

MINISTRY

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REQUIEM

&
RESURRECTION

FOR A FALLEN BROTHER

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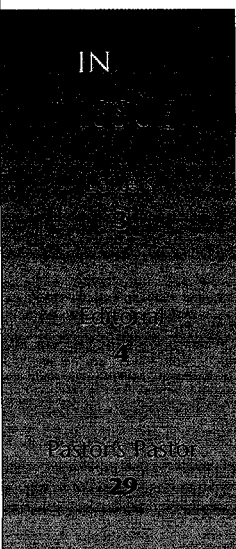
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The January 2004 "Letters" column of *Ministry* had a letter from Roger Kovaciny regarding the well-known psalm from Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child . . ."

Herewith are a few sentences from Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.'s book, *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1988), page 179ff:

"Therefore, we conclude that this enigmatic phrase means that instruction ought to be conformed to the nature of the youth. . . . As with many other moral proverbs of this sort, the question often comes from many a distraught parent: 'Does this proverb have any exception to it, or will it always work out that if we train our children as this verse advises us, we can be sure they won't turn from the Lord?'

"No, this verse is no more an iron-clad guarantee than is any other proverb. . . . The statement is called a proverb, not a promise."

—F. A. Hertwig, Lincoln, Missouri.

I highly appreciate the excellence of the author that intensify courteously unequivocal approach in line of ministerial functions. The author, Miroslav Kis, who wrote this article in the cover story of the *Ministry*, "Sexual Misconduct in the Ministry" (January 2004).

As a gospel minister or any workers link in our church, this calling is sacred and knows with respect to undertake excitements sensational interest upon confidential nature of personal impulsive impugn. He should have that standard to overthrow besetments and should not go beyond the limit of being too inquisitive. The enemy corrode our spiritual understanding in some occasion. Human beings as we are, we go down deeply, because of the attractions which direct us to undergo such problems,

thus, we damn our honor and sanctity.

Therefore, as far as life is concerned, as ambassadors for Christ, we must have that capacity to preserve our individuality that shall not be destroyed. The Lord turns the natural aptitudes and capabilities into profitable channels. In the improvement of the faculties God has given, talent and ability are developed if the human agent will recognize the fact that all his powers are an endowment from God, to be used not for evil or ugly purposes . . . but for the glory of God and the good of our fellowmen" (Letter 20, 1894, HC90).

We are happy in the coming future even, only among the least in the million saints, marching toward the inlet gold and to be with our beloved Savior face to face. We have conquered the worst battle of our self, because of our excellent precept to follow our Lord.

—Estrella Anacleto Jordan, Prilly, Switzerland.

I am responding to Clifford Goldstein's article in the January 2004 issue. Several points he makes are puzzling to me. I will deal with only one of them.

My question involves Goldstein's observation: "Thus, the message of the sanctuary is this: Christ and His righteousness, symbolized by the ceremonial blood shed on the Day of Atonement and in other sacrificial settings, is what gets us through the judgment. Without it, all of us would be lost, for none of us, no matter our works, have the quality of righteousness needed to stand before a holy God."

My first ten years were spent as a singing evangelist. I listened to some of our most outstanding evangelists present the Gospel, and not one of them made the observation Goldstein makes.

My understanding is that "all of our righteousness are as filthy rags . . ." (Isa. 64:6). Only as we are clothed with the

robe of Christ's righteousness can we stand before the Father. It is in accepting His righteousness, made possible by His death on Calvary, that gets us through the judgment."

Are the hundreds of people I taught—"He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12); "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18); "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); and the many texts that make Jesus central to our salvation based on His death on Calvary—lost because they did not understand the intricacies of the sanctuary ritual?

When Jesus said, as He breathed His last, "It is finished" (John 19:30), sanctuary (none) sacredness was demonstrated by the tearing of the veil between the Holy and Most Holy Place (Matt. 27:51). The sanctuary and its services were replaced by One "greater than the temple" (Matt. 12:6). Rather than looking back to the sanctuary and its services, it seems to me the gospel teaches us to look forward. It also seems of some significance that none of the disciples, in writing to the Christian believers, mention anything about a mid-nineteenth-century event that would relate to man's salvation.

Have I and some of our eminent evangelists failed to prepare our converts for heaven?

—Gery P. Friesen, Loma Linda, California.

Clifford Goldstein responds: Gery Friesen is correct; it's only the Cross, and not our understanding of the "intricacies of the sanctuary ritual," that saves us, both now and in the judgment. I don't see any contradiction, or problem, between knowing what happens in judgment and what happened at the Cross. Both are parts of a whole. ■

Free Subscription

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.

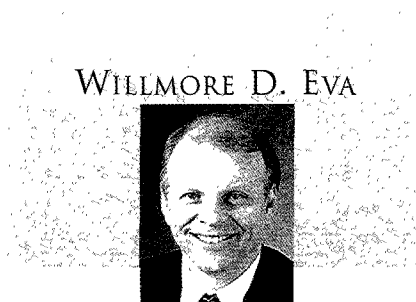
More on clergy sexuality

What's been happening during the last few years that Christian ministers have become as involved as we have in sexual wrongdoing? Is it just that a less deferential culture has emerged leading to an unprecedented exposure of behaviors that have been going on among us all along? Or has there in fact been a rise in our involvement in such things?

Even as I ask these questions, I'm aware that I can't answer them with ultimate adequacy. But along with many, my sense of disquiet is not one that merely manifests itself in a condemnation of those of my colleagues who have "fallen." My disquiet also brings me up sharply as I see myself standing vulnerable before my God, with the realization of how susceptible we all are to the pervasive, persuasive patterns of the contemporary attitudes, thoughts, fantasies, and behaviors, which confront us and tend to shape us more than we might realize.

Then of course, there are those immensely significant factors associated with the sexual sins of clergy: We see these most clearly when clergy dallying becomes public, causing incalculable damage to the hearts, homes, and marriages of those involved; and when festering congregational bewilderment and disillusionment become familiar cross currents in their wake, and when the credibility of Christian ministry in general is wearing so thin, not to mention the upheaval that ravages the souls of our own spouses, marriages, and families, and when a species of sterility takes over the previously secure trajectory of our lives and vocations.

We must also confess that we sel-



dom dare to actually count what our illicit, undisclosed sexual behavior costs us and others when it comes to our marriages, our self-respect, our sense of personal integrity and ministerial veracity. It's also hard for us to assess how secret and so far unexposed illegitimate sexual patterns impair our spiritual and emotional being, and how they blight our own sense of pastoral authenticity—which is so foundational to our function as ministers—not to mention how they affect our credibility and effectiveness as preachers as we stand up to handle the holy things of God.

Thus there is a particular aspect of clergy sexual transgression that haunts us, I think. It has to do with our grasp of the stark contradiction between sexual sin and the holiness of our call to be prophets and priests of the Most High God.

When we muster the courage necessary to actually face this reality we are confronted by the magnificence of our calling as it stands in stark contrast against the dark, shifting value systems of our time, sexual or otherwise. In the light of such disparity, we simply have to face the question of whether we have in fact been caught taking a rather long

and fatal spiritual nap while a corrupt mind-set has evolved and established itself amongst us; a mind-set that impairs our deepest convictions about who we actually are as ministers of God.

We must ask ourselves if we still actually believe that our calling is indeed all that high and all that holy.

Throughout my ministry, I have been a serious advocate of ministers being more approachable, more human, and more themselves, while they strive to be less stiff, stentorian, authoritarian, and formal; that they curb their ultimately egotistical attempts to live up to some sort of contrived ministerial image. This quest is certainly not wrong in itself, but I am now sensing a rising, pressing need for us to be much more prayerful and careful about the way we go about establishing the realities behind the ministerial image we seek to adopt and project. I know I'm not alone when it comes to these concerns.

The third article in our 2004, six-part series by Miroslav Kis dealing with pastors and sexual sin is in this issue (see page 14). It confronts us with a most potent challenge when it comes to the things we are discussing here.

Finally there's the terribly important question of how we deal with one another as clergy when one of us does "fall." I am glad indeed to be able to present in this issue, our cover article by Dwight Nelson, who deals so insightfully with this critical question.

Both these articles demand a deeply honest reading. The fact is, these articles transcend the sexual questions that they deal with frontally. They address questions that are jugular to what it means to be a Christian minister in the here and now. ■

Requiem and resurrection for a fallen brother

Dwight K. Nelson

Adapted from a recent sermon preached by Pastor Nelson.

Could there be anything in this life more glorious than a resurrection from the dead? The Reuters news agency carried the story, dateline: Managua, Nicaragua. Cesar Aguilera, 58 years old, was missing from his home in Tipitapa, east of the capital Managua. In fact, he had been missing for days. His wife and family were frantic. The authorities had no answers.

After a week with no sign of him, in desperation the family visited the Managua morgue. There amongst the cadavers they found the body—he'd been run over by a car.

With sorrow they arranged for it to be brought back to Tipitapa for burial. At the funeral the grieving family gathered beside the sobbing wife. The service began. Then without warning the door opened, and in walked Cesar! You can understand—the place went berserk! And a child in the corner kept screaming, "Are you from this life or the other?" It was as if a resurrection had taken place!

Interviewed by a local television station the next day, Cesar Aguilera said he had simply been away for a week to care for some rural property, and had forgotten to tell his wife—who was about to bury the wrong body (and perhaps was then tempted to bury Cesar himself!).

Can you imagine the moment? You're gathered to bury him—and then he walks in! Just like a resurrection. Just like that Sunday night when the dead and buried Jesus walked through the doors of His own upper-room funeral. Who could forget it!

And yet what we have too readily forgotten and too quickly overlooked is that John's account is really the story of two resurrections—and it's the *second* resurrection our now third millennial church is still waiting for, isn't it?

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" (John 20:19, NIV).*

Who knows how many bars and padlocks the panicked disciples had slapped onto that upper-room door. Obviously they hadn't convened themselves for a Sunday evening worship service—the record is too embarrassingly clear, the doors were locked "for fear of the Jews."

The 11 survivors of the slain preacher's rag-tag band were utterly convinced that the same authorities who had brutally executed their Master on Friday were now on their trail with bloodhounds. Hence the locked doors. But of course the sublime truth of the Resurrection is that all the master locks in the world can't lock the Master out!

And so Jesus stands in their petrified midst with a smile and a "Shalom." And the place goes berserk. Fear. Shock. And perhaps a kid in the corner screaming, "Are you from this life or the other?"

We aren't told how long it took for them to grasp the living and glorious Reality who stood before their gaping mouths. But what does become clear is that with His "Shalom" Jesus births the resurrection community that our own community of faith desperately needs to become:

"After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace [Shalom] be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'" (John 20:20-23).

Note it carefully: *This is the portrait of a resurrection community. A community that*



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resurrects and restores. A community that restores and forgives. Jesus says it of them: "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

We seem afraid to accept Jesus' word about us as a Christian community—Christ's inauguration of a new resurrection community. Certainly we don't like the idea of a formalized, humanly decided system of forgiveness. But in our fear of creating such a thing, and thus in our apologetic

will deny me three times.' He went out and cried and cried and cried" (Luke 22:60-62, *The Message*).

A thousand deaths in one ministerial fall. Requiem for a fallen brother.

Fallen in our midst

I have looked upon brothers (and sisters) who have fallen in our community and in our community of faith. The shame. The stigma. The sorrow, especially when it has become public.

there any rest for the fallen in our midst? "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). How easy it is to dismiss him. But how hard it is to forgive.

Requiem for a fallen brother. And then there's the resurrection of Simon Peter.

One more resurrection

Because there is one more resurrection left in the Gospels, it is imperative that we move from the barred and shuttered upper room to the breathe-free, wind-swept shores of Galilee at night.

It's evening actually, when the story continues: "Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you'" (John 21:2, 3).

Remember that Simon Peter had fallen in as public a way as is humanly possible. He ground the name of Jesus like a cigarette butt beneath his cussing heel in front of the whole world that night.

Why, even Jesus heard his explosion of expletives! "I—do—not—know—that—blankety-blank-blank man!" You can't fall any lower than publicly repudiating your Savior by your words, your life, your very lifestyle.

How long would a brother like Peter last in a community like ours? It is a shining testimony to the love of his brothers that Simon Peter did not have to go fishing all alone that night. "We will go with you," they said.

Would that we would do the same.

"So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing" (John 21:3). The moon is in its final quarter. It is a picture-perfect silvery night out on the waters of Galilee. Beautiful, but depressing. For Peter is not only morally fallen, he is now professionally failing—fishing when he should be preaching.

As it so often happens, fast on the heels of a moral fall comes the professional failure. A double curse, a double

BUT IS THERE ANY REST FOR THE FALLEN IN OUR MIDST? "AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

HOW EASY IT IS TO DISMISS HIM. BUT HOW HARD IT IS TO FORGIVE.

defensiveness, have we missed the high calling to us in these very words—the calling of the Gospels' second resurrection?

For on that same dark weekend, there had been another death. Someone died . . . a thousand deaths, really. And if that fallen brother is not resurrected, there will never be a resurrection community. At all.

Remember the burly big fisherman—who had been personally called by Jesus to fish for people—the one who at his ordination swore his loyalty to Christ until death—the one who became a leader appointed to the inner ministerial circle—remember him—the one who even when the chips were down at least trailed in the shadows behind his arrested Master—the same one who much later in that same midnight hour turned the chilled night air blue with his obscenities of denial—remember Peter the pastor?

"At that very moment, the last word hardly off his lips, a rooster crowed. Just then, the Master turned and looked at Peter. Peter remembered what the Master had said to him: 'Before the rooster crows, you

I wrote a letter once to a brother who in humiliation fled our community practically under the cover of darkness. It was his birthday. It is my practice to send a personal birthday letter to every one of my parishioners. But I am ashamed to admit that on that day when I came to his letter, I hesitated.

What personal note should I inscribe on the bottom of his birthday letter to a now out-of-town address? Wouldn't it be easier to simply not scribble anything at all—just a signature? Or maybe not even send the letter and let him think we'd simply forgotten? I'm embarrassed to confess my (un)pastoral conundrum.

Requiem for a fallen brother. *Requiem* is Latin for "rest." But is there any rest for a fallen brother or fallen sister in our community, our church?

What do we do with our fallen brothers? Strip them of their credentials? Burn their vestments, or at least revoke their ordination? Imprison them in their guilt by our collective or at least administrative silence, banishing their memory and their ministry forever from our midst?

Requiem for a fallen brother. But is

indemnity, a double jeopardy for the fallen brother. No fish . . . all night.

But the night is about to end. And upon the first faint breeze of the dawn comes the hint of another resurrection.

"Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish" (John 21:4-6).

In that instant young John recognized the Stranger on the shore and cried, "It's the Lord!"

And that was all the broken heart of his fallen brother needed to know. Grabbing his tunic, Peter plunged over the gunwales and splashed up the grey dawn shore to Jesus. Let the others bring in the catch, he must find the Savior. Such is the hunger of a fallen disciple's heart.

And after their early morning seashore breakfast with Jesus, the Gospel of John may as well have read, "When they had finished eating, it was time for a resurrection." For in front of all the rest, Jesus gazed through the campfire light, deep into the eyes and heart of their fallen brother.

"Three times, Peter, you swore to the world that you never even knew Me. And so three times I must ask you in front of these your brothers: Do you love Me? Do you *love* Me? Do you *really* love Me?"

And three times with the shame and weight of a thousand deaths upon his guilty heart, Peter, hardly able to look his Master in the eyes, in a humbled voice barely audible replied, "Yes . . . yes . . . yes."

And three more times, the crucified and risen Savior of the world spoke the words of pastoral reinstatement, "Feed My lambs and My sheep." Such is the work of a shepherd. And in the Greek of John "shepherd" is interchangeable with

"pastor." Which being interpreted means, the One who declared, "I am the good shepherd [or pastor]" (John 10:11) is the same One who less than 40 days after Peter's headlined moral failure and disgraceful public fall resurrected that fallen brother and reinstated him to his shepherding, pastoral ministry!

"Do you love me?" "Yes, you know I love you." "Feed my sheep." "Follow me" (John 21:15-19).

Requiem and resurrection for a fallen brother.

From fallen to risen

What does a *fallen* man have to go through, what does a *failed* woman have to do, in order to be resurrected and restored in a community like yours and mine? And how long do they remain fallen? By that I mean, how long does the adjective "fallen" remain attached to their memory? I'm not talking about God's record—I'm wondering about ours.

And while we're at it, let us also ask ourselves: These fallen ones—do they remain our brothers and our sisters in the meantime—during their fallenness? You say, Well, that just depends on whether they really repent of their moral failure or not. Does it? Does there ever come a time when I am no longer my brother's keeper?

But what are you suggesting? you may retort. That it really doesn't matter whether they repent of their sinful and public fall or not? Actually, I'm not suggesting that at all—in fact I'm not even thinking of *their* response right now. I'm wondering about *ours*. When does the adjective "fallen" get dropped from their memory—meaning, *our* memory of them?

In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's wonderful little book on Christian community, *Life Together*, he makes a disturbing observation on why we have such a hard time breaking through to community:

"He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their

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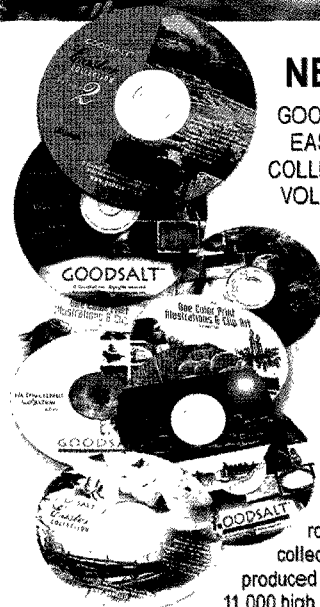
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fellowship in service, may still be left in their loneliness. The final breakthrough to fellowship [read community] does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the less devout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we *are* sinners!"¹

Could it be that the reason we're so hard on the fallen is because the fallen remind us of ourselves? And so we pretend piety in ourselves. And we demand piety in others. As Bonhoeffer wrote, "The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner."

But tragically, it is by that very pretending that we inadvertently choke off any possibility of genuine community. For how can I risk getting close to you in a small community or group? Because you might find out that I am a sinner. And knowing how hard I've been on sinners and how hard we are on the fallen, I cannot risk being vulnerable and transparent with you. You would reject me.

Thus we wear our masks of piety. And live the lie. And live alone. How did Bonhoeffer put it, "He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone." For there can be no community when we wear the masks of piety. And that is the tragic comedy. What we long for most, we prevent, when we pretend we are not what we really are—sinners, all of us, in need of divine grace.

You see, a "graceless community" is an oxymoron. For it is no community at all. A "pious fellowship" perhaps. But it is not community, genuine community. For *only grace can resurrect community*. No grace. No resurrection.

No community. For the truth about grace is that I will never *extend* it to you—fallen as you are—until I *experience* it in me—fallen as I am.

The great truth is that you can't have Easter *before* Good Friday. The Cross must come first. I can't *resurrect* you, until grace has *restored* me. "Peter, do you love Me?" "Oh Lord, You know that I love You." "Good—now go and love the fallen back to Me."

A "GRACELESS
COMMUNITY"
IS AN OXYMORON.
FOR IT IS NO
COMMUNITY AT ALL.

Once I grasp the truth that Calvary is God's pardon of every sinner who has ever lived and every sin that has ever been committed—once I comprehend the magnitude of God's grace for fallen me—there will not be a fallen brother and there is not a fallen sister I cannot love back to Him.

That is how grace works. With its doors thrown wide to all. And when grace works, community flourishes. For *only grace can resurrect community*.

Brennan Manning in his surprising book *The Ragamuffin Gospel* tells a story he wonders if we've heard:

"Four years ago in a large city in the far West, rumors spread that a certain Catholic woman was having visions of Jesus. The reports reached the archbishop. He decided to check her out. There is always a fine line between the authentic mystic and the lunatic fringe.

"Is it true, m'am, that you have visions of Jesus?" asked the cleric.

"Yes," the woman replied simply.

"Well, the next time you have a vision, I want you to ask Jesus to tell you the sins that I confessed in my last confession."

"The woman was stunned. 'Did I hear you right, bishop? You actually want me to ask Jesus to tell me the sins of your past?'

"Exactly. Please call me if anything happens."

"Ten days later the woman notified her spiritual leader of a recent apparition. 'Please come,' she said.

"Within the hour the archbishop arrived. He trusted eye-to-eye contact. 'You just told me on the telephone that you actually had a vision of Jesus. Did you do what I asked?'

"Yes, bishop, I asked Jesus to tell me the sins you confessed in your last confession."

"The bishop leaned forward with anticipation. His eyes narrowed.

"What did Jesus say?'

"She took his hand and gazed deep into his eyes. 'Bishop,' she said, 'these are his exact words: *"I can't remember."*'"²

Apocryphal? Perhaps. Truth? Indeed. For a century ago these words were written: "If you give yourself to [Jesus], and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous . . . and you are accepted before God *just as if you had not sinned*."³

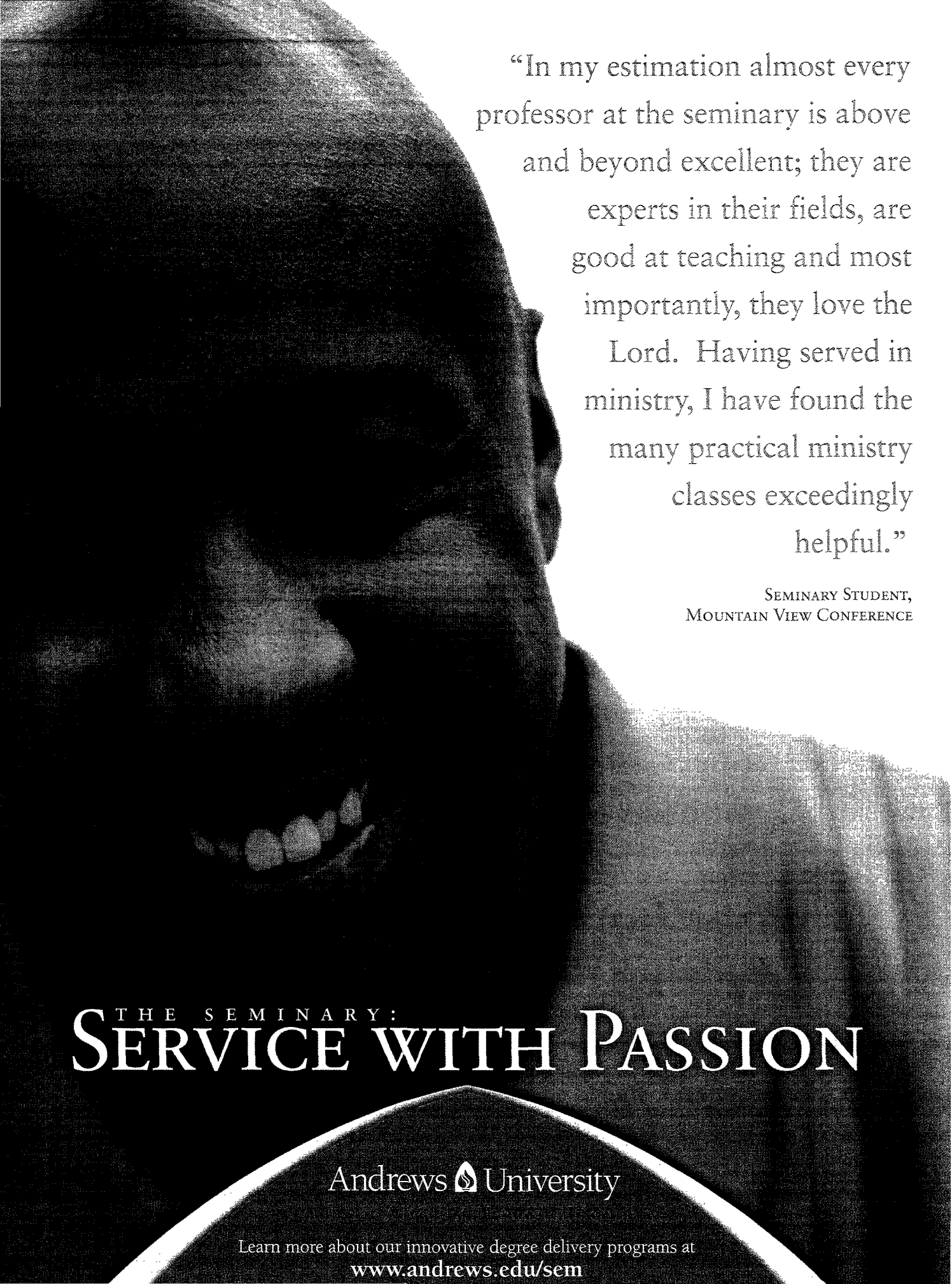
"I am he who remembers your sins no more" (Isa. 43:25).

"I can't remember."

The truth is, genuine community can only happen when men and women gather together in the name of the risen Christ whose forgiveness and grace declare, "I can't remember." It is when we say the same to each other that we resurrect our brother, we restore our sister and we revive our community. For *only grace can resurrect community*. ■

** Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New International Version.*

- 1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper, 1954), 110.
- 2 Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel* (Multnomah Books, 1990), 116, 117.
- 3 Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1892), 62, emphasis supplied.



“In my estimation almost every professor at the seminary is above and beyond excellent; they are experts in their fields, are good at teaching and most importantly, they love the Lord. Having served in ministry, I have found the many practical ministry classes exceedingly helpful.”

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Toward a theological basis for urban ministry

R. Clifford Jones



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September 11, 2001, almost irreversibly altered the course of American and world history. Terrorists hijacked four passenger aircrafts, crashing three of them into monuments of American economic and military might—the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Since that fateful day, hardly anything of political, economic or social significance in the United States takes place without reference to its events.

In the days immediately following, Christians and non-Christians alike gave more than passing thought to the utility and wisdom of living in the urban community. Not a few concluded that the time to abandon the city in favor of the country had finally arrived. These individuals claimed that the devastation of the twin towers provided unimpeachable evidence that living in the city was hazardous to one's physical and psychological well-being, and demonstrated that terrorists bent on maximum—if not complete—destruction could hardly find a more attractive target than the cities of the world.

The truth is that long before the tragic events of September 11, Christians had been ambivalent toward the city, viewing it with a mixture of enchantment and aversion. They were simultaneously drawn to it and repulsed by it. Not surprisingly, Seventh-day Adventists were caught in the throes of this ambivalence,

in part because of statements of Ellen G. White about the city.

Poll any ten Adventists on the subject and chances are that a disturbingly high percentage will assert that Ellen White stated that the city is inherently evil, that to live in the city is to imperil our lives and hazard our future in heaven, and that we should flee the cities.

Ellen G. White and the city

Did Ellen White admonish Seventh-day Adventists to flee the city?

Monte Sahlin carefully examined the 107 periodical articles on city work written by Ellen White. He found that of that number, 24 admonish establishing institutions and living outside city limits, while 75 encourage living within the city in order to win its people for Christ. The remaining eight analyze the negative conditions found in the city but stop short of saying whether or not Adventists should live there.¹

George Knight has amply demonstrated the need for Adventists to take another look at urban mission based on a rereading of Ellen G. White. Knight contends, after a balanced and thoughtful analysis of all that White wrote on the subject, that she spoke about the establishment of schools in both idealistic and practical terms, allowing that while the ideal was the country school, the fact that many city children were unable to commute to schools in the country made city schools a necessity. And while Mrs. White did promote an outpost model for city institutional work, she never condemned living and working in the city at the local church level. In fact, she commended those who, bucking the trend of the late nineteenth century, had moved into the city to evangelize it from within.²

Thus, based on a representative survey of Ellen White's statements on urban community, it is reasonable to conclude that she spoke more about living and working in the city than against it. Obviously, she was convinced that the best way to bring the city to Christ was by penetrating and living in it.

Responding to New York City

To their credit, even as Adventists were reassessing the merits and demerits of city dwelling, they and other religious organizations flooded New York City in the wake of the terrorist attacks to bring both short- and long-term relief to the city's beleaguered inhabitants.

Don Schneider, president of the North American Division (NAD), reflecting on the crisis, shared his dream of seeing new churches springing up throughout Manhattan Island, and several NAD organizations responded by sending financial and personnel resources to the city.

Yet any strategy to win the city for Christ must be based on a sound biblical theology. Mission strategies that are not undergirded, shaped, and informed by a coherent theology are bound to be problematic and destined to fail.

In a recent article calling on Christians to love the city, Samir Selamovic states that we must radicalize our theology if we are to engage in ministry that transforms the urban community.³ For too long Christians have read the Bible through rural lenses, arguing for the primacy of the country because God chose to place earth's first humans in a garden. What is needed, however, is not so much a radicalization of our theology as a transformation of it based on an objective reading and appraisal of the God portrayed in Scripture.

People who see the Bible as a rural book and therefore claim that Christians should not live in the city tend to hold to that view more for sociological than theological reasons. Put simply, their desire is to disassociate themselves from the kinds of people who dominate the inner city—the poor, the aliens, the refugees, the immoral, etc.

Constructing a theology of urban mission⁴

A biblical theology of urban mission is a reflection on the nature and attributes of God, the biblical text being its point of departure. In seeking to understand God and God's ways, it ponders such great themes as God's love, mercy, justice, sovereignty, and power. Were God not the centrifugal force of theology, the God-talk would not be theology, only pretentious chatter. In the context of the city such talk would be sociology, cultural

anthropology, urbanology, and economics, but not theology. Again, for a biblical theology of urban mission to be appropriate, it must commence, continue, and be consummated in God.

For theology to be credible it must be dynamic, not static. Theology is seldom a product; it is a process, something done to bring enlightenment and understanding.⁵ It is an activity that is informed and shaped by time and place, making it contextual. Content and context must exist in dynamic interrelationship, each probing, assessing, informing, and shaping the other. Yet to say that theology is contextual is not to say that God is constrained by contexts. On the contrary, God is universal and ultimate.

Of necessity, a theology of urban mission must be thought out and crafted in the urban community. No urban theology far removed from the challenging complexities of urban factors will be tenable or relevant. That is not to say that systematic theology cannot contribute to the formation of a functional urban theology. Yet for it to do so it must be done in the heart of the city, consciously and intentionally connecting all God-talk to the urban context. Only as it speaks to the particularity of the city will its integrity and authority go unchallenged. Grounded in the urban community, such a theology will be more practical and applied than systematic.

In seeking to include urban realities in its formulations and articulations, a biblical theology of urban mission must examine the systems and structures of the city, as well as listen to the stories of its people, especially those living on the margins. In so doing it will not fall victim to either of the two extremes that exist in urban mission today.

On the one hand are those who focus on the big picture, looking at the city from "helicopters" hovering overhead. These individuals view the city as a conglomerate of statistics and unnamed faces. Utilizing the dis-

ciplines of cultural anthropology, economics, and sociology, they study the city's population density, its transportation and communication systems, and its religious and socioeconomic distributions.

On the other hand are those who use the ethnographic approach, getting down to the street level and living amongst the city's inhabitants, where they are able to hear the people's stories and observe city life in its everyday flow.

An integration of the helicopter and street-level approach is what is needed in crafting a tenable urban theology. Such an integration will make for the complete exegesis of the city.

Along the way probing questions will be asked to identify the city's heritage, character, and spirit. Each city has a unique ambiance and flavor, grounded for the most part in its history and often evident in its trends. As such, the urban exegete will analyze the city's history, its place in the country's history and economy, and its past and current labels. The exegete will also examine the city's traumatic experiences (such as earthquakes, economic collapse, ethnic or racial conflicts, etc.) and the political and religious institutions that have dominated its life.⁶

It is in listening to and examining the theological narratives of the city that the urban exegete stands to glean the most useful information for the creation of an urban theology. Germane to the story will be an exploration of the circumstances under which the gospel first entered the city, and the trends that represent the greatest opportunity for the growth of the church. Demographic shifts will be investigated, especially those that have the potential to hurt a mission into the city, or that present seemingly insurmountable barriers to urban mission.

Any approaching crisis that calls for intense prayer will be examined, as well as all subcultures experiencing spiritual darkness or manifesting satanic oppression. And believing that

God is already at work in the city, the urban exegete will search for opportunities through which dynamic and struggling congregations may partner to reach the city for Christ.⁷

What is the link between the urban context and the biblical text? Who is most qualified to faithfully exegete both Scripture and the city? The faith community, the church!

The theological task is not an option for the church, but an activity wrapped up in its very being and mission.⁸ Only the church is qualified to bring Scripture to bear on the city with integrity and accuracy. Yet in bringing the two together the church must be careful not to read into Scripture what is not there in an effort to pursue its urban agenda, nor must it view the city in irredeemably bleak terms.

An urban theology that mourns the metropolis instead of celebrating it as a vital component of God's mission agenda will inevitably miss the mark. The faith community will do more than reflect on the biblical text in the context of the city. After reflecting, the faith community will act, then reflect some more. The action/reflection paradigm is creative and dynamic, ever evolving and growing.

Themes of an urban theology

God's love for people. A theology for urban ministry must begin with the nature and character of God—love. God created humans out of love. He continues to lavish His love upon them, undeserving though they may be. As the objects of God's love, people—His children—are the very apple of God's eye, and God's unending love affair with the human family is what sent God's Son, Jesus Christ, to the cross (John 3:16).

Of all God's creation, people, made in His own image, move God most. People cause God to act; people of all shades and colors, of both sexes, of all ages, and of every socioeconomic level. And where are the people of the world found? Masses of them are in the cities of the world.

At the beginning of the twentieth

century, 25 percent of the world's population lived in cities; by the turn of the twenty-first, more than half did. Cities are magnets for the world's poor, who stream steadily into them looking for jobs, seeking affordable and accountable health care, and hoping to find an education and to improve themselves.

Rich or poor, people are the object of God's love and concern, and to turn our backs on the city is to treat God's passion for people with benign neglect. Offered freely to all, God's love intentionally seeks out the least deserving, and it delights in seeing the seemingly incorrigible transformed.

A tale of two cities. Using the title of Charles Dickens's famous book as a launching pad, Robert C. Linthicum weaves a biblical theology of the urban church, arguing that the city is at once the dwelling place of God and God's people, and the stronghold of Satan and his hordes of demons.

The abode of personal and structural evil, both of which are rampant and disturbingly real, the city is the battlefield where the great cosmic war between God and Satan is taking place. Yet if sin is pervasive in the city, much more so is God's grace (Rom. 5:20).

Linthicum argues that, contrary to popular belief, the Bible is an urban book that was written in the urban Near East. How then did it come to be viewed otherwise? Linthicum posits that the main theological formulations of the church developed in rural Europe, and that not until the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries did theologians allow city elements to impact how they applied the Bible to urban life.⁹

Vulnerability. When Scripture is read in search of themes for an urban theology, one that will inevitably surface is that of vulnerability. This vulnerability is highly evident in the call and experience of Abraham. Leaving the land of his origin with its comforts and security, Abraham sojourns in foreign territory, casting off self-preservation so that he may be

faithful to God's call. Later, Abraham's descendants are themselves aliens in Egypt, experiencing oppression from their "hosts" and learning firsthand what it means to be displaced.

The embrace of displacement and vulnerability by God's people continues when Israel is exiled and when the first Christians are scattered and persecuted. God requires His people in all these situations to be missional—that is, to impact the surrounding culture in ways they would have been unable to do, had they not become pilgrims. God is a sending God. God and God's people do not just call people to the them, but go where the people are.

More significantly, Israel's experience shows that to be in Christ is to be a pilgrim who finds belonging, stability, and security not in place but in relationship with and dependence on God. Seeking to preserve oneself is at variance with the openness to pain that is critical to dealing with the stranger with disinterested benevolence. Because they themselves were aliens, the children of Israel could empathize with the stranger in their midst.

Admonished to welcome the stranger, Israel was to be guided by experiential knowledge, extending to others the grace God had extended to them. Though recipients of a special covenant relationship with God, Israel was to be acutely aware that all they were was due to God's grace. This knowledge was to engender gratitude in the nation.

When Christians accept that we are sojourners in the world and that all we are and have are due to the grace of God, they will stifle the urge to shut out aliens and strangers and to hoard what they possess.

Unity. Offering hospitality to the stranger in the city will contribute to the creation of the spiritual unity for which Christ prayed. This unity reflects the unity of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is born of humility, and reveals itself in the way the church utilizes the gifts of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-13).

The implications of this truth for a theology of urban ministry cannot be overstated. Cognizant of our unity in Christ, Christians will admit that we have been gifted to serve those who, though unlike us, need inclusion in the body of Christ.¹⁰

For too long have Christians divided the church and its mission, with mission being understood as an activity the church engages in. Church and mission are inextricably bound together in indivisible interrelation. They must stand together or die apart. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the city, where the purpose of God is not just to transform the stranger but the church as well.

Prone to exhibit an attitude of omniscience, Christians tend to enter the city with a holier-than-thou air, eager to provide all the answers to the city's woes. Such an attitude fails to accept that the city exists for our benefit too. Our engagement with the city must be reciprocal.

Casting off the cloak of omniscience and donning the garment of humility, we must enter and live in the city as learners eager to resonate with its inhabitants, however poor and unlettered they may be. Only then will our perspective expand and we shall come to view the city and its inhabitants as Jesus does.

I recall my first encounter with the mayor of Benton Harbor, Michigan, a city of approximately 9,000 overwhelmingly minority inhabitants. One of the first questions the mayor asked when we were introduced was where I lived. Informed of my residence, which was outside the city limits, she pondered a while before stating that the residents of her city were tired of folk from suburbia descending on them weighted down with all the answers to their plight. What her city needed, the mayor said, were people who demonstrated genuine care by living among them and listening to their stories firsthand.

Christ and the city. A biblical theology of urban ministry would be seriously incomplete without a look

at Jesus. Luke tells us that after Jesus confirmed and authenticated His ministry in the synagogue one Sabbath by quoting Isaiah, He set His face and feet toward the towns and villages, teaching in Capernaum and in Judea (Luke 4:18-44).

Yet it is Matthew and Mark who provide a succinct summary of what may be termed Jesus' urban agenda (Matt. 9:35-11:1; Mark 6:6, 56). Jesus did not flee places bulging with people, but sought them out so He could preach the good news, teach them, and address their felt needs. Incarnating and modeling what the church should be—a symbol of the kingdom and its agent in the world—Christ went about ministering in peopled contexts and speaking to “urban” issues.

If Jesus came to liberate the “little ones,” speak for the voiceless, and welcome the stranger, then the city is the place where He would be found today. His own experience of homelessness and displacement argues the point. Born in a stable, Jesus later stressed that unlike creatures of the wild, He had no permanent home (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58). Christ's displacement was consummated after His crucifixion, when, because of poverty, He had to be buried in a tomb owned by another (Matt. 27:57-60).

In Jesus the theology of presence finds supreme expression. Jesus lived amongst those He came to save. Must we not do the same?

From April to June 2002, Don and Ruth James of the North American Division Evangelism Institute lived on the tenth floor of an apartment building on Roosevelt Island in Manhattan to establish relationships with a view to introducing people to Jesus. Theirs was an odyssey in courage, faith, and hope, made so because born and raised in rural America, they had never spent much time in cities and had visited New York City only once before.

The couple succeeded in introducing people to Jesus and studying the Bible with others. They left New York

City with one unshakeable conviction—that only a long-term commitment to live and work in the city will have a telling impact. And by long-term they mean a minimum of three years.¹¹

Human history will end not in a garden where it started, but in a city, making urbanites of all who have been saved by grace. John saw this city, the New Jerusalem, in vision. It will be a city devoid of pollution, violence, pain, and suffering, and will be inhabited by people of every nationality, gender, ethnicity, language, and class who live in peaceful harmony (Rev. 21:1-8; Isa. 65:17-25).

Old Testament patriarchs and prophets anticipated living in it, abandoning earthly comforts to pursue it in faith and with hope (Heb. 11:8-10). Our theology should cause us, like Abraham, to set our faces to the city and to walk toward it with indefatigable courage. ■

This article has been peer reviewed by professors at the Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

- 1 Monte Sahlin, “Did Ellen White Teach that Adventists Should Not Live in Cities?” *Metro Ministry* 1 (Fall 1999) 1:11, 12.
- 2 See George Knight, “Another Look at City Mission,” *Adventist Review*, December 2001, 25-29.
- 3 Selmar Selmanovic, “Loving the City,” *Ministry*, July 2002, 5-8.
- 4 For many of the ideas in this section I am indebted to Charles Van Engen. See Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, eds., *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1994), 241-269. See also Bruce Campbell Moyer, “A Biblical Theology of Urban Mission,” *Metro Ministry* 1 (Fall 1999), 1-6.
- 5 Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 23.
- 6 John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1989), 85.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 123.
- 8 Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1999), 37.
- 9 Linthicum, 22, 23.
- 10 For the themes of vulnerability, grace, and unity, I am indebted to Kathryn Mowry, “Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbors? Toward a Theology of Welcome for the Urban Church,” in *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, eds. (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1994), 105-123.
- 11 Don James, interview by author, Berrien Springs, Michigan, February 20, 2003.

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Sexuality in ministry: the pastor, sexual sin, and the Bible

In the first essay in this series (see January's *Ministry*) we focused on the minister's identity as portrayed in the Bible. We concluded that he or she¹ is an unusual person. A pastor is called to identify with his vocation, to *be* a minister, and to *do* ministry from there.

In the sense of who he is, today's pastor can identify very closely with priests in biblical times. I witness this as I visit pastoral retreats or conferences everywhere in the world. Ministers themselves, the churches they serve, and even some outside the church see ministers as counterparts of the priests and prophets who are central to the biblical story.

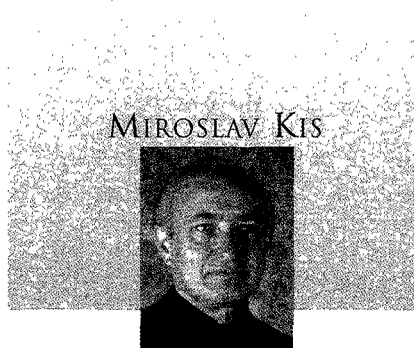
I also hear these pastors pray fervently about sister Alva's heart condition or young Tony's dangerous escapades with drugs. Alva is not their mother nor is Tony their son, but they are Christ's blood relatives, His sheep, and the shepherd's heart of a minister pulsates for them.

A plumber's work need not affect his personal identity in quite this way. His profession, natural talents, and good training are sufficient in themselves for him to do his work effectively. We pastors are called to lead human beings through the relentless battle against sin and evil, against principalities and powers, and into the safety of God's abiding presence. Natural talents and training are not sufficient for these things.

You and I, along with the apostle Paul, are not mere "peddlers of God's word" (2 Cor. 2:17). We are called to be the aroma of Christ, to some a "fragrance from death to death, to others a fragrance from life to life" (2 Cor. 2:15, 16).

How wonderful and humbling! What a privilege and responsibility!² God forbid that we ever forget this . . . ever . . . even in the privacy of our sexual life!

After all, human sexuality is a natural



part of a minister's identity, and the wonder of sexual intimacy is an integral part of a minister's marriage. These two elements of identity, the sexual and ministerial, stand side by side in the pastor.

In our second essay (the March issue of *Ministry*) we even hinted that if harnessed, the incredible power of sexual energy can become an ally in ministry. But harnessed it must be. In this, the third essay, we will search the Scripture, especially the landscape of the Old Testament, seeking God's position on the minister's marriage and sexuality, and thus His response to sexual misconduct in ministry.

The wife of the priest

God's instructions to Moses about the marriage of the priests reveal His concerns for the intimate life and home ambiance of His spiritual leaders. We find God involved (almost as directly as with Adam) in the choice of wives for the priests. Unlike wives of kings, judges, or other leaders in Israel, the wife of a priest had to be chosen in harmony with specific criteria. "We love each other" is not enough. "She pleases me well" does not work here (Judges 14:3, RSV).*

In the case of regular priests we read: "They shall not marry a harlot or a woman who has been defiled; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God" (Lev. 21:7).

The guidelines for "the priest who is chief among his brethren" are even more explicit and selective. "And he shall take his wife in her virginity. A widow, or one divorced, or a woman who has been defiled, or a harlot, these he shall not marry; but he shall take to wife a virgin of his own people, that he may not profane his children among his people; for I am the LORD who sanctify him" (Lev. 21:13-15).

Some 850 years later, as liberalizing influences threatened, God did not give in to social pressure. Selectivity for all priests is instead heightened. "They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest" (Ezek. 44:22).

The first explicit reason for this selectivity is summed up in the words: "the priest is holy to his God." His spouse, his "one flesh" companion, is a part of the priest's sphere of holiness and must not become a contact point with the profane.³

The second reason for guidelines might be an attempt to protect the marriage of the priest from unresolved issues and pains that past traumatic experiences of a future spouse might bring into the new union. Excessive and unresolved personal needs often reduce one's capacities to support and assist others.

The third reason is summed up in these words: "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23). This instruction cannot be expressed in words alone. Examples of the way the ministerial couple loves and cares for each other and the way in which their home and family operate are the most effective support for teaching the difference between the holy and the common,

between the unclean and clean.

What the Bible is saying, in no uncertain terms, is this: The pastor's wife is unique, a special wife in God's estimation. God watches jealously over how we pastors choose our mates; how we treat them; how we appreciate their loyalty to God, to His work, and to us; and how genuine our love for them is, even when they are advanced in years (Mal. 2:13-16). We must inform and carefully initiate the future spouses of young pastors and the wives of second-career ministers.

Some time ago I was faced with the sexual misconduct of the wife of a pastor who had entered ministry from another profession. She told me, "I accepted his change of work because I love him. But I did not know what it means to be a pastor's wife. I simply cannot take it, and he has ignored my signals and my needs for years."

The general biblical position on sexual sin

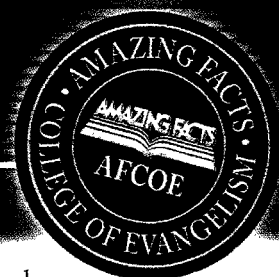
The institution of the marriage covenant enjoys a highly protected status in the Bible. Even before the promulgation of the Moral Law on Sinai, God intervened twice on behalf of Sarah's marriage (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

The seventh commandment prohibits adultery for everyone (Exod. 20:14), and the tenth forbids coveting a neighbor's wife (verse 17). The violation of the seventh commandment was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22 ff).

Adultery does violence to the "one flesh" union and "has the character of murder either in robbing the husband of his selfhood, or in destroying the corporeity that is created by the sexual union."⁴

Even the suspicion of sexual sin called for a special procedure "before" God. If a wife was guilty of infidelity, she had to drink bitter water, which would "cause bitter pain, and her body shall swell, and her thigh shall fall away, and the woman shall become an execration among her people" (Num. 5:11-31). In the book Jeremiah, chapter 3, adultery and idolatry are presented as the most

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serious offences against God and humans.

As we move down through the history of God's people, we observe trends toward the compromise of marital fidelity. At times it appears as if fornication and adultery reached epidemic proportions (Judges 19:22-26).

We read of prominent individuals, such as Judah, Samson, and David, engaging in some of the most scandalous behavior, almost as if this was a normal, acceptable thing to do. And as trends continued to slide, God's reaction became increasingly definite.

He relied on people such as Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, and the prophets Nathan, Malachi, and John the Baptist to decisively oppose the decadence of social mores among His people and their leaders.

Jesus Himself stood firmly against the stream by calling sin by its name and by urging His hearers to anchor their norms to what was "in the beginning" (Exod. 20:17; Matt. 5:27, 28). No matter how shameless or innocuous sexual misconduct appears to be, how prevalent and acceptable it becomes in a given culture and time, or how prominent the offender, the biblical witness unequivocally condemns adultery and fornication in the most decisive terms.

But the Bible also teaches that the sexual sinner can be forgiven. David's case was outrageous, yet it became an encouraging example of how God deals with the most serious sexual sin. David covets, he commits adultery, and he plans and implements a murder with all the deceitfulness that such a feat requires. But when Nathan intervenes, David discovers the ugliness of his ways, repents, publishes his utter regrets for all to read (Ps. 51), and remains on his throne.

Consequences do come, however: David's resulting child dies; his kingly influence and respect are all but shattered;⁵ the sword never left his house; his wives were taken away from him publicly (2 Sam. 12:10-14); Shimei felt free to curse and throw stones and dirt at the king; and David himself lamented:

"Behold my own son [Absalom] seeks my life" (2 Sam. 16:9-11).

It is important to note that it was not because of or while in his sin that David was called a man after God's own heart. It was when he thoroughly and openly repented and abandoned his sin in humility and without self-justification.⁶

The Bible and sexual sin among priests

David's experience and position are not in the same category with priests. David was a king, anointed as a civil servant. The difference is clearly outlined when Saul acted as if the distinction between king and priest was so insignificant that he felt he could proceed freely by offering the sacrifice in view of Samuel's delay.

In the light of Saul's behavior God says, "I repent that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me" (1 Sam. 15:10). David as a "lay" person was anointed for the kingly office and role. Priests, on the other hand, were set apart in a different ceremony (Lev. 9) and for the holy office of spiritual leader of people and all other leaders.

In what follows we will see that God expects the behavior of a priest to match the influence of his identity and the gravity of his calling. A deep, God-ordained and inner sense of the minister's identity must hold his sexual identity in control.

So we must press Scripture further to see what happens when a priest is found guilty of sexual sin.

The sons of Eli the priest. One notorious case of sexual sin in ministry is found in 1 Samuel 2:12-24. Verse 22 says, "Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting."

This last charge was particularly significant. Perhaps these women were Nazarites involved in a voluntary service at the worship site (Num. 6:2; Exod. 38:8).⁷ In any case, their presence there had a legitimate purpose. Yet the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, deliberately abused their priestly position,

involving these women in sins that were specifically prohibited.

In Deuteronomy we read, "There shall be no cult prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a cult prostitute of the sons of Israel" (23:17).⁸

The intensely earnest appeals of the father of these two men, the priest Eli, came too late. He tried to impress on his sons the seriousness of the abuse of their powers as well as their responsibilities, and the gravity of the loss of trust with the people.

Priests are holy (set apart) to their God. They are not their own. When they minister among God's people, they are serving Him. When they abuse His people, they touch the apple of His eye. When prostituted by His anointed ones, God's name, His house, and His endorsement bring them to the brink of no return.

Eli pleads, "If a man sins against a man, God will mediate for him: but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" (1 Sam. 2:25). When the only bridge to safety is destroyed, how can a rescue reach the one in peril? Sexual sin is never just a casual physical experience of no consequence. Adultery and fornication in ministry are direct assaults on the essential values of God and thus upon God Himself, and His plan of salvation.

How could the people of Israel believe that God was mighty to save *them* from *their* sins, when Hophni and Phineas, His holy representatives, demonstrated His impotence to control *their* passions?

Telling the story, the prophet Samuel recalled with sadness: "But they would not listen to the voice of their father (Eli); for it was the will of the LORD to slay them" (1 Sam. 2:25).

What by now is eminently clear is that God's decision to end their lives is irrevocable. A man of God comes to Eli and declares to him all that will come to his sons and his household as a consequence of trifling with the priestly vocation. "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. . . . And this which shall befall your two sons, Hophni and

Phineas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. And I will rise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever" (verses 30, 34, 35).

Effectiveness and honor in ministry are not inherited but acquired. The people of God are too prudent and insightful to be impressed by mere name or pedigree. Spiritual issues and the needs of the soul are so deep and divergent with every member of the church that only ministers who are true and innocent in their "inward being" (Ps. 51:6) will be able to discern God's prodding as He leads each one in His service.

"The sons of Eli inherited a sacred responsibility and an honorable name, yet through selfishness they had so become servants of Satan as to merit the universal complaints of the people. When their father failed to exercise his authority, he was warned that even as reverence and honor produce a harvest of character and usefulness, so the sowing of irreverence and dishonor results in dishonor and disappointment."⁹

"The life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man can gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction."¹⁰

The priests in Malachi's time. A message of sharp rebuke meets the priests who are contemporaries of the prophet Malachi. God's reputation (His glory) is at stake (Mal. 2:2), declares the prophet. God serves notice that His covenant with the priesthood, "with Levi" (verse 4), is being broken continually.

At the time when the covenant was made, God recalled with fond memories: "My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him, that he may fear; and he feared me, he stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.

For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in your instruction" (verses 5-9).

Moved by their sexual lust, the priests adjusted their theology to fit their unholy intentions, their secret vices, and their treacherous dealings, until moral values and norms were reversed. Thus they claimed, "Every one who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them" (verse 17). And because the "lips of a priest should guard knowledge," people listened and fell prey to their corrupt advice.

But deep within themselves, they knew very well that things were not the way they pretended them to be. God had withdrawn His power from their ministry and they knew it. Yet, in deceiving others they convinced themselves. They asked, Why doesn't God accept the offering from our hands with favor? (verses 13, 14).

The answer came. "Why does he not? Because the LORD was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (Mal. 2:14-16).

The situation is clear. God could not keep the covenant "of Levi" with them; He could not work with, or through, these priests; He could not bless their ministry in the professional, vocational realm while they didn't keep their God-

witnessed covenant with their wives.

This kind of divided arrangement, this inconsistency in relationships, simply will not do (Matt. 5:23, 24).

Ministers today

God stands firmly on the side of the cheated spouses of these priests, and of pastors' spouses today. Unless pastors respect their covenant with their spouses, they are out of favor with God. These are issues that prompt God to use the language of strongest rebuke.

God's words are powerful and intimidating. We who are God's ministers need to have enough courage to hear His word without attempting to dilute it.

In the next essays we will see further why God is so personally involved in the minister's marriage, and why He takes the sexual sin of His ministers so seriously.

God has taken a clear stand. He has ample power to protect, grace to heal, and mercy to forgive. And whatever we may think of our marriage, whatever our status, influence, reputation or position in ministry, faithfulness to the wife of our youth is of paramount importance to Him. ■

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** All Scriptures are taken from the Revised Standard Version.*

1 Throughout this study, male pronouns predominate because so much of the biblical material presupposes the male gender. It is never the intention of *Ministry* to discriminate in any way against the female gender.

2 E. G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 119.

3 Walther Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 2:460.

4 O. Piper, *The Biblical View of Sex and Marriage* (New York: Scribners, 1960), 150.

5 E. G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 174, 175.

6 *Ibid.*, 94, 95.

7 Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 7:80, 81.

8 See also Exod 25:1-5; Amos 2:7, 8.

9 SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 2:463, 464.

10 E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 624.

"The law is our anchor, Jesus is the wind in our sails"

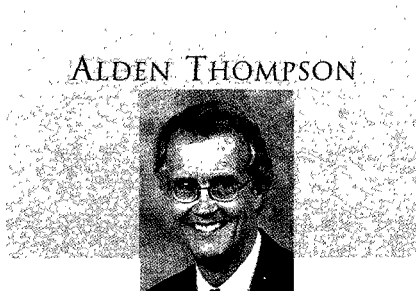
Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Faith #18:

"The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Exod. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-13; John 14:15; Rom. 8:1-4; 1 John 5:3; Matt. 22:36-40; Eph. 2:8.)"

Lawless" and "lawlessness" are scary words. I can't imagine that very many ordinary people would want to live in a lawless society. But we run into trouble when we consider the alternative, because "law" or "law and order" aren't very happy words either. "It's the law, you know!" sounds like someone is trying to push us into doing something we'd rather not, or to stop us from doing something we quite like.

But if we feel caught between these two troubling words, law and lawlessness, at least we're in good company. In Romans 7 Paul describes his battle between delight in God's good law and his rebellion against it. "Wretched man that I am!" he cries out. "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24, NRSV).

By the early 1860s, when Seventh-day Adventists finally decided to take a



name and formally organize as a church, God's law had become central to our identity. The "seventh-day" in our name points directly to the Ten Commandments. And before we had anything that could be called a list of Fundamental Beliefs, the words "commandments of God," lifted directly from the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, stood out in the simple covenant used to organize local churches: "We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together, as a church, taking the name, Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ."¹

The Adventist advantage

Now there are weighty reasons why Adventists have seen the Ten Commandments as a notch above all the rest of the laws God has given to His people. Some of the Old Testament laws can sound very strange to our ears. Not the Ten Commandments. And it's not just a matter of the fleeting sounds of the moment. The Bible itself gives the Ten Commandments a place of special honor.

A few years ago that point was brought forcibly to my mind in a quite unexpected way. While on sabbatical in Scotland, I was putting the finishing touches to my book *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*² when I hap-

pened by the office of a well-known Old Testament scholar. We chatted a bit about the various projects we were working on. When he asked me what I was doing, I frankly told him that I was writing a book to help my students see more clearly what never changes in Scripture. I said I was sick and tired of seeing my students lose their faith when they discovered things in the Bible they didn't think were supposed to be there. Here's a brief summary of what I told him:

The unchanging anchor in Scripture consists of the great principle of love, Jesus' two great commands (love to God, love to your neighbor), and the Ten Commandments. You can draw a double line around those laws and everything else for they never change. The rest of Scripture simply applies them in particular times and places, an interpretation suggested by Jesus' summarizing comment which accompanies His statement of the two great commandments: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40, NRSV).

While the two great commands are certainly enduring, the Ten Commandments represent an additional layer of stability. They, too, "hang" on the two great commands, but they never change. Draw your double line after the Ten. Everything else in Scripture—all the laws and stories—"hang" on the two, illustrating how we are to understand and apply the fundamental principle of love, the two great commands, and the Ten Commandments in many and varied circumstances.

So there, I thought to myself. That's my good Adventist Bible study on the law.

To my surprise, he replied without hesitation, "Of course that's where the Bible draws the double line. Look at Deuteronomy 4:13, 14."

Incredibly, our next few moments

together still sounded like an old-fashioned Adventist Bible study on the law.

"Note the difference between verses 13 and 14," he said. "In verse 13, God is addressing Israel directly, not speaking through Moses. According to this text, God gave the people 'his covenant' and described what He gave them as 'ten commandments.' Furthermore, the text states that God Himself wrote the Commandments on two stone tablets."

"But," he continued, "note the changes in verse 14. First, God is addressing Moses, not the people. Second, to Moses, He gives 'statutes and ordinances,' not 'his covenant' or the 'Ten Commandments.'"

"In short," he concluded, "you're quite right. The double line comes after the Ten Commandments."

I was astounded that he would respond so spontaneously and quickly with that solid "Adventist" exposition of the Bible. It's not just Adventist, of course. It's just a simple and straightforward reading of the Bible evident to any honest person.

To make the "Bible study" complete, we would need to add just two additional points. First, the "statutes and ordinances" were written by Moses in a book and placed beside the ark, not in the ark (Deut. 31:24-26).

Second, the penalties for breaking the Ten Commandments are not included in the Decalogue itself but in the additional legislation, thus giving the Decalogue a more enduring quality.

Penalties are much more likely to be shaped by time, place, and culture, and thus vary considerably, even in the Bible. In the Old Testament, for example, the additional legislation assigns the death penalty to every one of the Ten Commandments except the last one (don't covet), an application matching the violent needs of the violent people who had come out of Egypt.

Jesus, of course, coming to earth as God in the flesh, points us toward the nonviolent ideal, with the story of the woman taken in adultery being the most famous example: "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:11,

NRSV). Jesus could omit the penalty while still affirming the command as enduring.

And in the New Testament that enduring quality of the Ten Commandments is underscored by the fact that they are quoted and excerpted by both Jesus and the apostles. The array of texts is impressive: Matthew 19:16-21; Mark 10:17-21; Luke 18:18-22; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8-12.

IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, JESUS CONFRONTS US WITH THE TERRIBLE TRUTH ABOUT OUR TANGLED LIVES. NAMELY, THAT RULES CAN NEVER TRANSFORM THE HEART.

So our Adventist forebears have delivered to us a rock solid understanding of law, grounded thoroughly in both Testaments. But that didn't mean that they were ready to live happily ever after.

It wasn't long before our Adventist pioneers, like the great apostle Paul himself, became aware of the "wretched" tensions which the law stirs up. In 1890, for example, Ellen White wrote this lofty description of God's law and His ideal: "The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness."³

Yet in that same year she also penned this striking exclamation: "Let the law take care of itself. We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain. Let us trust in the merits of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."⁴

So we like the law and we don't like the law. What can we do about that dilemma?

Most important of all, we must know that the story of Jesus takes us to the first, last, and best answer. From his "wretched" exclamation in Romans 7:24, Paul moves on to that glorious promise in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (NRSV). And

pointing us to another key passage in Scripture, Ellen White wrote this buoyant exclamation in the 1890s:

"Good news! Good news! Ring throughout the world! 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' This lesson is one of the greatest importance to every soul that lives; for the terms of salvation are here

laid out in distinct lines. If one had no other text in the Bible, this alone would be a guide for the soul."⁵

Now when Adventists point to Jesus as the solution to our problems with the law, we are simply identifying with great truths known and recognized throughout the Christian world. The simplicity and power of this truth is nicely captured by C. S. Lewis:

"The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact (the Resurrection) and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption) operating on a sense of sin which they already had—and sin, not against some new fancy-dress law produced as a novelty by a 'great man,' but against the old, platitudinous, universal moral law which they had been taught by their nurses and mothers. The 'Gospels' come later, and were written, not to make Christians, but to edify Christians already made."⁶

But Adventists have taken the argument a step further, making special claims about the Ten Commandments which give us a great advantage, but also place us in great danger. In short, we have argued that all of the Ten Commandments are enduring; that taken together as they are written, they provide believers with a secure anchor, protecting us from a wide range of temptations, from those which bubble

up from within—our own passions and appetites—to those which threaten us from without, the temptations posed by an increasingly secular and relativistic world. Others may waffle, wandering about in search of meaning and security; Adventists can rest secure, held by an anchor that never moves.

That's the great advantage. The danger? The very simplicity of our message makes us vulnerable to the greatest sin of all: arrogant reliance on our own ability. And in our pride, we too easily fail to look within and discover those more subtle—and thus more dangerous—forms of sin which will certainly lead us away from God's kingdom and keep us from touching the hearts of those who need to know the story of Jesus.

But God has a plan to preserve the advantage for us and to protect us from the danger, a plan that can best be understood if we sketch the history of God's law from a cosmic perspective, from a perfect world, to rebellion, and back to a perfect world again.

From no rules to many rules

An important aspect of the Adventist understanding of law is that God's law of love is a natural law like the law of gravity or the laws of mathematics. It is a "natural" law, not an arbitrary one, because it is the *natural* reflection of God's character. In other words, God cannot choose to make one law for this part of His kingdom, and another one for that part. He cannot change His law, nor can anyone else because it is simply a reflection of Himself.

The opening line of Ellen White's book *Patriarchs and Prophets* makes this point with powerful simplicity: "'God is love.' His nature, his law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be."

Two biblical passages, in particular, point us in this direction. One is Romans 13:10: "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (NRSV)—or, to put it another way, love fills the law full. The other passage is the new covenant promise in Jeremiah

31:31-34 which points to a time when no one will need to teach someone else and no one will command anyone else to know the Lord because God will have written His law on the heart.

In other words, the law has become so much a part of human life and thinking that the loving response has become entirely spontaneous. The law has not been rejected or abolished; it simply has been internalized where no one can see it.

Ellen White follows that line of thinking when she describes the perfect world at the time of Lucifer's rebellion: "When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of."

But the war in heaven changed all that. Adventists have rightly argued that God could not just snuff out the rebellion immediately—unless He wanted all His creatures forever after to serve Him simply from fear. Ellen White describes God's ideal in this way:

"God desires from all his creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service."⁸

So for a time, God gave Satan freedom to develop *his* way, a government based on the principle of selfishness instead of the principle of love. Genesis 3 to 11 documents the tragic and ever-worsening results: sin in the Garden, Cain's murder of Abel his brother, the Flood, Babel. When God stepped back on the stage more actively at the time of Abraham, Scripture says that Abraham's own family worshiped other gods (Josh. 24:2). That's how bad things had gotten.

When things are that bad, what does God do? He lovingly—and daringly—adapts the principles of His kingdom to the needs of His fallen creatures. As Jesus bluntly explained in connection with divorce, God has given some rules because of the "hardness" of human hearts. But such rules should never be mistaken for His ideal: "from the begin-

ning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8, NRSV).

Surprisingly—yet probably not surprising when we think it through—at Sinai, Israel was delighted that God had given them rules to help them. Indeed, Moses said that even the surrounding nations would almost envy them for their rules, saying, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" (Deut. 4:6, NRSV).

Moses went to exclaim: "For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?" (Deut. 4:7, 8, NRSV). Ellen White echoes that sentiment: "The object of all these regulations was stated: they proceeded from no exercise of arbitrary sovereignty; all were given for the good of Israel."⁹

Yet the joyful reception of the rules masked a real danger, namely, that rules can never lead to love. They can guide and protect, but they can never really touch the heart. The fact that God is willing to give rules touches the heart, but the rules themselves never can. And so we come to the final reality in God's great plan, the story of Jesus.

Rules are never enough

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus confronts us with the terrible truth about our tangled lives, namely, that rules can never transform the heart. Hammer blow after hammer blow drive home the stinging truth: You haven't murdered? But what about your murderous thoughts? (Matt. 5:21, 22). You've kept your sexual activity in check? But what about your impure thoughts? (Matt. 5:27, 28). You've stayed within the legal limits of revenge: an eye for an eye. Now turn the other cheek, go the second mile (Matt. 5:38-41). Love your enemies (Matt. 5:44). Be perfect—like God is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

Jesus, we cry, You make it impossible. We almost had the rules down pat. Now You've ruined it.

Precisely. Jesus shows us a marvelous example of how we really want to live.

He prayed for His enemies, lived a life of purity, turned the other cheek. God took human flesh to show us how it could and should be done. His listeners watched Him, admired Him. But then they realized that they couldn't do it. So they killed Him. . . .

And we don't do it either. Broken rules, shattered ideals. Where can we turn?

From shattered ideals and broken rules, back to the rule of love

When the incarnate God died on the cross, a new cluster of amazing truths began to dawn in the hearts of His followers. On the cross, in some mysterious way, God had paid the price for our sins, covered our shame and guilt. He has forgiven us. We are clean. Whole. And He sent His Spirit to perform the work of transformation on our crooked hearts.

In other words, that which was impossible before begins to happen through the work of God's Spirit. But now we know we are dependent on God and living by His grace. No longer are we trying to impress Him or anyone else by our good works. Obedience is no longer driven by fear or mere duty, but springs from gratitude.

That's why Paul could exclaim. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, NRSV). "The love of Christ urges us on," he wrote to the Corinthian believers. "Because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. . . . If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! . . . For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 17, 21).

What has happened to the law? Affirmed and confirmed for all eternity. As Paul put it, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means. On

the contrary, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31, NRSV). God Himself has demonstrated to the entire universe what the law of love really means. He Himself lived out the law of love in the flesh. He Himself demonstrated the full extent of that love by paying the price for our sins, taking away our guilt and shame. He Himself made it possible for us to move beyond the rules to live in genuine, loving relationships with each other and with the Creator of the universe.

Perhaps the essence of this great teaching is best captured by Jesus in His conversation with His disciples just before His death: "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15, NRSV). Servants, you see, live by rules. Friends don't need them because the rules are written in the heart.

God has wanted to be friends with us all along. But we didn't know how. So Jesus came to show us. And He has promised to transform our tears of frustration into tears of joy. Finally, we are once again in a perfect world with no rules—except the rule of love, engraved on the heart. Jeremiah's new covenant

promise has been fulfilled. "No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34, NRSV).

God Himself has shown us: The law has always been our anchor and Jesus is the wind in our sails. ■

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- 1 Published in *Review and Herald*, 18:148, October 8, 1861 ("Covenant, Church," *SDA Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed, 1996, 416).
- 2 Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1991).
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1890), 34.
- 4 ———, Manuscript 10, 1890, in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington D. C.: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 2:557.
- 5 ———, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1923), 370. The sentence "If one had no other text in the Bible . . ." is recorded first in an 1895 letter to General Conference President O. A. Olson (*EGW 1888*, 4:1449) and was subsequently published in two pamphlets in the 1890s (1896 and 1897).
- 6 C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1961) XXIII:3 (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 108.
- 7 White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 109 (1896).
- 8 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34.
- 9 ———, 311.

Genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God's commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God's creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. —*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266

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The Registry Is For Those Who Love Others

Evangelism is everyone's task



Editor's note: *This article is presented as one of a number of contributions in Ministry, especially featuring the global evangelistic drive of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in "2004, Year of World Evangelism."*

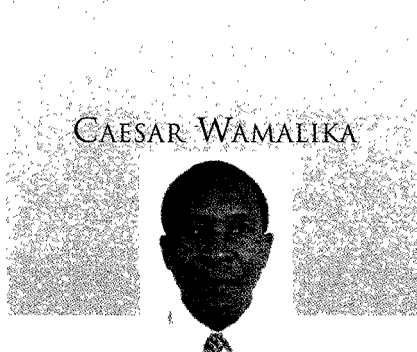
I am a student from Kenya. Before coming to the Philippines, I worked as a campus ministries director for the East African Union, where my assignment did not embrace the role of a public evangelist. Even now my study is directed toward Bible teaching and not evangelism. I am completing a Master of Arts/Religion program at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS).

One morning, however, I had a brief interaction with a student from the AIAS ministry class. He introduced me to the Global Evangelism Web site sponsored by Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (carolinasda.org) and the Quiet Hour. I visited the Web site and signed my name just out of curiosity, as one of the possible speakers for an evangelistic program in the Philippines.

To my surprise, my application was accepted and I was assigned to go to the Bicol region of Luzon island. Bicol is about 500 miles southeast of Manila. The region is famous for the warmth and friendliness of the people and of *sili*, *pili*, and *tilapia* fish! In addition, the place is famous because of its active Mayon volcano. Besides, the Hoyop-Hoyopan caves make Bicol a historic place and a tourist attraction.

First, some fears

As days went by, I felt reluctant to go to this place for evangelism. Bicol is steeped in strong religious traditions that make it difficult to present a Seventh-day Adventist way of thought and belief. One student pastor at AIAS had warned me that I would be lucky if



I got five people to come out to listen to me. Besides, with terrorism around the world, I felt unsafe as a foreigner in such a remote place.

But worst of all was the fear of inadequacy. As a Master of Arts/Religion student, my seminary program emphasis was tuned toward an academic preparation for teaching religion. What do I have to do with public evangelism? I asked myself. The AIAS seminary bulletin makes it clear: "MA-R seminary program is an academic degree in religion," meant "primarily for students wishing to qualify themselves for teaching religion." As a result, I was aware that my curriculum had little emphasis on evangelism.

As a student, I had other fears too. How was I to balance seminary studies with an intense two-week evangelistic series? I sought some counsel from my seminary dean and from the vice president for student affairs, hoping they would deny my request for time to do evangelism. But instead, they both encouraged me to go, and rearranged my class assignments accordingly!

As a foreign student in the Philippines, I was fully aware of the disadvantages of my status. I cannot speak the local language. Besides, expectations from a foreign evangelist are sometimes too high to meet.

The image some people have of an evangelist is disturbing. Most evange-

lists are known to come from the United States with big budgets. I knew I would be expected to have my own budget and graphic projection equipment, and to meet my own travel expenses.

Carolina Conference Global evangelism had made it clear that I was expected to meet my travel costs, hotel, and meals. Yet, I did not have a penny with me. Worse still, foreign students have no work opportunities in the Philippines. As I faced all of this, I began to think that I had made a mistake to have signed up.

At the same time, I felt hounded by the words of Jesus, "Take nothing for your journey" (Luke 9:3).

I wrote to global evangelism headquarters, informing them that I was unable to take up the assignment because I could not come up with money. But to my surprise, the Carolina Conference Global-Evangelism director offered to pay for my bus travel and meet other local direct expenses. He also sent me a videotape on the life of Christ and a set of CDs with sermon notes and graphics.

This development almost drowned my excuses for not being involved in evangelism. Then during family worship one morning, I encountered something that convicted me of my call to go. My youngest son read the parable of Jesus about the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32: "... And he came to the second son and said likewise (son, go work today in my vineyard). And he answered and said, 'I go, sir' and he went not." Was this little boy of mine aware that he was probably referring to me?

My next challenge was the fear of leaving my family in a foreign land. I have four children for whom I am responsible. Two weeks away would destabilize my family. But my heart continued to be disturbed with the conviction that I should go. It seemed my wife

had detected some strange uneasiness in me. She asked if I had a class assignment troubling me. I told her I was going to be away for evangelism.

I expected her to discourage me in view of terrorism and kidnapping in some parts of the Philippines. But she prayed and wished me well! I left without making adequate financial arrangements for my family.

Then, the adventure

I attended the orientation program in Manila organized by Carolina Conference. It was designed to assist first-time evangelists through the experience of evangelism. One of the things that impressed me was the presence of six students from Friedensau University in Germany. They, too, were scheduled for evangelism at other sites in the Philippines. I came back and reread the Web site information on global evangelism and went through the CD sermon notes and graphics.

Within days, I was ready to leave.

The adventure began when I arrived at the evangelistic site. The opening night saw the hall filled with people. The wife of the president of South Luzon Adventist Mission had set up the projector and screen. The program's theme was "A New Beginning for the Family." Some people seemed excited to see an African "black" man. The children would come to touch me and feel the hair on my head. It was as though God created me black for this occasion. Some of the people came to the meetings just to see "this black man."

One day I accompanied the local elder to visit a Filipino family. They had been resisting our invitations to come to the evangelistic meetings. We entered their house and prayed with them. I read a few Bible verses and invited them to come to the meetings.

As we were about to leave the house, the mother called out and said, "No black man has ever entered my house before. This man from Africa must be a messenger from God. We will come to the meetings." And that evening I saw them walk into the hall. They were among the first to arrive, and they

never missed a meeting after that!

But the greatest moment came on the fourth night when I was making a call for decisions. No one stood for the first five minutes. I almost froze. I began sweating but I did not give up.

Then something miraculous happened. In the center of the hall, one elderly mother with her son stood up and moved forward. Later, she was followed by five young people. Then fifteen people came. Before ten minutes were over, half of the people in hall stood and stepped forward, making their decision.

I noticed one woman wiping her tears as she came forward. The sight almost electrified me: She was the one we had visited earlier, the one who had been so impressed with me as a black man. On the closing day of the meeting, this family was among the 41 baptized.

Happenings in the city jail

Perhaps the greatest miracle of this evangelistic program was what took place in the nearby Legaspi city jail. The local pastor had made arrangements for me to visit the city jail during the day and preach to the inmates.

On one occasion, I shared one of the Global Evangelism sermons: "The Unpardonable Sin and the Holy Spirit." It seemed to have immediately touched a number of inmates.

One female inmate asked me whether she had heard me correctly when I said that "murder is not the unpardonable sin." I read her the words of Jesus in Matthew 21:31. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men . . ." Before my translator had finished translating this part of the verse, she shed tears and joyfully requested if she could be baptized.

She was among 15 inmates baptized in the city jail that week. I was overjoyed to see her come out of the water with a beaming face. She told me that she was going to live for the glory of her Lord. Her prison term was to end soon, and she would share her story and joy with others.

Her parents came that evening to see us. They expressed their happiness for

what had happened to their daughter at the city jail.

Finally, some lessons

This joyful experience of seeing simple men and women decide for Christ has taught me several things.

First, there will never be any excuse sufficient to deter me from evangelism. The Master's great commission takes the highest priority over our business.

Evangelism is my reason for existence. Witnessing for Christ is a call that swallows up every other engagement of life. It is a call that gives meaning to all other things I am doing. My heart and soul have been refreshed. My mind can focus as I pick up my studies. These studies have taken on a new meaning as a result of this experience.

Second, I have learned that evangelism is not so much about the number of people baptized but about a single life transformed by and for Christ. Heaven's "joy over one soul" is no less than the joy over thousands baptized. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:5, 6).

Third, God has His vineyard near to where we are. Across the street or across the seas, it makes no difference: The opportunity for witnessing remains the same. Students can find both training for and opportunity to witness by contacting the Carolina Conference Global Evangelism Center.

Fourth, lack of high-tech equipment and big budgets need not be a hindrance to effective evangelism. While they are helpful in making public evangelism attractive, they should not be allowed to compete and even clash with the simplicity of evangelism as found in the New Testament.

Finally, the notion that public evangelism by seminary students applies only to those taking applied ministry is false. Evangelism is every Christian's calling. ■

Caesar Wamaliika is a seminary student at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines.

Traction or distraction

C. Lloyd Wyman



C. Lloyd Wyman, D.Min., is ministerial director of the Pacific Union Conference, Newbury Park, California.

Years ago, returning to college following Christmas holidays, two of us rode in a fellow classmate's Model-A Ford. Living in western Washington State, we had a mountain pass to cross on our way.

As we started up the mountain, the driver announced, "If we can keep the car moving up the mountain slowly, we can keep our traction. However, if a car stops in front of us, we'll be in trouble because my tires are nearly bald." Then looking at me, he added, "If we have to stop, you and Jane will have to get out and push to get the car started. Then you'll have to run and jump into the car." As it turned out, Jane and I did in fact have to get out and push several times in order to help the car get traction once it had stopped!

Traction versus distraction

When we speak of "traction" in ministry, we are saying that when pastors recognize their calling and commit themselves to do the work to which they have been called, it takes steady, focused, intentional attention to the many facets of this unique work of God. Should they allow themselves to be distracted by sidelines, or by spending untold hours on various nonpastoral matters, pastors can lose traction and thereby become ineffective with their members.

Distractions are often like dysfunctions. Dysfunctions are the result of the normal,

proper, or characteristic activities of ministry jumping the track and no longer functioning in an acceptable manner. Distractions come in many shapes and sizes, forms and guises.

Robert H. Pierson, former General Conference president and a pastor-missionary, once said, "The success of any organization or project is more dependent upon the human factor than upon the budget factor."

One pastor I know spent at least one-half of most days on the golf course. Obviously that did not leave him much time to be in the office, or to do much ministry of any significance. He was often late to meetings and committees, because sometimes he and his friends were behind a slow foursome while doing his "golf evangelism," as he called it.

Another pastor was distracted by his computer. He was unusually capable with the computer and rarely left the machine, so that the members almost never saw him during the week. One of his members said of this young capable pastor that he was "six days a week invisible and on the seventh he was incomprehensible," because he did not seem to find the time to put together a well-thought-out, thoroughly prepared sermon.

One young pastor, an intern, stayed home to care for his two little children while his wife went to work at an 8-5 job because they were overextended financially and needed the money. This program did not permit him to do much of anything with the small church to which he had been assigned to serve as pastor.

Cushy job?

To some pastors, pastoring is a cushy job. It's as if a pastor has tenure. The salary keeps coming, almost regardless of the lifestyle. So there are some pastors who reason, why not pick up a sideline or two? Others are doing it.

I know that some have taken sales jobs on the side, such as in real estate; others work in "pyramid" sales. I knew one pastor who served as a counselor at a mortuary during his "spare" time.

These extracurricular tasks are serious "distractions" to the pastor's life. To the degree that we fail to make pastoral work our passion and full-time focus, God's work languishes, our churches become weak, and God's saints are not receiving an honest full measure of the leadership the church is paying for, or the church legitimately expects.

One man who had served as choir director of his church for 20 years said that during that time there had not been one pastor for whom the church was his first love, priority, and passion. Then he began to list the pastors in order and state what it was that they loved more than pastoring.

For one it was cars; for another, computers; for another, buying, selling, and collecting books; for another, houses and real estate, etc. He said "there has never been a time when we at the church didn't feel we had to make a commotion to get our pastor's attention for a few minutes, before he got back to his real passion."

Understanding the work of ministry today

I do understand that the economic crunch on minister families is real. Even when both spouses work, there are major financial pressures, especially for those with several children.

I do understand that to answer a call to minister in some areas these days, a pastoral family can be in for some dollar shock.

I do understand that pastoring is often frustrating work. The church may not have developed a mission statement so that the pastor might know what to expect. The church people are not home much and when they are, they do not want to be bothered or visited.

However, consider this: "Some who have labored in the ministry have failed of attaining success because they have not given their undivided interest to the Lord's work. . . . The energies of the minister are all needed for his high calling. His best powers belong to God. . . . The minister who is wholly consecrated to God refuses to engage in business that would hinder him from giving himself fully to his sacred calling."¹

Is it possible for us as pastors to see the pastorate as just a job and allow "other things" to steal our time and interest? Is it possible to take such a general view of the church that one does not see the immediate needs of

people and programs? Is it possible to be so wrapped up in our own pursuits that ordinary ministry and pastoral concerns are passed by or crowded out?

Evaluating pastors

Some years ago a conference administration asked me to evaluate its pastors. The administration and I decided to send a fairly simple evaluation instrument to seven leading officers of each church of the conference. The evaluations were sent out with a note that encouraged the church leaders to be brief and honest in their answers.

How did it turn out?

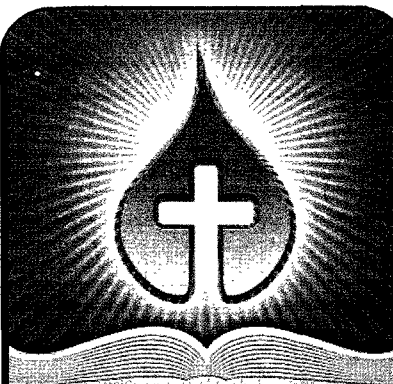
From the scores of evaluations received, a picture of each pastor came into focus. Here are only a couple of highly noteworthy points that came from this work.

The pastor does not seem to be spiritual. This was probably the most serious indictment of any that I heard. The report went on to say that the pastor had a short fuse and a bad temper. Board meetings were a battleground because if the pastor did not get his own way, he tended to fly into a rage. And if someone said or did something the pastor did not like, he could not seem able to forgive or forget.

When confronted with the evaluation, the pastor was quick to shift the blame elsewhere—to the insensitivity of some of his leaders, to the fantastic pressure under which he had to minister. He found it hard to own any responsibility in these matters.

We are reminded here, "Self is the enemy we most need to fear. . . . So long as we are in the world, we shall meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. If Christ dwells in us, we shall be patient, kind, and forbearing, cheerful amid frets and irritations. . . . Each one has a personal battle to fight."²

Here is another serious charge that came from the evaluation of another
continued on page 31



acknowledgement • communion • training • service

Supportive Prayer Groups

When a friend described the benefits of her prayer group, I remembered the prayer bands of my high school years and prayer meetings that blessed my grandparents. I determined that I wanted to be part of a supportive group for the following reasons:

1. Humans have a basic need for fellowship. With the escalation of broken homes, support groups are more and more necessary to maintain a healthy society.
2. Even when my own faith isn't vibrant, I still experience more answers to prayer. Sharing with others forms a significant, powerful team. Recently, in a Women's Ministry Roadshow, we travelled, preached, and prayed seriously for a week. Our prayers were fervent and the answers were amazing. We felt and saw God at work.
3. Sharing important needs in prayer with others forms a special bond that cannot easily be broken. Neighbors who prayed with me during difficult times are still good friends. Even though separated, we continue to share each other's concerns through prayer.
4. Praying together for a specific project becomes a powerful tool for communicating God's love and releases the Holy Spirit's power to work more powerfully.

— Joy Butler

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Behavioral marital therapy:

a way for pastors to help heal marital conflicts

Daniel M. Forbes



Daniel M. Forbes, Ed.D., LMHC, NCC, CFLE, is pastor of the University Seventh-day Adventist Church, Orlando, Florida.

Pastor, I feel like I'm at the end of my rope. Everything I do or say to my wife only seems to fuel her anger toward me. I can't seem to do anything to make her happy. She's nothing like the sweet girl I fell in love with and married 30 years ago. Life should not have to be this hard! The only time I feel content is when I'm away at work. I'm thinking more and more that divorce is the only answer, but I thought about talking to you before I did anything like that. Can you help me?"

"Hello, Pastor! I need to talk to you. I think I'm losing my husband! Ever since the baby was born he's always having to work late. And he never has time for the family or to help me with the baby. I think he's having an affair! What should I do?"

"Pastor, do you have a minute to talk? Last week my wife told me she doesn't want to remain married to me anymore. She says she's going to take the kids and move to a place where I'll never find them. I've been walking around in a daze ever since. I really thought we were happy together! Can you help me sort through it all?"

As clergy we often find ourselves more and more involved in ministering to troubled couples and hurting families. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the magnitude and multitude of what seems like a stream of families crying for our attention. We may feel altogether inadequate or unprepared to approach

the complex marital and family conflicts that come our way. Nothing in our regular training for ministry seems to have prepared us for such complexities.

We can, of course, choose to refer people to someone in the community for counseling. Quite frankly, that might be the best thing we can do in some situations. But that is not possible or needful in every case.

Spiritual leaders

For many in our communities the church is traditionally the first source of help they turn to when marital or other family crises arise. Our parishioners consider us spiritual leaders, and they expect us to help them in their emotional crises. They may also turn to us for help because of financial constraints that may not permit them to go to professional counselors. For these and other pastoral reasons, it is necessary that we have a working knowledge of marriage counseling.

Pastors may be eager to minister to those who have such needs, but that eagerness is often met by frustration because of a lack of training and skill in how best to deal with marital and family problems in a professional and effective manner. Such frustrations may tempt some pastors to choose to avoid situations that involve counseling, particularly marriage and family counseling.

For clergy who might be struggling with these and similar frustrations, I'd like to suggest a therapeutic approach called behavioral marital therapy as a possible solution.

We'll approach this study of behavioral marital therapy in six basic steps: (1) the theoretical cause of breakdown in marital relationships, (2) diagnosis and assessment, (3) building relationships between the pastor and the couple/family, (4) a general outline of how sessions are utilized, (5) therapeutic techniques, and (6) termination.

Theoretical cause of breakdowns

Successful marriages can be measured by the amount and range of reciprocating positive reinforcement that is shared between spouses. Distressed marriages, however, are characterized by acts of coercion, withdrawal, and retaliatory behaviors.¹

The basic premise underlying behavioral marital therapy is that in happy marriages, the rewards of the relationship outnumber or outweigh the costs or stresses. The reverse is

also true: Marital discord shifts the balance to where the costs outnumber the rewards.²

In troubled marriages the interactions between spouses are locked in a pattern of problematic behaviors that only serve to perpetuate the marital discord. In such a negative pattern, each spouse refuses to change his or her behavior until a change is first seen in the other's behavior.³

Behavioral marital therapy attempts to decrease the negative, destructive behavior patterns that characterize troubled marriages in order to increase the positive behavioral experiences.⁴ Evidence reveals that the main sources of marital conflict are found in a lack of communication, poor problem solving skills, and a lack of reciprocal exchange.

When behavioral marital therapy is employed—which involves behavior exchange along with training in proper communication skills—the results are statistically observable in improved patterns of communication, problem-solving skills, and overall satisfaction for most couples in marital distress.

Diagnosis and assessment

Behavioral marital therapy is primarily based on observations of marital couples, interactions of couples with the counseling pastor, and sound exchange theory.⁵ The goal is to analyze and modify the unwanted interaction behavior of a distressed couple rather than focusing on analyzing the personal growth taking place in their family relationship.

The therapeutic process begins with a thorough assessment that is usually distinct from actual counseling per se. In some instances, couples agree to an assessment process and then make a separate agreement for treatment, if they choose to undergo counseling. In other cases, assessment is more brief and is actually an additional part of counseling.

Generally speaking though, assessment may be thought of as a more or less elaborate part of behavioral mari-

tal therapy according to the personal frame of reference of the individual clergy/counselor. It usually involves some combination of interviewing, self-report questionnaires, behavioral observations, and perhaps some self-monitoring by the spouses.⁶

On the basis of the assessment and diagnosis of the troubled marital relationship, data is collected and a treatment plan using standardized modules is offered to the couple. The therapeutic plan is usually designed and tailored to meet each couple's particular needs.⁷

Building relationships between counselor and couple

The beginning phase in behavioral marital therapy is for the counseling pastor to create a positive therapeutic alliance with the couple, in which they are comfortable working together toward agreed upon counseling goals.

The first session involves asking spouses to express their feelings when it comes to the actual marital problems the couple is experiencing. Special attention is given to the couple's motivation to reestablish a new behavior pattern of marital interaction.

Assessment is the cornerstone of counseling. If properly performed, it can create confidence in the pastor's ability to help the couple succeed in improving their relationship. Assessment in the initial phase of counseling offers the therapeutic structure and foundation of the counseling process. It helps couples know what to expect and predicts the course and possible success of their efforts.

Emphasis on behavioral change is pivotal to behavioral marital therapy. Yet there is just so much change that is possible, especially in some relationships. If the focus is primarily on change rather than upon the process that achieves change (the couple learning how to unite their efforts against their problems), then counseling will succeed or fail depending on the degree of change that is achieved, and disappointment will result when the amount of change falls short of

the ideal.⁸ Thus it is important for the emphasis to be upon learning the means for achieving interpersonal behavioral change, rather than upon the change itself.

How sessions are utilized

Behavioral marital therapy typically addresses four basic areas: (1) a behavioral analysis of the couple's troubled relationship, which is based on interviews, self-report questionnaires, and behavioral observations; (2) initiating a pattern of positive reciprocity using various activities designed to foster such a response, i.e., "caring days," which will be discussed later; (3) communication skills training, for example, using "I" messages to express personal feelings, dealing with problems of the present instead of dwelling on the past, describing each partner's actual behavior instead of labeling it, providing positive feedback to each other, and (4) training in problem solving, i.e., specifying the problem, negotiating a resolution, and contracting for agreed upon ways to achieve that resolution.⁹

Since behavioral marital therapy seeks to bring about a lasting change in the communication pattern in the troubled marital relationship, the couple is taught to utilize the skills presented to them during the counseling intervention sessions, and then to use them on their own.¹⁰

Behavioral marital therapy is relatively structured, and therefore the methods employed by different counselors are somewhat similar. What is going to happen during each session is generally known before counseling begins, because the therapeutic task has already been established in the early assessment period. So the day-to-day crises that undoubtedly will be presented each week by the couple are not a distraction to the counseling pastor because the goals and focus of counseling are already clear.

Steps of behavioral therapy

Eight steps are involved in the process of behavioral marital therapy.

1. Each spouse separately completes a marital pre-counseling inventory, i.e., the Marital Status Inventory, the Couple's Pre-counseling Inventory, the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships, or a similar marital assessment instrument. This gives details of daily activities, general goals, current satisfactions, areas for change, as well as determining a level of commitment to marriage. This data helps in planning an effective intervention program.

2. A contract is made between the spouses and the pastoral counselor. The contract involves further counseling for a certain period of time, usually three to six sessions. Setting a time limit on counseling helps make the task seem more manageable and less threatening for the couple as well as the pastor.

The contract also includes ground rules for counseling, agreement on joint sessions, and permission to share with both partners what information each has provided with no secrets kept by the pastor from either spouse. It also includes mutual agreement on any change that is to be initiated by the couple.¹¹

3. The first joint session is devoted to discussing and understanding the basic principle, that the most effective way to bring about change in a distressed marital relationship is to increase the amount of positive behavioral interaction between spouses.

4. Step four involves an activity called "caring days." This activity is calculated to motivate both partners to reach success in attaining their counseling objectives. These "caring days" are used by each spouse to demonstrate a type of commitment that is performed independently of the other spouse's actions or responses. Caring activities are based on a list of specific positive behaviors that each spouse desires of the other. A record is kept by each partner of the number and type of caring behaviors he or she offers each day. Ideally that would be between four and twenty behaviors.

5. Training the couple to commu-

nicate accurately, honestly, and constructively without negative misinterpretation or comment.

6. Behavioral contracting based on the *quid pro quo* principle—"something for something"—in which the couple exchange desired behaviors with one another. More on this later.

7. The couple learns important principles or strategies for effective mutual decision making.

8. The couple learns to maintain the positive changes that have taken place in their relationship. They establish rules to continue to grow positively. Follow-up will occur at four-month intervals, or as needed in order to gauge progress and to renegotiate, as needed, further change over time.¹²

A description of therapeutic techniques

With several decades of studies and research on the efficacy of behavioral marital therapy, it can be stated that this approach to treating marital discord is effective in most situations. It puts emphasis on initiating positive family activities and on teaching as well as implanting effective conflict resolution strategies, with communication training being the strongest part of the intervention.

For behavioral marital therapy to be used competently, five sets of clinical skills are needed: (1) inducing positive expectancies; (2) structuring; (3) instigation; (4) teaching; and (5) emotional nurturing. Each of these skills is evaluated by a set of intervention strategies which include interrupting couples when they deviate from a stated rule or preplanned agenda, involving the couple in a dialogue regarding why they are being interrupted, and training them to gradually regulate their own behavior through recognizing their own rule violations.¹³

Behavioral marital therapy advocates the importance of the cognition (thoughts) and emotions of marital functioning. Yet the primary focus has typically been on the couple's behav-

ior. So most therapeutic strategies of behavioral marital therapy rely largely on increasing the positive reinforcements and decreasing the negative interactions based on what each spouse finds subjectively pleasing. A major source for those rewards and costs for either partner is the behavior of their spouse.¹⁴

The use of contracts between spouses

Of particular interest are the contracts used in behavioral marital therapy. Contracts are written agreements that stipulate specific behavioral changes. Spouses state in detail what behaviors they want increased by their partner. This eliminates the excuse of not knowing what the other spouse wanted or intended. The expectation of immediate reciprocation is eliminated also. Ironically, this can increase the likelihood of spontaneous reciprocation and counter a couple's resistance to change.

Two types of behavioral exchange contracts are *quid pro quo*, referred to earlier, and *good faith* contracts.

Quid pro quo contracts give the couple a chance to say to one another in effect: "If I do this, will you do that?" It is a negotiated agreement made between them that as one partner does something positive (or ceases to do something negative) for the other, the other will do something of equivalent value for the one.

Good faith contracts are agreements that specify what one spouse agrees to do for the other spouse. These things are done regardless of how the other spouse behaves or responds. This contractual technique comes closer to reflecting the foundation of Christian behavior as stated in the golden rule of Matthew 7:12, which instructs a person to do to others what they would like to have done to themselves.

Termination

Termination is the final phase of behavioral marital therapy. It usually begins one or two sessions before the

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The wrong crowd

JAMES A. CRESS



Jesus did not heal every person.

Not every prayer was answered. Not every cripple walked. Even though Scripture describes Jesus healing one lame man at the pool of Bethesda, there is no record of every sick person leaving that place restored. Jesus must have passed by the crippled beggar at the temple's Gate Beautiful on numerous occasions without stopping. Only weeks after Christ's ascension was the beggar contacted by the church.

And His selection process follows no logical pattern. For example, if I were designing heaven's system for answering prayer requests, I would surely respect the desires of the apostle Paul who was informed not only that his thorn would not be removed, but that he should stop praying for deliverance and depend solely upon God's all-sufficient grace.

Jesus expects His followers to continue His own works. "Reaching out to the disabled community is part of evangelism," says Dr. Rosa T. Banks, Associate Secretary and Human Relations Director for North America's Adventist Church, and chair of the Commission for People with Disabilities. The commission has defined seven types of disabilities that must be accommodated by congregations: cognitive, hearing, hidden (i.e., chronic, inflammatory, and debilitating

diseases), mobility, psychiatric, speech, and visual. Further, many disabled members do not attend church, so ministry must be conducted with them in their homes.

Members must be sensitized to both the needs and the opportunities to welcome persons with disabilities and to utilize their capabilities in service. Disability Commission member Catherine Burks says, "Accessibility doesn't just mean ramps and physical aids. Those with disabilities need to be encouraged to use their spiritual gifts. Each time you do that, you lose more and more fear. Some change is not easy, but change can be for the better. Usually the change involves a struggle, but the struggle promotes development." Try inviting the disabled of your congregation to share their insights and to voice their opinions in how the church might minister more effectively. You could establish a local disability commission.

Jesus anticipates even greater works from the church. In fact, He promises the Holy Spirit's power to energize and accompany the church in performing the same mighty works that He accomplished. As you labor to effectively reach those who are disabled and to include them in all facets of church life and programming, God's blessing will accompany your efforts and His power will guarantee your success.

Jesus judges our treatment of the disabled. In the sobering reality of judgment, both the saved and the lost ask Jesus the same question. "When did we see You hungry, thirsty, naked, or in prison?" Neither group recognized that their ministry to or rejection of "the least of Jesus' brethren" was ministry to or rejection of Jesus, Himself.

Imagine that! In heaven's eyes, the wrong crowd just might be the right crowd! ■

Jesus was always "hanging out" with the wrong crowd. In fact, Jesus generally offended people because His behavior did not match their expectations of how ministry ought to proceed. They thought Messiah would associate with the high and mighty and lead a vast army to deliver Israel from the Romans. Instead, Jesus associated with the low and powerless and led a ragamuffin bunch of sinners and outcasts to deliver souls from Satan.

Not that He hadn't announced His intentions clearly. Quoting Isaiah and applying the prophecy to Himself, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

And when they comprehended that His ministry actually would follow this pattern, they sought to kill Him. Just as they were offended that Jesus hung out with the wrong crowd, so today many reject the reality that Jesus wants His church to recruit from, care for, and minister with the same bunch.

Jesus targeted the disabled. Moved with compassion by the needs of the multitudes, Jesus intentionally focused on those who were distressed, diseased, disabled, despised, and disenfranchised. He returned sight to the blind who themselves would extend light. He restored lame limbs and those newly-abled built belief in others. He resurrected dead bodies and created new born believers who, themselves, shared everlasting life. In loosing their physical pain and suffering, Jesus bound people with mighty cords of love to His own loving heart.

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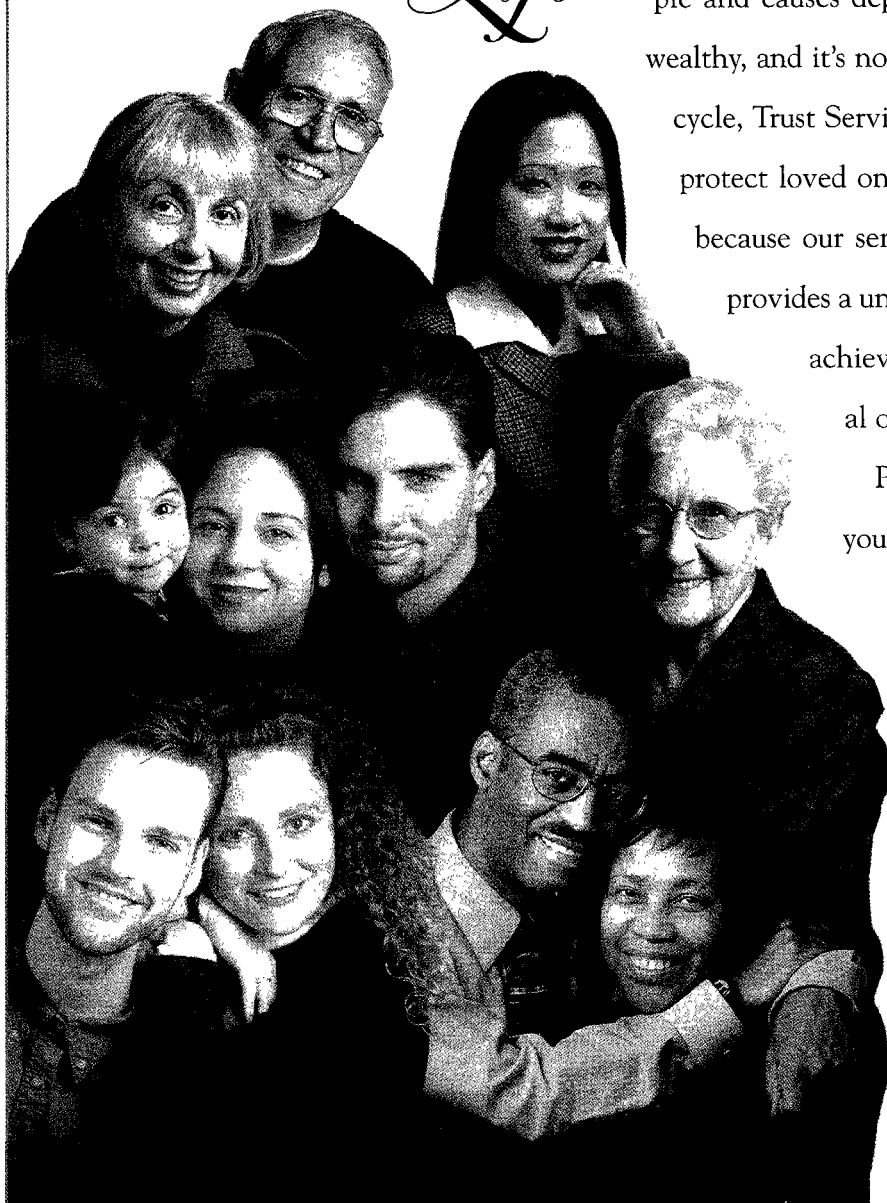
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Traction or distraction?

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pastor: "He pursues an agenda that centers around his own interests and for the majority of his time does not include his church or its people. Only occasionally does he show up for church committees and/or lay-led meetings. Rarely is he seen at conference-called pastors' meetings. His wife and family also see him very little."

"Let ministers and teachers remember that God holds them accountable to fill their office to the best of their ability, to bring into their work their very best powers. They are not to take up duties that conflict with the work God has given them."³

This pastor seemed to be unaware that he was accountable for the expenditure of his time and energy; for what was in fact properly required of him.

How can a minister stay focused in ministry?

An old preacher said to me early in my ministry, "Take a good walk around yourself regularly, Lloyd, and try to see and hear what others may

be seeing and hearing. It will be a most valuable walk."

Have you listened to yourself lately? Have you observed the focus of your ministry lately? Have you evaluated the influence and example of your life? Does it meet with your approval? Do you think it meets with God's approval? The answers to the above question could fill many pages. In brief I would say:

- ◆ Review regularly your sense of calling from God.

- ◆ Renew your consecration to God as His undershepherd (Phil. 3:7, 8).

- ◆ Every day of your life, seek to do God's will from your heart (Eph. 6:6).

- ◆ Let financial compensation take a back seat to your true and deep commitment to ministry for Christ.

- ◆ Focus on revival for the "saints" and a search for the lost and straying sheep and lambs.

- ◆ Study the Word deeply and keep at it until you can present soul-changing messages.

- ◆ Spend no time trying to politically please men, but concern yourself with pleasing God.

- ◆ If you have taken unto yourself a spouse, make his or her life and your marriage a top priority.

- ◆ If you and your spouse have brought children into the parsonage, let them be your first mission field.

- ◆ Never lose your sense of urgency about what life and ministry are about. We are getting a people ready for the coming of the Lord.

Paul's charge to the young man Timothy was, "Herald and preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable. [Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as a preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong.] And convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2, AMP). ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 365, 366.
- 2 ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 485, 487.
- 3 ———, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 271.

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Marital therapy

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final session between the couple and the counseling pastor. It should be affable and satisfactory, with the main goal of promoting commitment between the couple toward their marriage. Changes that have been made are solidified, and counseling ends.

During the termination phase four things happen: (1) The time period between sessions is increased as the counseling relationship nears an end; (2) a written evaluation is given describing what gains have been made and suggestions of what the couple needs to continue working on in their relationship; (3) a verbal evaluation takes place with the cou-

ple; and (4) the couple and the pastor end the counseling relationship according to the time frame that they contracted for in the beginning.

There will no doubt be a certain amount of ambivalence in the termination process. Yet as the counseling pastor moves toward termination, it becomes an opportunity to inspire the couple to continue working together toward further improving their relationship.

The termination process is also an opportunity to help the couple strengthen their relationship with God, who is able to sustain their efforts and safeguard their home against the attacks of Satan. ■

1 I. I. Goldenberg and H. Goldenberg, *Family Therapy:*

An Overview (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1991).

2 E. L. Worthington, *Marriage Counseling: A Christian Approach to Counseling Couples* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

3 Goldenberg and Goldenberg.

4 S. L. Sayers, D. H. Baucom, T. G. Sher, R. L. Weiss, and R. E. Heyman, "Constructive Engagement, Behavioral Marital, and Changes in Marital Satisfaction," *Behavioral Assessment* 13 (1991): 25-49.

5 Worthington; Goldenberg and Goldenberg.

6 Ibid.

7 Worthington.

8 N. S. Jacobson, "Toward Enhancing the Efficacy of Marital Therapy and Marital Therapy Research," *Journal of Family Psychology* 4 (1991) 4:373-393.

9 Goldenberg and Goldenberg; Gottman.

10 Sayers, Baucom, Sher, Weiss, and Heyman; K. Hahlweg, and H. J. Markman, "Effectiveness of Behavioral Marital Therapy: Empirical Status of Behavioral Techniques in Preventing and Alleviating Marital Distress," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 56 (1988) 3: 440-447.

11 Plachaty; Goldenberg and Goldenberg.

12 Ibid.

13 Jacobson.

14 Worthington.

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