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Preparing the way

Do you have a mentor who inspires and instructs you in the work of ministry? Let me recommend a servant leader who has been a great mentor to me—John the Baptist. He never called himself a prophet. He didn't even take the title of teacher. His way was rough, his companions few, but his mission was clear. He was called to prepare the way of the Lord.

Proclaiming truth with holy boldness

John the Baptist proclaimed truth with holy boldness. That truth found its fullest expression not in a collection of teachings but rather in a Person. When Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized, John exclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).^{*} That bold declaration was the theme of John's ministry. He recognized Jesus because of his personal encounter with God: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:32–34).

Like John, the Lord also calls us, in our particular ministry context, to proclaim truth with holy boldness as we prepare the way for His coming. That proclamation is only possible as a result of a personal, supernatural encounter with God. Have you ever met a follower of Jesus who walked in the presence of God? Perhaps when that person prayed with you or, by the way she showed the love of God to others, you recognized a direct connection with heaven. That's how

people felt when they were around John the Baptist. They sensed God's presence and that John had a living connection with God.


John the Baptist boldly proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. His message was a call to revival and reformation. Why did people listen to his exhortations? Why didn't they just brush him off as another fanatic? Because they saw holiness in his life; they saw a living connection with God. There was supernatural confirmation that his testimony was true.

Serving with a humble spirit

John the Baptist gave that bold testimony with a spirit of humility. According to Josephus, John had great influence over the masses. He could easily have promoted his personal agenda for his own benefit. Instead, John maintained a humble spirit. On one occasion, some of John's disciples came to him and said, " 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!' John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before Him." He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease' " (John 3:26–30). What an example for us in these closing days of earth's history! What a bold and compelling vision: Jesus must become greater, and we must become less.

As we prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus, why should people believe our testimony? After all, so many voices are calling. Could this be because they see God at work in us and through us? We must proclaim the truth about Jesus with holy boldness as a result of our living connection with God, and do so with a spirit of humility. It's not about us. It's all about Jesus.

WHY DIDN'T THEY
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WITH GOD.

I'm thankful that John the Baptist has been a great mentor to me, and I pray that his testimony will also bless your life. Some day soon, I plan to embrace John the Baptist when the saints of all the ages gather before the throne of God. I already know how he'll respond. He'll smile, direct my attention toward the throne, and boldly proclaim, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). 

* Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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

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The many faces of fundraising

As a fundraising professional, I have found that some Bible stories provide great insight into the principles of fundraising. One of the best examples is found in 1 Chronicles 29:1–17, where David outlines his donations to the building of the temple because “this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God.”¹

“So,” David says, “I’m making all my resources available—gold, bronze, wood, onyx, turquoise, and all kinds of fine stone and marble. And I’ll make these available in large quantities. Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver, and above everything I have provided for this holy temple, I’m going to give an additional thirty thousand dollars’ worth of gold (gold of Ophir) and seventy thousand dollars of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the building. Now who else is willing to join this campaign and consecrate himself today to the Lord?”

The leaders responded by giving to the work on the temple of God fifty thousand dollars in gold and silver, eighty thousand dollars’ worth of bronze and a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of iron. Besides that, those “who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the Lord in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite” (verse 8).

David rejoiced greatly, as did the people, at the willing response of their leaders. He responded by praising his God: “I know, my God, that

you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.”²

As my own professional skills and knowledge in fundraising grew, I saw how this story described a modern-day capital campaign so very well. All the steps of a successful campaign were outlined, and the current best practices were also reflected:

- The “kingdom” (i.e., institution or organization) budgets for a campaign because it takes money to raise money; it also practices good stewardship.
- The king (i.e., board chair, president, or executive director) gives personally.
- Leaders (board members, organization personnel) give.
- The campaign is made public, and donors are enthusiastic.
- Donors give when asked.
- People give for worthwhile causes—they give to achieve results. It is not about the money; it is what the money accomplishes.
- The campaign is a success.

Given the ample evidence in the Bible of fundraising as a ministry, there is, nevertheless, a lack of understanding, much less an embracing, of fundraising in churches. We shy away from talking about money (except to chide members for not returning tithe and giving offerings). We avoid using the term *fundraising*,

and separate the act of giving into compartments that often do not intersect. We pray publicly about giving and say in our prayers what we do not dare say in other ways to our congregations. In short, we treat fundraising like a bad word, a despised practice even.

That attitude is all wrong, and the purpose of this article is to help put fundraising in its proper perspective. The first task, however, should be to dispel a few myths about this important ministry.

Myth #1: “God said ‘we must give,’ so we do not do fundraising”

In times past, tithes and offerings just seemed to materialize (or so we like to think). Today’s church members, however, are different. They want to be treated as a donor; they do not want their generosity taken for granted. Trust has to be earned through accountability, transparency, and good stewardship.

According to Dr. William Enright, director of the Lake Institute for Faith and Philanthropy, giving to religious institutions has fallen from roughly half of all charitable dollars in 1995 to a third. Between 1987 and 2004, religious giving fell an average of 30 percent. Some denominations, he said, experienced a 50-percent drop in per-household giving.³

J. Clif Christopher writes: “Donors are saying to our churches today that you have to earn our gifts.”⁴ In a book called *Passing the Plate*, the authors enumerate the reasons why religious giving is in a decline:

- The influence of mass consumerism
- Clergy discomfort with issues of money
- A confused and uninformed laity as to Christian stewardship practices
- Mistrust of organizations
- The taboo of money-talk in American culture

Impulse giving has replaced planned and systematic giving (for instance, today only 9.4 percent of all

"Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches" (2 Cor. 8:7, 8, NLT).

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you

likely to give to other causes as well. Even if we were to ignore the fact that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," common sense says that the joining of faith with fundraising is a practical matter that yields the best results—results that are minimized if these two factors are fractured.

Myth #3: "But we're different"

Many Christians believe that we are a select people, but when it



WE PRACTICE GOOD STEWARDSHIP WHEN WE CONSIDER OUR OVERALL GIVING, BEGINNING WITH TITHING, GIVING OFFERINGS FOR SPECIFIC CHURCH APPEALS, AND STRETCHING OURSELVES, AND OUR RESOURCES, TO CARE FOR OTHER CAUSES.

American Christians tithe).⁵ For many people, their church is not automatically their "charity of choice." Members want to be informed, want to be asked, and want to know what their offerings and donations are accomplishing. Also, they want to be acknowledged for their giving.

Myth #2: "Fundraising is for secular organizations, not for us"

If we really believe this, then how do we handle all of those Bible texts that counsel us to be facilitators of the giving process?

up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:32–35, KJV).

Research has verified what many have believed or sensed: those who give to religious causes are more

comes to habits of the heart, we are not. Today's giver usually desires and requires more accountability and more of a say in what happens with their finances. This goes for both the religious and secular giver.

We cannot ignore the reasons why people give, the motivations that cause them to be involved in supporting good causes financially. Researchers Schervish and Havens have determined the most commonly stated reasons for generosity are the following—and these apply suitably to many Christian givers as well:

- Communities of participation: people give because they are part of an entity bigger than themselves.
- Identification with a cause: how much do we do to help people truly be a part of our church life?
- Invitation to participate: according to research, the main reason people do not give is because they are not asked.
- Models and experiences from youth: are we being good philanthropic role models for our youth?
- Assurance of positive outcomes, while also realizing there is an urgency to carry out a cause.
- Demographic characteristics—the changing populations in our churches also cause changes in giving—e.g., people living longer, more consciousness of global needs, more action by youth.⁶

At the same time, we must respect the reasons why some people do not give. They may not see the

need; they may have other interests besides the cause at hand; they may feel disenfranchised. We need to remember that philanthropy—and therefore the practice that facilitates giving (i.e., fundraising)—is about bringing people together, inclusivity, and working toward a common goal.

The best practices

Now that we have looked at some of the myths about fundraising, we need to look at some of the core principles behind it.

First, we often hesitate to use the word *fundraising* mostly because of abuses, especially among the clergy. But fundraising is a noble act. It is not about the money; it's about what happens when the money is acquired. We often emphasize the need for money, yet we forget to focus clearly enough on *why* we need it, on the good that will result, on the people who will be helped, and ultimately how we will also benefit if we are generous.

When Jesus said, “ ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,’ ”⁷ He added illustrations that apply to us as well. If we help an organization succeed in its mission and purpose because we provide the necessary funds for its functions, we have had a part in helping the hungry, the poor, the hurting, the homeless, and countless others. If we support the enhancement of the human mind and soul through education and the arts, for example, we are serving God as well. We minister unselfishly when we give to needs and opportunities that benefit those within our sphere of influence.

The six “rights” of good fundraising

The following statement, adapted from The Fund Raising School, sums up good fundraising: *Fundraising is the right person asking the right prospect for the right cause in the right way for the right amount at the right time.*

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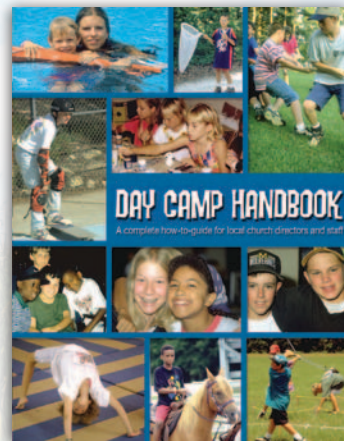
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These six “rights” encapsulate the complex practice of fundraising.

- Fundraising is not just up to the pastor but to a team composed of leaders and lay persons with a sincere commitment to a cause. The pastor should not be a solo performer but should organize, mobilize, and motivate fundraising.
- Understanding who our donors are is a key factor as well. We need to be wise in determining where funds may come from. We also need to make it possible for all those who have an interest in our case to be invited to participate.
- Fundraising is not manipulation or coercion. People like to be part of successful efforts, and it is a privilege to be invited to become part of a collective effort. People give because they are asked, because a case has been made that allows them to see the problem they are solving and what solution can be achieved.
- Asking potential donors in the right way; that is, employing the right communication strategy (whether through the Internet, by mail, in person, or in other ways), becomes critical. This adds to the challenge but also increases opportunities as our fundraising team exercises individual talents.
- Another consideration is timing. Is this the right time to ask? Is the donor ready? Has enough information been shared? Are people passionate about accomplishing a cause? These questions must precede an invitation to participate.
- And we should forever banish the simplistic phrase, “Whatever you can give will help.” The result could be a \$10 gift when really a \$1,000 gift could have been requested for the Lord’s work. By showing donors what their gifts will do, we can ask for a donation in a certain monetary range.

Fundraising as a ministry

In the end, we must see fundraising as part of our ministry—a ministry of caring, not just for our congregation’s needs but for the many needs around us, thereby fulfilling Christ’s mandate, “ ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ ” Fundraising, as a ministry, becomes part of a continuum of giving. We practice good stewardship when we consider our overall giving, beginning with tithing, giving offerings for specific church appeals, and stretching ourselves, and our resources, to care for other causes. We help others practice the same good stewardship when we educate about wise giving, making good choices, the logical expectation of results, and the mutual benefits achieved when resources are shared.

And let us not forget that we also benefit if we give and facilitate giving by others. “If you give to the poor, your needs will be supplied! But a curse upon those who close their eyes to poverty” (Prov. 28:27, TLB). “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back” (Luke 6:38, NLT).

Even secular research has borne out this biblical promise. A recent study by the National Institutes of Health said, “The results were showing that when the volunteers placed the interests of others before their own, the generosity activated a primitive part of the brain that usually lights up in response to food or sex. Altruism, the experiment suggested, was not a superior moral faculty that suppresses basic selfish urges but rather was basic to the brain, hard-wired and pleasurable.” Their 2006 finding that unselfishness can feel good lends scientific support to the admonitions of spiritual leaders such as Saint Francis of Assisi, who said,

“For it is in giving that we receive.” But it is also a dramatic example of the way neuroscience has begun to elbow its way into discussions about morality and has opened up a new window on what it means to be good.⁸

Conclusion


The following tombstones, I believe, illustrate the great honor of being generous.

In Warwickshire, England, this verse can be seen on a tombstone:

Here lies a miser, who lived for himself,
And cared for nothing but gathering pelf.
Now where he is or how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares.

Contrast those lines to the following epitaph in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London:

Sacred to the memory of Charles George Gordon, who at all times and everywhere gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, and his heart to God.

Yes, we all need to always remind ourselves that *fundraising is ministry*. We then follow the words of Jesus, follow God’s command that we be generous and promote generosity. When we do fundraising, we help people obey what the Lord has called all who profess His name to do. 

1 Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures are taken from the New International Version.

2 Paraphrased by the author from the New International Version.

3 Speech given at the Presidents’ Colloquium sponsored by Philanthropic Service to Institutions, November 2008.

4 J. Clif Christopher, *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008).

5 Christian Smith and Michael Emerson with Patricia Snell, *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don’t Give Away More Money* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008), 175–179.

6 Paul Schervish and John Havens, www.bc.edu/research/cwp.
7 Matthew 25:40.

8 Shankar Vendantam, “If It Feels Good to Be Good, It Might Be Only Natural,” *Washington Post*, May 28, 2007, A01.

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Bible camps: Evangelism through intensive summer camps

The Voice of Prophecy Bible correspondence school in Finland began its operation in 1948. Through the years, the school has offered several Bible courses for thousands of Finns. With its modern name, Media7 Bible School, it reaches about 1,500 students every year with correspondence courses and through radio, Internet, and television.

Each year we invite many of our students to special evangelistic events organized by local churches or the Bible school. In addition, all those who complete one of the Bible courses also receive an invitation and free ticket to a summer Bible camp. Most of the camps are held in the Adventist camp ground, Camp Kallioniemi, which is ideally situated in the center of Finland. Usually we have two, six-day Bible camps each summer in June or July. People feel relaxed while surrounded by beautiful nature and a friendly atmosphere. Some of the students come to the camp with a mind-set that they are willing to make their decision to follow Christ and join the Adventist Church. The majority of the participants have previously acquainted themselves with the Advent message but are still undecided. About half of the participants are already Adventists who support the camp by bringing their friends along with them and having personal discussions with other participants.

The Bible camp work, in a unique way, follows the interests that we have in Finland. Although

this method may not be the most modern or innovative way of doing evangelism, the Bible camp work has been tested, developed, and adapted to changes in society through the years, so it has had steady success even in an increasingly secularized society. Problems do exist, but the benefits outweigh the negatives. The Bible camp work still has an important role in the reaping, or the evangelistic cycle, of our small 5,000-member church in Finland.

Uniquely Finnish model

The Bible camp work started about 50 years ago, leading to the baptism of more than a thousand people thus far. We have a unique Finnish Adventist model of organizing reaping campaigns for the Bible students and our friends who have an interest in our message. Each year during the spring, we plan the program and start advertising the camps among the correspondence school students and through local churches and pastors. Many of the pastors are invited to join as speakers in the camps, with a crafted schedule and topics chosen. The camps are also open to friends of Adventists who, though not necessarily correspondence school students, have studied the Adventist message, visited a local church, and attended other evangelistic campaigns during the year. Also, some of the newly baptized members receive invitations so that they might grow in faith and encourage others to make their decision to follow Christ. The Finnish

conference plays a major role by sponsoring the camp and providing free tickets to the camp to those who need help. Each camp has about 50 participants and approximately eight pastors or Bible workers. This size seems to work quite well within the facilities we have.

The camp program has been planned in such a way that the basics of the gospel and our unique message are covered intensively for the participants to have a chance to make their decision to follow Christ and be baptized. The camp starts Monday night with an introduction to the whole week and a personal, Christ-centered message. In our most recent camps, the daily schedule begins on Tuesday morning at 8:15 with a devotional study on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit theme has thus been connected with Christ, His Word, spiritual gifts, and other related topics. After breakfast, we have two more lectures and one in the afternoon that concentrates on the core Adventist themes, such as Christ's second coming, salvation, Sabbath, death, baptism, and our prophetic faith. In addition to these daily Bible lectures, we have about a 45-minute question-and-answer period just before lunch every day during the week. People are invited to write their prayer requests and questions on a piece of paper, and these are read, prayed for, and questions are answered.

After the afternoon lecture, the participants are divided into small

groups led by pastors. Groups usually consist of eight members, both Adventists and non-Adventists, with one or two pastors leading out. During these meetings, people get acquainted with each other on a personal level and have a chance to discuss and study more deeply

On Friday, a baptismal class is organized after lunch, and on Sabbath a special baptismal service by the lake occurs after the Sabbath worship service. On Sabbath afternoon, a nature walk to the nearby mountaintop takes place, and after that a special welcoming service is

the testimony of His love to the world.

For the benefit of families with children, we also organize child care during the meetings. There are many people who travel from various parts of the country to the camp. For many, this becomes a unique and

OVERALL, THE BIBLE CAMPS HAVE HAD A DEEP AND LASTING EFFECT ON MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE THESE CAMPS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GROWTH OF GOD'S KINGDOM IN FINLAND.

the most important topics presented during the lectures. Many personal matters are prayed for and decisions made.

Evening meetings have a special spiritually uplifting tone, with music, singing, and personal testimonies. Spiritually deep and reviving messages are presented and calls made. At the end of each evening, people who attended the meeting are prayed for, and pastors serve in individual discussions with spiritually needy people. Calls have a special purpose each night. We call people to experience freedom with Christ and the salvation He offers. We also challenge them to follow Him in baptism and become part of God's family.

Some free time is provided in the afternoon, after supper, and in the evening. Many Finns like to relax in traditional saunas either before supper or after the evening meeting. There is hardly anything else more enjoyable than a relaxing sauna and a nice swim in a lake on a warm summer night with good company. Many decisions have been made even in a sauna, when the spiritual matters are discussed and prayed for.

organized for the newly baptized. Many Adventists who live nearby, or whose friends have been baptized on that day, visit the camp during the Sabbath. The following Sunday morning wraps up the program with special messages intended to encourage the newly baptized and other participants to follow in the steps of Christ by praying, studying His Word, and joining others to give

special time to spend a spiritually uplifting week they will cherish the rest of their lives. Some of them want to return year after year. At times, we also have immigrants or refugees who know very little Finnish, and some of them have found Adventist friends and have been baptized. The atmosphere on campus is very accepting and open for questions, discussions, and spiritual search.



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Many new friendships are formed, and most important, for many, the friendship with Jesus has become stronger and deeper. We are happy that during the past years we have had a privilege of baptizing about 25 people each year—sometimes less, sometimes more—about 20 to 30 percent of the total annual baptisms in the whole of the country.

We are happy for these people. Most of them still serve the Lord in various parts of the country and join our local churches. Some may not be coming to church regularly, but we do not let that discourage us; the final results of our labor for the salvation of souls will be revealed in God's kingdom with many surprises. Many who have quietly studied our courses or attended our camps, though we may not see them very often, will be in the kingdom. However, we need to improve in these areas: giving quality support to the newly baptized, and making their way to the local churches smoother when the camp finishes and people return to their homes. We have to make a special effort to help those who may be far from any of the local churches and where they know very few people. Those that have friends in the church are more likely

to stay in the church. That is why friendship evangelism becomes important both before and after baptism. Overall, the Bible camps have had a deep and lasting effect on many people's lives, and we will continue to have these camps in the foreseeable future for the benefit of the growth of God's kingdom in Finland.


Seven important steps

We recommend Bible camps to other conferences and church groups that are interested in reaping evangelism. Here are seven important steps that need to be taken in order to plan for the Bible camp.

1. Secure the support of the local conference. The conference committee needs to allocate a budget for the event to cover the cost of sponsored tickets for the interests recommended by local pastors or evangelists.
2. Choose a venue. If possible, use an Adventist camp site, which can provide modest accommodation and meals.
3. Send invitations to a select group of Bible school students and advertise camps with a special offer to get a free ticket to attend

the camp. You could decide to send the invitations to all those who have finished a Bible course during the last three years.

4. Advertise the camps in the local churches, and invite church members to attend and invite their friends who have shown some interest in the Adventist message. If needed, be prepared to sponsor them with free tickets.
5. Choose about eight pastors or lay evangelists to be speakers during the camp. There should be a ratio of one pastor/lay worker to 8–10 people in order to work most effectively in small groups and on an individual basis. Do not forget that you also need someone to organize music and child care during the camp as well.
6. Plan an intensive six-day program with an evangelistic preaching plan. Also, make sure to leave room for question-and-answer periods, small groups in the afternoon, and special appeals and prayer services in the evenings.
7. Pray and work, and you will see the fruit come in!

If you need more information on Bible camps, feel free to contact the writer at aimo.helminen@sdafin.org. 

The Bible camps: A personal reflection

Nikolaus Satelmajer

During the editorial review process, I was intrigued by Aimo Helminen's article about describing how individuals are brought to a camp for the purpose of Bible study. During a recent trip to Finland, I was able to spend several days with a Bible study group. My visit confirmed that the program described in the article is not only theory but works in a practical manner. It was obvious to me that the individuals who came to the Bible camp were enthusiastic participants in the program. The camp was a success because of the high level of commitment of individuals who coordinate the camp. This is true both of the ministers who are part of the team and the lay

members who take their personal vacation time in order to participate in this event.

A memorable day of the camp was the Sabbath day spent together in study and walking in the beautiful lake country at the camp location. Among the highlights of that Sabbath were the baptismal ceremony and listening to stories of individuals who shared what it meant for them to respond to the invitation of Jesus Christ.

Bible camps are an effective way of presenting the Word of God and allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work in the lives of individuals. Many parts of the world would greatly benefit from such camps.

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



Reflections on the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America: The long view of church growth (part 2 of 2)

Part 1 of this series (December 2010) presented research findings showing major disturbing trends in church growth in the North American Division (NAD). If we take the number of NAD converts as a percent of the population rate of growth, the church is experiencing a decline in growth. The growth pattern also shows that it takes more and more members to produce one convert (30, as opposed to 13). In addition, we now spend up to about \$42,000 per conversion; this is up from about \$8,000 (2005 U.S. dollars) in 1948.

Plausible explanations

Most of these long-term trends are not very promising. They indicate that NAD church is struggling and will continue to experience challenges moving forward. So what explains these long-term trends? After reviewing the literature and interviewing 51 people¹ within the organization, I found that some salient factors came to the forefront.

1. Internal factors. Real growth in the church takes place when laypeople are passionate about the mission of Jesus Christ and very active in sharing His love. Lack of member involvement in evangelism

could be attributed to weak spirituality; lack of vision; fear of rejection; busyness; disdain of traditional methods of evangelism, such as door-to-door and public methods; professionalizing of evangelism; or doubt that people are interested in the gospel, particularly in our unique message. Some people may even be embarrassed by their local church.

2. Cultural factors. The spiritual and religious landscape of the larger society has been significantly changed by the postmodern world. It is difficult to persuade postmoderns of the authority of a single truth when they believe that every viewpoint is equally valid and important.² These cultural shifts, which attach more authority to the personal experience and more distrust to institutions, are making people less interested in church, though interest in spiritual things is strong.³

Many, especially the young, are spiritual and looking for an experience with God, but they are not inclined to look for it in the church.^{4,5} This difficulty is felt in most Christian churches across North America. It is worth noting that David T. Olson shows that all denominations are experiencing a decline in their membership as well as attendance partly because of societal changes.⁶

3. Methodological factors. For many years our church has relied heavily on public evangelism as a means to fulfill the great commission and grow churches. Most people I interviewed believe that our strategies and techniques of public evangelism worked very well in the past when many people were Christian and religious, but less so today. Monte Sahlin's recent research shows that we are doing more public evangelistic meetings but fewer people are coming.⁷ Furthermore, the standard assumption of getting one or two people to come to public evangelistic meetings for every 1,000 advertising flyers sent out shows that a very small segment of the population responds to our methods of evangelism and marketing.⁸

Today we have an entirely new generation with radically different views than the generations of yesteryear. This new era challenges us to color outside the old evangelistic box and try for something more effective to win people for Jesus. Public evangelism, strongly connected with friendship evangelism and saturated with prayer and the Holy Spirit, has a definite place in our outreach efforts. Yet while keeping the traditional methods as tools in our toolbox, we must use

every avenue to win people for Jesus Christ. The more tools the church utilizes, the more effective it will be.

Exploding the trends

How can the NAD church bust the trends and turn the church around? Here are some pointers that emerged from our interviews as well as our study and observations.

1. Spirituality. How do we strengthen spirituality? First, prioritize spirituality *and* revival. An emphasis on spirituality and revival should be the main work of the church. Ellen White strongly connected renewal with an on-going experience with Jesus. "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. . . . But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing."⁹

The church must invest much more in the spiritual development of our pastors, leaders, and members. The emphasis of the church should be to grow fully devoted disciples of Jesus with a passion to win the world for Him.¹⁰ The most important asset the church has is its members. When those members are spiritually healthy, growing, trained, and equipped, they will do great things for God. The early church joyfully gave their time, talents, possessions, and even their lives for the cause of God because of their love for Jesus.¹¹

The second way to strengthen spirituality is to be intentional about prayer. Church growth is always closely related to prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White clearly showed this link: "A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God's Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the word; but when the Spirit's power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect."¹²

The early church did not grow because of programs or talents;

they grew because of prayer and the Holy Spirit.¹³ Let us remember "the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty." (Zech. 4:6).

Tom Rainer shows that praying churches tend to grow and keep a higher percentage of their members.¹⁴ Ellen G. White notes: "Prayer and faith will do what no power upon earth can accomplish. We need not be so anxious and troubled. The human agent cannot go everywhere, and do everything that needs to be done. . . . Earnest prayer and faith will do for us what our own devising cannot do."¹⁵

Third, bring about worship renewal. Church renewal is always connected with worship renewal.¹⁶ James Emery White writes that church growth and renewal are always connected with a revival of inspiring worship experiences.¹⁷ We learned from our interviewing that most people are hungry for powerful, vibrant, energetic worship. Many are longing to have an encounter with God, to feel His presence and live His power. Every time the church is intentional about prayer, building discipleship, and bringing about worship renewal, the church becomes healthy and starts to grow.

George Barna¹⁸ makes it clear that the number-one expectation people have of the church today is to feel the presence of God. Our churches are urged to pay much more attention to their worship services and bathe them with prayer, and nurture true worshipers who themselves experience the presence of God. Rainer found that dynamic worship services contribute in a very positive way toward evangelism, discipleship, and assimilation.¹⁹

2. Leadership. What is the role of church leadership in promoting church growth? First, focus on instilling the vision for evangelism and ministry. As spiritual leaders, administrators and pastors are in the best position to instill the vision that lost people matter to God and

should matter to us. The mission of the church ought to be front and center, cast in creative and compelling ways. As the leaders cast this vision for reaching lost souls, there must be an emphasis on the urgency of our time. The early church was caught up with the conviction that Jesus was coming soon, and that conviction drove them to take His message to the entire world. They did it with passion and urgency. People who love Jesus and have a clear vision of their destiny will do anything for Him.

Second, train, equip, and motivate the laity for ministry and evangelism. The main role of the pastor is to train and equip the laity for evangelism. Jesus spent more than three years training a group of people for ministry. Paul defines the role of the pastor as an equipper of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:2). Ellen White wrote: "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers . . . there should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts."²⁰

She also emphasizes that ministers should not do the work that belongs to the members, thus wearing themselves out and preventing others from performing their duty. They should teach the members how to labor in the church and the community.²¹

Third, engage in critical and creative thinking and evaluation skills. Effective leaders practice critical and creative thinking and are not mere reflectors of other people's ideas, plans, programs, and visions. Too often pastors, because of lack of time or skills, are doing very little critical thinking and reflection. In their effort to grow the church, they copy existing models and direct their energies on promoting programs. Programs—not saving

souls—become the mission of the church under such leaders. Assessing the situation, asking critical and thoughtful questions and coming up with solutions to meet the urgent needs of our time is the heart of leadership work. For the spiritual leader there are three basic questions: Where is God in action so we can join in with Him? How can we be more effective in what we do? What are we doing that is not effective anymore? After reflecting on such questions, we should have

way of life. It takes place at any time, anywhere, any place, by anyone, under any circumstances.

The book of Acts records dozens of incidents and methods of evangelism and ministry. The early church grew by employing every means available to them to evangelize the world. We would do well to follow their example and experience. The varieties of these programs serve at least two purposes. The first creates an avenue for believers to share their faith in a natural way. The second

Some studies show that healthy and effective churches employ at least nine pathways²⁶ and entryways²⁷ a year to reach the community. Every event, every ministry, every activity should be done with the purpose of connecting people with God.

Fifth, re-examine the anatomy of the denominational structure and make it more efficient. The mission of our church will never change. Our methodology and system, however, need to be ever-changing, adapting to shifting needs. All measures indi-



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the courage to end what is not effective or repurpose it so it would be. Critical thinking will help us move from stagnation to creativity and innovation.

Fourth, use a variety of methods and strategies to reach people. The church today needs to focus on a variety of methods to win people,²² such as friendship evangelism;²³ building authentic spiritual disciples;²⁴ and meaningful worship, Sabbath School, and public evangelism.²⁵ Too many people think of evangelism as an event rather than a way of life. In reality, evangelism is a

reaches multiple groups of people when one method might not be the right one to reach them.

We are now doing research to identify the fastest-growing Adventist churches and what they do that makes them so effective. We discovered that all growing churches use multiple avenues and venues to reach people. Growing churches use Sabbath School, the worship service, multiple ministries, seasonal events (Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.), personal and public evangelism, and even sport events, to reach seekers.

cate that a thorough re-examination of our structure is necessary and that any adjustments made should contribute to efficiently accomplishing the church's mission. Almost all the people interviewed agree that something needs to be changed in our system. George Knight believes that the denomination's institutional structures need to be totally reevaluated in the light of current realities and possibilities.²⁸ The basic of the structure should be one of functionality for mission.

The fundamental objective ought to be fulfilling our commission, and

this means investing our resources in the building-up of people and the kingdom of God, and releasing all of our resources into outreach and mission. This could be done by putting fewer people in management positions and more people on the front line of ministry and evangelism, cutting back on travel, and thinking carefully about efficiency in finance.

A creative idea that emerged from our interviews is to make conference departmental directors (Sabbath School, youth ministries,

driven by a vision of mission and not by policies carved in stone by people who lived under different circumstances.”²⁹

Sixth, plant more churches. All experts agree that church planting is the most effective means of church growth. According to C. Peter Wagner, “The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”³⁰ Lyle Schaller writes, “Without exception, the growing denominations have been those that

American church growing at the rate of the population, about 3,200 additional new churches would need to be started each year. The Adventist Church finds itself in a similar situation.³⁴ To maintain the ratio of churches to population as it was in 1913, we would need to add 1,000 churches to the North American Division today.

Conclusion

Exploding the disturbing trends in the North American Adventist

EFFECTIVE LEADERS PRACTICE CRITICAL AND
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personal ministries, etc.) pastors or associate pastors of local churches and have them develop effective programs in the local context. Then people from throughout the conference could observe how they do it. This model not only saves money but gives credibility to those who are engaged in the ministry.

Another strategy for conserving financial resources is to eliminate one layer of structure.


Finally, many of those interviewed believe we need to reexamine the way we manage our educational system. Perhaps we might combine some of our colleges, academies, and elementary schools to free up more money for ministry and evangelism and find additional ways to fund our educational system. “Every level of church organization from the local church to the General Conference exists solely to serve the mission of the church, not to perpetuate itself. . . . We must be

stress church planting. . . . Church planting continues to be the most useful and productive component of any denominational church growth strategy.”³¹ Olson discovered that new churches tend to grow by attracting younger people, providing synergy, and raising a new generation of lay leaders.³²

Church planting should be put into the DNA of every local church and conference. A church plant coordinator in every conference, one who carefully and systematically directs the planting of churches, would be one way to prioritize church planting. Ellen White stresses that “upon all who believe God has placed the burden of raising up churches.”³³ A realistic target could be to reach a ratio of one church to about 35,000 people in the population. Olson stresses the need for church planting because the decline rate of established churches probably will not change. To keep the

Church will take much more than a few small cosmetic changes of technique; it will require a reconsideration of our values and methods. The challenges that the church faces today are varied and serious; yet as we consider the way to move forward in the future, it is crucial for us to understand that our greatest need can be supplied by only one source: the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the ages, the church has always had some serious challenges from the inside and the outside—persecution, compromise, dissension, secularism, apathy, and worldliness. Yet God has promised that He will be with us all the time, even till the end of the age (Matt. 28:18–20). He has assured us that the church will go on to triumph because she is “the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard.”³⁵

The greatest need of the church today is not a new program—but a new passion; not to live in the

past—but to engage in the present and vision for the future; not to rely on human effort—but on divine power. The mission calling of the church today will never be fulfilled by the use of worldly methods and ideas, but only through a connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, who said that without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can do all things (John 15:1–5). So as we go into the future, let us go with Him. The best days of the church are still ahead of us. 

- 1 This group of people was composed of: 10 pastors, 10 laypersons, 8 seminary teachers, 4 elementary and secondary teachers, 7 conference workers, 4 union workers, 3 division workers, 2 General Conference workers, and 3 researchers.
- 2 Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 77.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 George Gallup, Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay, *The Gallup Guide: Reality Check for 21st Century Churches* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2002), 8.
- 5 Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4, 5.

- See also James H. Rutz, *The Open Church* (Jacksonville, FL: SeedSowers, 1992), 3.
- 6 David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 36.
 - 7 Monte Sahlin, interviewed by S. Joseph Kidder, Berrien Springs, MI, March 14, 2008.
 - 8 Norman Shawchuck, Philip Kotler, Bruce Wrenn, and Gustave Rath, *Marketing for Congregations: Choosing to Serve People More Effectively*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 190–195.
 - 9 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:121.
 - 10 Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Spire, 1963), 21.
 - 11 Bruce Larson, *The Power to Make Things New* (Waco, TX: W Publishing, 1986), 79–90.
 - 12 White, *Selected Messages*, 1:121.
 - 13 Randy Maxwell, *If My People Pray* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 31.
 - 14 Tom Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 174–175.
 - 15 Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, DC: E. G. White Estate, 1981–1993), 8:218.
 - 16 Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Quest for Renewal: Personal Revival in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 11–25.
 - 17 James Emery White, *Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Convention, 1992), 62–64.
 - 18 George Barna, “How to Reach Post-Moderns.” (keynote speech, Adventist Ministries Convention, Myrtle Beach, NC, January 20, 2009).
 - 19 Rainer, 20.
 - 20 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1974), 149.

- 21 —, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel, Germany: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 291.
- 22 Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Ways to Increase Church Attendance* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1988), 49–63.
- 23 S. Joseph Kidder, “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism,” *Ministry*, July 2008, 10–12. See also Win Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples* (Pasadena: Church Growth, 1982), 33–54.
- 24 Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1990), 19–27.
- 25 Thomas Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1993), 239–247.
- 26 Pathways are events that take place over a long time and have a strong spiritual emphasis, like Sabbath School classes for seekers or evangelistic meetings.
- 27 Entryways are events that take place in a short time, like cooking seminars or stop-smoking classes.
- 28 George Knight, *If I Were the Devil* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2007), 166.
- 29 Robert Folkenberg, “Renewing Church Organization,” *Adventist Review*, August 6, 1992, 15.
- 30 C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 11.
- 31 Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 20.
- 32 Olson, 155–156.
- 33 Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1963), 315.
- 34 Olson, 142–157.
- 35 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 12.
- 36 Adapted from Olson, 183.

A new approach for church growth: ten points for the North American Seventh-day Adventist Church³⁶

1. Be honest about the state of the church today and personally lead the church forward in spirituality, renewal, and strategy.
2. Have the courage and commitment to pursue both health and growth. This dedication needs to come from the top leadership all the way to the local pastor, lay leaders, and members.
3. Accept and learn to thrive in a world that is post-Christian, postmodern, and multiethnic.
4. Follow the best model we have for the mission and vision of the church: the early church’s passion, attitude, mission, and commitment.
5. Upgrade pastors’ ministerial gifts and skills, helping them learn to articulate the message and love of Jesus with passion, power, and relevancy.
6. Engage people in their sphere of influence with prayer and a humble, listening attitude, taking every opportunity God gives. A great way to begin is through the recovery of the historic Christian ministry of hospitality.
7. Encourage conferences and churches to embrace church planting as a primary means of passing the faith on to future generations.
8. Encourage pastors and leaders to be involved in recruiting and training young leaders.
9. Embrace and promote, in every church, the indispensable importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.
10. Bring about worship renewal. People are hungry for a life-changing, transformational encounter with God.



The ordinance of humility: Precursor to the Cross

Footwashing, as a part of worship, is not widely practiced in Christianity today. One reason might be that only John, in chapter 13, writes about footwashing in a worshiplike context. The two other places in the New Testament that mention footwashing (Luke 7:44; 1 Tim. 5:10) refer to normal hospitality. Another suggested reason is that, due to the vast cultural difference between Jesus' time and ours, many, today, find it hard to relate to the practice.

This is unfortunate because we are losing out on something precious by no longer practicing "the ordinance of humility." And that is because of the powerful symbol footwashing provides of what Jesus, Himself, was to go through for us on the cross.

The structure

Only in the Gospel of John can we find the footwashing account recorded. In it, after the introduction in John 13:1–3, the story unfolds in three parts.

The first part describes what Jesus does (verses 4–11) and also includes an exchange between Jesus and Peter, in which John depicts the disciple as not grasping the intent of Jesus' actions. Three times Peter reacts to the deeds or words of Jesus, and three times Jesus declares Peter's reactions as inappropriate.

The second part begins with a reference to what just happened: "when he had washed their feet" (verse 12).¹ Then, after a detailed

introduction that heightens the expectation of the listeners, the text presents a lengthy speech from Jesus (verses 12–20). It seems as though the passage invites the listeners to pay attention to the explanations that will unlock the meaning of the chapter.

The third section starts with a reference to what Jesus had spoken: "When Jesus had said this" (13:21). The text then switches back to a description of Jesus' actions, which includes the offering of "the morsel" to Judas (13:21–29). As in the first part, some verbal exchange is included, which shows how much the disciples did not understand what was really happening.

What Jesus does

In the first and third section of the narrative, we see the act of footwashing itself filled with significance.

For starters, footwashing was simply a part of the general hospitality practiced in that culture. This gesture was done for beloved guests to indicate they were very much welcome (Luke 7:44). Of course, footwashing was a service often done by someone of lower status, such as slaves or younger female members of the family. But not infrequently, the housewife herself (1 Tim. 5:10) or, in order to express special honor to the guest, even the father himself would sometimes do this service.² Also, children did it to their father and students to their teacher. In these cases it was a sign of loving service (cf. Luke 7:44–47).³

Jesus washed His disciples' feet, thus demonstrating His loving care for them. Jesus, bent down to serve His disciples, humbled Himself because He loves them, which was a precursor to and a symbol of the ultimate humiliation He would soon face: the cross. Even more amazing, in the sight of everyone, He turns with a loving heart to the one ensnared by Satan, Judas Iscariot. Jesus reached out to those ensnared by the devil quite often. This time, though, the true love of the Master meets the false love of the disciple.

The meaning of it all

What are we to take from this episode?

Because John 13 introduces the reader to Christ's passion, we must see the footwashing in this light. What Jesus does to His disciples is a symbol of His coming death. John states in the first verse that Jesus knew "that His hour had come" (John 13:1), a clear reference to Jesus' suffering (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:27; 17:1). This is the time of Passover, too, another indicator of Jesus' death (John 12:1). Out of His great love (John 15:13), Jesus humbles Himself, gets rid of His garment, gives up His honor and, finally, His life.

Peter misunderstood, though. He did not yet know that the Lord's action signified something much greater than Peter could then imagine. Jesus clearly said to him: "What I do *you* do not realize now, but *you* will understand hereafter"⁴ (John 13:7). The "hereafter" does

not refer to the following speech, because Jesus again testifies that the disciples will understand only later (John 13:19). As elsewhere in John's Gospel (cf. 2:22, 12:16), these verses refer to the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. These things will open the disciples' eyes and reveal the deep meaning of footwashing.

Interestingly enough, Peter's objection typifies a question many Christians have asked through the centuries. How can Jesus be our Lord and God if He is human also? How can He be God if He died on the cross? Yet this describes the great mystery of, not only the Incarnation, but of the Cross. God became a man in order to save us. There was no other way. Jesus had to die in order to give us eternal life.

Hence, He strongly tells Peter that unless Peter partakes of this—"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (verse 8)—He will not benefit from what Jesus will do for him. The word *part* in this verse means "portion" and can be linked to "heritage" or "booty." The expression "no portion with Me" does not speak of a spiritual community with Jesus, but refers to something that Jesus will win, and finally share, with His followers. And that, of course, is eternal life.

The problem? In John's time (and in ours), people preferred a Savior who would be more like a hero, someone demonstrating power and splendor. But the gospel presents a Savior who is humble, someone who submitted Himself into the hands of evil men, and who suffered a shameful death. Footwashing reminds us of the humanity of Jesus that rejects all forms of force or retaliation. No wonder people shy away from it.

In His speech after the footwashing, Jesus dealt with this misunderstanding. "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am" (verse 13). In other words, *Despite the humble service, despite the shameful death, despite the renunciation of all means of*



Ministerial Student Writing Contest

***Ministry*, International Journal for Pastors, announces its third Ministerial Student Writing Contest. All students enrolled in a full-time ministerial preparation program on the undergraduate or graduate level may participate.**

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1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission.
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earthly power, I am still the Lord of the universe.

This paradox on earth is true in the kingdom of God: The one who willingly served all is, in fact, the greatest of all (cf. Mark 9:35; Luke 22:26; Phil 2:6–8). Jesus prepared the disciples for His suffering and death so that they might not be in despair but see His glory and divinity in His humbleness.

“From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so

that would change *him* and make *him* qualified for God’s kingdom. The more washing, then the more qualified he would be, perhaps?

But Jesus rejects that interpretation and says to Peter, “You are *clean*” (verse 10). He also declares that the betrayer is not clean, despite the fact that his feet will also be washed (verse 11). Obviously, what Jesus did to His disciples was meant in a different sense than how it was grasped by those in the room.

is on the One who washes the feet, not on the one who gets his feet washed.⁷

Conclusion

This describes the importance of the footwashing story of John 13 and reveals Jesus already signifying His surrender to the cross on our behalf. We find Christ in the center; He unites the lowest service of a slave with being the Lord of lords. Through this footwashing, Jesus delivered a sermon, not in words but in deed. The subject of His sermon was His death for us, a death that reveals His infinite love and true, divine character. This sermon’s call invites us to believe in Him and follow Him in service and surrender (Phil. 2:5).

At the place where the other gospels recount the Lord’s Supper, John recounts the footwashing. This indicates that the footwashing has the same meaning as the Lord’s Supper. Following the command of Jesus, and thus washing the feet of each other, means (as with the Lord’s Supper) that we are proclaiming the death of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26). In short, the “ordinance of humility,” footwashing, demonstrates a way to serve other believers and, also, is a way to draw closer to experiencing for ourselves what Jesus has done for us. ■



FOOTWASHING REMINDS US OF THE HUMANITY OF JESUS THAT REJECTS ALL FORMS OF FORCE OR RETALIATION.

that when it does occur, you may believe that *I am He*”⁵ (verse 19). John recalls these words in order to encourage believers to understand that service, suffering, and even death are part of true discipleship.⁶

Misplaced emphasis

The misunderstanding of the disciples goes even deeper. This is seen when Peter asked Jesus to wash “not only my feet, but also my hands and my head” (verse 9). Why did Peter ask for a more complete washing? After Jesus had declared that, without His service, there was no way to share eternal life with Him, Peter might have thought that the washing does something to *him*

The chapter also reveals another crucial point brought out by their misunderstanding of events—this time about priorities. Peter thought that he, himself, comes first, an expression of the misunderstanding of a pious egoism. After he learned that footwashing has something to do with his salvation, Peter was concerned solely with himself. *What does it mean to me that my feet are washed? How can I gain as much as possible?*

His request for more washing stands in sharp contrast to the chapter’s focus. John relates the event with Jesus in the center. *His* fate is in view, *His* love, *His* service is what this chapter is about. The emphasis

1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible.

2 Cf. Testament of Abraham 2.9, a Jewish pseudepigraphon contemporary with the Gospel of John: “Then Abraham went forward and washed the feet of the Commander-in-chief, Michael.” Cf. Targum Neofiti of Gen. 18:4.

3 Cf. C. Niemand: “Was bedeutet die Fußwaschung: Sklavenarbeit oder Liebesdienst? Kulturgeschichtliches als Auslegungshilfe für Joh 13,6–8,” *Protokolle zur Bibel* 3 (1994) 115–129; idem, *Die Fußwaschungserzählung des Johannesevangeliums: Untersuchungen zu ihrer Entstehung und Überlieferung im Urchristentum*, Studia Anselmiana 114 (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993), 177–187.

4 Emphasis added.

5 Emphasis added.

6 Herold Weiss, “Foot Washing in the Johannine Community,” *Novum Testamentum* 21, 1979, 298–325, interprets the practice of footwashing in the Johannine communities as preparation for possible martyrdom.

7 G. Richter, “Die Fußwaschung John 13,1–20,” *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*, 43–44.

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Spiritual strength: What happens when spiritual leaders and spiritual people work together?

It is easy to find an army of a thousand, but, ah, how difficult to find a general." So says a Chinese proverb. To find a genuine spiritual leader in the Christian church—someone with a vision and integrity—is not always easy. Leaders with Christlike values and attitudes are the most valuable treasure of the church, and God Himself is involved in the process of their upbringing and development. Nevertheless, even powerful leaders, without the people they guide, are as generals without an army, and this could lead to unfortunate consequences. Without authentic relationships between leaders and the people they lead, there can be no spiritual development of the church.

The life and ministry of Nehemiah provide us with some profound insights on this authentic leadership so vitally needed by every generation of Christian community. What made Nehemiah a great leader? What helped him overcome every distraction and challenge and concentrate on leading his people to achieve the goals God had set before them? What kind of connection was there between him and the people of Israel? How might this bond inspire us today? Let us look at his distinctiveness as a spiritual leader.

Lessons from Nehemiah's leadership

Nehemiah had a vision (Neh. 1:3–11). As a cupbearer of the king of the mightiest nation in the world of his time, Nehemiah had a secure and protected position. He did not need any commotion in his life. He could have prayed for the success of Jerusalem and the remnant without his personal involvement and contribution. Nevertheless, he was a man of vision and action. He dared to come to the king and ask for permission to rebuild the temple. He wanted to persuade the remnant of the exigency and necessity of this noble and glorious task. Today we need daring ministers audacious enough to advance with vision and convince the people of God of the inevitability of spiritual change.

He was not boastful. "I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem" (Neh. 2:12). As the most influential Israelite in those times, he could have boasted about his position or his original vision, but he did not. He let his deeds speak. Pastors today have to uplift Christ and conceal their vision until the appropriate time. We should not boast about our visions for the church and provoke the animosity of those who do not

appreciate and comprehend God's ways. Let acts speak. Let vision be confirmed by God's approval, not just by convincing arguments.

He had motivation for the task. People worked "with all their heart" (Neh. 4:6) because Nehemiah was a motivating force. He had a dream and managed to transmit his eagerness for the rebuilding. Without motivation, pastors, teachers, or administrators will not be able to confer their vision and transform it into reality. Motivating force toward the completion of a set goal will help overcome obstacles along the way.

Nehemiah exhibited extraordinary faith. "Our God will fight for us" (Neh. 4:20) was Nehemiah's motivation in the most difficult situation when his enemies threatened to destroy the work of rebuilding. This is extraordinary faith in spite of opposition and serious difficulties. Pastors need faith in order to accomplish the vision. Faith says: "God is always with us" even when the circumstances speak differently.

Nehemiah was persistent and never quit. When enemies threatened, when his life was in peril, Nehemiah did not quit; he just prayed (Neh. 6:9). Spiritual victory in times of onslaught from the enemy becomes possible only when we are

a people of prayer and faith. Pastors in their ministerial struggles need to obtain the mentality of Nehemiah: persist, pray, and never quit!

Nehemiah loved the people of God, so he never exploited them financially or otherwise (Neh. 5:14, 15). He even sacrificed his rights in order to be an example to the flock. He never took anything from the people; he only shared his resources and time. We cannot exploit the church with our needs as if the church is obliged to do this. If we want more superior experiences

God (Neh. 13). In the last chapter of Nehemiah, the reform of the temple, marriage, tithe, and worship were based exclusively on the Word of God. True spiritual revival cannot take place when we trust in human strength; the Word alone has the power and authority to transform and strengthen the community of God's people and lead them to accomplish His will and purposes.

Nehemiah continued earnestly in prayer. Nehemiah prayed for God's forgiveness, for His glorious power and grace, for himself, and the cour-

the holiness in Christ (as a result of genuine acceptance of Christ's righteousness by faith) is a necessary condition for proper worship. The house of God, the day of God, and the people of God are holy, and we cannot afford to neglect their sanctity in our worship and witness.

Nehemiah worked with the outsiders. As a reformer, Nehemiah worked with those within and those without. The "outsider" had an importance in his leadership and ministry, and, as a result, the "outsiders" "realized that this work

WHEN SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND SPIRITUAL PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER, THE RESULT IS SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND IMPACT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

resulting from our faith, we should not ask for anything. God will provide our needs if we are servants of Christ.

Nehemiah delegated responsibilities. Nehemiah identified persons with dedication and integrity and shared his tasks with them (Neh. 7:1, 2). Such leadership with delegation actually improved the task because everybody was involved. To think that we, alone, can accomplish the task is, at best, risky and, at worst, impossible. Such a path may seem easier, but it devalues and downgrades the church. In sharing, there is strength; in delegation, there is unity and fulfillment.

Nehemiah valued the Word of God far beyond his own comprehension or people's expectations (Neh. 8:8, 18). Belief in the Written Word brought him many troubles and opposition, but he insisted that the reform had to be based on the revelation of

age he needed. He also prayed for his people: intercessory prayer has power to transform and strengthen God's community (Neh. 9). Prayer stirs the work of the Lord. Pastors should pray not only for themselves and their families but also for the people of God and the vision of Christ. "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer *is* the greater work," says Oswald Chambers.²

Nehemiah showed extraordinary zeal. Nehemiah's zeal produced not only his dedication for the work he set out to do but also had specific purposes: for maintaining the priority of the house of God (10:39; 13:10, 11), for the keeping of the Sabbath (13:17, 18), and for maintaining the purity of the people of God (13:25). All these aspects were valued as indispensable requirements for proper worship. There is no worship outside the truth of God. Pastors today should teach that zeal for

had been done with the help of our God" (6:16). This testimony is amazing. Out of reverence and fear, the Gentiles learned that Israel was a people of the mighty God. Mission today cannot be accomplished in isolation. Our work and witness must have fervor and a zeal that will be noted by all.

Nehemiah was God's man in a wholistic sense. Fully dedicated to God and with an absolute commitment to God's mission, Nehemiah portrayed the profile of the perfect spiritual leader. Transformed by God's grace, he was able to lead others to experience similar transformation. Where stands a transformed leader, the response of the people will not be lagging behind.

Lessons from the response of the people

People of God had the willingness and motivation to build the temple of

God (2:17, 18; 4:6). Everywhere the cry and commitment was singular: "Let us rebuild." The response of the church depends on the motivation of the pastor. The result is astonishing. The people had a confidence in Nehemiah, and they listened to what he said (5:12, 13). Even though he was a youthful leader, he was not despised. "We will do as you say" was based on the assurance that God, not man, was leading the work. People who cannot have confidence in their leaders tend to be a scattered flock without a shepherd, and this

eternity will reveal. Unconscious of their spiritual influence and in humility and purity of heart, they moved forward in glorifying their God. The only way to glorify God today, and show the world that we are different, is to find a way for successful *teamwork* of pastors, teachers, administrators, and the people of God. "Teamwork is the quintessential contradiction of a society grounded in individual achievement," says Marvin R. Weisbord,³ and no leader can afford to neglect true teamwork.

be a powerful testimony to Christ's living influence on the leaders. But this *sacred liaison* is impossible without the proper understanding of the exercise of authority. Ellen G. White said: "Although Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to co-operate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, he chose not to depend upon the mere exercise of authority. He sought, rather, to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, well knowing that a union of hearts as well as hands was essential to succeed in the



leads to spiritual disaster. *Israel loved the law of God* (8:1) and obeyed God's Word. There is no advancement without obedience to God.

People of God were generous in their tithes and offerings. "We will not neglect the house of our God" (10:39) was the response of the people to the call of their spiritual leader. If leaders live according to the standards of the Word, the people will follow their example. Spiritual growth, faithfulness in stewardship, active participation in witness and worship, and total support to the church will result. Steadfast leadership will produce faithful response in our membership.

Israel understood that their rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem was a mission to the Gentiles (6:16). The impact of their sacred work had far-reaching consequences that only

Spiritual strength in synergy

Spiritual success depends not only on the powerful vision and spiritual power of the leader but on the relationship between leaders and the people of God. This *synergistic* teamwork is always crucial for the spiritual progress. Teamwork demands, on the one hand, that pastors, teachers, evangelists, and administrators be completely emptied of self-interest, boasting, and the search of financial gain; on the other hand, teamwork expects that leaders be motivated by vision, sacrifice, faith, belief, prayer for the power of God, and perseverance and resolution. Only then will church leadership inspire and stimulate the people of God to enthusiasm and trust, obedience to the Word, generosity, purity, and humility. This sacred bond will

great work which he had undertaken."⁴ The essence of successful pastoral service and a flourishing church includes the pastor's trust in God and his or her readiness to cooperate with and motivate the people of God until we reach the union of hearts. When spiritual leaders and spiritual people work together, the result is spiritual strength and impact for the kingdom of God. This spiritual union, transcending organizational efforts in programs and mission, becomes influential testimony today and essential qualification for the life eternal. ■

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures quoted in this article are from the New International Version.

² <http://www.tentmaker.org/Quotes/prayerquotes.htm>.

³ <http://www.heartquotes.net/teamwork-quotes.html>.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1925), 174.

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To the ends of the earth

You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).¹ The command of Jesus impelled His followers to an astonishing journey of action; indeed a series of actions, one after another, involving the disciples and the early believers who, under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit, took the message of the risen Savior to the "ends of the earth."

That action is what the book of Acts is all about. Watch the ascension of Christ, the anointing of the apostles by flames of fire, enabling them to speak in different languages, which, in turn, led to the first great conversion surge, overwhelming the Jerusalem establishment and setting off lay missionaries to the Roman Empire's distant outposts. Race with Philip to catch up with the eunuch of Ethiopia and, through him, see the march of the gospel in distant Africa. How about the action of Stephen's stoning leading to the miracle of the Damascus road that produced Paul, the great missionary, who literally tore down every frontier to reach "the ends of the earth"? Ponder over Peter, his Pentecostal sermon, his encounter with Cornelius that prepared the church for the challenge of the mission to the Gentiles. See the First Apostolic Council of Jerusalem and its impact on the church's great march through history. All these, and other action stories, keep us excited to read a book that tells of a church becoming a living organism, growing and expanding, looking for new ways through sea and land until pursuing its way to the ends of the

earth. These were truly the acts of the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.² The book of Acts is, indeed, an inspiring chronicle of how an insignificant sect inside Judaism becomes a worldwide movement, confronting religious and philosophic systems that hitherto dominated the world. This achievement became possible because the early church was involved in an outstanding missionary movement, unmatched by any other Christian movement through history. That movement was rooted in an unhesitating response to a direct command of Jesus at the beginning of the book of Acts.

The book starts with a few disciples, hidden in the upper level of an unknown house in Jerusalem, their hearts filled with fear. It ends with thousands of people joining the new Christian movement and with those same disciples, now filled with a bold vision, sharing freely and with joy, announcing the Christian mission to the whole world, no matter what. The book clearly tells us that many of them did that, risking their lives.

What was the reason for such a fantastic change? What happened in between? We find an incredible message carefully wrapped in the book of Acts. But the most important thing about the book is the sequential and careful unfolding of a command given by the Lord Jesus Christ at the very beginning of the book.

A critical text and its context

Let's examine the last conversation between Jesus and His apostles. This represents a solemn

gathering—the last reunion of Jesus with His disciples on earth. The disciples asked Him: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). We see here that at the very beginning of one of the most outstanding moments in the life of the early church, the disciples did not yet see the whole picture. They simply misunderstood the Lord. They were opinionated and thinking politically, not religiously. They were still Jews expecting political supremacy in a world governed by Gentiles. But their narrow-minded vision would soon be changed forever.

They were moments away from the departure of Jesus to heaven. This magnificent and memorable event in their lives had been engraved in their memory, and it represents the key in the analysis of the rest of the book. Because this topic occurred in the context of the last moments of Jesus on earth, in reality, it compares to the starting march of the next dynamic and colorful event that began to define the very essence of the book of Acts.

Acts 1: 6 "forms something of an outline for Acts."³ At that moment, they received power not to rule, but to witness.⁴ Jesus referred to them now as witnesses, and He did it in a legal sense. "A witness . . . is someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation."⁵ The Lord did not reproach the disciples for their misunderstanding, but simply said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power

when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7, 8).

Jesus here appointed them, not only as disciples (they already were),

have speculated the meaning of this expression.⁷ Clearly the book shows an interest in Rome (the capital city of the empire), but some think this may not only refer to reaching out of the hub of Rome to the Gentile world, but that the

Did they obey the command of Jesus?

Jonathan Lewis indicates that "Christ's prophetic words in Acts 1:8 provide us with an excellent outline for understanding the missionary dynamic of this book."⁸

THE FULFILLMENT OF ACTS 1:8

Acts 1	Acts 8	Acts 8:4	Acts 10	Acts 13
Jerusalem	Judea	Samaria	(Gentiles)	Ends of the earth

but as *witnesses* because they were living testimonies of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁶ The resurrection of Jesus was a fact, directly seen by His disciples. Therefore, they were witnesses of historical facts and the convictions of faith in the early church. They were witnesses to the ends of the earth that may even have to put their lives at risk in defending the authenticity of their statement.

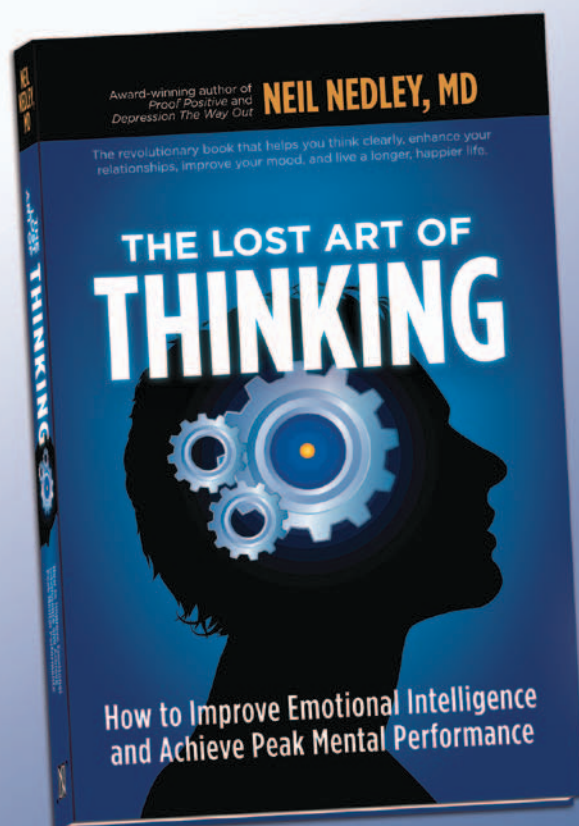
What does the phrase "the ends of the earth" mean? Some authors

gospel will continue to go beyond Rome. Hence we may well conclude that the phrase "the ends of the earth" is geographical and ethnic in scope, inclusive of all people and locales. This mission includes a multi-directional and eschatological focus. Independent of the Jewish expectations of the early disciples, who were anxiously looking for the restoration of the kingdom, God's intention was the world; not a part of it, nor a portion of it, simply the entire world.

This clearly shows us how the disciples went out determined to reach the target established by their Lord. The clear distribution of the mission clearly demonstrates that the disciples obeyed their Master.

What remains?

In the book of Acts, a significant geographical movement occurs: (1) a territorial expansion that made inroads into the Gentile world; (2) success and advance in the mission, even in the face of clear hostility,



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both internal and external; (3) the headquarters of the missionary task that was set in Jerusalem (Acts 6).⁹ The mission given in Acts has geographical and sociological targets rather than numeric ones. Jesus did not establish numeric figures to

work on earth to have concrete and visible results.

In the early days, the church that obeyed the command of Jesus was in constant growth. One early church father wrote to the heathen nations, challenging them: "We are but of

"Christianity without discipleship causes the church to assimilate itself into the culture."¹² The challenging command of Jesus for missions (Acts 1:8) remains valid and binding on the church. All we need to do is to resurrect the command, place it


THE CHALLENGING COMMAND OF JESUS FOR MISSIONS (ACTS 1:8) REMAINS VALID AND BINDING ON THE CHURCH.

reach Judea, Samaria, or the ends of the earth. Such a limitation would work against the urgency and universality of the message: God wanted the early church to reach the whole world, not a part of it.¹⁰ In the book of Acts, as in the Gospels, we see the growing of the Christian movement in a variety of levels representing a clear *spiritual* growing, because growing in the world made them grow internally in the church; a clear *sociological* growing with diverse cultures and ethnically diverse people and languages encompassed by the message; a clear *geographical* growing with the message being accepted in different places, towns, cities, and nations.

In the New Testament, Jesus was never pleased about: going fishing without catching any fish (Luke 5:4–11); seeing empty tables at a banquet (Luke 14:5–23); sowing seed that will never be harvested (Matt. 13:3–9); a fig tree not bearing fruit (Luke 13:6–8); an unaccounted sheep not brought into the fold (Matt. 18:11–14); a lost coin not found (Luke 15:8–11); a lost son who does not come back home (Luke 15:12–32); and proclaiming the Word without a response (Matt. 10:14), because God expects His

yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods."¹¹ Today our church needs to pay attention again to the moving words of Jesus. Those words were powerful. Not by the fact of their enunciation itself, but by the influence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts that moved those men and women to start a missionary movement unmatched through history. They did not have all the high tech and gadget resources we have today. The early Christians did not have television, Internet, email, computers, text messages, software, presentation resources, advertising, or any of the social media resources we have today. But they reached every place with the gospel message. And they reaped thousands of conversions in a surprisingly short time.

Can we not do the same? Of course we can. We need to catch the spirit of the early church. In the book of Acts, we see a church that still kept a discipleship vision. In the days to come, the church lost its discipleship vision, and we need to return to true discipleship. As Hull says,

before our church, and plead for the Holy Spirit to help us implement it. The Holy Spirit will empower us to fulfill the command, just as He did at the beginning of church history. He now waits to move the pastoral and lay force into a big missionary movement like we have never seen in history. Then, and only then, will Christ's saving message reach the ends of the earth—be it your next-door neighbor or the distant town on the other side of the globe. 

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

² The role of the Holy Spirit in Acts is clear (Acts 2:4; 8:29; 10:19; 15:28; 16:6, 7; 20:23). It is the Holy Spirit that says: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2, KJV).

³ A. L. Barry, *To the Ends of the Earth* (St Louis: Concordia, 1997), 43.

⁴ Paul W. Walaskay, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 28.

⁵ Darrell Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 64.

⁶ Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 10–15.

⁷ See Darrell Bock, 64; D. W. Pao, "Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus," *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2 (2000): 93; T. S. Moore, "To the Ends of the Earth: The Geographical and Ethnic Universalism of Acts 1: 8 in Light of Isaianic Influence of Luke," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 40 (1997): 389–399.

⁸ Jonathan Lewis, ed., *World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement*, Part 1 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1987), 79.

⁹ Daniel Scarone, *Hasta los confines de la tierra* (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Universidad Adventista de Centroamerica, 1996), 69.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹ Tertullian, 37:4.

¹² Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 16.

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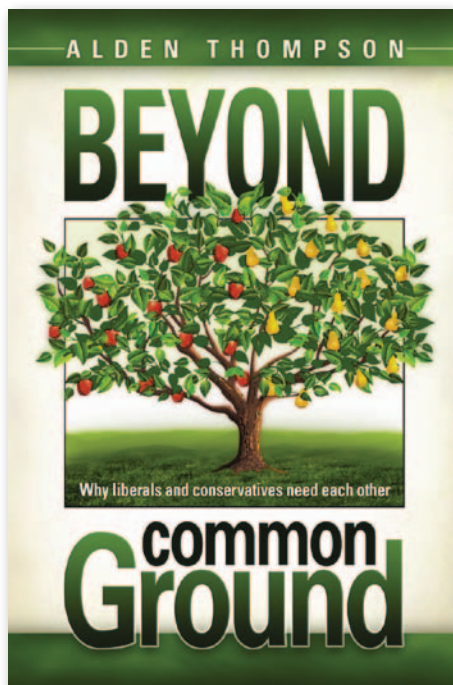


Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other by Alden Thompson, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2009.

Beyond Common Ground by Alden Thompson provides a call to understanding and unity between the various groups within the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. But it was the subtitle of this book that caught my attention and made me read it. Thompson shows his pastoral heart, passion, and vision in the gospel call to unity at the end of every chapter. Here are a couple of examples: "So let's pay close attention to what motivates our brothers and sisters in Christ and what motivates those who do not yet know our Lord. By God's grace, His Spirit will be able to light a fire in the hearts of His people that no earthly power can quench" (73). "In the end, therefore, the astonishing truth that emerges is that God is the greatest libertarian of all. And He made it happen by giving up His liberty, His freedom, dying on the cross so that the way of love could once again become the law of the universe. If God can die for us, then surely we should be willing to live for Him by living for all His children" (155). These are heartfelt calls for unity within the church we all could warm to.

Some may not read this book because they have already labeled the author as a liberal. Such bias would be a shame for, although the book may challenge some cherished stances, there is much to learn from it.

I have read almost all of Thompson's previous books and have not always agreed with him—but he does make me think. *Beyond*



Common Ground relies heavily on his previous writing; but he adds anecdotal stories and suggestions that could help build unity. For example, in his previous book, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, he highlights from Scripture a love pyramid. Thompson asserts that conservatives are best at loving God and liberals are better at loving others. Both aspects are what Jesus requires so conservatives and liberals need each other.

The book starts with Thompson providing three frameworks on which all Adventists have common ground. The first is the historical landmarks: the Sabbath, the Advent, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ. The next unifying factor is the law of love and the love pyramid; and the last anchor point is Jesus—God in human flesh. These are the nonnegotiables from an Adventist heritage based on Scripture. Thompson does not call for compromise but encourages strong conviction. However, people

with the same foundation need to share their convictions and be complimentary rather than contradictory.

Each person will find different gems in this book. I liked the thoughts on translations. Adventists have always had those who prefer one version; but the important thing is that we understand why we like a translation—and then base our dialogue on Scripture. The chapter on the diversity of the Corinthian church shows that there are still those who followed Peter, Paul, and Apollos today, but, in our diversity, we can have a unity that is not uniformity. His call for Adventists to hold to conditional historicism when interpreting prophecy is also timely.

The book has some weaknesses. Liberals and conservatives are not defined until the middle of the book, and I agree with one of his students—the Myers-Briggs personality material complicates the definitions rather than enhances them (117–131). Thompson, a scholar, has spent most of his life in large Adventist institutions and the Adventist communities around them. Perhaps such a cloistered life led to the book's glaring omission—Adventist mission. The author gives worldwide mission of the Adventist Church only lip service.

Despite this blind spot, I consider *Beyond Common Ground* a good book. It shows Thompson as a man of courage and integrity. He opens peoples' eyes to the various options of understanding from an academic viewpoint; but he has a pastoral heart—he envisions and pleads for a church that makes open dialogue a continual habit.

—Reviewed by Glenn Townend, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in western Australia. 📖

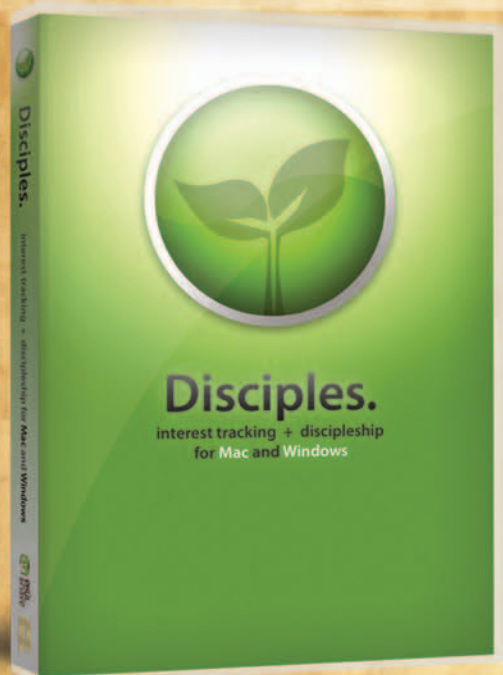
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Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Council

Huntsville, Alabama, United States—On December 5–7, 2010, approximately 2,000 pastors and leaders gathered on the campus of Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, United States, for the annual convening of the Pastoral

Evangelism and Leadership Council. The theme of this past meeting was “Pentecost II: Let It Rain.” And “rain” it did!

For three days, there was a clear and obvious moving of the Holy Spirit—with prayer breaking out everywhere and men and women of God spontaneously rushing to the altar in confession, recommitment, and passionate pursuit of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. From the worship experiences to the plenary and breakout sessions, the focus

was continually upon evangelism and leadership, with five morning and evening sermons and more than 30 workshop presenters.

The singular, consistent response from almost every attendee was the centrality of God in everything. “We caught a glimpse of Pentecost.” *[Fredrick A. Russell]*

WestPoint of Evangelism

Agoura Hills, California, United States—The 2010 WestPoint of Evangelism meeting, focusing on pastors and lay leaders interested in various aspects of church work, took place December 5–8, in Agoura Hills, California. The event included exhibits from various publishers and media ministries sharing a wide range of resources.

Bradford Newton, secretary of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the sponsoring organization, coordinated WestPoint of Evangelism. In addition to the general sessions, a number of breakout seminars on various aspects of church life and outreach were presented. **Jan Paulsen**, recently retired president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, presented the keynote message. **Ricardo Graham**, president of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, gave the final message before the group gathered for a final prayer asking for the Lord’s blessing in their life and ministry.


To avoid a date conflict with the Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Council, held at Oakwood University, Bradford Newton announced that the WestPoint of Evangelism will now be held in the spring of each year. The next event is scheduled for 2012. *[Nikolaus Satelmajer]* 



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