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The preacher's Problem



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THE PASTOR AND HEALTH

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I ESPECIALLY ENJOYED THE EXTENSIVE REFERENCES TO THE VARIOUS CHARACTERS IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS THAT SHED LIGHT ON HOW WE CAN RELATE TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION WE FACE IN OUR MODERN WORLD.

Faith and politics

Thank you for the excellent article by John Wesley Taylor V on the relationship between faith and our political life ("Faith and Politics: How Should We Live?"—September 2012). The article was well balanced and biblical. I especially enjoyed the extensive references to the various characters in the Old and New Testaments that shed light on how we can relate to the political situation we face in our modern world.

The article was quite a contrast to another one that I read several months ago in which the author advised us that to be involved in such "moral issues," such as gay marriage, was inappropriate for the Christian. His argument is easily discredited when Scripture is consulted as Dr. Taylor has done.

Again thanks for the insightful article.

—Allen Shepherd, MD, pastor, Indiana, United States

Spiritualistic manifestations

Ireflected upon my experiences in Africa as I read the interview that Willie E. Hucks II conducted ("The Reality of Spiritualistic Manifestations: An Interview With Kwabena Donkor"—July 2012). In the late 1960s and 1970s, these manifestations were showing up in one of our academies. In one example, involving a petite young woman, the dean of women called me and I assembled several staff to pray for the girl. During prayer, she became so strong that two stout men could not hold her or control her, so we prayed in the name of Jesus that she be free from this spirit. Calmness resulted. In another example, a young man who had been dabbling in devil worship came to the school. Seeking to be free from harassment, he contacted the student religious vice president who gathered a small group of boys who have a prayer group in the dorm. As they prayed for him, he got up and picked up a table lamp, [went]

behind the leader, and raised it to hit him in the head. The leader raised his hand and said, "In the name of Jesus, put it down!" The kid ran to the window and thrust his fist through the window, severely damaging his arm.

Some felt these manifestations were merely drug related or emotional behavior. I sensed otherwise and had observed several other manifestations like these outside my academy church family with mature adults. Some of them were so incredible or sensational as to seem impossible to believe. In 52 years of ministry, I saw Satan manifest his evil spirit. Most of these incidents I never reported for fear of being considered over the top in the education world. But I believe we are only seeing the tip of the spiritualistic iceberg.

I praise the power of the name of Jesus. I can say that the power of Jesus is often untapped and not appreciated out of ignorance. Thank you for publishing this article.

—Fred Speyer, email 



A broad and comprehensive mission

Serving as a pastor in the twenty-first century is *hard work*—demanding and sometimes dangerous. In order to support each of you in this hard work, our team provides this journal with a clearly defined purpose: to deepen the spiritual life of the pastor, develop intellectual strength through a careful study of the Scriptures, and provide practical instruction in pastoral and evangelistic ministry.

Pastors from numerous Christian denominations in more than 150 countries around the world receive this journal. Here are just a few comments from our readers:

- “Thank you for your faithfulness. I have found this journal to be most beneficial in addressing church concerns and issues.”
—Mike Luce, United Methodist pastor, Michigan, United States.
- “Thanks for publishing the article ‘Get Back to the Basics. Be Jesus to Someone.’ I appreciate most of the articles you publish.”
—Lance Lindgren, Lutheran pastor, South Dakota, United States.
- “I was a junior theology student when I first developed an interest in *Ministry*. Every time my professor received a copy of this magazine, my desire was rekindled. Almost a year ago, this dream became a reality. I am so happy to receive

the subscription and very eager to read all the articles.”

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- “We have greatly appreciated *Ministry* through 46 years of pastoral service, and the latest issue is certainly no exception, with many fine articles.”
—Jim Hoffer, retired Adventist pastor, Georgia, United States.
- “The March 2012 issue of *Ministry* was incredible. Is it possible to buy 10 extra copies of it? I would like to give a personal copy to each member of my staff.”
—Michael Kelly, pastor, Community Church, Ohio, United States.
- “I don’t always read the *Ministry* magazine when it comes. This month I decided to read before it got buried under the pile of mail that never quite ends. What a timely issue. Refreshing. Helpful. Practical.”
—David Glenn, Adventist pastor, Washington, United States.


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Many of our readers receive *Ministry* as a complimentary subscription. People who support the mission of the journal—people like you—cover the cost of these subscriptions.

Once a year we give our readers the opportunity to support this broad and comprehensive mission. We invite you to make a contribution to enrich the lives and ministry of fellow pastors around the world.

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Occasionally, there are those who are frustrated when we ask for financial support. We understand. We, too, are bombarded by requests—many of them from worthwhile ministries. May I suggest that rather than complain, pause to pray for the many pastors around the world who serve under very challenging circumstances. They struggle with limited resources and meager funds. For many, this journal serves as a lifeline, providing valuable instruction and encouragement. All that we ask of you is that you follow the promptings of God’s Spirit and continue to support us in prayer.

Thanks again for being part of our readership. We are honored to serve you and thank God for your faithful ministry. 

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The preacher's problem

Editor's note: This article is an adaptation of a sermon preached at the Pastoral Evangelistic and Leadership Conference, Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama, United States, December 6, 2011.

Every Christian preacher and leader ministers in the context of a problem. Paul, the New Testament apostle, could confound the scholars on Mars' Hill; but he had a problem. His powerful proclamations are impressive, but he still had a problem. We only hear Paul speak of his problem once, as if the problem was not of great importance. This single mention of his problem is much like our practice today of minimizing our struggles. Too many preachers are out of touch with the reality of their own problems because they specialize in helping other people with their problems.

Paul's problem seems to be revealed in 2 Corinthians 12:7 where he describes "a thorn . . . in the flesh" that was given to him.¹ This is a problem for Paul because it is painful. This "thorn" was thought to be of a physical nature and caused the preacher great discomfort and pain. How does one preach and lead in the midst of pain?

All preachers lead with a type of pain. And sometimes, the temptation is to attribute the source of pain to the

people we lead. Some pastors believe if they get a new parish or move to a new ministry location that the pain will dissipate. But this kind of pain cannot be circumvented by relocation because it is in the flesh, it's personal. Paul also describes it as *persistent*. He is recorded asking God three times to remove the pain. God does not grant his wish. How does a preacher, who prays successfully for so many other people, deal with the fact that his personal pain persists even though he has requested a reprieve?

The challenge of his pain is that it is chronic. All of us can get by a season of pain or discomfort, but Paul's pain was one that lingered. To make matters worse, his pain was also permitted by the same God who called him to preach the gospel. If we are honest, the greatest pain is sometimes brought on—not because of what happens to us—but by who allows it. Paul was busy advancing the kingdom of God, so perhaps one of the fringe benefits of his work should be safety from such pain. However, he is left to tell people about a God who permits his personal pain. Paul's problem is painful, personal, persistent, and permitted. And yet, he must preach.

The problem is not the problem

We may first be led to believe that the pain of Paul's thorn was the

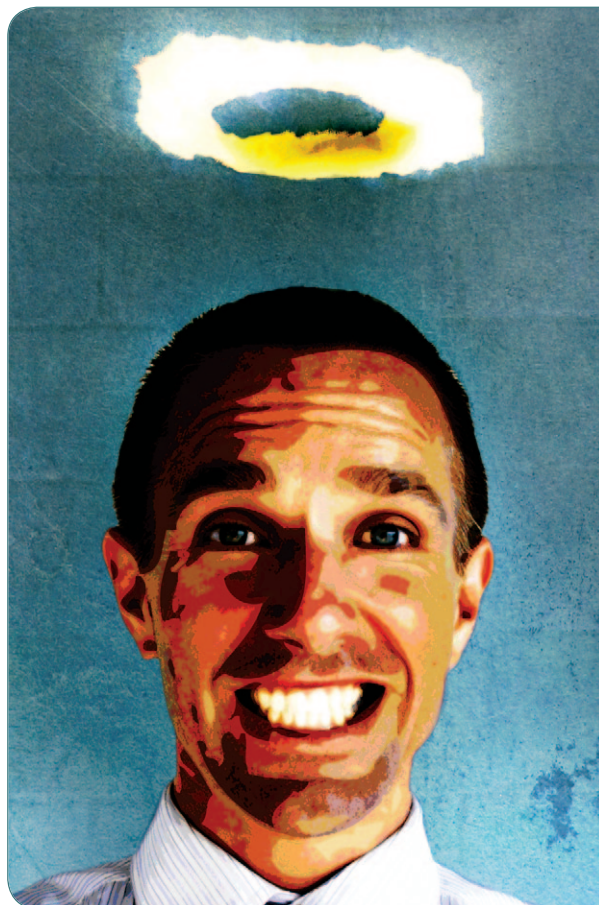
problem, but that was not it. We all would rather not have pain and, if possible, would eradicate the pains we experience as preachers. But Paul's pain was not his real problem, and neither are the pains we experience. In fact, Paul's pain was the *antidote* for the real problem. The potential problem every preacher faces is the *success* of his or her ministry. In many cases, the devil is not our greatest nemesis. Paradoxically, our greatest danger can come from being used mightily by God. This danger could be the feeling that comes from delivering a stirring message, the euphoria of being asked to serve as the keynote at a stellar event, or accepting the election to a high-ranking administrative office. The real problem Paul faced, and every preacher faces, is *pride*. Every minister that stands in front of a congregation or constituency on a regular basis must wrestle with the problem of becoming too conceited due to the surpassing greatness of the message.

I must admit that this has been my problem as a preacher, for I have had the opportunity, in my short tenure as an ordained minister, to preach internationally. There have been times when Divinity has flashed through my pitiful manuscript and set the place ablaze with conviction and celebration. I have often witnessed the miracle of

scores of penitent people coming to the front of the church in response to what the Holy Spirit said through me. I am quite cognizant that all the praise belongs to God. I agree that it was the result of His Spirit speaking to the hearts and minds of people. However, in many of

carefully crafted phrases. There are even times when I sense God telling me to end a sermon early, but I argue with Him that I still have a few more sagacious gems to share. So sadly, I must admit, sometimes my selfish will wins. I have a thorn and I suspect all preachers do.

a seductive temptation of narcissism for the preacher. "Christian leaders often use those they lead to enhance their own image and improve the way they feel about themselves."² The truth? Many preachers suffer from emotional and psychological wounds that



PAUL MEASURES
HIS MINISTERIAL
SUCCESS BY HIS
SCARS, WHILE WE
OFTEN MEASURE
OURSELVES BY
OUR STARS.

those moments of homiletical glory, I have often been tempted to steal or at least share the glory with God. I have been tempted to believe that the power flowing *through* me originated *from* me.

This internal nemesis is often present with me in the pulpit. There are times when an invisible wrestling match breaks out in the pulpit as my pride wrestles with God's desire to speak plainly to His people. I can sense when God is telling me to deviate from my studied and rehearsed notes, but I struggle to obey because I want to finish my

The preacher's ego is a fragile thing, easily fed by the opportunities we intend for ministry. The nature of public proclamation of the gospel is that it places the messenger in a precarious situation. The reality is that although all the praise belongs to the God who gave you the message, the people cannot see or touch God. The people can, however, see and touch the preacher. They attempt to respond to a spiritual and divinely inspired message while they show appreciation to a flawed and frail human messenger. This presents

color the way we view and practice ministry.

Unfortunately, due to the superhuman expectations we either place on ourselves or accept from our parishioners, we neglect to be healed in these deep and dark places. So we begin to heal our broken and fragile self-esteem by "medicating with ministry." This practice of ministry medication allows us to preach and lead with the intention of glorifying Christ while, in reality, we are feeding our pride and self-esteem in a subconscious effort to deal with our own emotional and psychological issues.

Comparing and competing

The practice of comparison and competition is also used in ministry to feed our pride. We have created a corporate business mind-set as it relates to the measure of our ministerial success. We use baptism numbers as our bottom line. Church edifices are seen as expanding the church's portfolio. Attendance becomes the weekly statistical measurement we use to determine progress. We use these metrics to compare with other "competing" churches.

These measurement tools are inadequate and incongruent with biblical principles. While all of us would naturally desire our churches to grow in number and stewardship, these are not the only measurements God uses. In fact, Paul gives us a rundown of his ministerial résumé in 2 Corinthians 11:23–30, and it does not read as a usual curriculum vitae would read today. Paul asks,

"Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death" (v. 23). Paul defines his ministry not by how many he has won for Christ. He defines his service to Christ by how many challenges and hardships he has suffered because of his faithfulness to the call. Paul goes on to list them for us; he was beaten with 39 lashes on five different occasions, beaten three times with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, under constant danger on the sea, in the city, and among his own people. He describes sleepless nights, and days filled with hunger. He concludes his somber list of experiences by declaring, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness" (v. 30). Paul measures his ministerial success by his scars, while we often measure ourselves by our stars.

Modern-day experiences seem in direct opposition to the experience of

Paul and many other New Testament preachers. In the first century, you had not really preached until someone tried to kill you. Popularity and acceptance of the message was not the focus, unlike our present-day celebrity context. The definition of success in ministry must not be performance, attendance, size, or even finances. It must be faithfulness to the assignment He has given us. To this end, God permits the painful thorns. To paraphrase and adapt an old Negro spiritual: *I've got a thorn, you've got a thorn, all God's preachers got a thorn.*

Paul describes the thorn as "a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. 12:7). This raises the question, Who is responsible for the thorn? It seems as if Paul pins the blame on Satan for using this thorn to torment him. However, Paul says the thorn is necessary to keep him humble. Is the thorn the agent of Satan or of God? Either God or Satan can use the thorns in our lives. There are painful

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realities in the lives of all preachers that Satan tries to use to discourage and silence us. The thorn represents something in your life that causes you some great anxiety or pain and may be the feeling of inadequacy. The evil one uses the thorn to convince you that you will never be good enough. He uses the thorn to tell you that you are inadequate and ineffective. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, the word we translate as “harass” is *kolaphizō*. This word communicates the picture of being punched in the face with a closed fist. These discouraging blows can become persistent and overwhelming in the mind of the preacher. They can cause you to approach the pulpit or the board meeting with the internal bleeding of doubt. The persistent thought and doubts can make a preacher feel that he or she is unable to accomplish the tasks of ministry. And the truth is that Satan is partly correct. We are inadequate and ineffective to accomplish the true goal of ministry. The Bible points out the futility of preaching and calls it “foolishness” since flawed human agents promulgate it (1 Cor. 1:18). We will never be good enough or worthy of the calling that lives on in our lives. This is true. However, this is only a half-truth like so many of Satan’s messages to humanity.

Why does God permit such thorns?


God permits this thorn in our flesh to show us our weakness and frailty. What Satan meant to discourage us has the potential of humbling us. Humility is the true position of power. When one experiences humility, the barriers of ego and human agenda are moved out of the way, which makes way for God to be revealed. Greatness is always accomplished by people who are not seeking personal glory. This is why Jesus often talked about and modeled humility. Jesus understood that pride was the origin of sin in heaven and the only cure

for it was humility. Jesus permits the thorn in order to place Paul, and every preacher, in the position of real spiritual power. Charles Spurgeon was known as one of the greatest preachers of his generation; but his thorn was a painful ailment that also kept him quite depressed. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most influential men of his century, and yet he was constantly misunderstood by his own race and hated by many Americans. The thorn seems to be the trademark of every preacher who seeks to transform the world through the Word. All God’s preachers have thorns.

The resolute faith of Paul, after pleading for the thorn’s removal, may be due to his understanding of the use of the word *thorn* in classical Greek. The word *skolops*, translated as “thorn,” is only used once in the entire Bible. However, this word, used in classical Greek, means a stake used to keep a tent driven into the ground. The fact that Paul was a tent maker was no coincidence. Paul uses this word to show us a picture of the thorn’s purpose in his ministry. The thorn acts as a stake to keep the preacher grounded and in place. Paul knew that without the stake the tent could possibly be blown away by howling winds and terrible tempests. The thorns in our ministries act like stakes to keep us in place so that we are not blown away by the unexpected pain of ministry. God knows, if it were not for my thorn, I would have allowed the demands of ministry to ruin my marriage. If it were not for the thorn, I would have left the ministry over bitterness and unfair treatment. But the thorn keeps me in place. The thorn will not let me leave. It will not let me be silent. The thorn drives me into the ground of fervent prayer. The thorn reminds me that I am nothing but dust. The thorn demands that I *be still and know that He is God* (Ps. 46:10). The miracle of the thorn is that what I asked God to

remove was the very thing He uses to save my ministry.

In the end, there are these two realities that save every preacher’s ministry from destruction: thorns and grace. The thorn humbles us; grace encourages us. The answer to our ministerial pride is the thorn represented by our painful life situations and inadequacies. God assured Paul that what he needed most was not removal but refocus. The focus now shifts from the preacher’s pain to God’s purpose. Pastoral weakness has the potential to reveal divine strength. The truth is that preachers do not have to be superhuman. We do not have to be OK all the time. We, too, can hurt, cry, and struggle. Our thorns reveal His grace. So then there is an inherent call to all preachers to embrace their “thorny” ministry. Paul says, “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). Our strength comes not from hiding our insecurities, disappointments, and pains but from confessing them. Our churches, constituents, and communities need to understand that we preach and lead with human “thorns.”

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is an act of public confession. He knew that you never conquer what you do not confess. Paul’s example for every preacher is to live in the authenticity of your weakness. Confess the pride that seeks to derail your preaching. Embrace the fact that your ministry is only about revealing God’s glory. Remember that faithfulness is the measure of ministerial success. Put the façade aside and be the inadequate conduit of His grace. Preach, minister, and lead with your thorn. When you do so in humility and with the grace of God, the preacher’s problem becomes the preacher’s power. 

¹ All scriptures used in this article, unless otherwise stated, are from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

² Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima Sr., *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1997), 99.

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Tom Dombrowski, DMin, serves as pastor of the Connecticut Valley and Rockville-Tolland Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the Southern New England Conference.



President, preacher, and teacher of preachers:

An interview with Haddon W. Robinson

Editor's note: Haddon W. Robinson is the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, United States.

Tom Dombrowski (TD): *What's been your primary goal as a teacher of homiletics and administrator in theological education?*

Haddon Robinson (HR): I think the primary goal has been to teach as many people as possible how to communicate God's Word. In reality, I've found the most satisfying things of my life have been to hear people say that I have helped them become effective preachers.

TD: *What significant advancements in expository preaching have you seen?*

HR: One advancement has been to see the Bible treated as literature. Many people look at it as a source of sermons and, throughout history, they would take a verse and preach on it, whether or not the verse had anything to do with the context of the sermon. But now more people are realizing you can't treat Genesis

like you treat the Psalms, and you can't treat the Psalms like you treat an epistle anymore than you can treat a novel the same way you would the history of the Revolutionary War. So, when we become aware of this problem, we are less likely to pour the Bible into preconceived molds.

I think we're also beginning to understand how difficult it is to apply the Bible in such a way that we can say when we're through, "Thus saith the Lord." The basic doctrine of the text, the big idea, we can get that. Putting it together into a coherent whole, we can do that as well. But more heresy is committed in the area of application than in any other area of our preaching.

If you go to the Scriptures looking for a sermon, you come off way behind. Go to the Bible, but read it as literature and ask, "What is the Bible writer doing? Why did he write this?" And, if given this truth, "Where might it apply today?"

TD: *Why focus on expository preaching?*

HR: Expository preaching is not opposed to topical. It is the foundation of preaching. If I don't preach

the Bible, then what else do I preach? Besides, I sometimes wonder if there's any such thing as preaching that isn't expository. Then I realize there's orthodox preaching, which is preaching doctrines. But that's not you at your best. You have to bring to that your own thinking or the thinking of your group or whatever it is, and that often stands in the way of letting the Bible speak to you first and then to the people.

TD: *What's the biggest challenge you have consistently witnessed when teaching expository preaching?*

HR: I'm stunned by the short amount of time the preacher spends in sermon preparation. I realize preachers are busy. I know the tasks they have to do. I don't want to make light of that, either. But you can't do good preaching on three to four hours a week preparation. There are some weeks when people die, and they don't die on schedule, either. If you're a good expositor, you bring into that experience the things that you know and study. But if everything you do is at the last minute, it won't work. You can get through it. You can yell at people. You can tell them stories. But

pretty soon, they'll begin to realize this is just chaff and not meat.

TD: *How can this be overcome?*

HR: You have to prioritize. You can't be all circumference. You have to have a center. If you haven't decided that *the center of my ministry is to expound the Word of God*, then something else will take the center. And it's easier for something else to take the center because it's usually more fun than sermon preparation. You can go out, you can visit, you can do all kind of things; but if you don't make sermon preparation a priority, then you'll do other things instead.

We all know the temptations: you're away, you're studying, you wonder, *What in the world am I doing here in the book of Obadiah?* And somebody calls and wants you to take them to the doctor's office, and off you go. Not because you're that compassionate, but because it's easier than to deal with Obadiah.

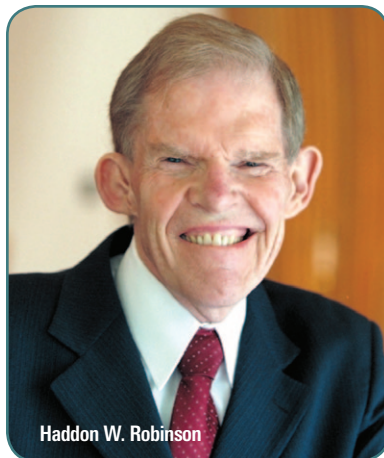
TD: *What does a seminary need to do in order to consistently produce effective expository preachers?*

HR: You have to take the people that are in the seminary and work with them. The Old Testament people, New Testament people, church history people, and homiletics people have to work together.

TD: *As a teacher, what advice would you have for those who teach future preachers?*

HR: Teach preachers about preaching. The great question you have to ask is, What kind of thinking do you have to do to prepare to preach? If you simply give them Roman numerals, some Ads, and stories, it's fragmented. It doesn't hold together.

It's not good enough to tell them you need three points. That's not thinking; that's just arranging stuff. Sometimes, the student says, "Teach me to preach," which means, "Teach



Haddon W. Robinson

me to put sermons together." You end up with cookie-cutter sermons. Every week, you do the same thing. So I think a great deal of it has to do with teaching people to think. And the danger of that is that they may not think your thoughts after you.

TD: *So, how do you teach them to think creatively?*

HR: One way is that I talk about narratives. A narrative is a way of showing people how the person in this text is working it. So Joseph's story is different than Jacob's story. And you come to literature and you say, "What is Sarah doing here? What is the writer trying to do?"

If I read a John Grisham novel, and you say to me, "What's the novel about?" And I say, "There are three things I learned from it," that's not what you're asking me. I'm saying [that] the story is set in New York City in a court in which a man has no power, and a great and large law firm is coming against him. You go through this, and you might say to me, "Well, what's the idea then?" I would answer, "The person is doing this: I think he's trying to help us realize how difficult it is to be right in an unright world. And he does it in a number of ways." That's not the same thing as saying, "There are three things we can learn."

TD: *Regardless of age or experience, what advice would you pass on to those who preach on a weekly basis?*

HR: I would say to them, you don't realize how strategic you are. Most people in church get their understanding of God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ from you. They may have devotions every day, but that's not where they get their minds shaped. So, to get before them and bore them is to say something about God. And boredom is not only bad communication—it's a destroyer of life and hope.

Whatever it takes, treat the Bible as God's Word in the sense that *holy stuff does not mean boring. It's holy. It's set apart to teach me about God, and teach the people about God.* I may entertain them as I preach; but if I entertain them and don't teach them about God when I open this text, I haven't served the Lord well.

But it's easy week after week after week to forget that. You preach not because you have something to say, but because you have to say something. That's the agony of preaching. And every serious preacher feels that. Some weeks you open a passage, and you see it. But there are many other weeks where you wonder, *What in the world is this about? And if I understand it, how do I get it across effectively?* Very seldom the great questions are asked, but if they are asked it's at the point of pain.

TD: *What's been your greatest joy on this journey of teaching and being an administrator?*

HR: To have folks say to me, "You taught me to preach; I'm eternally grateful to you." Every student has gone beyond what I've taught him. But that's the delight.

Or, to have people in churches say to me, "I asked our pastor to train with you, and when he went to that program I don't think he realized how close he was to being asked to leave. Now he comes back and we hear him preach. We want him to stay forever." That's a small part of what takes place. There is no greater delight than that. 📖

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The tyranny of the weaker brother

One of the great Pauline principles of Christian discipleship is that we are free in Christ Jesus—freed from sin by His grace, freed from legalistic bondage, and freed to reflect the model and teachings of Jesus. While Paul vigorously defends this freedom (Gal. 5:1), twice he adds a qualification: sometimes we must voluntarily restrict our freedom for the sake of others who are weaker in faith than we are (1 Cor. 8–10; Rom. 14).

The implications of these passages have a far-reaching effect on ministry. I do not know a pastor who has not been stymied in his or her attempts to make necessary changes in a church program, much less blaze a creative path, because “someone would be offended.” Sermons, relationships, plans, all fall prey to the sometimes tender, often angry, sensibilities of the “weaker brother.”

The result can be the church’s adjusting its activities to the capacity of its most dysfunctional member. I am acquainted with a church where a single man angrily objects to having church fellowship meals for reasons neither sound nor biblical. For 20 years, the congregation has not had a meal together in their church building. One man’s irrational

opinion has dictated the activities of everyone.

Is this what Paul had in mind?

Stumbling block

The Greek word *skandalon* refers to an object that causes someone to trip and lose one’s footing—something you might stumble over. Metaphorically (the only way this word is used in the New Testament) the verbal form is rendered “stumble,” “fall,” or (transitively) “offend.”

Some offenses, says Jesus, you must never cause. “If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matt. 18:6).*

For other offenses, though, He makes no apology. When some followers were offended by the seemingly bizarre notion of eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53–61), He did not say, “Oh, well, then forget it; it’s not *that* important,” but let them leave (v. 66) rather than retract or even (in this setting) clarify the teaching.

Paul, too, is intolerant of those offended by Christ. He recognizes that the Crucifixion was a *skandalon* to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23), but it will not stop him from preaching it. He

reserves the most brutal insult in all his letters for circumcision proponents by charging them with being offended by the Cross (Gal. 5:11, 12).

Like Jesus, Paul also uses the word to describe a situation in which one should avoid offending a vulnerable person. “Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall [*skandalizein*] into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall [*skandalisō*]” (1 Cor. 8:13). “It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall” (Rom. 14:21).

These teachings may appear, at first glance, to be similar to Jesus’ blanket condemnation of offending “little ones,” suggesting we are always to give in to weaker believers. But just because a need has risen to admonish strong church members to be sensitive to new believers does not mean Paul wants a church controlled by weak Christians. If Paul had meant we should let the church grind to a halt at every objection, he would have been contradicting his own pastoral practice: a lifetime of pushing back against objections theological, cultural, and practical.

A weak conscience

As a Jew, Paul has never been part of the empire’s dominant

religious culture. Now, as a Christian Jew charged with the important task of grafting on the non-Jewish branch (Rom. 11:17), he tries to see through the eyes of Gentiles and realizes that the idols he knows objectively to be nothing at all may, in fact, be a subjective problem to his Gentile converts. A quick reading through 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 gives one the sense that he is thinking it through as he writes, and, given the transition the church is going through, that is understandable.

In ancient cities, places of worship and merchants surrounded the town square. Idols were on display. A butcher, grocer, or restaurateur might offer a prayer to his gods and dedicate all of his stock to them, perhaps hoping to improve his sales.

Except for Jews and Christians, most ancient peoples were polytheists. The transition from multiple regional or ethnic gods to a single universal One could be difficult. Like Hinduism today, ancient paganism

was not so much a conviction or conversion but a culture: the gods were the spiritual background to everyday life. The person Paul describes has just come into Christianity. He is still surrounded by temples and idols, and he realizes the indefinable, almost subconscious hold paganism has on him, and feels it necessary to make a defined separation.

This is the one of whom Paul writes, "For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols?" (1 Cor. 8:10). If the conscience is the seat of a productive guilt, as we define the word today, then a weak conscience means that this person has not yet developed a strong moral compass. He is easily influenced. His moral muscle gives out, and he may collapse back into old habits.

Weak may also shade in meaning toward "tender," suggesting a person's moral sense is

overcompensating. This is hinted at in Romans 14, where Paul speaks of the person who really need not be so zealous about food and celebration days but whose qualms can be accommodated during his faith maturation.

Either way, there are some things we know about this weaker brother.

First, this problem is personal. Paul implies that the weaker brother does not yet see this clearly: it is neither the teachings of the church nor the actions of other Christians, but *his conscience* that threatens to trip him up. "But if anyone regards something as unclean, then *for him* it is unclean" (Rom. 14:14; emphasis added). What is at stake is *his* faith, not *the* faith.

Second, if others in the church oblige him, it is not because he is right, but because he is weak. What threatens him spiritually is not necessarily real: "An idol is nothing at all in the world," says Paul (1 Cor. 8:4). It follows that the weak brother



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is not one who, ignoring the convictions of other Bible students in the church community, is allowed to impose his scruples on everyone. There are ecclesiastical processes for rethinking doctrine or establishing orthodoxy, but just demanding that everyone comply with one's convictions is not one of them.

Third, the weaker one is expected to become stronger. Paul encourages growth in faith (2 Thess. 1:3) and knowledge (Col. 1:10) toward a Christian maturity (Eph. 4:15). When an infant is learning to walk, you clear a path so his little feet will not stumble, and hold out your hands to catch him should he fall. You would not, for the rest of her life, clear every path and hold out your hands for her to walk into. You want him to learn to climb stairs, to hike over rough ground, to play games without tripping over his or someone else's feet.

So this isn't a blank check for church manipulation. The one who stomps his foot and threatens conflict unless people see things his way is not a "weaker brother." He has a spiritual problem, but it is not the one Paul addresses here.

Disputable matters

Again, where a teaching is central to the Christian witness, neither Jesus nor Paul gave ground. So if believers are to accommodate the weak or conflicted person, it is only in matters that do not adversely affect the work of God or believers' salvation.

Paul's use of the phrase *disputable matters* in Romans 14:1 shows his recognition that, in the church, some elements of faith and practice will always be under discussion. We will never eliminate all differing points of view, and one person's conviction does not necessarily dictate a corporate one.

Many of us struggle with this, for our convictions tell us there is no matter of belief or behavior that should not be definitively pronounced upon; after all, I have studied and clearly decided it. Yet

part of spiritual maturation is realizing that not only is not every matter that comes up for discussion in the church of salvific importance, but some simply *cannot be and do not need to be* agreed upon. Paul acknowledges as much when he writes that for now, "we know in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). Disputable matters should not prevent the church from moving forward, whether or not they are agreed upon by all.

Paul's sensitivity to this may spring from his experience in Pharisaic Judaism, where community harmony depended upon agreement in thousands of specific behaviors. His postconversion position against legalism appears to play a part in the Jewish issues (celebration days, food, relationship to idolatry) that he weighs in Romans 14. While Paul appears to reject the basis of these (e.g., "I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself," v. 14), he still insists the church need not let such questions discourage new believers.

That will not necessarily end church conflict, for argumentative believers are adept at shifting the argument to whether the issue under discussion is disputable or indisputable. Undoubtedly, many things that churches argue about float between those poles. But to Paul, the poles are pretty clear. Differences having to do with ritual, ceremony, and food are clearly on one end. The primacy of Christ, His teachings, and power, are at the other. In his letters, Paul addresses dozens of problems, but he identifies a single unifying belief: the Lordship of Christ and living that relationship.

Please note, then, these two requirements. The weaker brother must be weak in faith, not simply opinionated or dictatorial. And we will not accommodate his weak conscience in anything that hobbles the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The weakest link

Paul does not hesitate to demand mature behavior of those

he expects to be mature. With weak Christians he is nurturing, though he may not agree that their scruples are God's. But when Peter ministers in Galatia, Paul expects him to uphold Christian freedom, going so far as to "oppose him to his face" (Gal. 2:11) for refusing to eat with the Gentile Christians in the presence of other Jewish Christians.

But what of the one who remains, willfully or unwittingly, weak?

Each Christmas I struggle with strings of Christmas lights that will not light up. Out of 100 bulbs, 99 are just fine. Only one is defective and, because of that one, none of the rest work.

If this were the model of Paul's ecclesiology, and this happens occasionally in congregations, we probably would not have a Christian church today. Paul never taught that the church should be controlled by its weakest link—exactly the opposite. The church is a temple built of interlocking components, rising up for God's glory (Eph. 2:21, 22). The church is a body of individual parts, some important and others minor (1 Cor. 12:12–30), but capable of completing tasks even when some parts do not contribute.

This is a vigorously parallel and organic ecclesiology. The weaker one, surrounded and supported by the strong, upholds the structure and moves it forward, preferably with him; but if not, then in spite of him. One weak mortar joint will not topple the temple, for there is redundancy built in. One cut finger does not put the whole body abed.

And, Paul tactfully adds, should some parts be "unpresentable" (1 Cor. 12:23), they are kept hidden out of modesty. Might he be thinking of those weak but troublesome church members who cause problems when they are allowed too much exposure?

The weak legalist

The "weaker brother" passages must be nuanced carefully if we are not to contradict the larger Pauline ecclesiology. Our English word

offend adds to the confusion, for one can be offended out of petulance, fear, obstinacy, or ignorance—qualities that *skandalon*'s usage proves are not valid excuses. Paul urges accommodation of the weak only in a certain situation: when someone is pushed unnecessarily beyond the stage of growth he has achieved, and then only in matters where all that is at stake is a small self-abridgment of one's own freedom until the weaker ones can mature.

To Paul, the stricter, more legalistic Christian is the weaker one. Of course, the weaker one will not necessarily recognize himself as such. He may equate strictness with strength. To the legalist, God's grace in Christ does not seem enough: God enjoins of him an artificial and forced compliance to an ever-lengthening list. This becomes most evident when he demands everyone conform to his convictions, for

then we see he is not just wrestling with his own conscience, but is trying to legislate a zone of control that would stabilize him in his own spiritual unsteadiness. Because that strategy rarely works, we see the weakest assurance of salvation and the greatest brokenness among the most legalistic of our members.

Some of our struggle with this in conservative churches results from our own confusion about strictness and legalism. When someone becomes incensed because of what is served at potluck or the musical instruments used in worship, do we (perhaps subconsciously) see him as having strong self-control and a willingness to go to ground for principle? In these situations we may lose sight of Christian freedom and find ourselves mucking about in what is disputable and of minor importance, and so prolong the adolescence of the weaker believer.

Churches are as often destroyed by a too-ready capitulation to the least-mature, weakest-conscience members as by errant doctrine, for churches consumed in offense taking implode in stressful relationships. Furthermore, the most abstemious Christian is not necessarily a strong, productive Christian. Giving too much attention to the weaker brother defines faith by what is *not* done rather than (as Jesus illustrates in Matt. 25:34–36) the good, just, and mercifulness that *is*. It's hard to see how Paul, who never tolerated a Judaizer's religion, would have intended that we should simply yield to those weaker brothers or sisters who demand their way rather than encouraging them to mature in their relationship with Christ. **M**

* All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the NIV.

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Be transformed

The Bible tells us, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). Why is this a significant verse? Although we are born again and transformed into new creations the moment we accept Christ as our Savior, the renewing of our minds does not happen instantaneously. And just because we have become born again does not mean we do not have thinking that needs to be dealt with.

God does not want us to think as the world does. He wants us to have a God-focused view about life. For instance, I sense that many Christians are troubled by the events currently

happening in our world: economic and political crisis, natural disasters, and so on. But as God's people, our faith should be in Him and not in the systems of this world. His ability to provide for His people is not subject to the state of the economy or anything else. He has given us the Word of God to transform our thinking so we might have this kind of faith-filled perspective.

This call is not an option but a commandment: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). This verse is a commandment to allow Christ to govern our lives. If our having the

mind of Christ was incidental to accepting Christ, the commandment for us to “let this mind be in you” would be a vain point, but this is not the case. If we want to have the mind-set of Christ, we must personally invest in the process.

—JONAS ARRAIS, DMIN, SERVES AS AN ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL SECRETARY, GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

Revival
and
REFORMATION

Ministry – reaching out to bless

Dear friends,

Ministry is more than just a practical, professional journal. This journal has become a friend to more than 77,000 clergy around the world.

Never did it enter my mind that I would have a role in sharing and making *Ministry* available globally. Over the years, I have had the opportunity of personally sharing *Ministry* with clergy colleagues of numerous denominations. There are a couple of examples that particularly stand out.

On one occasion, we hosted a promotional booth at a major international, interdenominational conference for clergy, and we made available complimentary copies of *Ministry* to all attendees. As the conference spanned three consecutive days, we planned to offer three different issues of the journal—a different issue on each day. At these types of meetings, copious amounts of materials are distributed, and we arranged for what we had imagined would be an ambitious but realistic quantity. But here is an important detail: the first issue that we shared contained part one of a three-part article. During the first night, there seemed to be plenty of reading done by the attendees; and the next morning, we were amazed by those who were eager to receive parts two and three of the article. By lunchtime, we needed to arrange a special delivery of additional magazines to supply the demand. We found it thrilling and gratifying to be able to provide this practical journal to our colleagues.

Another example that readily comes to mind centers on an occasion when I traveled to Nigeria for pastoral meetings. I packed lightly so that I could devote as much luggage space as possible for ministry resources for the attendees. Having limited clothes for a few weeks was a very minor inconvenience in comparison to the sheer delight of colleagues receiving *Ministry*.

And reflecting on my own experience with *Ministry*, after college graduation and internship, my wife and her inexperienced pastor husband began our ministry in rural Australia. While we treasure every friendship we formed during those years of pastoral ministry, there was one *friend* that regularly came and stayed with us. I was always excited to see my *friend* arrive. My *friend* would revive, teach, challenge, awaken concepts, nudge, push, and stretch me. Sometimes it would confront and even anger me—like all good friends. My *friend* was *Ministry*. And *Ministry* still continues to do all these things for me. In short, I have been, and continue to be, blessed by *Ministry*.

Over the years, *Ministry* has sought to reach out to bless pastors across hemispheres, continents, oceans, generations, and denominations, serving as a good friend, supporting, encouraging, and reviving clergy who are investing their lives in valuable service.

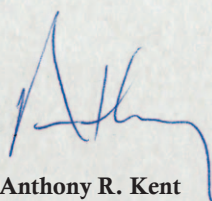
Each November, we have made an appeal for your prayers and financial support of *Ministry*, and 2012 is no different. Yes, most economies around the world are not in the best shape at the moment, but when would be the perfect time to ask someone for their financial support? *Ministry*, an international journal for pastors, exists to serve clergy of all denominations, whether they are in North America, Africa, or some isolated place in Australia. And yes, while the journal is produced and underwritten by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the overwhelming number of recipients of *Ministry* includes clergy of other denominations—and we are delighted about that! So, once a year we ask those who are receiving *Ministry* if they would be kind enough to support their ministerial colleagues by making a donation to *Ministry*. Every penny of your donation will be used to send the journal to your colleagues in ministry—to support, encourage, and thank them for their valuable service. Inside this issue, you will find an envelope for those who would prefer to mail in their donation. Other donors may prefer to donate online by visiting www.ministrymagazine.org/donate. Thank you in advance for reaching out to bless fellow pastors around the world.

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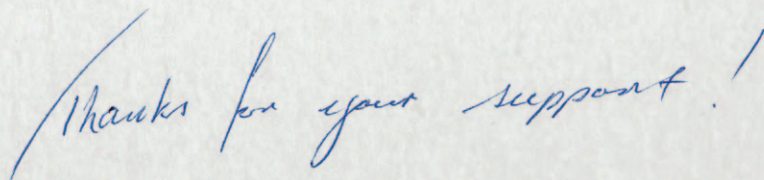
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For those who donate to *Ministry* before the end of 2012, we are offering a complimentary electronic copy of Derek Morris's recently enlarged and revised book, *Powerful Biblical Preaching* (retail value US\$12.95). The details are available at www.MinistryMagazine.org.

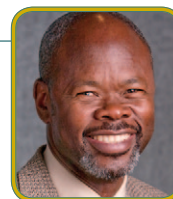
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Anthony R. Kent
Director for Continuing Education
General Conference Ministerial Association



Lael O. Caesar, PhD, is associate editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines and research professor of Hebrew Bible at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Salvation, hermeneutics, and culture

Culture is everything, everywhere, all the time. It is “the world of human meaning, the sum total of a people’s works . . . their vision of what it is to be fully human.”¹ Biblical hermeneutics (interpretation) and human culture are often intertwined and almost inseparable competitors. Despite the transcendent authority of faith, we read and live the Bible within human and social contexts. However, it is reasonable and necessary that we have a proper understanding of the culture-hermeneutics nexus so that the interaction of the two does not undermine the authority of the Word, but rather yields adequate salvific outcomes, with the end result that a valid interpretation of God’s Word is accessed and effectively transmitted across cultures.

Illustrating the issue

The issue demands serious attention, as illustrated by a look at global Seventh-day Adventism. In 209 countries across the world, nearly 19 million Seventh-day Adventists and visitors attend church Sabbath mornings. As a general rule, the church’s scripturally founded fundamental beliefs dictate Adventist belief, life-style, and worship. But because

culture is “the world of human meaning,”² faith in Scripture’s transcendence, in Guyana for example, is itself only part of a Guyanese overall social milieu. Australian interpretation is hard pressed to prescribe for Zimbabwean Adventist dress or music. And how can criteria from New Delhi best define the greetings or architecture typical of New Guinea’s Adventism? Whose theorizing determines orthodoxy among the baptized members worldwide?

These questions, stated in three words, actually ask, Whose biblical hermeneutics? As Huston Smith states, the world comes to us, and we go to it—with inbuilt sensors, concepts, beliefs, and desires that filter its incoming signals in ways that differ in every species, social class, and individual.³ Set over against Adventism’s global character is the truth acknowledged by C. Ellis Nelson that the individual congregation is “the primary society of Christians.”⁴ “Individuals sharing a common outlook or behavioral style increasingly cluster around those institutions . . . of which they approve.”⁵ The local congregation, rather than dictation from some global headquarters, most accurately reflects the theology, perceptions, conscience, and cultural identity of

most of the millions numbered in the church’s global reckoning. Perhaps reverently worshiping “conservatives” may be geographically close to, yet practically widely separated from “progressives” or “liberals” in another congregation fifteen miles away. Today, neither racial nor ethnic nor chronological homogeneity guarantees any similarity between congregations within the same city or village.

But human differences and variations of perception and behavior do not mean that the gospel is either inaccessible or incomprehensible. Human objectivity, more so than biblical intelligibility, remains perpetually open to question. As Smith states, “our concepts, beliefs, and desires affect worldviews.”⁶ This simply means that, as humans, we permit ideas we already hold, prejudices not always so labeled, to determine our attitudes to new ideas. Our reality “is mediated by . . . a meaning we give it in the context of our culture or our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms.”⁷ Hence reliable data transfer from mind to mind, school to school, or culture to culture, must be acknowledged as a real challenge. Nevertheless,

despite the multitude of interpretive roadblocks set up along the hermeneutical road, comprehension and its attendant behavior may yet be possible between radically disagreeing parties.

Osborne's challenge

Grant R. Osborne has thrown a hermeneutical challenge to the theology faculty of the University of Marburg. Osborne acknowledges that many of them will approach his writing from quite different presuppositional⁸ perspectives than his own, but insists:

The question is not whether they will agree but whether they can understand my arguments. I will not be around to clarify my points, so certainly this written communication lacks the dynamic of oral speech. Moreover, those readers without the necessary philosophical background will definitely struggle with the concepts herein.

However, does this mean that no amount of clarification can impart the meaning that I seek to communicate in these paragraphs? I think not.⁹

Osborne's Marburg colleagues do not share his faith in the Bible's historicity. They all know this. They disagree because one side does not believe the other has correctly stated the facts, or properly interpreted the data. Sometimes disagreement occurs because of misunderstanding. But even those misunderstandings are grounded in a sense that things have not been put the way they should. Most amazing then, in all this, is the divine success in communicating to earthlings the gospel of grace. For no two human societies, whether separated by epoch, science, age, or faith, can ever be as far apart as the distance between heaven and fallen humanity. And yet the Bible testifies that God has succeeded in revealing the truth about Himself to us in a way that saves us from ourselves to Himself.

Bible stories of human beings who successfully grasp and practice divine truth testify to this most dramatic of all transcultural communications. We shall review two of them from the life of Abraham, the father of all who believe (Rom. 4:11), and note some of their implications for our topic.

Story 1: Abraham answers the call

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, "LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU." Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living (Acts 7:2–4).¹⁰

Interestingly enough, Terah, not Abraham, heads up the caravan that set out from Ur (Gen. 11:31).

Terah's move to Haran in the north seems quite compatible with Joshua's statement that he served other gods (Josh. 24:2). The cities of Ur and Haran shared the same deity, the moon god, Sin. As head of the family, Terah may have opted for Haran's superior economic prospects—fertile pastureland, wheat and barley farming unaffected by gulf salt water, and the chance to provide services for caravaneers traveling between Mesopotamia and the Levant or the Hittite territory. Abraham stays with his father, not journeying to Canaan until after his death (Gen. 12:5).

Analyzing story 1

This story identifies at least five different groups of individuals. Two of them exhibit the radical alteration from their contemporary cultural norms to Abraham's divinely instituted ways of behavior. Abraham's relatives remaining in Ur when he moves constitute the first group (vv. 1, 2). Then there are those relatives left in Haran when he leaves that city.

Jacob returns to them to find a wife among his mother's relatives in the house of Nahor, Abraham's brother (28:4; 29:1–6). Then there are people Abraham meets in Haran, who join him whether as household slaves or otherwise (v. 5). A fourth group does not join Abraham's household when he leaves Haran. The fifth group is, of course, the primary one: Abraham and his companions who leave Ur together and continue all the way, via Haran, to the land of Canaan.

The groups' varied behaviors again help us focus on two questions Osborne raises about understanding. Osborne wonders (1) if it is possible for readers to know what a written document means; and (2) if it is important to know what the document means.¹¹ Barring total mindlessness, the varied responses show how dissimilar people's mental and practical responses to revelation can be. Many contradictory behaviors follow Bible study. But acceptance of the difference between divinely revealed truth and human nature means openness to the miraculous as we seek ways of sharing the gospel with humanity.

The Bible speaks with unequivocal consistency about people. Its binary thinking dismays those who would integrate hell and heaven into coherent oneness: " 'The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?' " (Jer. 17:9). "The carnal mind," the natural human being, "is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7, KJV). The Bible also denounces hermeneutical mischief, reversing bitter and sweet, darkness and light, evil and good, making each latter its former (Isa. 5:20). This constitutes no mere disagreement over how to put things on which all are agreed. It is disagreement over what is truth. Whatever our reasoning, ignoring real contrast or seeking to circumvent it confuses the purpose of God's biblical self-revelation. That revelation is designed to expose the chasm between God's purity and our shame, His goodness and our corruption, His gift of everlasting

life and our works of death. “Jesus” means Savior from sin (Matt. 1:21), not harmonizer of sin and righteousness.

Story 2: Abraham’s covenant with God

A second story from Abraham’s life involves his longing for an heir. In keeping with his times, the childless Abraham recommends to God his servant Eliezer, born in his house (Gen. 15:2, 3). Continuing the family’s name and wealth were imperatives in his day, accomplished, if necessary, through adoption. The adoption guaranteed an heir and the parents’ long-term care to the day of their burial.¹²

God is not persuaded. He redirects Abraham’s thoughts and reeducates his thinking on the principle of faith. Abraham catches on, and God reckons his faith in Him “as righteousness” (v. 6). Later (vv. 7–21), God complements and expands the teaching, once again, within the context of the interaction between familiar local culture and the phenomenological exception of divine revelation. The account features God as suzerain, engaged in a treaty-making action with His vassal people in the person of Abraham. In the ritual that normally established the treaty, animals were slaughtered, cut in pieces, and the portions arranged in two rows with an aisle between. Parties to the treaty or covenant passed down the aisle between the rows “while taking an oath invoking similar dismemberment on each other should they not keep their part of the covenant.”¹³ But in Genesis 15, God, rather than Abraham, passes, alone, between the pieces, turning on its head the cultural expectation. God’s pledge of dismemberment at the covenant’s violation confirms the promise of Calvary where He pays for our treachery, that He might bring us to Himself.

Learning from our stories: Seven principles

We have said that the Bible’s salvation message (1 Cor. 10:11;

2 Tim. 3:15) is about a divine culture, alien to earth. Its truths reach us because God’s communication is comprehensible and alters our previous beliefs and behaviors. I now propose seven principles, drawn from our two stories that may greatly assist in spreading heaven’s culture to other humans, much as God Himself shared it long ago with Abraham. A consistent message of these stories that we have reviewed is that God’s intervention into the existing culture makes the place of His coming the locus of a new, otherworldly culture. Here are the seven principles that we may apply to the culture-hermeneutics nexus:

1. Otherness. God is not the same as Abraham. He is different, unmistakably and even disconcertingly so, whether to Abraham or anyone else of his culture. And God’s messengers to all human cultures, fallen as humans are, must be other: “A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION” (1 Pet. 2:9). Apology about this *otherness* embarrasses God, our Commissioner.

2. Mutuality. When God as missionary approaches Abraham, He engages Abraham, acknowledging his intelligence (Gen. 12:1). God assumes a certain compatibility with His subject. His otherness is not necessarily alienating, though some may seize upon it as a reason for rejection. God works to eliminate any aspect of His otherness peripheral to His essence. So must we. Nothing dispensable must persist if this will prove inimical to missionary purpose. So the Word becomes flesh and lives in a tent among us (John 1:14). God’s representatives will not work from perspectives of superiority. They will acknowledge native people’s intelligence and operate on the basis of mutuality.

3. Authority. But setting aside the dispensables that inhibit mission does not mean that God is Abraham’s equal. His missionary enterprise requires *authority*: misery loves company. The coming of the missionary God must not lack

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authority or He has but come to accompany Abraham in his misery. God as missionary brings things unfamiliar, things that Abraham needs, and which, from God, he may draw full supply. God calls on Abraham to change, to leave the familiar and ease into the unknown (Gen. 12:1).

4. Respect. Respect, like the principle of mutuality, must be shared by both parties. God respects Abraham who returns the compliment; He does not force him. He offers the new, the promise, and the choice. Abraham's action involves a choice to change, to be different from his father Terah, the idol worshiper (Josh. 24:2). But Abraham displays much respect for his father even in this choice for change. Despite God's call, he follows Terah to Haran, stays with him there, and only leaves after his death (Acts 7:2–4). God speaks of leading Abraham all this way (Josh. 24:2, 3). Missionally speaking, respect is a general value, shown to all, not just to some. God respects Abraham. Abraham respects God. He also respects his father who does not understand his God. Tarrying with one's unconverted family need not signify lack of conversion or indisposition to follow truth. We may understand from the example of the Father of all who believes that some who do not step out may be showing respect.


5. Sincerity. Our fifth principle is sincerity, a challenge to the judgmental. For sincerity is neither proved by conformity nor disproved by nonconformity, but is where and why the Holy Spirit must be allowed to direct conscience and office. God does not dissemble in His speaking. Neither may the missionary who goes in His name. Be aware: God is who He is because of how He acts as surely as how He

speaks. The missionary and God are both presented this way. Respect for the individuality of the other and for the Holy Spirit's work on conscience allows us to accept the other's sincerity. As Peter expressed to the lying Ananias in the case of violation of conscience, that is a matter between the human and God (Acts 5:4). Sometimes God exposes hypocrisy, determining for Himself, when He is obligated to do so.

6. Integrity. A sixth missional principle derived from the Abraham stories is integrity. The God who promised greatness to Abraham (12:2, 3) gives most eloquent voice to this word when Abraham sees Him pass between the chopped up pieces (Gen. 15:17). We see, in His countercultural action, that there is no reserve about His commitment. Integrity is wholeness. God is wholly committed. He counted the cost before earth's foundations were laid, before the first angel was formed. His representatives must count the cost. Or prepare for tragedy by going half committed, by easily dismissing changed mind or broken promise, by winning with bribery when earnestness cannot persuade. We prepare for personal and institutional tragedy, since who we are discloses to observers who is our Commissioner.

7. Trust. A seventh principle on salvation, hermeneutics, and culture, is trust. Trust may be defined as the willingness to believe rather than the sincere suspicion of all belief. Skepticism will not be manipulated. Trust may be abused, but trust lets us grow. God's trust has been much abused by the cynical, but His love still gives to those who ask, and He will not turn away from those who wish to borrow (Matt. 5:42). If we are too afraid to trust, we will be too stunted to grow. All the rewards of His promises depend on trust that

works by obedience. If we will not trust enough to surrender to His will and power, then He cannot act on our behalf. Trust counts as evidence of the things not seen. Without trust, it is impossible to please Him. Without trust, none of our exegetical genius matters. Whether we agree or disagree, understand or misunderstand, comprehendingly and comprehensively proclaim, or mutter and follow tangents, we are nowhere without trust. Nothing in God's coming to us or our going for Him will work if we are skeptical.

If our hermeneutical excursions and cultural interventions demonstrate commitment to these seven principles, men and women will hear our expositions and see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). 

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- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 205.
- 4 Ellis Nelson, *Where Faith Begins* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1967), 183.
- 5 Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987), 69.
- 6 Smith, 205.
- 7 Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 2.
- 8 "Presuppositions" refers to the mental framework within which we individually interpret our data. What we see, hear, feel, etc., how we access, and how we cognitively process what we think we have accessed is informed and controlled by our presuppositions. For more on presuppositions, see Lael Caesar, "Examining Validity: The Bible As Text of History," in Humberto Rasi, ed., *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1996), 1–20, 5; and Caesar, "Hermeneutics, Culture, and the Father of the Faithful," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13/1 (Spring 2002): 91–114.
- 9 Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 376, 377.
- 10 All Scripture passages are from the New American Standard Bible, except as otherwise stated.
- 11 Osborne, 401.
- 12 Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 102, 103.
- 13 Ibid., 103.

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Mission and your next-door neighbor

We find mission embedded in the very heart of the gospel. The Creator of mission—Jesus Christ—set forth the formula for its ultimate success: *Come to Me and then go, share what you have received from Me with the world* (cf. Mark 2:14; 16:15). No matter where a Christian presence is found, it is a certainty that missionaries have been sent forth, following the Master's command.

If you have received the blessing of “going” for Christ, in either a short-term or long-term capacity, I am sure your mental hard drive is full of memories. Many Christian denominations engage in mission service, and I am happy that I am part of a worldwide church that also believes in mission, sending out its first missionary, J. N. Andrews, in 1874.¹

Mission is in the very DNA of Seventh-day Adventists. The passion to carry the message of a soon-coming Savior to the world grows brighter every day. Because of this passion, according to the Web site *Adherents.com*, Adventists rank number six in the “Top 10 largest highly international religious bodies. These are religious bodies in which at least 30% of their world membership lives outside the ‘core country’ (country with the largest number of members).”²

Mission focus has evolved

In recent years, the focus of mission has intensified in the area designated as the “10/40 Window.” The term was first coined by Luis Bush, a Christian missionary during the 1990s. It refers to the Eastern Hemisphere between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude, stretching from the western coast of Africa to the eastern coast of Asia. Roughly two-thirds of the world’s population lives in this area; the vast majority of the region’s inhabitants are non-Christian.³

The sheer number of languages spoken in this “window” is staggering, but the radio mission arm of the Adventist Church—Adventist World Radio (AWR)—has been working diligently for the past 41 years to blanket the region with the message of hope and salvation in Jesus Christ. At present, AWR is broadcasting this message in more than 100 major, mission critical languages. Our program production focuses on the most widely spoken languages of the world, enabling us to blanket about 80 percent of the earth’s total population.

Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, in *Operation World*, make this important observation: “The

potential audience for Christian radio programming is 99% of the world’s population, assuming good reception, availability of a radio, and a desire to find the programs.”⁴ AWR has taken advantage of this fact by using the technology of shortwave, AM, and FM radio to reach out to this vast audience.

The mind-set of many people in North America indicates that short-wave radio has become an oddity or passé—unlike radio listeners in the 10/40 Window. For them, shortwave radio is often their only means of receiving any radio programming at all. One listener wrote to us and said, “I never knew in all my life that there was any other religion other than Hinduism and Buddhism; but you have introduced me to Jesus Christ. Thank you for allowing me to taste the sweetness of God.”

The window has moved

People all around us hunger for a word from the Lord! There must be a greater urgency to our work. This is not a time to relax, but, energized by the Spirit, we must move ever forward in claiming territory for God. According to Mark Baxter, “In the last 40 years over 1 billion people have died who have never heard of Jesus, and around 30 million people

this year will perish without hearing [the message of salvation].”⁵

A statement made recently by Dan Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, should be considered when pondering the plight of our neighbors. While addressing a leadership meeting, he stated with great solemnity, “The 10/40 Window just moved in next door.” He was referring to the massive number of people from the 10/40 Window moving to the United States and Canada from every corner of the globe. The Hmong speaker, the Chin, the Mandarin, the Arabic, the Vietnamese, the Lao, the Spanish, and the Burmese have moved here—the diaspora is staggering in number!

In April 2010, the *New York Times* shared this mind-boggling information, “While there is no precise count, some experts believe New York is home to as many as 800 languages—far more than the 176 spoken by students in the city’s public schools or the 138 that residents of Queens, New York’s most diverse borough, listed on their 2000 census forms.”⁶

New York’s Lower East Side was probably the area where the phrase *melting pot* was first used.⁷ But the

size of the “pot” has increased to include the entire nation and “melting” takes time. The United States Census Bureau found that more than 55 million people above the age of five years old speak a language other than English in their homes.⁸ Indeed, mission has moved in next door!

“‘Things are changing in the U.S. and Canada,’ said Ed Stetzer, vice president of Life Way Research and Ministry Development. ‘By 2050, there will be no majority race or ethnicity in the United States. Already, in Toronto, the majority of residents were born outside of Canada. This is a wake-up call to the Church in North America. The nations of the world are living right here, yet many are not hearing the gospel in an intentional, organized way. We can do better.’”⁹

What would you do if a family moved in next door to you but they spoke no English and the language they did speak was unknown to you? Now, let’s assume they are not Christians. I am sure you will agree that they still need to hear about Jesus Christ and His saving love.

What can you do?

As a pastor, you and your congregation may be struggling right

now with this situation. If you pastor in a large city like New York City, you are certainly faced with this dilemma. AWR remains aware that the call to mission still exists; but the recipient of that mission has become a moving target, so we have developed effective tools for you and your church family to deal with this new twenty-first-century mission paradigm.

In 2010, AWR began an exciting new phase of outreach by placing our language broadcasts on the Internet and podcasts. There are close to two billion Internet users in the world, and the number grows daily. We now offer podcast programs in over 100 languages.

Let’s assume your neighbor speaks only Vietnamese. Log on to www.awr.org/share or www.awr.org/en/share to select the language of your choice—in this case Vietnamese. There, you will find a beautiful invitation that you can first read in English to understand and approve before you hand it out:

There is a wonderful message of Peace and Happiness that has meant a lot to me, and I would like to share it with you. To listen to

A sense of direction

A revivalist lost his way in a city where he was to give a lecture at the town hall. He stopped to ask directions from a group of boys. The boys told the preacher how to get to his destination, and then they asked, “Why are you going there?”

“I’m going to give a presentation,” the clergyman said, “about heaven and how to get there. Would you like to come along and find out?”

“No way!” one of the boys said, “you don’t even know how to get to the town hall.”

Notwithstanding the boy’s literal interpretation, those who seek revival, both personal and corporate,

should have a clear sense of spiritual direction. In a 2010 sermon, Dwight Nelson outlined three signs of genuine revival: prayer, study, and witness. The first two pertain to the direction in which authentic revival should lead: prayer is the ignition; faithful study of God’s Word is the steering.

“The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us,” writes Ellen G. White, “just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, . . . the reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One.”*

And when we have had an

audience with the Infinite One, we will want to reach out—in service and witness—to show His astonishing grace to a world that is foundering for a clear sense of direction.

—GARY B. SWANSON, MA, SERVES AS DIRECTOR OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT, GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 393.

Revival
and
REFORMATION

one or several of these messages in your own language—every day if you like—simply log on to your computer at www.awr.org/podcasts. On that page you will find many languages. Locate the program in the Vietnamese language and click the icon. It will open to a page that will allow you to choose from a large selection of programs. Please invite your friends and family to join you. May you find the same Peace and Happiness from these messages that I have found.

If you are happy with the wording, proceed to download the invitation. From there, it's easy; knock on the neighbor's door, smile, and when he or she answers, hand the invitation to him or her. That's it! There is nothing more to do—easy witnessing! The program content is culturally sensitive because our producers are born and raised within the specified language group. And you can share the gospel message using this technology without the risk of embarrassment or concern regarding program content and quality.

In addition, some language groups, based in our bigger cities, have become so large that they have their own newspapers. For many of the languages on our site, we have sample classified ads available that will enable you to download the wording and place ads that will blanket an entire population center.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). The best time to proclaim the

message of Christ to the diaspora is in the first generation—before they settle in and become too comfortable.

Ed Stetzer issued a challenge: "Believers in North America need to stop waiting for a 'melting pot' to impact immigrants and instead make personal efforts to engage the first-generation immigrants around them with the gospel."¹⁰

Practical application


I once interviewed a convicted murderer named Tao Tung for the TV series *Making Waves*. Tao was thrown into prison for killing his landlord, and, while in prison, he got into a fight with another inmate and killed him too.

Amazingly, he was let out of jail after serving four years of his sentence. He had no idea why he was released but was happy to be free. He returned to his city and found that his old home was still vacant. Not long after moving back in, there was a knock at the front door.

Cautiously peering through a crack, he saw a nicely dressed couple standing on the porch with a radio in hand. His curiosity was piqued so he opened the door and invited them in, and they introduced themselves as his neighbors next door. They explained that they were Baptist Christians and they brought him a radio as their friendship gift.

They showed him a particular channel on the dial (Adventist World Radio) and told him that it had been a great blessing to them and knew it would be to him as well. He was a Buddhist, but thought they were very kind to give him this gift.

They had been so nice that he decided to listen to the programs and soon fell in love with Jesus. He was baptized and now shares his love for Christ with all who will listen. It is ironic that his name in English means *shining brightly*.

Pastor, if your church family has neighbors who have moved from their homeland—feeling a little insecure, out of place—and are hungering for something, Jesus is the answer to that hunger. And with gospel programming in more than 100 languages, AWR will equip your members with the needed tools to satisfy that hunger! Together, we can help introduce your neighbors to Jesus Christ. 

- 1 See Mervyn Maxwell, "J.N. Andrews Life Sketch," Andrews University, accessed September 17, 2012, www.andrews.edu/about/jna_sketch.html.
- 2 "Religious Bodies of the World With at Least 1 Million Adherents," Adherents, accessed September 17, 2012, www.adherents.com/adh_rb.html#International.
- 3 Wikipedia contributors, "10/40 Window," Wikipedia, accessed September 17, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/40_Window.
- 4 Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World* (Tyronne, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 7.
- 5 R. Mark Baxter, *The Coming Revolution: Because Status Quo Missions Won't Finish the Job* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2007), 12.
- 6 Sam Roberts, "Listening to (and Saving) the World's Languages," *New York Times*, April 28, 2010, accessed September 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/29/nyregion/29lost.html?pagewanted=all>.
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- 8 Hyon B. Shin and Robert A. Kominski, *Language Use in the United States: 2007* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), PDF, accessed September 18, 2012, www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/acs-12.pdf.
- 9 Brooklyn Lowery, "LifeWay Research Finds Outreach to First-Generation Immigrants Succeeding, Needs Improvement," LifeWay, March 29, 2010, accessed September 18, 2012, www.lifeway.com/ArticleView?storeId=10054&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&article=LifeWay-Research-finds-outreach-to-first-generation-immigrants-succeeding-needs-improvement.
- 10 Ibid.

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The **motivation** factor: Why people do what they do

People in thriving churches have it. Organizations that change the world have it. Productive people apparently have it. An effective spirit-filled ministry team certainly needs it.

What is this “it”?

Motivation.

Church leaders often view motivation as a mysterious phenomenon. True, our observations regarding motivation create as many questions as answers. The disciplines of psychology and organizational theory propose premises often leading in opposite directions. On the one hand, some people believe motivation is a part of the natural realm—one is born with the trait. On the other, some see motivation as a mystical quality. While helping and hindering forces may be identified, the quality of being motivated defies definition.

Motivation is best understood from a scriptural starting point. True, science yields understanding and enriches the questions we pursue. But understanding motivation requires exploration of meaning in human existence and that rests in special revelation. Only when we understand our relationship with the Creator can we understand the nature of motivation. So, in considering the notion of motivation, the

followers of Christ must grasp the concept of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and how He prompts the urgency and fervor of our initiatives.

Motivation is not a mystery. We can understand it. We can motivate. More accurately, we can lead others to the experience from which they draw motivation. The process of understanding is centered in Scripture, but it also draws from the voices of social science. Understanding requires reflection on our beliefs about life in our time.

When we talk of motivation, a sense of fear exists—fear that we pursue motivation for our own selfish agendas, to get more of what we want from others. That fear emerges from honest reckoning with the weakness of our own humanity. Selfishness gets in the way of true understanding. Motivation can be rightly understood only when we are at peace with our own meaning; and that peace lies deeper than the interests that too often drive ministry. Peace is not discovered in success interpreted through the evaluations of our peers—peace comes through knowing why we live and do what we do. True, motivation increases productivity; but it can only be understood when approached in terms of meaning, serving, and joy.

The following is a spiritually grounded approach to motivation that engages the needs, gifts, and aspirations of the people we seek to serve and lead in God’s service. We begin with a consideration of several human approaches to motivation and then study what Scripture says.

Motivation in human experience: A theoretical approach

Consider work. People have organized, or been organized, for work since ancient times. Look at the pyramids of Egypt. One of those edifices, the Great Pyramid, is 756 feet long on each side; 480 feet high; and has more than 2 million blocks of stone, each weighing more than 2 tons. The base of the structure misses a perfect square by only seven inches.¹ This edifice was built without the internal combustion engine, electronic calculators, or computers. People worked. Why? They were forced—enslaved.

Generally, ancient cultures distinguished creative initiatives from work and despised work, believing it interfered with the arts. So, they employed slaves for work. There are exceptions, and they increased as history moved forward. Medieval monks built monasteries and

recorded their time and process, apparently concerned with efficiency and productivity.² What motivated their work? They envisioned the outcome as glorifying a purpose to which they felt called.

The Protestant Reformation gave birth to the idea of work as a virtue. Theological ideas, which we explore below, came into view. People came to understand themselves as led by the Spirit of God, called to a spiritual priesthood, and gifted for service. Work took on new meaning. Work became fulfilling and respectable; idleness deplorable.

Consider the idea of productivity. Productivity is generally described as the ratio of desired consequent output to a measure of input. Output worth \$100 from input worth \$10 is productive. Output worth \$100 from input worth \$105 is not. Efficient management of this process is thought to be the key to an organization's survival.

In much of culture, motivation finds its utilitarian value around productivity. The question is, How can we motivate people so productivity increases? The problem with productivity as an idea is the issue of what we measure, what we truly value. The measure of the value of work when determined by one doing the work may be different from one wanting the work done. For instance, a painter values the beauty of the painting, while the shopkeeper values the artwork by what a buyer will pay for it. For one, the value is beauty; for the other marketability. Understanding motivation requires changing our concept of productivity, investing terms of productivity in the hands, or more accurately, the soul of the one actually doing the work.

A brief review of some social science research in motivation is helpful here. One such notable work is that of Elton Mayo, who based his research on the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company of Chicago from 1924 to 1927. Mayo asserts that the social world of the adult is carried out around work

activity, and motivation is conditioned by social relationships. Recognition and affirmation are more important than physical elements, and social groups have greater influence over motivation than management.³

Abraham Maslow, whose research is most often noted in "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943) and *Motivation and Personality* (1954), is best known for his hierarchy of human needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow asserts that this is a hierarchy of motivation, with humans seeking the next level. Maslow's contribution to our inquiry regarding motivation is revealed in his statement, "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man can be, he must be."⁴

Frederick Herzberg conducted research among 200 engineers and accountants in the Pittsburg area in the 1950s. He theorizes that people are motivated to find satisfaction through their work. He describes two dimensions of job satisfaction: hygiene and motivation. Hygiene factors, such as policies, supervision, salary, and working conditions, do not motivate, but they can dissatisfy. Motivation, he states, is linked to matters such as responsibility, actualization, and recognition, and is found in the work itself.⁵

Douglas McGregor, in his work *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), describes two management models, which he labels as Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X managers assume people dislike work and, therefore, must be controlled or rewarded. Theory Y managers, in contrast, believe energy given to work is as natural as play or rest. People seek responsibility, will direct themselves, and improve their work. McGregor asserts that his research proves thriving organizations are characterized by Theory Y managers.⁶

The nature and practice of motivation

When considered extrinsic, motivation equates with control. We

can control the *behavior* of others by external factors such as policies, remuneration, or punishment. But behavior cannot be defined as motivation.

Motivation is doing something because we want to do it. It is intrinsic. It is observed in those we call self-starters, people who take initiative, those who find joy in getting things done.

For us as Christians, our theology shapes how we view motivation. What do we believe about God? I see a great deal of evidence that many believe in a controlling and punitive God. I see it in the tone of the Sabbath School teacher who begins the class with a quiz regarding the hours that Christians help or the number of Bible studies given. I hear it in the thundering sermons that remind us of our responsibility: "We are Christians, members of this body, so come back this afternoon to pass out literature!"

But that need not be the case. As leaders, we can motivate the church for a better ministry, and the motivational techniques we use should be ethical and compatible with the Word. The following is a brief summary of such techniques:

- Help people identify a need by exposing them to reality. We do that when we help a smoker visualize the effects of smoking, expose a careless driver to the human tragedy of an accident scene, or give Christian youth opportunities to see spiritual joy and genuine gratefulness among people in poverty as they construct a new school or church during a short-term mission trip.
- Give people responsibility. Responsibility is a great teacher. Realizing the opportunity to contribute through their efforts, people tap their intellectual potential and rise to new challenges.
- Provide affirmation and recognition. People respond positively to assurance that they are investing their time and energy in a way that

blesses others. Affirmation from the church assures them their lives mean something to God.

- Demonstrate our own enthusiasm for ministry. Pastors specialize in exhortation. But providing an example of motivation for ministry through our actions has great influence and power. That does not mean we must replicate every ministry in the church. It does, however, mean we should show passion that exceeds professional duties.
- Intensify interpersonal relationships. Relational networks are motivating. Teams that care for each other spend meaningful time in prayer and conversation and enjoy being together, and they experience greater motivation.
- Believe God can make everyone a significant person. God calls

people to what they can become. Envision that future. What you see for people shapes who they will become.

The theological ground of motivation

But what is the theological grounding of Christian motivation? Among several possible answers, I like to choose the Christian concept of joy.⁷

Jesus spoke of triumphant joy emerging from the depths of the disciples' grief just prior to His crucifixion: " 'Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. . . . Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you

will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy' " (John 16:19, 20, 22, NIV).

Like the first disciples in those hours of His death, we wait for the return of Christ. Do we wait in sorrow or joy?

A moment etched in my memory offers both a serious and humorous narrative of the dilemma that faces Adventist believers waiting for the return of Jesus. On a summer afternoon in 1990, the sun brightened the urban landscape as I emerged from what was then known as the Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis, Indiana. My heart was filled with joy. I had been with thousands of faith-filled believers attending the church's General Conference session. They had stories—stories of victory, stories of people who had surrendered to Jesus, of thousands baptized, of lives changed. I cheered; my eyes swelled with tears of joy; my heart overflowed.

So the demonstration facing me as I emerged from that stadium was a bitter contrast. Banners shouted the conviction of people marching back and forth: "Now is a time for sorrow," "Weep and lament." Picket signs bobbed up and down, punctuating their message. Literature pressed into my hand rebuked me for the joy I felt. *We live in the end time, repent, weep for your sins*, I was told.

I must confess, weeping comes easily for me. Is it doubt, this unrest in my soul? Or is it perhaps a more universal expression of human religious experience: sorrow mixed with longing? A hundred thousand perish in an earthquake in China. An anonymous child slips into death from starvation in Africa. A dear colleague is overcome with cancer. A stray bullet steals the life of a six-year-old girl in Philadelphia. Could this be my Father's world? Strangely, in the suffering, my longing for Jesus becomes a sweeter joy.

In His parting message of hope to the disciples, Jesus has a word for us. " 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble.

More Resources

The following resources provide further study in the area of motivation. Careful reflection on the words of Jesus in context and on the comments compiled from Ellen G. White's writings are very helpful. The leadership literature chosen contributes to understanding principles of motivation, as do the selected works from fields of social science.

- Blackaby, Henry T., and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2001.
- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2008.
- Deci, Edward L., and Richard M. Ryan. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.
- Fisher, Elizabeth. "Motivation and Leadership in Social Work Management: A Review of Theories and Related Studies." *Administration in Social Work* 33, no. 4 (2009): 347–367.
- Jesus, in His prayers for and conversation with the disciples as recorded in John 13–17; 21.
- Niebuhr, Richard. "The Widened Heart." *Harvard Theological Review* 62, no. 2 (1969): 127–154.
- Rodin, R. Scott. *The Steward Leader*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Thomas, Kenneth W. *Intrinsic Motivation at Work*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.
- White, Ellen G. *Christian Service*. Takoma Park, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947.

But take heart! I have overcome the world' " (v. 33, NIV). In the remainder of their days, the eleven would experience poverty, wealth, persecution, miracles, shipwreck, and celebration. Simultaneously, they would testify, see the power of the Holy Spirit, and long to be with Jesus. They would wait, wait until death. Wait with joy!


We, too, often assign joy to future glory; a human experience to be delayed until Jesus returns. In doing so, we resign ourselves to wait in solemn, even passive expectancy. Jesus spoke to the Twelve of suffering but underscored their joy. Joy was His promise. Was He speaking of the end of time on this planet, beyond the life of service? Or did He believe their witness of the resurrected Christ would ensure their joy in the present? Jesus led the attention of the Twelve to the time of their mission throughout the exhortation of John 16. Joy was His wish for His followers in that period of time: " 'Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full' " (v. 24, NKJV). Jesus wished them joy during the remaining years of their lives of

service on earth. " 'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' " (v. 33, NKJV).

In Christ, we have joy! Right here, right now! Joy is a gift of grace. We do not achieve grace by working for it and so it is with joy. I have, too frequently, encountered the temptation to despair like the demonstrators pacing the plaza in Indianapolis, warning of doom to come; a doom I easily acknowledge as the condition of this earth without Jesus. But when the Creator draws us to Him, joy comes like a gift. Jesus is risen! He has overcome! As we long to be with Jesus, the sufferings only accentuate the longing. The longing itself multiplies joy.

People do things that give them joy. That is the key, the ground for motivation. We were created for joy. Yes, faith and love are inseparable in the experience of joy. And we do what we do for one reason that underlies all others: we have experienced the love of Jesus and

this love has transformed the way we see the world.

Do you want to motivate members for ministry? Understand its nature, give competent leadership that ethically promotes motivation, and most of all, live, preach, and teach the joy of our risen Christ! 

- 1 For a more complete description of the engineering and construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza, see N. Smith, "Classic Projects: The Great Pyramid at Giza," *Engineering and Technology* 6, no. 1 (February 2011): 112, 113.
- 2 Scott Reeves provides one illustration of the nature of work done by monks in constructing their monasteries in "Yorkshire's Medieval Cistercian Abbeys," *British Heritage* 32, no. 1 (March 2011): 50–55.
- 3 See Elton Mayo, "Supervision and Morale," *Journal of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology* 5, no. 5 (January 31, 1931): 248–260.
- 4 A. H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (July 1943): 383.
- 5 For an application of Herzberg's theory in a university setting, see Ryan E. Smerek and Marvin Peterson, "Examining Herzberg's Theory: Improving Job Satisfaction Among Non-academic Employees at a University," *Research in Higher Education* 48, no. 2 (March 2007): 229–250.
- 6 Elizabeth Fisher compares McGregor's work with researchers mentioned previously in this article; see Elizabeth Fisher, "Motivation and Leadership in Social Work Management: A Review of Theories and Related Studies," *Administration in Social Work* 33, no. 4 (October–December 2009): 347–367.
- 7 I recommend two sources to examine a theology of joy at a deeper level. The first is Roy Branson, "And Now . . . the Theology of Joy," *Encounter* 34 (Summer 1973): 233–245; the other is Richard Niebuhr's article, "The Widened Heart," *Harvard Theological Review* 62, no. 2 (April 1969): 127–154.

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A revival in Hawaii

More than a hundred years ago, Ellen White penned this poignant appeal: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To see this should be our first work. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer."* If that was true then, it is more so today. It will not happen any other way—we must pray and ask.

Recognizing our desperate need of revival in our lives, homes, schools, and churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hawaii embarked on a journey of prayer and revival. Every person received the book written by Dennis Smith,

40 Days of Prayer and Revival in Anticipation of the Second Coming.

For the first time in the history of the Adventist Church in Hawaii, the entire membership joined together in 40 days of prayer. We did so because we recognized our desperate need and desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit, live like Jesus, and stand strong in these last days.

But this was more than just praying for revival. The 40 days were also an invitation to pray for lost people. Each person made a list of at least five to pray for every day. For 40 days straight, thousands of lost people were lifted in prayer.

The results? Answered prayers, miracles, revival, healings, baptisms, and rebaptisms. Simply put, we will never be the same again!

—RALPH S. WATTS III, DMin, SERVES AS PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN HAWAII, UNITED STATES.

* Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), bk. 1, 121.

Revival
and
REFORMATION



The Reformation: Faith and Flames

by Andrew Atherstone,
Oxford: Lion Hudson Plc,
2011.

Andrew Atherstone, tutor in History and Doctrine, and Latimer Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, has written several books on Christian history. In the prologue to *The Reformation: Faith and Flames*, he declares the purpose of the book: "This is the account of Christianity in crisis as the people of Europe engaged in their common quest for eternal salvation."

In 10 chapters the author takes us from the Renaissance and the Reformation at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the wars of religion at its end. He sets out, with clarity, the religious issues and political factors that assisted or retarded the Reformation.

The writing is of a high standard with no obscurity or sectarianism informing the narrative.

The author writes in a fair and factual perspective in laying out the positions taken by all the participants: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Loyola, Erasmus, the English Reformers, the Anabaptists, and the papacy.

The Reformation is a paradox, for we see incredible courage blended

with gross stupidity. Religious tolerance found no place in the thinking or behavior of the magisterial reformers or the papacy, and the carnage they let loose upon the Anabaptists defies understanding. Personal prejudice blinded intelligent men to the basic principles of Christianity. In a very real sense, the possibilities inherent in the Reformation were arrested.

The efforts of Philippe of Hesse

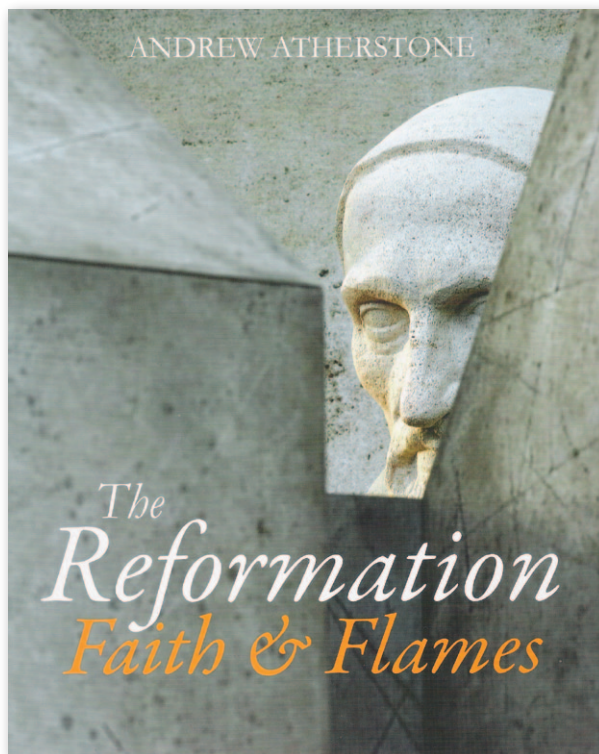
the progress of the Reformation. Luther's diatribe in which he said of the Zwinglians, "Before I would have mere wine with the fanatics, I would rather receive sheer blood with the pope."

Atherstone brings out the vital role Erasmus played in the development of the Reformation and also how the Anabaptists championed religious toleration, especially in the work of Menno Simmons. This well-illustrated book has several clear maps showing the geographical progress of the Reformation. For anyone interested in obtaining a wide perspective on the Reformation, this will prove as a really helpful book.

The year 2017 will be the 500th anniversary of Luther's posting his 95 theses and, with the hindsight of history, there is a tendency to revision and reinterpret his life and writings. The author concludes with an epilogue including a final sentence pregnant with meaning. "The Reformation caused a cataclysmic and permanent rupture throughout Europe, divided families and communities as

never before. Yet they were willing to pay that painful price in their pursuit of eternal salvation." This book spells out the reasons for their commitment. ▣

—Reviewed by Patrick Boyle, MA, a retired pastor living in Watford, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.



to forge evangelical unity by calling the Reformers together at the Marburg Colloquy foundered largely on Luther's intransigence to interpret Christ's words, "This is my body," in any but a literal sense. Both Luther and Zwingli, though they were children of their age, held back



In Ukraine, Adventist Church is first Protestant broadcaster to receive license

Kiev, Ukraine—The approval last week of a cable and satellite broadcast of Seventh-day Adventist Church television programming in Ukraine marks the first time a Protestant broadcaster has received a broadcast license in the eastern European country. Set for launch in November, a new 24-7 Adventist-run satellite channel in Ukraine is expected to potentially reach 75 percent of the country's population.

The license, granted by Ukraine's National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting, authorizes Hope Channel Ukraine to broadcast nationwide on 600 cable networks.

"This is a major development for our church in Ukraine," said **Brad Thorp**, Hope Channel president. Previously, Hope Channel Ukraine programs aired on cable channels operated by other broadcasters in the country. With the license, Hope Channel Ukraine can potentially "reach three out of every four persons in Ukraine," Hope Channel Ukraine Director **Vacheslav Demyan** said in a press release from the network.

Prior to the approval, national regulations prevented any religious broadcaster from obtaining a broadcast license, said **Oleg Kostyuk**, a Hope Channel headquarters program host and native Ukrainian. "There [have been] no Protestant television channels in Ukraine. But there will be one now," said Kostyuk. "This is not

just good news; this is a major and miraculous breakthrough."

According to the press release, Ukraine's National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting considers Hope Channel Ukraine an educational-religious broadcaster. Hope Channel Ukraine expects to broadcast Bible lessons and programs on healthy living, music, and lifestyle as well as programs for children, young people, and families. Network officials say Hope Channel Ukraine will broadcast 18 hours of programming in Ukrainian per day, with an additional six hours of content in other languages spoken in the region. *[ANN staff]*

In newest country, radio ministry coming soon

Juba, South Sudan—Shipping containers here in Juba don't just hold transported goods; they are also used as homes and offices. Even some entire hotel complexes are constructed out of the large steel boxes. In a few months, the Seventh-day Adventist Church plans to launch a radio ministry from a beige container recently installed on the compound of its local field office. The ministry, in development since 2006 at the prompting of a pastor, is meant to connect with a community where traditional outreach is not possible, church leaders say.

"We are committed to share the Word of God with people in this community," said **Alumai Dominic**, a lay member and chair of the committee overseeing the project. "This message isn't [otherwise] reaching

the people outside of Juba. We'll be able to reach other communities."

Years ago, the committee requested a radio frequency from the government and was pleasantly surprised to receive four. They named their flagship frequency 94.0 Salvation FM. The ministry plans to offer programs about the gospel, health, family, and youth issues. Programs will be broadcast in local languages, including Bari, Juba Arabic, Dinka, Muro, Shiluk, and Zende.

The upcoming radio ministry was the brainchild of **Fulgensio Okayo**, a retired pastor who, in 2006, issued the challenge of starting a radio ministry. "People here really want to hear from the Word of God. If we use radio we can reach them," he said. Members quickly bought into the idea and contributed to the project.

Studio equipment has been purchased, eight volunteers are being trained to staff the operation, and a 30-meter mast has been assembled next to the container capable of broadcasting to an eight-kilometer radius. Later, an antenna will be constructed on a hill outside of town, capable of reaching the entire capital city of some 350,000 people.

Still, another 50,000 South Sudanese pounds—or US\$11,400—is needed to launch the ministry, said **James Yangi**, the committee's treasurer. He estimates a broadcast launch in about three months after more contributions trickle in. Some subscribers are already committed to regularly contribute for ongoing costs once the ministry begins. Yangi said other local members will likely contribute later once they see progress and get excited about the project. *[Ansel Oliver/ANN. Steven Bina also contributed to this story]* 

Elvin Adams, MD, MPH, served as an associate director of Health Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.




What is health evangelism?

Health is a great treasure. It is the richest possession mortals can have. Wealth, honor, or learning is dearly purchased if it be at the loss of the vigor of health. None of these attainments can secure happiness, if health is wanting. It is a terrible sin to abuse the health that God has given us; for every abuse of health enfeebles us for life and makes us losers, even if we gain any amount of education.*

educate participants regarding the adverse consequences of risky behaviors and advocate specific behavior changes to promote or recover health. Health programs measure certain variables to document a person's starting status at the beginning of a program and ending status after a program. Measuring the changes that have taken place during a program documents the effectiveness of the program in alter-

to pray. Prayer is the way a person contacts Jesus. By prayer a person can ask for help, express gratitude for success, and enjoy fellowship with Jesus.

Health evangelism programs, when conducted correctly, provide an opportunity for people to experience daily contact with a Christian helper for encouragement, and social and spiritual support. Church members can share their own experiences with Jesus. They can pray with those who are struggling to change. They can form friendships. The bonds that are formed may open doors for future opportunities to share Jesus. When conducted in your church, these health programs provide opportunities for the community to become familiar with your church facility—helping them feel at home in your church environment. Then, hopefully, they will be more inclined to come to the church for other programs and maybe church services.

In this day and age where healthful living is being emphasized in many societies, we must be willing to seize these wonderful evangelistic opportunities. We, as pastors, need to prayerfully consider every way to share Jesus' love with others. In Jeremiah, God said, "Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6, NASB). This promise given to Judah and Israel is within our grasp as well. God has provided a map to living healthy in Him; let's share it with the world! 

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT JESUS CAN EMPOWER PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE HIS HELP TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES.

Traditional health education communicates information regarding the risks associated with unhealthy living and provides behavior change strategies designed to correct bad habits and addictions. Only a small percentage of people who attend such health education programs make permanent, long-term changes.

The good news is that Jesus can empower people who choose His help to make healthy choices.

Health evangelism focuses on Christ-centered help integrated with a health program. The evangelistic component of health evangelism introduces people to Jesus. Lasting behavior change is difficult for many, but a relationship with Jesus can make a difference—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Most health programs are essentially secular in nature. They

ing a person's life. Common health variables include blood sugar level, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, weight, body mass index, and many other characteristics.

Some of these secular health programs are conducted by churches but have no spiritual component. It is a missed opportunity when a person comes to a church, meets members, learns some health information, but does not learn of Jesus, who provides the power to change.

Health evangelism is evangelistic activity *in* a health program. In health evangelism programs, a person is introduced to the Bible as a valuable resource for total health. The Bible has many examples of the help that Jesus provides to those who are seeking better health.

In these specialized evangelism programs, a person is taught how

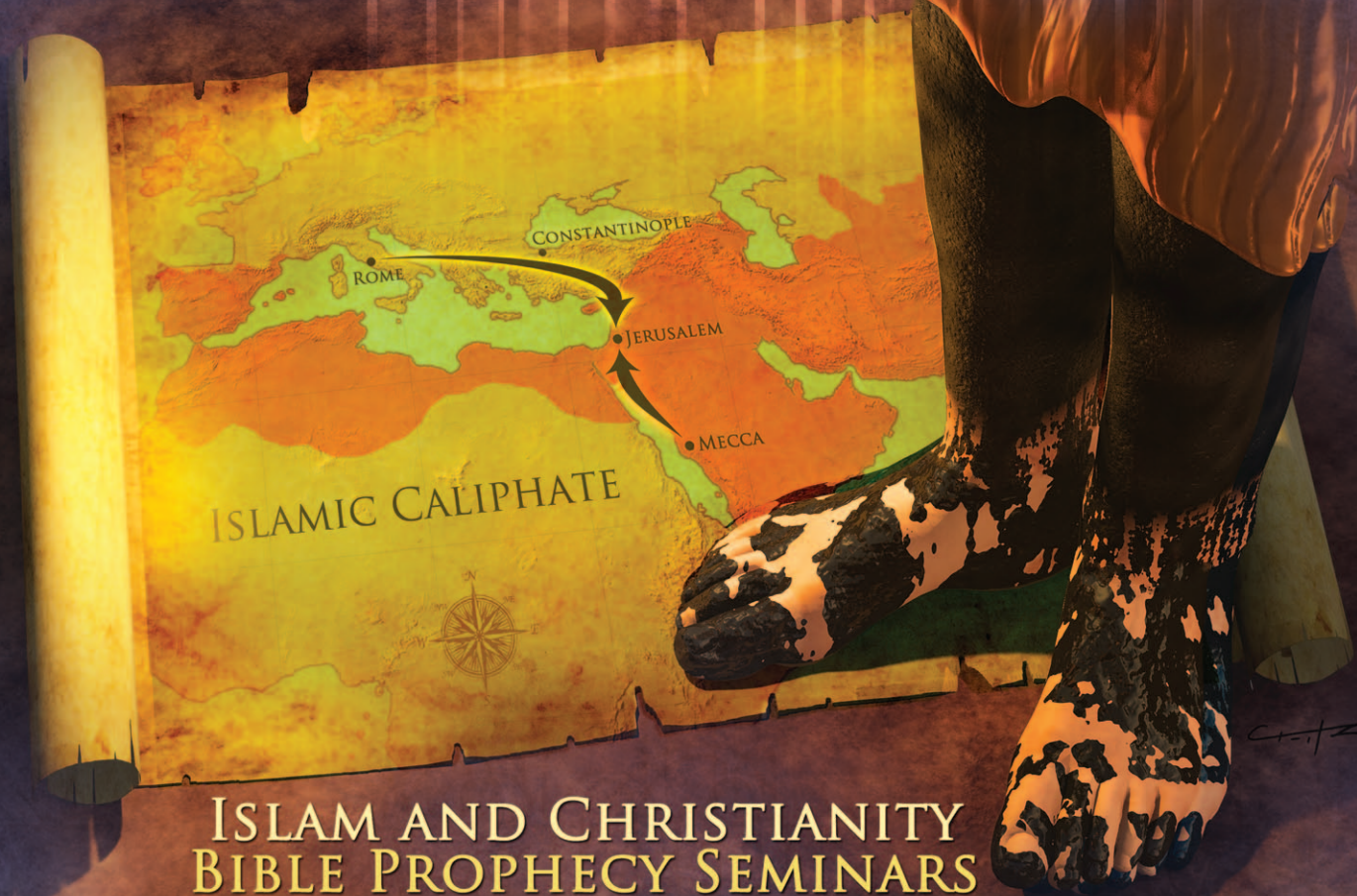
* Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1951), 186.

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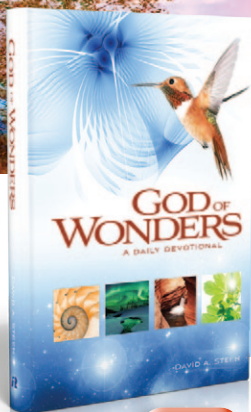
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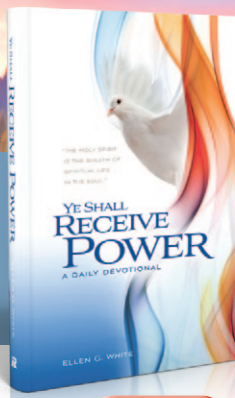


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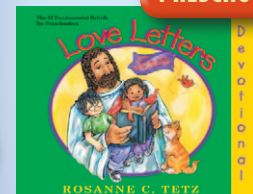
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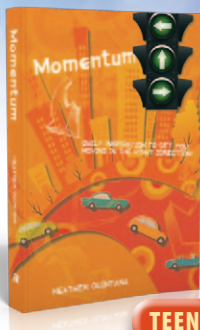


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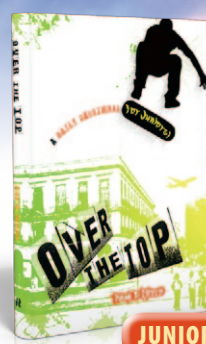


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