realized that my child had found a connection with our pastor—her pastor. He was no longer just her parents' pastor. He was also hers.

This is the power that any pastor can wield from the pulpit. For most children, pastors are unapproachable. They're like God. The pastor is someone their parents look up to, respect, sit in front of every week. When he is coming to visit, it is for the sake of their pastor that they make sure the house is "perfect."

Therefore, connecting with the children in your congregation is critical. It is an opportunity that none should pass up lightly. And it can, basically at least, be done in only five minutes per week.

You say, "It's not that easy." Ah, but it is! It can be done in five minutes during the main worship service. How? By you, the pastor, telling the children's story yourself each week. It's a five-minute effort that will continue to be some of the best time you ever spend.

Here are five reasons why the pastor should tell the children's story and not someone from the congregation:

1. *You build immediate credibility and trust with your congregation.* Statistics show that people no longer automatically trust their pastor. The fact that a pastor has integrity is no longer a "given." Thus, pastors have to earn the respect and trust that people give them. Telling the children's story is one of the fastest ways of bringing down those historical barriers. It allows the pastor to show a creative and fun side that immediately wins people and makes him or her "likable."

2. *Adults like a pastor who likes their children.* If a child connects with the pastor and is treated as a viable member of the congregation, the parents will not leave the church. In fact, parents will attend church because their children want to. In this important sense, children can grow a congregation faster than many types of evangelistic endeavor.

3. *You can control the amount of time you have in the pulpit.* How many times have you gotten up to preach at ten minutes to noon because the children's story lasted 20 minutes? How many times have you lost your pulpit time to members who used the children's story time as a platform for their own agenda?

Dr. Jerry Spencer, past president of Southern Baptist Convention, states, "Pastors hate giving up their pulpit time to anyone. If I could stress one thing, it would be that telling the children's story themselves would give them extra time to be up front. They would have the children's time and the adult's time and they could control more of the podium."

4. *You can control the content.* You can choose to let the children's story be an introduction to your sermon or thematically relate to your sermon. Then, the story no longer becomes just another item in the church bulletin. It has a specific purpose, as part of the divine worship service, and helps you build your point through a method that reaches every age group. Everyone loves a good story. In fact, most people will remember the stories you told during the sermon before they will remember the content of your sermon.

5. *You can reach adults through the "back door"* without pointing to them directly. You can address touchy subjects such as gossiping or dishonesty—without being offensive!

Jesus' example

"But . . ." I already know your first objection. You have three churches and don't have time to give a full sermon, much less do the

Melynie Johnson
Tooley is the
president of
Storytelling for
Pastors, Hagerstown,
Maryland.

children's story!

Seventy-five percent of all pastors have two or more churches. In fact, 40 percent have three or more, and 15 percent have four or more.

Dr. Lynn Hill, Cumberland District Superintendent of the Methodist Church, states, "The more churches a pastor has, the greater the need to connect with the children in his congregation." He would rather have the pastors in his district give a 25-minute sermon (instead of 30 minutes) and spend the other five minutes connecting with the children.


John Loor, Jr., president of the Montana Conference, says, "If a pastor doesn't want to give up five minutes of his pulpit time to the children in his congregation, he is basically saying, 'The children don't matter.'"

"In His work as a public teacher, Christ never lost sight of the children. When wearied with the bustle and confusion of the crowded city, tired of contact with crafty and hypocritical men, His spirit found rest and peace in the society of innocent little children. His presence never repelled them. His large heart of love could comprehend their trials and necessities, and find happiness in their simple joys; and He took them in His arms and blessed them."¹


The Creator of the universe set the example for today's pastors by not letting the important duties of preaching, teaching, and healing come in the way of His ministry to children. "Let the little children come to me,

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and don't prevent them. For such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 19:14, TLB).

Jesus not only welcomed the children but taught and preached in simple ways, so that both adults and children could understand Him. "In parables and comparisons He found the best method of communicating divine truth. In simple language, using figures and illustrations drawn from the natural world, He opened spiritual truth to His hearers. . . . In this way He was able to make sufficient impression upon the heart so that afterward His hearers could look upon the thing with which He connected His lesson, and recall the words of the divine Teacher."²

Jesus loved children. It is the privilege and the duty of pastors to do the same. Pastors cannot afford not to tell the children's story! There are times when, without question, it is the most crucial element of pastoral duty. Children need to see and know Jesus through the pastor. Pastors represent Jesus. What children experience early in life will stay with them forever. ■

1 Ellen G. White, *Counsels To Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1943), 179.

2 ———, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), 236.

Story Resources

Maxine Bersch, *Storytelling in a Nutshell* (LifeWay Press, \$12.95).

Donald Hank, *5-Minute Messages for Children: 52 Children's Lessons for Any Occasion* (Group Publishing, \$14.99).

———, *5-Minute Messages for Children's Special Days* (Group Publishing, \$15.99).

———, *Quick Children's Sermons* (Group Publishing, \$14.99).

Steven Morley, *Great Stories and How to Tell Them* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., \$11.99).

Storytelling for Pastors. A bimonthly newsletter with five-minute, weekly, story ideas. It includes a scripture reference and every-day props you can bring from home. Information available at www.storytellingforpastors.com or call toll free 800-804-0522 to order. Price \$29.95 per year.

Faith Weaver, *Children's Messages 1-3* (Group Publishing, \$15.99).

NOBS (Network of Biblical Storytellers) Information available at www.nobs.org or call 800-355-NOBS.

What are we teaching our children?

Bertil Wiklander¹



Bertil Wiklander, Ph.D., is president of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, England.

"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isa. 54:13).

In our official membership statistics, we do not count children, but they are of crucial importance to us, and they have enormous value in God's eyes. They can play a significant role in God's mission to His lost world. So, the church has assumed the task of teaching the children the things of the Lord, through Christian homes, schools, Sabbath Schools, and Pathfinder clubs.

What should the church teach? And how will that teaching bring our children peace? Isaiah gives us three challenges.

What do we teach our children?

Whatever we teach our children, Isaiah says, should bring them God's peace. Peace is often associated with freedom, and freedom has often been compared to flying. For centuries human beings tried to free themselves from the limitation of being created without wings. About a thousand years ago, an English monk, Eilmer of Malmesbury, made one of the first-known attempts to fly. He fastened wings to his hands and feet and jumped from a tower. He managed to fly more than 250 yards, but his landing was less than successful.

Since then many attempts have been made to fly. Humans had curiosity, vision, and

courage. However, that was not sufficient to ensure success in their enterprise. Their problem was their limited knowledge. Not until the end of the nineteenth century did humans begin to master the art of gliding on the wind, and out of that came new knowledge concerning the laws of aerodynamics.

The history of human attempts to fly teaches us something about wanting to succeed in life. How can we experience life with a sense of freedom and authenticity? It is not enough to have curiosity, dreams, and courage. It is not enough merely to be gifted, to take an interest, to have imagination, to work hard, or to have creativity and power to act. To succeed one must be equipped with an adequate knowledge of life, of who we are, and why we are here. This applies to what we teach our children.

Ellen White says: "In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate."² The knowledge we teach our children must grow from communion with God. Knowledge of God grants freedom and peace, because God stretches the capacity of our minds beyond anything we can think or imagine. Concerning freedom, Jesus said: "'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (John 8:31, 32, NIV). Here Jesus is referring to God when He says "truth." Children's lives are formed by their knowledge of God. They find it in Jesus under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, our ultimate objective must be more than giving the children a great time, as if our goal were to entertain them, or of giving them information, as if it could save them. Our ultimate objective is to make them disciples of Christ, able to understand and know God who sets us free and enables us to fly in the spiritual heavens.

Sometimes, what we offer our children in

church is a distorted image of God that cripples them rather than making them free; that keeps them paralyzed rather than helping them fly; that keeps them filled with anger, guilt, and fear, rather than with peace.

I can remember my childhood in the church. Devoted and pious men and women taught me how to behave. Uncle Arthur's *Bedtime Stories* reinforced their teaching. To strengthen their position, they taught me about the Great Judge, the God who was always watching me to see whether I did anything wrong. I was taught to sing a song about being careful what I did, because the Father up above was looking down at me. The song had several verses, and every verse introduced another part of me which I had to be careful with: eyes, mouth, ears, hands, and feet. The meaning of life was to behave well, and God was the Chief of police.

This kind of teaching gave me a guilty conscience and no peace. It enslaved me and deprived me of my freedom and dignity. It reluctantly urged me to fly, but only with a head so full of vague instructions and fear that the flight often ended in failure. I was taught that God was one who made life harder than it was by itself. I didn't learn always to see God as my friend and helper to deal with the challenges of life. I was not "taught by the Lord" but by weak human beings who struggled to produce in me a legalistically perfect behavior. To them, lifestyle was more important than life.

And the outcome was that I did not experience the church as a good place for me to be. Fortunately, I had a home where I was loved unconditionally. And God was patient with me. But I did not always get from the church the "great peace" God had promised.

We must teach our children to experience God Himself, not just dry theory about Him. They must be able to love and trust God, having a relationship with Him they can always come back to. He is the Father who is

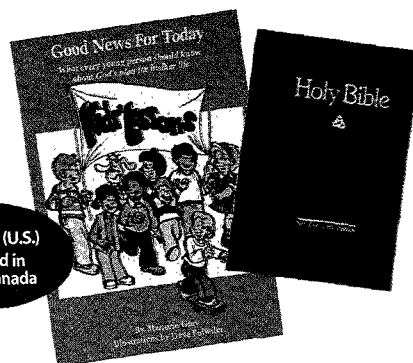
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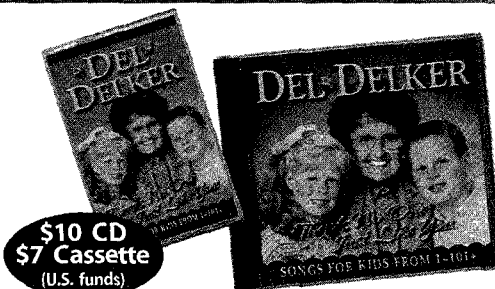
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always waiting for their return, even if they have lost their heritage, status, and friends. Even if they have been prodigals in a foreign land for years, He is the God who waits for them and embraces them when they return.

We cannot teach that unless we have experienced it ourselves. Unless we come to Jesus ourselves as sinners totally dependent on God, our children will not see that it is possible to fail at times and still make it through by His grace. If our children do not see this dependent relationship in us, no matter how costly and beautiful our teaching material, we will not

be taken for granted. Having daily bread on our tables is a source of deep joy and humble gratitude, because it is a sign of God's peace that prevails over darkness. When we teach the children this dynamic view of life, we give them tools to live. This knowledge enables them to appreciate God's peace when anything good is coming to them, and to struggle against evil and darkness.

It is an alarming signal that suicides among children are growing all over the world. In Sweden, some years ago, two children committed suicide every week. In Denmark, suicide

passion and love for other people. "Love one another even as I have loved you," commanded Jesus.

How do we teach our children?

Our text states: "All your children will be taught by the Lord." It means that someone has to be the spokesperson for the Lord to our children. Children learn by observing their adult examples.

Serving the children means that we model servanthood for them. Instead of an emphasis on right behavior, often static and measured by rules, we can teach our children the joy of service. There is no better way than by demonstrating it to them as we serve them.

I had wonderful examples of Christian servants in my childhood. I remember an unmarried, middle-aged woman who spent Saturday evenings and Sundays instilling in us children and youth a love for the church. She arranged for us to play games and stood there, very happy when we enjoyed ourselves. She did everything to make us feel part of the church family. She was a great example of Christian service. And no story, no reading, no theory, could take the place of her living example.

Jesus gave us an example of the true spirit of Christian service. He entered the suffering world and carried all human weakness and needs. He identified Himself with sinners, He suffered with them, and for them, to bring healing to their bodies and souls.

Just as with Israel in the time of Isaiah, our future depends on our children being "taught by the Lord." Our work with children needs a new foundation. The Lord must become the teacher, and when that happens, "great shall be the peace of our children." ■

MOST IMPORTANT IS THE FACT THAT MANY CHILDREN FELT SUPERFLUOUS . . .

give them the truth. And they will not be set free. And they will not find peace.

What are our expected teaching outcomes?

When the Bible lifts the curtain on the created world, as God wanted it to be, we behold balance and harmony, a world at peace. In fact, God's purpose in designing our world was to share the peace that existed in His own mind. Therefore, God's peace embodies life's innermost meaning and can be seen everywhere in His created world.

The Bible also teaches that God's peace must continually be defended against destructive forces. Therefore, God is always at work. In an ongoing struggle He seeks to restore His peace in the lives of men.

To believers in the Bible, therefore, the darkness of the night, the unfruitful desert, and the roaring waves of the sea are constant reminders of two opposite powers: the threat from the power of the destroyer, the chaos of evil, and God's mighty and sustaining power and the peace of God.

All that is positive flows from the God of life. Although, nothing is to

caused ten percent of all deaths among boys between 10 and 19 years of age. The reason is lack of good relations with their parents and the lack of clear ethical principles based on the peace of God. Most important is the fact that many children felt superfluous, that they were not needed, and that they grew up with parents who had no time for them. Many of these children seek consolation in drugs and alcohol. The next step is death.

In the midst of all this turmoil and human suffering, there stands the church. It says: We are an instrument for God's peace in the world. We oppose the destructive forces at work around us. This must mean at least two things:

First, we lead our children into a life of service as coworkers with the Creator and Sustainer of other human beings. Second, we do not focus our teaching only on our children; an inward-looking approach to teaching children will breed an inward-looking church. The most important but forgotten doctrine in the church is that lost people matter to God and, therefore, to us. How vital is our work for all children, planting in them a fundamental com-

1 Adapted by Kathy Beagles from an address given at the Trans-European Division Children's Ministry Advisory, April 2002.

2 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1952), 15.

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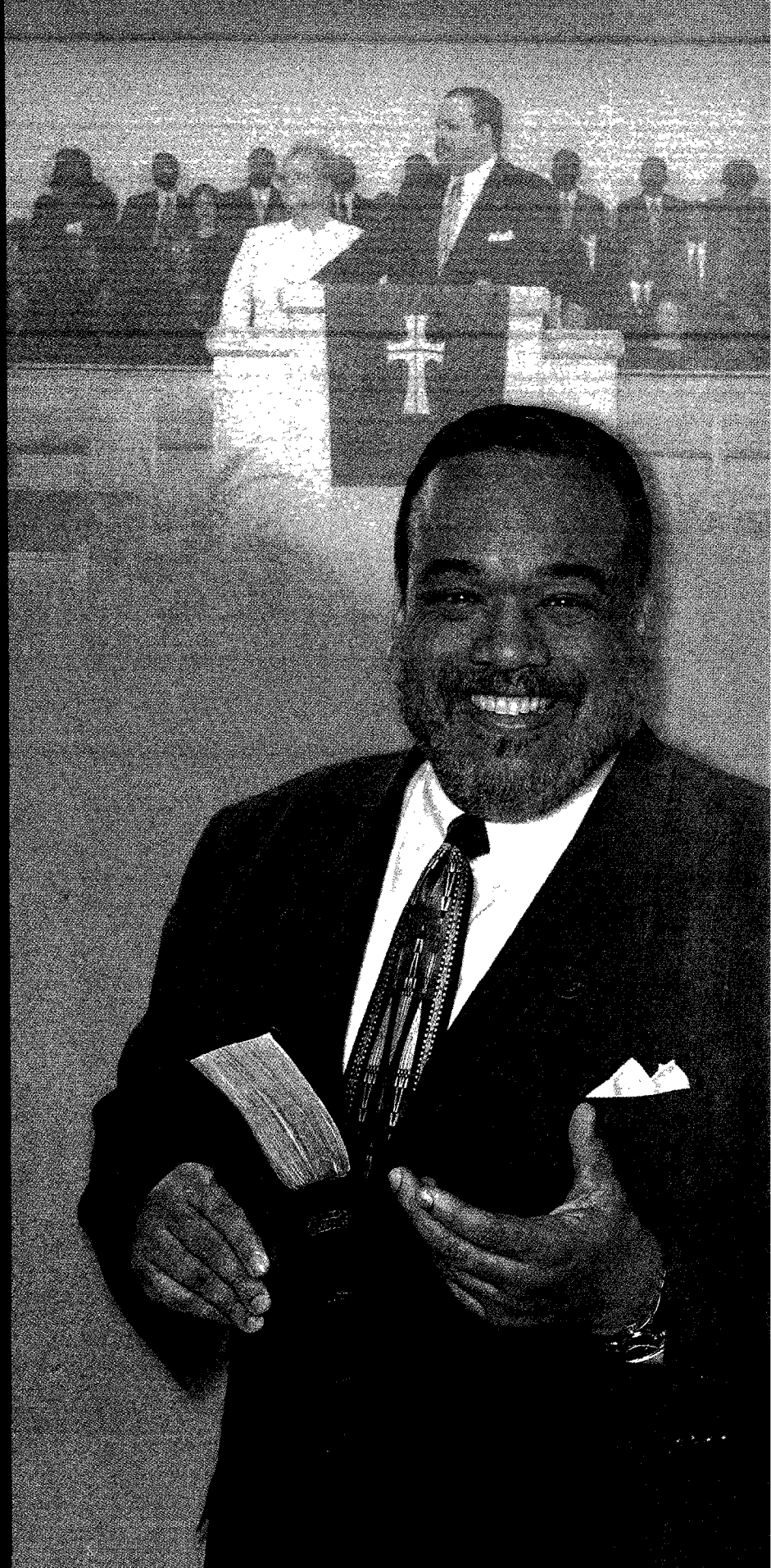
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Making children feel welcome

Evelyn Omaña



Evelyn Omaña is director of children's ministries at the Inter-American Division, Miami, Florida.

A professor stood before his class with a number of items on the table in front of him. Without saying a word he picked up a large empty jar and filled it with rocks, each about two inches in diameter. Then he spoke, asking his students whether the jar was full? They agreed that it was.

The professor then poured a box of pebbles into the same jar and shook it lightly. This, of course, caused the pebbles to fill in the open areas between the rocks. Again, he asked the students whether the jar was full. Again, they agreed that it was.

The students smiled as the professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up all the space that was left. "Now," said the professor, "consider this jar as your life."

The rocks represent the most important things in life—family, health, children—anything that is so important to you that you would feel lost if it were taken from you. The pebbles are other things that matter such as your career, house, and possessions. The sand is everything else.

If the sand were poured into the jar first, there would be no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for life. If we spend all our energy and time on the small and the less significant, we will never have room for the things that are crucial. Take care of the rocks first because they are the things that really

matter. It's a matter of priorities and setting them in proper order.

A matter of priorities

As a church facing multiple demands and needs we sometimes hardly take time to consider whether our children's ministries are merely functioning, or whether we are intentionally moving in a specific direction that enhances and shapes our ministry to our children in a direction specifically helpful to them. We might feel trapped in the myth that if we move ahead with some changes in our priorities, we will lose people's approval, or promote chaos in the church. This kind of thinking is not helpful in the light of the realities we face.

As we view our church today, we can't help noticing that a significant number of our members are between 15 to 35 years of age. These members are either youth age themselves or they have young children filling our Sabbath Schools. With this in mind, we must ask whether we are placing our children too low on our priority list? Are we giving them a sand-and-pebbles treatment, rather than valuing them by making our ministry to them a major priority? These children represent those who soon will lead our local churches, our entire organization, or perhaps become leaders in the society.

Provocative, diagnostic questions

Not long ago I attended a large ministerial meeting where a woman asked several pertinent and painful questions:

- ♦ Why do adult Sabbath School classes get the best Sabbath School teachers?
- ♦ Why are we giving the children the old equipment that the adults don't want?
- ♦ Why do we appoint leaders for the different children's ministries in the church without giving them any meaningful training for these tasks?
- ♦ Why do many churches build large and comfortable rooms for adults while those for children are small and uncomfortable?
- ♦ Why do we, all too often, ignore our children when selecting participants for important worship service assignments?

An honest analysis of these questions may well lead us to conclude that we definitely could adjust our priorities in favor of our children. It is all too easy to come to the place where, like Jesus' disciples, we are in one way

or the other, attempting to send the children away because our minds are on other more pressing adult priorities.

When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages, to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, "Suffer them to come"; as if He would say, "They will come if you do not hinder them."¹

When this is said, it does not always mean that churches are simply not interested in their children. Perhaps they do not clearly comprehend the importance of ministering to children according to their age level. If we want young adults in the church, we must pay attention to them while they are still children.

We need to identify the needs of each age level and strive to create a unique and appropriate environment for them. Churches that do not provide an attractive environment for children, appropriate furniture that fits their growing bodies, interesting and well-balanced programs, loving acceptance, and active involvement, send a negative message to their children. This could contribute to their later decision to withdraw emotionally, and finally bodily, from the church.

If we want to see the upcoming generation involved and identified with the church, we need to initiate action that will empower them to look at the church not as the place where they must go because their parents and others expect it, but as the place where they worship their Creator in dynamic and friendly relationship.

Some ideas for immediate implementation

If we want to see our churches meet the children's needs, the following ideas are worth serious consideration. Try them with enthusiasm and determination:

- ♦ Find specific ways to make the

church environment attractive and safe for children. Take a careful look at your children's facilities. See whether they are designed especially with children in mind. The environment we create helps capture the children's attention and draws them into the reality that we are trying to communicate.

- ♦ Make children feel welcome. Ask people, perhaps older youth, to greet the children while the congregation is singing, while the offering is being taken, or when the children arrive at church.

- ♦ Include planned activities for children in the church worship schedule. Children learn by doing. We can't expect to have them enjoy their church experience just sitting and observing what is going on around them. Children need a variety of activities. Allow them to participate regularly as readers, ushers, greeters, speakers, and in every other appropriate way.

- ♦ Upgrade the bathroom facilities for children. Lower the drinking fountains or place a stool to make the fountain accessible to them. Provide adequate furniture for children that is

constructed to fit their size.

- ♦ Sing songs that have melodies and words appropriate for children. Invite them to the altar during the pastoral prayer. Seek movement and activity rather than requiring austere stillness and silence.

- ♦ Remember that children are listening to the sermon. So capture their attention by asking a question, showing a picture, telling a story, or using an attractive illustration. Remember the power of color, movement, and singing. Encourage children to submit their questions or ideas about the sermon. Take time to answer their questions and thank them for their participation.

The mission of our denomination's Children's Ministries Department is to help children develop a long-lasting spiritual, redemptive, and loving relationship with God and the church. We can empower this generation of children to feel that they belong in the kingdom of God, and that the church is their church, a place to which they love to come. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 517.

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Jesus in junior Sabbath School: What would He do?

Jackie Bishop and Kathleen Beagles



Jackie Bishop is director of children's ministries in the Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, Colorado.



Kathleen Beagles is editor of the Junior and Youth Sabbath School Bible study curriculum, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Imagine Jesus as one of your church members. Picture Him volunteering for ministry to the children. After all, we are comfortable, aren't we, with the image of Jesus with a child on His knee, or bending over a small boy's lunch? But have you ever thought of Him teaching the Sabbath School lesson to a group of junior kids?

As for me, I cannot picture the children lined up in straight, glassy-eyed rows as Jesus lectures. I don't see Him frowning when small bodies squirm or young lips whisper in boredom. Yet haven't we all seen (or even experienced) that very situation in more than one junior room?

I can't imagine Jesus as a mere knowledge dispenser. He would not be content with teaching if no one was learning. He would understand, as modern educators are beginning to, that learning is facilitated by modeling, mentoring, and organizing experiences that help young students grow. Jesus' teaching would focus on facilitating learning.

In terms of actual detail, we really don't know much about how Jesus would teach a Sabbath School class or run a Vacation Bible School. But as we look at the New Testament, several principles underlie the general way in which Jesus taught.

Start with the learner's context

Jesus started from the learner's context. He used objects and story subjects that were

familiar to His hearers: boats, fish, sheep, water, wine, bread, fig trees, seeds. He started where they were. He knew that effective teaching builds on what the learner already knows.

So, if Jesus were a Sabbath School teacher or Pathfinder leader today, He would get to know His learners. He would take time to connect. The learning would be tied to the objects and activities that the children face daily. The emphasis would be on the learner, not the teacher.

Emphasize discovery

Jesus allowed His learners to *discover* truth. For example, there was the time Jesus called for Peter to walk on water so he could learn about faith. Peter discovered truth through his own experience. Jesus could have simply lectured Peter about faith, but He wanted Peter to *discover*. After Jesus pulled Peter from the water, He asked him, "Why did you doubt?" He could have *told* Peter all about the nature of doubt and about his doubts particularly, but instead He asked Peter about his doubt so that Peter could think it through and discover the answers for himself.

The children in our churches can discover and learn truth for themselves in the same way. For this to happen, however, they must be involved, and not just sitting silently while they are taught. When we allow children to discover truth, we are focusing on learning rather than on teaching.

Use "teachable moments"

Jesus took advantage of the "teachable moments" that came along. These are brief, unplanned intervals when learners are ripe for learning. A teachable moment in Jesus' ministry happened, for example, when the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) was brought to Him. Jesus taught the lesson of spiritual pride to her accusers and of forgiveness to the woman. Then there was the storm on the lake (Luke 8:22-25), which Jesus used to teach trust, or the encounter with the man with the withered hand in the synagogue (Matt. 12:9-13), which Jesus used to teach the true meaning of Sabbath keeping. Jesus knew when His learners were ripe for learning. He didn't hesitate to capitalize on something that happened as He was teaching. When He observed people engaged in captivating activity, He knew they were ready to learn.

We will find teachable moments all around

us where we can draw our students' attention to an important truth. A teacher who focuses on what students are learning, rather than on what he or she has planned to teach, is open to such moments. However, it takes a strong connection with the Holy Spirit to recognize and use these moments for good.

Encourage practice as part of learning

Jesus had a way of providing His "students" with opportunities to practice what He was teaching them. After His discussion with the rich, young ruler, Jesus challenged him to sell all his possessions (Mark 10:17-21) and put into practice the essence of the commandments this man was asking about. After teaching His disciples about their human capability for betrayal, He gave Peter, Judas, and the others time to practice their loyalty (Matt. 26:31-49). Their failures during practice seared the lesson into their memories. Few lessons stick without being actively put to the test or simply being acted upon.

We can hear a lecture on bicycle riding, but if we don't get on a bike and actually practice, we'll never learn to ride. We can expound on the word *servant* or *service* in our classes, but if we don't practice serving, we'll never become authentic disciples of Jesus.

When we don't give our children tangible opportunities to practice sharing and serving and loving, we can't expect them to learn how to be active disciples. Teaching our children Christianity in church is *not* supposed to be like teaching them history in school. Teaching Christianity has to be more like teaching biking or swimming. It has to focus on the learner's ability to do, not just to know.

Make learning an adventure

Jesus turned learning into an adventure. A teacher who doesn't focus primarily on teaching, but on learning, is ready to deal with the unpredictable. Passive learning is usually predictable. Active learning is an

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adventure because the teacher trusts the students to help create the learning experience; often the teacher learns as much as the students.

The goal is not simply to use teaching methods that are entertaining, as opposed to boring. The entertaining aspect is simply the means of achieving the learning goal. If the teacher's goal is to help people know God, they'll be open to methods that achieve that goal, including ones that work because they're entertaining.

As an example of this, one junior described an indelible memory: "The lesson," he said, "was that Jesus is the Light. So we went into a dark room and shut off the lights. We had a candle and lighted it, and we learned that Jesus is the Light and the darkness can't shut off the light."

A seven-year-old, playing one of the disciples hiding in the upper room, was caught up in the spirit of the lesson. Instead of running to hide with the rest of the students when a big, adult "Roman soldier" entered the room to threaten the "disciples," she boldly faced him, told him how bad he was, and that Jesus was her best Friend and would always protect her. That's active learning. That's

learning at a deeper level than a lecture or worksheet can provide.

Involve everyone

Jesus' teaching method involved everyone. There were few passive spectators. If Jesus taught Sabbath School, it would not be like a football game with a few playing the game while the rest sat watching from the sidelines. Focusing on learning takes the spotlight off the teacher, or the outgoing student, and places it where everyone can be in the light, or at least has a turn in the light.

If Jesus taught the class, the activities and experiences would be focused by the teacher through careful questioning. There is no need for teachers to fear activity, fun, participation, and even teachable moments when they are prepared to gather the students and help them reflect on, interpret, and apply the truths learned from their experiences. This kind of teaching is not limited to the cognitive. It digs into feelings, responses, emotions. It takes truth from the head to the heart. It affects the learners where they live. It helps them make meaning out of their experiences, and learn to apply it

back into their everyday lives.

What the students learn is not always what the teacher had planned to teach. That may seem risky to some teachers. But it opens the door for the Holy Spirit to guide in the curriculum. Haven't we known preachers to say that God impressed them to preach on something different from what they had planned, something the audience needed to hear? The same goes for teachers. The Holy Spirit is just as ready to guide the learning as He is the listening.

During a foot-washing experience with teenagers, failure loomed when one belligerent boy, Jimmy, refused to remove his shoes! At that point, the teacher quietly wished he had merely given a talk on servanthood instead of risking failure with an active experience. Fortunately, the teacher sensed a teachable moment and asked the group, "How do you feel about what is happening in our class right now?"

After a brief silence, one student asked Jimmy why he wouldn't remove his shoes. The boy replied that his feet were ugly and he didn't want anyone to see them. What followed allowed Jimmy to experience God's unconditional love. Up until then Jimmy had felt like a misfit in the group. Now one by one the students expressed their acceptance and love for Jimmy. After that "failed" lesson, Jimmy was never the same. Instead of being on the fringe, he got involved. Today Jimmy is a minister.

We can't, of course, *really* have Jesus take over the children's ministry in our church. What then can we do? Rather than just returning to use the same way we have always taught the children, we can, in fact, follow His example of focusing on others by setting aside our lesson plans and getting to know our children. We can make sure the learning experiences we facilitate meet them where they are and take them experientially to the Master, who sets them on His knee, blesses their lunches, and asks those who are standing there, "What have you done for the least of these?" ■

Sharpening our ministry to children

René Alexenko
Evans



René Alexenko Evans
is a freelance writer
from Franklin,
Tennessee.

With a worldwide advertising budget of two billion, the golden arches of McDonald's are now second only to the Olympic rings as the most recognized symbol in the world.¹ Now think about this. Forty percent of McDonald's profits come from Happy Meals sales, targeted at kids under the age of eight.² How has this company managed to make 40 percent of its money off a market segment with no income and no spending power?

Talk to the adults who are sitting at the tables while their kids are jumping in the ball pit or climbing on the jungle gym. They'll tell you they aren't there for what passes as food, but their kids have talked them into coming anyway. No wonder McDonald's is now the world's largest toy distributor.³

From a marketing perspective, McDonald's has hit the nail on the head. By marketing to kids, you get their parents. That's a huge lesson for churches. While McDonald's is not our model, it is stimulating to ask if our churches are as family-friendly as McDonald's is. Here are three areas to consider in answering this question.

Physical needs

Children are obviously smaller than adults, but all too often churches overlook that simple fact, even when it comes to the rooms where children's programs are held. We must

make sure the things kids use are sized appropriately. It's easy to assume that nine- or ten-year-olds are big enough to use adult chairs. Are the chairs in your church the right size so that when children sit, their feet are flat on the floor? Can children reach the drinking fountains? The toilets?

During church most children have a fabulous view of only the backs of the heads in front of them. No wonder they get squirmy and turn around so much. There are faces behind them to look at! Providing booster seats for small children can help their attention span, simply because they can see what's going on up front.

Most children's tummies have been programmed for lunch at about the time you stand up to preach. Don't forget that hungry children are cranky children. Do children receive a snack in their class before coming to church? If not, are you and the rest of the congregation favorably disposed to parents who allow children a tidy snack during the service?

Child development specialists declare that it is unrealistic to expect a toddler to sit still for an hour or more. In fact, church is the only time during the week when we expect that of small children. If you don't have a nursery, parents of toddlers will spend the entire worship service trying to keep their kids quiet, which will rob them of the blessings of worship. In turn, they may decide church is too much work and either skip it or go somewhere where nursery service is provided.

The interest factor

Are children's classes active and interesting? Or are adults simply lecturing at the children who have tuned out? Do classes take into account the different ways in which children learn, so each child receives information in a way they understand? Do programs make emotional connections for the kids? Do teachers help students make the application from the Bible story to their own lives? Children will drag their parents to church and try to get them there on time if they're excited about what's going on in their class.

The worship service can be a bigger challenge when trying to appeal to kids, but it's certainly not an impossible task. Think about the songs kids love. They're active, joyful, fun. Does your worship service include that kind of music? Do children ever participate as Scripture readers, musicians, actors, or in fea-

How family friendly is your church?

Take the following quiz:

Yes
No
Don't Know

Children's rooms are clean and colorful, with appropriately sized furniture			
Child-sized drinking fountains/steps; child-sized toilets in the restrooms			
Children receive appropriate snack before worship service begins			
Booster seats provided for use during church			
Space dedicated exclusively to parents of infants (nursing room, etc.)			
Space is well-equipped (changing table, wipes, extra diapers, tissues, enough rocking chairs for families with babies)			
Nursery service provided for children ages four and under			
High chairs in fellowship hall and sippy cups in kitchen			
Families with small children encouraged to go first at fellowship dinners			
Children's divisions have necessary equipment; equipment works well			
Children's programs are interesting, active, and consistently engaging			
Pastor is familiar with curricula being used in children's programs			
Volunteers in children's programs have spiritual gifts appropriate to their positions			
Church has a children's ministry leader			
Pastor regularly meets with children's ministry leader and knows her/his vision and needs			
Children's ministry is adequately funded from church budget			
Training and support provided for children's ministry leaders/teachers			
Volunteer screening program in place			
System for releasing children to their parents after programs			
Child-friendly sermons, including visuals/illustrations kids will understand			
Families included in worship service (special music, scripture reading, drama, etc.)			
Pastor actively looks for ways to include families in worship service			
Provide children's bulletins/quiet crafts/quiet bags during church			
Lending library of parenting books and videos/DVDs			
Seminars on parenting and other family topics			
Sponsor family picnics, socials, Mother's Day Out, etc.			
Child care provided during parenting seminars, church business meetings, and other non-child-friendly activities			
Families feel affirmed and supported by the church			

Look at any "No" or "Don't know" answers and see where you can improve. Now you have a good sense of where to begin making changes and what direction to take in improving the children's ministries in your congregation.

tured ministries? Do you make a point of including families in the worship service?

Examine your sermons. Do you use illustrations children will understand? Most kids have an uncanny ability to sense the start of a good story. When they hear it begin, they'll sit up for it. We mustn't overlook the importance of charts, maps, pictures, film clips, or other visual enhancers. Children—and adults, for that matter—will stay with you longer if there's something for them to look at as well as listen to.

Give children an incentive to listen to the sermon. When I was a kid our pastor gave us a word to listen for every week. It was printed in the bulletin, and he announced it at the start of the sermon. We counted how many times he said it during the sermon and after church gave the number to him or his wife, who was the official counter. There was a small gift or treat for any child who got the correct number (and usually for those who were anywhere near to being close). That also put the pastor and his wife in touch with the kids, because each week we hunted them down after the worship service. They both knew our names and used them when they greeted us.

The truth is that children's attention may still wander. So provide children's bulletins, Bible-centered crafts, and quiet bags for children of lower elementary school age.

Finally, analyze the elements of the worship service. How much time are you spending on announcements, the offering, etc.? Even under the best of circumstances, children have only so many minutes to give you before they start to fall apart. Don't squander them on preliminaries.

The battery and the lighthouse

For years we have tended to think of the church as a lighthouse, with families being the batteries that power it. It's time for a paradigm shift. Family friendly churches view the

families in their congregation as the lighthouses in their communities, and the church the battery that powers the homes.

Do church members look to the church for parenting support? Family-friendly churches equip parents by offering parenting seminars and family life speakers. They provide lending libraries of books, videos, and audio tapes on parenting topics. Their pastors work parenting tips into their sermons. They organize family socials and other opportunities for families to connect with one another. They sponsor Mother's Day/Night Out programs. They host support groups. They exist to meet the needs of the family.

Family friendly churches are that way by intent. Creating a church that truly meets the needs of its families takes careful planning, lots of work, and above all, a family-centered mind-set. The rewards are worth it. ■

1 animalaid.org.uk

2 funtrivia.com

3 *Noise Magazine*, Fall 1999, as quoted by funtrivia.com

Letters *continued from page 3*

lectured on preaching to my fellow students and me at Cambridge, spoke of driving his mind through a sermon in its preparation, discarding anything that was irrelevant, especially pet stories or jokes, so that, as Dr. Mueller puts it, the one theme could show through. Another able senior colleague suggested that it was good to have everything prepared and ready by Friday (this would mean Thursday for those who preach on Saturday!), as often some divine alchemy took place in the 36 hours before Sunday morning, which could make the message sharper and clearer in the preacher's mind.

Thank you, Dr. Mueller.

—Rev. Charles Banks, Eaton, Norwich, Great Britain.

Overcoming panic anxiety

The article "Overcoming Panic Anxiety" (Archibald D. Hart, March 2002) contained some extremely helpful insights. I have experienced panic attacks for the last three years. . . . It was helpful to have the article confirm the fact that these attacks are "biologically based" and in my case, not specifically "worry anxiety." The article about panic attacks was right on!

—Name withheld

Container or content?

I am a United Methodist pastor, and because my predecessor received your magazine, it still comes to the church. I sat down to read through a stack of mail and found the cover intriguing: "What Matters More: Container or Content?" (May 2002). I have never written a letter to the editor before, but this article deserves a response. So here are a few observations.

It is very typical of moderns (versus postmoderns) to feel the need to choose between one thing and the other: container versus content. While the title indicates that both are important, the article does not bear that out. The author of the article rightly points out that what is said is more important than who says it or how it is said. However, he fails to discuss the reality that how things are presented or who presents them significantly influences how the content is heard. Jesus carefully chose the "container" of His messages to convey the content. He spoke in parables (container) so that people would understand the eternal truths (content).

The author leads us to believe that these two factors can be separated without significant changes. In fact, the Bible indicates that God carefully selects the right container for the content. When Jonah first refused the assignment, did God go to the next in line? No, Jonah was the right container for the job.

I understand that Dr. Roberts is responding to a culture where advertising has taught us that the right packaging will sell anything, but he overstates the reality, and the editors

reinforced it with the headings (content, not packaging; deepening versus broadening). Do we really want to deepen our ministry and not broaden it? Do we really want an end result where we only nourish a deepening group of Christians without bringing any others in? This does not sound like Jesus, Paul, or any other biblical writer. The Bible carefully records how many people came to know Christ in Acts, and tells us that the numbers were being added to daily. That is broadening. Was there deepening—Yes! It's not "either/or," it's "both/and." I understand that the article is intended to stress one over the other but it developed into something more than that.

Until the church begins to realize that form and content are both important, we will continue to be reactionaries who respond to a secular culture with fear and misdirection.

—Andrew J. Cooney, pastor, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.

I want to share my delight in only a partially read May 2002 issue of *Ministry* (I do plan to read it all in time). First, I was much pleased with Teena Stewart's piece on criticism. Having been a pastor for approaching two decades, I felt I walked a similar path of experience as Teena in how I have come to cope with other's negatives about my leadership or ministry. Very helpful.

Secondly, Ian Hartley's article on the difference between dialogue and debate was equally appealing. One of my beloved teachers in college, whom I still solicit counsel from now and then, gave me some time-tested and true advice about the same topic. In my early ministry, my priority upon the preservation of truth was high, and relationships, sadly, were low. Truth trumped people. But my dear teacher said something that moved me from a debator to one who seeks dialogue. He said, "Kevin, always remember that people are more important than points." It struck me hard in realizing that we can win points but lose people. A horrible cost! ■

—Kevin James, Ogden, Utah.

Does Jesus still love the children?

Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world." You know the tune you learned as a child. Today's blight of clergy child molestation might force us to reword the tune: "Jesus used to love the children; Now He doesn't anymore!"

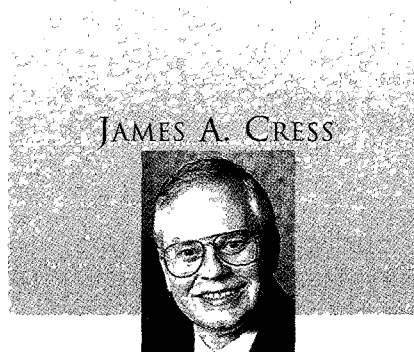
Imagine the horror when a minister violates a child; the terrible incongruity of spiritual leaders who represent Jesus taking advantage of their powerful position to molest those least able to defend themselves. Ministers who abuse children who should depend on the church and its leadership for protection, shatter a youngster's view of God even as they destroy their victim's emotional future.

While all sin is abhorrent in God's sight, some sins are more heinous than others. Even Jesus, who extended mercy to adulterers, suggested immediate capital punishment for those who violate children. "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

Note, Jesus taught zero tolerance—execution by drowning. The God of "second chances" excluded giving abusers future access to victims. The same Savior who challenged only those without sin to cast the first stone, advocated millstones for child abusers.

Some advocate mercy for those who violate children and, of course, forgiveness is available to any sinner. Scripture, however, advocates mercy for their victims and protection for those who would become their victims if they were loosed to prey again upon the innocent.

Media reports are saturated with reports of tragic clergy scandals that cross denominational lines. Although it is unlikely that public execution of molesters will become the pattern, churches must not pretend these sins



don't happen or attempt to hide reality from public knowledge.

L. Gregory Jones, dean of Duke University Divinity School, says, "Betrayals of trust, especially in the midst of power differentials and by people in whom sacred authority has been vested, are especially grievous sins that call for clear accountability and expectations of true repentance."

Beyond decrying these horrid misdeeds, pastors must proactively protect children and youth from predators. Some simple guidelines:

Value your church's children. Recruit the best possible leaders for children's ministries, budget for quality resources, and monitor behavior to insure the safety of every participant.

Establish performance standards. No program should be sponsored which permits supervision by a lone adult, whether clergy or laity. Children should be transported to and from church events only by their own parents or by a team of two adults—minimum. Clearly announce time schedules for activities and demand close adherence.

Monitor compliance. Elect leaders for Children's Ministries as church elders and request frequent reports to the board. Both policies and personnel should be reviewed to assure the best standards and protection possible.

Avoid even the appearance of evil.

Consider installing windows in all church offices, declining to meet alone with parishioners, insisting that private conversations occur in public settings, rejecting any person suspected of abuse as a children's leader, establishing pastoral/elder presence at every church-sponsored event.

Do not hide the truth. If abuse occurs, do not disguise reality in the misguided belief that you are protecting the church. Even clergy confidentiality is not sufficient reason to avoid appropriate disclosure and discipline. It is nonsense to feel that because a parishioner has confided their misbehavior to a minister they should be protected. Their helpless victims must be protected and the perpetrators ("perps") must be dealt with by legal authorities. When accusations of sexual misconduct against children are made, do not assume or defend the innocence of the alleged perp. Permit the legal system to pursue investigating all issues.

Notify civil authorities immediately. Learn the legal requirements about reporting abuse and never fail to follow the law. In most jurisdictions, it is mandatory for a clergy person who becomes aware of abuse to report to the appropriate authorities. "When criminal wrongdoing is apparent or even suspected, the appropriate civil authorities need to be notified and engaged. Further, we ought to ensure that victims (or potential victims) of misconduct are protected and supported. This will involve removing offenders from positions of public authority and sacred trust. Our first concern needs to be to care for those who have been sinned against, even as we honor the possibility that persons may be wrongly accused."²

Screen all volunteers. Never feel compelled to place anyone in a position of authority or give them access to chil-

dren just because they volunteer. Avoid placing newcomers into positions of responsibility until you have observed them over sustained time.

Especially beware those who rush to children's ministry. Thank them for their interest; share how your organization values children and about your mission of leading youngsters to a personal relationship with Jesus; observe how they relate to authority and to their own family; check references carefully; provide all children's workers with written rules of conduct and expectations. Then, only after months of observation, invite them to participate by completing a volunteer screening form. Orient all volunteers to team service. Those unwilling to follow this approach should not be entrusted with your children.

Bobbie Drake, a specialist in abuse prevention and intervention to support victims, recommends specific action steps when allegations are made:

Believe the child or teen. Fewer than five percent of allegations are false, even when custody issues are at stake. Be supportive of the victim and family.

Report allegations promptly. For cases of incest, contact Child Protection Services (or its equivalent in your community). Report other abuse to the police. Resist the temptation to contact or negotiate with the alleged offender. Most molesters can manipulate even clergy or therapists. Civil authorities will follow legal procedures.

Provide appropriate support to the alleged offender. Say, "I will pray for you while you go through the judicial court system but the church cannot interfere with that process or serve as your defense reference."

Notify judicatory administrators. Congregations should always engage leadership in decisions that impact denominational entities or public media. I always advise pastors, "If in doubt, call your conference president!"

Notify insurance providers. Immediately notify your insurance provider of any complaint and follow their guidance in issues that affect liability and treatment.

Secure competent therapists for victims. Seek the best sexual offender therapist in the area. Avoid those with no specialized training in this discipline.

Remove accused perpetrators from leadership. Request accused individuals to step aside until all issues are resolved. If a false accusation has been made, specialists can determine by pertinent testing whether allegations are true. Children tell their stories differently than adults and, if questioned by an expert, the basic truth will be revealed.

Level with your congregation. Do not hide reality. You can announce, "I am sorry to tell you that there has been a sexual abuse allegation against Brother Perp. The church is taking appropriate steps by contacting the public and church authorities and we will report the conclusions only after this matter is settled. We ask that you pray for both Brother Perp and the victim's family. Both of these families are precious to us and to Christ."

Avoid ongoing analysis or making additional statements. Announce that you will not provide updates until the authorities conclude their investigation and then stick to your intention of silence. This approach will reduce speculation, gossip, polarization, and innuendo. Ask judicatory administrators to appoint a spokesperson and refer all media requests to that individual.

Educate yourself, your children, and your leaders. Excellent resources are available including a children-focused training book by Bobbie Drake, *Friends: Good, Bad, and Secret* (see ad on page 9) and a special eight-page resource, *Making Churches Safe*, (online at www.ministerialassociation.com) which was originally published in Australia by the *South Pacific Record*.

Exalt Jesus's example. Our Lord's own interest in children should show the priority of reaching, protecting, and developing the potential of our youngest believers. ■

1 Jones, L. Gregory, "Tough Love for Sexual Abusers," *Christian Century*, April 24-May 1, 2002, 40.

2 Ibid.

What every leader ought to know, but seldom asks



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NEW BOOKS



The Gallup Guide: Reality Check for 21st Century Churches

By George Gallup, Jr., and D. Michael Lindsay (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing, 2002).
Web: www.group-publishing.com. ISBN 0-7644-2397-5.

What do people in your church really believe? These 11 ready-to-use surveys give you all the tools you need to do reliable, professional surveys that reveal what your church really believes about God, the Bible, moral values, prayer, evangelism, mission, stewardship, church programming (including preaching), and much more!

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BOOK REVIEW

Bible Works For Windows 5.0

Allow me a bit of hyperbole: I have divided my life into two epochs: B-

BWW and A-BWW; that is, before Bible Works for Windows and after Bible Works for Windows.

I don't know who first turned me on to BWW but about seven years ago I bought the software, and life hasn't been the same since. It has revolutionized my study of the Bible. It was incredible not only how easy BWW is to use, but how much is available on this program. I have used it nonstop since I first got it, and will until death, Alzheimer's, or the Second Coming intercedes.

Now I have BWW 5.0, which leaves BWW 3.5 in the dust. I am amazed at what an incredible array of research options you have at the click of a mouse. It's hard for me to imagine life without BWW. Every new computer I ever get, or new operating system that I put in, the first thing that goes on is BWW. Only those who use it will know what I am talking about.

Anyway, let me just scratch the surface of BWW 5.0. Besides the basic tools of searching in all sorts of languages (everything from Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, English [numerous versions] to Vietnamese, Romanian, and even Albanian), BWW 5.0 has what's called the "Report Generator," which allows you to do the most incredible and detailed word analysis on any text or set of texts you could imagine. You just set the search parameters, and click on the boxes next to what you want it to do, and *Voilà!* More research at your fingertips in an instant than you could do in a month of conventional study.

Cross version search mode allows you to search different versions of the Bible for the same key word(s): The synoptic dialogue allows you to have all the synoptic gospels set out in parallel before you; there's a great editor window that allows you to write your sermons or take notes right in the program itself without having to toggle in

and out; there's an advanced search engine, an interlinear display, a parallel version display, *Strong's* number display, and on and on . . .

What's more, BWW has a great Web site (<http://www.bibleworks.com>) with all sorts of downloads, patches, and updates. Technical support has been great too.

What can I say? If you're looking for a Bible software program for serious Bible study, sermon preparation, or even for personal devotions, you've just read the right article.

BWW 5.0. Enter a new epoch.

—Clifford Goldstein, editor, *Adult Bible Study Guides*, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Note: Have you read a book recently that has influenced your ministry and thinking? Do you believe the book would interest other readers? Send us a brief review (150-200 words); if we publish it, we'll send you U.S.\$25.00.—Editors



The blessing tree

It's always the right time to give thanks, according to the book of Psalms. This idea is especially great for the Thanksgiving/Christmas holiday season but can be effective all year 'round.

The blessing tree is a real or artificial tree set up in the church foyer. Announcements are made so people of all ages know to start decorating it at their convenience with special circles of colored construction paper on which blessings and answers to prayer received during the past year are written and signed. They can be tied on with pieces of red ribbon. Let all ages participate. Many children have answers to prayer worth repeating to

increase the faith of an adult. Blessing trees could also be erected and decorated in each classroom or department of the church. The answers to prayer can be read at a special time out loud in a service near Thanksgiving or Christmas. They can even be read at a New Year's Eve service or social activity.
—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas.

Newsletters made easy

We all know what a job it is to put out a church newsletter. After the writing comes the copying, collating, folding, stuffing and addressing envelopes, stamping them, and taking them to the post office. You can reduce this to one step: writing. Here's how:

Write your newsletter on the com-

puter and save the file. Go to the post office Web site, <www.usps.com>. Then go to "Mailing." From there, click on "Promote with direct mail," then "Net Post." Follow instructions to set up an account and send your first newsletter.

You will be sending your newsletter and address list by Internet directly to Net Post. The post office will bill your credit card. They will produce and mail your newsletters in envelopes for a very low cost. Example: We send out 72 four-page newsletters for \$42.00—that's postage, printing, paper, envelopes, everything! The newsletter is usually mailed out the second day after you send it to them.

You can send one-page or multiple-page letters, even booklets. You can

send to one address or to as many addresses as you want. Considering the cost of postage and the time saved, this is a really good deal!

—Gary L. Gray, Caseyville, Illinois.

\$25 for your ideas!

Send us your suggestions about how pastors can make daily ministry more effective. If we publish it, we will pay you U.S.\$25.00. If your idea promotes a product or service, we'll be glad to consider it but won't pay \$25.00.

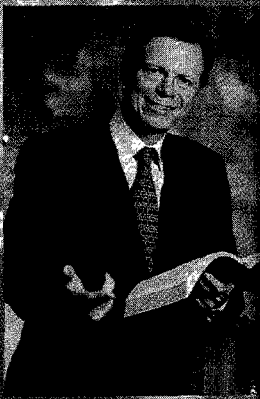
Mail ideas to *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. All authors must include their mailing address, and U.S. citizens must include their Social Security number if they wish to receive payment. ■

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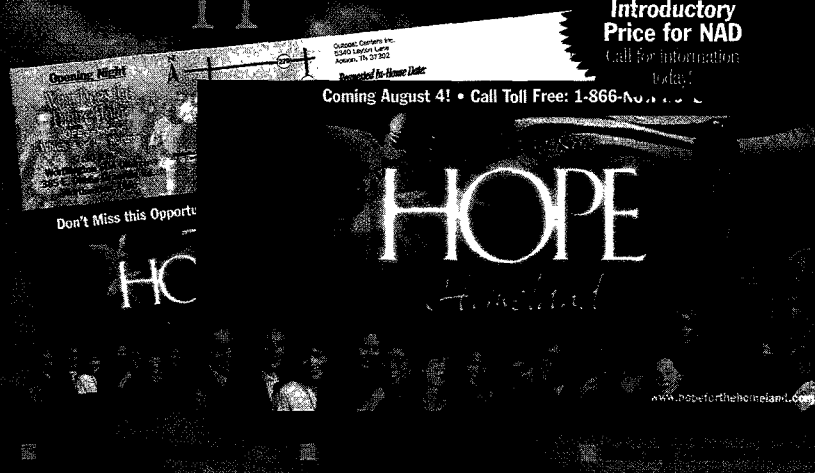
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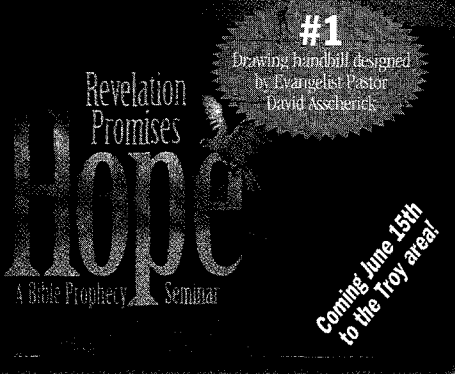
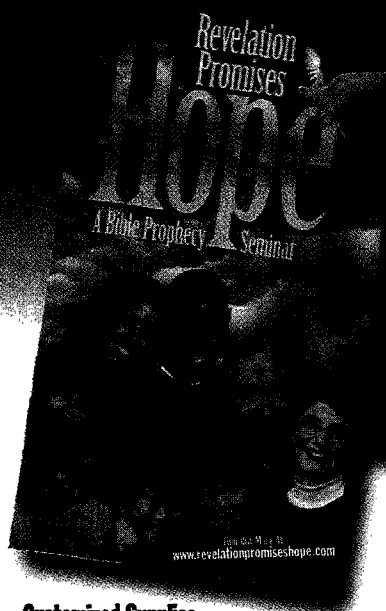
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