

# MINISTRY

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## Sinners in the Hands of God

IN  
EVERY  
ISSUE

Letters

3

Editorial

4

Dateline

28

Pastor's Pastor

30

## 5 Sinners in the hands of God

*Are there redemptive purposes that are served by God subjecting the lost to varying "degrees" of punishment in the "lake of fire" at the end of the age?*

Woodrow W. Whidden

## 9 Descending into administration

*A "must read" article for those who aspire to "higher" office.*

Ken Crawford

## 12 Being the message

*Second Corinthians 3:2, 3 teaches us the truest form of evangelizing others.*

Cindy Lou Bailey

## 14 Pastoral care during life passages

*How can we acknowledge significant events in the lives of our church members?*

Daniel Schramm

## 17 Blogging: a new way to share your faith

*There are countless ways of doing evangelism. Why not try this one?*

Marty Thurber and Josue Sanchez

## 20 Listening to your listeners: why effective preachers are attentive to verbal and nonverbal feedback

*Is preaching more like a one-way street or a two-lane highway?*

Derek J. Morris

## 22 The final push

*As Jesus needed affirmation when He neared the end of His earthly race, so also do we—as we approach the finish line.*

Gerald A. Klingbeil

## 25 Faith and science: a personal story

*A physicist shares his thoughts and his faith.*

Ben Clausen

# MINISTRY

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# IT MOTIVATED ME TO DO SOMETHING I HAD LONGED TO DO.

## Preaching effectively without notes

I very much appreciated the article “Preaching Effectively Without Notes” (October 2006) by Derek Morris. I am a pastor’s wife, and I have only preached four times as a lay preacher. On one occasion our head elder needed to be away at the last minute, and so with the five steps on how to preach effectively without notes still fresh in my mind, I prepared a sermon. During the next couple of days, although very busy with my two young children, I thought of the major moves of my sermon. When I preached, it went well and was well received! The article was very well written and practical. It motivated me to do something I had longed to do.

—Sheila Beaudoin, pastor’s wife, Peace River, Alberta, Canada.

Dr. Derek Morris’ article, “Preaching Effectively Without Notes” (October 2006), served both as a confirmation of and as a challenge to my pulpit ministry. As a former homiletics student of Dr. Morris at Southern Adventist University, I already knew the value he places upon preaching without notes. It was required of his students in their second semester of preaching. Convinced of its benefits in communicating the message of Scripture, upon entering into full-time pastoral ministry, I committed myself to continuing this practice. However, it wasn’t long before other demands of ministry took precedence in my weekly calendar and I, once again, found myself dependent upon detailed notes in the pulpit.

For the past five years I have served as an associate pastor and, as such, only preach once, sometimes twice, per month. This schedule allows me to

invest more time in sermon preparation and, in theory, makes it “easier” to preach without notes. Approximately one year ago, I made the decision to return to this discipline. After I preached eight to ten sermons without notes, one of the church members shared with me that he had really been receiving a blessing from the sermons that I had been preaching. He even went as far as to draw a comparison between my earlier preaching (“sermons” was his word) and my preaching over the past several months. He described the difference as “preaching more from your heart.” Truth is that I pour my heart into every sermon I prepare and preach. The only change of any significance that I had made in my preaching was returning to the discipline of preaching without notes.

Dr. Morris challenged me 12 years ago in preaching class, and he has challenged me again in his recent *Ministry* article. The five steps that he has outlined are not only effective when followed but practical for the busy pastor. While I am not as consistent as I wish to be, I have found the key to be steps one and two. Getting an early start and knowing what you want to say early in the week allows the sermon to become a part of you as you “mull it over” and “massage” it during the rest of the week. My greatest challenge is getting this early start.

Recognizing that everyone’s church or district is different and schedules vary as widely as do our churches, some may find the process to preach effectively without notes more challenging than others do. Out of my own experience I have become convinced that it is a worthy challenge. Anything that we, as

leaders of God’s people, can do to more effectively communicate the message of God’s Word—it can do nothing but enhance our ministry and thereby lead people closer to Jesus.

—Michael Hill, associate pastor, Spartanburg, South Carolina, United States.

## Doing theology

Thank you for your timely editorial, “The Place, the Outcome, and the Future of Theology in the Church” (October 2006). Pastor Satelmajer presents several areas where theology is *done*, including the worship service, Sabbath School, and schools.

To get a point across, an interactive approach is preferable to the lecture approach. The Sabbath School class is best in this regard. Sermons are probably the worst, lacking any feedback at all in most cases. In some seminars, questions are invited, but it is impossible to explore a viewpoint or an issue when a number of people want to ask questions.

I mention these things only to propose a venue that is little used by the denomination. That is the discussion forum on the Internet. Every participant can fully present his view. There is opportunity for feedback. The participant is always encouraged to read all that others have said.

A serious Bible student, pastor, or scholar would feel welcomed in a forum and could make a real contribution. The presence of a knowledgeable “teacher in Israel” is an inspiration and a help to those of us who struggle with theological concepts.

—Hubert F. Sturges, M.D., retired physician and missionary to Ethiopia. ■

# Authorities, anxieties, approval, and appreciation

WILLIE E. HUCKS II



**“W**hen you think about the word *judgment*, what thoughts come to mind?” I asked my Christian Beliefs class. As a rule, the answer would be negative. Occasionally, however, a brave voice would state the opposite. My goal in broaching the subject was to emphasize the truth that judgment, whether divine or human, when correctly conducted, is the best thing that could happen.

But if I had been asked that question 25 years ago, I also might have answered negatively. Indeed, today my answer would be twofold. Theologically, I know God’s judgment is right, for it sets the record straight and exonerates His saints because they have accepted the atoning merits of the blood of Jesus Christ. Deep down, however, I still have some fear because I know there are some spiritual battles that I fight and lose more often than I win.

Do I still have that childhood image of a God whose patience wears thin with me because I seem to be making very little progress with some of my spiritual growth issues—even though my theological understanding tells me God loves me and is unwilling that I should perish?

## Authorities

Perhaps I am guilty of ascribing my views of civil law enforcement upon the Divine Lawgiver. How often have I taken my foot off the accelerator when I saw a police officer in the distance—even if I was driving within the speed limit? And if the traffic flow is heavy and an officer pulls onto the roadway, my paranoia convinces me that of all the people the officer could attempt to stop, the officer is coming for me. Or how often have I seen police officers endangering their own lives to help a stranded motorist, and I thought that their doing so was the exception rather than the rule? I fail to realize that police officers aren’t gleefully

looking for troublemakers. Indeed, they would be thrilled if their days and nights were free of conflict.

## Anxieties

Or perhaps my anxieties arise because I have seen judgment misapplied. History is replete with accounts of those who can afford the best legal counsel and escape the judicial process with nothing more than the proverbial “slap on the wrist.” They may not have even received that much—while the innocent are, more times than we wish to admit, convicted based on circumstantial evidence and the testimony of unreliable witnesses. Often people have come to me and said, “Has anyone ever told you that you look like . . . ?” And I say to myself, “I hope no one who looks like me commits a crime, because the authorities might come looking for me!” As I write this editorial I am in a hotel room more than two thousand miles away from home, in unfamiliar surroundings. No one in this beautiful city knows me, and that can add to my anxieties. What if I were to be falsely accused of some crime? (Not that I expect something to legally go awry.)

## Approval

But if, for some stranger reason, I was brought before the criminal authorities, I should not fear judgment. Why not? Because if I can account for where I was and what I was doing, then I should quickly be exonerated. At this point judgment would become a process that

leads to my approval; therefore, I should welcome judgment with open arms.

While I still wouldn’t cherish the possibility of human judgment (since something could go wrong), I’m glad I don’t have to worry about God’s judgment, for God does not err.

Some do wonder, though, about the justice of God in administering the negative elements of judgment—better known as hellfire or destruction. Is it fair for some to burn longer than others? Why do those eternally lost individuals even have to experience such a cruel ending? Couldn’t they just die and no longer exist? In our lead article, Woodrow W. Whidden explores the justice of God as He passes judgment upon the unrepentant.

## Appreciation

A lot of things about God’s judgment I still grapple with. Most notably:

- how great the grace of God must be—that it can reach down to rescue and redeem me
- that He actually is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26, NASB).
- that God made Jesus “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21, NASB).

Knowing that Jesus bore the judgment of eternal death for me, that He experienced the negative elements of judgment for me, that He endangered His own life to help this poor stranded sinner—all this elicits my appreciation. And if His sacrifice elicits your appreciation, then why don’t you, along with me, live each day that He gives us His breath as a life of steadfast devotion? ■

Tell us what you think about this editorial. Email us at [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

# Sinners in the hands of God

Woodrow W. Whidden



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Many earnest Christians have expressed sincere concern over the fairness of God in His executions of retributive justice in hell. Of course, Seventh-day Adventists have been in the forefront of the opposition to the interpretation of hell that teaches an eternity of conscious, endless physical, mental, and emotional torture for the lost. The major alternative position to the never-ending torture teaching has been technically referred to as annihilationism. In other words, God will ultimately bring an end to His just judgments on rebellious sinners, and they will be annihilated, consigned to an eternity of unconscious nonexistence.

Somewhat similar to the opposition directed at the traditional doctrine of eternal conscious torment is the criticism aimed at a key aspect of the traditional annihilationist position that there will be varying degrees of punishment for the damned before they finally subside into an eternity of nonexistence. A classic expression of this position comes from one of Adventism's most respected advocates of the annihilationist position:

"The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. . . . Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far

greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches."<sup>1</sup>

What disturbs many annihilationist believers regarding the interpretation of Ellen White is the suggestion that God's retributive justice seems vindictive, not redemptive.<sup>2</sup> What does God seek to prove if no more hope exists for those who have been judged to be deserving of the destiny of hell? If there is no hope for corrective reform of the condemned, why should God want to give the appearance of brutally punishing them? In other words, what good could come out of the relatively protracted suffering of the lost?

## Hell: merciful or punitive?

Are redemptive purposes served by God subjecting the lost to varying degrees of punishment in hell? Or should the only just annihilationist alternative be that God will immediately and utterly destroy all the vast hosts of the damned with one withering stroke of righteous judgment? For those whose sensibilities find degrees of punishment utterly reprehensible, perhaps there is a less crude version of annihilation.

A title variation on Jonathan Edwards' (in)famous sermon follows: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." While not wanting to appear flippant about this very sobering subject, it appears to me that the critics of the varying degrees of punishment position are arguing for a position that could justly be called "Sinners in the Hands of a Humane God."<sup>3</sup>

Such an interpretive scenario envisions God orchestrating an end-time lethal injection<sup>4</sup> version of hell. He will reluctantly begin the sad process by first administering some sort of collective anesthetic, which will then be quickly followed by a gently administered, collective lethal injection to the now-drowsy throng. Then, when all have breathed their last breath, their bodies will be consigned to some nether region for fiery incineration. And finally, the whole process will be completed with the sweeping away of their ashes into utter oblivion.

What can be made of this seeming dilemma that appears to impute very unbecoming attitudes of vindictive wrath to a merciful and just God? Should traditional annihilationists exchange their vision of varying degrees of punishment for a version of collective, instantaneous destruction

for the hopelessly lost? Or possibly the question could be put this way: Are God's mercy and justice best served in the infliction of varying degrees of retributive judgment, or should such an infliction throw out the "degrees of justice inflicted" interpretation and replace it with some version of an instantaneous, annihilating blow?

revolves around the key organizing biblical perspective known as the great controversy theme.

The core issue at stake in this protracted, cosmic contest has to do with God: in His loving nature being able to demonstrate that He is fit to be the moral Governor of the universe. Triune love has been brought under the most

hope of possible reform. Furthermore, human justice seems justified when it differentiates between the differing social impacts that certain crimes have and concludes that some crimes deserve more severe punishment than do others. Thus it only seems fair to expect that God will do the same thing on a cosmic scale—passing out different degrees of

## THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CALVARY AND THE END-TIME HELL WILL BE THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LOST WILL BE CONSIDERABLY LESS IN DEGREE AND INTENSITY THAN THE INFINITE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD.

First of all, I sincerely recognize the concerns of those who are troubled by the thought that God will administer varying degrees and amounts of punishment. I do feel the pained reactions of those who have struggled with the seeming injustice of the traditional annihilationist position. I, too, was somewhat staggered when first confronted with the well-meant objections to this doctrine. Especially did I feel the initial force of the questions, What good does it do the wicked since there is no chance for their redemption at this late date? Are they not finished for eternity? So why not just put them quickly out of their misery?

The first point to be made has to do with the question of overall perspective. Especially for Seventh-day Adventist annihilationists, the key question does not center on whether God will or will not annihilate the persistent rejecters of His graced salvation (He will), but which alternative method has (1) the best biblical support and (2) seems most consistent with the character and nature of God's love. The latter point

severe test and scrutiny in the unfolding of this drama. Can God's love manifest a sustained demonstration that will effectively show that justice and mercy can redemptively negotiate the delicate, balancing challenges that sin and Satan have hurled at His redemptive love? Now, with these preliminary perspectives in view, let's directly confront the issue.

### Several perspectives on justice

First, I would offer the following reasons from natural law and the rational analogies of the best paradigms of human justice. Though imperfectly administered, the vast majority of our experience in human justice testifies that, according to the most basic canons of common sense, the degrees-of-punishment position is the fairest way to proceed in the restrained administration of the just executions of retribution.<sup>5</sup>

For instance, normal human beings think it perfectly OK to mete out serious retributive justice to those who are demonstrably hopeless psychopaths—even though they are normally beyond

punishment (determined by the degrees of the heinousness of the convicted's unrepented sins).

And why does God do this? Most obviously He does this in order to maintain His public justice. By this I mean that God evenhandedly deals out more punishment for the greater sins and less severe retribution for lesser sins so that public order can be sustained. Is it going too far to suggest that recollections of such evenhanded justice will be perpetual memorials to our tragic experiment with sin? Will the nail prints in the hands of our Lord not only tell of His infinite mercy but also implicitly recall such a grievous and costly experiment with rebellion?

While Jesus had much to say about hell that has been contested by both the endless torment and annihilationist advocates, the one thing that He made abundantly clear in His teaching concludes that there will be varying degrees of punishment. The very words of Jesus recorded in Luke 12:45–48 are unmistakably straightforward: Some

servants will be beaten “with many stripes” and others with “few.”

Yet, despite the clarity of Jesus’ teaching, many sincere believers go on to suggest that God’s destruction of the evildoers cannot serve as a deterrent. This is obviously due to the fact that when hell transpires, there will be no further switching sides of loyalty between the claims of Christ and Satan. Yes, I fully agree there is no further need for any deterrent effect that may emanate from the signal judgments of God. This still does not, however, negate the need for God to demonstrate to the unfallen and redeemed beings of the universe the fullness and fairness of His justice—even right down to the last detail. This comes as part and parcel of His needed demonstration of the morality and fairness of His governmental justice—if He is to rule by moral suasion, not with an iron fist!

The great controversy theme plays its important role here: The devil has charged God with injustice in the administration of His love. God’s overall response demonstrates, in the various facets of Christ’s work as righteous and just Judge, that He has been totally just in both the makings and the outworkings of the provisions of His salvation plan. This is why God, in His patient, unfolding demonstrations, has a pre-Advent judgment. Here, He clearly presents public evidence to unfallen beings in support of His reasons for redeeming whomsoever He will at the Second Coming. Furthermore, this explains the reason why He will have a millennial judgment—so that He can once more give compelling public evidence to the redeemed as to why He will destroy the wicked in the lake of fire at the last judgment in the end of the millennium. And, in the end, He will demonstrate to all His loyal subjects (the unfallen angels, free-will beings of the unfallen worlds, and the redeemed of all ages) His justice in executing some with “few stripes” and others with “many.”

## The just Judge

Before we move on to our final considerations, three other closely related issues cry out for attention.

1. Many are troubled with the thought that we with Jesus must decide “the portion which the wicked must suffer.”<sup>6</sup> All Ellen White is attempting to communicate in this statement is an explanation of the words of Paul—“the saints shall judge the world” and “we shall judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3, KJV). Paul here does not detail what he means—and I am reluctant to put words into his mouth. But it would seem that, in the light of all that God has revealed, Paul says that God will carry us with Him in the decisions that He makes about the final judgments upon the lost. Most certainly the redeemed do not have any final, determining say in all of this, but as always, God seems anxious to carry us along with Him through the means of moral suasion as He metes out His judgments on the wicked.

2. Others are troubled with the Bible’s use of the word *vengeance* (Isa. 34:8).<sup>7</sup> Many have wondered if that word means “just punishment.” Most likely, yes! The word *vengeance* must be understood very much like the word *wrath*. It means the execution of God’s inexorable opposition to that which is contrary to His nature of love. For millennia God’s mercy has manifestly tempered His justice. But a day will come when there will finally be justice no longer tempered with the restraints of loving mercy. It will still be a merciful justice in the sense that God extends to the whole universe (including the damned) one final, merciful favor by putting to death those who refuse to accept His mercy and who would threaten the harmony of the universe that will once more be governed by the principles of freely chosen love. Yet God still executes this merciful justice in a totally just way.

This latter point deserves a few further lines of comment. As has been pointed out elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> if God is the source of all life, His is the ultimate court of resort when it comes to the final determination as to who will continue to benefit from His beneficent, life-giving power. Try as they might, many well-meaning Christians attempt to relieve God of the onus of His role as the executioner of retributive justice.<sup>9</sup> But whether He executes such justice passively or

actively, He is still the Sovereign Lord of life and death. It matters little, in the final analysis, if one pulls the plug of a life support system from a dependent patient or simply administers a lethal injection. The results of justice are the same since the One who is the only source of life and just justice is the same Person. We are all on life support when it comes to sin. If we reject the offer of eternal life support, the only alternative will be eternal separation from the Life Supporter and the result will be endless death.

3. What does the suffering of the lost actually entail? Is it primarily physical, mental/emotional, or social? The answers to these questions are not totally clear. But we can be reasonably assured, in the case of our Lord, that it was both mental/emotional and physical. There is no doubt that His somewhat protracted suffering on the cross involved the most intense experience of physical pain. But was this the main burden that He had to bear? If the normal experience of crucifixion tells us anything, the physical suffering of Jesus was relatively brief. And this strongly suggests that the main cause of His physical death was the intense mental anguish that resulted from the judgments of God that fell upon His sinless, yet sin- and guilt-bearing Son. To put it bluntly, Jesus died of a broken heart because of our sins that He bore for us. The wrath of God’s just judgments on sin tore out the heart of the Son of God. Most certainly His anguish was primarily mental/emotional, and the most telling aspect of this pain was the grief that resulted from a broken love relationship with the Father (also suggesting profound social suffering).

## Jesus’ sufferings: a type of end-time hell?

Now, what does this say about the varied types of suffering that the lost will experience? The answer seems simple: Whatever Jesus suffered at Calvary will be the same type of suffering that the lost will experience in the end-time hell. The only difference between Calvary and the end-time hell will be that the sufferings of the lost will be



considerably less in degree and intensity than the infinite sufferings of our Lord. And this leads us to our final argument for the differing degrees of protracted suffering experienced by those who have rejected or neglected the sufferings of the vicarious atonement made by the slain Lamb.

Not only should we ponder the lessons of sweet reason, the broader perspective of the Bible, and the teachings of our Lord, but we would be remiss if we failed to ponder the implications of Christ's experience of sacrificial atonement. The Cross speaks with uncanny power and poignancy to our present question.

One of the final arguments that the doubters of the varying degrees of punishment position bring forward is drawn from the metaphors of "quick destruction"—such as stubble being quickly consumed. Most certainly there will be quick destruction, but does that mean that each case should receive the same instantaneous execution? We most certainly cannot now clearly divine God's justice in every case. In fact, Christians should always withhold judgment as to how God will dispose of specific, individual cases. Why not, in our limited understanding, leave it up to God to work out the details of His love?

And yet, patience notwithstanding, I am sure of one thing about the soon-to-be-revealed executions of His justice: That which was relatively brief for Christ will seem quite protractedly long for the lost. And one may appropriately ask, How so?

The final point inherent in the previous paragraphs related to our Lord's experience of Calvary has provoked an interesting line of thought on the issue of differing degrees of punishment. Possibly the best way to bring closure to our reflections on this issue is to carefully ponder the following questions:

Why did God the Father choose a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross when He could have done it by a beheading, a noose, a sword, a

gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?

The experience of the divine/human Christ (through the dark hours of Gethsemane and the utter darkness that enveloped Him there, and on to the cross and the ultimate darkness that consumed Him there) speaks with unparalleled and compelling power to our dull senses that sin is much more horrible to God than any of us could ever imagine. As has been previously mentioned, the death of Christ was caused not so much by physical anguish as by mental anguish.

This will essentially be the same experience of the wicked in the lake of fire, though of a more limited nature than that of the wounded and bleeding Lamb of God. And most certainly, the reason for their lingering death is that their hearts will not be broken by sin the way Christ's was. They grieve only the loss of their lives, not the horror of their sins. Christ grieved the opposite way. He was revolted by our sin, yet loved us unto death and did not love His own life. What a powerful reversal for us. Redemptive suffering always seems relatively brief, while the judgments of just retribution have always seemed unending to the damned!

## Conclusion

Will there be varying degrees of retributive suffering for the lost? I will leave it to each person to ponder the evidences that have been articulated in this essay. I rest my case with this final word: When pondering this question, never forget the profound lessons of Gethsemane and Calvary. For our issues, the lessons seem to be this: The greater one's revulsion to sin, the quicker will be the finale of hell. The dimmer one's view of sin, the longer lasting will be the self-inflicted experience of God's reluctant and merciful but unavoidable retributive justice. Thanks be to God for the surprisingly brief bout of suffering that made provision for the salvation of the whole human race! Second death, "be not proud!"<sup>10</sup> Hell exists as the only inevitable destiny for those who refuse the solace of the surprisingly sudden death of Calvary. ■

1 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1911), 673.

2 The original inspiration for this essay arose from a friendly letter exchange between the author and Dr. Henry and Lorraine Gerber of British Columbia, Canada. This exchange took place in January 2003, and the present article contains the expanded gist of my reply to these honest searchers for truth.

3 And most certainly, the annihilationist position is very humane when contrasted with the utterly reprehensible alternative of the endless torment interpretation of hell.

4 The reason I chose the lethal injection alternative is that it seems to be the most painless (at least physically) version of modern alternatives for capital punishment. Hanging, the electric chair, the gas chamber, firing squads, and beheadings all have, to one degree or another, very unseemly connotations. Hanging is very much associated with public executions and lynchings (especially the infamous racist lynchings of Black Americans during the "Jim Crow" era). The electric chair conjures up visions of smoking corpses, charred beyond recognition (in my native Florida, the electric chair at the old Raiford State prison was wryly dubbed "Old Sparky"). Firing squads are commonly associated with repressive, dictatorial regimes the world over. And beheadings are all too easily associated with, for example, the cruelties of the crimes of the insurgency in Iraq (not to mention the very unedifying vision of bloody, severed heads plunking into buckets at the base of the French guillotine). Yes, lethal injection seems to be the least reprehensible and most humane of all forms of capital punishment.

5 In essence, the argument asks, If the almost universal canons of human justice mean anything, will we say that humans are to be judged more righteous than God if He does not administer varying degrees of just retribution?

6 White, *The Great Controversy*, 661.

7 Compare Isaiah's use of this vivid language with Ellen White's application of the same terminology in *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1947), 429.

8 Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1995), 49–53; Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, John Reeve, *The Trinity* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002), 260–71.

9 For a ready collection of Ellen G. White's statements on the passive and active executions of God's justice, see the published compilation of her thoughts titled *Last Day Events* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1992), 240–44.

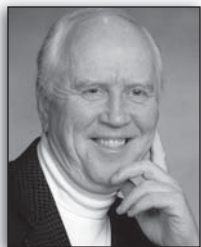
10 This compelling phrase is taken from the book title of John Widener's poignant story of his son's heroic but losing fight against cancer, *Death Be Not Proud* (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1960).

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# Descending into administration

Ken Crawford



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Let me be honest. For years, somewhere in the crevices of my heart, lay buried a secret desire to be a leader, to try my hand at church administration—perhaps because of the high pedestal on which I pictured leadership, or maybe I just wanted the challenge of leading and influencing the future in a larger setting than the local church. It can't be because of pride of recognition or the allurements of the position. Well, I would like to think that my motives were not carnal, but . . .

Leadership did come my way, and I am now celebrating the second anniversary. No, *celebrating* is not the right word—*reflecting on* or *personally debriefing on* is better.

After spending the last 10 years of my 25 years of service in pastoring, I was elected a conference president. I have not climbed any mountain to survey the valley below, but from where I am and from the experience of the past two years, I can compare the role of the president with the role of a pastor. I have found several downsides that were unforeseen.

*I no longer study as deeply as I did as a pastor.* In my years of ministry, I found my greatest delight in deep study of the Word. The power of transformational biblical knowledge and the changes that took place in my own thinking amazed me. Not infrequently I had to pause and bow before the Spirit in grateful acknowledgment of His leading.

Every Sabbath people were waiting expectantly with a question: "Is there any word

from the Lord?" (see Jer. 37:17). They needed a perspective from heaven to understand their yesterday and to direct their tomorrow. Spiritual instruction from the pulpit to influence and guide the minds of people comprises one of the vital roles of a pastor that cannot be understated. The weight of that responsibility drove me to a deeper and ever-deeper life of prayer and study. The Bible became a living oracle of God with its living power coming from hours of poring over the Bible and commentaries. It was both a revelation and a mystery to me as I sensed my mind constantly opening to the wonder of the plan of salvation.

*I am losing the ability to preach.* As an administrator, I find that the demands of meetings and travel usurp the time and the ability needed for deep study. I find I am scrambling (looking over old sermons) for something that will feed the people. An elderly pastor, who had dedicated himself to a life of shepherding the flock, once said, "Always drink from a running stream; never try to give the people water from a stagnant pool." How seriously I took that counsel in my ministry; if my heart didn't burn within me, I didn't preach. But somehow now I find myself repeating the same sermon from church to church until even my faithful wife complains.

*I am growing out of touch with the spiritual heart of the people.* There is no higher calling than pastoral ministry. You are a surgeon of the soul. Your calling, like that of Moses, encompasses the guiding of your people to the borders of heavenly Canaan. As an emissary of heaven, you are called to live with and minister to the people. This calling embraces the most challenging, yet the most rewarding calling on earth.

In many ways, ministry is much harder than administration. To pastor the flock means living with the saints on a day-to-day basis. You grow to know their weakness and their downsides, but you love them anyway. These saints/sinners are your family, and you forge relationships that are deep and lasting.

In administration, people treat you differently. With the respect for the office comes a distance in relationships. Not intentionally, but slowly. That's why departmental leaders and administrators tend to socialize together; they feel that pedestal, and they sense that they are different.

*I find it much more of a challenge to build an evangelistic base.* As a pastor, I made it a priority to constantly try to expand my outreach base. I joined ministerial associations, service clubs such as Rotary International, and as many other

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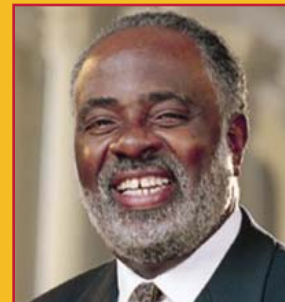
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**Randy Roberts** was born in South America of missionary parents. Until college age, the majority of his life was spent in Latin American countries. Dr. Roberts has extensive experience as a church pastor, hospital chaplain, marriage and family therapist, and lecturer in religious studies. Randy has fulfilled speaking invitations to many varied audiences, both nationally and internationally. He has written articles for various publications and has authored the book *The End Is Near (Again)*. Currently Dr. Roberts serves as senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Roberts and his wife, Anita, have a son, Austin, and a daughter, Miranda.



**Dr. Gordon Moyes** recently retired after 50 years of preaching, the last 27 at Wesley Mission in Sydney, Australia. During this ministry, his church grew to be the largest in Australia with 4,200 paid staff ministering in 500 buildings. Moyes became the first minister in the world to raise and spend over one billion dollars in one church. He also served as a national television and radio minister for over forty years. Since retirement, Moyes has been elected as a state senator and is an advisor to the Australian prime minister, who describes him as “the epitome of Christian leadership.” Moyes, who has authored fifty-six books, has also received highest national honors including Companion of the Order of Australia (2002) and the New South Wales Father of the Year (1986).



**Robert Smith Jr.** serves as professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama. Previously he served as Carl E. Bates Associate Professor of Christian Preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he received the 1996 Findley B. Edge Award for Teaching Excellence. An ordained Baptist minister, Smith served as pastor of the New Mission Missionary Baptist Church for twenty years before returning to complete his Ph.D. He has also authored a study of ministry in the African American church, *Preparing for Christian Ministry*, and co-edited *A Mighty Long Journey*. His research interests include the place of passion in preaching, the literary history of African American preaching, Christological preaching, and theologies of preaching. He received Beeson's Teacher of the Year Award in 2005. Dr. Smith and his wife, Wanda, are the parents of four adult children.

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organizations as I could. My goal was to build a base to touch the lives of people outside of my circle, and these organizations were always wonderful avenues for building relationships. These contacts brought many evangelistic opportunities. In administration, the demands of travel to churches and other meetings do not allow that luxury, and these demands do not even allow for a wide social base on a personal level.

Organization and structure naturally evolve to a preoccupation of how well we are managing. When the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formed, the average age of workers was 23 years, and that included the elderly Joseph Bates, whose age pushed the average up dramatically. But these young people had vision along with a healthy skepticism for organization and a clear purpose of God's plan for

I am beginning to see the wisdom in that statement. Don't misunderstand me. Our times cry for strong leadership in the church with the challenge to place the best in positions of leadership. As I have come in contact with leadership at various levels of our church, I am convinced that God has done just that. I am ever amazed and humbled to see the spiritual focus and sincere dedication of our leaders. Most

## WITH THE RESPECT FOR THE OFFICE COMES A DISTANCING IN RELATIONSHIPS. NOT INTENTIONALLY, BUT SLOWLY.

I have observed that in settings where a large number of Adventists live or work, that social base constantly shrinks. While living on college campuses, I found this to be starkly true; so many build a social network that causes them to keep very much to themselves. Professors, students, and members in general tend to introvert into their own closed social network and therefore lose their evangelistic touch.

*I sense a change in my cognitive thinking.* I have recently noticed subtle changes in my thinking. Perhaps it's because I spend so much of my time dealing with various issues. A number of years ago, as a departmental director, I walked into the office of my conference president, who was staring at several dozen notes of phone calls he had to return. As he looked up he said, "I wish I knew that one of these calls I am going to make would be positive and uplifting."

The job description of administration includes casting a vision and leading the conference toward lofty goals and high ideals, but the vast majority of the work deals with personal and mundane issues. Dealing with problems of this nature on a constant basis subtly changes your thinking. You drift from spiritual counselor and mentor to manager.

them. In the 160-plus years since, we have become institutionalized and successful—preoccupied with what we are *doing*.

I find myself counting the strength of spiritual Israel by numbers. I have become preoccupied with baptisms, tithe gain, attendance records, and formulas to indicate growth success. I am reluctant to mention this, because I don't want, in any way, to downplay the priority of our mission. Ellen White tells us, "The saving of human souls is an interest infinitely above any other line of work in our world." Evangelism is our calling and what we are all about, but I have noticed how easily we all become preoccupied with measuring how we are doing. I find an internal (perhaps external as well) pressure to cross over a subtle line of demarcation that divides corporate success from spiritual calling.

### The role of a pastor

As H. M. S. Richards Jr. reflected on his father's philosophy at my ordination service, he challenged, "Never descend into administration; there is no higher calling than the role of a pastor. Don't succumb to the pressure to slide into administration; it has been the undoing of too many good pastors."

followers of God don't yearn for the high place when they are reluctantly thrust into leadership. The fact that they're in leadership represents a call from God to use their gifts in this capacity. However, the further away leadership is removed from the role of pastoral ministry, the more they lose the ability to understand their role. Perhaps there is wisdom in the concept of a seven-year Jubilee at which all administrators and theology professors are cycled back into ministry to sharpen their skills and reprioritize their focus.

Even as I clearly sense God's call to this position of leadership, I am beginning to enjoy the challenges that accompany that role. However, because no higher calling on earth exists than the role of a pastor, looking to move up the corporate ladder may not be all you may think it is. ■

\* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1923), 293.

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# Being the message

Cindy Lou Bailey



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Pigeons have been carrying messages of peace and hope since the day the dove brought the olive leaf back to Noah. In ancient European history, they were seen as saviors during a siege. Not only could they carry messages outside the wall, but because the birds rapidly reproduce, humans could eat squab (half-grown pigeons) in order to survive the siege.

During the world wars, the United States Army had a very large carrier pigeon program. This military secret as to how they trained pigeons to “home” (fly back and forth between two sites) still exists. Pigeons braved enemy fire, and several continued on after being hit by bullets while carrying their message—sometimes saving the day. G.I. Joe was a pigeon that saved over one thousand men when he carried a message through enemy fire—even after the loss of one eye.

Although since World War II communication technology has advanced beyond the use of birds, people still use pigeons as messengers. But rather than carrying a message, they have become the message. The pure white dove version is used today at weddings to symbolize peace. They are also set free at funerals as a sign of hope. Disneyland has a flock of white birds that they release every day in their ceremonies.

## A changing world

We live in a changing world, and while our message as Christians remains the same, our

means of carrying it needs to change. According to the apostle Paul, we always were intended to *be* a message rather than *have* a message. He writes, “Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you. Christ himself wrote it—not with ink, but with God’s living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives—and we publish it” (2 Cor. 3:2, 3, *The Message*). This “publication” comes about as we live our daily lives—living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We live in a world that values authenticity. When people see that the lives of Christians are different from what we are preaching, it turns them off to the gospel and brings reproach upon the name of Christ. On the other hand, because the world values genuineness or being real, they are ready to hear about anything that makes a difference in life and can be seen as authentic. Some strive to give a politically correct message, but with our society shifting away from political correctness toward honesty and truth, it’s time that we, like the pigeon, went from carrying the message to being the message.

Carrying a message means the message that you bear may not be your own. You could be carrying it for some sort of remuneration while not necessarily believing or adhering to it. Carriers of a message might not even know the message. Being a message, on the other hand, means that people get the message by your life, by the sum of your words and actions, by who you are and what your values mean. Being a message involves your total character and how you connect with the people whom you are trying to reach.

With connection vital to being a message, you can sometimes carry a message without being personally involved or caring about those you are giving a message to—in order to *be* a message, you have to come close to those with whom you have contact. Jesus understood what it meant to *be* a message. We are told that, “Jesus did this very work. He came close to those whom he desired to benefit.”<sup>1</sup> If you want to be of assistance to another, you have to connect with that person. A preacher aloof from the people often fails to benefit them, but Jesus cared about the hearts of those He sought to help.

## Being in action

As a hospital chaplain intern, I am learning what it means to *be* a message. Before I began my internship I asked myself, “What will I say to the family of someone who has died?” As I entered room after room, each with distinct yet

BEING A MESSAGE, ON THE OTHER HAND, MEANS THAT PEOPLE GET THE MESSAGE BY YOUR LIFE, BY THE SUM OF YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS, BY WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOUR VALUES MEAN.

different needs, I began to realize that what to say is not so vital as what to be. And the only way to *be* the message is to be in constant prayer, asking Jesus how He desires the person to be benefited. Many times I felt impressed to just sit with a person and not say anything at all, merely listening to them.

Once, when I entered a room right after a death, I wasn't searching for words; rather, I was seeking how to reach over and touch hearts. I simply listened to

their story. I didn't need to *say* much; I needed, instead, to *be* the human message of love and validation that their pained souls yearned for. After about twenty minutes, the widow mentioned that they were members of a particular denomination. My job requires that, if they are churchgoers, I ask if they want me to call their minister. She turned and said, "We just want to be here with you."


I don't think it was so much about being with me as it was that the message

had come through. We are all called to be this message. "Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. . . . In every one Christ's long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth, are to be manifested to the world."<sup>2</sup>

Truth is more than a set of doctrines or a dogma. It is, first and foremost, a Divine Person, Jesus Christ. When we *are* the message, others can see "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27, NIV). Have you internalized this truth to where it's not just a part of you but actually who you are? If you have, your message will touch lives in our high-tech age just as the dove can still reach a world that has turned to email. ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1948), 337.
- 2 ———, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1940), 827.

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# Pastoral care during life passages

Daniel Schramm



*Daniel Schramm, D.Min., is a lecturer in pastoral studies at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, United Kingdom.*

**T**he phone awakens you at 5:45 AM. "Seven pounds, six and a half ounces," you manage to hear. Although half asleep, you feel honored that these people share their important life passages with you as if you were one of the family.

Because church members do not routinely ask their pastors directly for pastoral care, ministers need to be creative in order to give that care to them. One way to do this would be to listen to their life experiences during crucial times, especially during life passages such as births, adoptions, birthdays, weddings, baptisms, anniversaries, graduations, retirements, and funerals. Such occasions are windows of opportunity for pastoral care.

How can we, as pastors, acknowledge these life passages? Though things like prayer, music, relaxation, quiet time, gifts, cards, words of encouragement, and creative services can be appropriate, sometimes simply listening is often the best way to acknowledge the significance of one of these events. Just being there, and being aware, can speak volumes.

Several life passages are mentioned in this article, with ideas for celebrating them. The following life passages progress from being primarily celebrative to more reflective.

## **Adoptions**

Tedious processes that involve considerable waiting, hoping, and praying include adoptions.

Parents should be affirmed and encouraged during these efforts, which can feel like a marathon. When the big day finally comes to pick up the new child, a celebration is in order, and if you, as pastor, find out about such an occasion, you could help celebrate. Sometimes called a claiming ceremony, this occasion becomes the pinnacle of the adoption process.

As you include siblings in celebrating adoptions, join the hands of the adoptee with the rest of the family in a dedicatory prayer. If the couple has a family Bible, be sure to record the child in their Bible. Consider making them a "welcome to the family" certificate. If the parents have chosen a name for the child, speak of the significance of the name. Stress that the child has been especially chosen and that God and the church would like to be partners in the adoption.

Especially appropriate scriptures include Psalm 139, because it discusses God being with people in the womb and through every step of their journey; Ephesians 1, which discusses adoption; John 14, which mentions orphans; Isaiah 49:15, 16, which ask whether mothers can forget their nursing children; Psalm 22:9, 10, which speak of God's love from the womb and beyond; and Psalm 68, which speaks of God as the Father of the fatherless.

## **Birthdays**

Chaplain's are often privy to birthdates on medical charts; pastors can get birthdates from their church clerks. I admired a fellow pastor who gave his members a brief call on their birthdays. Simply call on members and have no other agenda than to wish them a happy birthday and to pray with them. Cards also remain in style, with email or e-cards fitting for some. Blessed is the pastor who has members who also love this ministry. Brief visits are appropriate when time permits, especially for special birthdays. In cultures where aging may not often be celebrated, it is especially relevant to acknowledge 90- or 100-year birthdays. This will ensure that these celebrations do not become monotonous, as not everyone has a 90th or a 100th birthday. Affirm seniors for their longevity, faith, contributions, and legacy to the future by using Psalm 103 as a key passage, for it celebrates the blessings of life.

## **Anniversaries**

Numerous anniversaries mark life passages: weddings, deaths, baptismal dates, personal achievements, and disasters. Pastors need some kind of organizational system to remember these



occasions. Family and church members who know the individuals and the history of these anniversaries can be of special assistance to help celebrate. My wife recently phoned a young lady on the one-year anniversary of her husband's accidental death. This woman was, of course, thinking about her husband, and my wife's call was especially meaningful to her. Remembering anniversaries becomes primary to celebrating them.

## Baptisms

Baptisms symbolize a passage into God's family by proclaiming divine, human, and congregational acceptance. Share scriptures that affirm those being baptized, especially those that speak of joining God's family, or that acknowledge individuals as cherished children of God. Biblical affirmation is especially healing because many in contemporary society have not grown up hearing statements such as, "This is my beloved Son [or daughter], in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

A crucial part of baptisms includes officially welcoming new members

into church fellowship when they come to the front for an introduction. For example, "This is Miss Smith. She enjoys swimming and teaches history at a secondary school," or "This is Mr. Lee. He is a software engineer from Korea." Also, introduce their family or friends that attend as well as acknowledging those who were involved in their joining the church. Giving them a gift, a Bible, devotional book, or spiritual journal can be especially meaningful and appropriate. Encourage members to befriend those who join the congregation, and welcome new members by stressing that they are part of the church family.

## Beginning and graduating from school

Beginning an academic year comprises a significant life passage as emotions often run high when school begins. Having public church celebrations as your young people begin a new school year means that your church members consider these students to be an important part of the congregation.

Invite each category of students up front, including those in primary, secondary, and university while also acknowledging the teachers and others that work at school. Assure them that the church strongly supports them. Encourage them with words and scriptures to exercise faith and to study diligently, such as "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccles. 9:10, NIV). One way to dedicate students to a new school year would be to pour water over their hands to commit them for the new academic year. Another way may be to bring symbols related to school, such as an ink pen, laptop computer, book, or whatever their education entails. Pray for the students and their studies, and assure them that the church supports them as they progress in their academic and career lives.

Graduating from school should continue as a joyous time when you communicate the pride that God, the congregation, and the pastor have in these graduates. I dedicate a church service to graduates each spring by gathering information about their

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favorite classes, what they experienced in school, and other significant memories. When relatives attend, they can be acknowledged appropriately. These opportunities can mark the transition from one academic grade to another, the learning stage to the earning stage, youth to adulthood, or graduating from one life chapter to another.

## Retirements

Retirements move people into change, challenge, and new lifestyles. Financial, physical, relational, and other adjustment issues often converge at this life passage. Finishing one's life work signifies a transition from one phase in life to the beginning of a new one. For some, this can be traumatic, leading to emotional stress and a loss of purpose.

One way to acknowledge retirements would be to gather items that specifically relate to the retiree. A summation of a person's work may be fitting as you affirm them and their career. If appropriate, have them share some of their work experiences or plans for their future endeavors. A retirement meal provides a nice setting to mark this time in their lives.

The notion of God resting after Creation may be an appropriate biblical theme. In addition, consider 1 Corinthians 15:58 as relevant at retirement: "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (NKJV). Psalm 121 appropriately mentions that God stays involved with our going in and going out. Psalm 139 also emphasizes God being omnipresent as life passages progress.

## Funerals

As life's final passage, a funeral should express pastoral care rather than evangelistic rigor. Funerals acknowledge the reality of death, deal with the feelings of loss, remember the deceased, and celebrate the memories. Along with many pastors, I appreciate Psalm 90:9–12, which speaks of the shortness of time, the value of life, and the need for wisdom in relating to death. With funerals being a time for reflection, these occasions help us to stop and think. Listening to what others

BECAUSE CHURCH MEMBERS  
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TO GIVE THAT CARE TO THEM.

are thinking and feeling is crucial to pastoral care during funerals.

Pastors tend to minister more to adults than to children at funerals. Be intentional about speaking with children and grandchildren along with adults by finding ways to include children in funeral sermons. One of the ways I have done this at funerals is by reading a child's book at funerals, entitled *Love You Forever*.<sup>1</sup> This book presents to children the shortness of life, the value of family, and how human beings age and die. I have led prayers to pass on parental blessings to children. This has been especially touching for some who grew up with limited verbal and physical affirmation. Consider the biblical model of Jacob passing on his blessing to his children. When funerals demonstrate pastoral care, they are evangelistic and meet relevant needs during life's final passage.

## Resources for commemorating life passages

Resources abound to empower pastors to understand and celebrate life passages. Some especially good books include *Marking Time: Christian Rituals for All Our Days*,<sup>2</sup> *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage*,<sup>3</sup> *Understanding Men's Passages: Discovering the New Map of Men's Lives*,<sup>4</sup> *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Counseling*,<sup>5</sup> and *Jewish Passages: Cycles of Jewish Life*.<sup>6</sup> Many other books, Internet

resources, and retreat centers specialize in life passages.

## Conclusion

Consider being present as primary in marking life passages. Whenever someone is dying, celebrating a milestone, or going through another significant life passage, a pastor can be a powerful presence. Ministers are set apart to be with others, especially during these seasons of their members' lives. When clergy provide pastoral care during life passages, they serve individuals on deeper levels, better serve institutions, and become links to human transformation. ■

- 1 Robert Munsch, *Love You Forever* (Toronto, Canada: Firefly Books, 1986).
- 2 Linda Witte Henke, *Marking Time: Christian Rituals for All Our Days* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001).
- 3 Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
- 4 Gail Sheehy, *Understanding Men's Passages: Discovering the New Map of Men's Lives* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1999).
- 5 Jeanne S. Moessner, Editor, *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1996).
- 6 Harvey E. Goldberg, *Jewish Passages, Cycles of Jewish Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

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# Bloggging: a new way to share your faith

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Josue Sanchez**



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**W**hen H. M. S. Richards Sr. began his first radio broadcast years ago, people had little idea what he was doing. Some even wondered if he was wasting precious time and even more precious resources. Prophets of doom predicted that his venture into a new way of sharing the gospel was bound to fail. And yet look! What a revolution in gospel witnessing one man's vision brought. Millions around the world heard the rousing words of "Lift Up the Trumpet" and the comforting adieu "Have faith in God" and came to understand the message of a loving Savior. The *Voice of Prophecy* ventured out into the unknown and pioneered preaching over radio waves.

## What is bloggging?

Today, another revolution, called bloggging, has surfaced. Bloggging offers endless possibilities for sharing your faith almost instantly to millions around the globe. Bloggging is all about connections—using the magic of Internet. First there's reading, then commenting, then bloggging. Four years ago I had no idea what a blog was, or what a bloggger was. Then I started searching the Internet for churches that were making a difference in their communities. I immediately noticed Web sites called Web logs, or blogs, about various churches and what they were doing. The box in this article lists some Adventist blogs.

Once I got familiar with a few blogs and what they were talking about, I made my first comment to one of them, and they actually commented back to me—total strangers began talking with me, almost as if we were face to face.

I began to realize that I could blogg too, and here's how I blogg. As I study my Bible, I ask God to give me an idea to write about for that day. The deeper my study, the more readily ideas worth bloggging about seem to offer themselves. I pray about ideas and jot down notes on them. Then I sit down at my computer and post the idea on my blogg. The bloggging software is arranged so that all you have to do is type in your posts (comments) and save them, just like you were keeping a daily journal. Usually they'll show up online in just a few seconds.

Anyone who stops by your Web site (blogg) can post comments about your ideas if you allow this to happen. They might be across town or across the continent or farther. With distance not a factor, bloggging can be described as "the death of distance."

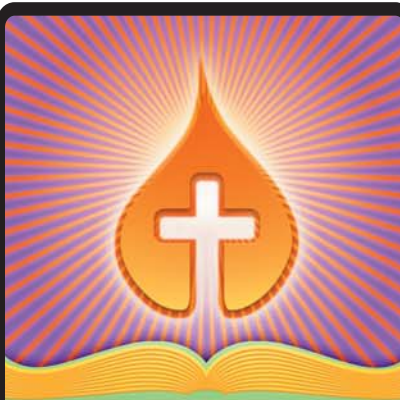
Blogs are about connections. Something posted in the United States can be seen in Brazil, India, Slovenia, or just about anywhere in the world in less than a minute, and a response can be sent back in the same minute. We no longer have to ask, "Can you hear me now?" as we combine our thoughts and collaborate on our ideas simultaneously.

When we lived near Austin, Texas, my wife and I would go out to the west side of town where they were building magnificent houses on the hillsides. Ambling from home to home, we marveled at the artistry and voices each home shared with us—artful limestone fireplaces, soaring ceilings, timbered structures, grand decks with stunning views, kitchens where exquisite meals would be prepared and served. We enjoyed those houses and the dreams that they inspired in us.

Bloggging can be described as visiting unfinished homes as you go from blogg to blogg enjoying the differences and lifestyles of your hosts. You embrace their creativity, confusion, and concern. You marvel at what you learn, and you wonder at what some people are writing about. Some blogs are political, some philosophical. Some blogs concentrate on religion, some on sports, and some on marketing or artwork. You name the subject; someone will be bloggging about it somewhere in the blogosphere. Not only does everyone have an opinion, now they've got their own place to tout it.

After a while, you collect a group of favorite blogs where you begin to settle in and become a





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**Praying to change your church**

How can a church integrate prayer power into the process of change?

**Much prayer in meetings.** Planning sessions must give more than a minute or two to praying. Remember, the real power point for churches is not technology, it is the Holy Spirit.

**Stronger prayer presence in worship.** Too often prayer is the least part of worship—unplanned, hurried, and lifeless. Public prayer can be meaningful, praise-filled, specific, creative, and soul-winning.

**Prayer integration in Bible classes.** Make certain each class integrates these important elements—fellowship, study, prayer, and outreach.

**Corporate prayer.** Regardless of the time period (for example, one day or forty days), a period in which members are challenged to seek the Lord in special prayer will open the way for extra blessing (Joel 1:14).

**Home groups.** Try a commitment of five weeks, meeting once a week in consistent locations. Claim Bible promises, then seek and document God's leading for your church.

**Prayer walking.** Teams can walk around the church property, neighborhoods, schools, factories, shopping malls, or government offices. As you walk, praise God and make specific intercession. Also, ask God to teach you how to reach the people you're passing.  
 —Ed Gallagher, Rocky Mountain Conference

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regular visitor. I check about ten sites or so each day. It takes only a few minutes to look at them and get caught up on their latest entries. These favorites become “third places,” after home and

blogs. Check out the sites listed in the box in this article and let your mouse scurry back and forth across the Web sites listed. Stop on one or two that seem to interest you, clicking on all the links

**B**LOGS ARE ABOUT CONNECTIONS. SOMETHING POSTED IN THE UNITED STATES CAN BE SEEN IN BRAZIL, INDIA, SLOVENIA, OR JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD IN LESS THAN A MINUTE, AND A RESPONSE CAN BE SENT BACK IN THE SAME MINUTE.

work. Blogging provides information about spaces and places—geography on the Internet.

This collection of spaces and places can be compared to a two-way printing press that excels in sharing instant information. A blog develops into a personalized Web site that looks like a daily journal. Authors/editors can blog (write) or photoblog about anything they want. They can also link to anybody else on the Web who writes about that or similar subjects, or any subject for that matter. You can also do audio and video blogging, called podcasting. As an online community begins to form, it grows and matures as others offer their input, comments, and questions. It won't take long before you have your own radio or TV station going in this new world of blog media.

Perhaps the best way to understand blogging would be to visit some good

to see where they take you. Observe the sites not only for content but for how they layout their design and hold your attention. Imagine what type of content you might share and how you would put together your site.

As you look at the homepage of the blog, you'll recognize the name and possibly the purpose of the blog. With the main section of the blog as the journal section, the major thoughts/articles/photos are posted here. At the bottom of each post you will often find a permalink and a comment section. The permalink helps you to find the link to that article anywhere on the Web and links you to it. The comment section will open up a form for making comments and reading the comments of others. You may have to sign in to post your comments.

In one of the blog sections you might find other interesting things, like

# BLOG SITES TO CHECK

## Pastors

<http://www.mycommonground.org/blog/> Pastor's blog  
<http://www.theadventure.org/blog/blogger.html> Pastor's blog  
<http://www.montesahlin.com/> Church leaders blog  
<http://jjblogs.com/justpastors/> Blog for pastors by 3 pastors  
<http://prdaveonline.blogspot.com/> Pastors blog  
<http://oregonadventistpastor.blogspot.com/> Pastor's blog  
<http://www.adventistpulpit.com/> Pastor's blog for preachers  
<http://www.jjblogs.com/> Pastors' blogs  
<http://apokalupto.blogspot.com/> Pastor's blog  
<http://www.3t3red.com/> Pastor's blog about the Cross  
<http://www.adventistpastors.org/> Pastors' blog for pastors  
<http://janalanmckenzie.squarespace.com/> Pastor's blog

## Churches

<http://www.ketsdablog.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.thecollegechurch.com/blog/index.html>  
<http://www.creeksideonline.org/>  
<http://www.theplacechurch.com/>

## Other

<http://www.guidemagazine.org/extrapages/blog.asp> Guide magazine  
<http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/> Leadership journal  
<http://gien.adventist.org/forum2006/index.html> SDA Internet evangelism  
<http://www.ground7news.org/index.html> GC audio podcast  
<http://www.atsjats.org/article.php?id=4> ATS journal podcast

## Daily Bible Readings Blog

<http://www.oneyearbibleblog.com/>

## Books on Blogging

*Publishing a Blog with Blogger.* Visual QuickProject Guide

By Elizabeth Castro

*Blog: Understanding the Information Reformation That's Changing Your World*  
Hugh Hewitt

## Starting Your Blog

<http://www.blogger.com/start>  
<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/intouch/startblogging.mspx>

other people's blogs, links of interest, a calendar with days that have posts, books currently being read, and all kinds of other things.

The best thing would be to just jump in and click away.

## Pastors' blogging

After some blog visiting, you may begin to think about doing your own blog. It's easy to set up but takes some work to keep it going. We think it's well worth it, so we've written about the why and the how below.

Look at Dave's site. <http://apokalupto.blogspot.com/>

Look at Marty's site. <http://www.adventistpastors.org/>

Three of us do this site together for pastors: <http://jjblogs.com/justpastors/>

Between the sites, we are telling the story of our Friend and Savior, Jesus Christ, with our target audiences a little different, though they may overlap.

## Finding your voice

Who would you talk to if you could get people to come out to a local auditorium? What interests you so much that you could talk about it to them for hours? Answer those questions and you are on your way to knowing your audience and what to share with them. And you are now on your way to your first blog.

Here are just a few blogging possibilities:

- Mission trip promotion and updates
- Daily journal along with your main Web site. For example:
- A college blog
- School blog
- Informative blogs from Adventist Church officials
- Administrators can start a blog for pastors to be seen and used only by those invited. This invitation-only format keeps the focus on the topics relevant to its readers. ■

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# Listening to your listeners: why effective preachers are attentive to verbal and nonverbal feedback

Derek J. Morris



Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apopka, Florida, United States.

Many preachers view preaching as simply a time to speak. They fail to recognize that effective preachers need to listen attentively to their listeners.<sup>1</sup> Every listener provides valuable feedback during the sermon, and wise preachers will learn to listen attentively to this feedback in order to connect more effectively with their congregation.

## Verbal feedback

In some cultural settings, spontaneous verbal feedback from the listeners during the sermon is not only accepted but encouraged. For example, a core component of African American preaching can be described as the process of *call and response*, or *call and recall*. This process requires verbal feedback from a participating congregation. Henry Mitchell suggests that “if the Black preaching tradition is unique, then that uniqueness depends in part upon the uniqueness of the Black congregation which talks back to the preacher as a normal part of the pattern of worship.”<sup>2</sup> This verbal feedback by the listeners becomes a powerful dynamic. Common verbal feedback, in addition to the traditional “Amen,” includes comments like “Lord, help us”; “Make it plain”; and “Stay right there!” With these verbal responses as much more than a perfunctory acknowledgment of the preacher, the listeners actually preach back to the preacher. Mitchell notes that “most preachers of any culture would gladly welcome such stimulation and support.”<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, when preaching, I am energized by thoughtful verbal feedback. On one occasion

while I was preaching to a large congregation, one section of the congregation was particularly responsive in providing this feedback. They were my “Amen corner.” I felt so connected with this small group that I had to be careful not to ignore the rest of the congregation.

At times, a preacher might even make a variety of appeals for verbal response, such as “Can I get a witness?” or “Can I hear ‘Amen’ out there?” When verbal communication occurs between the preacher and the listeners, both must be attentive to the other. This verbal feedback can help the preacher to connect more effectively with the church.

A preacher may also seek to encourage verbal feedback by building dialogue into the sermon itself. One way to do this includes designing the sermon as a conversation between two or more individuals in the presence of the congregation. The participants may include the preacher, other specialists, and representatives from the congregation.

I experimented with this interactive form for a sermon on healthy families.<sup>4</sup> Three teenagers and a marriage and family counselor joined me on the platform for a lively discussion.<sup>5</sup> The impact of this interactive sermon was profound. In this setting, the congregation overheard the conversation and felt involved in a way that would be difficult to achieve with a monologue.

Some preachers have sought to increase verbal feedback from listeners by adding a discussion time at the conclusion of the sermon. Listeners might be divided into small groups with preassigned group leaders, and each group could be directed to discuss questions arising out of the sermon. Following the discussion time, the congregation could gather again for group reports and a closing act of devotion.

Another option would be to give permission for time-out if a listener has a question or needs a point of clarification, with listeners indicating their intention by raising a hand. The preacher would recognize the question or comment, address it, and then continue.

The most interactive form of preaching would involve free discussion between preacher and listeners regarding the meaning and implications of a given passage of Scripture or biblical theme. The listeners might be encouraged to study a certain Scripture passage during the week and bring questions to the worship service. Clear guidelines must be given to the participants in order to avoid disorder or confusion, such as, suggest that questions of explanation precede questions of application, that comments/questions must be on the topic/passage under discussion, and that individuals be limited to one question.<sup>6</sup> This form of

interactive preaching not only encourages personal Bible study but also involves your listeners in the act of preaching.

## Nonverbal feedback

In addition to listening to the verbal feedback, preachers need to listen to the nonverbal feedback. Even when you are the only one speaking, your listeners will inevitably communicate nonverbally. Nonverbal feedback includes facial expressions, hand and arm gestures, postures, positions, and various movements of the body, legs, and feet.

Nonverbal feedback provided by listeners is generally more reliable than verbal. Research by Albert Mehrabian suggests that 55 percent of communication comprises facial expression and body language, 38 percent tone of voice, and only 7 percent words.<sup>7</sup> If feedback results in inconsistency, that is, if nonverbal and verbal feedback are not congruent, Mehrabian asserts that “a person’s nonverbal behavior has more bearing than his words on communicating feelings or attitudes to others.”<sup>8</sup> An effective communicator will be attentive to nonverbal feedback and will learn how to decode these silent messages.

Much of the nonverbal feedback will probably be unintentional and unconscious. Perhaps the most noticeable nonverbal indicator of noninvolvement is a listener taking a nap during your sermon. Some young people will lean forward with their heads almost resting on their knees. Other typical nonverbal indicators of noninvolvement include most leg and foot movements, grooming behaviors, self-manipulations (scratching, fiddling with one’s keys), and postural adjustments.

Conversely, increased involvement by your listeners would be manifested by nonverbal cues such as decreased distance, more direct body orientation, greater facial expressiveness, increased postural openness, and more frequent head nods. Every preacher rejoices to see listeners smiling and nodding their heads.

Eye contact, or lack of it, may also be an indicator. As a general rule, increased eye contact between you and your listeners occurs as a positive indicator that you are connecting effectively. I

remember a young man in Allentown, Pennsylvania, who always sat toward the front of the church. It was evident from his verbal and nonverbal feedback that he was earnestly seeking a closer relationship with God. When listening to a sermon, he was looking either in his Bible or directly at the preacher. His eye contact told the preacher that they were connecting. Today, that young man is a preacher.

However, eye contact cannot be interpreted without attention to surrounding facial cues. For example, if a listener looks at you with open eyes, unfurrowed brow, and a smile, it would appear to indicate a positive feeling, or perhaps even an invitation for interaction. However, if the listener squints with a stern expression, it more likely indicates a negative response. Facial cues are the channel by which nonverbal emotional messages are most often and most clearly displayed. Miller notes that “body language tells you not only if you are heard, but whether you are being understood.”<sup>9</sup>

Nonverbal feedback may vary, depending on culture, although many detailed similarities in expressive movements between different cultures, such as smiling, laughing, and crying, also exist. Examples of differences include a flashing of the eyebrows, which is considered indecent in Japan, whereas in Samoa it is an accepted form of greeting. Think about your cultural context, and make sure that you are correctly interpreting the nonverbal cues of your listeners.

## Conclusion

Your listeners may not always give you verbal feedback while you preach, but they will all send you silent messages—facial expressions and body language. Learn to read these spoken and silent messages so that you can connect more effectively with your listeners. Verbal and nonverbal feedback may cause you to change your rate of delivery, restate an important point, or add a sentence of clarification. The goal is simple: Listen attentively and adjust your verbal and nonverbal delivery in order to connect effectively with your listeners.

Perhaps you are thinking, *How can I be so attentive to the verbal and nonverbal feedback of my listeners while*

*I’m reading my sermon manuscript?* You can’t! Freedom from a sermon manuscript becomes an essential step for any preacher who wants to be more attentive to feedback.<sup>10</sup> After reading a recent article on preaching effectively without notes<sup>11</sup> and implementing the five steps outlined in that article, a pastor sent this testimony: “Your tips were just what I needed. I wanted to let you know that at least one pastor’s preaching life was changed!” The listeners will be changed as well because that preacher will be able to listen more attentively to their verbal and nonverbal feedback and thus better connect with them.

Once you realize that effective preaching embraces dialogue rather than monologue, you will be unwilling to ignore verbal and nonverbal feedback. You might even consider asking your listeners to intentionally provide clear verbal and nonverbal messages during your sermon. However you do it, by learning to listen to feedback you will be a better preacher and better able to connect with those who have come to hear from you the Word of Life. ■

1 Preachers also need to listen attentively to God during the preaching of the sermon. See step #5 of “Preaching Effectively Without Notes” in the October 2006 issue of *Ministry*, 16.

2 Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 100.

3 Ibid.

4 This sermon is part of a six-part series called Healthy Christians. It is available on DVD at [http://www.acn.info/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=82&osCsid=c5abf8360592b801ae86dff2bbef826d](http://www.acn.info/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=82&osCsid=c5abf8360592b801ae86dff2bbef826d) as part of Adventist Preaching, volume 11.

5 This sermon can be viewed at <http://www.forestlakechurch.org>. Go to sermon archives, 4/16/2005.

6 These guidelines prevent one individual from monopolizing the discussion and keep the discussion focused on the assigned passage or topic.

7 Albert Mehrabian, *Silent Messages* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971), 43.

8 Ibid., 44.

9 Calvin Miller, *The Empowered Communicator: Seven Keys to Unlocking an Audience* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 184.

10 See “Preaching Effectively Without Notes,” *Ministry*, October 2006, 14, 16, 17.

11 Ibid.

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# The final push

Gerald A. Klingbeil



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My brother Martin was slowly climbing the hill. He had been running for nearly 40 kilometers (25 miles) and was now facing the final 4 kilometers (2.5 miles). Because the Riebeeck West Berg (South Africa) marathon was to be run on a Sabbath, a group of Adventist runners had worked out a deal with the organizers to run the race “officially” on Friday. I was to be the entire support team, driving ahead of the runners, handing them needed liquids and energy bars, shouting encouragement to them as they reached another hill (this was a mountain marathon!), and even running with them for half a kilometer or so in order to encourage them or give them a needed break from the winds coming head on.

It was Martin’s first marathon, and he had trained hard. But now the crisis had hit. As I stopped the car and looked at him coming up at a snail’s pace, I knew he was in trouble. I started downhill to run with him on the final leg. “Come on, you’ve come this far, you’ve done a great job—you can do it!” Slowly but surely, we climbed that hill together. “Look at the top. After this only the stadium and no more hills. The end is in sight. Come on, don’t give up now!”

## Jesus’ final race

This account with my brother has given me an important spiritual lesson. As was my brother, though in a totally different context, Jesus was also entering the final and decisive leg of His ministry. For more than three years He had ministered to

the people, although it would seem that even His closest friends, the disciples, did not want to know it. Jesus was aware of what awaited Him, and He told His disciples on at least three occasions what was to happen.<sup>1</sup> However, the disciples (as well as the larger following of Jesus) did not get it. This did not fit their expectations and their mental map of things to come. They weren’t really listening, for they were preoccupied with arguing about who should get the best seat in the kingdom (Mark 10:35–40) or arguing with the crowds about the authority to drive out demons (Mark 9:14–18).<sup>2</sup>

But while the disciples did not understand, the Father knew the signs of the times and had prepared a special booster for Jesus. Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain (Mark 9:2). The Septuagint uses the same phrase—high mountain—several times, sometimes in connection with the proclamation of good news and a future hope (Isa. 40:9; Ezek. 17:22), and sometimes to indicate the depravity of the Israelites’ idolatrous worship (Isa. 57:7; Jer. 3:6). In the religious perception of the nations surrounding Israel, mountains played a major role as the point where the gods were thought to reside.

## The mountains of Moses and Elijah

Mountains are also important in the Old Testament. God revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelite leaders on Mount Sinai and gave the law tablets to Israel (Exod. 24; 31). Elijah had two distinct mountain experiences: the encounter with the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel with the firework display of the Lord’s presence and then the fleeing of this frightened and discouraged prophet to Horeb, the mountain of the Lord. He seemingly retraced Israel’s route of the Exodus, and then Elijah encountered the presence of the Lord. He was not in the mighty wind, nor in the earthquake that shook the rocks. He also could not be found in the roaring fire, but rather, He was in the gentle breeze (1 Kings 19:1–12).

## The mountain of Jesus and the disciples

Jesus was on the high mountain, and suddenly the glory of the Father broke through—right in front of the disciples, Jesus was “transformed” (Mark 9:2). The Greek word for *transformed* is the basis for the English word *metamorphosis*. Paul admonishes us in Romans 12:2 not to be conformed to this world, but rather to be transformed (or changed by a metamorphosis) through the renewing of our spirit, a transformation

DO WE REALLY LISTEN TO  
GOD'S WHISPERINGS  
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THINGS OF GOD?

done by the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3:18). At the transformation of Jesus, He didn't look the same to the disciples—even the white of His clothing seemed so different from the bleaching that could be done at that time.

When Peter, James, and John looked again, they saw two more people close to Jesus: Moses and Elijah. Scripture does not tell us what they looked like and how the disciples were able to identify them. We are just told that they were talking to Jesus. It is interesting to see that in Exodus 34:35 the same Greek term is employed by the Greek translators of the Old Testament to describe the communication between Moses and God after his return from the mountain of God. As always it is Peter who makes himself the spokesperson of the disciples: "Rabbi, let's build three tabernacles for you, Moses, and Elijah" (Mark 9:5).

But this mountain experience was designed at that time for Jesus, not for Peter, James, and John. The Father was there to run the last leg of the terrible journey to the cross with His Son. Similar

to the Exodus experience, a cloud appeared and a voice boomed from the cloud: "'This is my beloved son; listen to him'" (Mark 9:7, RSV). The last time this happened was right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, during His baptism, on the banks of the Jordan River (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). And now, toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, after the Father has encouraged and sustained Him, God speaks again: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

### Conclusion

At this time, the disciples were climbing their own mountains. Did they heed this advice? Did they begin to really listen to their Master? Did they shelve for a moment their own ideas, ideals, and dreams and pay attention to God's perspective? Unlikely, considering the fact that, as in Mark 9:45 for example, Christ explained to them in great detail a concept they did not understand.

Do we really listen to God's whisperings through our personal devotions and prayer time—our time for

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# CAN WE PUT ASIDE OUR OWN AGENDA WHEN IT COMES TO THE THINGS OF GOD?

getting ready for the race? Can we put aside our own agenda when it comes to the things of God? As we contemplate Jesus on the high mountain, on the last leg of His journey, talking to Moses and Elijah, imagine the Godhead united for the final push into the enemy's territory. As my brother needed encouragement when he neared the end of the race, so Jesus needed affirmation and the Father's presence. Of course, the Father had always been there, right beside Him—in the mornings when He sought strength and guidance through prayer and the study of the Word. He had been there when the crowds pressed around Jesus and when Jesus had preached the kingdom and showed the principles of the kingdom in His healing ministry. He had been there when Jesus had spent

quieter times with His disciples. But now He manifests Himself visibly and audibly to strengthen Jesus for the final uphill push.

While Peter, James, and John did not appear to have grasped the meaning and importance of the event at this particular moment, years later as they climbed their own high mountains and reflected on Jesus' race to the finish, as they remembered the Resurrection morning, they must have heard that powerful Voice from the cloud over and over: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!" And we can be sure that every time they encountered an uphill struggle, they would say: "Thank You, Lord, for being here with us. Yes, we are listening."

What about us? Can we say when we face *our* mountains, when we run the

race with Him in this final leg of earth's journey, "Yes, Lord Jesus, I'm listening. What do You want me to hear?" ■

- 1 The first announcement of the Passion of Jesus can be found in Matt. 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33; and Luke 9:22. The second Passion announcement follows in Matt. 17:22, 23; Mark 9:30–32; and Luke 9:43b–45. The third prediction of Jesus' Passion is included in Matt. 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34; and Luke 18:31.
- 2 The Greek word that Mark uses here can be translated as "argue," "discuss," but also appears often in the context of challenging someone aggressively as can be seen in the Pharisees' challenge of Jesus' authority (Mark 8:11) or a good theological fight between different factions, as seen in Mark 12:28.

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# Faith and science: a personal story

Ben Clausen



*Ben Clausen, Ph.D., is a scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda California, United States.*

After being miraculously cured of leprosy, Naaman professed faith in the God of Israel. “ ‘Now I know,’ ” he said to Elisha, “ ‘that there is no God in all the world except in Israel’ ” (2 Kings 5:15).<sup>1</sup> Naaman said, too, that he would never again give sacrifices or offerings to any God “ ‘but the LORD’ ” (v. 17).

There was, however, one problem. Naaman said to Elisha, “ ‘But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this’ ” (2 Kings 5:18).

What did Elisha say to Naaman, who expressed concern about a part of his job that required him to go to a heathen temple and bow there with his master? To this concern, Elisha responded “ ‘Go in peace.’ ”

As a scientist, I do research in the area of radiometric dating and the directly associated earth science concepts of plate tectonics<sup>2</sup> and magma cooling rates.<sup>3</sup> I am also a person of faith and a strong believer in the importance of Genesis 1–11, but I work daily with data that I don’t know how to fit into a short time frame. I would like to find convincing evidence confirming the literalness of the Genesis record, but in my area of research I usually find that the data fits better with a long-age model. Nevertheless, though I may appear to some to bow to the god of evolution in my research, just as Naaman told Elisha, I also declare, “[Y]our

servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord.”

## The finitude of mankind

Yes, I am sympathetic to church members who would like definitive answers about the issues regarding the age of the earth. I don’t want the church to change its beliefs. In return, I would hope for sympathy and understanding from leaders and members of the difficult position that, as a scientist, I am in. Many have exhibited sympathy, understanding, and trust. And I really do appreciate the leaders who, sympathetic with my concerns, have said to me, “Go in peace.”

Indeed, I appreciate the patience of the church as I try to understand these two apparently discordant sets of data—nature and revelation—both of which I hold in high regard. No doubt the discordance comes from my finite understanding, but I am encouraged by seeing other areas where apparently discordant sets of data must be accepted. Church history suggests to me two areas that have been under discussion for a long time: (1) How can Christ be both Creator and created at the same time? (2) How can I have free will to choose, but God still has foreknowledge? And as a physicist, I ask, How it is possible that light behaves both as a wave and a particle? Each of these three examples has been discussed at length, with many helpful explanations, but ultimately, it seems that the problem comes from our own limitations. I believe the same limitation causes our trouble in explaining the apparently discordant sets of data from nature and inspiration.

## What the Lord has done

With that lead in, let’s reflect on Mark 5:19, and specifically Jesus’ words to the Gadarene demoniac. After restoring him, Jesus said, “ ‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you’ ” (Mark 5:19). Although the demoniac did not understand all that happened, he could tell what Jesus had done in his life.

In many ways, the demoniac reflects my situation. As with him, I don’t understand many things. Nevertheless, I still can witness to my professional colleagues about the wonderful things God has done for me. I do have something to say about Jesus, who has answered my most important questions.

I have had some wonderful opportunities to witness, sometimes with apparent success and other times with apparent failure. Either way, I have tried to tell people about how much the Lord has done for me.



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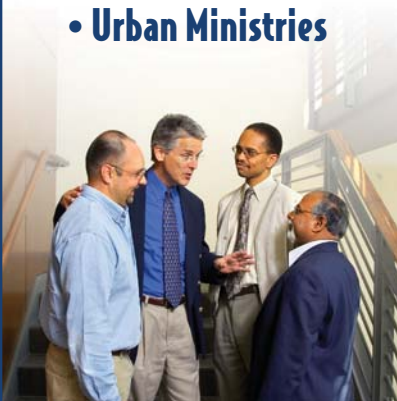
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I APPRECIATE THE PATIENCE  
OF THE CHURCH AS I TRY  
TO UNDERSTAND THESE TWO  
APPARENTLY DISCORDANT  
SETS OF DATA—NATURE AND  
REVELATION—BOTH OF WHICH  
I HOLD IN HIGH REGARD.

• While a student at University of Colorado, I helped with a Bible study for a geologist who found that the scientific arguments I had learned for a worldwide flood were quite unconvincing.

• In my dissertation acknowledgements I included an appreciation for the natural world that God created for us to enjoy studying; someone who read that later asked me for more details about what I had meant.

• I lent one of the missionary books of the year to my major professor. The book had been especially meaningful to me, but it ended up on my desk a couple days later as though he had no interest in having anything to do with it. On the other hand, he went out of his way to make sure that I had no Sabbath problems. He even offered me his rental car so I could attend church when we were away from home working together.

• While working at an accelerator's facility, the schedule was 24/7. I would ask that I not be scheduled to work on the Sabbath. That meant that fellow physicists might have to take a 24-hour shift. This special request often resulted in questions about my beliefs. The first few times I was caught off guard and would just give a list of doctrines, but later I learned to give a story or share the great controversy theme.

• On another occasion a colleague in Moscow asked about the problem of evil; she had heard the story of the fallen angel and found it unsatisfying. We continue to correspond.

• I had an opportunity to help another Russian colleague come to the United States to do research at a major university. After I left that institution, he started attending church.

One of the things I do at Geoscience Research Institute is respond to questions that come to our Web site. I have had interesting exchanges with various individuals. Probably the longest-lasting exchange has been with an atheist who sent a scathing letter to us outlining what he saw to be the stupidity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. After giving a pleasant response and an acknowledgement of fallibility, I have had an extremely pleasant interchange with him. He continues communicating with me several times each month.

When I first started taking geology classes at a nearby state university a few years ago, I asked about making up the four Sabbath field trips. I was told that if I didn't go on the field trips, I wouldn't pass the class. As time went along I did well in the class and tried to find ways of making up the field trips, and I did get a passing grade in the

class. The second quarter the issue of field trips came up again. By then the students knew me, as did the teaching assistant. I had no interest in asking for any favors but, on their own accord, the students and teaching assistant said that having Sunday field trips was fine with them. By the end of the second quarter I had developed a good enough relationship with the professor that he gave me a large data set to analyze on his computer.

Finally, my wife—who manages the diabetes treatment center at Loma Linda—went out to eat with a representative of a pharmaceutical company and another co-worker. During lunch the representative surprised them by stating that he and his family were interested in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They had enjoyed working with various Adventist medical personnel.

Over the next few months this family started attending the local Seventh-day Adventist church, studied with one of the pastors, and decided that they wanted to be baptized. This man's wife, who grew up in a country that was controlled by communists, was a chemist and in a doctoral program in psychology. For a while she had studied Buddhism. Because of her early education in communism, she once asked me about Creation, and I made a few comments. One Sabbath the whole family came to an open house at Geoscience Research Institute, and later she told me she had listened to a radio broadcast about intelligent design. It really took no convincing on origins issues because the mind-set was fertile and ready for a change.

Several years ago this couple moved to a new location. When we visited them the week they moved in, we noticed that the house next door was for sale. We are now next-door neighbors.

## Lessons learned

During the years these experiences have taught me many things about how to witness to people. One of the best examples comes from Ellen White's *The Desire of Ages* when she wrote about how Jesus dealt with doubting Thomas.

"In His treatment of Thomas, Jesus gave a lesson for His followers. His example shows how we should treat those whose faith is weak, and who make their doubts prominent. Jesus did not overwhelm Thomas with reproach, nor did He enter into controversy with him. He revealed Himself. . . . Unbelief is seldom overcome by controversy. It is rather put upon self-defense, and finds new support and excuse. But let Jesus, in His love and mercy, be revealed."<sup>4</sup>

I have learned the truth of Ellen White's words, "Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay."<sup>5</sup> Or as Madeleine L'Engle says, "We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."<sup>6</sup>

The point of these accounts is simple—just as the Gadarene demoniac, I may not have all the answers, but I do have something to say about my experience with Jesus. ■

- 1 All Scripture quotations in this article are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.
- 2 Plate tectonics is the comprehensive geology theory of how the earth's present mountain ranges, ocean basins, earthquakes, and volcanoes are due to the long distance movement of the continents through time.
- 3 Magma is hot liquid rock that can cool underground to form granitic-type mountains such as the Sierra Nevadas in California. It takes some time for this large a volume of liquid to cool to a solid.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1940), 808.
- 5 Ibid. 142.
- 6 Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (Wheaton, IL: Shaw Publishers, 1980), 122.

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## If you pastor more than one church—we want to hear from you

Here at *Ministry* magazine editorial offices, we are planning another issue featuring and recognizing the work of pastors who have more than one church. In order for this issue to be valuable to ministers around the world, we need your participation. You are invited to prepare an article for *Ministry* magazine. Here are some suggested topics you may consider:

- Training lay leaders to effectively work with you
- Designing sermons to meet the needs of different churches
- Addressing family life in a multichurch district with special emphasis on children
- Organizing the evangelistic outreach in a district
- Coordinating boards and committees in a district
- Working with the communities in the district
- Creating a spirit of cooperation among the churches
- Recognizing the needs of the pastor's spouse and children for continuity as the pastor preaches in a different church each week

If you pastor several churches, you will no doubt have other topics in mind.

### Next steps:

- Email, write, or call and discuss with us the topic or topics you are suggesting.
- Once we have agreed on the specific topic, we will ask you to proceed with the writing.

### We need to hear from you.

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# Dateline

## Elders training

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—Since 1990 training and production of resources have been the responsibility of ministerial secretaries. In addition to producing various resources for elders, the General Conference Ministerial Association has published *Elder's Digest*. This quarterly publication is available on a subscription basis, but more than fifty thousand copies are distributed through local conferences throughout the world. The distribution through the conferences is much more effective and less expensive. Four yearly issues cost US\$0.80 plus shipping.

In addition to providing resources, Ministerial Association personnel provide training seminars. These seminars are held throughout the world, but recently large groups of elders have assembled in various locations in various parts of the United States.

"We are delighted that large groups of elders travel long distances to attend these training events. It is our belief that elders in the western world will increase their leadership role and become even more active in the churches," states **James A.**

**Cress**, ministerial secretary.

Pastors who are interested in obtaining resources for their elders or to schedule training seminars should contact **Jonas**



*Elder's Digest*

**Arrais**, associate ministerial secretary, at 301-680-6506, or e-mail him at Arraisj@gc.adventist.org.

## Third Africa theological consultation

**Eldoret, Kenya**—The third and final theological consultation "Spiritualism and the Adventist Church in Africa" was held at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, located in Eldoret, Kenya, Decem-



*Students on the campus of the University of Eastern Africa*

ber 3–5, 2006. Some twenty theologians and leaders participated in presentation of papers and discussion. Most of the participants were based in Africa. **Ángel Manuel Rodríguez**, director of the Biblical Research Institute, led a team of five General Conference representatives.



*One of the participants was J.A. Kayode Makinde, vice chancellor of Babcock University.*

**Brempong Owusu-Antwi**, vice-chancellor of the Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, coordinated the presentations. It is expected that the studies presented will be reviewed by

appropriate committees, with the goal of providing material to pastors and elders of the churches in Africa.

## Ministerial secretaries meet in Tucson, Arizona, United States

**Tucson, Arizona, United States**—January 7–11, 2007, ministerial secretaries from throughout North America met in Tucson, Arizona, United States. These meetings were held in conjunction with other ministry meetings. The ministerial meetings were under the leadership of Russell C. Burrill, ministerial secretary for North America. Prior to this meeting, the Shepherdess coordinators (ministry for spouses and families of ministers) met, under the leadership of Marti Schneider. Schneider is the Shepherdess coordinator for the Adventist Church in North America.

Dr. Burrill will retire from his position on June 30, 2007. The new ministerial secretary will be **Ron Clouzet**, who most recently was the dean of the School of Religion at Southern Adventist

University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States. Previously, Clouzet was senior pastor of the Adventist church in Roseville, California, United States.

## Ministerial secretaries

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—*Ministry*, International Journal for Pastors, is received by ministers in most of the countries of the world. It is usually ministerial secretaries who see to it that pastors receive the journal. While this is only one of the functions of ministerial secretaries, the *Ministry* editorial team appreciates the leadership of the ministerial secretaries.

There are hundreds of ministerial secretaries throughout the world. It would be impractical to publish the names of all of them, but we are sharing with our readers the names of the ministerial secretaries in the world divisions of the church.

List of ministerial secretaries by division:

**John B. D. Kakembo**

East-Central Africa (ECD)

**Bruno Vertallier**

Euro-Africa Division (EUD)

**Ilie Leahu**

Euro-Asia Division (ESD)

**Hector Sanchez**

Inter-American Division (IAD)

**Russell C. Burrill**

North American Division (NAD)

**Miguel Luna**

Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)

**Alejandro Bullón**

South American Division (SAD)

**Gary H. Webster**

South Pacific Division (SPD)

**Passmore Hachalinga**

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (SID)

**Measapogu Wilson**

Southern Asia Division (SUD)

**Houtman E. Sinaga**

Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)

**Daniel Duda**

Trans-European Division (TED)

**R. Danforth Francis**

West-Central Africa Division (WAD) ■



## BOOK REVIEW

**More Than a Prophet: How We Lost and Found Again Ellen White.** Graeme S. Bradford, Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2006. Paperback, \$25.00.

Truth is progressive. This idea is foundational to Adventist epistemology, and ultimately, for a theology of spiritual gifts. *More Than a Prophet* builds on this concept by arguing that the Adventist denomination needs to grow in its understanding of Ellen White's prophetic life and ministry. The church needs to face up to the *real* Ellen White. *More Than a Prophet* is also the third installment by the author since 2004 to help Adventists obtain a clearer understanding of Ellen White and inspiration. Bradford is a recently retired professor of practices. This third book is much broader than either of his two previous books, *Prophets Are Human* (2004) and *People Are Human* (2005), in which a fictional dialogue is set up to answer questions that an Adventist couple face—especially those questions raised because of criticisms generated through negative Web sites.

One could have wished that the content of the book was more carefully edited. The publisher, at the very least, should have caught the numerous errors that abound throughout the book. For example, beginning with footnote 188 (p. 115) every footnote is off by one (there is no footnote 443 in the text). Despite this, once one gets past these problems, an even more foundational problem is the view of Ellen White and Adventist history that he presents.

If the church were to accept his view of inspiration and the role and authority of Ellen White, it would certainly mark a real shift in the stance of the church toward her prophetic ministry. It is for this reason and several more that the Ellen White Estate

has issued a disclaimer that it does not endorse the book, despite the foreword's mistaken claim that the manuscript was favorably reviewed by White Estate officers. Other church leaders who had initially endorsed his two earlier books now seem to be distancing themselves from this volume.

So why is the book controversial? The answer lies in his understanding of the relationship between Christianity and culture. These paradigms, which became popular in scholarly circles after the publication of H. Richard Niebuhr's classic, *Christ and Culture* (1949), argue for five descriptive categories. These categories run within a continuum. On one side there is the view that Christ is against culture; on the other side is the view that Christ is of culture. Most of the church, Niebuhr suggested, rest somewhere in what he called "the church of the middle." While not explicitly stated, the relationship of Ellen White to her culture as presented by Bradford is one that is much closer to the "of" side of the continuum instead of being closer to the "church of the middle."

In developing his views of "culture," Bradford places the 1919 Bible Conference at a critical juncture between the Ellen White of history and the Ellen White found in the church today. It was at this Conference, he maintains, that the real truth about Ellen White was hidden. Although these transcripts were discovered in 1973 (thanks to inquiries made by Don Mansell), only a modest amount of study has been given to the transcripts. Bradford argues that "progressives" like A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott, in fighting against traditionalists like J. S. Washburn and Claude Holmes who were advocating the verbal inspiration of the testimonies or Ellen White's writings, were correct in pointing out historical errors in *The Great Controversy* and the entire process of how she prepared her books—they knew from firsthand experience that her writings were far from inerrant. Yet Bradford only examines the two discussions about

inspiration that occurred at the end of the Conference and does not talk about earlier discussions that prefaced them. If he had, he would probably be uncomfortable with the verbal inspiration of the Bible that some of these "progressives" articulated. Ultimately, both the "progressives" and the "traditionalists" were impacted by the rising fundamentalist movement—especially as a way to combat the rise of modernism, which threatened the inspiration of Scripture. Many Adventists today would be uncomfortable with either position. Was the real truth about Ellen White covered up? Not in the way that Bradford presents it. The Adventist Church was at a pivotal moment in its history when it grappled with how it would face functioning without a living prophet. The fact of the matter is that the church was also confronted with a much broader shift in American culture that would have far-reaching implications for the continued development of Adventist theology. Instead, the 1919 Bible Conference polarized Adventist theology into two camps (in fact, it is the first time that the term *liberals* and *conservatives* are utilized in an Adventist meeting). These two camps would fragment and overlap through the rest of the twentieth century and continue to impact the church up to the present.

In conclusion, a central argument for Bradford is that "there has consistently been a group that has a more enlightened understanding of her role but they have not felt free to share what they know with the larger body of believers" (193). Bradford presumes that he is part of this progressive and therefore enlightened group. Unfortunately his view of inspiration and Adventist history that he presents is fatally flawed. This book therefore does not contribute toward unearthing the *real* Ellen White and thus represents a step backward for the church in its progressive quest for truth. ■

—Reviewed by Michael Campbell, Ph.D.  
candidate in Adventist Studies, Andrews University,  
Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



# Get back in the closet

JAMES A. CRESS



The news was both devastating and scandalous—a renowned pastor exposed as a longtime homosexual.

Imagine the pain, anger, frustration, and disappointment when he and his lifestyle were forced “out of the closet” into open scrutiny by the media. Like a pebble cast into still water, the scandal’s expanding ripples impacted ever-widening circles.

First, there was the reality of his own sinful behavior that resulted in the abrupt termination of his career as a pastor. He had publicly preached against the gay agenda, and the court of public opinion is ruthless in its ridicule of those whose faith pretensions are not matched by their faithful performance.

Second, his own disaster was coupled with his wife’s trauma as she suddenly was forced to confront her own betrayal in public—even as she discovered in the harshest way possible that, at some level, their marital relationship had been a sham for many years. Likewise, his children and extended family were thrust into the spotlight under most unfortunate circumstances.

The consequences of clergy sexual misconduct, however, do not stop with the family. Reports that rocketed into the news brought utter devastation to members who felt betrayed by their pastor’s fall. Likely it may take more than a decade for members to trust pastoral leadership again.

Likewise, his pastoral colleagues—several of whom he had personally recruited to ministry or assisted in developing their pastoral/evangelistic skills—were stunned by their mentor’s behavior. More than one even questioned the validity of their own call to ministry when they faced reality about the minister who had been God’s agent in extending that call.

Beyond the local church, his entire denominational structure—in fact, the wider body of all Christians—experienced

another blow, especially in the minds of skeptics who assume all believers are covering up some secret sin and wonder whether their conversion claims actually stand for reality. Television comedians enjoyed rousing applause as they mocked the pretenses of the notorious preacher. No wonder one of his own members responded by asking, “Why couldn’t he have just stayed in the closet?”

Of course, this became a tragedy for the entire church as well as for the sinful pastor. What can we learn for the future?

## **Don’t jump to conclusions.**

The pastor I just described is not the famous former president of the National Association of Evangelicals (based in the United States), Ted Haggard. Instead, he is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor whose exposure occurred in similar time proximity to Haggard’s own revelations. No church, no denomination, is exempt. Ministers, especially, are Satan’s special targets.

**Don’t categorize some sins as more shameful.** While it is true that public attention and church shame are more exposed in sexual sin than other sins such as thievery, prevarication, murder by gossip, or profanity, God views all sin as heinous, deserving the death penalty, and able to be overcome only by the blood of Jesus.

**Don’t shun the sinner.** Exposed sinners, particularly pastors who rarely have adequate nurturing support systems, need to hear from their colleagues that they are still valued as individuals.

Silence is our easiest escape when we are offended by a colleague’s misconduct. Our silence is spiritually deadliest when a sinner yearns for a sympathetic word.

**Develop a support system.** I’ve been praying for Ted Haggard and my Adventist colleague, and I hope they have been praying for me. We need each other’s prayers. Heaven has used these pastors mightily in the past, and God may use them again to reach other individuals. Never assume you could not morally fall. Find or establish an accountability group of trusted colleagues or members who require you to discuss what you read, where you go, who you see, and how you handle the temptations you face.

**Offer positive options.** We must signal three things to any individual, especially to those who have betrayed the church’s trust: love, acceptance, and forgiveness.\* Affirm heaven’s love for every sinner, because no one is beyond God’s grace. Express acceptance—not of the sin, but of the sinner. Remember, God’s grace accepts any repentant prodigal. In the name of Jesus who forgives you, forgive others who sin. Of course, a repentant sinner must ask the Lord’s forgiveness, but that first step is often prompted by some saint’s personal assurance of Jesus’ love and eagerness to forgive.

## **Get back into the closet yourself.**

Jesus spoke about entering our prayer closet (Matt. 6:6) and pleading with heaven. I’m convinced we need much more prayer for and much less speculation about the sinners in our midst. There, in the closet, is the location and method for victory. ■

\* Jerry Cook, Stanley C. Baldwin, *Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness: Equipping the Church to be Truly Christian in a Non-Christian World* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1979).

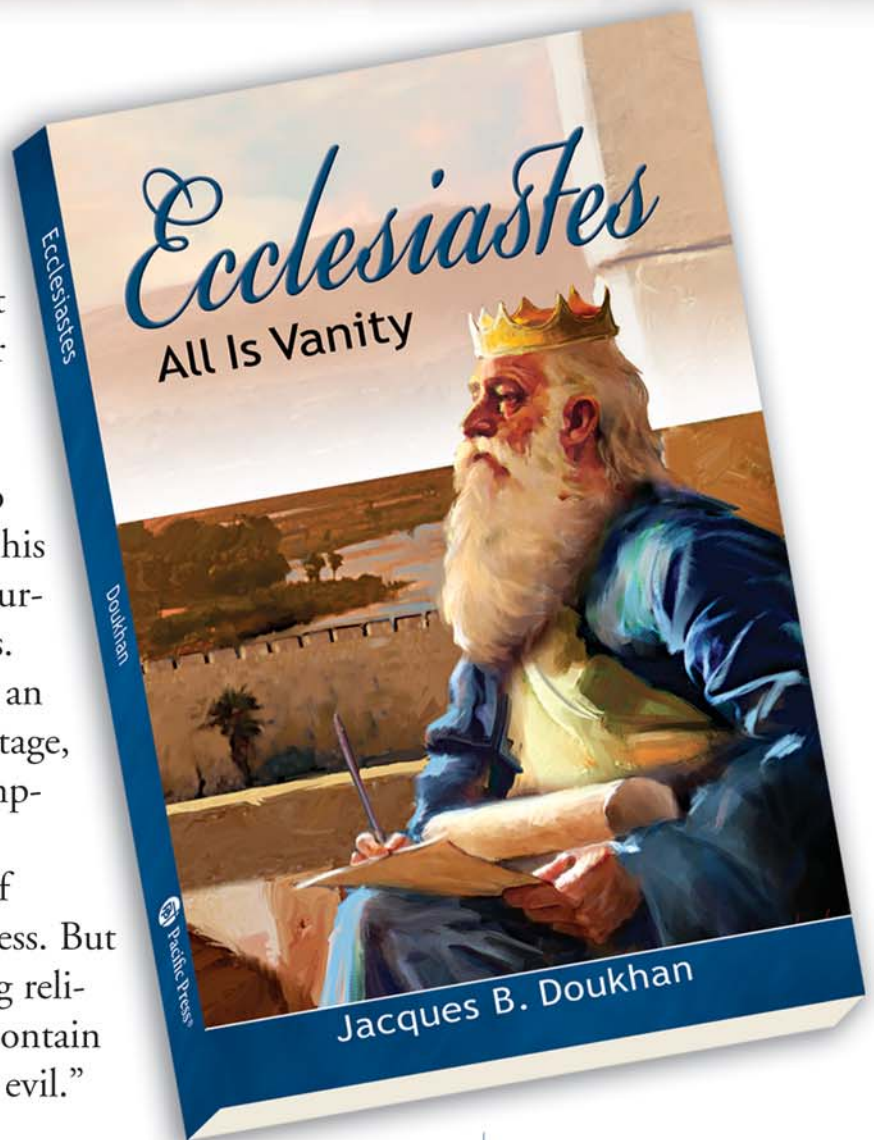
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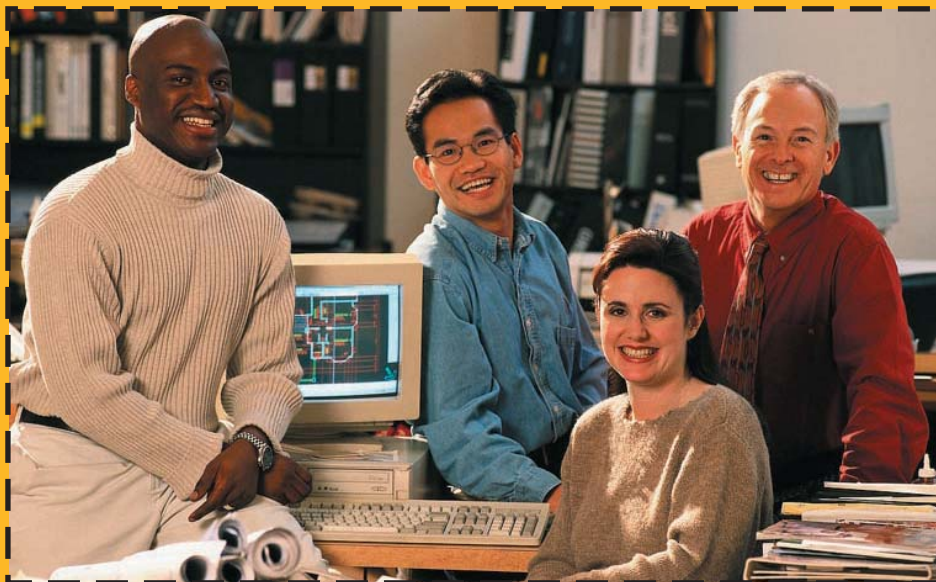
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