

MINISTRY[®]

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LEGALISM

*and
"righteousness
by faith"*



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OUR READERS RESPOND...

Rediscovering God in the hospital

I thoroughly enjoyed Leslie Holmes's article "Rediscovering the Heart of God on a Hospital Gurney" (September 2007). What an encouraging story of hope and perseverance. I, too, am a minister—but I am much younger. Pastor Holmes has reminded me that good stewardship of our bodies is essential to effective and responsible ministry. His down-to-earth nature also encouraged me, revealing a humble side to all of us pastors that we often keep hidden. There's nothing wrong with revealing our fears because it opens doors to receiving love and affection from others. Praise God that our Lord saw Pastor Holmes through this surgery so that all of us can now read of this miracle, and give God the glory that He deserves.

—Henry M. Kirsch, pastor, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

I read with great interest "Rediscovering the Heart of God on a Hospital Gurney." I was recently released from the hospital following cancer surgery.

Being a "take-charge" pastor, I found myself in the exact situation in which Dr. Holmes found himself. Thank you so very much for this article that came at just the right time for me. May God truly bless

orderlies such as the one whom he had in sharing the love of our Lord with those who are going through such difficult situations. Interestingly enough, I had a surgical nurse who ministered to me in much the same way.

—Robert B. Billings, pastor, New Minas, Nova Scotia, Canada

Covenants and righteousness by faith

I am reading for the third time George E. Rice's article "The Covenants and Righteousness by Faith" (May 2007). This article is heavy with meaning. Rice states that "Jesus lived in perfect obedience to His Father's will and law," and that Jesus—being without sin—lived under the universal covenant under which all sinless beings live.

Wow! I had to read that several times. I have one question: Did not Jesus have to depend on grace to resist sin as do we? If He had within Him the innate power to resist sin then He would not have conquered Satan on the same ground where we live!

Books have been written on this topic. Yet Rice has done such a good job within the confines of one article, maybe he can give us a condensed answer to this question!

—Hubert F. Sturges, MD, email

I want to comment on George E. Rice's article "The Covenants and Righteousness by Faith." It is an in-depth treatment of the subject, yet interesting and clear for a topic of this nature.

This explanation of the universal covenant and the new covenant and to whom each covenant applies would be of great help in clearing up the confusion in the minds of those who believe in the sinful nature of Christ. A sinful physical, yet sinless spiritual nature that Christ possessed enabled Him to perfectly obey His Father's law under the universal covenant, whereas every other human being, being sinful in both natures, lives under the new covenant, being in need of grace to be saved.

Articles like this are needed today to help us get our bearings and strengthen our faith as we continue to trust our Lord to save us.

—Henry S. Gerber, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

Idolatry makes sense, but doesn't work

No wonder Randall L. Roberts's article, "Idolatry Makes Sense; It Just Doesn't Work" (September 2007) made the cover for that month's magazine. It's an appeal to our open gradual Bible Christian ethical demise.

continued on page 27

CORRECTION: On page 6 of the November 2007 issue it was incorrectly stated that King Henry IV was a French king. It should have stated that he was king of Germany. —The editors

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If you're receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all clergy of other denominations. To receive your complimentary subscription, please write to us at our Editorial Office, visit us at www.ministrymagazine.org, or email us at ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

Looking at the finish line

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



January—the start of a new year—usually begins with questions. What kind of year will it be? What will we experience personally and professionally? What will happen in the congregations or organizations where we minister?

These questions and more are asked, but we really can't answer most of them. That's why many of us make promises at the start of a new year. Clergy—pastors, chaplains, leaders, professors—make promises such as, *I will focus on my spiritual life; I will spend more time with family; I will spend more time preparing the sermons; I will train members to fulfill their rightful role in the life of the church.* No matter where we live, what kind of ministry we do, or what denomination we are in, there are many similarities in the New Year's resolutions clergy make.

The problem with New Year resolutions, though, is that within a week or two we replace many, if not all, by the daily challenges we face and then completely forget them. But for a few days, at least, we feel good because we made some worthwhile resolutions. Instead of focusing on promises in the beginning of the year, I suggest we focus on where we want to be at the end of the year—the finish line.

Let's look at some biblical personalities and their focus—or lack thereof.

Peter

He boldly declared that even if he had to die (Matt. 26:35) or if others left Jesus (Mark 14:29), he, Peter, would remain loyal to Jesus Christ. That's the resolution he made, and I have no doubt that it was a sincere one. The problem was the outcome for Peter's resolution

melted by the fire that warmed him while Jesus was being questioned (Mark 14:67). Somehow, the promises he made before had no value and did not prevent him from denying Jesus. His well-meaning, but valueless promises were a bitter experience for him.

Ananias and Sapphira

They witnessed other Christians sharing their worldly possessions and decided to do the same. At the moment, it was the thing they wanted to do. After the sale of their property, though, they had second thoughts and kept part of the proceeds from the sale (Acts 5:1ff.) but wanted the others to believe they had shared everything. The resolution they made they chose not to keep, but even worse, they refused to acknowledge that their promise had no value.

Moses

After Moses escaped Egypt because of his rash killing of a harsh taskmaster (Exod. 2:11ff.), he found a new life in a strange land. That land became his home, so there was no reason for him to return to Egypt—except that God called him. Moses offered many excuses why he should not return to Egypt. He pled with God, " 'O Lord, please send someone else to do it' " (Exod. 4:13, NIV). But God wanted him to look beyond the immediate moment. When

Moses finally accepted the goal God had for him—to take the Israelites out of Egypt—he returned to his people. The immediate circumstances did not give him the motive to return, but God and the final goal did.

Nicodemus

During his first meeting with Jesus (John 3:1ff.), Nicodemus focused too much on the present. In fact, he became somewhat argumentative with Jesus. But when he focused on the outcome of Jesus' ministry (John 19:39), he made a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. He proclaimed himself a follower although many others abandoned Him. It was not an empty promise that made him a follower of Jesus; it was a focus on the finish line and on the One who was at the finish line—Jesus Christ.

Promises—such as promises made at the beginning of a new year—are often made with good intentions, but are difficult to keep. We forget, modify, or pretend to fulfill them. A more effective way would be to focus on the end of the year. What kind of person would you like to be at the end of the year? What is your vision for your congregation at the end of the year? What does your focus for the year include? Such questions will guide us throughout the year.

Before we make resolutions and boldly move into the future, let us focus on the end. That end goal can serve as a beacon for us so that we will not fool ourselves by making empty promises at the start of the year. ■

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

Legalism and “righteousness by faith” Part one of a two-part series

Roy Gane



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Righteousness by faith” is foundational to the biblical concept of salvation. In Romans 3:21–26, Paul states that God reveals His righteous and just character not only through His law, but also when He extends mercy by justifying and forgiving those who have broken the law, if they accept His righteousness through faith that is of and in Christ and receive His atoning sacrifice. The apostle stresses the importance of righteousness by faith by repeating, explaining, and illustrating it through much of his Epistle to the Romans (4:5, 9, 11, 13; 9:30; 10:6) and elsewhere (Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:9). For Paul, righteousness by faith is the heart of the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17).

According to Paul, all who believe in Jesus “are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).¹ To the Ephesians he wrote, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9). Essential to saving grace is a “legal” declaration of acquittal from condemnation (e.g., Matt. 9:2; John 8:11; cf. Rom. 8:1). In addition, because the justifying gift of grace brings the transforming presence of Christ, it naturally provides power to bear the gift of “fruit” in one’s life, namely, sanctification (Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 1:4–8, 30).

Because “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and no amount of good works can ever redeem anyone from past failure, law-keeping is completely

ruled out as a means of salvation, for salvation is possible only by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9). Does this mean that there is something wrong with God’s law? Not at all. The law is holy, just, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14). It serves the crucial purpose of protecting us by revealing what is right and what is wrong (Rom. 3:20; 7:7–13).² The law is holy because it is based on love (Matt. 22:37–40), the basic principle of God’s character (1 John 4:8). However, while keeping the law results in life in the sense that its principles of cause and effect are for our benefit and preservation (Lev. 18:5; cf. Exod. 20:12), the law is powerless to help anyone who has already broken it (Gal. 3:10–12).

God’s law is not legalistic, nor is true obedience to that law. Rather, obedience is “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). By freeing us from condemnation, Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1–3), “so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (v. 4). Because “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5), we receive the basis of harmony with God’s law and character (namely, love) as a gift.

What is legalism?

Legalism is *misuse* of the law. That is, it is using the law for a purpose other than that for which it is intended. Legalism includes futile attempts to earn salvation by one’s own performance (e.g., Luke 18:9–14) and to gain assurance by achieving a minimum standard (Matt. 19:16–22). Legalistic abuse of God’s law also includes using it with human traditions added to it, to gain power over others (Matt. 23:1–28). Rather than trying to protect people—a purpose for which the law is designed—legalists hypocritically make a show of protecting the law itself, including their own version of the law, for which they claim divine authority (Matt. 15:1–9). By laying down the standards to which others must adhere, legalists enhance their status, political clout, and even wealth. Such legalists end up violating God’s law by obscuring and ignoring the principles on which it is based (Matt. 23:23–35). By taking the place of God, it could also be said, they commit a form of blasphemy.

Satan is antinomian, against God’s law (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8, 10). But do we know that he is also the biggest legalist in the universe? This is not because he is divided against himself (Matt. 12:26), but because he misuses God’s law and deceives people regarding it. He perverts it and

blasphemously uses his perverted version to gain power and to discourage people from victory over sin and salvation through Jesus Christ. Then he turns around and hypocritically accuses God's loyal people of being legalists because they are seeking to obey God! Because Satan tries to use God's law against God's loyal people to slander and destroy them (Zech. 3:1–5; Rev. 12:10), he is a malicious false witness (Deut. 19:16–19).

Legalism is alive and well in the Christian community today. For one thing, our society is so driven by performance

church community. Those who try to restore harmony through sound biblical evidence and reasoning are often baffled by their lack of success, which is due to the fact that the main problem resides outside the bounds of rationality in the realm of personalities and their drives for influence and power.

A so-called righteousness by faith based on a legalistic assumption

There is still another kind of widespread legalism that is not generally recognized as such. This approach

a. Because moral transformation is limited, Christ's work *in* believers and role as our example must be limited. All that matters is Christ's substitutionary legal work *for* believers, which accounts them righteous at all times, no matter what level of moral or spiritual failure or victory they may be experiencing.⁶

b. God's Old Testament moral law is an unreasonable and obsolete standard of righteousness. This law is superseded by the higher New Testament and "new covenant" standard of love.

LEGALISM IS ALIVE AND WELL IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY TODAY. FOR ONE THING, OUR SOCIETY IS SO DRIVEN BY PERFORMANCE THAT PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE SWITCHING GEARS WHEN IT COMES TO SALVATION.

that people have trouble switching gears when it comes to salvation. Because the Bible teaches that we are all judged by what we do and think (Eccles. 12:14; Rom. 2:16), many suppose that in order to be saved they must, by their own efforts, keep from sinning. However, the Bible also teaches that true good works come from faith (Gal. 5:6; cf. James 2:17–26), which means that not sinning is possible only as a gift from God (Jude 24). Our salvation is based not upon our performance but upon Christ (1 John 5:11–13). Any good works that we do are only involved in receiving, not earning, His gift of salvation.³

Another kind of legalism among us is the imbalance with which some Christians latch on to things that are really nonessential and force them on others as essential. Whatever the chosen issue may be, the effects are elitism, criticism, or condemnation of others, and polarization of the

claims to be gospel "righteousness by faith" because it emphasizes God's free and gracious justification of sinners who believe in Christ and His once-for-all sacrifice as the only basis of their salvation. However, this true concept gets skewed by being mixed up with other ideas, such as:

1. Not only is our human nature tainted by sin so that we constantly need the covering atonement of Christ (which is true; cf. Num. 28:1–8: daily sacrifice for all), beyond this, human depravity is so extreme that we commit sins all the time, including involuntarily.⁴
2. While the converted life should manifest victory over sin in the process of sanctification as moral growth that accompanies justification, full obedience to God's law is impossible.⁵ This view has several corollaries:

c. A judgment of the works of Christian believers according to the standards of God's law is irrelevant because works have nothing to do with their salvation, and they are already judged as saved in Christ. They certainly could not be judged according to standards presented in the Old Testament, which are not binding on New Testament Christians.

We now proceed to examine these notions through five questions arising from issues of human depravity, obedience, justification, Old Testament law, and judgment.

1. Depravity

Is human depravity so domineering that even after experiencing conversion, one cannot help but continue to sin?

The widely held assumption of extreme human depravity has deep

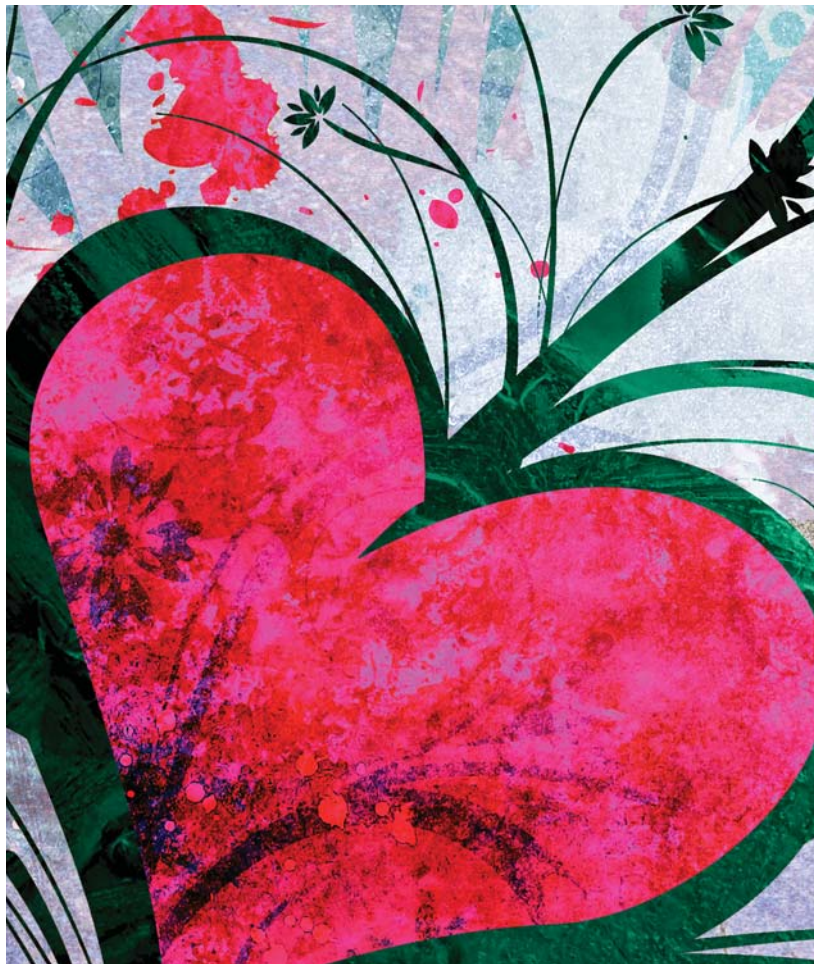
historical roots in the teachings of some Protestant Reformers who challenged the Roman Catholic doctrine that because people are partly unaffected by sin, they are capable of contributing to their salvation through their own meritorious works.⁷ According to the Bible, all human beings are affected by sin (Rom. 3:10–18, 23; cf. Pss. 5; 14; 36; 53; Isa. 59). This moral weakness inclines toward further sins (James 1:14, 15). The fallen sinful body and its evil propensities remain until Christ's second coming, when God's faithful people will be changed and receive immortality (1 Cor. 15:52, 53).⁸ Any moral good that we have is from God, from outside of ourselves (Rom. 7:18).

In the Bible, words for "sin" can refer either to fallen nature as a dynamic state of being or to specific infractions of divine law. Examples of sin as nature and state are Psalm 51:5, "in sin my mother conceived me" (NASB); Romans 7:17, "sin which dwells in me" (NASB); and 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves" (NASB).

This concept explains why some Israelite animal sacrifices, prefiguring Christ's sacrifice, were offered as expressions of joy when expiation or atonement (*Piel* of *kpr*) and forgiveness for specific sins was not needed (Lev. 7:11–17: thanksgiving, votive, and freewill subcategories of well-being and peace offerings; cf. chap. 3).⁹ Even human praise is tainted by sin and needs the mediation of Christ's sacrifice in order to be acceptable to God.¹⁰

Other biblical passages speak of "sin" as specific violations of God's

law: "sin [*hamartía*] is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4); "All wrongdoing [literally, "unrighteousness"] is sin" (1 John 5:17); "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17, NASB); "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Sin in this sense can be a verb: "If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins unintentionally in doing



any one of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done" (Lev. 4:27); "No one who abides in him sins" (present tense of *hamartáno*, 1 John 3:6). Sinning involves breach of one's relationship with God because it is out of harmony with His character of love (1 John 4:8) and His law, which is based on love (Matt. 22:37–40).

Sins, as violations of God's law, can be actions or thoughts (Matt. 5:21–30). They can be deliberate (Lev. 6:2, 3) or inadvertent and unintentional (Lev. 4).

But they are never simply automatic. In the ancient Israelite ritual system, which dealt with many aspects of human faultiness, the only automatic human conditions that required ritual remedies were some kinds of physical ritual impurities (e.g., menstruation, nocturnal emission) that excluded persons from contact with God's inner sphere of holiness and life centered at

the sanctuary (e.g., Lev. 12–15; Num. 5:1–4; Deut. 23:10, 11). Physical ritual impurities, such as corpse contamination (voluntary), scaly skin disease (so-called leprosy; involuntary), and healthy or abnormal genital flows (voluntary or involuntary) belonged to a conceptual category associated with "the birth-death cycle that comprises mortality,"¹¹ that is, the fallen human state that has resulted from sinful action (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12; 6:23).

Because physical impurities were not violations of divine commands, they were not moral faults requiring forgiveness, as shown by the fact that persons who offered purification

offerings (so-called sin offerings) for severe physical impurities received "atonement" ("purgation") that only resulted in physical ritual purity. This cleansing was not prerequisite to forgiveness, which such individuals did not need (e.g., Lev. 12:6–8; 14:19, 20; 15:15; contrast forgiveness in 4:20, 26, 31, 35 in cases of sinful actions).¹² Although Christians can learn from these physical impurities and their remedies, which show us that Christ's sacrifice ultimately redeems us from our sinful

state of mortality (1 Cor. 15:52, 53; cf. Ps. 103:3: “who heals all your diseases”; John 3:16 “eternal life” [emphasis supplied]), the ritual remedies for them no longer apply because Christ’s ministry is in God’s heavenly temple (Heb. 7–10), which cannot be affected by human physical states as the earthly sanctuary and temple could.

Some well-meaning and otherwise well-informed Christian interpreters have mistakenly interpreted some Israelite sacrifices that removed physical ritual impurities, such as the red heifer remedy for corpse contamination, as rituals that atoned for people when they had *committed* sins. For example, while the NRSV correctly understands the end of Numbers 19:9 to label the burning of the red heifer as “a purification offering” (cf. NJPS “for cleansing”), the KJV, the RSV, the NKJV, the NASB, and the NIV incorrectly render it “purification/purifying from/forsin.”¹³ Because physical impurities can be automatic, reading “sin” in a case of physical impurity can lead to the wrong conclusion that committing sins can be automatic. Thus the great preacher Charles Spurgeon interpreted the red heifer ritual: “Who has lived for a single day in this base world, without discovering that in all his actions he commits sin, in everything to which he puts his hand, he receives, as well as imparts, some degree of defilement?”¹⁴

Not all human imperfection, even in the sphere of conscious activity, can be regarded as sin. Human life is fraught with all kinds of nonsinful imperfections due to our limitations of skill, knowledge,

memory, physical coordination, and so on. For example, while a worker should do his best (cf. Eccles. 9:10; 2 Tim. 2:15), there is no indication that he needs forgiveness from God if something goes wrong or is not absolutely perfect (cf. Jer. 18:4).

The bottom line is that human depravity, as pervasive as it is, is not a valid argument to justify sinning. Righteousness by faith does not mean

life is progressive acceptance of God’s precious gift of victory over our fallen natures by partaking of the transforming power of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:1–4). *By God’s grace*, Christians can and should keep their sinful natures under control (1 Cor. 9:27).

According to Paul, “since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). This is not false assurance; rather,

it is reconciliation with God that results in true hope “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (v. 5). So when God converts people by His grace, He brings them into harmony with His character and law of love (cf. 1 John 4:8; Matt. 22:37–40) by progressively pouring love into their hearts through His Holy Spirit.

The role of the Spirit is essential for conversion. The Spirit provides spiritual reorientation that can metaphorically be termed “new birth” (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:4–7; cf. Rom. 8). This change of disposition is an integral, essential part of conversion along with forgiveness for past sins (cf. Rom. 3:25).

Jesus came to save His people not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins (Matt. 1:21). For Christians, committing sins is not inevitable. According to Jude 24, God “is able to keep you from falling.” John writes, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (1 John 2:1). He recognizes that God’s children may occasionally fall in their progressive journey toward harmony with God’s character, so he adds in the same verse: “But if anyone



freedom from sin in order to continue to sin. Rather, it is freedom from sin to live a life of obedience to God.

2. Obedience

Is obedience to God possible? Is it legalism to emphasize obedience?

In Romans 3:10–18, Paul describes the pre-conversion spiritual state, showing that all human beings need God’s gift of justification through Christ. An indispensable part of the Christian

does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Nevertheless, John recognizes the possibility of not committing sins, or it would make no sense for him to encourage people to abstain from this. Keep in mind that we are talking here about development and maturation of *character*, not sinless perfection of *nature*, which nobody receives until glorification.

In the New Testament, disobedience to God's law is sin (1 John 3:4), and this includes the Old Testament moral law. Even in Old Testament times, God intended His law to be kept. Thus Moses encouraged the Israelites to be loyal to God because obedience to His law is accessible (Deut. 30:11–14). Of course they could not obey God in their own strength. But if they truly loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:5), their internalized heart relationship with Him would have been like the "new covenant" experience, in which God puts His law within people and writes it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33).¹⁵

Those who think they must go on continually sinning until Jesus comes tend to brand as legalistic "perfectionism" the biblical teaching of overcoming sin through God's Holy Spirit and "Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).¹⁶ But obedience to God's law by grace through faith is not legalism, and God empowers the level of obedience that He requires (1 Cor. 10:13). Without this divine empowerment, obedience is impossible. Thus, commenting on 1 John, Hans La Rondelle has observed, "To John the life of holiness is to be lived on the level of miracle. The impossibility of sinning therefore to John does not spring forth from any inherent metaphysical quality but from the reality of the victorious and cleansing union of faith with the Crucified and Risen One who is essentially holy and righteous."¹⁷

It is true that Christ wants "to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27), but it is Christ who takes responsibility

for purifying the church (vv. 25, 26). His "bride" is able to make herself ready for "the marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7) because

"to her it has been granted to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints
(v. 8, emphasis supplied).

So "righteous deeds" are a gift from God. What we are responsible for is receiving the gift, which involves cooperating with God. ☐

1 Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

2 On legalism and the purpose of God's law, see Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 310–312.

3 Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2006), 106, 109; Erwin Gane, *Jesus Only: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2005), 48.

4 See, for example, "We must understand this fact of being born with dead spirits in order to realize that we need a Savior. It is this unavoidable, intractable sin which makes it utterly impossible for any person to be able to please God." Colleen Tinker, "If What You Believe Is Not Biblical Would You Want to Know?" *Proclamation!* 7/6 (2006): 18.

5 See Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, rev. ed. (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1995), 201; Ratzlaff, "Christ Follower, You Are RIGHTEOUS," *Proclamation!* 7/4 (2006): 16; David Dykes, "Leave the Shadows [The Reality Is Christ]," *Proclamation!* 7/6 (2006): 10, 11.

6 "Because we as humans naturally have dead spirits which are in bondage to 'the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient' (Ephesians 2:2), we can never emulate Jesus. He could never be our 'example' of how to become perfect. He can only be our substitute." Tinker, "What You Believe," 18.

7 See Fernando Canale, *The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology: A Hermeneutical Study of the Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005), 189.

8 While these propensities remain in our underlying bodily nature, God can give us the victory over them in our character (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). Thus Ellen G. White wrote that through faith in Christ, "it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . ."

"As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away

from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we co-operate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations." *Review and Herald*, April 24, 1900.

9 Cf. Lev. 17:11, where all sacrificial blood, including that of the well-being offering (v.5, 6, 10, 12) provides some kind of expiation or ransom (*Piel of kpr*).

10 "The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 344.

11 Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and Its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 49.

12 On physical ritual impurities and their relationship to sins, see Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999), 115–121; Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 221, 222, 224–230; Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 198–202.

13 On the name of the sacrifice as "purification" rather than "sin" offering, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 253, 254.

14 Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1951), 359. It is true that in an extended sense the salient aspects of this sacrifice teach us about Christ's redemption from all sin pollution, including that which results from committing sins (see Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4 [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948], 120–123). Recognizing that this is an extended sense helps to avoid confusion of categories by which the "automatic" aspect of physical ritual impurity is incorrectly carried over to committing sins.

15 See Skip MacCarty, "New Covenant DNA in the Old Covenant," in *Granite or Ingrained?: What the Old and New Covenants Reveal about the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 37–56.

16 See Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1996), 212–216.

17 Hans K. La Rondelle, *Andrews University Monographs Studies in Religion*, vol. 3, *Perfection and Perfectionism: A Dogmatic-Ethical Study of Biblical Perfection and Phenomenal Perfectionism*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press), 233.

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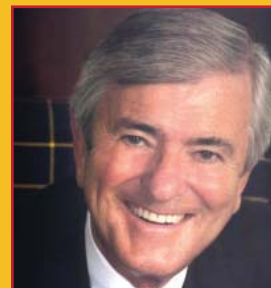
James Earl Massey is the son and grandson of ministers. For 22 years Dr. Massey was the senior and founding minister of the Metropolitan Church of God, a large multicultural, mission-oriented congregation in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. He was also elected for a five-year period to be the speaker on the "Christian Brotherhood Hour" — a weekly international program which broadcasted on more than 140 radio stations. Additionally, Dr. Massey has been invited to preach in distinguished pulpits across America, Europe, Egypt, the Caribbean, Australia, and Japan. More than 140 colleges, universities, and seminaries have invited him to preach or lecture. James Earl Massey has authored 25 published books and in 2006 *Christianity Today* named him one of the "25 Most Influential Preachers of the Past 50 Years."



Laurence Turner began his ministry as a pastor-evangelist in South England before being invited to be a lecturer in Theology at Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia. Currently he is Principal Lecturer in Old Testament Studies and Director of Research Degrees at Newbold College, Bracknell, England. Dr. Turner's main area of research and publishing has been the book of Genesis, on which he has published three books and contributed to major reference works and journal articles. He is very highly regarded as an expository preacher and enjoys expounding the Old Testament in a contemporary Christian context. In addition to Old Testament, Dr. Turner teaches homiletics at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and is regularly invited to preach internationally.



Jo Ann Davidson is the daughter of missionary parents. Formerly a homeschooling mom and music instructor, Dr. Davidson now lectures at the Andrews University Theological Seminary. She has the distinction of being the first woman lecturer in the Theology Department. Articles she has written have appeared in the *Adventist Review*, *Signs of the Times*®, and the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Her column, "Let's Face It," which has a woman's slant on theology, appears regularly in the journal *Perspective Digest*. She has also authored the published book *Jonah: The Inside Story*. Dr. Davidson is a highly sought-after speaker for large national and international Christian conventions and continues to find great fulfillment in her various roles as wife, mother, daughter, sister, auntie, teacher, musician, student, and active Christian.



Lloyd John Ogilvie has long been recognized as having a remarkably distinguished ministry. He was the 61st chaplain of the United States Senate in Washington, D.C. Dr. Ogilvie was also the Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, California, for 23 years with a very significant TV and radio broadcast ministry. He is currently the president of Leadership Unlimited, receiving numerous high-profile speaking invitations. Dr. Ogilvie has authored more than 55 books and has been the recipient of many prestigious awards including being named in the 1996 Baylor University's worldwide survey as one of the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. Recently, Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, established the Lloyd John Ogilvie Preaching Institute and the Lloyd John Ogilvie Chair of Preaching.

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Whatever happened to the “matchless charms of Christ”?

Shawn Brace



Shawn Brace is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

I recently sat through a very troubling talk. The speaker, well-intentioned, “encouraged” a group of young people to spend time with God, though I am not really sure how many of the young people in attendance were encouraged by the exhortation. For whatever reason, he gave a disparaging description of what a walk with Christ is all about. He told his young listeners that reading the Bible and spending time with God was something that had to be done, whether enjoyable or not. He even admitted that he sometimes preferred to watch television over reading his Bible. But, in the end, he performed his Christian duty and chose the Bible over the television because it was good for him, much like taking a bitter dose of medication.

What shocked me the most, however, was when he compared spending time with God to doing homework—something that certainly overjoyed the hearts of every school-age child in the room.

“None of us likes to do homework,” he said, “but it’s something we have to do in life in order to get by.” And with these thoughts echoing through the channels of their young, impressionable minds, he sat down.

Matchless charms

I don’t wish to criticize this speaker, or imply that there are never times when we don’t feel like spending those few fleeting moments with our Savior. But I fear that too many of us pastors have neglected to present Christ in all of His beauty.

Instead of presenting the “matchless charms of Christ” (*The Signs of the Times*, September 16, 1889), we have presented a very dry Christian experience that relegates a “relationship” with Christ as something to be endured, at best. What’s more, we give the unfortunate impression that our listeners are the ones who must do all the work in the relationship; that is, they speak nothing of Christ’s initiative in the process.

How many times have you heard—or perhaps even delivered—a sermon that put friendship with Christ on even par with a twelve-step program? Instead of preaching about Christ’s loveliness and expecting that loveliness to attract the listener into wanting to spend time with God, we have focused on what the listeners must *do* if they want to have a “thriving” Christian experience.

Instead of preaching about how Christ’s wonderful love and grace drew Zacchaeus to Himself, we choose to focus on how much effort Zacchaeus had spent climbing the sycamore tree, the implication being that we must do the same if we want a flourishing walk with God. In essence, we put the focus squarely on what we’re supposed to do rather than on what God has done and continues to do for us.

Unfortunately, I’m not sure that this do-it-yourself approach produces great results, nor does it leave the listener with a favorable—or accurate—picture of their heavenly Father. Our job as ministers is to help our listeners “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8)¹ knowing with full confidence that the uplifted Christ will draw them to Himself.

What would happen if we talked more about God’s goodness than we did about our responsibility in the Christian disciplines? Perhaps the “Christian disciplines” would naturally happen if we presented an irresistible Savior to our listeners’ starving ears.

Taking a page out of Solomon’s book

These ideas aren’t without precedent. Nearly a thousand years before Christ walked the dusty roads of this earth, He inspired a man to write about the most intimate of human experiences—the love shared between husband and wife. Though no resident expert on successful relationships (at least in the latter part of his life), Solomon wrote a beautiful book about relationships that bears his name.²

The book, whose interpretation has been hotly debated for millennia, describes the beautiful interplay between two young people smitten with one another. Solomon waxes eloquently about the nuances of holy and blissful love. Though much of the book portrays a wonderful picture of

mutual admiration and affection, a slight detour takes place about halfway through the narrative. As with all relationships, challenges arise and the young lady—the Shulamite—ultimately finds herself trying to reconnect with her beloved. With little success, she petitions her friends to join her in this dramatic undertaking.

that any man has ever received. (Not even my wife has used such remarkable words in describing me!)

Beginning with his head, and going down to his feet, the Shulamite describes her beloved in detailed and poetic language. She compares his head to gold, his eyes to doves, his body to carved

time, they are motivated to join the Shulamite in pursuing this one-of-a-kind man. Though they don't necessarily have romantic intentions—after all, the Shulamite already lays claim to him—they are definitely attracted to him, to say the least. The Shulamite's description shows the difference in their

GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THE LOVELINESS OF OUR BELOVED TO LUKEWARM OR DISINTERESTED LISTENERS, WE INSTEAD PRESENT A DRY AND BORING PICTURE OF WHAT UNION WITH CHRIST IS ALL ABOUT.

Her friends are not interested, however, and with one accord, they ask the Shulamite,

How is your beloved better than others,
most beautiful of women?
How is your beloved better than others,
that you charge us so?
(Song of Solomon 5:9, NIV).

In his refreshing paraphrase, *The Message*, Eugene Peterson renders this verse, "What's so great about your lover, fair lady? What's so special about him that you beg for our help?" In other words, these young ladies want to know what's so extraordinary about the Shulamite's beloved. Lukewarm to the idea of looking for him, they want to know if he is worth their time.

The same is true of many people's interest in Christ. Not everyone who sits in the pew is already convinced of Christ's worthiness. They, too, can come with great skepticism about whether Christ is worth their time. How we present Him can make the difference between whether they are drawn to Him or if they will continue in their indifference.

Fortunately, the young Shulamite was a great evangelist. Using powerful language, she gives one of the greatest descriptions

ivory (all compliments in those days, I suppose), and ultimately concludes by saying that he is "altogether lovely" (v. 16).

G. Lloyd Carr wrote that "love songs describing the physical beauty of the beloved are common in the ancient Near East, but most of them describe the female. Such detailed description of the male, as here, is seldom recorded."³ There must have been something extra special about the Shulamite's beloved for her to wax eloquently about this remarkable man.

Convinced

But as amazing as her flattering description is, her friends' response is even more significant. Eight verses earlier they are lukewarm and disinterested in the Shulamite's beloved; after hearing such a striking description of this man, they can't contain themselves and shout out (6:1),

Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest among women?
Where has your beloved turned
aside,
that we may seek him with you?

Overwhelmed with his beauty, they too want to look for him. Now that they realize he has become worth their

estimation of him and, ultimately, in their interest in seeking him.

Is there a Shulamite among us?

Is it possible that, where the Shulamite succeeded in uplifting her beloved, many of us have failed? Given the opportunity to present the loveliness of our Beloved to lukewarm or disinterested listeners, we instead present a dry and boring picture of what union with Christ is all about. Instead of presenting Christ in a light that will irresistibly draw people to Himself, or as One who takes the initiative in pursuing us, we tell our starving listeners that it is their job to set the wheels in motion of the relationship. We tell them that it is their Christian duty to wake up 15 minutes early each morning to spend time with God. We tell them that the greatest theologians in the Christian era spent 3-4 hours a day in prayer, and that they need to do the same. But we leave it at that, presenting nothing of the loveliness of Christ that can draw souls to do the very things we spend so much time trying to convince them of.⁴

In contrast, a picture of Christ that correlates with the Shulamite's description of her beloved will draw these individuals into precious union with their Savior. It's not complicated. Just as you wouldn't spend five hours

trying to convince enemies that they should spend time with each other, it is fruitless to try and convince souls naturally alienated from God to spend time with Him, at least by appealing to their sense of duty and responsibility. They need a compelling reason to do so, and uplifting Christ's matchless charms


HOW WE PRESENT HIM CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHETHER THEY ARE DRAWN TO HIM OR IF THEY WILL CONTINUE IN THEIR INDIFFERENCE.

is the best reason possible.

Here are words of encouragement to every expositor of the gospel:

In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing. . . . Tell the people of Him who is [quoting Song of Solomon 5:10, 16] "the Chiefest among ten thousand," and the One "altogether lovely."⁵

Well would it be for us, as ministers, to heed this timeless advice. The world is starving for a picture of an irresistible Savior. We can, by God's grace, present Christ in all His loveliness, just as He rightfully deserves.

How much better to present Him that way than, rather, as doing homework? 

- 1 All scriptures, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version.
- 2 For a discussion on Solomonic authorship, see Richard J. Hess, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 37–39, and Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 537–543.
- 3 G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 139. It's also

interesting to note that many current scholars recognize that this description is, perhaps, also directed toward a divine being. In his commentary, Tremper Longman III opines that the Shulamite's description turns the reader's attention to "something exalted, even holy," suggesting that there is more to the meaning of this passage than meets the eye. For a discussion of this, see Longman, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 173, 174. For this reason, and others, this author maintains that Solomon's book moves beyond its original intention and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, typologically—in distinction from allegorically—speaks of God. Thus, when Ellen White writes in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1955), 49, "The divine beauty of the character of Christ . . . of whom Solomon by the Spirit of inspiration wrote, He is 'the chiefest among ten thousand, . . . yea, He is altogether lovely,'" she recognizes a meaning to the passage that the Holy Spirit originally placed there through Solomon's pen. This, in the end, gives credence to the idea that the Song of Solomon does, in fact, speak of God's relation with His people, though still allowing for a literal interpretation of the book as well.

- 4 Of course, we, as ministers, cannot present Christ's matchless charms to our listeners if we, ourselves, haven't experienced them.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 826, 827.

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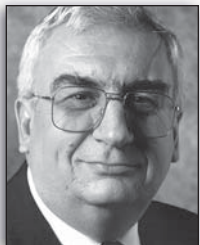


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Reaching the world one person at a time:

An interview with the leaders of Adventist World Radio

Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie E. Hucks II



Nikolaus Satelmajer, DMin, is editor of Ministry.



Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, is associate editor of Ministry.

*Photos by
Hearly Mayr*

Editor's Note: The editors of Ministry interviewed Benjamin Schoun, president of Adventist World Radio, and his vice presidents: Jim Ayer, Dowell Chow, and Greg Scott. The following are excerpts from the interview.

Nikolaus Satelmajer (NS): When did the Adventist Church begin to use radio as part of its outreach?

Benjamin Schoun (BS): The first experiments with radio were by a student at Andrews University (then known as Emmanuel Missionary College) in 1923. In the dormitory, John Fetzer built his own radio transmitter for the campus and later established a whole network of stations in Michigan.

NS: How did the dean of men react to a radio station in the dormitory?

BS: Actually, Fetzer was invited to bring his radio equipment to the college from home and his project eventually became the campus station. H. M. S. Richards began experimenting with radio in the late 1920s, and that developed into the *Voice of Prophecy*. Adventist World Radio (AWR) was established in 1971, and the first program to be broadcast on AWR was in Italian, although the overall goal was to reach people in restricted areas, such as the former Soviet Union.

NS: Really?

BS: Yes. The objective was finding a way to reach the people behind the iron curtain. We knew we had some believers in those countries, but we had very little contact with them and they were unable to share the gospel publicly. So, Adventist World Radio, under the Communications Department of the General Conference, started using shortwave radio. And just as in H. M. S. Richards's time, there were skeptics about this plan because many people wondered whether shortwave radio would really work.

NS: Tell our readers the difference between shortwave radio and the radio they listen to.

BS: The radios we listen to today are usually FM. The FM radio signal is a line of sight signal that travels across the ground and the range of its coverage is limited to fifty to one hundred miles. Shortwave radio uses a different frequency band, and the signal goes up and bounces off the ionosphere and then comes back down to the earth. It can travel thousands of miles and cover very broad areas. So we can have a transmitting site that exists outside of a country and still beam programs into that country.

Willie Hucks (WH): With the wide acceptance of television, why do we still use radio?

Dowell Chow (DC): In many parts of the world, television does not exist. The only means of getting outside communication into these places is by radio.

Jim Ayer (JA): We recently returned from Nepal. Some of our listeners walked four days and then traveled by bus to reach the baptismal site. In those valleys, between the mountains, our shortwave signal can reach them as nothing else can.

Greg Scott (GS): Another reason radio has become very popular is because in some countries the governments control the local media, but shortwave signals still reach the people. When the people want to find out what's happening in their country or other countries, they turn to short wave radio.

NS: But isn't it also true that even where you have television, radio is still widely used by people who are driving, walking, hiking, and so forth?

BS: Yes, by all means. It's also true that we don't use shortwave radio very much in North

Benjamin Schoun



America and in western Europe, but it is heavily used in other places. In general, radio is still a very important medium. In Australia, for example, it's said that from morning until late afternoon, radio has twice if not three times the listenership of television. Only in the evening does television listenership climb higher than radio. So radio and television are both for presenting the gospel.

NS: Give our readers a picture of how widespread the broadcasts are that you coordinate around the world.

GS: We're broadcasting in about seventy languages, such as: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Mandarin, Russian, eight to nine languages in India alone, and also in Indonesian—Indonesia being the largest Muslim populated country in the world. We broadcast in about twelve to fourteen different African languages. Altogether, our broadcasts have the potential to reach between seventy and eighty percent of the world's population. Our main transmitter site is located on the island of Guam where we broadcast in twenty to twenty-two languages. We have transmitters in Germany and Madagascar, South Africa and Austria. Our priority broadcast area is the 10/40 Window.¹ In other parts of the world, such as the Americas, we assist

with broadcasting on local radio. For instance, we now uplink our Spanish programming via satellite from the Dominican Republic. This allows local AM and FM stations in South, Central, and much of North America the opportunity to use the programming.

Greg Scott



We also partner with the South American media center in Brazil through the Nuevo Tiempo Spanish Network and the Novo Tempo Portuguese version.

BS: We also provide programming to many local radio stations in Europe as well. In North America, we use the Internet and podcasting.² There's a large number of ethnic groups, in cities particularly, and our goal is to provide them programs in their own languages through these tools. Our podcasts have become very popular. The highest number of subscribers is a French health broadcast with one hundred eighty-three thousand subscribers around the world.

NS: Comments were made of the Guam station, your flagship station. Where does it reach?

BS: The Guam station went on the air in 1987, with the specific purpose of trying to reach mainland China, but it covers many other nations as well. Today Asia is the biggest mission field. It has the fewest Christians of any part of the world, based on their population. Only about eight percent of their population are Christians and as little as one percent in the 10/40 areas. The Guam station is crucial for reaching Asia.

WH: Describe the nature of the programming that you have on AWR.

BS: Our most typical program is a magazine format, meaning that it has a variety of segments. We've chosen that format because most of our listeners are non-Christians: Hindus, Muslims, Secularists, and Communists. These people aren't used to listening to sermons. This format allows us to include a variety of material, such as health subjects, family life, spiritual segments, and biblical information and study. In Madagascar, our studio was chosen as one of four in the entire country to help the government prepare radio programming to deliver community education to its people. This includes programs

on HIV/AIDS, agricultural principles, anticrime values, and nutrition.

WH: Do you have the same programming in all of the countries that have listeners?

BS: No. We're very sensitive to the fact that people need to hear programs in their own languages and reflecting their own cultures. Therefore, we have about seventy studios all over the world.

WH: What kind of feedback do you get from listeners?

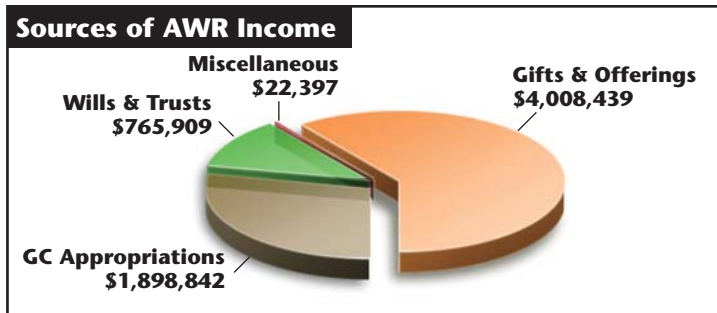
JA: We receive around one hundred thousand letters and emails every year. Also, Ben and I just returned from Asia where we visited with many listeners. We found murderers in prison, people from various ideologies who had no thought

of becoming Christians. So many times we heard that they were tuning the dial to listen to a news station and instead stumbled across AWR. They fell in love with Jesus Christ, and their whole lives were changed. One man in Burma who had been in prison for two murders was, for some reason, pardoned after four and a half years and sent home. A neighbor came to his home, carrying a radio, and said, "Listen to this." They tuned to AWR, and he soon fell in love with Jesus. He was baptized last year. We have many stories like that. Also, I think it's important for everyone to realize that we just don't put out radio waves. We work to do the follow-up as well, right through to baptism.

DC: And how many people listen to AWR who cannot send an email, or don't have money for a stamp, or might be persecuted if they were discovered, or who can't read or write? How many thousands or even millions more might be willing to send us a letter or message but don't have the means!

BS: In the past, most of our responses were by actual letter, and we still get a lot of letters, but in recent years that has changed considerably. In some places,

email, but since they have installed cell phone towers, almost everyone has access to a cell phone now. In China, we get seven hundred to eight hundred listener responses every month, many by email. Studio workers send them electronic Bible lessons, answer their questions, and keep in contact by email. One of our workers was instrumental in leading around one hundred thirty-five people to preparation for baptism, people he had never met personally but people he had become acquainted with through the Internet.



NS: So, then, you're reaching areas that sometimes cannot be reached by conventional ways.

BS: Yes. In fact that is part of the mission statement by which AWR operates: Broadcasting the Adventist hope in Christ to the hardest to reach people groups in the world in their own languages.

WH: How is your ministry supported?

DC: We receive an appropriation from the General Conference that totals about one-third of our annual budget. The rest must be raised from private individuals, mostly church members in North America, and we have an annual offering every March. We also receive funds from wills and trusts. Every year we face a real challenge

to come up with a budget, but the Lord has always provided. We raise about two-thirds of our annual seven million dollar budget. We have a direct-mail

program to raise funds and we make contacts with people inviting them to partner with us. We visit churches and camp meetings to share the exciting success stories of AWR. One of the challenges facing us is that we work heavily in places that most people can't see. So, we must intentionally tell what's going on in order for people to know about AWR. For example, many are not aware that we operate with a paid staff of only thirty people plus a handful of dedicated volunteers. This includes headquarters but AWR coordinates and

broadcasts in seventy languages around the world daily!

WH: How can our readers contribute?

BS: They can send their gifts to our office here at the General Conference, visit our Web site at www.awr.org, or give through

their local Seventh-day Adventist church by writing on their offering envelope "Adventist World Radio."

NS: Is there new technology that you're working on and new programming that's coming in the near future?

GS: About three years ago one of our engineers came across a new device, a solar-powered MP3 player. Set it in the sun and it'll charge itself. We took two hundred of these small solar-powered units into southern Sudan last November. They contained our radio programs in their main language. Our regional director for Europe, Tihomir Zestic, and I were in northern Uganda where the administrative office for southern Sudan is located. We heard firsthand how the small solar-powered MP3 players had been utilized in their area.

NS: What did they say?

GS: They said that the units have been passed from villager to villager and there have been at least twelve baptisms as a result of this little device just in the last eight months. They made a request



cell phones have become the primary method of communication. For instance, in Ethiopia they don't have much of a postal system or good connections to

that we provide additional units in the seven Sudanese languages where we're currently broadcasting. So we have plans to answer this request and deploy thousands more in many places in the world. These devices will contain such resources as the Bible, a series of Bible lessons, perhaps the book *Steps to Jesus* (the condensed version of *Steps to Christ*), and other nurturing materials with the idea that these units will be passed on from person to person. We just placed one hundred of these devices in two countries in northern Africa and are awaiting their feedback.

NS: Are there devices that can be powered by turning a crank?

GS: Yes. We found a radio manufactured in China that has four sources of power: batteries, electricity, solar, and dynamo crank on the back. You can turn the

JA: To wrap our technology into one package, besides shortwave radio, we currently use AM and FM, podcasting, satellite, the Internet, and MP3 players.

BS: There's one other area that we're beginning to work on, and that is a new delivery system in partnership with the Hope Channel. AWR and the Hope Channel are planning to work together where we will have several audio channels on the same satellite that delivers the television signal. This will enhance our delivery system. For example, wherever there's a downlink site for Hope Channel, we can place a small FM transmitter there and suddenly multiply the number of people who will benefit from the radio broadcast. Right now it's relatively easy to get licenses in Africa, and by following this plan

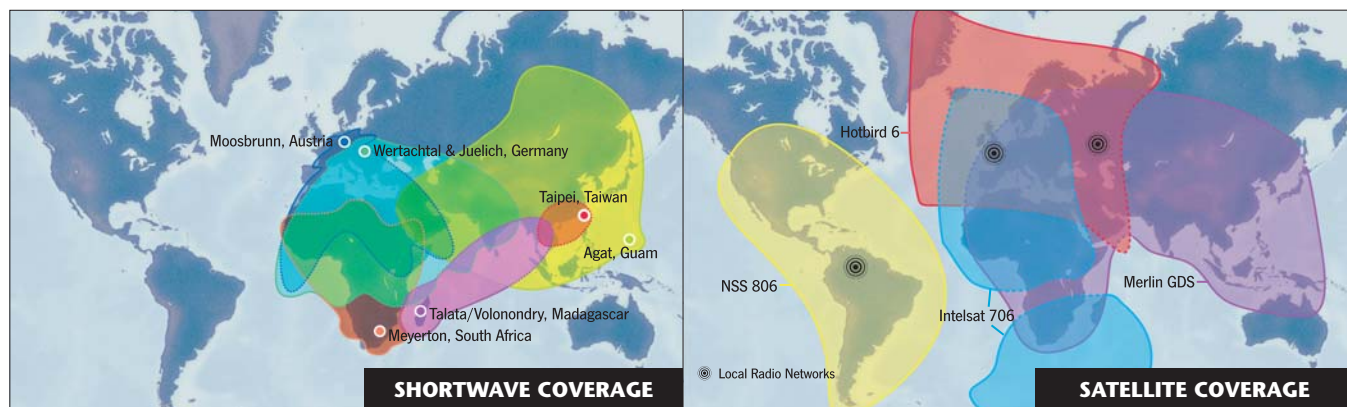


Jim Ayer

General Conference and the presence of AWR. So, yes, we do have a strong recognized presence.

NS: Anything else you want to say before we end?

BS: Yes, I wish I could tell more of the inspirational stories that we hear from our listeners and how their lives have



crank and it will recharge the battery. We have purchased around one thousand and sent them to different countries. In one location, fifty radios given to and used by area workers have been responsible for six thousand seven hundred baptisms.

BS: As people give, we will increase the number of radios sent out. I was recently visiting with one of our world church leaders, and he told me that he took a number of these radios to his home village and in a short time there were eight to ten baptisms.

NS: What other kind of technology do you use?

we can suddenly multiply our outreach efforts. It will also enable us to deliver programming to other FM stations that we're already serving.

NS: Where are you in Christian broadcasting? Are you a major player or in the minor league?

BS: We are recognized, especially, in the shortwave world as a significant player. We are written about in journals and talked about in the shortwave world. Last year AWR hosted a convention of the National Association of Shortwave Broadcasters and the Digital Shortwave Radio Consortium. Those people know who we are, and they know about the

been changed. But mostly I want to thank the people who support AWR through their gifts and prayers, because their support is the only way that we can keep this message on the air. ■

- 1 The imaginary rectangle called the 10/40 Window is located between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees west of the equator, and stretches from West Africa, through the Middle East, and into Asia. Two-thirds of the world's population live here and they're the world's poorest people, the vast majority of whom have never even heard the name of Jesus.
- 2 A podcast is a digital recording of an audio or video program on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player.

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Preaching across languages and cultures: Some cautions and suggestions

Jerry Schmalenberger



Jerry Schmalenberger, DMin, is the retired president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California, United States. He is now serving as a Global Mission Volunteer for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, presently teaching practical theology in Hong Kong, China, and Sumatra, Indonesia.

My presentation was a disaster. I itched from salt water, I confused the congregation, and embarrassed myself trying, through the use of humor, to relieve some of the century-old tensions between two Lutheran groups suspicious of each other.

In the early '70s, I was invited to be the speaker at the first-time-ever gathering of members of some different Lutheran congregations in Recife, Brazil. It was my first opportunity to preach with the use of an interpreter.

We were on a tour of South America sponsored by the Board of World Missions of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). One of our first stops was the Roman Catholic Seminary of Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Dom Helder Camera, in Olinda, Brazil. We wanted to learn more about liberation theology and the poor.

In the afternoon my wife and I went to the beautiful sandy beach and swam in the Atlantic Ocean. We returned to the seminary for a shower before I was to preach that evening—only to find there was no water. I dressed in my clerics and was driven to the church on that very hot, humid evening. The sanctuary was packed. When I perspired, the dried sand and salt on my skin ran down my body and burned. I kept squinting my eyes because they stung from the salt water dripping into them.

The content of my sermon was so American-culture-bound that the congregation was puzzled. I tried humorous stories I had used before, but by the time they got through the

interpreter into Portuguese, they were not only *not* funny, they didn't make sense. (It may have been true that this particular group of Lutherans didn't appreciate humor in preaching, even if it were understandable!) Although the sermon made sense in English, I failed to communicate the gospel well in this, my first attempt, to preach across languages and cultures.

Since then I have developed a deep interest in communication through interpreters. I've had the privilege to study and practice the art through teaching homiletics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and serving as a volunteer missionary, preaching and teaching homiletics in locations such as Hong Kong, Sumatra in Indonesia, Liberia in West Africa, Germany, Honduras, Brazil, Jamaica, Argentina, Uruguay, and Surinam.

In this article, I share a little about what I have learned.

The myth about humor

A joke from the preacher's own culture and language will rarely translate effectively into another culture. Funny experiences met while learning the indigenous culture are, however, fun for preacher and listener alike.

One myth declares that humor won't translate. Not true. It's the origin of the humorous situation that makes the difference. Jokes that have a punch line from the speaker's culture probably will flop, but humorous experiences in the different culture can be enjoyed by all. For example,

- struggling with word meanings or ways of doing things. It's most humorous when the joke hangs on the preacher;
- saying the wrong thing in the new language;
- misunderstanding the language and its idioms;
- misunderstanding the cultural customs.

While lecturing and living at the Augustana Hochschule in Neuendettlau, Germany, I wanted to purchase a pair of leather pants for my wife. In the dining hall I tried to discover if such were lined with fabric, as I was sure Carol would want them. In my limited German I told a girl wearing a similar type: "I would like to see what's inside your pants." What sounded inappropriate merely came across that way due to my limited knowledge of German.

Narrative preaching

Stories from the indigenous culture work exceptionally well when woven throughout the sermon as extended metaphors. They are

well received and remembered by your audience who appreciates your effort to learn them. Even as you tell your story, local interpreters can polish it as they translate for your listeners. On the other hand, narratives from your own culture are not well understood and often puzzle the audience to the degree that they distract from the gospel message.

The preacher's own story is only moderately effective, and then only if local phrases and indigenous descriptions are used. We must remember that the preacher's use of a personal faith story has yet to be accepted or seen as acceptable practice in many cultures outside the United States. These cultures have been taught, as we were forty years ago, not to share oneself in the pulpit believing that speaking of self lacks humility and distracts from a polemic message. The lowest risk narrative use is the Bible story. Jesus' parables and miracles, if retold well and seated in the present culture, become effective. Perhaps that's what makes them so extraordinary.

If feeling brave, we can try telling a Bible story while putting its setting in the contemporary culture. It often will delight listeners that you tried.

Sharing what you have experienced in the present culture always works. If it is something negative, say it in a way as to indicate that our two cultures share a similar problem where the gospel needs to be applied, rather than in any judgmental tone indicating we are any better.

Stories in which preachers tell of certain struggles they have experienced and they did not come out as the hero or heroine are sometimes not understood. Preachers could then be described as "wounded healers," and the congregation may see them, instead, as having a terrible weakness and asking for help. Use caution here.

Stories from local newspapers or ones related to you by the interpreter or an elder will work very well. You must retell them and not assume they are well known to your listeners. Take time to research the local lore; these stories will be well accepted as you use them in your sermon.

Here are some examples of how to organize a sermon using local history as narrative:

1. Begin the local story.
2. Relate the gospel truth using scripture.
3. Continue the story as an example.
4. Give an up-to-date application of the gospel.
5. Finish the local story.
6. Take some action steps from the gospel.
7. Frame it (return to opening) or conclude.

Or

1. Tell most of the story.
2. Draw an analogy to the gospel.
3. Call for specific action to be taken.
4. Tell the end of the story.

In Jamaica, a gold mine of local history stories can be found that make effective narratives. For instance, there had once been a governor who wanted to stop the offshore piracy. He offered what was called "an act of grace," which meant that if the pirate would hang up his sword and boots, he would be given land and so many gold coins to start a new way of life. That narrative worked well in Kingston at the Baptist church to announce the gospel of God's undeserved grace and the chance to give up old ways and start anew.

Extended metaphor

Lending themselves to moves or points in the sermon, local metaphors work well while those from other cultures, including your own, may not be useful. It just takes too much verbiage to explain a metaphor foreign to the audience.

Try learning some well-used and accepted phrases from the indigenous culture and utilize them throughout the sermon. Including these will help the listener remember the theme and respect you for making the effort to learn small bits of the language.

While on the island of Sumatra I employed this technique often. I learned at a Batak "Hula Hula" (celebration) that they repeat after each speech the phrase "*Imatutu*," meaning "may it be true." Later I preached a sermon on the Beatitudes as recorded in Matthew and

sprinkled it with *Imatutu* to the delight of the Batak congregation. Six months later young people wrote to me and used the phrase again and again as a way of remembering our sharing of the gospel with them.

Using different interpretations of a custom or phrase applied to theological experience can be called "good homiletics" to reach across culture and language and can provide for good humor as well. The Bataks of Sumatra, after shaking your hand, will touch their chest over the heart. Noticing this custom led to the many meanings it could have within the context of the gospel. Heart-touch and God's love came together for us all.

One warning about extended metaphors: We must use caution, as the metaphor can be so compelling and attention-getting that it crushes the gospel message. This is true in our own culture and even more so in a culture other than our own because the listeners are rarely accustomed to their use at all.

Sermon plots and organization

The homiletical plot that works best for me when preaching across culture and language involves the listeners' reactions. My own modification of Richard C. Borden's "magic formula" for persuasive speaking¹ is built on the theory that there are predictable reactions in listeners to verbal presentations of which we must be aware if we want to communicate effectively. Borden claims it is so simple you could write it on your thumbnail:

1. Ho hum!
2. Why bring that up?
3. For instance?
4. So what?

Therefore, we can build our sermon on the following moves in response to what our listeners are thinking:

1. Get the attention of the listeners right away (fire).
2. Make a transition between the attention and the focus (bridge).
3. Give the focus of the message (point and scripture text).
4. Give an example of the truth communicated (example).

5. Tell your own witness to the gospel (witness).
6. Give first-action steps to be taken (so what?).
7. Close by returning to step one (frame).²

The next-to-the-last step in the above formula, the one often omitted and the most difficult, calls for a close-to-the-ground application of what has been proclaimed. We need to ask advice of local people to be sure we have done this well. Our interpreter will be a good person to consult.

When we get those many requests to speak or preach impromptu in another culture, knowing this formula adds an additional bonus as we already have an outline to use.

Some tips about preaching

Here, then, are some additional tips from a preacher who tries so hard to do this complicated, delicate task:

1. Learn some indigenous words and phrases you can use even though you have an interpreter. At least, use them when signaling your sermon moves. At most, repeat a few phrases over and over throughout the sermon's content. Use the local language for key theological words.
2. Something visual from the preacher's culture can work well or really flop—a high gamble.
3. If we are uncertain of a local symbol or visual, we should understand it before using it during delivery of the sermon. It's wise to consult your interpreter as to any possible emotional baggage attached to the symbol. The Buddhist reversed swastika is a good example of this kind of tricky concept.
4. When using an interpreter:
 - Avoid all theological jargon; keep it close to the ground.
 - Establish a rhythm with the interpreter.
 - Check out humor ahead of time.
 - Content should be about one-third less to allow for interpretation time.
- Speak slowly, but have an enthusiasm as if the interpreter weren't there.
- Encourage the interpreter to mimic your excitement, change of pace, voice inflections, and the use of muted gestures.
- Begin with the local language as a greeting, prayer, or first sentence. Close in the same way.
- Provide your interpreter an outline ahead of time, but not a manuscript.
5. Preach as though your listeners understand your language so your interpreter can translate your gestures, facial expressions, voice inflections, and body language, as well as your vocabulary. Have the interpreter stand on the opposite side of your hand that normally makes most of your gestures.
6. Remember, most cultures characteristically read the text at first, then they pray before the actual sermon. Many cultures are also accustomed to a three-point sermon.
7. It works very well to draw something on a chalkboard or newsprint while preaching. While some may think this distracts, I find it very effective.
8. Try a "people sermon" where a committee of six or seven help prepare the sermon concepts. While in Sumatra, the Batak Christians loved helping me prepare my sermon ideas and delighted to hear the sermon they had a hand in preparing.
9. Simplicity is your best communication tool.³ Sometimes other cultures see in us a certain vocabulary inflation that shows superior education. We must demonstrate a different attitude in our preaching. Jesus' preaching sets a good example for us.
10. Be sure to affirm and express your own appreciation for the culture and your desire not to offend it.
11. Resist the temptation and safety of being overly vague and general so as to not offend. Focus on the "so what?" in the particular culture where you are.
12. Be careful about using examples and stories from a culture foreign to your hearers. Be sensitive to your hearers, for they are also a part of God's worldwide family.
13. Local history stories will almost always work and give good credibility for the preacher.⁴
14. A special message to the children will surprise and be very novel in most cultures.
15. The sermon in the format of a letter from you or someone in your culture to them can be very well received.

One night I was preaching in the Liberian village of Begalata with a flashlight beam on my face and one on my Kpelle interpreter, John Manawu. About halfway through the sermon we developed a rhythm back and forth. Mimicking my voice inflections and gestures, he failed to stop his Kpelle and went on and on without waiting for my English. I reached over and tugged John's elbow to remind him that he was the interpreter and not the preacher! The listeners who could see what had happened roared with laughter.

This incident is a good example that not all preaching across cultures and languages need be uninteresting or ineffective. Nor must we sweat salt and sand to do it. By working carefully with a good interpreter and following some basic principles, we can present the gospel across cultural divides in an effective manner. ■

1 Borden, *Public Speaking—As Listeners Like It!* (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1935).

2 For additional explanation of this formula's use and an example sermon see Jerry Schmalenberger, *The Preacher's Edge* (Lima, OH: C.S.S. Publishing, Inc., 1996), 45–53, 117–128.

3 Martin Luther advised, "He who teaches most simply, childishly, popularly ... that's the best preacher. I like it to be easy and earthy. But now if it is debate you're looking for, come into my classroom."

4 For the author's further explanation of this type of sermon see Jerry Schmalenberger, *The Preacher's Edge* (Lima, OH: C.S.S. Publishing, Inc., 1996), 69–73.

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The best pastor I know

Loren Seibold



Loren Seibold, DMin, is pastor of the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church, Worthington, Ohio, United States.

I won't tell you his name. And knowing him as I do, I'm quite certain he won't recognize himself in this camouflaged description. Among his other good qualities, he's humble.

The best pastor I know lives in a small town. He pastors several small churches some distance apart. I attended church with him recently, but I must admit, I didn't find the experience very inspiring. Small and not especially attractive, the church building needs upgrading. The aging congregation seems more interested in protecting what it has than advancing into any new territory.

My friend preached a pretty good sermon, though not dynamic. He didn't fall into the trap that so many of us do—he didn't scold or bewail the state of the church or the wickedness of world. He talked about God's capability rather than human inability or the world's instability. But he doesn't rank as the best pastor I know just because he preached a "pretty good sermon."

Afterward, he interacted warmly with all of his church members, from children to grandparents. He didn't pull rank; he helped the deacons set up chairs for the rather unappealing fellowship meal. He tells me that he visits homes regularly, but with only a handful of people in this church, and not many more in the others, it doesn't take long to see them all.

I could tell he was a good pastor, but I didn't realize he was the best pastor I know until one afternoon when I took a walk with him to the hardware store.

A block into our walk, a truck pulled up beside us, rolled down the window, and the driver shouted, "Hey, Pastor!" Before we'd gone another half a block, another driver shouted the same greeting. Drivers, other pedestrians, people sitting in front of their houses always greeted him as a friend, and he responded to each by name.

As we walked past a small house, he said, "Come meet these folks. They're wonderful people." He knocked on the door and was warmly welcomed. We had to continue on to our destination, so refused their repeated, insistent invitations to come inside for some refreshments.

After we left he explained, "When their daughter died, I visited them and brought some food."

"Are these people your church members?" I asked.

"Not yet," he responded.

In the business district, he knew the name of almost everyone we passed. We stopped so often that I thought it would take forever just to get to the store because at the door of most shops one or two came out to greet him. At the hardware store, the owner met him like an old friend.

"I visited her father in the hospital," he explained. "Later I attended his funeral."

"Their beliefs are probably different than yours," I said.

"I didn't talk with them about beliefs," he replied.

"I just loved them and prayed with them."

How did he develop such dynamic relationships with so many people in town? I wondered.

"I realized when I came here," he said, "that if I was going to concentrate on my church family, I would quickly run out of things to do. They really don't need that much from me. In fact, sometimes I think they resent this young guy coming in and telling them how to do things. So I decided that I would be not just a pastor of this church, but the community's pastor."

"How do you do that?" I asked.

"Easy," he responded. "I just go around and talk to people. I learn their names. I meet everyone I can. I pray with them if I they want me to do so."

I thought of my first years in small churches. I hadn't done very well. I was frightened and insecure, and spent most of my time trying to please my church patriarch and matriarch—who, it turned out, didn't seem to want to be pleased. They mostly talked about how good my predecessor had been. I'd tried to do some evangelism, but nobody showed up. I was lonely and frustrated, and almost quit ministry.

That memory jogged another question. "Have you tried evangelism?" I asked.

"Yes. In this town, everyone has their religious niche. If I approach people with doctrine, doors close," he explained. "Spiritually, though, people are wide open. Most people appreciate having someone who knows their names and who listens to them. When I stop at a store and the clerk tells me about a difficulty they are experiencing, I say, 'May I pray for you about that?' Very few say 'No.' Then we slip behind a display or into the back office for a short prayer."

He has taken an active interest in the community. He introduced himself to the local school teachers and made friends with the town police officers. He joined a softball league and attends high school football games and cheers for the home team. He goes to city council meetings. The fire department and ambulance squad are volunteer organizations in his little town, so he took their training and joined. He reinforces my belief that extroversion is an asset to a pastor. Although *he* has this gift, not all of us do.

"How do you find time for all this?" I asked. "I was nurtured in the model of the traditional pastor: one who dresses seriously, speaks seriously, and divides his time between his study, the hospital, his church, and visitation to church members' homes."

"My churches aren't very big," he explained. "I could do everything they need me to do and still be semi-retired. But that's not the pastor I want to be—so I pastor everyone I meet."

"Do other ministers resent it?" I asked.

"I've made friends with them too," he said. "I visit their churches when I can. They look at my little church and realize I'm not much of a threat. Besides, I don't try to steal their church members. But if someone should want to come to my church," he said with a grin, "I wouldn't turn them away."

He confessed that his biggest fear is whether or not new people could

successfully join his little congregation. "My members have been lackadaisical and uninvolved in their community for so long," he said, "that they're skeptical. They're not especially accepting of people who don't see things as they do. They say they want the church to grow, but I wonder if they really do."

"But you're still supposed to 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel,'" I said.

"Well, that's what I'm trying to do," he replied. "I'm just doing more of it out there than in my church building."

JESUS NEVER HAD A TELEVISION
PROGRAM. HE NEVER WROTE BOOKS.
HE DIDN'T BUILD A MEGACHURCH.
MOST OF HIS WORK WAS PERSONAL.
YET HE CHANGED THE WORLD.

My church

My own church has many members, and they are very busy people. There's enough administration, study, and counseling to keep me in the church office all day, if I wanted. Unlike my friend, I don't need to leave the church to find people to talk to and pray with for they often come to me, and most of them are my church members. I tried to picture what it would be like to know most of the people in my town (mine has well over a million people) like my friend does.

Spending time with the best pastor I know has led me to question why spiritual care has become such a segregated task. Undoubtedly, it has something to do with our separation into doctrinal tribes in the wake of the Protestant Reformation: the Methodists, the Adventists, the Lutherans, the Baptists, and many more. While a government official, a merchant, a doctor, a policeman, a garbage man, has the privilege of serving the whole community, people in my district expect me to serve my congregation and stop there.

"We've got our own church," people have said to me, without provocation, when I introduce myself as a pastor.

In some way, my friend has overcome that. He's successfully gone through the barriers. Has he had to compromise? It depends upon what you mean by *compromise*. He certainly has had to be a little less parochial than most of us. He doesn't put his religious brand on display every time he approaches someone. He's submerged his tribalism in favor of doing the kinds of things Jesus did.

"Are you just being cagey?" I asked him once. "Are you trying to break down people's barriers so you can convert them?"

"If I were only baiting a hidden hook with friendship, I'd come across as insincere," he said.

"But," I persisted, "what about making your church grow?"

"Of course, I pray that my church will grow. But I try to leave the results to God. I won't turn anyone

away. Still, I've often heard it's more important to be faithful than successful. This seems to me the best way, in my circumstances."

You may wonder why I would rate him as the best pastor I know when I know pastors of churches of thousands, who are gifted preachers, charismatic leaders, and skilled businessmen. While I respect what they do, it seems to me that my friend has actually extended himself more meaningfully (and more personally) into the world around him than other pastors do, and against greater odds. His methods are less like a business and more like those of Jesus. Jesus never had a television program. He never wrote books. He didn't build a megachurch. Most of His work was personal. Yet He changed the world. If my friend doesn't get discouraged or bored, and if he stays long enough, I expect he'll leave some kind of legacy in that community, whether or not his congregation grows. ■

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The position of suspense

Gary B. Swanson



Gary B. Swanson is the associate director for Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

I hate to wait! I'm one of those people to whom time and punctuality are extremely important. It comes, possibly, from my service as an editor. Editors—at least most of them—govern their lives by deadlines. For more than a quarter of a century, deadlines were the heartbeat of my work. For me, missing a deadline was like feeling my heart skip a beat—or stop altogether. It was not a good feeling!

So when others are late, and I have to wait for them, I take it personally. James White wrote that “the position of suspense is not the most happy one.”¹ I know exactly what he meant.

But he was referring to “the position of suspense” that we experience as we wait for Jesus to return. So I acknowledge that there's something I need to learn about waiting. Maybe there's something there for quite a few of us.

One of Jesus' well-known parables addresses quite directly this issue of waiting for Jesus to come: the story of the ten bridesmaids (Matt. 25:1–13).

“The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom” (v. 1, NLT). Those who are waiting for Jesus' return can be compared to the ten bridesmaids waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. We are, in effect, like members of a wedding party.

Jesus told us to “keep watch, because [we] do not know the day or the hour” (v. 13, NIV). We are told elsewhere in Scripture that Jesus Himself doesn't know the exact time of His return

(Matt. 24:36). So while we wait, we are to “keep watch.” What exactly does that mean?

In November 1989 thousands of jubilant Germans tore down the Berlin Wall, thus signaling the first step toward the reunification of Germany. The very next day a man who had lived in East Berlin appeared at the front desk of the American Memorial Library in West Berlin. Under his arm he carried several books he had borrowed 28 years before, shortly before the wall was built. During all that time, he had kept the books in the hope that if he ever had the opportunity he would be ready to return them.

Can you imagine what the overdue charges must have been!

I'm sure that, in view of the situation, the librarians must have waived the fees. But we live in much the same situation today as that man did before the Berlin Wall was dismantled. Captives in our own land, we wait for the day that the wall that Satan has erected to separate us from God will be torn down forever. Then, at last, we will be able to take our rightful places as citizens of heaven.

We're talking here about more than the mere reunification of a nation. We're talking about the ultimate reunification. When we will be reunified with Christ! Like the five wise bridesmaids of Jesus' parable of the wedding party, we must be ready now for the Bridegroom's return.

Surely there must have been times over those 28 years that the man despaired of ever having the opportunity to return the books. But his faith in the coming freedom was so strong that he was ready at the first opportunity to return the books to their rightful place.

Over the years, as we have looked forward to Jesus' return, we have been inspired and moved with the words of the hymn: “Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring.”² Because we're human, however, we must admit that at times we have become discouraged that He would ever come back. When we face pain and disappointment that are so much a part of life, we can become disheartened. At times like these our relationship with Him becomes most important. Then our faith can be strengthened that the wall will surely come down, and we will be able to go home at last.

“In the parable,” we are told, “all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ's second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ's near approach,

and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,' many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit."³

Being knowledgeable vs. being wise

Notice that Jesus didn't say that five of the bridesmaids were "knowledgeable." He said that they were "wise." There's a great difference between these two words.

either know or want any more."⁴ Radio, television, newspapers, Web sites—all claim to be presenting news and facts. Talk shows and commentators artfully blur the line between opinion and fact. And the Internet provides so much raw data that it boggles the mind.

We are not living in the age of information. We are living in the age of *informational obesity*.

In an episode of the television program *The Practice*, centered on the personal and professional lives of a group of lawyers in Boston, the small law firm was unevenly matched in a legal battle with a much more

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED IF MAYBE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IN THE TIME OF THE END PEOPLE ARE RUNNING TO AND FRO BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN INCREASED?

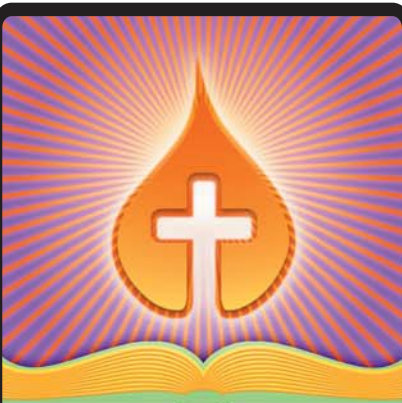
We have been told that in the time of the end, " 'many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase' " (Dan. 12:4, NKJV). Francis Bacon said that knowledge is power. If this is the case, how can it be that with so much knowledge, people are running to and fro? If knowledge is increasing, shouldn't the world be getting better? Shouldn't there be less and less confusion and chaos? Shouldn't the world be moving ever more inevitably toward perfection? Have you ever wondered if maybe it's possible that in the time of the end people are running to and fro *because* knowledge has been increased?

In fact, we're faced today with more knowledge than we can possibly use. And all of this because we're living in the so-called age of information.

Philosopher Jean Beaudrillard has asserted, I think rightly, that "the media are so saturated with information, and with so many different voices demanding to be heard, that it is no longer possible to know what you

affluent and prestigious legal practice. The larger practice was representing a transnational corporation with pockets so deep that they seemed to defy gravity. When the underdog legal firm subpoenaed the corporation for certain information, the opposing firm sent them an unnecessarily massive amount of office records. Clearly, it was an attempt to discourage them from finding the specific information they needed. It contained so much data and documentation that the smaller firm simply didn't have the resources to plumb it.

Whether the real world of jurisprudence actually employs the use of this strategy or is just the figment of a scriptwriter's imagination, it serves as an apt illustration: It's possible to bury the truth in otherwise useless information. If Satan has his way, that's literally what all these media will be doing to us: submerging the truth under a Himalayan range of completely worthless—and often destructive—strata.



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How to share your testimony

It is important to build bridges with people, to stress things in common, and to become a genuine friend. Everyone has a story to share about how God has—and is—impacting their life.

Here are several reasons to share your story of faith:

1. People like stories.
2. Stories are windows into the soul.
3. Stories create a bond instead of a wall.
4. Stories encourage both the listener and the teller.

What should stories of faith look like?

1. Stories should be no longer than five to seven minutes.
2. The essentials of your story should be:
 - a. Your life before Jesus.
 - b. How you met Jesus.
 - c. What Jesus means to you now.
 - d. A personal appeal for your listener to follow Jesus.
3. Use everyday language. Be authentic and give God the glory.
4. Identify with the listener to build a connection.
5. Share the steps needed for a person to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
6. Share about the church community, about how you enjoy being a part of a church that loves Jesus and follows the Word of God.
7. Invite your listener to attend church with you.

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So it's become an inescapable conclusion that much of the information gathering that we indulge has been motivated by our hunger for more data—not for more truth. In the words of a popular song on the classic radio stations:

"You don't really need to find out
what's going on.
You don't really want to know just
how far it's gone."

Christian author Dorothy Sayers grumbled: "The public do not care whether they are being told truth or not."⁵ And this was 60 years ago—back in the time machine to a place where there was no such thing as a blog, a podcast, or an infomercial. In its earlier days the Internet was hailed as the most democratic of the media. Because everyone could access all this valuable information, advocates crowed, we would at last be brought together into a golden future.

But this didn't take into account the human element: The brutal truth is that most of us don't rely on the media to seek a balanced menu in data; we go there to reinforce our presuppositions. It has become just another instrument of polarization. The availability of all that fantastic information hasn't changed us for the better at all. Instead, we've become more extreme versions of our former selves. "There is reason to think that the Internet is more likely to increase social fragmentation than it is likely to promote social consensus."⁶ And none of the rest of the media can be categorized as any better. Even the information supposedly reported as news has its basis on one ideology or another.

As we expose ourselves to these sources of information in the media, we must continually ask ourselves, How important are these facts in the cosmic reckoning? How much time should I be devoting to accessing such facts? Am I devoting time to the receiving of

these facts—this so-called news—at the expense of something more timeless, transcendent, or important? If I'm spending two to three hours each evening before the TV set or the computer screen and have only ten to fifteen minutes to breeze through my Bible, am I becoming informationally obese?

How crucial is it, after all, to be aware that some newly released film has become the third-highest grossing film in history? Or that someone has just purchased the pope's limousine in auction at an obscene price? Or that one

he predicted in this manuscript that the end of the world would come about 1,260 years after the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire. One thousand two hundred sixty years! Does this sound familiar?

Recently one non-Christian on the Internet expressed how unnerving this is—even to those who are committed solely to human reason: "When you think of Sir Isaac Newton, you think of the father of modern physics and astronomy, a scientist and a rationalist—not someone warning of the Apocalypse. . . . It makes you a

tad uneasy when you realize that Newton's predictions about the laws of gravity and the motion of the planets were proved correct."⁷

If we are expecting the apocalypse to be nothing more than the utter end of human existence, it would be an understatement to

say that it makes us feel "a tad uneasy."

But to the Christian, the Second Coming is something to look forward to because our knowledge of the Second Coming has had a transformative effect on our lives, on the way we conduct ourselves in our workplaces, our schools, with our families—even in our times of complete solitude. Basic human nature desires to plan ahead—especially for those things that we are looking forward to with anticipation.

Knowing and being prepared

Here's a crucial question: Are we truly looking forward to Jesus' return? "Many profess to be wise but have they the Holy Spirit? As a people, we profess to know the truth, but of what avail will this be if we do not carry out its principles in our life?"⁸

Knowledge, in Scripture, goes beyond mere facts. As the familiar hymn goes, "The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind."⁹

Jesus went on with His parable: "While they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were

CAPTIVES IN OUR OWN LAND,
WE WAIT FOR THE DAY THAT THE
WALL THAT SATAN HAS ERECTED
TO SEPARATE US FROM GOD WILL
BE TORN DOWN FOREVER.

celebrity is suing another for failing to live up to a contract?

Might we be " 'poor, blind, and naked' " (Rev. 3:17, NKJV) when we think we're rich *in information* as well as in material goods?

Knowing vs. being prepared

All ten bridesmaids in Jesus' parable apparently knew exactly what they needed to know to be prepared. Mere knowledge wasn't enough. Even those described as foolish knew all they had to know, but they hadn't been transformed by what they knew.

As we wait for Jesus' return, we don't know the deadline! We are in this "position of suspense." From our viewpoint, at least, we're way past due.

When we read the biblical prophecies, it's difficult to come to any other conclusion than that we are on the cusp of the very end. And this interpretation isn't unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The eminent analytical scientist and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton developed a manuscript in 1704. After a thorough analysis of the book of Daniel,

ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked' " (Matt. 25:10, NLT).

How could this have been? How could there have been such a large portion of the wedding party who were unprepared, even when they knew how to be prepared?

Jesus warned us that before He comes again, false prophets and christs will appear on earth who will do such impressive things that we will be in danger of being fooled—and lost. If Hollywood today can mesmerize millions of viewers with Harry Potter—even when they know the whole thing is pretend—surely the devil has a few communication skills and media left that he can use to fool even some of “the elect.”

The good news is that Jesus Himself described His second advent. He provided some explicit and graphic characteristics of His return that we would do well to remember. And if we have grounded our preparation squarely on vigilant study of His Word, we won't be fooled by Satan's astonishing counterfeits.

Yet knowing the objective facts that biblical prophecy has provided us about His return becomes only a part of our being prepared. There is more.

“Without the Spirit of God,” Ellen White reminds us, “a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home,

the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.”¹⁰

Our readiness for Jesus' return—for the Bridegroom's return—transcends the merely factual. Of course, we must know such information so that we will not be deceived. But we must also know Jesus personally. Preparation for His return cannot be bought or borrowed at the last minute. It is not a commodity. We must each have a personal, living relationship with our Savior.

Our readiness is relational—based not on *what* we know, but on *who* we know. Notice what the bridegroom says when those who were unprepared returned after the door was shut: “‘I tell you the truth, I don't know you’ ” (v. 12, NIV). There was no relationship. When Jesus does return, our lamps must be well filled with the oil of the Spirit. Then we will be prepared to go home with Him—forever!

This “forever” will mean a completely different kind of existence than any we've known before. It will be a return to the Eden that we lost so long ago. It will be a time and place where “‘there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’ ” (Rev. 21:4, NIV).

The “old order of things,” the “position of suspense,” will be no more. There will be no more waiting. No more pain. No more tears. No more death.

Based on this scriptural reference in the book of Revelation, the lyrics from a

contemporary Christian song express this hope in a moving and beautiful way:

“Say goodbye to the loneliness forever.
Say hello to the garden once again.
Say goodbye to this world of stormy weather.
Say hello to the One who calls you ‘friend.’
I can't wait until we're reunited and we say,
“Hello again—we're back together.
Hello again—we're here forever.
Hello again—rejoined in heaven.
Hello again.”¹¹ ❏

- 1 James White, *Life Incidents* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), vol. 1, 337.
- 2 “Jesus Is Coming Again,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 213.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 408.
- 4 Paraphrased in Glenn Ward, *Postmodernism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 1997), 182.
- 5 *The Mind of the Maker* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1941), xi.
- 6 Gordon Graham, *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1999), 83.
- 7 <http://thinkingshift.wordpress.com/2007/06/23/newtons-secret/>.
- 8 Ellen G. White in *The Signs of the Times*, August 1, 1892.
- 9 “There's a Wideness in God's Mercy,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 114.
- 10 White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 408.
- 11 <http://www.sweetlyrics.com/387355.Petra%20-%20Hello%20Again.html>.

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Letters continued from page 3

Fundamentally, idolatry seeks to deny God's absolute sovereignty—destroying faith in eternal treasures and eventually overthrowing God's Word for the soul to depend on the deceitful pleasures of the devil. Idolatry uplifts the world in its most attractive light and bids the soul to bow down to receive it. Thus, the soul commits adultery.

After having my morning devotion with this article, I whispered a prayer, “Lord, if I have been deceived into any

form of idolatry, please forgive me. Please keep me on the safer side to live by your own will. Amen!”

—Clifford Owusu-Gyamfi, pastor, Kumasi, Ghana

Ministry to postmoderns

Aleksandar Santrac's “Reaching the Postmodern Mind” (September 2007) is an excellent article. I have discussed religious and other issues with young people who are educated at some of

our leading universities. This article made it clear that they are influenced by postmodernism. It's a challenge we all must face who are commissioned to preach the gospel. The better we understand postmodernism the better we can understand what is happening in this world. And thus the better we can structure our messages to reach them with the gospel of Christ Jesus and the Advent message.

—Rollin Shoemaker, e-mail ❏

NEWS Dateline

Innovative church of the year

Columbus, Ohio, United States— The Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church in Aldergrove, British Columbia, Canada, has been selected by the Resource Center for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD) as the 2007 Innovative Church of the Year. Pastor **David Jamieson** received the award on behalf of the church on September 30, 2007.



David Jamieson. Photo by Dave Gemmell.

"Aldergrove was selected because it has taken advantage of opportunities in a changing society with dozens of innovative ministries such as Acts of Kindness, Extreme Home Repair, Charity Golf Classic, oil change for single moms, Breakfast Club, and seasonal musical productions," according to **Dave Gemmell**, associate director of the Church Resource Center. Aldergrove's innovative ministries have resulted in an attendance growth in the last five years from 200 to 500.

The NAD Church Resource Center hopes to recognize growing healthy congregations in the United States, Canada, and Bermuda. Gemmell says

that "because the world is constantly changing, the ways that congregations lead people to Jesus need to continually undergo innovation." The NAD Church Resource Center hopes to stimulate and affirm congregations that have successfully taken a risk in adapting the eternal truth of the gospel to the constant change of people's needs. [NAD Church Resource Center/Loren Seibold]

"Touch of hope" helps smokers

Vukovar, Croatia— During September 3–7, 2007, Pastor **Marijan Persinovic** conducted a Stop Smoking seminar in the town of Vukovar. The program consisted of two parts, PowerPoint presentations of the Five-Day Stop Smoking program, and talks about problems and experiences they had.

Some of the participants confessed that they found it too difficult to stop smoking and asked the pastor if he would give them a clue on how to succeed. This gave Persinovic the opportunity to talk with the group about

the power of prayer, and he asked if he could pray for them.

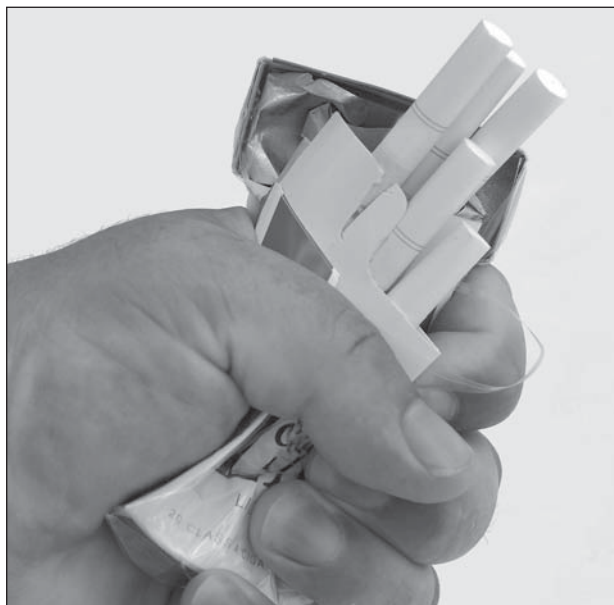
During the Stop Smoking seminar each participant was invited to a health seminar—held twice weekly in the church building. Now, many of them regularly attend other programs at the church. Three participants started to read the Bible and are receiving Bible studies with the pastor and church elder.

The Stop Smoking seminar is part of the "Touch of Hope" project, the goal of which is to establish a new LIFE development group in the town. [InFOCUS/TED News Staff/TED News]

National conference highlights opportunities

Columbus, Ohio, United States— Attendees from across the United States, Canada, and Europe came together in Columbus, Ohio, United States September 30–October 2, 2007, for the third annual **National Conference on Innovation**. The core teaching faculty for the event were four nationally known speakers: **Philip Jenkins**,

distinguished professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University and author of more than twenty scholarly books; **Jon Paulien**, dean of the School of Religion and professor of Theological Studies at Loma Linda University and author of more than eighteen books; **Doug Pagitt**, pastor of Solomon's Porch, a Christian church community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States, and **Rabbi Marcia Prager**, dean of



ALEPH, Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and rabbi of Jewish Renewal Communities in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Princeton, New Jersey, United States.

The objective of the 2007 Conference was to understand the changing context of world Christianity and how churches are responding to the resulting challenges and opportunities, with the goal of finding ways to renew and reenergize the Adventist Church in North America.

Describing the growing role of global South nations (Africa, Latin

America, Asia) in Christianity, and their varying approaches to Scripture, Jenkins described how the distinctive values held by the Adventist Church can have positive impacts in this changing environment. Jon Paulien established a theological framework for the identity and role of the remnant within the emerging global context. Doug Pagitt offered a case study of Solomon's Porch, an unusual contemporary Christian community of which he is pastor. Rabbi Prager traced the history of Jewish Renewal, with

sample Renewal teachings on subjects like prayer and the Sabbath. Breakout groups explored how the information presented applied to Adventist life, ministry, congregations, and schools. The entire experience was an inspiring affirmation of the Adventist Church's role and responsibility to be a vital presence in advancing God's mission on earth.

The National Conference on Innovation's 2008 event is scheduled for October 5–7 in Columbus, Ohio. [NAD Church Resource Center/Loren Seibold]



BOOK REVIEW

An Introduction to the New Testament: Witnesses to God's New Work by Charles B. Cousar, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005. 215 pages.

Charles B. Cousar's audience for this little volume is for "the church, for seminary and church college classes, and for pastors who assume the regular responsibility of teaching and preaching in congregations" (xiv). This is a post-critical work which assumes the priority of Mark and the pseudonymous writings of some of Paul's letters: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and the pastoral letters: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Cousar begins this volume by introducing the letters that most scholars agree Paul wrote: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians,

Philemon, and 1 Thessalonians. He translates the expression "faith in Jesus Christ" (NRSV), in Romans 3:21–26 and Galatians 2:15,16, as "faithfulness of Jesus Christ." In Philippians 3:7–9, the expression "faith in Christ" (NRSV) is translated as "faithfulness of Christ." This translation appears to be a result of an influential study conducted a number of years ago by R. B. Hays entitled, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Paul's Theology in Galatians 3:1–4:11*, PhD diss., Emory University, 1981. He also notes that the expression "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12, NRSV) means working out their own problems as God works "in and among them to bring about the wholeness and unity of God's demands" (62).

He gives a summary of the theologies of each book, not only for Paul's letters, but for each book of the New Testament. He has a section at the end of the book which lists a select bibliography for each book of the New Testament. In the conclusion he lists eight principles for Bible study:

1. "[I]n our study of the Scriptures is our need for openness to the Spirit."
2. "'[T]he rule of faith,' which says that the Bible is always to be read in light of past and present reading of the text."
3. "Scripture interprets Scripture."
4. "[T]he conviction that Jesus Christ is the center of Scripture."
5. "[T]he Bible needs to be read in community with others."
6. "[T]he rule of love."
7. "The Scriptures are always to be read in light of the literary form and the social and historical context in which they are written."
8. "[R]ead the text for all it is worth."

This volume is very informative and easy to read and worth being in the library of every pastor who wishes to do theology responsibly.

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a pastor with the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United States.

Evangelizing preparation

JAMES A. CRESS



When I heard John Sweigart use the term *Evangelizing*, I knew it conveys the best definition for teaching evangelism as process more than event.

During our years as itinerate evangelists, Sharon and I often grieved at the suppositions that we could deliver one event to encompass the totality of evangelistic endeavor. Leaders and members embraced this assumption: paying and praying for *our* success. Typically, however, neither group addressed the holistic necessity of evangelism as a thoroughly integrated process of sowing, reaping, and conserving.

And frankly, itinerating guests who shorten public preaching to an even briefer “touch and go” event only perpetuate the assumption that high-quality proclamation—conveying truth in the most attractive, winsome package possible—is all that is needed for evangelistic success. A possible theme song for such an approach could be “Information Saves!”

Vampire Christianity. Of course, such has never been our theological position, but this “event mentality” has clearly infected our practice. Anthony B. Robinson cites Dallas Willard’s new book, *The Great Omission*, which describes a prevalent gospel reductionism focusing primarily on conversion and eternal salvation while neglecting belief as a way of life here and now.

Willard terms this shortsighted focus on conversion at the neglect of thoroughgoing discipleship as “vampire Christianity” in which the individual says to Jesus, in effect, “I’d like a little of your blood, but I don’t care to be your student . . . in fact, won’t you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I’ll see you in heaven.”*

So I cheered when the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted for a three-year comprehensive process of preparation, proclamation, and preservation while emphasizing the concurrent necessity of all three in continuous cycle.

Great goals, poor slogan. Unfortunately, the terminology designating

2009: *The Year of Pastoral Evangelism* may dissuade more than persuade. Some ministers may react and assume the proposal imposes more work on an already overextended pastoral force while conveying the idea that laity may relax, fund, and observe or ignore the efforts of professional pastors.

Designating *pastoral* evangelism perpetuates the myth that ministers can accomplish the objectives alone. Regardless of the worthy objectives, such terminology implies limitations on releasing all believers into the fields. Jesus instructs us to pray for more reapers, not to impose descriptive confines as to who is responsible. Here’s reality! If we wait for pastors alone to do the work, we will wait in our graves.

Of course, ministers have a leadership function—nothing happened at the crossing of Jordan until the priests’ feet entered the water. But the people were delivered only when they followed in eager participation. Therefore, I encourage the encompassing vision of all believers becoming engaged in evangelizing.

2008—Year of Preparation.

Regardless of the need for better sloganeering, we can embrace the concept as beneficial. As ministers, we have a wonderful opportunity to intentionally prepare for a truly abundant harvest. While encouraging this integrated process, the following specifics will prepare us for an outpouring of evangelizing blessings:

Repentance. Let us acknowledge our sin and seek the face of our Savior in repentance for our willingness to maintain the status quo or to excuse small results. Let us seek forgiveness and expect victorious living.

Review. Let us remember and rehearse the abundant blessings of the Lord’s leading in our past and

acknowledge our dependence upon His favor for our future.

Revival. Let us preach Jesus alone as the Source of all the church needs to accomplish God’s plan for seeking the lost, and let us never stray from a Christ-centered focus.

Reformation. Let us call our members to live our lives congruent with our convictions and let us lead by example, fasting from those things that detract from Jesus or that deny the Spirit’s transforming power.

Relationship. Let us restore everyday evangelizing. Make acquaintance with strangers until they become our friends. Invite friends to attend until they are included in church life, even before they become believers.

Renewal. Let us do things differently and expect different results. Plan annual events in which to preach good news. Conduct intense Weeks of Spiritual Emphasis and Prayer. Teach how to emulate Jesus.

Revamp. Let us rearrange priorities until committees become strategizing sessions for mission rather than boards to grant or withhold permission about lesser issues.

Reliance. Let us seek God’s will and God’s way, asking the Holy Spirit to help us view people through Heaven’s eyes, considering every contact a candidate for the kingdom. If you are concerned about funds, concentrate on the potential—the money we need to accomplish God’s will is already in the mouths of the fish we are called to catch.

Reap. Let us determine that evangelizing will define our lives and drive our preaching. Call for decisions. Concentrate on the cities—going where the people are. Expect sizeable results.

Rejoice. Let us expect great things from God and boldly venture forward to rejoice in all He will provide. ■

* Anthony B. Robinson, “Follow Me,” *The Christian Century*, September 4, 2007, 23.

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The Invitation

True Stories that will change your life!

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Evangelist **Alejandro Bullón** has worked for more than forty years in South America. His greatest passion is public evangelism and communicating the gospel by radio, television, and the Internet. In his many years of service he has gathered breathtaking stories of people destroyed by life's circumstances and rebuilt by the love of God. Each story illustrates one step in coming to Jesus.

The devil's greatest con is to tell you there's no hope or forgiveness for you. Yet, each of these stories will lead you to believe in a Power that is above and beyond your own self. Your great need is God's great opportunity to save you. He offers you a new birth, a new life with meaning, and the opportunity to rebuild your life and restore your family. Please, accept His invitation. No one is beyond His grace unless they choose to be.

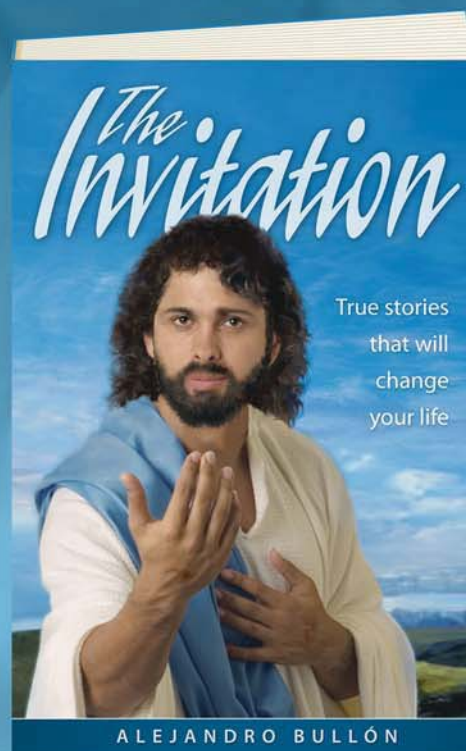
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