

# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

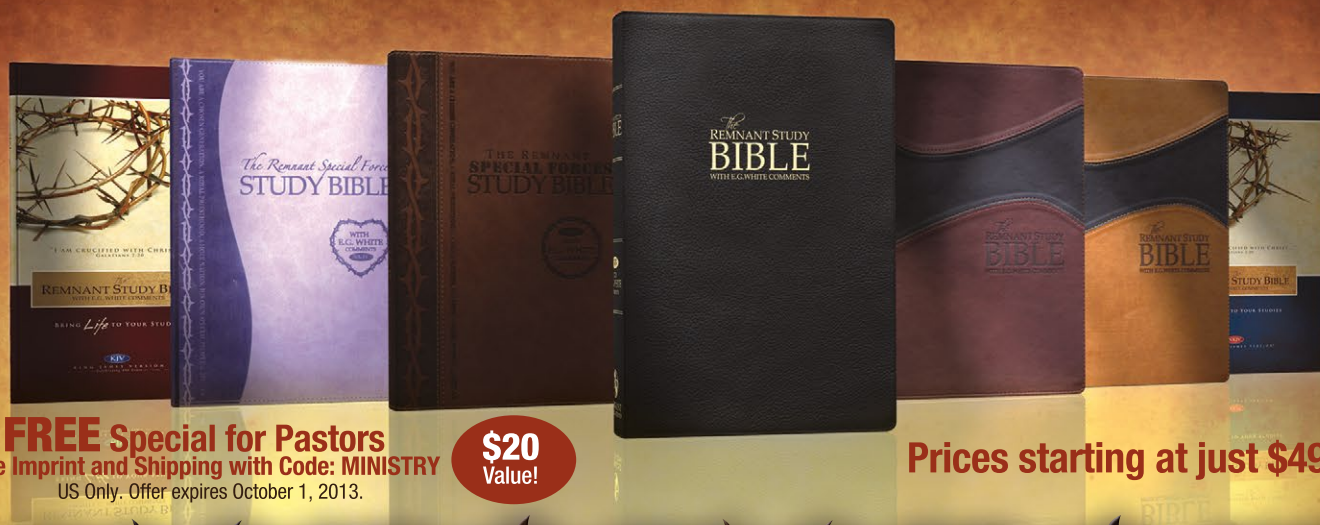
AUGUST 2013

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS



Does **God** believe in  
**restoration?**

# THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE FOR ANY PASTOR



**FREE Special for Pastors**  
Name Imprint and Shipping with Code: **MINISTRY**  
US Only. Offer expires October 1, 2013.

**\$20**  
Value!

Prices starting at just **\$49.95**

## The REMNANT STUDY BIBLE WITH E.G. WHITE COMMENTS

### Power-packed Features

- Two-color printing, plus words of Christ in red letters
- 20 topical studies chained throughout the Bible with index to chains
- More than 40,000 helpful end-of-verse Scripture cross-references and notes
- Full-color section featuring Bible timeline, furniture and cleansing of the sanctuary, and prophetic symbols
- How-to-use section, brief biography of Ellen G. White, Bible symbols and their meanings, parables and miracles of Jesus Christ, read your Bible through in a year guide, how sin began, and more
- Extensive concordance, 8-page section of color maps, 2 ribbon markers, generous margins, plus much more!
- Biblical explanations, images, and timeline of Daniel and Revelation prophecies

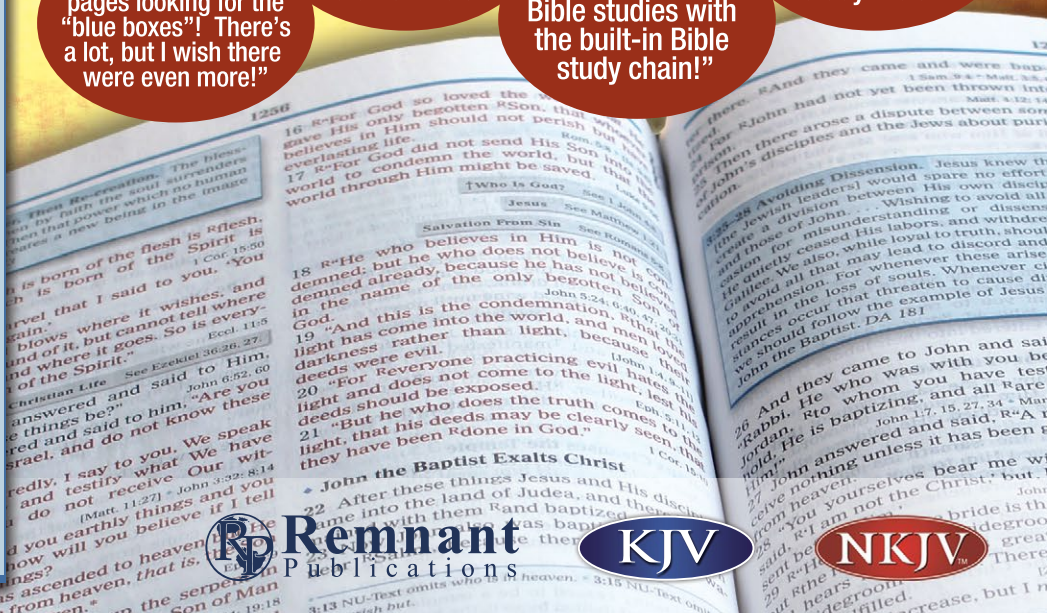
"I love reading through the pages looking for the 'blue boxes'! There's a lot, but I wish there were even more!"

"The study helps in this Bible have made God's Word come alive like no other Bible!"

Actual Feedback from Customers:

"I'm not afraid to give Bible studies with the built-in Bible study chain!"

"I'm a member of God's last-day church today because of this precious Study Bible!"



Remnant  
Publications

KJV

NKJV

TO ORDER VISIT [WWW.REMNANTPUBLICATIONS.COM](http://WWW.REMNANTPUBLICATIONS.COM) OR CALL (800) 423-1319

## 06 Does God believe in restoration? Part 1

**David Solomon**

Early in college, the author experienced a radical conversion and had a desire to witness to others, even though he still did not know if he would be or even could be saved.

## 10 Dealing with doctrinal issues in the church: Part 4

**Paul S. Ratsara and Richard M. Davidson**

Controversial issues have the potential of splitting a church. How can we avoid this danger?

## 14 People catchers

**John Wesley Taylor V**

The Bible mentions four ways to catch fish, and these strategies hold insights for our calling as “fishers of men.”

## 18 The hovering of the Spirit of God

**Luis Gustavo S. Assis**

Join the author in contemplating the activity and personhood of the Spirit of God.

## 21 God did an awesome thing: A church growth strategy that worked

**S. Joseph Kidder**

Do you dream of being a part of a vibrant worshipping community of faith? Discover a proven strategy to accomplish it.

## 24 Is God calling you to plant a church?

**Anthony WagerSmith**

The conviction to be involved in new churches unfolds differently in every leader. Nevertheless, there are transferable principles that can guide you or the organization you lead in prayerful assessment.

04 Letters

05 Editorial

13&17 Revival & Reformation

28 Resources

29 Dateline

30 Ministry Matters

### MINISTRY®

International Journal for Pastors  
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring,  
MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.  
[www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org)  
[ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org)

### EDITOR

Derek J. Morris

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Willie E. Hucks II

### CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR

John Fowler, Clifford Goldstein, Myrna Tetz

### EDITORIAL SPECIALIST

Sheryl Beck

### FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

John Feezer IV

### STUDENT WORKER

Lisa Poirier

### INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

**Chinese**-Robert Wong

**Indonesian**-Edwin T. Pandjaitan

**Japanese**-Yukio Ebihara

**Korean**-Sung Sun Hong

**Portuguese** (South America)-Zinaldo

Santos

**Russian**-Michael Kaminsky

**Spanish** (South America)-Marcos Blanco

**Spanish** (Inter-America)-Pablo Perla

### INTERNATIONAL ADVISORS

Mario Brito, Michael Kaminsky, Janos Kovacs-Biro, L. Chansanga Colney, Armando Miranda, Rudatinya M. Mwangachuchu, Daniel Opoku-Boateng, Jongimpi Papu, Bruno Raso, Ángel M. Rodriguez, Hector Sanchez, Houtman Sinaga, David Tasker, Ivan L. Williams, Ted N. C. Wilson

### ADVERTISING

Melynie Tooley  
[advertising@ministrymagazine.org](mailto:advertising@ministrymagazine.org)  
+1 301-787-2790

### SUBSCRIPTIONS/ RENEWALS/ADDRESS CHANGES

[subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org](mailto:subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org)  
+1 301-680-6511  
+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

### COVER ILLUSTRATION

EMILY HARDING

### LAYOUT

316 Creative

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99; Canada and overseas US\$47.00. To order: send name, address, and payment to Ministry® Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.

[www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe](http://www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe)

### TO WRITERS

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Before submitting, review the writers' guidelines at [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org). Please send manuscripts via email to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).



Co-hosts Anthony Kent and Derek Morris  
[www.MinistryinMotion.tv](http://www.MinistryinMotion.tv)

MINISTRY® has been published monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Ministry is a peer-reviewed journal.

**SECRETARY** Jerry N. Page

### ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Jonas Arrais, Robert Costa, Willie E. Hucks II, Anthony Kent, Derek Morris, Janet Page

### MINISTERIAL RESOURCE CENTER COORDINATOR

Cathy Payne  
888-771-0738, +1 301-680-6508  
[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)

**PRINTER** Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687

Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

Adventist®, Seventh-day Adventist®, and Ministry® are the registered trademarks of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists®.

Vol. 85 Number 8 © 2013

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



*"If our organization would follow what is outlined therein, the church would finally be empowered to follow God's call, the Holy Spirit would be fully operative, and our mission would be accomplished!"*

### Trends and issues

Stanley Patterson's article, "Trends Facing Adventist Spiritual Leaders" (June 2013) is a bold attempt to deal with realistic issues. I have not known a single conference president that I did not respect and look up to. They have been highly devoted, committed, talented, and successful. They bring spiritual leadership as well as administrative know-how.

All those called to minister would suffer greatly if conference presidents were not great administrators, yet today it is the charismatic, often independent television preachers that, to a large degree, have the hearts of the people in their hands and, in reality, have taken the helm of the ship along with its resources. Conference presidents are left to grapple for the wheel, scurry about encouraging the crew, tie down the load, and fight off pirates, as the ship goes through a storm of unprecedented proportions.

I believe the biblical role of church leadership is best modeled by those who actually do the things they are asking others to do. Starting with Moses, Joshua, King David, and going to the New Testament, Jesus, Paul, and the apostles, they led through the wilderness, attacked strongholds, led their troops into battle, taught disciples, and said, "Do as I do." It was the deacons

who served the administrative needs of the New Testament church while the ministry leaders were preaching, teaching, evangelizing, casting out demons, and healing.

It may be that it is time to implement more fully the leadership model that has been in operation in several conferences where successful district pastors become area ministry leaders, mentoring and overseeing a number of disciples.

When it comes time to meet our expenses, as those leading out in ministry, we are glad to be considered employees. I am not sure we need to return to the model of the apostle Paul where he raised money, worked with his hands, and decided who was useful and who was not in the ministry. However, perhaps our thinking needs to shift so that the visible leaders of the church are those most active in ministry.

—Jim Kilmer, PhD, retired Church Growth coordinator, Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Spokane, Washington, United States

I cannot express the deep appreciation I have for your publishing the article by Stanley Patterson. It touches what I believe is a pivotal issue that needs to be addressed in training and placing pastors. If nominating committees had these insights in view, there would be fewer who enjoy "kingly

power" elected as personnel managers, i.e., presidents.

—Tom Stafford, email

I found Stanley Patterson's article to be amazingly refreshing. If our organization would follow what is outlined therein, the church would finally be empowered to follow God's call, the Holy Spirit would be fully operative, and our mission would be accomplished! What is shared here is so true; pastors and members alike feel stuck. Our church needs change and it would bring hope if we saw it happen soon.

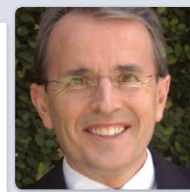
—David Guerrero, email

### The ordination debate

I found the article by Ekkehardt Mueller concerning the ordination debate ("The Ordination Debate: How to Approach the Theological Issues"—June 2013) to be well reasoned and balanced, setting out a series of questions and a methodology that does not seem tilted towards either side of the question. I think he has provided a helpful pathway forward as we seek to discuss and resolve the issue as a world church.

I did find, however, an interesting omission from his discussion of the principles used to interpret Scripture.

*Continued on page 27*



# Restoration

The antique oak dresser was at least 50 years old, but this piece of furniture was still as sturdy as the giant oak from which its timbers were hewn. And the price was right. I pulled out one of the drawers and admired the beautiful dovetail joints. Amazing workmanship! I imagined the weathered face of the dedicated craftsman who had put his heart and soul into this masterpiece. There was just one problem. Someone had painted it green!

This piece of poorly painted furniture became my first major restoration project. I spent many hours dissolving the multiple layers of paint and scraping the gooey mess into toxic puddles on my basement floor. My hands got dirty. Sometimes my eyes would sting. Many times my body would hurt—restoration is a messy and painful work. Was it worth it? Stop by my house and decide for yourself. That old oak dresser has been fully restored to its former beauty and is 30 years older than the day I purchased it.

So here is my question for you: Do you believe in restoration? To be more specific, are damaged Christian leaders salvageable? Should we take the time and effort to restore them? As I ask myself these questions, I immediately think of Simon Peter. He was a damaged Christian leader. Peter not only fell, he fell hard—cursing and denying that he even knew Jesus. From a shortsighted human perspective, Simon Peter's ministry was over.

The risen Christ appeared to Peter before meeting with the rest of the disciples (1 Cor. 15:5). What did Jesus say to this fallen Christian leader in this private rendezvous? The Bible doesn't tell us, but we do have a record of a meeting with Peter by the Sea of Galilee.

Having spent another nonproductive night on the lake, Peter returned to shore only to find Jesus waiting for him. "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15).<sup>\*</sup> Not many days before, Simon Peter had brashly boasted, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" (Matt. 26:33).

But now beside the Sea of Galilee, Jesus doesn't remind Peter of his failure. Rather, He reminds him of his future: "Feed My lambs" (John 21:15). Why would Jesus trust Peter with the care of His lambs? Hadn't Peter already

the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). And to a skeptical Ananias, Jesus said of Saul, "He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (v. 15).


No wonder a restored Simon Peter declared, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). The apostle Paul, once called Saul, also blessed the name of the Lord for His work of

*I imagined the weathered face of the dedicated craftsman who had put his heart and soul into this masterpiece.*

demonstrated his incompetence and unfaithfulness? Yes. But Jesus believed in restoration. Jesus believed in giving people second chances.

If you're not sure about that, take a look at the way Jesus treated Saul of Tarsus. By his own confession, Saul was a ruthless opponent of all who believed in Jesus. "Many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:10, 11). Saul was damaged and dangerous, but Jesus saw his potential. "Arise and go into

restoration. "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:10).

David Solomon, the author of the lead article in this issue of *Ministry*, could give the same confession as that of Simon Peter or Saul of Tarsus. This fallen Christian leader has been restored to ministry by the grace of God, and that grace was not in vain. I was deeply moved by his testimony, and I am still reflecting on the implications for my own life and the lives of my colleagues in ministry. To conclude that restoration is always possible would be naive, but we must never forget that we serve a God who rescues and restores. 

<sup>\*</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the NKJV.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

David Solomon is a pseudonym.

# Does God believe in restoration? *Part 1*

I was five years old when my mother abandoned me. No, she never left me physically, only emotionally—and I am sure she never intended to make such a deep wound on my small heart. She herself had been damaged by sexual molestation. Along with that, her own fears that she would never be accepted by a holy God added to her anxiety. Suffering from manic depression, she spent most of my first years in a mental institution or lying in bed.

Because Mom could not take care of us, we kids were shipped from one family to another. I still remember waking up in the middle of the night and being moved from one home to another, never understanding why I was “rejected” again.

Later, when I first discovered I was a sexual being, I learned that God “rejects” those who struggle with impurity. If I continued to masturbate, *I would not only be lost, I would go crazy, and no good girl would ever marry me.* These words from my mother were emotionally charged for a boy just entering his teens and would forever imprint my relationships with women. Because I never had a normal love from my mother, I would try to replace it with pictures of nude women. The ill-clad women in the magazines would become the elixir that would satisfy my curiosity and need for love.

## Tangled in the Web

Over many years, I would become deeply entrenched in a cycle of victory

and failure. Boredom, guilt, and shame would lead me to crave another sexual fix. Added to my inner temptations was my distorted view of God. My generation spoke of a soon return of Jesus and an investigative judgment that demanded near perfection. Deep inside, I knew I could never please God or be good enough to go to heaven. Why, then, try? Nevertheless, after the excitement of fulfilling my lust, I would repent, determined never to participate in this evil again. Yet, like the apostle Paul, the things I wanted to do, I didn’t do, and the things I didn’t want to do, I did (Rom. 7:19). Months would pass with me getting victory after victory against lust. Then failure would raise its ugly head again. As I grew older, my journey would take me from occasional fascination with pornography to more intoxicating paths.

Early in college, however, I experienced a radical conversion and had a desire to witness to others, even though I still did not know if I would be or even could be saved. Even after finally understanding grace, I still had this secret sin that would not go away.

A couple of years later, I graduated from college and became an intern pastor. Little did I realize how unprepared I was. A well-known author and psychologist, Candace Benyei, wrote that 91 percent of clergy come from chronic dysfunctional homes,<sup>1</sup> and, as did so many others, I sought to heal by helping others. In the process, I learned that

Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. Nonetheless, mine was still a gaping wound. I was not a “bad” person, just a damaged and inconsistent one. I had no idea that I had a sexual addiction; all I knew was that I did not have victory all of the time.

## The hidden persona

After seminary, I would seek to help others understand God’s love and have a relationship with Him, yet my own life was up and down. I would pray for victory, and experience it for a time, but then I would find myself falling back into the same sins. Failure seemed to be etched in my very being. This was not noticeable to my colleagues or employers. My problem was something known only deep inside. In fact, on the outside I was quite successful. I was on my way up the ladder of recognition.

On occasion I would try to talk with my wife about my issues, but this would only wound her more deeply. Furthermore, I blamed her for my lack of success in overcoming. “If she would just change, I would have no more temptation.” I even risked talking with a counselor or two, and though they sympathized with me, I did not continue my sessions. I prayed, but my conversations with Him often seemed to mock my sincerity and efforts to overcome. At one point I shared my journey into impurity with a colleague in ministry, and this helped me stay away for about

eight years from the joints I infrequently visited.

Nevertheless, sexual addiction had its steely tentacles fastened around my mind. When I was repentant and free, I would feel I had victory, only to find myself obsessed again. The cycle was uncanny. But I found hope after failure by reading stories of biblical characters like David and Solomon. At the same time, I knew that if I continued down this same road, I would lose my own soul.

our problems will leak out.” Or, “I wouldn’t tell a fellow minister my problems in this area. My denomination would forgive murder but not impurity of thought.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason, we are very likely to go underground with our hidden lives until we are either caught in a public scandal or we wash ashore in a sea of guilt and shame. We rationalize that we know God’s love and believe that He can forgive us and those like us. We think that, if we can finally win, we can

I must seek help. By then I learned of group meetings for those who are sexually addicted and decided to attend. I longed for freedom and decided to share my story with someone I trusted, someone who would hold me accountable. I felt if I could find someone in the church to encourage me, I could find ultimate victory. If I could not be consistent, I would let him know and hand in my credentials. I was fearful of sharing my secret life, but surely a pastor’s pastor would help me.



*My problem was something known **only deep inside.** In fact, on the outside I was quite successful. I was on my way up the ladder of recognition.*

## Fear and the keeping of secrets

For pastors, sharing these kinds of dark secrets with anyone is very risky. Those who struggle, struggle alone. We fear speaking to anyone about our problems because the consequences may be dire. For some pastors, the problem may be pornography only, and a kind of boredom in marriage. For others it may be more serious. Any addiction tends to strengthen over time. Our fears are that we may lose our jobs and the only support we have for our families. Two pastors expressed it this way: “We are afraid to go to a counselor for fear

encourage those who fail because we ourselves know the agony of defeat.

Not until recently did I discover the significant numbers of clergy who struggle with sexual issues. Research at Fuller Theological Seminary, published in *Leadership*, indicates that 18 percent of the clergy go online to look at pornography occasionally, and one out of nine have committed adultery.<sup>3</sup>

## Betrayed and abandoned

Several years of apparent freedom gave me a sense of victory until I moved to a large city, and the old temptations came back, stronger than ever. I became engulfed in failure and knew

Reluctantly, I made the plunge, not expecting that the person in whom I confided would treat me as a leper. I needed to resign from the ministry, he said, and I *might* be able to return five years later. My other choice was for more people to know and leave my case in their hands.

I decided to share my story with other leaders. Weeks later my ministry was over; the church leaders simply followed policies. Not only that, the head pastor of the church I attended requested that my membership be withdrawn. I was devastated. Why was this happening to me? I had gone for help and my ministry was destroyed. After

being terminated, I wished my friends and former colleagues would call to see how I was doing. No such care came from those who claimed to represent Jesus.

one else could restore, He could. With this hope, I did not remain bitter toward my fellow ministers. God forgave me and continues to forgive us when we

an excellent job, but soon I came to the place where I was so far down that I had to look up to see bottom. My life was spinning out of control. I thought

*My story is one of God's miraculous grace and of church leaders who believe in second opportunities.*

I began to attend another church and rededicated my life to Christ, but my heart was not in it. Weeks into my new church a guest speaker, a woman, shared the story of God's unfailing forgiveness. I hastened to the restroom and wept uncontrollably. Did God really care? I had failed so often, how could He forgive? Somehow I finally learned that Jesus and the church are different. If no

struggle. How can we hold bitterness in our hearts toward those who walk the same human road? Years later I would find out that there are those in leadership who believe in second chances.

For about two years after my exit from ministry, I floundered in my addiction. I was without work for about six months, but my education had paid off, and I was able to find a job. It was

I might as well live out my playboy lifestyle. Why try to be who I wasn't? Yet, if I continued down that course, I would be lost. In desperation, I cried out to God to change me. There was no human help available. No addiction recovery groups were anywhere near. I had pretty much become a deist by that time, but I prayed, "God, if You are there and You can help me, I can't



100 MILLION YEARS  
OR 5000 YEARS?

**Choose You**  
Why It Matters  
What You Believe  
About Creation **This Day**

**T**HE GREAT CONTROVERSY between Christ and Satan is focusing on the credibility of the Creator and the Creation story in Genesis. Today, even Christians are questioning the biblical account. Science is important, but we can trust it only if the Bible is our standard for evaluating origins, evil, and our great God.

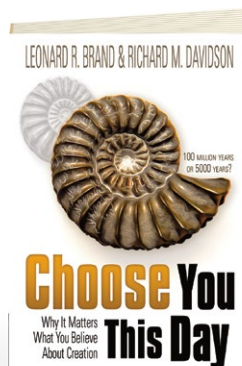
This choice will prepare us for earth's final events, when Jesus returns to rescue repentant sinners.

Call 1-800-765-6955  
Shop [ABCASAP.com](http://ABCASAP.com)

 Pacific Press®

© 2013 Pacific Press® Publishing Association • Prices subject to change 35590204 • Please contact your ABC for pricing in Canada.

US\$2.49 • 0-8163-4434-5



LEONARD R. BRAND & RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

**Choose You**  
Why It Matters  
What You Believe  
About Creation **This Day**

change myself. I'm too far gone. There's no hope without You."

## Second chance

That day was the beginning of a new life. Miraculously, within weeks my obsessive addiction was gone, and has never returned since. Praise God for the freedom. I cannot explain what happened because I had prayed for this healing before. Deep within, I know the change was a "God thing." I can attribute the inner healing only to the idea that when we finally come to our end, God gives us a new beginning. His amazing grace is the only explanation. Not long after, my wife, who was experiencing her own healing, found out the full extent of my addictive cycles and, over time, was able to forgive.


Elated by the miracle, two years later we contacted our former church administrator to tell him of the miraculous

change. He rejoiced with us in the new-found victory and let us know that if we ever decided to return to ministry, he would not stand in our way. He felt we could be wounded healers.

Sometime after that we decided to further our education. Returning to ministry was not in our thinking when we decided to go back to a church where we had been the pastoral couple. The people were in transition, looking for a new pastor, and they wanted us to apply. Someone else had been selected but the people's interest rekindled a desire for us to explore the possibility of returning to ministry.

After two more years of teaching at a university, we contacted a few leaders in our denomination, asking if there were any pastoral openings. Our former administrator wrote a beautiful letter of reference; several church leaders who believed in restoration encouraged us.

In spite of my past, which the leadership knew about, they, too, believed in grace. Miraculously, God not only healed our hearts but grace abounded in a new opportunity for service. That was many years ago, and we have never looked back. My story is one of God's miraculous grace and of church leaders who believe in second opportunities.

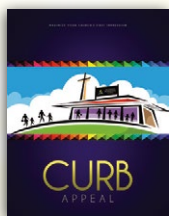
I share my story because there is hope for those who fail. There is a new day of grace in the community of faith. Perhaps someday the entire church will understand that God intends to not only forgive, but to also restore. 

(Part 2 will appear in the October 2013 issue.)

- 1 Candace Reed Benyei, *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets, and the Abuse of Power* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998).
- 2 Richard Exeley, *The Perils of Power* (Tulsa, OK: Honor Books, 1988), 19, 20.
- 3 T. C. Muck, "How Common Is Pastoral Indiscretion?" *Leadership* (Winter 1988): 12, 13.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

# MAXIMIZE YOUR CHURCH'S FIRST IMPRESSION



## Curb Appeal CD

Created by the NAD Communication Department

Just as humans send a message even when they are silent, a church sends a message just by its very presence in a neighborhood. What kind of message does your church send? *Curb Appeal* can help you find out.

*Curb Appeal* is designed to spark group discussion as part of the church board, board of elders, communication committee or group assigned by the pastor or church board. This self-evaluation

tool is divided into seven categories:

- Signs and Directions
- Exterior
- Interior
- Print
- Technology
- Verbal
- Non-Verbal

*Curb Appeal* includes a worksheet so you can pinpoint areas in which your church excels and areas you would like to improve. The goal? For every Adventist church in North America to send warm and inviting verbal and non-verbal messages to guests and visitors.

This CD includes PowerPoint presentations and PDF booklets in English and Spanish.

Catalog #250076 US\$14.95



Find more communication resources at [www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org) or 402.486.8800.

**AdventSource**  
one name • one number • one source

**Paul S. Ratsara, PhD**, is president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Pretoria, South Africa.

**Richard M. Davidson, PhD**, is J. N. Andrews professor of Old Testament interpretation, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



# Dealing with doctrinal issues in the church: *Part 4*

**C**ontroversial issues have the potential of splitting the church. To avoid this danger, church leaders need to exercise much care and, at the same time, show firmness when dealing with these issues.

Lack of spiritual preparation on the part of leaders, members, and scholars contributes to ecclesiastical disunity. When the Holy Spirit does not fill people, they are either empty or, even worse, filled with evil spirits. When people pray, they invoke the presence of God and His power; if not, they become vulnerable to satanic forces and ungodly practices. Lack of spirituality on the part of Bible scholars and church leaders may also lead to wrong hermeneutics. Likewise, when church members are not spiritually connected with the Divine, they can easily become misled theologically. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, every attempt to correctly interpret God's Word becomes futile. In other words, our spirituality influences our presuppositions and approach to biblical interpretation.

## The hermeneutical challenge

Presuppositions influence biblical interpretation. Varying biblical presuppositions among leaders and theologians will threaten church unity. Frank Hasel states, "The notion of

presupposition(s) plays an important role in biblical interpretation. We all hold a number of beliefs that we suppose or accept when we come to the task of interpreting Scripture. No one is able to approach the biblical text with a blank mind."<sup>1</sup> The presuppositions of a spiritually fortified person or Bible scholar would lead to the biblical hermeneutics that build the body of Christ, the church. Likewise, a person who is not spiritually fortified tends to develop wrong biblical presuppositions, which will lead to wrong hermeneutics.

Hasel asserts,

Presuppositions delimit the boundaries within which biblical interpretation can and should properly function. They also determine the method and, through the method, also influence, to a considerable degree, the outcome of our interpretation. In other words, they directly affect our theology and the authority that Scripture has for our life and for doctrine. In turn, our theology influences spiritual and theological identity and, finally, also the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church.<sup>2</sup>

Often times, interpreters of the Bible face what Hasel refers to as "the hermeneutical challenge." This has to do with the fact that the interpreter's

"past, experiences, resident ideas, and preconceived notions and opinions" influence one's methodology of biblical interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Hasel suggests that, to an extent, our personal subjectivity tends to interfere with how objectively we can approach the biblical text. The sinful nature and experiences of humankind may also contribute personal and corporate biblical presuppositions and interpretation. Paul said,

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Rom. 8:5-9).

John Baldwin calls attention to the influence of the cosmic conflict on hermeneutics, warning that "fallen spiritual powers, Satan and his angels, can influence the exegete. . . . The attempts of Satan and evil angels to redirect interpretations of the Bible cannot be dismissed."<sup>4</sup> To Timothy, Paul writes,

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). To the church in Corinth, Paul says, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:3, 4).

When the Holy Spirit departs, the church is left too vulnerable to the control of evil forces. When that happens, church leaders, church members, and Bible scholars will often not agree in

against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the

paradigm of at least seven additional steps for the church when dealing with doctrinal controversy, steps built upon the aforementioned seven principles: (1) assemble representative church leaders to investigate the controversial issue; (2) engage in frank and spirited discussion and give clarifying public presentations of relevant biblical and supplementary data; (3) present reports and personal testimonies of the Holy Spirit’s working through council members and others in relation to the issue under discussion; (4) verify and test these testimonies/reports by the witness of Scripture; (5) allow the Holy Spirit to lead the council to an

**Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
every attempt to correctly interpret God’s  
Word becomes futile.**

matters of Christian faith and practice. The Holy Spirit and angels’ departure from the church at the individual or corporate level must be avoided at all cost.

Ellen White writes,

When Satan has undermined faith in the Bible, he directs men to other sources for light and power. Thus he insinuates himself. Those who turn from the plain teaching of Scripture and the convicting power of God’s Holy Spirit are inviting the control of demons.<sup>5</sup>

To the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul says,

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and

Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:11–17, NIV).

### Principles and steps

For these reasons, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to take seriously the approach of the early church toward doctrinal uncertainty or controversy. The experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, in the upper room on Resurrection Sunday, and during the ten days before Pentecost, provides at least seven important principles for a doctrinal crisis: (1) accept the foundational authority of Scripture, (2) employ a solid biblical hermeneutic, (3) maintain a Christ-centered focus, (4) foster a spirit of unity of mind/purpose/impulse, (5) engage in frequent seasons of earnest prayer and fasting, (6) seek for the illumination of the Holy Spirit in order to correctly understand scriptural truth, and (7) maintain an evangelistic motivation and passion for lost souls.

The experience of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 provides a

emerging consensus (unity although not necessarily uniformity) from their close investigation of Scripture; (6) if the council is so mandated (as with the Annual Council and General Conference in session), make a formal decision, commit it to writing, and circulate the document among the world church; and (7) implement the council’s decision as binding throughout the world church.

### Early examples

The practices of the pioneers during the 1848 and 1855 Bible conferences teach us that a proper relationship with God, the Scriptures, and fellow humans is critical. Spiritual preparedness must characterize the nature of everyone involved in the study of Scriptures. Spiritual preparation includes prayer and fasting. Personal or corporate spiritual preparation would include adoration and praise, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving. During any of our church meetings, it is important to saturate our meetings with prayer.

During the Bible conference of 1848 and 1855, the pioneers' major concern was truth and unity. Inasmuch as doctrinal correctness was also important, they did everything possible to ensure that they did not compromise church unity. The attitude of pioneers was characterized by open-mindedness and a willingness to discern God's will. The same ought to be the practice of leaders and Bible scholars in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today.

The pioneers studied the Scriptures with thoroughness during the Bible conferences, giving priority to Bible study. The Bible acts as a bulwark against every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief 1 affirms the position of the church regarding the infallible nature of the Bible. Those who wrestle to understand Scripture must accept it as God's Holy Word; otherwise, they will consider the Bible as any other piece of literature subject to scientific methods of interpretation.

## Hermeneutics

The choice of a Bible study method is crucial for unity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Various methods of approaching the Bible are available, including the higher-critical method. Church unity is achievable if Adventist scholars, church leaders, and church members would approach the Bible using the historical-biblical method, or what is referred to as the "historical-grammatical method." Church leaders and believers should find it necessary to study God's Word with an open mind, ready to understand and do His will. Ellen White points out:

We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures, and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical

problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God, and a sincere desire to learn his will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.<sup>6</sup>

In *Messages to Young People*, she writes,

In your study of the word, lay at the door of investigation your preconceived opinions and your hereditary and cultivated ideas. You will never reach the truth if you study the Scriptures to vindicate your own ideas. Leave these at the door, and with a contrite heart go in to hear what the Lord has to say to you. As the humble seeker for truth sits at Christ's feet, and learns of Him, the word gives him understanding. To those who are too wise in their own conceit to study the Bible, Christ says, You must become meek and lowly in heart if you desire to become wise unto salvation.<sup>7</sup>

She goes on to say,

Do not read the word in the light of former opinions; but, with a mind free from prejudice, search it carefully and prayerfully. If, as you read, conviction comes, and you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the word, do not try to make the word fit these opinions. Make your opinions fit the word. Do not allow what you have believed or practiced in the past to control your understanding. Open the eyes of your mind to behold wondrous things out of the law. Find out what is written, and then plant your feet on the eternal Rock.<sup>8</sup>

The angels are capable of influencing the understanding of God's Word.

For instance, the angel Gabriel helped Daniel understand the Word of God in Daniel 8:16; 9:22, 23. According to White, "angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed."<sup>9</sup>

Church unity is possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Church executive committees, councils, and boards must always be saturated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Bible scholars must intentionally choose to study the Scriptures under the influence of the Holy Spirit. If all those who search the Scriptures constantly seek to be filled by the power of the Holy Spirit, the church will experience unity of doctrine, faith, and practice.

The church should be united in belief and practice. Church leaders and Bible scholars should shun the temptation of disunity caused by theological and ecclesiastical compromise. Francis Wernick asserts, "Though there will always be peripheral areas of disagreement, in those truths that are crucial to the message of the church the body of Christ must be in agreement. Likewise, there must be harmony in the Biblical practices of the church."<sup>10</sup> However, he observes that "pluralistic views on a number of essential truths and Biblical practices as they are urged upon the church" might negatively affect the unity of the church in the future. He pleads with church leaders and members to utilize this present time to study the Bible with sincerity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

Church unity is possible if church leaders teach biblical unity based upon Scripture. In other words, church unity is impossible outside the Word of God. Wernick points out that church leaders should seek peace by teaching biblical unity.<sup>12</sup> He exemplifies the truth of biblical unity by quoting the words of the apostle James: "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without

partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:16–18). In the Beatitudes, Jesus also said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Paul adds by saying, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

The pioneers also depended on the Spirit of Prophecy for biblical interpretation and understanding when they experienced a deadlock in their study of the Bible. The writings of Ellen White are a powerful tool for unlocking deadlocks. We should still consider prophetic guidance as a way forward when dealing with controversial issues. Wernick urges church leaders and members to recognize the role of the Spirit of Prophecy as a unifying factor in the study of the Bible.<sup>13</sup>

We believe in the unity of the church. The church comprises people from all walks of life and backgrounds. While the membership of the church is culturally diverse, we must preserve

its unity under God's leadership. Unity does not necessarily mean uniformity; rather unity means oneness of faith, purpose, and practice in Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

As church leaders and Bible scholars, we should emulate the zeal of the early church and Adventist pioneers and even surpass them. In other words, more is required of us today than of our early Christian and Adventist pioneers. According to Ellen White,

Greater light shines upon us than shone upon our fathers. We cannot be accepted or honored of God in rendering the same service, or doing the same works, that our fathers did. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as they were, we must imitate their faithfulness and zeal,—improve our light as they improved theirs,—and do as they would have done had they lived in our day. We must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness.<sup>14</sup>

May we, by God's grace, rise up to the challenges that face us as church leaders and scholars when we face controversial issues. ▮

- 1 Frank M. Hasel, "Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, George W. Reid, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 27.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 John Baldwin, "Faith, Reason, and the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, George W. Reid, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 18, 19.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 258.
- 6 White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 417.
- 7 White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1930), 260.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 600.
- 10 Francis W. Wernick, "Leadership Role in Maintaining Unity," in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2005), 771.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Wernick, 772.
- 14 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 262.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

## Reformation in life, marriage, and ministry

Ellen White defines reformation as a "reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices."<sup>1</sup> While we usually apply this to mean the spiritual reformation that must take place in us as individuals before the return of Jesus, we have also seen its fulfillment in the lives of people whose marriages were in trouble.

Rod and Sharon<sup>2</sup> were very successful in their careers, had been married and divorced previously, and had three children. Rod served two tours of duty during the Vietnam War and, as he told me, had "broken every commandment that is written and some that should be written." Among

other things, he had left his wife for other women more than a dozen times; but every time he came back home, Sharon took him back. "Now," he said to me, "I feel totally empty. Can God possibly still love me?"

Several weeks later, after Bible studies, both Rod and Sharon were baptized and immediately immersed themselves in the life and ministry of the church. More than ten years later, they continue to serve the church as leaders of several ministries and conduct Bible studies with prospective members nearly every night of the week—resulting in many baptisms every year. Rod and

Sharon have experienced a personal reformation that changed their marriage and turned them into very effective ministers in their church and community.

—CLAUDIO CONSUEGRA, DMin, FAMILY MINISTRIES DIRECTOR, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), 42.
- 2 Pseudonyms.

*Revival*  
and  
REFORMATION

**John Wesley Taylor V, PhD**, serves as an associate director of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



# People catchers

I like fish. No, I do not like to eat fish nor do I have any amazing fish stories to tell. I have never caught any really big fish, either—only small fish, very small, in fact.

I like to see fish. And the Philippines, with its 7,107 islands, is a wonderful place to see them. When in the Philippines, I put on my mask, snorkel, and fins, and would swim out to a reef. At times I saw many fish: small fish and large fish, sleek fish and spiny fish, gorgeous fish and scary fish. But, other times, when I would swim out to a reef, there would be almost no fish at all. And the ones I did spot seemed terrified, darting away into the depths.

What was the problem?

Although the practice was illegal, some fishermen would use dynamite to catch fish. They would create an underwater explosion and the surface would soon be littered with fish. Of course, it is an easy way to fish—you just scoop them up and head for shore.

But dynamite fishing describes a feast-today-and-famine-tomorrow situation. The explosion destroys the fish habitat. All that is left are heaps of coral debris; and, with a reef destroyed, so are the fish. Therefore, no more food to feed the family. So they would all pack up and move.

There is another easy way to catch fish, but the end result is no better. Sometimes fishermen will use a toxin, such as cyanide, to poison the fish. Again, fish float to the surface. Again, the ecosystem is destroyed. Not a smart way to fish.

Now, because the Bible uses fishing as an analogy for soul winning, this article asks the question: How do you catch fish intelligently?

## Approaches to fishing

The Bible mentions four ways to catch fish, and it seems that these fishing strategies may hold insights for our calling as “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).<sup>1</sup>

1. *Fishhook* (Matt. 17:27). In this verse, Peter was to take a fishhook and head down to a lake. There he discovered that a fish can be more valuable than you might think. But the question is, How do you catch a fish with a hook? Of course, you need a line and some bait, but perhaps even more important in the long run, you need *patience*. You will not catch a fish by just tossing in the hook and immediately pulling it out again, tossing it in and yanking it out. You must wait patiently.

Sometimes we expect results to be instantaneous, for conversions to take place overnight. But the process of change can, in fact, take time. You must be patient.

2. *Spear* (Job 41:7). Several years ago, I visited a Dayak village in Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. I rode in a longboat, slept in a longhouse, and discovered that the Dayaks are experts at spearing fish.

So what skill is required if you are going to fish with a spear? Very simply, you must be quick. Sometimes unexpected opportunities present themselves—an urgent need arises,

a crisis erupts. You must be ready to seize the moment, to maximize the opportunity. You must be quick to respond.

3. *Hand net* (Mark 1:16). Sometimes called a “throw net,” a hand net is small, only a few meters at most in diameter, with stone or lead sinkers around the edge and a line attached. You hold the line with one hand, gather up the net in the other, and throw the net with a broad sweep.

Clearly, a hand net is useful but only in shallow water. Fish, though, are sometimes found quite near the shore, even entire schools of fish. Furthermore, it is really quite easy to use a hand net; even a small child can do it.

Yet to use a hand net you must be willing to get your feet wet! You will never catch fish with the net if you stand rooted to the shore. You must wade into the water. You must step into the current of their lives. You must become involved.

4. *Purse net* (Luke 5:4). Sometimes you need a large net to catch fish. Certain fish are found only in deep water, and you will never get them by just skimming the surface. You need a purse net. The purse net, or seine, is typically several meters wide and perhaps fifty to a hundred meters in length. Corks are tied to the top of the net, sinkers to the bottom, and ropes attached to the ends. After the net is let down, the bottom ropes are pulled in faster than the top ones, enclosing the fish in an envelope of mesh.

What asset do you need in order to use a purse net? A boat is helpful, but perhaps even more important is cooperation. You simply cannot use a seine alone. You must have teamwork. So put together a team, push away from the shore, and cast your net.

## Secrets of successful fishing

You must realize the importance of approaching fishing intelligently. Now that you have been given the tools of the trade, how do you fish successfully? Based on the collected wisdom of experienced fishermen, there seem to be at least four secrets of successful fishing.

1. *Go where the fish are.* This may seem rather obvious, but you simply cannot catch fish while sprawled in your easy chair, dreaming about fish. You must break out of your comfort zone. You must head to where the fish are—if you expect to catch fish.

2. *Think like a fish.* No, this does not mean that you should have a fish brain!

But it does mean that you must be a careful observer of fish—their habits, their habitat. You must understand their needs, interests, hopes, and dreams. Then you will better grasp how to approach fishing.

3. *Do not give up too easily.* Real fishing is not easy. Sometimes you get sunburned. Sometimes you are soaked to the skin. Sometimes you are caked with mud. Sometimes you are bug-bitten and bone-weary. But through it all, you must persevere. A successful fisherman does not give up easily.

So, if your first attempts do not bring immediate results, even if you have toiled all through the night and have taken nothing, do not despair (John 21:3–6). Do not quit just yet. Let your net down on the “right side” of the ship. Miracles still happen.

4. *Make fishing your top priority.* For a true fisherman, nothing in life is more important than fishing.

The owner of a country store posted a notice that the store would be closed the following Tuesday. When one of his

regular customers inquired, the owner replied that he was going fishing that day because Tuesday was going to be a good day for fishing.

“But how do you know?” asked his customer. “That’s nearly a week away.”

“Well,” the man replied, “if it rains easy that day, it’s going to be good for fishing. And if it rains harder, it’s going to be even better.”

“But what if it’s sunny?”

“Even if it’s sunny, it’s *still* going to be good for fishing.”

This commitment is evident in Luke 5:11: “So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.” To successfully catch people, we must be committed, and our priorities must reflect that commitment. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves, *What do I need to forsake today to be more effective as a “catcher” of people?*

## Jesus: Able Fisherman

Jesus, who invited others to seek out candidates for God’s kingdom, was

Join us in

# 10 days of PRAYER

JANUARY 8-18, 2014

[www.TenDaysofPrayer.org](http://www.TenDaysofPrayer.org)

 SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Himself an effective People-Catcher, exemplifying in His ministry both the methods and the secrets of successful fishing (Mark 1:17).

The nature of God's kingdom was a key concept that Christ wanted people to grasp, but it seemed that many just did not understand. So time and again, He patiently illustrated the concept through analogies. He compared the kingdom of heaven to a man who sowed good seed in his field, a mustard seed, leaven, treasure hidden in a field, a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, and a dragnet (v. 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). At times, however, not even His own disciples seemed to comprehend. So when He was alone

Sychar (John 4:40). He reached out and touched a man with leprosy (Matt. 8:3). He took children in His arms, entered the grieving house of Jairus, and wept at the tomb of Lazarus (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 8:41–56; John 11:32–36). One stormy night when Jesus' disciples had toiled vainly to bring their boat to land, Jesus came to personally join them, walking across the water (Mark 6:47–51).

Although Christ possessed all power and could ask His Father at a moment's notice for twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53; 28:18), He did not go it alone. Rather, He endeavored to build a team for ministry (Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; Mark 10:21; John 1:39, 43). For

He focused His teachings on the life experiences of His listeners—planting a field, making bread, hoping to be hired, looking forward to a wedding, and losing a coin (Matt. 13:18, 33; 20:1; 25:1; Luke 15:8). He was perceptive of others' needs. When the multitude was hungry, He provided food (John 6:5–13). When His disciples had fished all night without success, He prepared a hot breakfast (John 21:3–12). Even more important, He recognized the longing of the human heart for lasting relationships. That is why He said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2, 3).

*Although Jesus spent much time alone with His Father, He focused His ministry on relating with people.*

with them, He would explain His lessons in greater detail (v. 36; Mark 4:10, 33, 34). Even with Thomas, who was slow to accept new ideas, He provided the circumstances needed to establish his faith (John 20:24–28).

While Jesus was patient, He was also quick to respond. When a woman with a devastating health condition reached out and touched the hem of His robe, Jesus immediately provided her with a further opportunity to express her faith, asking, “Who touched Me?” (Luke 8:45). When Peter, dropping beneath the waves, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Christ did not leave him to flounder. Rather Jesus immediately “stretched out His hand and caught him” (Matt. 14:30, 31).

Jesus intentionally stepped into the current of people's lives. He attended the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11). At the invitation of the Samaritans, He stayed for two days in the town of

example, He called together a group of 12 men to work closely with Him (Matt. 10:1–4), and then sent them out to work together in small groups (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1, 17).

Although Jesus spent much time alone with His Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12), He focused His ministry on relating with people. He ate with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10, 11). He spent time in fellowship at the homes of Peter, Matthew, Simon the Pharisee, Mary and Martha, and Zacchaeus (v. 10; Mark 14:3; Luke 4:38, 39; 10:38–42; 19:5–7). He even traveled to the border of Tyre and Sidon and interacted with a Syrophoenician woman who was greatly troubled over her daughter's condition (Matt. 15:21–29; Mark 7:24–31). In essence, Jesus *went where fish were found*.

Christ's ministry evidenced His understanding of the interests, needs, and dreams of those around Him.

Jesus *did not give up easily*. When His disciples argued among themselves regarding who would be the greatest, He continued to emphasize the importance of service (Matt. 20:26, 27; 23:11; Mark 9:33, 35; 10:45; Luke 10:29–37; 22:24–27; John 13:4–17). He illustrated His own unrelenting mission in the parable of a shepherd who searched untiringly until he found his lost sheep (Matt. 18:11–13; Luke 15:4–6). Even at the close of His ministry, when He recognized that many in Jerusalem would reject Him, He wept over the city (Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41).

Jesus' life was mission-focused. Fishing was His top priority. “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). After His resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to make people-catching their highest priority: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15, 16).

## Fate of the fish

One matter remains, however, and it concerns the fate of the fish. What happens once a fish is caught? In becoming people-catchers, our purpose is of greatest significance.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Discarded.* Sometimes when we catch a fish, we look it over critically. Some fish are beautiful specimens. But others seem too small, ugly, or perhaps not the right kind or color. These are discarded, left on the shore.

As fishermen, we are intent on catching fish. But once caught, we set aside the “insignificant” ones. We abandon those who seem unpleasant. We are off to “more important” things and fail to nurture those we brought in. They are left behind, stranded on the shore. Not a good future for a fish.

2. *Fried.* A fish may be a “keeper.” It may seem to have good potential—for the frying pan. But becoming a fried fish is not a thrilling destiny, at least from the perspective of the fish.

Sometimes we fish to serve our own objectives and agendas. We focus

on numbers—evangelism and baptism goals—and we congratulate ourselves when we have tallied up enough fish. The true purpose of fishing for men, however, is not to reward the fisherman but to benefit the fish.

3. *Quarantined.* Some fishermen are strict vegetarians. They don’t eat the fish. They just take the fish home and place them in an aquarium. But after a short while, swimming in tight circles, the fishbowl becomes confining and some fish even try to jump out of the bowl.

Sometimes it appears that our ultimate goal is to fill the “aquarium,” to populate the pews of the church. While church can be a good place for people—where they stay regularly fed and cared for—filling the church for our own benefit is still self-centered, rather than fish-focused.


4. *Rescued.* Some fish live in land-locked ponds, where food is scarce, and the water is muddy and filled with parasites. Furthermore, these ponds may be slowly drying up, locations where the fish will ultimately die.

However, a beautiful alpine lake exists, where the water is clear and deep, and food is plentiful—a place where fish will be healthy and happy, a place where they will experience an abundant life (Rev. 21:4; John 10:10).

Our mission consists of rescuing the fish, to take part in a transfer—from a murky pond to the mountain lake.

## Conclusion

So how do you become a catcher of people? Be quick to respond, yet patient. Come close. Work together as a team. Leave your comfort zone. Seek to understand. Persevere. Prioritize. Focus on the true goal—the salvation of men and women in the kingdom of God.

Of course, people are not fish but, as Jesus showed us, the principles in catching them are all the same. 

<sup>1</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical passages are quoted from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup> This matter regarding the fate of the fish, which caught my attention in a devotional, was presented by Pastor Juvenal Balisasa, chaplain at Valley View University in Ghana, to whom I am indebted for the idea of these four categories.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

## Eternal security

We spend a great deal of time working to provide financial security for the future. We work to earn money, set aside funds for retirement, and buy medical and life insurance all in an attempt to provide security for ourselves and our families. But do we also devote the time we should to our eternal security?

God has provided us with a glimpse behind the scenes at the great controversy between good and evil. We know how it all ends: God is victorious and evil is eradicated! The devil would have us devote all our attention and time on the things of

this earth that have no lasting value.

Whether we are talking about the soon return of Christ or the uncertainty of life, we must keep focused on the real value of life. Personal revival and reformation as well as sharing with others the importance of making Christ the center of their lives remain the only true ways to have a secure future. When we think of what Christ offers, everything on this earth pales by comparison.

“Language fails to express the value of the immortal inheritance. The glory, riches, and honor offered

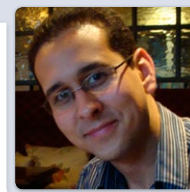
by the Son of God are of such infinite value that it is beyond the power of men or angels to give any just idea of their worth, their excellence, their magnificence.”\*

—ROBERT LEMON SERVES AS TREASURER, GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

\* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 2:40

*Revival*  
and  
REFORMATION

**Luiz Gustavo S. Assis** is a church pastor in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.



# The hovering of the Spirit of God

**T**he proper study of the Christian,” said Charles H. Spurgeon, “is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the doings, and the existence of the great God. . . . There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our tools are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self contentment, and go on our way with the thought, ‘Behold I am wise.’ But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought ‘I am but of yesterday and know nothing.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

As human beings, we are limited in our comprehension of some biblical topics.<sup>2</sup> One of them is, no doubt, the doctrine of the Godhead. As David acknowledged, “Such knowledge [of God] is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain” (Ps. 139:6).<sup>3</sup> The only way to know this profound Being is through His own disclosure in the Holy Scriptures.

This article will examine a text not widely used in the approach of this theme. We will look at Genesis 1:2,

particularly the last part of the verse: “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” I have divided our study in two parts: (1) Is the “Spirit of God” God Himself? (2) Is the “Spirit of God” a Person?

## Is the “Spirit of God” actually God Himself?

Translating from an ancient language to a modern one does not happen easily. The Old Testament Hebrew is one example. A majority of Bible translations render *ruach* ‘*elohim*’ (Gen. 1:2) as “the Spirit of God,” but some versions give a different meaning, like “a mighty wind,” or “a wind from God.” The latter two options tend to consider the “Spirit” as an inanimate force or a breath from God and not a Divine Person of the Godhead.

The Hebrew word *ruach* alone has the meaning of wind or spirit. In such cases, the context provides the best translation. In Genesis 1:2, *ruach* is not alone but appears with the noun ‘*elohim*,’ God. In all 24 occurrences of the expression *ruach* ‘*elohim*’ in the Old Testament, none of them is translated as “a mighty wind” or “a wind from God.” Why would this be? As we can see, this biblical passage deals with something deeper than a mere uncontrolled wind. And one has to remember that an uncontrolled wind does not have the capacity to start or create life. While it is difficult to see a mighty wind in this

passage, we are dealing with the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>4</sup>

An isolated reading of the Genesis passage does not provide much information about this Spirit of God, but when we look at other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures that deal with the Creation topic, we have a better understanding. For example, observe Psalm 104. The psalm is a hymn to God based on the Creation account of Genesis 1. Jacques Doukhan has provided a careful study comparing the structure of Genesis 1 and Psalm 104.<sup>5</sup> In verse 30 we read, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” This text suggests that the Creation act was only possible through the work of the Spirit. For those who claim that the Holy Spirit was absent in Creation, Psalm 104 reveals clearly that He had an active part during that process.

In other words, Genesis 1:2 affirms the Spirit of God as the One who starts life. He is not only the Creation instrument but is also the Divine One, capable of creating.

## Is the Spirit of God a Person?

Our text presents simple but strong evidence for the Personhood of the Spirit of God. This text has to do with the Hebrew verb *rachap*, to hover, soar, fly. It is an uncommon verb in the Old Testament. Besides in Genesis 1:2,

*rachap* occurs only in Deuteronomy 32:11, where God's care for His people in the wilderness is compared to an eagle hovering over its nest, revealing the idea of protection. Richard Davidson suggests another insight: the word *barren* in Deuteronomy 32:10 is the Hebrew noun *tohu* that also occurs in Genesis 1:2 as "formless." We have here the same sequence of words in the extremes of the Pentateuch. What the Spirit of God made in Genesis 1, God does with His people in Deuteronomy.<sup>6</sup>

But let us go deeper in our study of the verb *rachap*, and for this we must look to another ancient Near Eastern language, *Ugaritic*. Since the discovery of thousands of clay tablets in 1929 in Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra, in Syria,

in Genesis 1:2 as a creating activity and, at the same time, protective.

Maybe this is the reason why the Holy Spirit chose a dove to manifest Himself at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22). The New Testament scholar Greg Beale from Wheaton College, affirms that "when one considers God's authorship and design of the entire Bible and its sacred history, God's (the Spirit's) 'hovering' over the chaos of creation is a bird metaphor, which foreshadows God's sovereign design that a dove would herald the new creation after the flood of Noah, and foreshadows God's care of Israel after creating them anew out of Egypt, and foreshadows the Spirit descending as a dove on Jesus at His baptism, which recalls

seed in the human heart, devastated by the suffering and terror of sin.<sup>11</sup> There are several examples, but we will look at just two. The first—Psalm 51 where David portrays a scene of total repentance after his terrible sins. He asked God to create (Heb. *bara*) a pure heart (Ps. 51:10). Only God can create. David knew that and this is why he added, "Do not . . . take your Holy Spirit from me" (v. 11).<sup>12</sup> Why did he say that? Saul, the first king of the Israelite monarchy, became dry as a desert when the Third Person of the Godhead was removed from Him. The "hovering" activity of the Holy Spirit would restore David completely.

The second reference is Titus 3:5. Describing the process of salvation, Paul says, "He saved us through the

*For those who claim that the Holy Spirit was absent in Creation, Psalm 104 reveals clearly that He had an active part during that process.*

scholars can understand better many Hebrew words. In all *Ugaritic* text available until now, *rachap* always relates to birds, especially eagles.<sup>7</sup> Thus *rachap* in Genesis 1:2 describes an action of a Being, not an impersonal power or energy.<sup>8</sup>

Looking deeper in other languages, we can see the fullness of the beauty of Genesis 1:2. In *Syriac*, for example, *rachap* means "to bring forth," "to generate." In the ancient Arabic, the idea means to be suspended above something with open wings and again transmitting the image of protection and care of a bird hovering over its nest.<sup>9</sup> We can summarize all information provided by these ancient languages in a single phrase: *a Being generating life and protecting His creation!* This shows the meaning of the verb *rachap*

Israel's own Exodus through the Red Sea (and again second generation Israel's going through the Jordan River into the promised land), both of which were new creation episodes. Indeed, Jesus begins to inaugurate the new, second Exodus and the new creation, so it is suitable again that the Spirit as a dove should show up to indicate this."<sup>10</sup> Think for a moment on the relief that the observers felt when they saw the dove upon the very Son of God! A new creation was beginning.

### Final considerations

The insights about the activity and Personhood of the Spirit of God are like a small seed in this text. Throughout the Old and the New Testaments, we can see how the biblical writers felt and described the profound impact of this

washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." The expertise of the Third Person of the Godhead includes giving life, and He also has the power to renew one. Sometimes in our ministry, we have to deal with the tragedy of death and the destructive power of sin. We find it very important to feel restored after these kinds of situations. But not only that, sometimes a minister needs to rediscover the marvelous sense of the grace of God. Unfortunately, I have seen some pastors that do not have the light in their eyes when they are preaching or communicating the Word of God. We must recognize that only the Holy Spirit can give this light back to us.

When we, as ministers, see a large city like Sao Paulo, Paris, Chicago, New York, Mumbai, Beijing, and others, immediately a question is raised:

How shall we reach all these people? Rhetorical skills and technology seem indispensable. Biblical and theological knowledge are very important. Evangelism methods and theories of church growth must be mastered. But, without the hovering of the Holy Spirit, all these components are dry and superficial. Every pastor, elder, and leader in our congregation can multiply their efforts when the Holy Spirit becomes the urgent need of each one of us.

Ellen White wrote, "There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."<sup>13</sup> Why cannot you and I be that person? Not to be popular, not to receive applause from a large audience, but to be the minister that the gospel deserves. At

the time when the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world prays for revival and reformation, we must ask God for this hovering of His Holy Spirit upon our lives and upon our ministry. There is no other way. [V]

- 1 Charles H. Spurgeon on Malachi 3:16, quoted in Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975), 89.
- 2 A majority of the research for this article was done in 2008. However, I am thankful for Richard Davidson's presentation on the seven functions of the Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch, during the South American Division Biblical Theological Symposium in May 2011, particularly for some of his marvelous insights on Genesis 1:2 that enriched this article. I am also grateful to Elias Brasil de Souza, associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, for critiquing this manuscript.
- 3 All biblical passages in this article are from the New International Version of the Bible.
- 4 If the biblical writer intended to refer to a mighty wind, he probably would have used the expressions *ruach se'arah* (cf. Ps. 107:25; 148:8) or *ruach qadim* (cf. Jer. 18:7; Ps. 48:7). Jonah 1:4 is a decisive text here. Referring to a strong wind, Jonah used the expression *ruach gedolah*, not *ruach 'elohim*, as in Genesis 1:2. See Sabatino Moscati, "The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician

- Cosmogony," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (1947): 307.
- 5 Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: 1978), 81–88.
- 6 Richard Davidson, *The Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch*, unpublished paper, 8.
- 7 H. Neil Richardson, "An Ugaritic Letter of a King to His Mother," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (1947): 322.
- 8 Roberto Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic?" Part III, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 38 (1998): 64.
- 9 Moscati, 307.
- 10 Personal correspondence in September 26, 2009.
- 11 Richard Davidson, in the symposium referred to earlier, gave the following references—John 3:5–8; 6:63; Luke 1:35; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 3:6—to show how the hovering motif was expanded in the minds of the biblical writers.
- 12 In all 41 occurrences of the verb *bara'*, to create, God is always the subject. The idea of forgiveness is related here too. Ellen White wrote, "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' Psalm 51:10" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1988], 114).
- 13 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1988), 250, 251.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

# Revival and REFORMATION



God's people are praying for  
the Holy Spirit's presence  
in our families, churches,  
leaders and communities

7 DAYS A WEEK,  
AT 7 AM AND 7 PM

"We embarked on the 777 program as a church and we started to observe the Holy Spirit at work. The church was marred with disunity, coldness, and even the construction of the church was at a standstill. Now the unity of purpose was re-ignited, trust restored, faithfulness revived, and the chapel is almost 85% complete, en route to the construction of the main structure of the church. We wish the Almighty Lord will continue to energize our church."

KEFAS CHIKOWERO, ZIMBABWE

"A chain of earnest praying believers  
should encircle the world . . . to pray  
for the Holy Spirit"

(REVIEW AND HERALD, JANUARY 3, 1907).

JOIN US!

7 days a week, at 7 am and 7 pm

[www.RevivalandReformation.org/prayer](http://www.RevivalandReformation.org/prayer)

**S. Joseph Kidder, DMin**, is professor of Christian ministry, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



# God did an awesome thing: *A church growth strategy that worked*

I was an enthusiastic young pastor attending my first ministerial meeting. A conference official stood in front of us and said, “Now, we have a program that will finish the work.” I got excited; I wanted the work to be finished so we could go home to heaven. Two years later, he stood before us again, saying, “Now, we have a program that will finish the work.” I got excited again; I wanted Jesus to come. Well, we are still here. Two years later, another leader stood there, saying, “NOW, we have a program that will finish the work!” I paid no attention. I knew that none of these programs were going to do anything. Evangelistic programs and church growth techniques are great. The only problem is that they do not work without God’s power.

We all long to see God work in us and through us in powerful ways. We dream of a vibrant worshipping community of faith, evangelizing the world with love and power, triumphant with the Spirit. What we see instead are congregations in a plateau or decline, made of people who are enthusiastic about worldliness and apathetic about their faith.

James Rutz lists the top ten problems facing the church: apathy,

shallowness, worldliness, failure to give, pastoral burnout, teenage dropout, fear of evangelism, flabby self-discipline, maxed-out schedules (with no real results), and a chronic shortage of strong and committed members. This status he calls “The State of the Church Today.”<sup>1</sup>

But what was the state of the New Testament church? It was a community of believers empowered by the Holy Spirit and turning the world upside down with its message and life. This method spread like wild-fire across cultures, overcoming the obstacles of paganism, persecution, and Pharisaism. It was powerful!

A. W. Tozer once wrote, “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church 95% of what they did would stop and everybody would know the difference.”<sup>2</sup> Today, more than anything, we need the Holy Spirit!

## Not by might

When we rely too much on human effort, we rely too little on divine power. We think that if we had a youth pastor, a better preacher, a better

choir, a better school, or a better building, then the church would succeed. All of these things are good, but they’re not the cure for our ill churches. After we have attended every seminar, tried every strategy, checked off every task, we find ourselves in the same spot—only more tired.

The Scriptures give us a holy prescription. “ ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty’ ” (Zech. 4:6, NIV). The word *might* means every conceivable human ingenuity.<sup>3</sup> We think that the work of God is going to be finished by what we do, through programs we develop, resources we find, and talents we exhibit. Wrong. These are not the things of eternal significance. What really works is the Spirit of the Lord Almighty. We do not need more formulas, we need more *filling*. We do not need more plans, we need more *power*. We do not need more strategies, we need more *Spirit*.

## Ministry unplugged

At the heart of our problem is disconnection: we are missing the vital connection to the Vine. Without Jesus, there is no life. He tells us, “ ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot

bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing' ” (John 15:4, 5, NKJV).

Some time ago, a church had 80 members. One day the church members met together with a great vision. They decided to build a church that seated 600 people. Over the next few years, the church grew to about 100 and they started their dream church. But as the building and designing went on, fighting began and attendance dropped to about 40 and stayed there for one year.

That is when I came to be their pastor. I was excited for the challenge because I was working on my doctoral degree in leadership and church growth. I used all the things I had learned, implementing the strategies, plans, and programs I had been taught. After three and a half years of cutting-edge work and 60- to 80-hour weeks, something unusual happened. Our attendance went to 30. I had become a church decline expert.

I spent those three and a half years doing ministry unplugged from the Source of life, separated from the Vine. I had forgotten the most important ingredient in healthy church growth: the power of God. God is the One who grows His church; we are to depend on Him.

“The first lesson to be taught the workers in our institutions is the lesson of dependence upon God. Before they can attain success in any line, they must, each for himself, accept the truth contained in the words of Christ: ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’ ”<sup>4</sup> Ellen White calls this the first lesson; I learned it last for I find it naturally easier to implement plans or strategies than to surrender my heart, plans, and ideas to His will.

## The fantastic future

Jesus said to His followers, “ ‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be

my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8, NIV). They waited on the Lord, prayed, and received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They went out evangelizing the world with the gospel. With one accord they devoted themselves to prayer (v. 14). Prayer can do what no power on earth can.

Communication with God is essential. Self-reliance will fill years with frustrated ministry. Our church needs to get plugged back into a real power Source through prayer. Connecting with God gives the church a fantastic future; all things are possible with God. Prayer is the way forward to revival, power, and growth.

## The means of renewal

“ ‘If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land’ ” (2 Chron. 7:14, NIV). This is the essence of renewal; this is the promise of God for us today.

Consider the five essentials for renewal embedded in this text. (1) We belong to God and are His people. (2) We call on His name. (3) We humble ourselves. (4) We pray and seek Him. (5) We repent of our sins. Then God will hear our cries, answer our prayers, and renew us. This is not a program that we buy into, but an organic relationship with God. This is not a strategy, but a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ellen White says, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. . . . But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”<sup>5</sup> Renewal takes place when people take God seriously and spend considerable time seeking Him. “We may be assured of this: the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.”<sup>6</sup>

## From despair to hope

After my church declined from 40 to 30, I decided to quit the ministry and go back to engineering. I figured, *I would make more money, have weekends off, and I won't have to deal with difficult people.* I finished typing my letter of resignation and the doorbell rang. While at the door, my wife found the letter. Later she asked me why I wanted to quit pastoral ministry. “It's simple. I have calculated that if the current trend continues, in three and a half years there will be only you and me left in the church. I want an honorable exit.” My wife looked at me and said, “Have you been praying for your church?” I thought that was a bit judgmental and harsh. I started to defend myself, but pretty soon I had lost the argument because deep inside I had to admit that I was more into strategic planning and programming than into prayer and spirituality.

With her encouragement, I decided to spend one day a week in prayer and fasting. I was supposed to eat my last meal on Sunday night and go to the church to spend all Monday in prayer. The first Monday morning I went into the church and knelt down in front of one of the pews to pray for the family that sits there. After two minutes of prayer, I fell asleep, and I slept for eight hours. Ordinarily, I never sleep during the day, but my attempt at prayer seemed to change all that.

My biggest challenge of the day was what to tell my wife when I got home. She asked how it went, and I mumbled something like “great,” and in my heart I added, *for the two minutes that it lasted.* But with her encouragement, I kept at it. The next week I spent three minutes in prayer, and the next week four and back to two. Then I made the greatest spiritual discovery of my life: the greatest challenge to my spirituality is myself, not the Internet, radio, television, or sports. Me. I am not wired to do this. Give me a program, strategy, or something to do, and I will do it. Spirituality is about a submissive life and a connectedness with God, which is contrary to my nature.

My wife continued with her encouragement, and I continued in my commitment. I said, “I will do it and keep doing it, even if it kills me.” Luckily, it did not kill me. Over time, things started to change in my life. For eight months I continued this praying effort and the first weeks of determination and struggle later turned into joy and peace. In my newfound enthusiasm, I started to look for new ways to incorporate prayer in my life and practiced one hour of prayer walking every day. I began to be filled with hope and optimism. There was more effectiveness in my preaching

‘I feel like, as a family, we should take God more seriously.’ ” They saw the Adventist church across the street and decided to give it a try.

They were hungry for God. I studied the Bible with them twice a week and they were baptized two months later. When I baptized them, I dedicated the sermon to them, and as I shared their story, I shared my story too. I told my congregation about my struggle with prayer, and how I used to come into the church and pray for them. I told them how I had prayed that God would send me someone to baptize. And then I said,

church, during the week, and on the weekends. They prayed individually and in groups, they prayed earnestly and with passion. Eight years later, that church had grown from 30 defeated people to about 500 fully devoted followers of Jesus. They grew from 30 people without purpose to 500 people who turned their city upside down. God did an awesome thing. All the church growth strategies that I implemented did not work, but prayer transformed our lives and church.

We are busy people. Deadlines loom ahead of us, appointments press in

*We do not need more **formulas**, we need more **filling**. We do not need more **plans**, we need more **power**. We do not need more **strategies**, we need more **Spirit**.*

and ministry. My ministry was no longer my own, it was God’s. The discipline of prayer was changing me.


Then one Sabbath I was preaching and from the pulpit I saw the same faithful 30—plus four more: a husband, wife, and two little daughters. I said to myself, *They must be from out of town, we never have visitors*. I did not consider that they might be seekers—at that time our church was so depressing, I would not have attended, except that I was the pastor.

I greeted them at the door and asked if they were visiting. They said they lived across the street. I asked how they happened to come to this church. The husband said, “I was fishing in Alaska, my boss there was an ex-Adventist. Every evening he’d gather the crew and talk about his philosophy of life. One day he told us, ‘If you ever go to church, try the Seventh-day Adventist church.’ When I got home, my wife said,

“The God of the whole universe was listening to the prayers of a discouraged pastor in the middle of nowhere, and He gave me this couple.”

As soon as I said this, a 69-year-old man stood up, and he came to the front crying. In front of everyone, he said, “I have four grown children and all of them are far from the Lord. If God answered the prayers of Pastor Joe and brought him this family, He will answer my prayer and give me my children and their families. I’m going to pray day and night for them. Will you pray for them and for me? Hold me accountable and remind me that God answers prayer?” As he finished his testimony, a woman from the other side of the church came forward sharing a similar testimony.

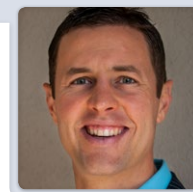
That Sabbath morning, more than ten people gave testimonies. This started a movement of prayer. People started to pray before, during, and after

around us, tasks demand our attention every hour. In all this busyness, we tend to ignore the one true priority. Let us reject busyness and answer the whispered invitation of God to commune with Him. When we tried every other technique, we failed. But when we tried God, we succeeded. God is faithful to His promises. He will do great things for us if we surrender ourselves to Him. God wants to repeat this success story over and over and over—starting with you. 

- 1 James H. Rutz, *The Open Church: How to Bring Back the Exciting Life of the First Century Church* (Auburn, ME: SeedSowers, 1992), 2.
- 2 A.W. Tozer, “Reflections,” *Christianity Today* 29 (Dec. 13, 1985):46.
- 3 Carl Webber in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1981), 171, 172.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 194.
- 5 White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 121.
- 6 Unknown Christian, *The Kneeling Christian* (Scott Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2009), 3.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

Anthony WagenerSmith, MDiv, is a church planter in the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United States.



# Is God calling you to plant a church?

**S**hould you plant a new church?

The need is obvious. But the specific steps of planting a church that worked in one community probably will not work in yours. Principles transfer; models do not. Instead, what is important is a discernment process to confirm if God is indeed calling you to a new church start-up. Without confirmation, you will likely start for the wrong reasons or quit when the honeymoon ends. Yet, with such confirmation comes faithfulness and eventual fruitfulness in the lives of others. You will discover it is imperative, therefore, that you, as a potential planter, discern if new church development is indeed God's will for your community.

## Different approaches, same calling

"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary."<sup>1</sup> Our identities as children in God's kingdom and involvement with His mission are inseparable. Jesus describes this connection when He says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere" (Acts 1:8).<sup>2</sup> This calling includes church leaders who, in God's design, also take the lead in equipping fellow believers for disciple making (Eph. 4:11, 12; Matt. 28:18–20). This

vital call does not necessarily mean to plant a church, although in some cases, this will be the outcome. The call is to follow Jesus.

While Jesus calls everyone to a life of mission, no one in Scripture is called specifically to be a church planter.<sup>3</sup> Jesus said, "Make disciples" not "plant churches" (Matt. 28:19). This simple fact should keep us from overglorifying the work of new churches over existing ones. Mission-shaped church plants (new church development) and the transformation of existing congregations (redevelopment) are simply two different tools with the same purpose—to make disciples.

## A discernment process to hear God's YES

The conviction to be involved in new churches unfolds differently in every leader. Nevertheless, there are transferable principles that can guide you or the organization you lead in prayerful assessment. Even if your mantra emphasizes that "we work with the willing," these principles can help the willing to be more prepared, as 80 percent of new churches die within the first five years.<sup>4</sup> The leadership necessary to initiate new churches is related but distinct from that of existing congregations.<sup>5</sup> A church-planting leader's conviction should be clearly understood, easily articulated, and

routinely reviewed. Taken prayerfully and in conversation with those whom know you best, these principles can help potential leaders hear God's YES (an acronym elaborated upon in the following sections) to new church development.<sup>6</sup>

## Yourself: The way God wired you

*Catalytic innovator.* An important trait of effective church-planting leaders includes that of being a catalytic innovator.<sup>7</sup> They catalyze or start new things, and innovate or bring about changes to the established order of things. The following questions are helpful in discerning this trait. Do you have a history of starting new things from the ground up? Can you learn from failed experiments, hitting the reset button until you find what works? Just because you recognize God is staying with you does not mean an experiment will not fail, and just because an experiment fails does not mean God is not with you. Do others know you as a risk taker? Are you able to dream big and start small, avoiding both naïveté (refusing to start small) and complacency (failing to dream big)?

In my own growing up years, I found myself involved with new start-ups through business, music, and creative outreach. Some of the most effective church planters previously worked in youth ministry, as

innovation is not only tolerated but required in both environments. While fine distinctions can be made between spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and acquired skills, several assessment tools exist for you to discover how God has wired you in regard to the catalytic innovator and other traits.<sup>8</sup>

*Vision caster.* Like pastors of growing congregations, church-planting leaders are strong vision casters. In both contexts the leader uses symbols, stories, or words to describe what God is doing (Deut. 6:6–9; Hab.

vision for our plant revolved around the gospel, we were able to adapt our approach in response to the changing needs of those we were reaching.

A review of failed church plants revealed that one of the top ten mistakes is a leader with a fantasy statement instead of a vision statement.<sup>9</sup> Are you pursuing a fantasy or do you have a vision in your heart that God placed there? If so, how will you communicate this vision in compelling ways?

*Friends with non-Christians.* Those who start new churches love God by

full of people in my community with whom I spend time, and they come from a diversity of ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds. Right now, an unchurched family in our neighborhood, after moving out of the state three years ago, plans to move back. The father contacted me to say that the first thing he wants to do upon returning is bring our families together for a meal. If you sense God's leading towards new church development, you will ace the "cell phone test." You will not rely on money to outsource

*While Jesus calls everyone to a life of mission,*  
**no one in Scripture is called specifically**  
**to be a church planter. Jesus said, " 'Make**  
**disciples' " not "plant churches" (Matt. 28:19).**  
*This simple fact should keep us from overglorifying*  
*the work of new churches over existing ones.*

2:2; Rev. 1:1–3). In both settings the leader develops practical strategies out of a vision for the lost. Unlike an established church where an existing team discerns God's vision together, the vision God places in the church planter's heart gathers the team. In my own experience, I have realized the need for the vision to be cast around the gospel, not any particular methodology or approach. In an earlier church plant I was involved in, it morphed from a house church to small groups at parks to a soup kitchen adjacent to a homeless shelter. We grew from eight to 50 in three years with 21 baptisms, only three of which had any previous Adventist background. Since God's

spending time with people far from Him (Matt. 9:10–13; Rom. 5:6–8; 1 John 4:20). They know that in order to be a mission-shaped church, their calling to live as people sent of God is more important than methods or techniques (John 17:18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21).<sup>10</sup> A simple index of a missional life is what I call the "cell phone test." If someone wants to plant a church but does not have a non-Christian in his or her cell phone contact list, he or she cannot be ready to lead. Several years ago, while scrolling through the contacts on my cell phone, God revealed my hypocrisy in this area and also brought about a radical change in my perspective and lifestyle. My cell phone is now

the development of a contact list. You will pray for open doors and nurture meaningful relationships with those outside of your faith tradition.

### **External: Others recognize what God is doing**

The second marker in hearing God's YES is external. While God's calling does not originate from humans, you will find this is recognized through the affirmation of denominational structures, the formation of a team, and previous fruit in the lives of others.

*Affirmation from denominational oversight.* The early Christian movement affirmed the apostle Paul by

recognizing his call to the Gentiles and sending him out from Antioch to disciple the nations (Gal. 2:1–10; Acts 13:1–3). While open doors come in all shapes and sizes, if God calls you towards church planting, others will affirm this calling. Have you developed a relationship of trust with the leadership of your church or denomination? Do those whom God has placed in roles of oversight know of your interest in church planting? Does the way you express your passion make it difficult for them to work with you? Are you flexible in regard to timing

but does not get along with you, he or she will not stay around. Conversely, if you have a great friendship but the individual sees no need for the vision, he or she also will not be a teammate. The formation of a team is a key marker in a leader's call to a new church start-up.

*Previous fruit in the lives of others.* Has God already used you to bring about change in the lives of others? Have you reached people outside of an existing church? These questions point toward an external confirmation in the type of ministry necessary for new

against rather than what they are for, they are living off siphoned energy. It is only a matter of time until these leaders discover that distaste for their previous church experience does not attract the community. Effective church planters know that the gospel of Jesus Christ changes lives, not the venue or methodology (1 Cor. 15:1–5). New people will come to church plants, all with different reasons for being there. However, the church planter's internal hunger and greatest joy must be to see transformed lives. Changing the way people view church is not as

*The church planter's internal hunger and greatest joy must be to see transformed lives. Changing the way people view church is not as important as seeing God change their hearts.*

and location? If your denominational leadership does not seem supportive of your involvement with church planting, this does not necessarily mean that God is not calling. In conjunction with the other principles in this article, the answer could be “No,” “not now,” or “Yes” in a different context.

*The formation of a team.* If God wants to establish a new congregation in your community, you are not the only one He is calling. The role of a church-planting leader includes finding others whom God is also calling. Work with denominational leaders to find others involved in church planting. The size of the group is not as important as their development into a team. Alongside a shared doctrinal foundation, there are two compatibility questions the leader must pay attention to in gathering teammates: Do they like the vision, and do they like you?<sup>11</sup> If someone likes the vision

church development. Missiologists tell us that a change in geography does not magically create a change in the character of missions. Also true with church planting: many holy experiments have failed, in part, because the leader had no track record of caring for the lost.

### **Stirring: The unceasing passion of your heart**

The third and final marker in hearing God's YES for church planting is a passionate stirring of the heart. Fueled by a deep walk with Jesus, God's call creates an urgent hunger for what can be in the life of a leader.

*Have a hunger for what can be, not a distaste for what is.* While not uncommon for leaders of new churches to be dissatisfied with the *status quo*, this dissatisfaction can drive them to contextualize the gospel to the unreached. However, if they are primarily motivated by what they are

important as seeing God change their hearts.


*Biblical devotional practices.* The source of all vision, power, and personal renewal in a leader's life comes from being with Jesus (Mark 3:14). Listening to Jesus through biblical devotional practices is about having Christ formed in you by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27). Planting a church is a roller coaster and those high and low points have left many burned out and disillusioned. A faithful leader—through a lifestyle of biblical devotional practice—knows that Jesus alone satisfies (Isa. 55:1–3). In my life I call this “the three Rs”: daily renewal, weekly rest, and a quarterly retreat. I am learning that the solution is often not to work harder but lean harder on God through prayer. Reflect upon the supremacy of Jesus in your life. Does your spiritual boldness match your social boldness? Is your default mode

to plan things to death or pray them to life? Does your weekly flow include both a devotional life as well as a life of devotion?

**Urgency.** A dream without action is just a wish. Like Jeremiah, who describes God's call as a burning fire that cannot be contained (Jer. 20:9), those that God calls to church planting cannot be silent and passive. This urgency is not merely an emotional experience but an unceasing conviction that creates radical commitment. This urgency will keep you awake at night and shape the way you live in your community. Planting a church cannot be something trendy that you would like to do before you die, but must be something you are dying to do right now. How urgent are you about being engaged in church planting? Is your urgency more about having your own way or being obedient to God? Are you willing to say No to other

opportunities in order to say Yes to the growing pains of developing a new church?

## Conclusion

Far from a simplistic checklist, these principles represent a discernment process whereby you, or someone in the organization you lead, can hear God's YES to church planting. When this type of assessment is paired with coaching and training, support systems can be developed to empower new church-planting leaders. Has God wired you for a new church start-up? Is there external confirmation? Does your heart have an unceasing internal stirring? If you can say YES to all three markers, move forward. Proceed with a humble confidence, knowing the One who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (see Phil. 1:6). 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 195.
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages are from the New Living Translation.
- 3 The initiation of new ministry through apostolic gifting, while evidenced in the lives of Paul and others whom God used to raise up new churches, is related—but not directly parallel—to our modern notion of a church planter (Acts 13:1–4; Eph. 4:11, 12).
- 4 Acts 29 Network, accessed July 2, 2013, [www.acts29network.org](http://www.acts29network.org).
- 5 For a landmark multiyear and cross-denominational study on the traits of effective church-planting leaders, see H. Stanley Wood, ed., *Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times*, vol. 1, *Unadorned Clay Pot Messengers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).
- 6 I coined the acronym YES to conceptualize the principles it contains, based upon wide exposure to church-planting research and literature, multiple conversations with church planters, and my own experience.
- 7 Wood, *Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times*, 36–49.
- 8 Online tools such as [www.strengthsfinder.com](http://www.strengthsfinder.com), which reveals an individual's top five natural strengths, can be paired with spiritual gifts inventories to assess church-planting competencies.
- 9 Bill Easum and Jim Griffith, *Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 22, 23.
- 10 Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3.
- 11 Tom Nebel and Gary Rohrmayer call this the "compatibility matrix" in *Church Planting Landmines: Mistakes to Avoid in Years 2 Through 10* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2005), 44–47.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).

## LETTERS

Continued from page 4



He mentions both *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone is to determine matters of faith) and *tota scriptura* (the use of Scripture in its entirety) but omits to mention the third principle usually associated with these first two—*prima scriptura* (Scripture should be the prime or ruling authority among other sources of truth). I find this omission troubling, as it suggests a buying into the popular, but misguided view, in my estimation, that *prima scriptura* is somehow at odds with *sola scriptura*. Some would argue that if Scripture is the sole authority, then other authorities do not exist, and thus the *prima* principle opens doors to compromising scriptural truths with other sorts of truths. But my studies as a church historian lead me to conclude that the

church always, whether knowingly or not, draws on information from a variety of sources, including reason, experience, and historical witnesses, when trying to understand and interpret the Bible. Doctrines of the church must be solely based in Scripture, but to fully understand, define, explain, and apply them often requires material from outside of Scripture.

A simple example is biblical prophecy. One cannot apply or understand prophecy without also studying history books and other uninspired sources. Also, in applying biblical lifestyle standards of modesty and decorum, one must draw on the knowledge of one's culture. I think it would be unfortunate for the church to proceed on this important study without acknowledging that

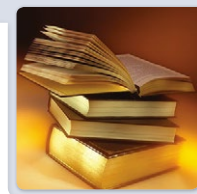
God has provided other avenues of truth, experience, reason, and history that can be used to illuminate and apply the Bible to particular questions. The Bible must be the supreme, *prima*, authority, but even the Bible acknowledges that other, secondary authorities can play a role as well in teaching us about God and truth.

—Nicholas Miller, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

## Phoebe

Kudos on the excellent article by Darius Jankiewicz titled "Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?" (April 2013). I found it to be well researched, very readable, and quite enlightening.

—Beverly Rumble, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States



## The Book That Changed the World: The Story of the King James Version

Edited by Nikolaus Satelmajer, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2012.

**T**he *Book That Changed the World* outlines the importance of the King James Version (KJV) in American history, the English language, and its influence throughout the English-speaking world. It also gives a summary of its development and ultimate publication. The book is divided into four sections: Origins (two essays: “From Outlawed to Authorized—A Path Soaked in Blood: English Bibles Before the King James Version,” and “Taking ‘Pains in the House of God’: The Origins and Making of the Authorized Version”); Old and New Connections (three essays: “The Enduring Influence of the King James Version,” “‘Contraries Meet in One’: Shakespeare, Donne, and the King James Version,” and “‘Do You Fancy Picking It Up?: The King James Bible and Digital Culture’”); Church Communities (three essays: “The Role of the King James Version in the African-America Church,” “The King James Version and Seventh-day Adventist Faith: A Historical and Theological Reflection,” and “Ellen G. White and the King James Version”); and Reading, Memorizing, Studying (three essays: “The King James Version as Oral Beauty,” “Eating the Book,” and “This Message Is for You: Getting the Most Out of One’s Personal Bible Study”); with an introduction and brief biographical statements of the writers, editors, and project consultants.


In the introduction, editor Nikolaus Satelmajer lays out the genesis of the project and his lifelong interest in Bible translations, notably German, Croatian, and Serbian. He mentions that the KJV project began in his Sabbath School

class by his and others’ presentations on the subject of the KJV on its 400th anniversary.

Two articles illustrating the depth and breadth of the essays in this book are “Taking ‘Pains in the House of God’ ” and “The Enduring Influence of the King James Version.” In the first essay, it was noted that “[t]he AV [Authorized Version] turned out as it did largely because . . . the translators were chosen for their biblical scholarship, rather than ecclesiastical or political opinions; and because they themselves seem to have regarded their work as the culminating effort of a century of Protestant attempts to render the Bible in English” (34, 35). The essay continues by noting that “First, the Bible was foundational to true religion. Second, . . . accuracy was essential in translating it. . . . Third, a translation was . . . also intended to enable ordinary people to read the Bible. . . . [The] translation must be both accurate and readable” (35). It was further pointed out in the essay that there was “a tendency to translate the words to be ‘openly read’—that is, read aloud” (46). The translators also “regularly ‘crave[d] the assistance of God’s Spirit by prayer’ ” (44). The essay noted that some of the language used in the translation emphasized the intimate and personal relationship

between God and His people, which was without foundation in the Hebrew and Greek text (48).

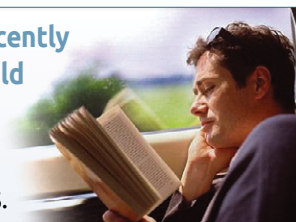
The essay “The Enduring Influence of the King James Version” cited the KJV’s influence on music, art, religion, democracy, civilization, and the English language. In music, we have Handel’s *Messiah*, plus famous works of Haydn, Mendelssohn, Purcell, Bach, and many others as well as the hymns composed by Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Fanny Crosby, Newton, and a host of others. In social reforms, there are, among many others, William Wilberforce (1759–1833)—abolition of slavery; and in numerous English expressions, such as “the salt of the earth.” It can also be seen that Abraham Lincoln, too, was influenced by his reading of the KJV. Note the KJV language in his statement: “With malice toward none; with charity for all.”

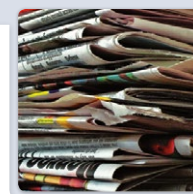
After reading this book, it becomes clear that the KJV has had an enduring influence on English culture in all its aspects as well as on the English language. The book is coherently written and well worth reading from cover to cover. 

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a retired pastor living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Have you read a great book published recently that your fellow pastoral colleagues would really enjoy? Write a book review!

For Writer’s Guidelines visit  
[www.ministrymagazine.org/article-submissions](http://www.ministrymagazine.org/article-submissions).





## ► “Revelation of Hope” meeting

### New York City, New York, United States—

The drenching rains of Tropical Storm Andrea failed to dampen the enthusiasm of people who attended the initial “Revelation of Hope” campaign meeting Friday evening, June 7, 2013. The meeting is one of hundreds being held in metropolitan areas during June as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “Mission to the Cities” campaign.

Officials of the Atlantic Union and the two area conferences say that 1,100 people have already been baptized during the months leading up to the event. The NY13 campaign—which features 160 different evangelistic events across the region in June alone—is expected to culminate on June 29 at the Nassau Coliseum with



a rally attended by more than 15,000 people. The overall effort includes the participation of the Atlantic and Columbia Unions, as well as the Southern New England, Greater New York, Northeastern, and New Jersey Conferences.

Pastor **Ted N. C. Wilson**, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, served briefly at what is today the historic Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church some 40 years ago when he first began his ministry. He returned to the church to open the three-week evangelistic series. Calling himself a “New Yorker at heart,” Wilson told the audience he had “started ministry right here.”

In his message, Wilson declared: “The Bible is amazingly accurate. The Bible is filled with hope for the future.” He added, citing Amos 3:7, “Surely the earth’s events are not going to ‘sneak up’ on God. Unlike the dismal predictions of human beings, the Bible gives us hope.”  
[Mark Kellner/ANN]

## ► Adventist elected president of Swiss Bible Society

### Aarau, Aargau, Switzerland—

Delegates of the Swiss Bible Society elected Seventh-day Adventist theologian **Reto Mayer** as the organization’s president during their May 24 meeting, making him the first Adventist appointed to the post in the society’s 58-year history.

Mayer, associate treasurer of the Adventist world church’s Inter-European Division based in Berne, Switzerland, has served as the society’s vice president since 2005. The Adventist Church joined the society in 1982.

“I hope that people see [the Bible] as an invitation from God, inviting them

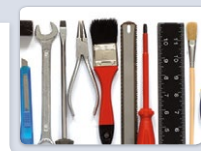


to live a personal relationship with Him,” Mayer told the Swiss Bible Society in a May 24 interview. “The distribution

of the Bible is close to my heart, so it’s a pleasure for me to participate in this work.”

The Swiss Bible Society was founded in 1955, succeeding the former coalition of Swiss Bible Societies. This organization promotes standards for translation, production, and distribution of Bibles in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein, and works with more than 146 national Bible societies united as the global United Bible Societies to bring the Bible in easy and modern language and form closer to the people. [Herbert Bodenmann/APD/ANN/tedNEWS]

Enroy G. Ferguson pastors the North Street Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kingston, Jamaica.




# Tips *on* ministering *in the inner city*

**A**s a pastor, I have worked in inner-city communities. Here are some of the lessons I learned and the approaches that have worked for me:

- You must care about the people in the communities. Do not try to trick or con them. They see through hypocrisy easily.
- If you are a preacher or pastor, remember that most of the people view pastors as men or women of God. Therefore they will want and expect you to pray for them. This is important to them.
- Show an interest in their circumstances. Talk to them about their lives. If they trust you, they will open up to you and come to your church services and other such gatherings.
- Speak to them about the Bible—the lessons it has for our day-by-day lives and the importance of reading it daily. Many of them long for better lives, so they are receptive to this approach. Remember Psalm 119:9: “Wherewithal

shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (KJV).

- Speak to them about how God changed your life. Make it real. There is power in the story of a changed life.
- Be sincere in whatever you do for and with them. They live at the basic level of life; if you are not sincere, they will pick it up quickly and ignore your message.
- Even if they do not have a religious bent, your sincerity and care for them often awakens good impulses and starts them on their way to new lives.
- Be willing to spend time with the people, discuss their family problems or whatever might be bothering them. They often need nothing more than to have someone show an interest by listening to them as they sort out their issues.
- Believe in and look for the good in them.
- Point out where they have prospects for success and by what method they can succeed. Open their minds to possibilities and how they can achieve them. 

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or visit [www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine).



# Southern Adventist University

your partner in ministry

## JOIN US ON CAMPUS

### Archaeology Lecture, September 24

Scholar and author Kyle McCarter, Ph.D., will talk about the development of the Hebrew language at 7 p.m. in Lynn Wood Hall Chapel. McCarter is professor of biblical and ancient near eastern studies at Johns Hopkins University.

For more information, visit [southern.edu/archaeology](http://southern.edu/archaeology).

### Adventist Heritage Lecture, October 3

Historian and author James Nix will speak at 11 a.m. in the Collegedale Church. Nix is director of the Ellen G. White Estate.

### Origins Exhibit

Our museum-quality exhibit in the Biology Department offers an understanding of origins from a creationist worldview. Consider the intricacy of the cell, the relationship between the Geologic Column and biblical flood, and the significance of nature's intricate beauty.

For more information, visit [southern.edu/faithandscience](http://southern.edu/faithandscience).

## JOIN US FROM ANYWHERE

Vespers and worship services at our campus church are broadcast live at [southern.edu/streaming](http://southern.edu/streaming).

## INVITE US TO JOIN YOU

We are an abundant resource for talent and expertise in a wide variety of areas. We invite you to consider someone from Southern for speaking appointments, workshops, musical programs, and other occasions.

For more information, visit [southern.edu/resourceguide](http://southern.edu/resourceguide).

### Recommend Us

If you know of someone looking to attend a Christian university, we have a variety of campus visit options for prospective students. For more information, go online to [southern.edu/visit](http://southern.edu/visit).



Power for Mind & Soul

1.800.SOUTHERN  
Collegedale, Tennessee

# A Call to Action

## *The Blueprint*

Rico Hill and Jared Thurmon

How can we reach the teeming multitudes in our cities with the gospel? You can find an answer in *The Blueprint: A Manual for Reaching the Cities*. Rico Hill and Jared Thurmon present the Beehive method, a tried-and-true approach to urban ministry with a new twist. Based on the methods of Jesus and an intriguing dream of Ellen White's, they describe a model that they have successfully tested in modern urban outreach. 978-0-8280-2714-4.  
**US\$12.99**

Scan  
this ➡



Prices and availability subject to change.  
 Canadian prices higher.

**SHOP  
YOUR  
WAY**

- » Visit your local Adventist Book Center®
- » Call toll-free 800.765.6955
- » Click [www.AdventistBookCenter.com](http://www.AdventistBookCenter.com)



**Review & Herald®**