

MINISTRY[®]

INTERNATIONAL
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MAY 2009



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“NARROW, ANECDOTAL OPINIONS WILL ALWAYS BEMUSE. SYNERGISTIC PROBLEM-SOLVING EMPOWERS.”

Worship

Just as Alain Coralie mentioned in his article titled, “Worship: Maintaining Theological Soundness and Cultural Relevance” (January 2009), being “bemused” after attending “an alternative worship service,” I was bemused after reading his article. He almost gave a positive grade for the “Praise and Worship” movement, but pigeon-holed and bashed the “Seeker Service” movement. I don’t disagree with what he shared; but where’s the positive side? Who’s making it work? How is it working?

While I don’t disagree with what Coralie shared, I recognize that these movements do not lead exclusively to shallowness. Are they really that much different than our generation’s version of the organ-accompanied bar tunes from ages past that accompany the spiritual lyrics of some songs in our hymnals? Please show us how we can seize this postmodern opportunity (not “problem”) while disposing of the “fluff” element. Narrow, anecdotal opinions will always bemuse. Synergistic problem-solving empowers.

—Bret E. Schlisner, pastor, San Luis Obispo, California, United States

For years I have been trying to articulate my feelings about the subjects that Alain Coralie covered. What an exceptional, intelligent, and accurate assessment he made of the subject. Having served in ministry nearly 40 years, I have seen movements come and go, including the ones he addressed. There was always something that did not feel right about the Praise and Worship/Seeker emphasis that is almost taking over evangelical culture. His insight, observations, and conclusion so far are the best I have seen.

—Reverend Jan Michael Nace, Gowanda, New York, United States

Ministry to young adults

Having read the interview of Roger Dudley (“Embracing Those Who Reject Religion: An Interview With Roger Dudley,” January 2009), I wonder who is implementing these suggestions? Dr. Dudley stated, “we couldn’t find any other denomination that had even done anything like this.” So if we were the first ones to study the youth (thirty years ago), why are we still losing youth? What are we not doing to keep the youth? Obviously, there is something

missing that should bridge the gap between youth and religion.

Dr. Dudley has some very good points such as “adults feel threatened by young people in the church and they don’t know what to do with them,” “congregational climate as being the most important thing of all,” and “that all youth ministry is local.” These points resonate with me because I understand these points. As a youth I felt the adult church members didn’t understand me and I based Adventism on my small church.

He also stated that “what happens in higher levels administration isn’t what usually happens down in the local church.” This gave me an inside look at some of the difficulties that I will face in my future ministry. I agree that young people want to be in a church where they belong. However, if we are to really impact the youth, we need to get to know them first and show that we love them. We need to quit being so legalistic and start being realistic with them. The youth today are more interested in leaders who are more interested in them than they are in leaders who focus solely on the laws

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

FROM THE EDITOR:

In the March 2009 issue we printed an interview with Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA). On page 9 the editor asked: “How does the work of ADRA relate to Christ’s commission to His church?”

As printed, part of the response gives a confusing and inaccurate picture of ADRA’s ministry and work. In reality what ADRA does is a sign of God’s unconditional love and its work is not a public relations technique. The interview as a whole more accurately reflects ADRA’s ministry and work.

The editor apologizes for the confusion created and is pleased to provide this clarification.



Secular evangelists

I wake up slowly and go through a routine that I have learned over the years. Among other activities, I pray, read, and at some point, eat my breakfast. During breakfast, I am still in the process of waking up and often reading a newspaper. In other words, I am not an early morning person.

This morning, during the waking-up process, my eyes landed on an editorial in the *Washington Post*.^{*} The editorial expressed concern about an effort to insert into science textbooks once again the phrase “strengths and weakness” in connection with life origins, specifically with the concept of evolution. This case is in Texas, but the issue has been repeated in other regions.

This editorial is not a discussion of evolution and creation (though my perspective will be evident), rather how those who advocate evolution enthusiastically defend their views and what ministers of the gospel can learn from this spirited—almost evangelistic—defense.

The newspaper editorial is not advocating that creation should not be believed but that in science classes, we “should teach science.” From their perspective, that means you should not teach creation; it’s either evolution or nothing. That evolution is science and anything else is classified as a religious view, which should not be imposed on students, seems to be the message.

This newspaper editorial is only a minor example of the ongoing defense of evolution. Last year, a number of churches agreed to a statement that evolution is the only acceptable view of how life originated. Some churches participated in what was known as Evolution Sunday. I have to confess that I am impressed by the passion that many advocates of evolution show. The other day, I was listening to a radio program during which the host

interviewed a number of scientists about life origins. Only one or two references were made to those who teach creation, and it was obvious that the host and the participants had a warped view of the concept of creation. Each of the participants spoke with evangelistic fervor about evolution. Each spoke with certainty even when they did not have an answer. I was surprised how one participant made the statement about not knowing how original matter came into existence, but then moved into other areas as if the admission was a minor point.

Why the fear?

Yet in spite of the certainty of those who advocate evolution, many exhibit a fear that any alternative views are taken seriously. I find that strange. In other areas of life, we usually consider the facts and then consider our options. When a physician tells us the results of laboratory tests, frequently we then discuss the options we have. Whenever there is a problem with my car, the mechanic usually goes over the options I have. That’s the way we usually function whenever facts are presented to us. But when we discuss the question of origins, for evolutionists there is only one option—evolution. There is a zeal for and certainty about evolution that goes beyond just relating the facts.


Certainty

What can ministers of the gospel learn from the proponents—may I say *evangelists*—of evolution?

Perhaps the first thing we should learn is to not allow our enthusiasm to go beyond that which can be supported. We must not go beyond the message of the Word of God. It seems to me that is what is happening with many proponents of evolution. Many of them speak with certainty of what happened many

years ago without acknowledging that their predecessors spoke with the same certainty even though today’s experts often disagree with experts of the past. As clergy, we need to address complex challenges with humility. It is tempting, for example, to tell a person suffering from a life-threatening illness that God will heal them, but the fact is we don’t know what will happen. A woman who was in the final stages of life told me how a minister assured her that God told him that she would not die. When she died, he had no credibility with the family.

On the other hand, there are times when we should speak with certainty, but instead, we hold back. Should we not speak up about the power of God in our lives? Can we not speak with assurance that if individuals follow God’s leading they will experience new hope? To those who live with guilt, can we not remind them that God offers forgiveness? Perhaps we confuse timidity with humility and that is why too many clergy come across as lacking enthusiasm for the God whom they worship. Clergy are not merely religious consultants—giving faith options to people. We must communicate from the perspective of firm conviction. Conviction by itself is not enough, but conviction is needed. We should tell people that the faith we are advocating will bring positive change into their lives and give them hope for the future. If we don’t believe that, then our faith is worthless.

Yes, I admire the evolutionists who present their view with evangelistic fervor. Surely God’s servants—pastors, chaplains, teachers, and administrators—also have a message about which they are enthusiastic. Let’s reclaim God’s message of hope. 

^{*} “Strengths and Weaknesses’ Will the Texas Board of Education Evolve Backward?” Editorials, *Washington Post*, sec. A, March 25, 2009.

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

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The **power** of God's kingdom and **ministry**

In his book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Philip Jenkins, a distinguished professor of history at Penn State, notes that the most significant changes in the world during the last portion of the twentieth century were not secular trends like fascism, communism, feminism, or environmentalism.¹ According to Jenkins, "it is precisely religious changes that are the most significant, and even the most revolutionary, in the contemporary world. . . . We are currently living through one of the transforming movements in the history of religion worldwide."² According to Jenkins, the church is exploding at unprecedented rates in the so-called Third World.

In the last 50 years or so, and especially since 1980, revivals are breaking out all over; one of the best-kept secrets of the era is the explosion of the kingdom of God and a harvest of converts and disciples greater than anything the world has ever seen. In fact, the single most explosive movement of any kind—political, military, whatever—is the spread of the gospel and the advance of the kingdom.

Consider the following: some estimate that in 1970, there were around 71 million born-again Christians with a vision to reach out to the entire world for Christ. By the year 2000, there were 707 million, roughly 11 percent of the earth's population. Up until 1960, Western evangelicals outnumbered non-Western evangelicals two-to-one, but by 2000, non-Westerners

(mostly Latinos, Blacks, and Asians) led Westerners four-to-one, and the figure will be seven-to-one by 2010. Today, more missionaries are sent from non-Western nations than from Western nations. At a church planting congress in 1998, representatives from Latin American countries set a staggering goal of planting 500,000 new churches by 2010, and it appears that the target will be reached. In fact, five nations have already reached their target goals and have set new ones.³

Kingdom power and the ministry of Jesus

At the core of this explosion has been an outbreak of "signs and wonders" as expressions of the power of the kingdom of God. With rare exceptions, the Western church has lagged behind in seeing such power compared to the church in the Third World. Part of the reason includes the admittedly fraudulent, inappropriate weirdness, and anti-intellectualism often linked to American evangelicals who associate themselves with signs and wonders. Another aspect is the naturalist worldview in the West, a worldview that has affected us all and is more distant from a biblical worldview than the more supernaturalist perspective of those in the Third World.

Another reason that the Western churches have not seen such power is the association of signs and wonders with certain views of spiritual gifts. While I am not a cessationist, I believe the importance of a healing ministry, a deliverance ministry, and an openness

to the various ways that God speaks to His children (impressions, dreams, words of knowledge, and so forth) cannot be primarily a matter of one's views of gifts. Theologically speaking, it is a matter of the reality of the kingdom of God now, however much it still has a future form, along with the recognition that the kingdom becomes manifested by an outbreak of power in the ways just mentioned. It is also a matter of following almost universal New Testament scholarship in recognizing that Jesus performed His ministry from His human nature, full of the Spirit, and being led by His Father. We are to do "greater works" than He did; that is, we have to continue Jesus' ministry with power in dependence on the Spirit. This is not a charismatic or noncharismatic issue but a kingdom and ministry-of-Jesus issue.

Living within the kingdom and experiencing its power was a central aspect of Jesus' gospel. To see this, let us probe His teaching more fully.

Jesus and the gospel of justification

Even a cursory reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus understood that His mission required Him to engage in the war of ideas. Thus, while He was much more than this, at His core, Jesus was a Teacher and a Prophet. To be sure, He was deeply involved in action: healing, delivering, performing other sorts of miracles, and confronting various forms of evil and injustice. But even here, His actions were done to reveal, reinforce, reflect, and validate

His teachings. So when Jesus saw thousands of needy people, His compassion moved Him (among other things) to *teach* (Mark 6:34). Matthew's statement is typical of the Gospel writers' summaries of Jesus' activities and intentions: He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities (Matt. 11:1).

What, exactly, was Jesus' central message? Clearly, it was the announcement of the good news, the gospel. But what was the essence of that gospel? The answer may be different than what you think. Since the Protestant Reformation, the gospel has been identified with justification by faith, the announcement that through the death and resurrection of the God-man, Jesus, God's wrath has been propitiated, we have been ransomed, and we are declared righteous through our trust in the accomplished work of Jesus. Justification is surely an absolutely central message in the New Testament and intimately related to the gospel. The Reformers are to be forever thanked for recovering this biblical teaching. And Jesus clearly taught this notion. On one occasion, He announced that He had come to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

We are all familiar with Jesus' penetrating interaction with Nicodemus, recorded in John 3, an interaction that the Master summarized in language that can be properly understood only in terms of justification by faith: He, the Son of Man, must be crucified to remove judgment and provide a way of forgiveness and salvation.

Is it appropriate to call the doctrine of justification by faith "the gospel"? The answer is Yes and No in different senses. In one of the classic texts on the gospel in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), Paul explicitly uses "the gospel" to describe the truth that Jesus died for

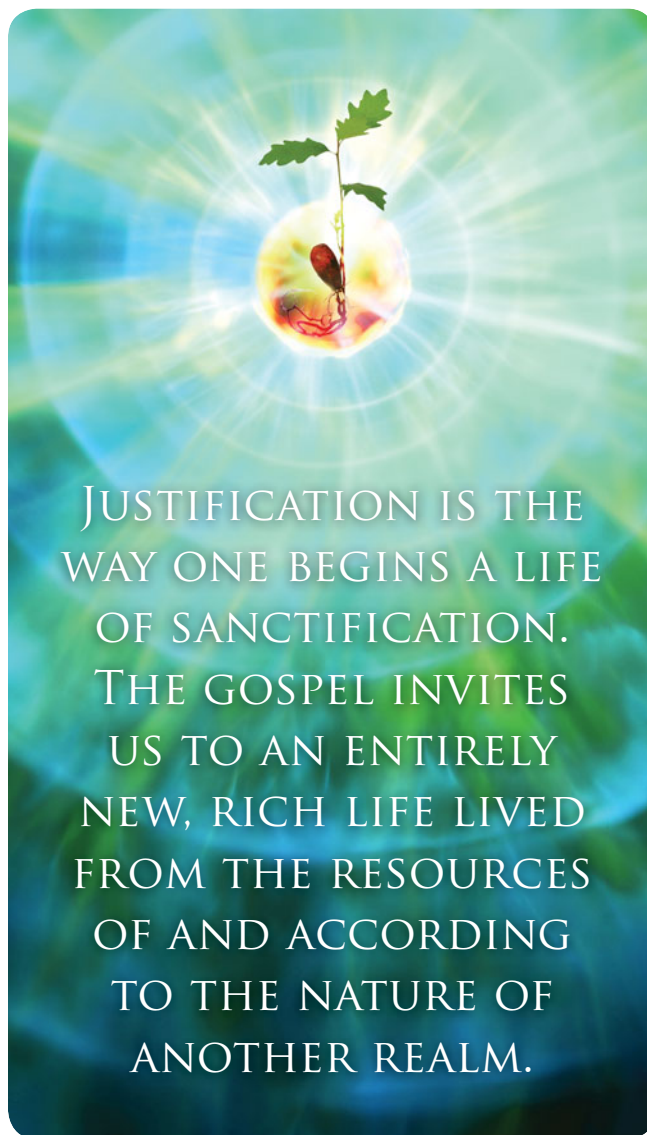
this understanding of the gospel. First, I found it difficult to connect sanctification and spiritual maturity and growth to this gospel. About all I could say was, "If Jesus is now your Lord, you should obey Him. And you should seek to grow because of your gratitude for what He did for you on the cross."

This was true as far as it went, but it did not go far enough in my mind. There was no deep, inner connection with justification and sanctification that followed from the very nature of the gospel, at least not one that was natural enough for me.

Second, some people tried to fill in this gap by insisting that Jesus has to be Lord to be Savior. Others responded by insisting that, while one must take Jesus to be the Lord in order to recognize Him as qualified to sacrifice for our justification, the requirement that Jesus be the Lord of one's life comes perilously close to a works gospel. Besides, they argued, being justified happens at a point in time, regardless of whether or not one can identify that moment, but Lordship is a lifelong process. In my view, this entire debate was based on a mistake, but I could not say what it was.

Third, justification by faith required people to trust in something Jesus did, but it was unclear that it called people to

trust in Jesus Himself (besides trusting that He was qualified to make the sacrifice for our justification). The role of Jesus as our daily Teacher in the school of life and of us as His apprentices was not clearly attached to the gospel, at least not in a way I found intellectually satisfying.



our sins and was raised. For the first 20 years of my Christian life, this was the gospel I shared with unbelievers. Converted in 1968, I served with Campus Crusade for Christ for ten years and shared this gospel with literally thousands of people.

However, there was a problem. In fact, I had three problems with

A broader gospel

But since the 1980s, especially in the writing of Dallas Willard, the evangelical church has recovered a broader gospel that, in my opinion, retains justification by faith and resolves the three problems mentioned above: it is found in the idea of “the gospel of the kingdom of God.”

Jesus announced this gospel at the very beginning of His public ministry (Matt. 4:17, 23) and said it would be taken to the entire world (cf. Matt. 24:14). It is the gospel identified as the apostolic message throughout and up to the very end of Acts (cf. 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31). What is this gospel, and how does it relate to justification by faith?

To answer the first question, we need to be clear on the nature of the kingdom of God. Primarily, the kingdom of God is the range of God’s effective will, that is, the range over and within which His perfect will has say and also the realm in which the rule of God is effective. This includes the laws governing the natural world and the hearts and activities of those who are willingly submitted to His rule. Of course, a sense exists in which everything is within God’s rule, but Scripture limits the kingdom to the two arenas just mentioned and reserves “kingdom of darkness” for the collective hearts and activities of those resisting God’s reign. Secondarily, the kingdom of God represents the realm of reality in which God’s rule is effective—the twofold realm just mentioned.

Expanding on Jesus’ words to fill out, in summary form, what He meant in announcing the gospel of the kingdom of God (“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven [= God] is at hand,” [Matthew 4:17, KJV]), Jesus was saying, “Change the way you think about and approach life in light of this new fact: the direct rule of God is now available to everyone immediately (e.g., one no longer needs to go through the Old Testament ceremonial system).”

Beginning with forgiveness and justification through faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection, and by repeated repentance and trust in Jesus as my daily Teacher and Guide, I can choose, moment by moment, to live within the power and protection of God’s kingdom. I can also live according to its nature, rules, and structure (e.g., to have God as one’s King and to be His servant ready to do His bidding, to relate to other members as part of my family), to seek to be its ambassador, to get my core identity from it and its Triune King, and to experience intimacy with the Triune God and my brothers and sisters within its provision and boundaries.

Application


I recognize—this is a mouthful, yet so pregnant with meaning. I encourage you: First, find biblical texts that undergird the different components of the gospel of the kingdom as I have stated it. Second, take it phrase by phrase and talk over its implications and applications with other believers.

Let me apply this broader gospel to the queries and quandaries I mentioned above. First, the gospel of the kingdom of God is to justification by faith as the whole is to the part, or as the beginning of a journey is to the rest of the journey. The gospel of the kingdom includes justification as an essential ingredient. And it specifies the purpose of justification, namely, to be the entry into a continuing journey, or, perhaps more appropriately, to be the start of a continuing journey. The point of becoming justified? Justification is the way one begins a life of sanctification. The gospel invites us to an entirely new, rich life lived from the resources of and according to the nature of another realm. I become justified so I can learn this new life, a life that will be mine forever.

Second, the debate about Lordship salvation makes as much sense as the debate about whether one

can begin a journey without taking the journey. While starting a journey is different from the day by day carrying out of that journey, the reason one starts is to take the journey. Similarly, one accepts the free grace of God in justification in order to enter a life of progressively having Jesus as my Lord in this life and the next.

Finally, the gospel of the kingdom bids me to start by trusting something Jesus did for me (died and rose), and to continue that trust by enlisting daily as Jesus’ pupil so that He can teach me regarding living my life as He would if He were me, that is, living out the kingdom in my own setting.

My evangelism has been transformed by recovering this broader gospel. When I speak evangelistically, I now spend most of my time painting a picture of what life in the kingdom is like. I contrast it to life outside the kingdom. I offer an invitation for listeners to rethink their life in light of the invitation to live from within the kingdom of God. And, finally, I proclaim the need for justification by faith as the essential first step into kingdom life. By connecting justification by faith with this broader gospel, I have good news to offer people. And I have come to recognize that the gospel of the kingdom and kingdom life, generally, should be accompanied with manifestations of God’s power and presence as we see in His ministry and in the book of Acts. And Jesus’ own ministry is to be understood as an example of how to live in and from God’s kingdom in dependence on God’s Spirit. This is our invitation and what an honor it is.⁴ 

1 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1–3.

2 *Ibid.*, 1.

3 See James Rutz, *MegaShift* (Colorado Springs, CO: Empowerment Press, 2005), 1–55. For up-to-date statistics on this subject, check out www.worldchristiandatabase.org.

4 For more on the gospel of the kingdom of God and its relationship to worldview thinking, inner transformation, spiritual formation, and the supernatural power of the Spirit manifest in signs and wonders, see my book *Kingdom Triangle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

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Simply creative: Ways to involve children in your worship services

It is children's Sabbath in an average church. But it hasn't been an average kind of service. The children illustrated the words of the scripture reading with sign language. Every child had written praises to God, prayer requests, and Thank-You messages that were woven into the congregational prayer. The "sermon" was interactive—the children were involved in different responses and activities every few minutes. They helped the speaker look for a lost sheep in their church, and they responded to certain words with appropriate sounds or performed other actions. At the end of the "sermon," one of the members brought a hand-raised lamb into the church for the children to pet. A two-year-old sat on the front row and watched every moment, wondering what would happen next. And none of the adults managed to drift into their midmorning pew nap.

After the service, juice and cookies were served in the hall and the children were given sheets of paper and colored markers. A large thought bubble was printed on each piece of paper and the words "My dream for my church is . . ." invited the children to imagine, to reflect, and to share their deepest desires for their church community. Their messages were posted on a bulletin board where the grown-ups could read them, and, perhaps for the first time, the children in the church were being listened to and valued, and what the adults read, listed below, changed their church forever.

My dream for my church is:

- that I'm involved in the church service, like I was today, every week!
- that it's not boring.
- that I can move around in the church, doing something interesting and not being frowned at.
- that the seats are more comfortable and don't make my legs ache.
- that we do things, not just hear things we don't understand.
- that I feel more loved and wanted here.
- that I can play my violin here and that it's OK if I make a mistake.
- that we sing songs with easy words.
- that it's fun for us kids and not just the grown-ups.

Over and over, in their different ways, the children were saying that they wanted to be more involved in church. They also needed a place where they felt welcomed, valued, and comfortable.

Why involve children?

Why should adults listen to the dreams of the children? Why should our churches think about actively involving children in the services? And why might our churches need to change in order to fulfill the dreams of the children and let them know that children matter?

Think about these points:

- Jesus urged His disciples to enter the kingdom of heaven like a child, to learn from the example of

children's simple faith and sense of wonder (Matthew 18:1–4), to welcome children and help them to feel comfortable in God's kingdom (Mark 9:37), to do nothing that would turn them away from His kingdom (Matthew 18:6) and, conversely, to do everything we can to attract children to His kingdom so that none of them are lost (Matthew 18:14), and to make sure His lambs are spiritually fed (John 21:15).

- We also read, "At every suitable opportunity let the story of Jesus' love be repeated to the children. In every sermon let a little corner be left for their benefit."¹
- A church service is very different from children's experiences in most schools, where they sit in small groups, move around, talk together, and learn by trying things out for themselves.
- When children are involved in a service, they are more likely to listen, understand, and learn. They are being actively disciplined, and they are developing their ideas about their faith and their relationship with God.
- Church services that do not actively and positively involve children can create a negative image of the church. When children are not involved in the service, the main points they learn include that church is uncomfortable, boring, and not for them. Some children learn from the age of two or three that nothing exists in the church service for them except the occasional

children's story. So they learn to switch off their minds as to what is happening in the service, lost in their own imaginations or coloring books, and never switch back on again.

- When children take part in church services in simple and creative ways, they feel valued, included, needed, loved, and special.
- Even if only one child becomes involved in the service, the others will often stop what they are doing to watch whatever is happening. If one of them receives value, then the others know they are valued.
- Involving children supports their parents and grandparents and encourages them as they disciple their children and nurture their spiritual development. I regularly hear from parents who are desperate to find churches where their children will be welcomed, appreciated, and involved. Positive church atmospheres contribute to evangelism. For example, nearly half (43 percent) of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior do so before they become a teenager.²
- With children involved in services, other children and their families are attracted to your church. If grandparents or friends bring a child to church, their own parents may come along to church if they know their child will be participating in a program.

Here are some ways of involving children in church worship:

1. Train a group of children to pray for others. Invite people who would like someone to pray for them to put up their hands. The children can then find a person who needs their prayers, ask about their prayer requests, and pray a few sentences on their behalf.
2. Invite a small group of children to develop their own series of actions to illustrate the Lord's Prayer and

then teach their actions to the rest of the church.

3. Give each person in the congregation four pieces of paper (each the size of half a sheet of copy paper) as follows: yellow paper with the word *Praise* written on it, blue paper with *Sorry*, green paper with *Thanks*, and pink paper with *Please*. Also, stick one of these papers onto four different gift bags, the same colors as the paper (to make matching the words to the bags as easy as possible). Have pencils and pens available and allow time for everyone to write a sentence or two of *praise, sorry, thanks, or please* prayers on each of their sheets of paper. Place the four labeled gift bags at the front of the church and invite everyone to come forward and place their prayers into the relevant bags. Then pick up each of the bags in turn and read a selection of the prayers inside.
4. Ask the children to bring objects to church that represent the things they want to thank God for or praise Him for. Make a collection of the objects on a table at the front of the church, and interview the children about their choices. Use these objects to inspire a thankful prayer.
5. Give each child a piece of white modeling clay. Ask the children to make a model of something they want to thank God for, praise Him for, or say *sorry* for. They can reshape their clay several times during one prayer or bring their sculpted objects forward as part of the prayer time. They can make shapes that represent the things they want to say *sorry* for and then reshape them into heart shapes.

Five ways to involve the children in the scripture reading

1. Give children several weeks' notice when you want them to do the scripture reading, and ask them to be prepared to say a few

words about what the passage means to them.

2. Invite a small group of children to act out or mime the action in the Bible passage as it is being read.
3. Choose a significant and repeated word in the scripture passage and invite the children to perform an action or sound each time the word is mentioned.
4. Ask several children to draw or find a series of pictures to illustrate the scripture reading. Scan these into a PowerPoint presentation to show as the verses are read.
5. Be creative! Choose one or two verses for a scripture reading and then find an interesting way to teach the verses to the children. Write each word on a different shape appropriate for the text, and hide the shapes around the church for the children to find and bring to the platform. Then stand the children in the correct order so that the verse can be read by the congregation.

Five ways to involve the children in the offering

1. Children (or the whole congregation) can come forward and put their offerings into attractive gift bags, reminding them that God has given us everything we have, and we are just giving a small part back as a way of saying "Thank You!"
2. Print envelopes with an appropriate design that links with the sermon theme, and give everyone an envelope into which they can place their offering. Children can then help collect the envelopes and bring them to the front to be placed in an appropriate container. For example, when the sermon is about the story of the lost sheep, the envelopes could be printed with sheep on them and placed in a box lined with green velvet that looks like a field.
3. Have a special offering for the children when they come for the children's story. Perhaps this money can be used to fund



outreach projects for the children in your community.


4. Invite each of the children's classes to design and decorate offering containers that can be used for a special event or for a whole month.
5. Instead of playing music while the offering is collected, invite different children to come and tell the congregation what they are most thankful for or how God has provided for them in a special way.

Five ways to involve the children in the sermon

1. As part of a story about Noah, children could find small plastic animals hidden in sevens and twos around the church. They could bring them up to the front of the church and place them safely in a boat. They could look for the characters needed for your Bible story or different objects that illustrate your sermon points.
2. Use a science or nature object lesson as a sermon illustration, and demonstrate it with the children during the sermon.
3. If you are using PowerPoint slides to support your sermon, choose a small object that is relevant to your sermon, such as a coin, heart, crown, angel, etc., and hide pictures of these objects throughout your slides. Ask the children to look for the hidden pictures quietly and secretly, and count how many they can find.
4. Give each child a small piece of modeling clay. Ask the children to model something that relates to the sermon—an object you

mention, what the sermon means to them, something that helps them to understand God's love or forgiveness, or an item from the Bible story, for example.

5. Dress a few children as the characters in your chosen Bible story and help them to create tableau scenes to illustrate the story.

These are just some of the ways of involving children in worship. Once you start involving the children, you and your church leaders will find many others ways to make the worship service a blessing to the children. 

1 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 208.
2 The Barna Group, "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids," Barna Group, www.barna.org.

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Web sites and books to help you involve children in your church

www.scriptureunion.org.uk

This Web site has thousands of Bible-based activities and ideas for children and young people's groups. Go to the main Web site and scroll down to the LightLive banner. Register for free and then you can search through thousands of ideas by Bible story or reference.

www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk

Formerly called "Bible Reading Fellowship," the Barnabas Web site has hundreds of ideas for prayers, stories, scripture readings, and other worship activities to use with children. Many are suitable for whole church worship contexts. Go to the site and click on the "Ideas" tab and then search for what you need.

www.engageworship.org

This is a new Web site that collects creative ideas developed by

different churches so that other groups can use them to enhance their worship. Many ideas can be adapted to be child inclusive.

50 Creative Worship Ideas, by Nancy Goudie, Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway Publications, 2002. ISBN 10: 1842910272.

100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids: And Grown-Ups Too!, by Karen Holford, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003. ISBN 10: 0816319685.

100 Quick & Easy Worship Ideas for Kids, by Karen Holford, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2004. ISBN 10: 0816320519.

100 Instant Ideas for All-Age Worship, by Sue Relf, Eastbourne,

UK: Kingsway Publications, 1993. ISBN 10: 0854767630.

Multi-sensory Church: Over 30 Innovative Ready-to-use Ideas, by Sue Wallace, Milton Keynes, UK: Scripture Union Publishing, 2002. ISBN 10: 1859996671.

Multi-sensory Prayer: Over 60 Innovative Ready-to-use Ideas, by Sue Wallace, Sarah Mayers, and Darren Hill, Milton Keynes, UK: Scripture Union Publishing, 2000. ISBN 10: 1859994652.

Pick 'n' Mix: Over 100 Ideas to Create Programmes for Children of All Ages, by Judith Merrell, Milton Keynes, UK: Scripture Union Publishing, 1997. ISBN 10: 1859990967.

Fernando L. Canale, PhD, is professor of theology and philosophy, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Holiness and ministry

In recent times, some have come to view ministry as one of proclaiming salvation rather than a call to holy living. This trend is in keeping with the interpretation of salvation that is attributed to Martin Luther. Luther taught that we obtain salvation through justification by faith. With this as his central belief, Luther deduced that sanctification, holiness, and obedience to God's commandments are not integral to salvation but the result of salvation. God produces good works, argued the great Reformer, to show unbelievers the spiritual salvation already possessed by the justified.¹

A practical consequence of such an interpretation of salvation as *justification by faith* results in ritualism. An example of ritualism is the assumption that God grants and secures salvation at the moment of baptism. Rituals confer salvation and the power of God.

This scenario reduces the task of ministry to one of proclamation—proclamation being a public declaration on a matter of stupendous importance. Hence ministry is proclaiming the gospel (preaching the good news) and need not involve Bible study or a fuller understanding of the truth on the part of the hearer. In such a proclamation, ministers invite nonbelievers to accept salvation made possible by God on the cross. This model of ministry advocates that through the work of the Holy Spirit, proclamation produces instantaneous and permanent salvation in those who accept it by faith.

This lack of emphasis on the biblical understanding of salvation truth and the consequent turning to instant salvation by heeding a proclamation

alone have crept into evangelism and ministry in the last two decades or so. Consequently, even in proclamation events where people come to hear the gospel, ministers have tended to adopt consumer-oriented approaches that will attract the most people of all cultures. Such approaches do not hesitate to employ rituals, contemporary cultural tastes, and secular theatrical attractions (in music, for example), so long as the public events generate a large audience where the proclamation can take place and instant salvation administered.

Pastors who think, operate, and minister in such an atmosphere may have the satisfaction of seeing hundreds raise their hands in an emotional response of accepting salvation. However, I do not believe such respondents understand or experience the basic ingredient of the Adventist understanding of salvation: that salvation comes from an experience of faith leading to obedience. This "commandment keeping" characteristic of Adventism, neglected and eventually dismissed by those who think ministry and evangelism rest only in proclamation, results in not being followed by a call to obedience. Proclamation of faith, I maintain, without a call to holiness and obedience is absolutely foreign to the essentials of Adventism.

Holiness and salvation

The view that the gospel provides salvation without any reference to holiness (sanctification) does not do justice either to the *sola* or *tota Scriptura* principle. How can theologians and pastors believe in doctrines based on a few biblical passages while disregarding the teachings of

Scripture as a whole? Paul's statement stands out forcefully: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and *to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14; emphasis added).² The apostle exhorts committed Christians to seek holiness. Why such an exhortation for holiness and sanctification? The reason is clear. "Be ye holy," says God, "for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16, KJV). Salvation, an experience of giving up the old ways of sin and living a new life, results in a life of sanctification. This new life is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

Some may argue that justification does it all and we receive sanctification along with justification. But the apostle's argument in Hebrews 12:24 contradicts such reasoning in at least two ways. First, the passage does not say that acts of living peaceably with all people and being holy are something bestowed at the moment of justification, but rather they result because of believers' conscious work: "Make every effort," says the apostle. These works are a result of historical acts (acts of obedience). The preceding context implores Christ's followers to struggle against sin, resisting it in every way they could (Heb. 12:2–4). Christians should seek and obtain real, not legal, holiness through the historical process of struggling against sin.

Second, the Christian experience of holiness results in works believers do, albeit empowered by the Holy Spirit, but these are not works that God wills and does for them. The position of some that God chooses us to be holy by overruling our will with

His omnipotent will (predestination), and makes us holy by overruling our limited power with His omnipotent power (providence), contradicts the meaning of Hebrews 12:14.

Consequently, according to Scripture, salvation requires and includes two different, yet complementary, experiences: justification and holiness (sanctification).

What is holiness?

We do not find an explicit definition of the terms *holy* and *holiness* in Scripture. The role they play in Christian theology, however, is too important to leave them open to the ambiguities of semantic definitions and the distortions of theological traditions. To explain their meanings, Scripture ties these terms directly to the being of God. God is holy with holiness a characteristic of God's being (Lev. 19:2; Ps. 99:3, 5, 9; Isa. 6:3; Luke 1:49; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Rev. 4:8). Although God's being is beyond human definition (Exod. 20:3; 2 Chron. 6:18; Isa. 40:18), we can learn what this means by looking at God's righteousness. "The holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness" (Isa. 5:16). Divine holiness, then, becomes manifest in divine righteousness, and God's righteousness, in turn, is His justice made visible in His righteous acts (1 Sam. 12:7; Dan. 9:16; Rev. 15:14). Furthermore, God reveals His righteousness in two main historical acts—the law and the Cross (Rom. 3:21)—as well as in all His provident actions throughout history (Deut. 32:4).

When God acts, He reveals His righteousness and His holiness. Righteousness means God always does the right thing. God acted according to His wisdom and righteous character not only when He established the order of creation but also when He revealed His justice and love through the law, the Cross, and His heavenly ministry.

Divine actions reveal simultaneously God's holiness and His righteousness (Isa. 5:16). When Isaiah exclaimed that the thoughts and ways of the Holy One of Israel are not our

thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:8, 9), he was expressing a fundamental and unalterable truth: holiness is the difference between God's being and ours, between God's thoughts and ours, between God's actions and ours. James 1:13 provides a logical extension: being holy, God cannot sin. Holiness is thus the opposite of sin.

Salvation includes a holy lifestyle

Because God is holy (Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16) and desires to share His life with us, He created human beings to be holy; that means to have a holy lifestyle (Eph. 1:4). Yet, by deciding to be independent from God, humans became sinners and lost their holiness (Gen. 3). God's plan of salvation brings holiness back to human lives. The experience of holiness in faith and obedience restores in humans the image of God and generates the joy of salvation.

Clearly stated throughout Scripture, the experience of salvation includes a holy lifestyle. For instance, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, understood that God's salvation expected believers to " 'serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness / before him' " all their days (Luke 1:74, 75, NRSV). A holy lifestyle expresses the righteousness and love that properly belongs to God's holiness in human experience. In living a holy lifestyle, Christians escape from the corruption in the world and "become participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:1–4, NRSV). We participate in the divine nature, not by the transformation and incorporation of our created bodies into the being of God (divinization of our creatureliness), but by adopting God's holiness in our daily lifestyles.

We need to understand that human holiness does not result in salvation. Salvation becomes ours only because of Christ's sacrifice and His ongoing intercessory work in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 5:8–10). As Paul puts it, those who have faith in Christ are the ones who experience salvation (Rom. 3:22). But faith must lead to obedience, and together faith

and obedience are two inseparable components of the same act of free human trust in God (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The free human decision to respond to God's call of salvation through Christ in faith and obedience is not the cause but the necessary condition for salvation to exist.

Christ saves us for holiness with holiness as the true experience of salvation. Holiness becomes real as we decide to have implicit faith and obedience in God's will, promises, power, providence, call, and intercession. The same faith and

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obedience by which we accept and receive His forgiveness (justification by faith) simultaneously and necessarily involves a willful and joyful obedient lifestyle (holiness). According to Scripture, we cannot have one without the other.

Before God, we cannot have forgiveness of sins without simultaneously being obedient and becoming changed progressively into His image. Since Christians will receive the crown of life by being faithful (obedient) until death (Rev. 2:10), ministers should present these teachings to help believers keep their faith-obedience response to Christ's call throughout their lives.

Paul gave us an example by urging Roman believers to offer themselves "in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Rom. 6:19). The

apostle expanded the same appeal when writing to Corinthian believers: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul explained in even greater detail how a holy lifestyle replaces the old worldly lifestyle. “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4:22–25).

With holiness as a necessary component of the experience and reality of salvation, we can understand why “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb.12:14).

Implication of holiness to ministry

The biblical teaching that a holy lifestyle (holiness, sanctification) is necessary for salvation runs against the view held by some. Hence the caution: ministers, committed to the full testimony of the Scriptures, cannot follow the sacramental model of ministry according to which God uses proclamation as the visible vehicle (sacrament) for the operation of His divine salvific power through the Holy Spirit.

Instead, Christ taught that the Holy Spirit operates through the understanding of the words of revelation recorded for us in Scripture. In fact, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to continue His own teaching ministry. “ ‘When the Spirit of truth comes,’ ” Christ told the disciples, “ ‘he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine

and declare it to you’ ” (John 16:13, 14, NRSV). God’s power operates through Christ’s words and acts of revelation recorded in Scripture. Christ made clear that “ ‘It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life’ ” (John 6:63, NASB).

In harmony with Christ’s teaching, Paul does not believe that faith results from the omnipotent, unilateral decision of God’s will but from the free human response to the Word of Christ. “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17, NASB). If faith and obedience are free human responses to God’s call, understanding His revelation in Scripture becomes necessary for salvation.

The Holy Spirit uses pastoral ministry as a chosen instrument to reveal Christ’s teachings and actions to the world. In consequence, the goal of pastoral ministry should be to facilitate the understanding of Scripture and God’s will in order to awaken faith and obedience in the world and keep it alive in the church.


A Scripture-centered model of pastoral ministry will find consumer-oriented methodologies contra-productive. Instead, because “the work of education and the work of redemption are one,”³ ministers will find the method of Christian education to be the best way to achieve their goal. We need to bear in mind that Christian education “will lead to the best development of character, and will fit the soul for that life which measures with the life of God. Eternity is not to be lost out of our reckoning.” The highest education is “that which will teach our children and youth the science of Christianity, which will give them an experimental knowledge of God’s ways, and will impart to them the lessons that Christ gave to His disciples of the paternal character of God.”⁴

Education as a pastoral redemptive methodology will not adapt the teachings of Scripture to the taste

and likings of secular contemporary culture. Instead, it will attempt to make them plain and understandable to simpleminded persons and scholars of all cultures.

Conclusion

God appointed pastors to work for the salvation of sinners. Because God channels His saving power through Scripture and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 6:63; cf. Rom. 1:16; John 16:13, 14), pastors should become familiar with all the teachings of Scripture and their harmony. In this way, they will see Christ’s holiness, righteousness, and love. As the Holy Spirit attracts them through the teachings of Scripture to accept and emulate God’s holy righteousness and love, Christ will transform them in His image.

By progressively and continuously growing in a deep understanding of God’s ways revealed in Scripture, pastors will become able to use Christian education as the best method to facilitate and disseminate biblical knowledge and their conversion experience to sinners in the world and saints in the church. The biblical model of pastoral ministry centered in Bible study will again replace the traditional sacramental model of pastoral ministry centered in proclamation and rituals. This ministry will produce an awakening of godliness and mission that will unite the worldwide church and hasten the second coming of Christ. 

1 “Works only reveal faith, just as fruits only show the tree, whether it is a good tree. I say, therefore, that works justify, that is, they show that we have been justified, just as his fruits show that a man is a Christian and believes in Christ, since he does not have a feigned faith and life before men. For the works indicate whether I have faith. I conclude, therefore, that he is righteous, when I see that he does good works. In God’s eyes that distinction is not necessary, for he is not deceived by hypocrisy. But it is necessary among men, so that they may correctly understand where faith is and where it is not.” *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), IV, 34:161.

2 All Scripture references, unless otherwise stated, are from the New International Version.

3 Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 30.

4 Ellen White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), 296.

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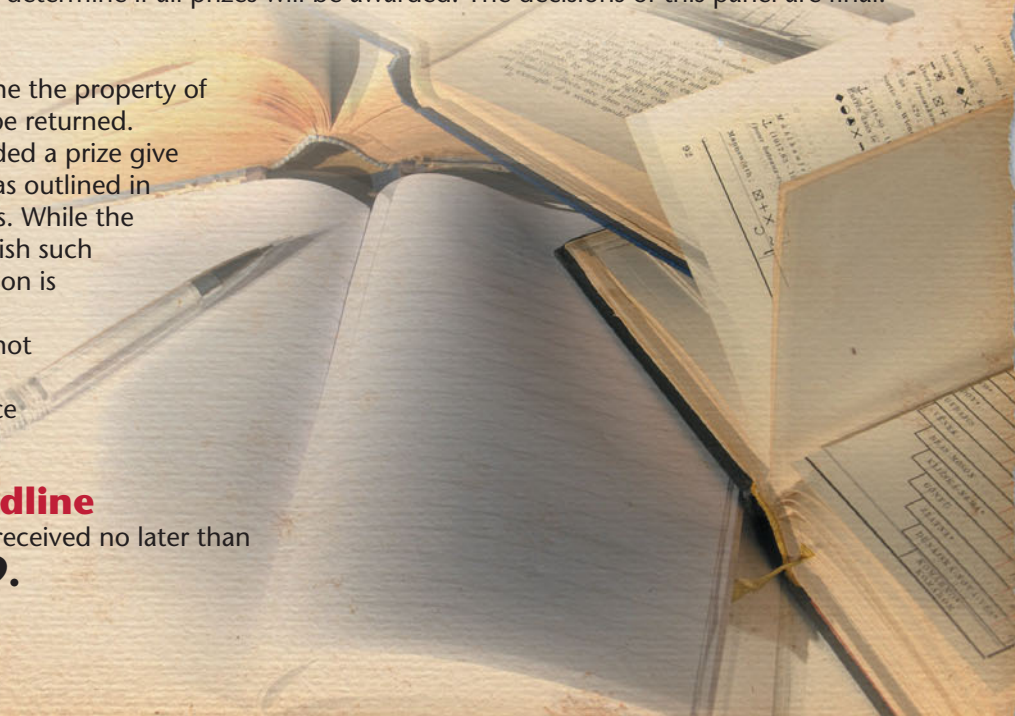
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3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased at a price to be negotiated.

Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than

JUNE 30, 2009.



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Management by surrender

However hard to say it, I admit, “I don’t know how to lead.” After 27 years of pastoral, conference, departmental, and now administrative experience, *I still don’t know how to lead*. At first, I fought against this stark realization, then I surrendered to it; now I accept it willingly, and finally, I am learning to rejoice in it.

Of course, I know and understand the *principles* of leadership. I have studied books and taken numerous courses on the subject. I can espouse principles of management by objectives, team development, and strategy implementation. I can discern potential crises. I can even manage making the tough decisions when I need to do so.

But does that describe leadership in God’s cause?

My heart and my motives are right, for I want to serve faithfully, and with God’s help, lead the cause of God to the next level. But the real issue? *How can I be the kind of spiritual leader the Lord wants me to be?*

In secular society, good leaders try and fail, then learn from their mistakes and try again. Great leaders persist until they accomplish great things, but still they are learning and failing—for the benchmark for their performance seems always above what they accomplish. I have come to the conclusion that spiritual

Christian leadership is markedly different. We serve an omnipotent God who welcomes weakness and failure and, in fact, cannot really use us to our full potential until we acknowledge those weaknesses and failures ourselves.

will remain strong, the focus clear. They have the vision and a reasonably clear understanding of how to get there. When leaders experience success, that very success goes to their heads—a danger worse than failure itself. In most situations, there will be small steps of success and giant steps of failure as well.

The second stage is that of potential *discouragement, of self-examination*. We know our own heart as no one else does, and we see the mixed intent of the human soul. At best, the purity of every act becomes laced with the poison of self-aggrandizement. In humanity, the line of demarcation between good intent and self-praise is not a line that divides; rather, it is a line that splits every soul. The question comes to the heart of every leader. *If God knows my limitations and my weaknesses, why would He call me to leadership, then set me up to fail?* In spiritual leadership, this stage of introspection really acknowledges our

own human frailty.

The third stage is the dawn of *understanding*. Here a great lesson can be learned, for leaders finally let go of self and allow God to teach them the true meaning of submission. This develops into the most challenging and yet, possibly, the most valuable lesson. The science of surrender,

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Five stages

Below are five stages of growth that I believe are essential for anyone who wants to be an effective spiritual leader.

The first stage is the *leadership launch* stage. Here, a person of God, a warrior in the great cause, tries to do their utmost—and then fails. They

stated clearly in John 12:24, reads, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (NKJV). We so often apply this to the conversion experience, but the lesson really includes the secret of the power of a leader. In Psalm 73:17, David says, "I entered the sanctuary of God; / then I understood." Can't you picture the king, kneeling before the throne of God, acknowledging his own wicked heart, then rising to his feet in new strength and determination, to lead a nation by submission to His God and King?

The fourth is the stage of *anticipation*. Now you see the all-powerful hand of Divine Omnipotence at work. Your eyes of discernment are constantly open, looking for the hand of the Creator of the universe at labor. "Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things


are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."* New questions are now the leader's constant companions. "What are You doing here, Lord?" The answer of total submission stays ever present in the thoughts. "How can I be involved in this, Lord?" "What would You have me do or say to bring honor to Your cause here?"

The fifth is the stage of *joy*. "Oh, God! I saw You at work there! Lord, this is amazing! You and I together!" The heart carries in its bosom an ongoing tune of heaven, perhaps like the songs the angels sing as they minister. Every new experience contains a new verse, unique and powerful. The Sovereign God of heaven and earth is at work, conducting a symphony of praise as He re-creates beings into His image, with praise wrung from the heart,

"Oh Father, we left a blessing there didn't we? Oh God, I saw that! You are truly amazing!"

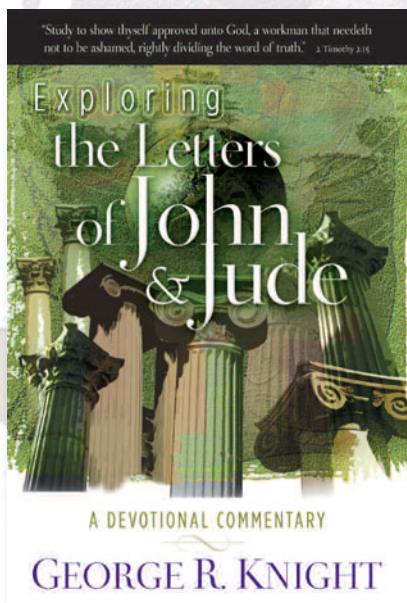
Conclusion

In the end, great spiritual leaders don't just happen. They are not created instantly. Over the years, I learned that leadership, good leadership, spiritual leadership, comes through a process, one that can seem slow, which at times feels painful and humiliating, but one that, in the end, leads to the sense of satisfaction of knowing that we are being used by our Lord.

I still don't know how to lead. But by knowing that I don't know, I am learning the lessons that are, through God's grace, teaching me how to lead. 

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1937), 417.

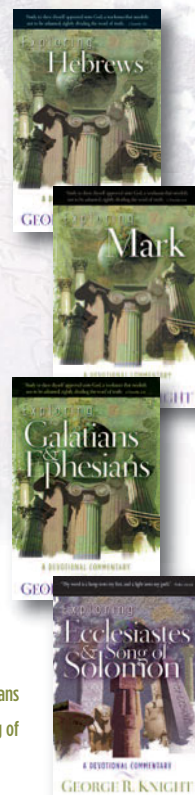
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The challenge of change

Why can't women join the clergy? That was the question on the floor of a General Synod of the Church of England in the 1980s. Back then, it was a controversial proposition—and hotly debated. One speaker spoke with passion against women being admitted to the priesthood.

"In this matter," he said, "as in so much else in our great country, why can't the status quo be the way forward?"¹

Status quo? What he didn't realize was that the status quo (the existing condition) had already been shaken by merely asking the question about women in ministry. Whenever a denomination has seriously tackled this question, they have tended to break the status quo by broadening the role of women in their churches, even if the decision was ultimately against women becoming full-fledged clergy.

Status quo? You'd have to ask your great-great-grandmother what it was like to live in an era when change was the exception, and when change happened, it came slowly. The past century has brought an accelerating rush of change within society that has impacted the church as well.

The status quo can no longer be, well, the status quo. Change now comes upon us so quickly that there's barely enough time for us to understand *what is the status*, let alone time for it to become *quoad!*

The problem of change

I grew up Adventist at a time when you knew what made an Adventist. It was obvious (or at

least it seemed that way to me). The common beliefs, lifestyle, and Sabbath keeping gave us clear definition. In a sense, it was easy to be Adventist then. The instructions were clear. You were expected to act in a certain way. You worshiped in a certain way, with worship outlines supplied from above (no, not from God), and you simply filled in the blanks about who was to do what. And guidelines for Sabbath keeping were well defined.

Not that we weren't interested in making changes. During my teenage years, in the 1960s, some were suggesting that instruments other than organ and piano—with the occasional brass band—could be used in worship. Guitars were beginning to come into our church, but what was obvious to us teenagers about their acceptability was not obvious to all. The amount of midnight oil burned in church boards discussing the issue would have supplied a myriad of maidens with oil for their lamps while awaiting the bridegroom.

Just as it dawned on Dorothy in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, when she said to her dog, "I've a feeling we're not in Kansas any more," anyone who grew up Adventist back then can say, "I have a feeling that we're no longer in the church of that time anymore." Better yet, ask someone who left the church and came back 20 or 30 years later. Some of them search for the church of yesterday and find it no longer there.

Outside the church, change has become commonplace. Some 50 years ago, change was expected and welcomed because members

thought that change would be more of the same, only better. Now there are no guarantees. We "cannot predict with confidence what will be happening in our own lives. Change is now more chancy, but also more exciting, if we want to see it that way."²

Most people don't want change. "Given the choice between changing and proving that change is not necessary, most people will get busy on the proof," says economist Kenneth Galbraith.³

There's good reason for this attitude. Change often means ambiguity, confusion, or loss of control; that's why there's resistance.⁴ This may mean "sacrificing the familiar, even if it is unpleasant, for the unknown, even when it might be better. Better the hole they know rather than the one not yet dug."⁵

Change has always been a constant, but more recently, an ever-quickenning rate of change has come upon us. This is not a disease, even if it does cause some "dis-ease."⁶ It's part of living in a "world where only one rule exists—the certainty of uncertainty."⁷

Within Christianity, we find a history of change. Jesus established the church, but the church began as a Jewish movement. Within a generation, the church was mainly a Gentile movement and an inclusive organization. The apostle Paul, by championing the view that circumcision was not necessary among Gentiles, was accused of going against the explicit command of Scripture.⁸ Jews and Gentiles were welcome, as were women, children, and slaves. All were treated equally. Wherever Christianity established a

presence, there were usually differences in its form and shape, which could cause conflict between other Christians. Sadly, “the resulting differences often erupted in conflict.”⁹ More change.

The Reformation changed the face of Christianity and the world. These were dramatic times. Complex times. Historians are no longer as

someone would eventually quote Malachi 3:6, “ ‘I am the LORD, and I do not change’ ” (NLT).

Sometimes the resistance to change fitted their argument, sometimes not. Sometimes it brought a chuckle, sometimes sadness. Sometimes it caused me to question the writer’s thought processes. Sometimes I’d agree.

They claim not to have turned away, but God reminds them of their shortcomings. Some, “those who feared the LORD” (verse 16, NLT), listen and respond. God calls them His “ ‘special treasure’ ” and says that He will spare them as a father spares an “ ‘obedient child’ ” (verse 17, NLT).

God’s love is the constant. That’s what’s needed—not an unchanging

WITHIN CHRISTIANITY, WE FIND A HISTORY OF CHANGE. JESUS ESTABLISHED THE CHURCH, BUT THE CHURCH BEGAN AS A JEWISH MOVEMENT. WITHIN A GENERATION, THE CHURCH WAS MAINLY A GENTILE MOVEMENT AND AN INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION.

certain of reasons for the Reformation as they once were, but the change is well noted in the question: “Why did people around 1515 want to see the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, but around 1525 demand to hear the Word of God?”¹⁰

The Adventist Church was a child of the Reformation when formed about 350 years later. This change, we believe, helped bring back truths that were lost over time. Now, however, changing times and changes within the church have led to uncertainty about who and what we are—not in every detail, but in some significant areas.

What about the unchanging God?

When working as an editor, I used to receive letters bemoaning changes in the church that were referred to in our magazines. The topics would cover a whole range of issues, including the role of women, worship styles, and Bible translations. If enough letters came in on these topics, you could almost guarantee

Not once, though, do I remember anyone quoting the whole verse: “ ‘I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed’ ” (NLT). “You should be surprised that you aren’t destroyed,” God continues, “because since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned My laws, and you have not obeyed Me.”

Why haven’t they been destroyed? We find the answer at the beginning of Malachi, for this little book begins with a love note: “ ‘I have always loved you,’ says the LORD.”

“ ‘Really? How have you loved us?’ ” comes the question.

“ ‘This is how I showed my love for you: I loved your ancestor Jacob’ ” (Mal. 1:2, NLT).

God’s love is the constant. God’s love never changes. That’s why His creation hasn’t been destroyed. That’s why He gave us His Son. That’s why we have the right to be called His children (John 1:12).

Malachi 3:6 forms part of God’s plea for His people to return to Him.

society or an unchanging religious system. Their religious system was temporary until the arrival of Jesus. Then it changed. Dramatically.

From the beginning, God’s love has been the constant. During times of change, we must be sure that we do not stand against any change merely on the mistaken belief that God never changes. His love never changes, even as His church does change.

The necessity of change

Some things must never change within Christianity. The core truths are solid. God loves. Jesus saves. Salvation comes through faith alone. We’re commanded to love and commissioned to share—to live and act as children of light. Teachings such as the Sabbath, what happens when we die, and the Second Coming don’t change, even if our understanding of them deepens.

Change should lead to growth and development. There needs to be a sense of continuity from where we were to where we are, and from

where we are to where we are going. A tree is alive and bears fruit because it maintains contact with its roots, writes Jack Provonsa. He adds that we stand on the shoulders of our fathers and mothers in the Adventist Church, but we show them the greatest disrespect if we don't move a millimeter beyond where they stood.¹¹

Some things must change. To put it bluntly: "If a congregation is a living organism . . . it follows that change is necessary. Organisms that do not change and grow are not living organizations—they're dead!"¹²

There's nothing new in this notion. When Paul preached in Athens, he used the language of the philosophers and quoted their poets. He went from Athens to Corinth and changed his approach, choosing to preach the simple message of the Cross. Commentators are unsure as to why he did this but probably there was a change in methodology. Had he learned something from his experience, or did he change according to the cultural differences?

Former president of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists, Neal Wilson, notes Adventist historian George Knight's claim that most Adventist founders and pioneers would be reluctant to join the church if they had to agree to the church's fundamental beliefs of today. He then adds, "Adventism keeps searching, investigating, listening, reviewing, studying, and praying with the conviction that God may enlighten and enlarge its understanding of the salvation story."¹³

Change is rarely sought; indeed, it's often opposed. When the image of the church is viewed as a haven where peace prevails, we don't want change. That's when relatively innocuous changes—a new hymnal, the use of gender-inclusive language, for instance—disturb the stability. "Worshippers may not want cultural changes even mentioned in the context of the service, since they

have come to escape such realities." The problem is that "denial of change often only prolongs its pain, and in the church's case delays its ministry to a new culture."¹⁴

"The church cannot refuse to change, since it is in the process of discovery. . . . The church cannot change willy-nilly with the currents of culture, because it knows it follows God's Spirit. But for the same reason neither can it resist all change. We are left with an openness to change, a willingness to weigh the possibility that change is one of the progressive discoveries of our life as a church."¹⁵

Here, then, is the tension. The church must be in a continual readiness to change in order to remain in touch with its society and to remain true to its mission. At the same time, its mission and its purpose is based on eternal truths and unchangeable principles. Added tension exists in congregations and denominations when the boundaries between these inviolable truths and principles and the contingent are poorly defined.

We do know that, until the Second Coming, God's church can always do better, can always improve, and can always minister more meaningfully. This alone should make us alert to ways that will make us more effective. Asking what's effective, within the boundaries of truths and principles, also takes the emphasis away from ourselves and whatever our personal preferences may be and allows us to focus on fulfilling our purpose. Fulfilling our purpose is what should drive the church and change within the church.

We live in a culture of fast-paced change, a culture that embraces change. We can't stand apart from culture because we're a part of that culture. Of necessity, we present Christianity and speak our faith within the context of a certain language, modes of thought, and symbolism. We do so within the context of our culture.¹⁶

Change brings challenge. Change brings uncertainty. Change brings tension. But if we don't change, a worse fate awaits us: we remain the same.

God forbid! 

- 1 Charles Handy, *The Age of Unreason* (Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), 3.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 6, 7.
- 3 Quoted in Vicki Bennett and Ian Mathieson, *The Effective Leader* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2002), 103.
- 4 Todd D. Jick, *Managing Change: Cases and Concepts* (Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 1993), 6.
- 5 Handy, 28.
- 6 Sean Fagan, *Does Morality Change?* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2003), 7.
- 7 Rebecca Huntley, *The World According to Y* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2006), 15.
- 8 William Loader, *Jesus and the Fundamentalism of His Day: The Gospels, the Bible and Jesus* (Melbourne: Uniting Education, 1997), 7.
- 9 Marshall D. Johnson, *The Evolution of Christianity* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), xix.
- 10 Peter Blicke, quoted in R. N. Swanson, "The Pre-Reformation Church," in *The Reformation Church*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2006), 9.
- 11 Jack W. Provonsa, *A Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1993), 21.
- 12 Kathleen S. Smith, *Stilling the Storm* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 91.
- 13 Neal C. Wilson, "A Word to the Reader," in *A Search for Identity*, George R. Knight (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 7, 8.
- 14 Robert Kysar, *Stumbling in the Light* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 37, 24.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 22.



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The pastor as proactive leader

In their book, *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry and Richard Blackaby speak of two kinds of church leadership. The first one is task driven. Task-oriented leaders strive to “conquer the obstacles immediately in front of them. . . . They do not reflect on why they are doing what they are doing. . . . They value action over reflection—or more precisely, reaction over reflection.”¹ The second type is proactive. They commit time and energy to reflective thinking that leads to proactive behavior that effects change and leads to growth.

Having said that, the authors challenge us to consider the foundational differences that separate a reactive leader committed to reacting to the happenings of ministry and the proactive leader who intelligently charts a course based on a vision of what needs to happen in ministry.

Proactive spiritual leadership, first and foremost, results from the Holy Spirit impacting the life of the believer. The Blackabys state that “spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda” under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit.² The Spirit accomplishes this by the intentional equipping of every member of the body with a competency or a mix of competencies, allowing each to contribute to the mission of the church. The same Spirit is responsible for transforming the character of these individuals in a manner consistent with the character of Christ. This Christlike character ensures the relational health of the community that He has

called to His service. George Barna suggests that this combination of character and competency³ (spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit) serves as the bedrock upon which spiritual leadership rests.

Every person gifted and transformed by the Spirit should contribute to the overall process of spiritual leadership that accomplishes the Master’s will through His church. Each must recognize that the proactive “doing” of ministry comprises the work of every believer in the body. Formal leaders such as pastors, administrators, and local elected church leaders are called to the work of coordinating and developing the competencies of members. Additionally, their call includes encouraging the spiritual formation of character for those involved in the process of intentionally and intelligently meeting the challenges of the Great Commission.

Difference between reactive and proactive styles

A story in Ezra illustrates the difference between the two leadership mind-sets. Ezra has gathered approximately 1,500 men at a base camp beside the river Ahava in Babylon in preparation for the return to Jerusalem to reestablish the sacred temple economy. Everything is ready—carts loaded with vessels and scrolls, provisions packed, and a fresh decree from Artaxerxes, granting them generous access to the resources of the empire. As these pioneers prepare to return to the

land of their fathers, Ezra calls them to assemble by families and report their numbers and names. When this mustering concludes, Ezra discovers their readiness is compromised by the absence of representatives from the tribe of Levi (Ezra 8:15–20).

The Levites were absent at this much anticipated prophetic moment marking the deliverance of God’s people from exile and the miraculous restoration of the sacred kingdom. The chosen tribe, whose ancestors had been set aside for ministry because of their readiness to step across the line with Moses, was nowhere near the line of service at Ahava. They were integral to the reestablishment of the temple services associated with the kingdom. Amazingly, Ezra knew just where to look—the Levitical seminary overseen by Iddo at Casiphia.⁴ There, Ezra’s messengers were able to gather (some commentators suggest “press” into service) a number of Levites, “men of understanding” who honorably reacted to the call of service to return to Israel. They left Casiphia and came immediately to join the returning exiles.

We can only guess why they were not present when muster was called at the river Ahava. It seems indeed odd that such a momentous event would pass Levitical notice without at least one or two feeling compelled to participate in a process that depends on their presence. When called, they responded—a clear example of reactive ministry. They were accessible, available, and responsive when called. But

proactive they were not! They missed this irretrievable moment in history when they might have demonstrated spiritual leadership. Rather than the priestly voice of Ezra, it should have and could have been the voices of the sons of Levi calling muster beside the river. They are forever left with the record and results of reactive service.

Called to spiritual leadership

Those of us summoned to professional gospel ministry are called to spiritual leadership as a vocation. We bear a title such as “Pastor” that commonly suggests a serene “feeding the flock” expectation. In reality, pastors possessed of diverse spiritual gift mixes are called to lead God’s people—mixes that may or may not include the spiritual gift of *pastor*. Scripture does not support elevating the gift of pastor to a position of superiority that uniquely qualifies one to serve as spiritual leader of the church. First and foremost, we are called to lead regardless of the gift(s) granted by the Holy Spirit. Leading is proactive. Common expectations can allow us to exhaust an entire career in caring, reactive service to God’s people, but such service does not qualify us as leaders if we fail to guide the members of the body into thoughtfully and proactively considering God’s high calling for each of them.

We have seen an emerging emphasis over the past decade or so regarding the role of the pastor as a trainer and equipper of the church. During most of that time, I have served as a ministerial supervisor. I have watched young men and women enter ministry with a passion for this proactive calling, only to

encounter a Christian community that expects a pastor to be available and faithful in meeting the needs of the church. Frequently, little or no expectation of proactive leadership aimed at effecting change in the church exists. This paradox is marked by an uneven struggle between the

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expectations of the body and the intent of the young pastor. The lofty purpose of the pastor nearly always succumbs to the expectation of the body.

Russ Moxley, in his book *Leadership and Spirit*,⁵ quotes Parker Palmer on this issue: “When I follow only the oughts, I find myself doing work that is ethically laudable but is not mine

to do. A vocation that is not mine, no matter how externally valued, does violence to the self—in the precise sense that it violates my identity and integrity for some abstract norm. When I violate myself, I invariably violate the people I work with.”⁶

When the high calling of God in Christ Jesus becomes shaken and made to tumble before the task-focused demands of a need-based routine, any believer experiences loss. And the loss develops into an even more tragic situation for a young pastor intent on leading change in a renewed biblical paradigm. The high calling of the pastor hereby threatened consists of a calling to equip and encourage the members of the church to a ministry assignment uniquely fitted to their gifts. We must not surrender the future of our church to the tradition of accepting reactive ministry while we know that God calls us to a loftier platform of spiritual leadership.

Pastors find themselves in the unenviable position of being pulled in one direction by their calling and professional training and in another by traditional expectations of the congregation. Such stress is sometimes buttressed by the expectations of church administrators who themselves were trained and nurtured in the task-focused model of managing challenges and accomplishing tasks. If Palmer’s assessment

of the impact of such behavior is true, then we damage our professional pastors and with them we violate the people God has called us to lead. This dilemma reminds us of Jethro’s pronouncement in Exodus 18:17 that Moses would wear himself out along with the people he was leading if he persisted in his “get the job done myself” approach to leadership.

Moving toward spiritual leadership


What can we do to move toward our calling of spiritual leadership? As with all leadership growth, we should and must begin with an assessment of ourselves.

- Is my concept of spiritual leadership based upon a solid foundation of biblical theology?
- Am I committed to a sacred calling that goes beyond simply meeting expressed needs?
- Do I have a vision of ministry as a platform for spiritual leadership?
- Do I see myself as responsible for identifying the will of God and effecting change that leads to reform in the dysfunctional paradigms that mark the twenty-first century church?
- Do I see myself simply as a servant to the church or as a leader called to serve the transformational needs of the church?
- Does my view of the leadership process extend beyond positional leaders, i.e., denominational leaders, pastors, and elected church leaders? Does my view embrace every member of the church as a Spirit-gifted, Spirit-transformed leader whom God expects me to nurture toward an effective, proactive contribution to the total process of leadership within the body?

We must assess our professional work patterns. A proactive/reactive analysis of our calendar activities over a period of time will reveal whether we are reacting to ministry challenges as an on-call servant of the church or proactively engaging in reflection, planning, and visioning initiated by God's agenda rather than the exigencies of the day. We need to help the church understand that meeting the needs of daily life in the church belongs to the church, not the pastor alone.

The proactive pastor is a spiritual leader called to train and equip the church for competent and effective

ministry that meets the complex needs of church life. Such change will require time and patience for the church to move from a pastor-centric model of ministry marked by professional reaction to need toward one of an empowered church served by a competent and proactive spiritual leader. This requires gentle persistence, consistent responses to needs, and unwavering trust in the gifts of the Spirit to re-educate the congregation and to develop a corps of lay leaders to become spiritual leaders themselves.

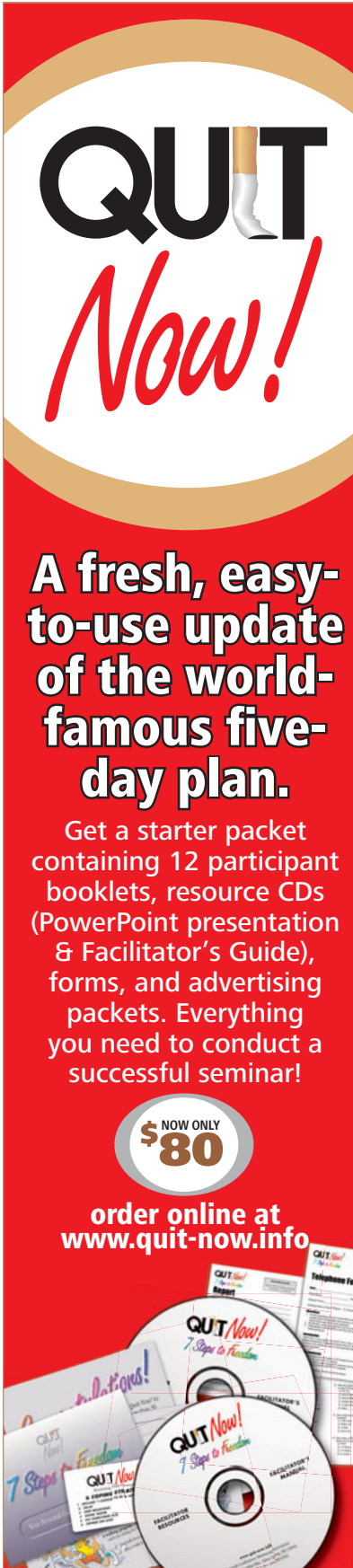
Finally, it will require God-given courage, forged in intercessory prayer, and a tenacious commitment to one's own calling as a man or woman of God to hold back the tide of congregational needs while modeling proactive spiritual leadership qualities and nurturing the same in every believer. 

- 1 Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 58.
- 2 Ibid., 20.
- 3 George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 25.
- 4 Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, New Modern Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), electronic database, s.v. Ezra 8:17.
- 5 Russ Moxley, *Leadership and Spirit: Breathing New Vitality and Energy Into Individuals and Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 163.
- 6 Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 30.

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The **big** positive purpose

Were you at church this morning?" I was on the phone with a friend.

"Yes, of course," said my friend. "Our family never misses church."

"So what did your pastor preach about?"

"Something in Revelation, something about three froglike spirits, I think," she said.

"What about them?" I asked.

She paused. "I have no idea, actually," she said finally. "Some history and scholarly stuff about what he thought they were. But it didn't mean much to me. I get discouraged," she added, "because we so rarely hear anything from the pulpit that *really matters* to our family!"

There are two issues here. One may be a fading interest in the more esoteric points of prophecy, especially if that's the bulk of a pastor's preaching repertoire. That's not what was most wrong with this sermon though. The second issue includes speaking redemptively of the froglike spirits of Revelation 16—a lesson we should have learned from Bruce Wilkinson's unpacking some amazing lessons from an obscure passage in 1 Chronicles 4.*

What was wrong with the sermon? The absence of what I call, in my sermon preparation, the *big positive purpose*.

Basic composition

Among the first things you learned in freshman composition was the structure of an argument. You begin with a thesis statement—"Here's what I want to convince you of"—followed by three or four points in support of the thesis and (if

required) an answer to an objection or two, then a conclusion.

That's more or less what happens in a well-structured sermon. (It's true that there are a few incredible preachers who break all the rules and still move people deeply. You and I, preachers of average talent, probably shouldn't assume we can do that. Nearly every bad sermon I've ever heard could be improved with more attention to structure of the kind I'm describing here.)

The ladder of points can be thematic (three proofs of God's love) or organized by the text (the meaning of the soils in the parable of the sower, or Paul's argument about righteousness by faith in Romans 5:1–11). With this method, rarely do preachers fail to make important points, and their supportive material, coming from Scripture, remains unimpeachable.

Many preachers neglect the thesis statement: they give information without their listeners knowing quite what the preachers intend that it should mean to them.

Scripture has plenty to tickle the intellect and give us a chance to show how smart we are. With that we may interest people, but without a big positive purpose, we won't encourage and inspire.

It would be interesting to ask the aforementioned pastor, "Why did you choose to speak about Revelation 16:13, 14?" He might say, "Because I'm preaching a series and that's where I got to this week." Or, "They need to know about even the abstruse points of John's Revelation." Or, "Because I've studied it a lot and have so much information on the topic." None of these address,

though, how you hope to help your listeners by speaking to them about the subject in question.

That's because the big positive purpose is discovered neither in the text nor in the preacher, but in the people.

Both big and positive

Jesus was noted as speaking, unlike the contemporary teachers, "with authority." He had authority, not just because He was a good exegete (though He was); the others were excellent scholars, too, but offered little useful spiritual help. Jesus' authority came from the practical understanding He had of the needs of His listeners' lives, which becomes so apparent in His parables. He spent time with the people, and it showed.

As I prepare a sermon, I mentally page through the concerns of my congregants. Let's see: money (generally not enough), job (losing or miserable in), family (continual conflict, divorce, estranged child, troublesome parent), health (worrisome to terminal), happiness (spiritual disquiet to downright depressed), children (usually wanting them to grow up better and happier than the trajectory they're on right now would portend), fear (of any of the above, plus terrorism, crime, and the stock market crashing), faith (insufficient to totally lost)—well, you get the idea.

That's why I'm quite convinced that preaching doesn't start in your study, but in conversations with your people. You really can't be a good preacher unless you are first a good listener. Good preaching encompasses the biggest needs

in people's lives. Anchored in the past, good preaching anticipates the future and always addresses people's lives right now. That's what makes it a *big* purpose.

Only a foolish minister would preach to a specific problem one person confided to them. Still, what I say, with Scripture's help, should speak to, even if only in a general way, the heartache of the person who came to church that week having just learned that he has cancer, or that she may lose her job, or that their family may be breaking up—even if your text is about three froglike spirits.

But how?

I believe there are only two areas that qualify a preacher to speak authoritatively. I can draw on Scripture to tell people *what they should do*, or I can tell them *what God has done and will continue to do*.

Some of us have been a little better at the first than the second. Behavior is important to us; so supposing that those in our church aren't behaving because they don't know what to do, we tell them again and again.

Yet I only rarely talk to people who aren't sure what is right and what is wrong; most people know but don't have the ability or will to act on that knowledge. That's why I believe the most important thing to preach about is what God provides—strength for living, answers to prayer, forgiveness should they fail, and eternal life when this life ends. Even what God wants us to do, which we must address as well, gets its impetus from God's actions: God wants you to quit sinning and live right, and through Christ, He can help you to do it.

That's why it is a *positive* purpose: it is not just scolding or threatening, but encouraging.

Bringing it together

You have a text. As you study the text, you'll recall the needs of your people. To find the big purpose, you ask how the text can meet those needs. You transform it into a positive

purpose by telling them what God has already provided and how they can access divine resources on tap, ready for their use.

Most often, the big positive purpose will be some formulation of hope: "Because of what I'm telling you today, you need not despair. God is good. We can trust Him. He does not deal with us in an unkind nor petulant way. He cared for our spiritual ancestors, and He will also see us through this week, on into the future, and beyond death to eternal life."

Not every text provides such a clear, hopeful purpose between the verse number and the period. If you're preaching through a book or using a lectionary, you may not be free to choose one that does. If a text doesn't contain a message of hope and encouragement within it, then you must supply it from elsewhere in Scripture. No sermon should be without a big positive purpose.

Let's go back to those three froglike spirits as an example. In the context, they represent demonic manifestations that gather people through impressive displays of power. Though in their prophetic application they haven't yet appeared, we can explain what will happen when they do.

But if one leaves it there, the people will go home undernourished; the events of the eschaton aren't as close to their hearts as the events of this week, and they won't find much comfort in anticipating the end times unless you assure them that God is at work for them *now*. Yes, the events of prophecy will happen. But let's not let anyone assume that expending lots of spiritual energy speculating on the events of the end

times excuses a ragged spiritual life in the present.

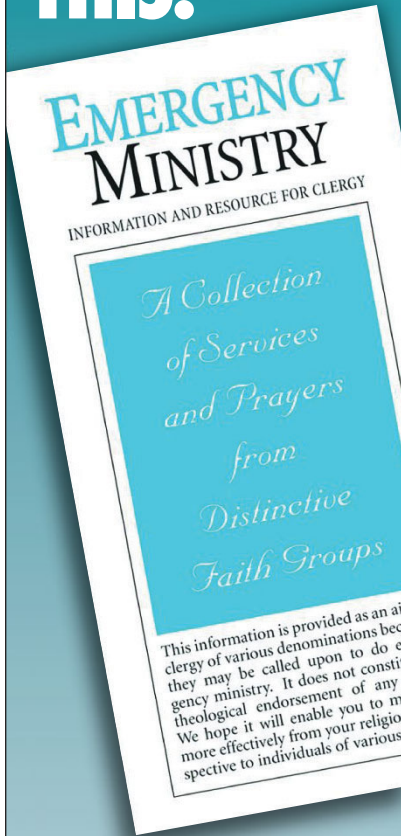
In this phase of my study, I pin down my big positive purpose. Aren't there many demonic manifestations in our lives now? Virtually every bad thing that happens to us results from Satan's influence. Cancer, job

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A GOOD PREACHER
UNLESS YOU ARE FIRST
A GOOD LISTENER.

insecurity, divorce—all can ultimately be traced back to Satan. Big displays of demonic power? Surely that describes the machinery of war that can kill thousands of people in a single explosion, not to mention hurricanes and earthquakes.

The three froglike spirits are also deceivers: the gullible don't think them evil because they appear so powerful. And so we remind people that impressive displays—even miracles—alone (whether religious

If you interact with people of other faiths,
YOU NEED THIS!



This information is provided as an aid to clergy of various denominations because they may be called upon to do emergency ministry. It does not constitute theological endorsement of any denomination. We hope it will enable you to minister more effectively from your religious perspective to individuals of various

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or secular) do not godliness make. After all, Jesus came with minimal fanfare, with no beauty that we should desire Him, and was actually despised and rejected by men (see Isaiah 53:2, 3).

Clearly, God will be proof against the three froglike spirits. Just as He was proof against Satan in the past. And even more important, He is also proof against sin and tragedy in our own lives at this moment. I can find any number of Christian victory texts to support this.

So I've found my big positive purpose: God is more powerful than evil. We can be neither deceived nor defeated under His care.

Testing the big positive purpose

One can't just tack this sentence on to the sermon's end, though, and expect it to suffice. The sermon has to be permeated with the big positive purpose. The old communication maxim "Tell them what you're about to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them" is dead-on when it comes to the big positive purpose. A preacher can hardly convey it often enough. I communicate my big positive purpose in some form before I'm five minutes into the sermon, and periodically thereafter.

The big positive purpose tests the coherence of the sermon. As you are preparing, repeat your big positive purpose at the beginning of the sermon and at the beginning and end of every major point, and see if it makes sense. Say to yourself, "Because of this point I've just articulated, I understand clearly that God is more powerful than Satan: He proved it in the past, He will prove it in the future, and best of all, He proves it in your life today."

This will seem a bit artificial, but it works. When you finally preach the sermon, you won't necessarily leave the phrase in there. But it had better make sense should you choose to say it nearly anywhere in the sermon. If it doesn't, you're wandering across the thematic

landscape and possibly confusing your listeners.

Being able to find and clearly state the big positive purpose isn't the only preaching skill one needs, but I believe it is the central one. Good illustrations, clarity of expression, eye contact, and body language all contribute to an instructive and inspirational sermon. But without the big positive purpose, your sermon won't hold together and your people will go home wondering what you preached about.

I'll go so far as to say that if you are mediocre in the other preaching skills, but you state a clear purpose that includes both the life-encompassing (big) and life-affirming (positive) concepts, and say it often enough so that no one can miss it, you'll give your people something worth their having come to church. ☑

* Bruce H. Wilkinson, *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2000).

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found in the Bible. We need to build relationships with the youth first, then show them how to live instead of telling them.

Honestly, it's not rocket science when relating to young adults. It takes a caring heart, patience, and time (the same as God uses for us). It's too late in earth's history to still be *talking* about what we need to do. What we need is to *do* something!

—Bryant Herbert, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

Special thanks to Roger Dudley for giving this interview. For a long time I was bewildered as to why such a large number of young people were leaving our churches. When I think of my own church, for example, I have to agree with Dr. Dudley that what was lacking in our midst was intentionality. C. S. Lewis stated "Christian love, either towards God or towards man, is an affair of the will." For that reason, it is imperative that we check our attitude and become intentional in our interaction with youth and young adults. So let's have a revolution in our churches in 2009. Let's have the mind and attitude of Christ when ministering to the youth.

—Mondy Dorsainvil, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

Spousal abuse

Natalie Joy's story ("Recognizing Abuse for What It Is: A Personal Story," November 2008) is typical of many women's stories, both inside and outside the church. It seems to be more insidious in the church and more difficult for women to break from, within the church, because of our teachings about "submission" to men/husbands.

I have worked in the domestic violence field for 12 years, counseling women both on an individual basis and running groups for women who have take out protective orders against their partners. Our experience is that there is no common predictor of who will be an abuser: they come from all walks of life,

professionally, economically, and socially—including Christians.

One of the most helpful things that can be done for women is to bring this issue into the open as your journal is doing. Some women, if they have grown up in a home where there has been domestic violence, don't even realize that this is wrong and they do not have to live with it.

Pastors need to mention it in their sermons, the media needs to publicize it more, and people need to be educated to recognize it and work with both the offenders and the victims.

When victims of abuse approach their pastors, they need to believe the victim unless they are proven to be wrong. And accosting the abuser and telling him it is wrong is not the right approach. The victim will just be abused more at home and in private. Education about healthy relationships and behavior and the managing of one's feelings and anger are a starting place. Teaching that mutual respect in a relationship and acceptance of differing ideas/beliefs is paramount.

—Charlotte Teal, Papakura, New Zealand

I read the article by Natalie Joy, and found it helpful but biased. The bias that I find in Natalie's article is the assumption that women are incapable of violence. I was raised in the old school: that a man never hits a woman. When my wife hit me, I did not hit back. Finally, when she left a bruise on my daughter's cheek in the form of four fingers, I had her arrested for child abuse. She was never arrested for spousal abuse, but it still happened.

The pastors I know are very aware of spousal abuse, but like Natalie, they all too often have the sexist notion that such crimes are only perpetrated by men against women. Some congregations even have pamphlets in the back addressing different kinds of domestic violence. These are all a start, but it will be generations before we have clear insight in this matter.

—Name withheld

Leadership

As I was reading Jon Coutt's article in the November 2008 issue ("A Theological Approach to Pastoral Leadership Today"), I was shouting "amen" and "I have been saying that same thing." In fact, I had lunch with a colleague recently who told me of his long hours of "visioning" during his work week. He asked me what I do during the week. I replied, "I visit. I visit new families who have visited us and I visit our members." Our church grew by 97 new members this last year, not because I spent time in an office "visioning," but because God called my co-pastor and me to a ministry of "pointing the community to participate with Christ in communion with the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit." The only way we have been able to do this is by being in and with the community.

Thank you, Jon Coutts, for giving me those words. And thank you for your openness to the nudging of the Spirit to write those words.

—Alan J. Liphart, pastor, St. Augustine, Florida, United States

Thank you for publishing Michael Cauley's article ("Growing Leaders Through Coaching," March 2009). It is one of the first I have seen in Adventist media that addresses the need of ministers to have ongoing supervision that facilitates more than the practical aspects of ministry. I'm glad he addressed the fundamental process of spiritual formation or growth of the whole person in relation to God, self, and others. We were created in relation and need deep and abiding relations with trusted people such as well-trained coaches and clinical pastoral education supervisors that will lead us into personal growth and change throughout the life of our ministry.

—Adrian Flemming, assistant senior chaplain, Sydney Adventist Hospital, Sydney, Australia



The Church of the Perfect Storm, by Leonard Sweet, ed., Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.

This book features a collection of essays on the elements that contribute to a culture storm today and how the church can navigate her way into the future. About 500 years ago, Christianity faced a “storm” when it experienced the Reforma-

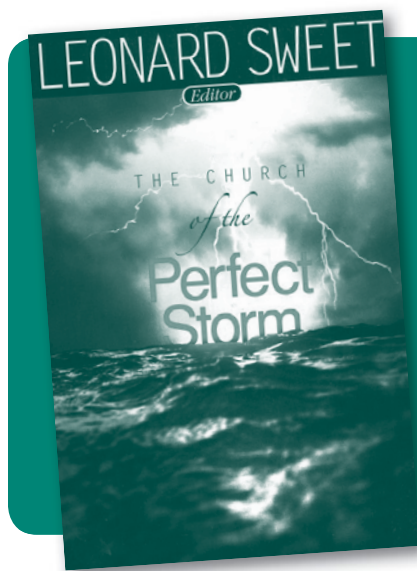
storm (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)..

Claiming that the “world is getting better, but the dangers the better brings are getting worse,” (22) Sweet identifies three areas where the scale-up has become “post-progress”: (1) the GRIN revolution (genetics, robotics, informatics, and nanotechnology) has made us post-human; (2) globalization has made us post-round; and (3) our care for

ignore culture, imitate culture, condemn culture, or create culture. Earl Pierce has a brief but useful treatment on postmodern paradigm shifts and shows how the Greco-Roman cognitive paradigm is now giving way to an affective paradigm.

I found the book to be both conceptually stimulating and practically useful. I recommend it to storm watchers who are concerned about how the church will navigate its way through the culture storms of our day.

—Reviewed by Raj Attiken, president, Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, headquartered in Mount Vernon, Ohio, United States.



I FOUND THE INTRODUCTION AND THE TWO CHAPTERS BY SWEET TO BE THE MOST THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND USEFUL SECTIONS OF THE BOOK.

tion. Claiming that we are either heading into a storm, are in a storm, or are just leaving one, Leonard Sweet proposes that Christians are now headed into one of the greatest culture storms ever—one that he calls a “perfect storm.” The premise of the book is that the church’s place in this culture storm is not in the harbor, but in the midst of the storm, in deep water.

I found the introduction and the two chapters by Sweet to be the most thought-provoking and useful sections of the book. He identifies three types of storms that are battering our culture today—all of them Category Five storms: (1) a cultural storm, the tsunami of postmodernity, a religious storm; (2) the hurricane of post-Christendom; and (3) a STEM

planet Earth has made us post-cold. He concludes his opening chapter with these words: “Only truth can turn off the suicide machine. We must cure the status quo with truth. We must be about the mission of jamming the suicide machine with truth” (36).

Mark Batterson’s appeal in his essay (“The Relationships of Winds and Waves”) emphasizes that if we are going to turn the spiritual tide in America, the church needs to stop retreating and start redeeming, it needs to stop criticizing and start creating, it needs to stop seeking shelter and start chasing the storm. He proposes that “God is calling the church out of the church and back into the middle of the marketplace” (110). He identifies four options that the church has and urges the fourth:

Women in the Bible... and Me

14 Bible Study Lessons for Women

General Conference Women’s Ministries is overjoyed to launch a set of Bible study guides we have created for our sisters in the World Church. The first set was *Bible Study for Busy Women*. These Bible lessons are called *Women in the Bible...and me*. Each lesson features a different woman in the Bible. Through these Bible lessons we are able to present different aspects of the Christian character in a way that will encourage and motivate our sisters to grow in Christ.

Many hours have gone into the formation of these lessons and we are thankful to Evelyn Glass the author of these lessons, and to those who assisted us with the editorial process. We believe that these lessons will help our sisters in their quiet times with God as well as be a very effective tool in small groups and outreach ministries.

The Lessons are available through available through the Adventist Book Centers.



Hope Channel joins DIRECTV's lineup

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States – Hope Channel, the official television network of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is pleased to announce its partnership with DIRECTV for broadcast to the continental United States, Hawaii, and Alaska. Hope Channel is scheduled to be added to the basic DIRECTV lineup on April 29, 2009, on channel 368.

“We are delighted to partner with DIRECTV! This allows millions of viewers in North America to receive the life-changing messages of Hope Channel,” said Hope Channel president **Brad Thorp**.

“We’re encouraging church members who have cable to make the easy switch to DIRECTV. By doing so, they will support Hope Channel so millions of others can begin to benefit from our family friendly programs,” said **Gary Gibbs**, Hope Channel vice president.

“Seventeen million homes is the largest satellite TV audience in North America! This is a very providential development! This is the largest media breakthrough for the church in North America,” explained **Mark Finley**, Chairman of the Hope Channel Board of Directors.

As Channel 368, Hope Channel will be placed among several leading news and educational channels. Look for Hope Channel April 29, 2009, on DIRECTV’s basic home service package. [*Scott Steward, Hope Channel Marketing Director*]

Writer’s workshop

Dodowa, Ghana—The Adventist Church in Ghana, in conjunction with Valley View University, Accra, Ghana, hosted *Ministry’s* first writer’s workshop on the campus of Valley

View University (VVU), February 22 and 23, 2009. More than 40 pastors, professors, administrators, and students attended the event, which consisted of 13 hours of instruction and practical hands-on assignments—intended to sharpen the writings skills of those who wish to write for religious journals.

Nikolaus Satelmajer and **Willie E. Hucks II**, *Ministry’s* editor and associate editor, respectively, facilitated the conference. Prior to the seminar, they also presented lectures to the university’s 170 theology students on a variety of topics ranging from time management, professional ethics, and making an effective transition from the classroom to pastoral ministry.

Special thanks for the success of that weeklong effort goes to **W. Danforth Francis**, ministerial secretary for the Adventist Church in west Africa, **Felix Adu-Gyamfi**, ministerial secretary for the Adventist Church in Ghana, and the theology faculty of VVU. [*Willie E. Hucks III*]

Festival of religious freedom

Lima, Peru—The Estadio Nacional (National Stadium) is the venue for the world’s largest Festival of Religious Freedom being planned for June 13, 2009. Visionary leaders in Peru and throughout South America are making travel arrangements for their delegations to attend this event, which may host more than 50,000 people. The purpose is to celebrate religious freedom in an unprecedented international event by giving thanks to God, the country of Peru and the other countries represented, public authorities, and those who have suffered, as well as to remember those who have given their lives for the invaluable religious freedom we enjoy today.

John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has launched worldwide the new concept of Festivals of Religious Freedom with the intent to cover all continents with great celebrations during the years 2008–2010 and create a positive environment of freedom and peace. On June 28, 2008, a crowd of 45,000 gathered in the main stadium of Luanda, Angola, for a similar event.


For more information, visit our web site at www.FestivalsOfReligiousFreedom.org. [*Alfredo García-Marenko*]

Ministry staff update

The editors of *Ministry* are pleased to announce some changes in office operational functions and the addition of another person to our team. Sheryl Beck, now Editorial Specialist, and John Feezer IV, now Development Specialist, have been with *Ministry*, but their roles were redefined to recognize their abilities and the needs of the growing publication. John Feezer, in



John Feezer, Sheryl Beck, and Mervyn Lee

additional to his work with *Ministry*, will spend approximately one-half of his time working on the finances for the Ministerial Association, as well. To pick up other responsibilities, Mervyn Lee has joined our team and is working approximately half-time for *Ministry* and the other half for the Ministerial Association. We are delighted to have these three individuals as the office team working with the editors in editing and the development of *Ministry*. 



Visitation expectation

You cannot visit all the members all the time. The reality of overcrowded schedules and overstressed ministers often leaves an awesome expectation gap between intention and reality.

In my own family, for example, immediately following the airplane crash that took my brother's life, my father complained that his pastor had failed to visit despite the reality that five pastors were in his home with him at the moment I learned of the tragedy and telephoned from halfway around the world. Only later, my father discovered that the pastor he believed had ignored his grief had been graciously guarding the crash site.

When members repeat a favorite litany, "We haven't seen our pastor in years," I always attempt to query their assertion in greater depth. "Tell me," I ask, "when did you last request your pastor to visit you?" "Have you alerted the church elders of your needs?" "What do you believe the pastor is doing while you are not being visited?" Too often, I discover that expectations are different than reality and that complaints are actually "recreational" griping. In one case, a complaining parishioner explained that it had been at least seven weeks since their pastor had been to visit. Disappointment results from members whose expectations have not been met, and reconciliation occurs only when both pastors and members more closely align their expectations with reality.

I have also discovered that increasing urbanization hinders rather than helps visitation. While it is accurate that more members may live in closer physical proximity in large cities than those in rural areas, various complexities actually deter the process of metropolitan

pastoral visitation much more than the longer distances of rural areas. These complexities include traffic and transit issues, irregular work schedules, nontraditional housing arrangements, and increasing inaccessibility to high-rise buildings or gated communities. Society also has changed expectations for timing and frequency of fellowship and nurture.

I aim to correct the misperception that the perceived lack of visitation comes from either pastoral indifference or indolence. I am attempting to clarify that pastors have multiple schedule complexities that may prevent them from accomplishing what they would likely prefer to be doing. I also refuse to ever permit jokes about pastoral schedules to go unchallenged. When someone says, "I wish I had a job where I work only one day per week," I invite them to work alongside me for just one day and then report their convictions about the workload.

In fact, I believe each pastor should provide a weekly activity report during worship services. Typically, just before beginning my sermon, I relate a few events of my pastoral week so that my members understand the various items that have consumed my time and energy. At monthly board meetings, I always provide an in-depth pastoral report so that leaders grasp the complexity of pastoral responsibilities and help provide explanations to members who might complain of neglect.

I also believe that pastors should understand the power of even a brief visit. In fact, I have learned that most pastoral visits can be accomplished in much less time than we might imagine. Remember, a pastoral visit

need not be everlasting in order to be immortal. A short, focused visit can actually accomplish more than extended conversations that lack purpose or planning.

If possible, visit only by appointment. Signal the importance and brevity of your visit as you establish the initial contact. When you telephone, state, "My visitation partner and I are making brief visits to a number of individuals in your area. When could I schedule a fifteen-minute appointment with you?" Advance notice permits the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts and minds for spiritual business.

Upon your arrival, get right to your spiritual agenda. Inquire as to their spiritual welfare—time in Bible study and prayer. Listen carefully to their responses and then ask about their faithfulness to the Holy Spirit's leading in their lives regarding church attendance, stewardship, fellowship, and witnessing. Ask whether they have any texts or topics on which they would like to hear a sermon, whether they have family or friends whom they might invite to attend church services with them, and conclude by inviting specific requests for which you can pray as you bless their home.

Even the specifics of your questions can signal that you expect a short response. Take responsibility for focusing responses. Beware of any story that begins, "Back in 1967, . . ." and bring such rambling discourses to a quick conclusion by saying, "I wish I had time to share all these details, but I'm expected at another home in just a little while."

Ask for the Holy Spirit's help and your own visitation can become more focused and your pastoral experience more personally fulfilling. **M**

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A new heaven and a new earth—then what?

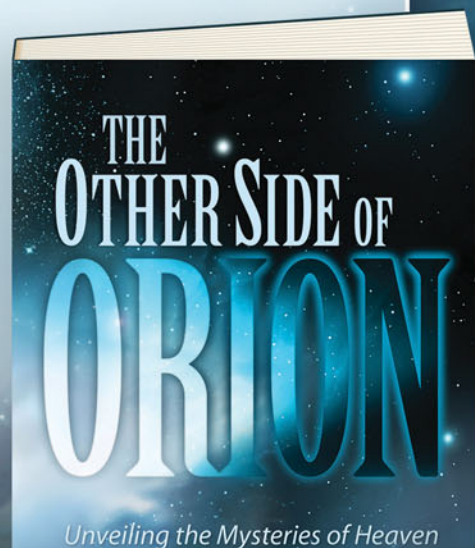
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