

# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

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## Pastoral ministry in the third millennium:

Learning  
the art of  
strategic  
neglect





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## Ted Wilson and leadership

I just finished reading the interview conducted by R. Clifford Jones of Pastor Ted Wilson (“Humble Servant Leadership: An Interview With Ted Wilson”—April 2015). Thank God for the faith and straight testimony of our General Conference president.

The article was excellent, especially where he was asked by Dr. Jones as to what books he would recommend for gaining more information on Christian leadership. Elder Wilson did not equivocate or give some politically correct answer. Instead, he stood tall in the faith and answered that the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy are what is needed. This was my immediate response and still is. May God give us clarity to choose that which was and is inspired by God for these times: books that provide clear and present truth to meet the challenges before us.

—David L. Tripp, retired pastor, Potomac Conference, United States

## Ordination

Dan Serns’s contribution (“Ordination: The Neglected Dimension”—February 2015) touches on a pressing issue that has been exercising Adventist minds for some time.

His appeal to Scripture (see Matt. 28:16–20) is most appropriate and compelling, and the appropriating of the gospel commission to the individual is biblically valid. The confirmation of this responsibility by Ellen G. White is like a clarion call to the whole church. How blessed are the church congregations where the pastor fulfills his rightful role in training the members to fully participate and enjoy the ministry that God has laid on their hearts.

—Steve Cinzio, email

## Reflections on ministry

I read with very much appreciation the practical pointers written by Lawrence Balleine (“Forty Tips From 40 Years of Ministry”—February 2015). Every one of the tips that are suggested comes with the insight of 40

years of pastoral experience. They are what I call commonsense practices—practices that sometimes seem so obvious, but I personally had to suffer before coming to accept some of them. I took the time to ponder every one of the tips, and so many positive and negative memories came to mind. I wish I had them 20 years ago. Thank you!

—Daniel Cucuteanu, pastor, Ontario Conference

## Johannine view of the temple

I have come to admire and enjoy the careful and scholarly work of Kim Papaioannou. In his recent essay (“The Heavenly Temple in the Gospel of John”—April 2015), he explores the theme of the temple in the Gospel of John.

I would very much enjoy seeing his study of the temple theme in the Book of Revelation, ending with Revelation 21:22. Perhaps the essay has already been written? I look forward to it.

—Ernest J. Stevenson, email 

## It often starts with one

Several years ago, Judith Miranda made a commitment to God that she would do all that she could to raise a church in the city of Malibu, California. Undeterred by the fact that some of the wealthiest people on earth live there, she started her task by going from door to door asking people if she could pray for them, listen to them, or study with them. Her vision became a reality. Now a congregation of approximately 50 members meets there.

When I met that congregation, it proved to be a moving experience. Here I found a group of individuals,

from diverse backgrounds, devoted to sharing God’s Word and love. There I met Ambassador Leith Eaton, the newest member of the congregation.

Leith is a happy woman. When we spoke about her move into Adventism, her testimony was heartwarming. She told me that while the people had studied the Bible with her, they also brought a level of caring into her world that “drew her in.” Her experience illustrates my point.

It seems to me that we need more Malibus, that true revival and reformation is demonstrated when individuals and congregations alike

take their eyes off themselves, focus upon God’s good will, and then move beyond their proverbial comfort zones to demonstrate His goodwill, sympathy, and caring in ministry. In reality, this often starts with one.

—DAN JACKSON, MA IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, SERVES AS PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA, HEADQUARTERED IN SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.





# The perils and privileges of pastoral ministry

**W**e hear a great deal about the perils of pastoral ministry—and there are many. We constantly run the risk of becoming so preoccupied with serving others that we ourselves spend little or no time at the feet of Jesus. We also face the ever-present danger of neglecting our own families in an unbalanced attempt to care for our church families 24/7. It is so easy and professionally acceptable to neglect appropriate self-care while encouraging others to intentionally replenish physically, emotionally, and socially.

These perils, and others unnamed, are very real and need to be candidly discussed and intentionally avoided. You'll appreciate the lead article by Willie and Elaine Oliver. They provide a strategy for avoiding many perils in ministry: the art of strategic neglect.

While recognizing and addressing the perils of pastoral ministry, we would also do well to remember and appreciate the wonderful privileges that come with our pastoral assignment.

Many years ago I served as a local church pastor in Allentown, Pennsylvania. There I was blessed to meet a young adult named Nathan Krause. His day job was at a local foundry, and he taught martial arts in the evenings. I shared the truths about Jesus with this young man and eventually baptized him.

My pastoral care for Nathan didn't end there. I encouraged him to attend a Christian college, spoke at his graduation, performed his wedding, and offered prayers of dedication for both

of his children. Then our friendship took an interesting turn. When I moved to the Washington, DC, area to assume my current responsibilities, Nathan became my pastor. This gave me another opportunity to reflect on the privilege of pastoral ministry. Seeds sown years ago can yield a bountiful harvest. While we know this is all God's work, we can rejoice as we see the miracle of God in progress.

For the past few months, I have assisted as a volunteer interim pastor in a local church. My primary responsibility is to preach on a regular basis. Once again I am challenged to search the Scriptures, search my own heart, and be attentive to the lives of my hearers in order to share the Word of God. What a sacred responsibility and joyful privilege.

In connection with this pastoral assignment, I was also asked to speak to the students and teachers at our local church school. It brought joy to my heart to hear the students singing their school song: "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." I was familiar with the Scripture passage, but I had never heard it sung with such enthusiasm or seen such energetic hand gestures. After my worship talk, several students came over and greeted me. The little ones hugged my waist, and the more mature students shook my hand. Their etiquette teacher would have been proud of them. I was reminded once again of the privilege of pastoral ministry.

*Seeds sown  
years ago can  
yield a bountiful  
harvest.*

Each Wednesday evening we have a House of Prayer in our home. This midweek prayer service is open to anyone in our community. Recently, we shared a prayer quilt with a young mother facing a major health challenge. Our home was filled with Bible study partners and friends, along with our regular attendees. As I saw the love of God poured out and listened as prayers ascended in the name of Jesus, I was reminded once again of the great privilege of serving as a local church pastor.

I'm not sure how long my responsibilities as a volunteer interim pastor will continue, but I'm thankful for the opportunity. I have been reminded once again that pastoral ministry has joys as well as sorrows, privileges as well as perils, and blessings as well as problems. So when you're having a hard day, a hard week, or even a hard season, remember to look at the big picture. Allow the Good Shepherd to walk with you through the perilous dark valley, and take time to reflect on and give thanks for the privileges of pastoral ministry. 

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# Pastoral ministry in the third millennium: *Learning the art of strategic neglect*

While flying across the Atlantic a few months ago, we encountered a nasty storm. Though we had experienced many storms on airplanes before, this flight was one of the worst. We were both still and quiet, sitting next to each other during that dreary night. Holding hands, we individually talked with God.

In those moments, when the plane was dipping and shaking and our futures seemed uncertain, our thoughts were not about our work responsibilities. Later, in calmer skies, we confessed to each other what truly was weighing on our minds: our relationship with God, our relationship with each other, and the salvation of our children.

## Lessons from a rough ride

Invariably, our lives in ministry can, at times, feel like a nasty storm. The intensity of the job itself added to the high rates of unrealistic expectations from church memberships or even leadership does not always make for a smooth ride. Rather, it sets up pastors to burn out quickly and, often, to live with a great burden of guilt, frustration, and disillusionment.

These emotions not only are a reality for pastors but have a ripple effect

on the pastor's spouse and children. Often, many of the same expectations placed on the pastor are placed on the spouse and children. For instance, the spouses (usually wives) are asked to take on pastoral responsibilities, and the children are expected to be models of perfection by demonstrating spiritual maturity beyond their years.

Of course, pastoral ministry has both joys and challenges. While the highs of ministry can be great—leading people to Jesus, bringing hope to people without hope—the lows of ministry can be very low, often causing one to be stretched to the limit of time and resources and falling short in measurable results with both the church and one's family.

In the mid-1980s, Paul Tsongas, a United States senator from Massachusetts, found out he had cancer. At first he decided to move ahead with his reelection campaign. He had second thoughts when a friend, Arnold Zack, wrote him a note saying: "No one on his deathbed ever said, 'I wish I had spent more time on my business.'" Tsongas gave up his campaign to spend time with his family during this difficult period.<sup>1</sup>

We are not suggesting that pastors give up ministry. Rather, we suggest that they take a new look at putting first things first by better managing

their competing commitments and finding homeostasis in their spiritual, personal, and professional lives. "Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first."<sup>2</sup>

## Strategic neglect

In an interview in *Leadership Journal*, Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek Community Church talked on the keys to simpler and more effective leadership. He mentioned the need for pastors and ministry leaders to come to grips with the notion of "strategic neglect."<sup>3</sup> This idea speaks to the need for healthy boundaries in ministry. Ostensibly, each pastor needs to focus, simplify, and prioritize.

And with this commitment, one must ask, personally, the questions, Who do I want to become over time? What kind of husband or wife? What kind of father or mother? What kind of friend, pastor, or leader? And then ask the follow-up question, What needs to be put into my schedule so that I become this kind of person? Essentially, pastors must decide in a strategic way what things will be left out of their schedules in order to be successful spiritually, personally—in their family life—and professionally.

In a recent study on pastoral family stress in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, a significant percentage of pastors reported difficulty with personal prayer, trouble maintaining personal connection with God, and problems making time for personal devotions. What we know, as people in ministry ourselves, is that without prayer and Bible study, it is impossible to sustain the kind of viable relationship with God necessary for any kind of effective ministry. Without this daily connection, we lose sight of being *called*, rendering what we do for the church as just a regular job.

So what must the pastor *strategically neglect* in order to develop stronger spiritual disciplines? Setting specific times to respond to emails? Spending less time with unnecessary social media? Watching less TV? Getting to bed earlier in order to wake up earlier? You are the only one who can determine what you must *strategically neglect* so that you can give the necessary time to prayer and Bible study that will enable you to be an effective spiritual leader.

## In the Word

Ezra 7:10 declares, “Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”<sup>4</sup> Note the commitment Ezra made to studying Scripture, living Scripture, and teaching Scripture. Studying God’s Word is a prerequisite for knowing God. Many scholars study and teach Scripture, but it has not made a difference in their lives. Not so with Ezra. He put his heart into it. He studied Scripture, he observed Scripture, and then he taught Scripture.

Without a doubt, *strategic neglect* was operative in the life of this faithful scribe, or he would have been unable to singularly study, live, and teach Scripture. As pastors, we must learn and operationalize in our lives the model set by Ezra to be effective as leaders of the flock. The time we spend in personal devotion and studying God’s Word cannot just be for sermon preparation,

but it must be where we nurture and feed our spiritual lives to be essentially connected to the vine.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus counsels His disciples with the words, “‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” A few verses later, in Acts 1:14, we read, “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.”

The Holy Spirit will inhabit us when we spend time in prayer, asking for clarity of mind and purpose to effectively represent Jesus to the world. The power of the Spirit will come down with the force of Pentecost when we make the time to commune with God through prayer. Without this focus and priority, our lives will become too cluttered to make time to pray. Ellen G. White counsels, “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work.”<sup>5</sup> As pastors, we must strategically include time for prayer and Bible study, for as we neglect those activities, they become barriers to our spending time with Jesus.

In the North American pastoral study mentioned earlier, many pastors complained about not having enough hours in the week to handle all their

responsibilities and still have enough leisure time together as a family. Thus, pastors must strategically neglect many good things in ministry that are not central to their main mission so that they can make the time to be with and nurture their families.

If we both accepted all the invitations we receive each year to speak or write, we would fail in the main objectives of our ministry responsibilities. While often tempted to work through our vacation, we must purposefully delay or decline certain tasks and functions to give us the needed break to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy enough to continue to work effectively.

## Teamwork

Last August, we celebrated 30 years of marriage. To mark the occasion and create memories to keep our marriage viable, we spent five days at the beach. We enjoy beach vacations, especially where there is beautiful sand and clear blue water.

Our time at the beach was simply incredible. We relaxed, read books, ate food someone else cooked, swam, snorkeled, and went bodyboarding and kayaking; but most memorable of all was learning to sail.

## The 7 commitments of a happy marriage

Connection requires commitment. Here are seven key commitments that will take your marriage to the next level:

### I commit to

1. listening to my spouse without becoming defensive;
2. sharing my feelings with my spouse without blaming her or him for my feelings;
3. giving my spouse the benefit of the doubt and not jumping to conclusions;
4. acknowledging my contribution to our misunderstandings;
5. apologizing to my spouse when I have done or said something that hurt him or her;
6. forgiving my spouse even if she or he does not apologize; and
7. doing all I can to give kindness, patience, understanding, and forgiveness to my spouse.

Willie Oliver and Elaine Oliver, “And They Lived Happily Ever After,” *Vibrant Life*, Jan/Feb 2015, 24–27.

## How to put first things first

- Schedule it!
- Personal devotions.
- Weekly fun date with spouse (do not discuss problems).
- One-to-one time with kids.
- Keep schedule!
- Honor your commitments to God, family, and church first.
- Strategically neglect “little rocks” (those things that get in the way of what’s most important).
- Use schedule to stay on track!
- Life happens, as such, schedules get derailed (for a moment).
- Use schedule to recalibrate and stay focused on priorities.

As soon as our sailing lesson began, we realized sailing is much more complex than it appears on the surface. While a bit stressful, it was also relaxing, challenging, and rewarding. We would need to work together as a team and be on the same side of the catamaran to experience gliding smoothly across the beautiful Caribbean waters.

God created marriage and family to give human beings a sense of community and to make them feel connected to and have a sense of responsibility for another. While the process has challenging moments, the rewards are great.

The Bible is replete with counsel to help us negotiate our family relationships for maximum joy. The more we read the Word of God individually and as a collective, the more we will be in tune with what God wants for us and our families. The truth is, it is impossible within the domain of human capacity to keep love always sheltered from injury or hurt. However, as we apply God’s Word to our family relationships, we can find the capacity to honor God in

those relationships. This can only take place, however, as we make the time to be with each other and grow together through the power of God.

### Family matters

We love to spend time together. Having the privilege of working together, we have experienced all kinds of favorite things, activities, and places together. We have favorite restaurants, museums, flowers, meals, and many more. We are simply grateful that God brought us together, and we try to apply Scripture to our relationship interactions for maximum benefit. One of our favorite verses in the Bible to be mindful of as we communicate with each other is James 1:19: “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

Working as closely as we do is gratifying but also challenging. So, we choose to build in fun times together and find reasons to celebrate often in order to keep making our marriage and family a desirable place to be. After spending a weekend on our feet speaking at a couples’ retreat or training pastors and church leaders, we often find a good Indian restaurant. While we try to be temperate and careful, we

simply enjoy food and find it a good reason to celebrate God and life.

Our children no longer live at home. However, every time we get a chance to be together, we make the time to celebrate being connected to each other by participating in an activity we have enjoyed: whether playing a game, eating at a favorite restaurant, visiting a museum, or going to church. This reminds us that we belong to each other and are grateful to God for His goodness to us. And when away from each other, we stay connected by keeping in touch. To be sure, we can accomplish this only by employing *strategic neglect*.

Pastoral ministry is difficult; at times it can feel as if you are thousands of feet in the air amid a terrible storm. However, once we admit that difficulty, the fact that it is difficult no longer matters as long as we remember that “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). 

1 Paul Tsongas, *Heading Home* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 160.  
 2 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 204.  
 3 “The Secret of Strategic Neglect: Bill Hybels on the Keys to Simpler and More Effective Leadership,” *Leadership Journal* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2015).  
 4 Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version of the Bible.  
 5 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 70.

### Major stressors for pastors

Financial concerns: meeting monthly expenses and retirement	<b>70%</b>
Making time for personal devotions	<b>67%</b>
Leisure time as a family	<b>67%</b>
Distress over moving	<b>58%</b>
Lack of real friendships—emotionally connected	<b>57%</b>
Poor coping mechanisms—overeating, media addiction, pornography	<b>40%</b>

David Sedlacek, Duane McBride, René Drumm, Alina Baltazar, Romulus Chelbegean, Gary Hopkins, Elaine Oliver, Wendy Thompson, *Seminary Training, Role Demands, Family Stressors and Strategies for Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors’ Families: A Report to the North American Division Ministerial and Family Ministries Departments in conjunction With the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2014.

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# What do these leaders have in common?



Randy Roberts  
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Hyveth Williams  
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# The church, Scripture, and adaptation: *Resoluteness in essentials, adaptation in peripherals—Part 1 of 2*<sup>1</sup>

**T**he role the church plays in interpreting, applying, and adapting scriptural teaching is fraught with concern, at least for Protestants. The sixteenth-century Reformation was based, in a good part, on the principle that the Bible, and not the church, was the ultimate authority in matters of doctrine and practice. The Protestant Reformers contended that the church had erred from scriptural truths because human authority and tradition had been placed over Scripture. One of the ways in which this had happened was allowing the papacy to be the ultimate interpreter of biblical truth.

Yet the Reformers did not deny that the church, guided by its duly chosen teachers, had the role of proclaiming doctrine and disciplining members. Protestants hold Scripture as the ultimate and defining standard of truth, and at the same time they allow authority for the church to proclaim doctrine, discipline members, and uphold practices that govern the community of faith. These two positions have at times caused the church to carefully examine what Scripture posits as essential and what it offers as

peripheral. This article deals with how the church should understand what scripture considers as not negotiable and what it may consider as secondary organization matters that may be adapted, and even modified, to meet human need and the mission of the divine community.

We will approach the issue in two parts. Part 1 will deal with how the church resolutely relates to scriptural norms of faith and moral conduct. Part 2 will discuss how the church may employ adaptation with issues that are not critical or directly related to faith and doctrine.

We begin the first part by turning to Luther and Calvin. Both took seriously Christ's gift to Peter of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" and the accompanying instructions that "whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).<sup>2</sup> Both Luther and Calvin held that the church had a role in interpreting and applying scriptural standards to correct and discipline church members.<sup>3</sup> They denied, however, that this role was especially given to Peter and his

successors in office, rather than to Peter as a representative of the whole church—all those that would join him in his confession that "Christ" is the "Son of the living God" (v. 16) and thus become living stones in the edifice of the church. As Luther put it, "The keys were given to St. Peter; but not to him personally, but rather to the person of the Christian church."<sup>4</sup>

## Binding, loosing, and adapting

The Reformer's view of the meaning of "binding and loosing" is supported by Christ's teaching in Matthew 18, where He describes church discipline, including the removal of offending members from church fellowship. Here, Christ says again, "Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). This passage clarifies both who receives the keys ("the church," even a segment of it where "two or three have gathered together in My name," v. 20) and what actions are involved (i.e., the application of scriptural standards to the life of church members).

Christ's hearers would not have been puzzled by His words about binding and loosing. Josephus and early targumic materials from the time of the early church reveal that Jewish rabbis "bound" the law when they found it applicable to a certain situation and "loosed" it when they found that it did not apply.<sup>5</sup> Christ moved this locus of this authority from the rabbis to the church and its leaders.

None of this description is particularly revolutionary. Most Christians acknowledge the need for the church community to both interpret and apply Scripture to its members. As one writer puts it, "A majority of scholars now recognize that the terms 'to bind' and

a scriptural injunction. But as lawyers know, at least some acts of judging involve not just interpretation (what the law says) and application (how the law deals with particular circumstances) but also filling in ambiguities in the law, as well as adjusting the letter of the law so that it will correspond with the spirit behind the law.

### Letter versus spirit and the role of equity

To adapt a law involves making applications that fall between verbal cracks or vagueness in the text, or dealing with situations that are not foreseen by the text itself. Inevitably, the language of a statute, or even

tradition of England a branch of law known as equity.

Equity was a series of interpretive customs that a judge could call upon to adjust or adapt a law when the application of its letter would violate its spirit. Equity was *not* the same as situation ethics, or legal relativism. It was the opposite: recognition that there *is* something behind and beyond human laws, a higher justice and righteousness that these laws imperfectly reflected and must serve as a continuing guide and touchstone for them.<sup>7</sup>

With a loss of the sense of the transcendent in the educational and legal communities, there was a rise of legal positivism, which insisted all laws were

*The most prominent scriptural advocate of equitable adaptation of scriptural instruction is Christ Himself.*

'to loose' are best understood with reference to a practice of determining the application of scriptural commands to contemporary situations."<sup>6</sup>

As Protestants committed to the right of private judgment in scriptural interpretation, we might bristle at this sense of community interpretive authority. Yet, every statement of beliefs, set of baptismal vows, and list of grounds for discipline in a church manual show this example of the authority of the church community in interpreting and applying Scripture. It becomes even more so when a church actually applies and enforces these things on its members.

Careful readers may accept that while I have defended the duty of the church community to *interpret* and *apply* Scripture, it is not so obvious that the church has a role to *adapt* Scripture. Adaptation implies the possibility of not just applying but actually tailoring

constitution, can never be perfectly precise. The law also cannot foresee all possible circumstances to which it will be applied. Because of this, the language of a law may, under some circumstances, produce an effect contrary to the actual intent and spirit of the law. A simple example: Can the law against going faster than 55 miles per hour (88 kilometers per hour), which is meant to protect human safety, actually conflict with human safety when you are trying to get a dying person to the hospital?

Allowing the spirit of the law to be used to refine, or even reshape, the letter may sound radical or heretical to a theologian; lawyers, however, are somewhat more used to the idea. Legal philosophers were long aware of the problem of expressing transcendent and immeasurable principles of justice in imperfect and finite human words. Because of this problem, there developed in the grand common law

purely human constructs. Thus, the theory behind equity was lost sight of and basically abandoned as a legal category. But the practice of equity, I would argue, continues today in at least one important community: Christian churches. As one scholar has put it: "virtually all Christian sects and individuals will grant that some prescriptions and proscriptions of Scripture are no longer relevant or applicable to Christians in the world today."<sup>8</sup>

Such judgments are made not just with Old Testament (OT) law but also with New Testament (NT) instructions. Most Christians have bank accounts and pension funds despite Christ's injunction to "not store up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matt. 6:19). Likewise, almost all Christian churches in the West allow women to attend worship services with uncovered heads (1 Cor. 11:10), and most Western Christians do not practice the art of

the holy kiss, despite Paul repeating this instruction in four separate places (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26).

### Christ, David, and two kinds of law

The most prominent scriptural advocate of equitable adaptation of scriptural instruction is Christ Himself. Christ used David's eating of the showbread, which the law reserved for the priests alone, to defend the actions of His own disciples in "harvesting" and eating grain on the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:1-9; cf. 1 Sam. 21:1-7). Indeed, if it were not for Christ's teaching on this point, one would be tempted to ignore the above Pauline examples as just other "difficult" things to understand from Paul. But Christ's clear and prominent use of the Davidic example tells us that there is something important to know and understand about the limits of *some* scriptural instruction.

And I say *some* scriptural instruction for a reason. Let me focus for a moment on a category of law that these equitable principles of adaptation *do not* apply to. One cannot make sense of Christ's teachings in the Gospels without realizing that Christ views there being at least two kinds, or categories, of scriptural law. Just focusing on the book of Matthew, which contains the "bind and loose" instructions, clearly reveals this duality.

The Christ who tells us that the church has the power to "bind and loose" (Matt. 16:19) in relation to the law, and who applauds David's adaptation of the law regarding the showbread (Matt. 12:7, 8), is the same one who insists that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18, KJV). So important is *this* law that whoever "shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (v. 19, KJV).

The tension between these two sets of commands is heightened when we recognize that in the Greek, the instruction to not "break" the law in

Matthew 5:19 uses the word *luo*. This is the same word used by Christ in giving the disciples the power to "loose" the law in Matthew 16. So in one text, Christ condemns "whoever" might "loose" the law, and in another He gives the power to "loose" the law to His disciples. What are we to make of this apparent contradiction? The solution would seem to lie in the different uses that the New Testament has for the word *law*.

It can mean human civil law (Matt. 5:40), the entire OT corpus (Matt. 11:13), the books of Moses (John 1:17; 7:19), the natural moral law (Rom. 2:14), or the Ten Commandments (Rom. 7:7-9; James 2:8-12). These distinctions have roots in OT legal usages. We find an interesting distinction between the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God on stone and placed inside the ark of the covenant, and the civil, ritual, and organizational statutes of Israel, written by Moses and placed in a compartment outside the ark (Deut. 31:24-26).

If we look carefully, we find Christ's differing approaches to the law in Matthew reflecting at least some of these distinctions of legal meaning. On the one hand, where Christ says the law should not be broken or loosed, He explicitly references by way of example two of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 5:21, 27). He also references other injunctions, but these are also of the moral variety, for example, not swearing oaths to deceive others, not seeking vengeance, and loving others (vv. 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44).

On the other hand, the story of David and the showbread involves ritual, not moral, law. The law of Moses contained clear, express injunctions against non-priests eating the bread (Exod. 29:32-34). Both David and Ahimelech view this rule as being "adaptable" in light of human health, hunger, and true need. The showbread story does not end well in some respects; Saul slaughters the priests for aiding David. But this horrible conclusion comes about from David's concealing the truth of his flight rather than from his eating the showbread. This is the way Christ

views the story, anyway. His defense of His disciples to the Pharisees makes absolutely no sense if He invokes a story that is itself morally indefensible.

The later passages in Matthew where Christ invokes the "binding and loosing" do not give specific examples of the acts being referred to. But if what I am saying about judging, law, and application is right, God's community must always have some role in "binding and loosing," because that is the nature of law in human community. Thus, Christ is not creating a new power for His community, merely transferring its locus. Given this, we should be able to find examples and instances of it throughout the OT that can serve as a guide and template for the church's actions.

### Moral law versus organizational and ritual instructions

Unsurprisingly, we do find such stories of modification. Throughout these stories we find a consistent theme of ritual and organizational law being modified, while moral law is left untouched. All the examples are based on the difference between (1) God's absolute moral commands and eternal truths and (2) His organizational, ritual, and ceremonial instructions. The former includes the Ten Commandments, as well as consistently articulated scriptural requisites on personal moral behavior. The Ten Commandments do not exhaust the moral law but rather are concrete expressions of its central principles. Thus, the command against adultery is a central component of sexual morality but does not exhaust the biblical sexual ethic, and we look elsewhere in the Bible for further indications of sexual moral limits.

The Ten Commandments can be called "principled rules." That is, laws that, unlike most other laws, actually fully capture the principle behind them. The verse of Scripture "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7, KJV) applies to all of God's moral law. But it applies in a special way to the written moral law, the Ten

Commandments, which allow for no exceptions, unlike almost all other written laws. It is never right or moral to steal, murder, or commit adultery; these things are always wrong. (Though in defining theft, murder, and sexual morality, we will need the spirit of the law to guide us.)

The second set of laws—ritual, ceremonial, and organizational norms—exist to bring order to the community of believers, safeguard the identity of God’s people, and enhance their mission. They are to be taken with great seriousness and faithfulness. Unilateral, defiant, or even frivolous violations of them can be met with extreme consequences, including exile from God’s people or even death. These dire consequences can be seen in Miriam’s leprosy and exile for questioning Moses’ authority (Num. 12:1–10); the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for the same (Num. 16:1–35); the death of the sons of Aaron for offering strange fire (Lev. 10:1, 2); and Uzzah’s

death from touching the ark (2 Sam. 6:6, 7).

Organizational rules are not, strictly speaking, without a moral element because they have the authority of the divine community behind them. Respect for the ordering and authorities of the community is itself a moral principle because these powers exist through the ordination and providence of God. The safety and order provided by organizational rules are also a moral good in themselves.

But the question becomes whether the community of God itself or subsets of it can modify these rules for appropriate reasons in an orderly manner that furthers the spirit and purpose of the rules. The above stories of enforcement of organizational and ritual norms should not obscure the fact that many other biblical stories show such norms being flexed or modified by God’s community to further the mission and well-being of God’s people. In the next installment of this article, we will

consider some of these stories and the principles they reveal that can guide the church to properly apply and adapt scriptural instruction.

Part 2 will appear in the September 2015 issue. ❖

- 1 This article is excerpted from a book titled *Ancient Word, Modern Faith: The Reformers Speak to Today’s Church*, to be published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, Fall 2015.
- 2 Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.
- 3 John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: Matthew* (Olive Tree Bible Software), 555–62; Martin Luther, “The Keys,” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. and trans. Earl Beyer and Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1958), 40:365, 366, accessed November 16, 2014, as quoted in James Swan, “Luther: Christ Gave the Keys to Peter?” *Beggars All: Reformation & Apologetics* (blog), November 6, 2010, [beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2010/08/luther-christ-gave-keys-to-peter.html](http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2010/08/luther-christ-gave-keys-to-peter.html).
- 4 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 51:59, quoted in “Luther,” accessed November 16, 2014, [beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2010/08/luther-christ-gave-keys-to-peter.html](http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2010/08/luther-christ-gave-keys-to-peter.html).
- 5 Mark Allan Powell, “Binding and Loosing: Asserting the Moral Authority of Scripture in Light of a Matthean Paradigm,” *Ex Auditu* 19 (2003):81.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 82.
- 7 For an overview of equity in English common law, see W. S. Holdsworth, “The Early History of Equity,” *Michigan Law Review* 13, no. 4 (Feb. 1915):293–301.
- 8 Powell, “Binding and Loosing,” 81.

## My efforts should never cease

A nine-year-old was unconscious for three weeks after a classmate threw a rock that smashed in the center of her face. Friends and family feared she would die. When Ellen Harmon finally regained consciousness, she soon discovered that her dream of finishing school was also dashed, her injuries preventing her from being able to study. Friends proved fair-weather, drifting away. On top of all this, Ellen came to entertain the thought that God was a tyrant who would burn her forever. So distraught was Ellen over all this that she thought of suicide.

But through a series of providential events, Jesus became a precious friend to Ellen. She realized with surprise and awe that God had a great purpose for her life, and the events that had seemed so harsh and random were really part of a divine

plan. In her own words, here is what she did next:

“I arranged meetings with my young friends, some of whom were considerably older than myself, and a few were married persons. A number of them were vain and thoughtless; my experience sounded to them like an idle tale, and they did not heed my entreaties. But I determined that my efforts should never cease till these dear souls, for whom I had so great an interest, yielded to God. Several entire nights were spent by me in earnest prayer for those whom I had sought out and brought together for the purpose of laboring and praying with them.

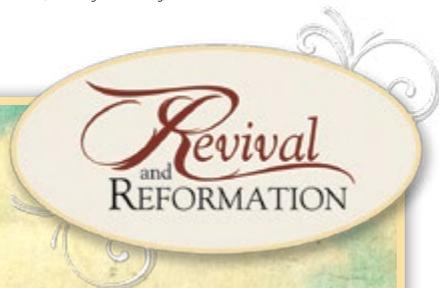
“Some of these had met with us from curiosity to hear what I had to say; others thought me beside myself to be so persistent in my efforts, especially when they manifested

no concern on their own part. But at every one of our little meetings I continued to exhort and pray for each one separately, until every one had yielded to Jesus, acknowledging the merits of His pardoning love. Every one was converted to God.”\*

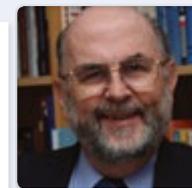
This often comes to my mind when I think of revival and reformation.

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\* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 1:33, 34.



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# Ellen G. White's contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

**E**llen G. White's contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been invaluable in many areas and throughout the history of the church, but particularly during the early years. The following contributions are among the most important ones.

## Church organization

During the first 20 years of our church, there was no church organization because the Millerites and the early Adventists were against any church organization. They considered all organized churches as belonging to Babylon. Hence, there was no paid ministry; our pioneers worked at various jobs to make a living. James White, for example, mowed grass, cut wood, and worked on the construction of a railroad to support his family. Furthermore, anyone could preach, if he felt called; consequently, heresies prospered.

Also, the first buildings were in private hands. The question of legal ownership finally propelled the church into formal organization. In 1853, James White urged the believers to organize themselves, but resistance to organization was strong. A year later, Ellen White wrote, "The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality

should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth. . . .

" . . . The danger of those traveling whom God has not called, was shown me. . . .

"I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock can be shut. I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, 'The church must flee to God's Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.'"<sup>1</sup>

Another six years passed before the first churches were organized in 1860 in Michigan. A year later, the Michigan Conference was organized, and in 1863, the General Conference. At that time, the total membership consisted of about 3,500 baptized believers. Today, the church has more than 18,000,000 members in more than 75,000 churches.

## Publishing

In 1848, Ellen White had a vision in the home of Otis Nichol in Dorchester, Massachusetts. When she came out of the vision, she said to her husband, James, "I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small

at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world."<sup>2</sup>

" 'Streams of light . . . clear around the world' " ! How could that be? Jesus was coming soon. Their numbers were few. There were no wealthy members and no great scholars among them. The world was unbelieving. And yet, here was a young woman who predicted that a work of publishing to be started by her penniless husband would grow until it would encompass the globe. More than half a year went by before James White could make even the smallest beginning; he arranged for the printing of a thousand copies of an eight-page paper on borrowed money. Today, the church has 63 publishing houses that produce books and magazines in more than 360 languages.

## Health and medical work

Our pioneers, during the first 20 years of our history, were anything but health reformers, except for Joseph Bates. During the 1848 Sabbath Conferences, they sat together smoking their pipes. In that year, Ellen White was shown that tobacco, tea, and coffee are harmful, but it took many years to

convince the membership to dispense with these harmful substances.

Then on June 6, 1863, Ellen White received a 45-minute vision in which the need for health reform was shown: “I saw that it was a sacred duty to attend to our health, and arouse others to their duty. . . . We have a duty to speak, to come out against intemperance of every kind,—intemperance in working, in eating, in drinking . . .—and then point them to God’s great medicine, water, pure soft water, for diseases, for health, for cleanliness. . . .

“I saw that we should not be silent upon the subject of health but should wake up minds to the subject.”<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, on December 25, 1865, Ellen White had a vision in Rochester, New York, in which she was

are just entering the ministry may be taught at least the common branches of education, and where they may also learn more perfectly the truths of God’s word for this time.”<sup>5</sup>

On August 24, 1874, Battle Creek College opened its doors. Today, we have more than 7,000 elementary and secondary schools and more than 100 colleges and universities. Seventh-day Adventists have the largest Protestant school system in the world. Why? Because our pioneers took seriously what God told them through the prophet of the remnant church.

### Mission

In the early decades of our history, they believed that the church was fulfilling God’s command to teach all nations

“When the churches see young men possessing zeal to qualify themselves to extend their labors to cities, villages, and towns that have never been aroused to the truth, and missionaries volunteering to go to other nations to carry the truth to them, the churches will be encouraged and strengthened.”<sup>7</sup>

And, in 1874, she had an impressive dream of giving the third angel’s message to the world. In the dream she was told, “You are entertaining too limited ideas of the work for this time. You are trying to plan the work so that you can embrace it in your arms. You must take broader views. Your light must not be put under a bushel or under a bed, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Your house is the world. . . .

## *God used Ellen White several times to steer the church through different crises.*

shown that the church “should provide a home for the afflicted and those who wish to learn how to take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness. . . .

“Our people should have an institution of their own, under their own control, for the benefit of the diseased and suffering among us who wish to have health and strength that they may glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, a year later, in September 1866, the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek was opened. Today the church operates 175 hospitals and sanitariums and 270 clinics and dispensaries around the world.

### Education

In 1872, Ellen White received a vision on proper principles of education. A short time later she wrote 30 pages on what she had been told. “We need a school where those who

by preaching to the immigrants in North America. Uriah Smith wrote in 1859, “We have no information that the Third [Angel’s] Message is at present being proclaimed in any country besides our own. . . . Our own land is composed of people from almost every nation.”<sup>6</sup> To reach these nations in America, publications were prepared in many different languages.

When in 1864 M. B. Czechowski volunteered to go as a missionary to Europe, his request was turned down. He went to the First-day Adventists, and they sent him to Europe, where he preached the three angels’ messages and established Seventh-day Adventist companies. In the meantime, Ellen White educated the church about its worldwide responsibility. In 1871, she wrote, “Much can be done through the medium of the press, but still more can be accomplished if the influence of the labors of the living preachers goes with our publications. . . .

“ . . . The message will go in power to all parts of the world, to Oregon, to Europe, to Australia, to the islands of the sea, to all nations, tongues, and peoples. . . . Your faith is limited, it is very small. Your conception of the work needs to be greatly enlarged.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1874, John N. Andrews became the first official Seventh-day Adventist missionary. He and his children went to Switzerland, and three years later the John G. Matteson family was sent to Scandinavia. By 1890, Adventist missionaries were working in 18 countries.

Today, out of the 238 countries in the world the United Nations recognizes, Seventh-day Adventists have an established work in 216.

### Theology

More than once Ellen White’s counsel prevented the church from making serious theological errors. For example, in the 1890s and early twentieth century,

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the director of Battle Creek Sanitarium, attempted to introduce pantheism into the church. In 1903, he and his followers, Dr. E. J. Waggoner, Elder A. T. Jones, and Dr. David Paulson, arrived in Washington to convince the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee to accept Kellogg's book, *The Living Temple*, which had previously been rejected because of its pantheistic contents.

Although this item was not part of the agenda, "the regular work was laid aside and a day was given to the consideration of the pantheistic philosophy. . . . All day [the delegates] wrestled with the matter. . . . At about nine o'clock in the evening, Elder [A. G.] Daniells [the General Conference president, who was opposed to the book] considered it time to adjourn the meeting, but he did not dare call for a vote. People were too confused and uncertain, and he did not wish to take a step that would solidify any conclusions. So he dismissed the meeting, and the people [went] to their lodging places.

"Dr. Paulson, who was strongly supportive of Dr. Kellogg, joined Daniells. As the two walked along, they continued with the discussion of the day. Reaching the home where Daniells was staying, they stood under a lamppost and chatted for a time. Finally, Dr. Paulson shook his finger at Daniells and declared: 'You are making the mistake of your life. After all this turmoil, some of these days you will wake up to find yourself rolled in the dust, and another will be leading the forces.' . . .

"Elder Daniells straightened up in his weariness and discouragement and replied firmly: 'I do not believe your prophecy. At any rate, I would rather be rolled in the dust doing what I believe in my soul to be right than to walk with princes, doing what my conscience tells me is wrong.' . . .

"After parting, Daniells entered the home, where he found . . . 'two messages from Mrs. White' [waiting for him]. ' . . . No one can imagine,' recounts Daniells, 'the eagerness with which I read the documents that had come in the mail while

we were in the midst of our discussions. There was a most positive testimony regarding the dangerous errors that were taught in *The Living Temple*.' . . . The message had come just at the crisis hour. As he read, his eyes fell on these words:

" 'I have some things to say to our teachers in reference to the new book *The Living Temple*. Be careful how you sustain the sentiments of this book regarding the personality of God. As the Lord presents matters to me, these sentiments do not bear the endorsement of God. They are a snare that the enemy has prepared for these last days. . . .

" 'In the visions of the night this matter was clearly presented to me before a large number. One of authority was speaking. . . . The speaker held up *Living Temple*, saying, "In this book there are statements that the writer himself does not comprehend.' . . .

"In another document received from Sister White addressed to 'Leaders in Our Medical Work' . . . he read: 'After taking your position firmly, wisely, cautiously, make not one concession on any point concerning which God has plainly spoken. Be as calm as a summer evening; but as fixed as the everlasting hills.' "9

"The next morning church leaders assembled for their Council. After the prayer, Elder Daniells arose and told the brethren he had received two important messages from Sister White. Everyone was eager to hear them. They sat in thoughtful silence while he read. As statement after statement setting forth the falsity of the teachings of *The Living Temple* was presented to the assembly, many loud amens were heard and tears flowed freely. It was at that moment that the tide was turned" and pantheism was rejected.

When Elder Daniells sent a letter of thanks to Ellen White recounting the day's events, he received a letter in response in which she explained why he had "received the messages just when he did:

" 'Shortly before I sent the testimonies that you said arrived just in time, I had read an incident about a ship in a fog meeting an iceberg. . . . One night a

scene was clearly presented before me. A vessel was upon the waters, in a heavy fog. Suddenly the lookout cried, "Iceberg just ahead!" There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, "Meet it!" There was not a moment's hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder upon the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

" 'Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. . . .

" 'This is why you received the testimonies when you did. That night I was up at one o'clock, writing as fast as my hand could pass over the paper.' "10

## Conclusion

God used Ellen White several times to steer the church through different crises. Although she died in 1915, her writings continue to guide the leadership of the church as it faces new challenges. Hence, her writings are still relevant today. "Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20, KJV). ❧

1 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), 97, 100.

2 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), 125.

3 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 3:280.

4 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 1:489–92.

5 Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), 45, 46.

6 Uriah Smith, "Editors Note," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 3, 1859, 87.

7 White, *Life Sketches*, 205.

8 *Ibid.*, 208, 209.

9 Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White—The Early Elmshaven Years: 1900–1905* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), 296–298.

10 *Ibid.*, 299, 301.

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# Specialness, urgency, expectancy: *Essential basis for local church culture*

God has given Adventists a huge task: to share the gospel with the world. At present, this appears on the surface to be a losing battle. In a document titled “God’s Promised Gift,” the Annual Council acknowledges the issue:

“God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6–12). The challenge of reaching the more than 6 billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message *seems impossible*. The task is *overwhelming*. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission anytime soon *appears unlikely* (Matthew 28:19, 20).

“The Church’s growth rate is simply *not keeping pace* with the world’s burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic change *we will not complete* Heaven’s assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources, are *incapable of finishing God’s mission* for His glory on earth”<sup>1</sup> (emphasis supplied).

No question, the reality of the problem seems to have grown larger even from when the document was

written. An *Adventist Review* interview, published October 12, 2014, with G. T. Ng, secretary of the world church of seventh-day Adventists, shares a startling statistic: while the world Adventist membership has grown to 18,143,745, Ng reports that 31.8 million people have been baptized into the Adventist Church over the past 40 years.<sup>2</sup> This means, of course, that a large number of people are leaving the church or are just missing.

How do we reverse the trend? “We have nothing to fear for the future,” wrote Ellen White, “except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”<sup>3</sup> When we look at the history of ancient Israel and review the account of the Exodus from Egypt, we see three principles that guided them.

First, they understood they were the specially called people of God. Second, they had a sense of urgency in the mission of God. Third, they understood that their success depended on the miracles of God. The early Adventists of the mid-1800s also understood these three imperative concepts: specialness, urgency, and expectancy. Today, we must remember the way the Lord has led us in the past. Here is the key to our success by the grace of God.

## Specialness: A chosen people

As a church, we must continually review what God has already done and constantly remind the church of the God-sized mission that we can accomplish through His power. God has brought your congregation together for His purpose.

God works continually with and through people to complete His plan for the redemption of the world. This purpose can be traced throughout the stories, sermons, and prophecies of Scripture and is still true today. We can learn much of how God wishes to use His special people today by seeing how He related to and worked through His people throughout history:

Deuteronomy 7:6: “‘For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.’”<sup>4</sup>

John 15:16: “‘You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.’”

First Peter 2:9: “‘But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him

who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

## Urgency: These are the end times

We are to be fully aware of the urgency of our time. We must be continually reminding our church where we are in Earth’s history. The Bible makes it clear that we must work quickly because the Second Coming is near. To us it may seem as if God delays His coming and we have a lot of time. But as Adventists, we realize that we must work quickly. People are dying all around us before knowing Jesus, and they will face eternal consequences. Here are some Bible examples that tell us we have an urgent message for our world:

Daniel 2:44: “ ‘In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.’ ”

Daniel 8:14: “ ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.’ ”

Revelation 22:7, 20: “ ‘And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.’ . . . He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

## Expectancy: God is eager to perform miracles

God does not give a God-sized mission without giving God-sized power to accomplish what He asks. We must remind the church that God is able, that God’s will for our churches is to grow, and what God wills can happen if we cooperate. We must teach our churches to look for and recognize the miracles of God and teach our churches to pray for and expect many more miracles.

We are the special people of God, chosen and given an urgent message to share with a world that will soon end. We are asked to share with those around us, but we are weak. However, we can expect the power of God to help us complete what God asks us to do. The Bible is full of

Here is an abridged inventory that may guide you in determining whether your church leans toward membership culture or discipleship culture. Read the sets of questions and mark either *a* or *b* (only one), whichever most accurately describes your local church:

- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Our church exists primarily for those who are not yet members.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Our church exists primarily for those who are already members.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ The members of our church live as if the sacred is part of their life every day.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ The personal life of our members is divided into sacred and secular spheres.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Our church members come to worship because they know they will meet God.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Our church members come to worship because they feel obligated to attend.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ You sense that the members of your church are expected to serve in ministry.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ You sense that most of the ministry is to be done by the pastor and a few others.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Conversation in our church is more about the future than the past.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Conversation in our church is more about the past than the future.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Vision and mission are the driving forces in what our church does.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Tradition and history are the driving forces in what our church does.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Public prayers in our church often include prayer for God to bless the mission.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Public prayers in our church are focused on the church and members’ needs.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Ministries and programs in our church are designed to serve God’s mission.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Ministries and programs in our church are designed to serve our church.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Church board discussions and decisions focus on God’s mission.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Church board discussions and decisions are mostly about the business of our church.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ The mission of our church determines what it does in ministry.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ What our church does in ministry determines our mission.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ Our church is willing to do whatever is necessary to fulfill its God-given mission.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ Peace among the members is a driving force in our church.
- (a)\_\_\_\_\_ The church financial budget shows we are serious about our God-given mission.  
(b)\_\_\_\_\_ The church financial budget shows we are serious about maintaining our church members.

Now add up the number of a’s and b’s. A higher score of a’s tends toward discipleship, while a higher score of b’s tends toward a membership model of local church culture.<sup>5</sup>

examples of people accomplishing things that only God can do:

Joshua 1:9: “ ‘Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.’ ”

John 14:12–14: “ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works

that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.’ ”

Luke 9:1, 2: “ ‘And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and

authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.”

### Church culture

What is this essential and basic need for our local churches? It is to have a local church culture characterized by a sense of specialness, urgency, and expectancy. When I speak of local church culture, I am not speaking of where in the world the members of a church come from but specifically what the organizational culture is in the local church. A “culture,” in the context of a local church, is the system of values and beliefs a church holds that drives actions and behaviors, and influences relationships. A local church culture drives a church in its day-to-day and long-term decisions. Culture is largely hidden from and invisible to the

people within the system. It is like air: we do not notice it until the culture is gone.

The best way to understand your local church culture would be to step back and listen. What are people talking about? What is the focus of the conversations, and what is your church praying about? Based on the conversations you hear, and the resulting decisions made in the life of the church and the lives of the members, in what direction is the church moving?

### Conclusion

Would you like to begin to change the local church culture to include *specialness*, *urgency*, and *expectancy*? Start by sharing in your worship, preaching, visitation, small-group studies, education, and in everything you do.<sup>6</sup> If a church grows as God wishes, the congregation must accept and internalize all three. *Specialness, urgency, and expectancy*

may feel as though they are subjective and difficult to measure objectively, but by listening carefully, we will learn whether we have successfully changed the local church culture and these motivating principles have become a part of who we are and what we do.

God is eager to accomplish His last-day work through His last-day people. A change in the local church culture will make us ready to receive what God has given us as a mission to the world. 

1 “God’s Promised Gift,” October 2010, [www.revivalandreformation.org/site\\_data/428/assets/0004/1921/Gods-promised-gift.pdf](http://www.revivalandreformation.org/site_data/428/assets/0004/1921/Gods-promised-gift.pdf).  
 2 Andrew McChesney, “Church Membership Reaches 18.1 Million,” *Adventist Review*, October 12, 2014, [www.adventistreview.org/church-news/church-membership-reaches-18.1-million](http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/church-membership-reaches-18.1-million).  
 3 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), 196.  
 4 All Bible quotes are from the *New American Standard Bible*.  
 5 Another good source of evaluation is the Natural Church Development inventory.  
 6 If you would like a document that shares “sermon starters” for specialness, urgency, and expectancy, email the author at David.Ripley@gmail.com.

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# A spatial shift in Luke-Acts: From the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary

Luke's two-volume work, Luke-Acts, comprises a well-crafted piece of literature. Scholars generally "share the view that Luke/Acts form a literary unity . . . to tell a single story."<sup>1</sup> Thus the "events in Acts clearly parallel those of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

In addition, some scholars propose that the author has thematic and theological emphases. Although it is apparent from Luke's introduction that he centers his writing on historical accounts, Donald Guthrie suggests that there is "an important distinction between this writing and history pure and simple,"<sup>3</sup> because "the history [in Luke] concerned a unique person."<sup>4</sup> He also adds that Luke's purpose in writing the history of Jesus is dominated by a theological motive.<sup>5</sup> However, Howard Marshall, perhaps, comes more to the point: it is possible for Luke to be both a historian and a theologian simultaneously.<sup>6</sup>

While scholars in their own structural analysis have proposed several themes and theological emphases for Luke-Acts, one area that lacks consideration is Luke's spatial shift of the locus of salvation ministry from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly.

## The purpose of Luke-Acts

Luke explicitly laid out his purpose in the introduction (Luke 1:1-4).<sup>7</sup> His

purpose? To write an orderly account to Theophilus: "that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (v. 4).<sup>8</sup> Primarily, his purpose was to write a chronological sequence of what had been fulfilled among them in order to establish the certainty of these things (v. 1) in the mind of Theophilus, who already received instruction about the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> But why was such knowledge of the historical certainty of the things that he had been told and that had been fulfilled among them needed? L. T. Johnson says, "If that historical people was not *now* in possession of the promised blessings, and someone else was, what did that signify for God's reliability? Did God keep his word, or did he utterly betray Israel? And what were the implications for *Gentile* believers in this God? Could they rely on 'the things fulfilled among them' any more than the Jews could? If God's word failed Israel, could it not fail the Gentiles as well?"<sup>10</sup>

## The plan of God

Apart from a theological motive, Luke has other important themes in view. According to John T. Squires, the theme of "the plan of God" (*tēn boulēn tou Theou*, Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38, 39; 13:36; 20:27) embraces the whole of Luke-Acts.<sup>11</sup> He adds, "A variety of thematic strands are woven together

to emphasize the certainty and consistency of the plan of God as it is worked in the life of Jesus and the history of the early church."<sup>12</sup> As Helmut Flender states, "For in the community, under the guidance of the Spirit the divine plan of salvation becomes a reality."<sup>13</sup> So to Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Luke works in a conceptual construct of "salvation history," that is, human history remains guided by God's salvific activity. Hence, Luke's statement "the events that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1, NRSV) relates to Old Testament (OT) history and the realizations of God's direction of history.<sup>14</sup> Further, this is a divine plan where " 'all flesh will see the salvation of God' " (Luke 3:6); indeed, salvation " 'has been sent to the Gentiles' " (Acts 28:28).<sup>15</sup>

Thus, this article holds that the major theme of Luke, undergirding all other themes, is the plan of God that centers on salvation for all flesh. This plan, carried out as divine activity in human history, is called salvation history, which, in part, is taken into account by Luke in Luke-Acts. This plan begins with the Jews but ultimately embraces all nations, kindred, and people.

## The centrality of the temple in Luke

Luke also emphasizes the centrality of the Jerusalem temple. Cyprian

Hutcheon asserts that the “temple is a ‘sign’ of critical importance for trying to understand Luke’s theology.”<sup>16</sup> He also notes that Luke’s Gospel begins and ends in the temple.<sup>17</sup> As Fitzmyer points out, it is not only a destination of what “Jesus began to do and teach” (Luke 1:1) but also the starting point of the spread of the Word of God, for the apostles were to go from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8; 23:11; 28:14).<sup>18</sup>

The narrative of the childhoods of John and Jesus begins and ends in the temple (1:5–2:52). This story begins with the annunciation of the birth of John by angel Gabriel and ends with the visit of Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. The temptation of Jesus also ends at the temple in Jerusalem (4:1–13), although its Matthean parallel places the temptation at the temple in the middle of the narrative (4:1–11). Luke’s travel narrative also ends with Jesus entering the temple in Jerusalem (9:51–19:48). In addition, Luke ends the Gospel narrative at the temple with the disciples praising God for all the wonderful things they have witnessed (24:53). Also emphasized, as J. Bradley Chance notes, is the “prominent place that Luke assigns to the city of Jerusalem and the temple” in Luke-Acts.<sup>19</sup>

### The shift of focus in Acts

The book of Acts begins with the birth of the church at Jerusalem (1:3–26). As Chance states, “The action of the first seven chapters of Acts is virtually confined to Jerusalem, and much of what takes place there is focused on the temple (3:1–4:4; 5:12–32, 42; 6:13, 14; 7:44–50).”<sup>20</sup> However, while the Acts narrative begins in Jerusalem, it ends in Rome (1:3–28:31). Further, in Acts, the birth and ministry of the church began in the Jerusalem/temple, but the narrative shifts its focus to Stephen’s vision of the glory of God and Jesus in the heavenly Jerusalem/temple (2:1–7:60).<sup>21</sup>

The temple is central in the Luke-Acts theology of salvation, which proceeds from the temple where God reveals His glory, as in the OT. But this shift suggests a move of the locus of salvation; that is, from the earthly temple

in Jerusalem (in Luke) to the heavenly temple (in Acts 7), where Jesus stands at the right hand of God.<sup>22</sup>

### The vision and its implication to the shift

The *first* evidence is Stephen’s (and also Luke’s) attitude toward the Jewish temple. Luke had a positive view of the temple of Jerusalem up until Acts 7:48, 49, when he highlighted Stephen, who quoted Solomon, saying, “The Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of house will you build for Me?” says the Lord, “Or what place is there for My repose?”<sup>23</sup> Stephen made this statement in the context of his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:12). He was accused of speaking blasphemous words against “this holy place, and the Law” (v. 13).

Scholars are divided on how they view this statement,<sup>23</sup> but there is evidence from Luke that Stephen, instead of looking to the earthly temple, where the glory of God was usually residing,<sup>24</sup> “gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” Stephen said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (7:56).<sup>25</sup> At this juncture, contextual analysis would suggest that Luke emphasizes a shift of the locus of salvation ministry through Jesus to the heavenly sanctuary.

The *second* evidence is the statement “he [Stephen] gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God” (7:55a). The glory of Yahweh (*kabôd* YHWH) was usually associated with the earthly temple in the OT<sup>26</sup> but now is associated with the heavenly temple,<sup>27</sup> as emphasized in the New Testament (NT). The most explicit evidence is found in Revelation 15:8a,<sup>28</sup> which says, “And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power.”<sup>29</sup> If these passages are verbally and thematically parallel with Acts 7:55, it is then plausible to say that the one in Acts is also in the setting of the heavenly temple. Further, such emphasis of the

glory of God in the heavenly temple was postulated by David (Pss. 57:5, 11; 73:24; 108:5; 113:4) and also confirmed through a vision of Isaiah when he saw the Lord upon His throne high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1), a vision that has a heavenly locus (cf. Ezek. 1).

Furthermore, when Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1, he was reminding the Jews that God cannot be confined to a house built by human hands (Acts 7:48), for heaven is His throne (v. 49). It is important to note that the OT earthly temple where the glory of the Lord usually resides with His people is only a replica of heavenly realities (i.e., a heavenly temple where the glory of the Lord ultimately dwells). The NT writers, on the other hand, never spoke of the earthly temple as the place where God’s glory is revealed as it was in the OT.

*Third* evidence: Stephen saw “Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55b). This phrase has several parallels in the NT. However, in most NT occurrences, Jesus is depicted as seated at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69; Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19). Evidently, the phrase “sitting at the right hand of God” in the NT when Jesus ascended to His Father means power (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Heb. 12:2), authority and honor (cf. Mark 10:37), and rulership (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1).<sup>30</sup>

However, the usage of other similar phrases like “sitting at the right hand of God” or “right hand of God” in their various literary contexts also suggest the varied facets of Jesus’ ministry or responsibility at the throne of God.<sup>31</sup> For example, Hebrews 1:3b, “When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” is not in the context of heavenly governance but rather in the context of sanctuary service or ministration. Similarly in Hebrews 8:1, “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”<sup>32</sup> Here, the work of Christ as our High Priest is performed in the temple pitched by the Lord, not man (Heb. 8:2),<sup>33</sup> making

intercession for our sins before the Father (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34).

This analysis leads us to argue for the intercessory or mediatorial work of Jesus before the throne of God in the heavenly temple.<sup>34</sup> To this shift of ministration in behalf of God's people, from earthly to heavenly, Luke refers in his references "seated at the right hand of God." It is no longer through the earthly priesthood and ministry, but through the superior priesthood of Jesus who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary.

## Lessons from the forefather

Fourth evidence, there is also a possible connection between the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 and Acts 7. Evidence from the historical-literary context of chapter 7 says that Stephen presented God's indictment just like the OT prophets did for His people for the last time (7:51–53).<sup>35</sup> The speech of Stephen was set in the context of his defense before the Sanhedrin when he was accused of speaking "blasphemous words against this holy place and the law" (6:13, NKJV). When he responded to his accusers (7:1), Stephen tried to show them that he did not reject the tabernacle and the law, but the children of Israel did when they persistently rejected God and His messengers. He pointed them to their rejection of Moses and the law (vv. 35, 39), which forced Aaron to make a calf and offer sacrifices to it (v. 41). They also worshiped the host of heaven aside from worshiping God and took up the tabernacle of Moloch (vv. 42, 43).

Further, Stephen pointed out that the tabernacle in the wilderness that was built by Moses was only a replica of the original one in heaven (7:44–55; cf. Heb. 8:1, 2). Thus, he confronted the Jewish people and their leaders that they are not any better than their forefathers. They, too, are as guilty as their forefathers who "killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One" by being His betrayers and murderers (7:51–53, NKJV). Like their forefathers, they also killed God's last messenger to the nation of Israel (7:53–60).

So, looking at the subsequent narrative beginning with Acts 8, it is evident that no other messenger of God so explicitly confronted the leaders of Israel with the message of Jesus the Messiah. Thus, in my perspective, Acts 7 is very significant as far as the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 is concerned, in relation to the shift of the focus of Luke-Acts from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly one.

## Connection to Daniel 9

Historically, the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 happened in A.D. 34,<sup>36</sup> which was the end of the 70 weeks (490 days,

in that they had crucified the Messiah, the mob stoned Stephen to death (7:52, 58). In essence, the thematic connection between Daniel 9:24–27 and Acts 7 was the killing of the "Just One," or the Messiah. In Daniel 9:26, the author speaks of the Messiah as the Prince who will be cut off ("put to death," NJB; "will be killed," NLT), and Stephen in Acts 7 alluded to His coming, or the coming of the Just One<sup>38</sup> and His death at the hands of His people (v. 52). Thus, this theme of "rejection" becomes significant as the probation for Israel expires (cf. Dan. 9:24).

Thus, if the Acts 7 event centers on the rejection of God's messenger equating to

*Rejecting the Messiah, God's last messenger for the nation of Israel, was the ultimate rejection of God's plan for His special people.*

or years, prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27<sup>37</sup> allotted for God's people to finish transgression (rebelliousness). Rejecting the Messiah, God's last messenger for the nation of Israel, was the ultimate rejection of God's plan for His special people. Consequently, as the chosen nation, literal Israel (as a nation) was rejected by God in favor of spiritual Israel—the church that includes both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus (Rom. 9–11; Gal. 3:28, 29).

Acts 7 shows the theme of "rejection." In Acts 7:9, the patriarchs rejected Joseph and sold him to Egypt, but God delivered him and made him ruler in Egypt. Israel in Egypt rejected Moses, but God sent him to be a ruler and deliverer (Acts 7:35). This same Moses who received the living oracles for Israel, which they could not obey, was rejected, and they made a golden calf to become their god (7:38–41). When Stephen directly applied to his hearers this theme of rejection

the rejection of God, then Israel's probation as a chosen people has expired. This, to me, has been the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24 (490 years of probation for Israel), the ending of the earthly temple, and the movement toward the high priestly ministry of Jesus in heaven.

## Conclusion

Thus, the redirection of the focus of Luke-Acts from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly is scripturally credible (Luke 1:5–2:52; 4:1–13; 9:51–19:48; 24:53; Acts 7:44–50, 55, 56; cf. Heb. 8:1, 2). Note again the route of the redirection. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' and John's narratives begin and end with the temple (Luke 1:5–2:52). The temptation of Jesus, in contrast to Matthew's narrative, ends with the temple (4:1–13). The travel narrative in Luke ends with the temple (19:47). The book itself begins and ends with the temple (Luke 1:5–21; 24:53). In Acts,

the action of the first seven chapters is virtually confined to Jerusalem, and much of what takes place there focuses on the temple (Acts 3:1–4:4; 5:12–32, 42; 6:13, 14; 7:44–50). However, in Acts 7, Stephen speaks of the heavenly sanctuary as the real dwelling place of God (vv. 44–50), the permanent residence of God’s glory, as he subsequently saw in the vision (v. 55). And significantly, he also saw Jesus ministering before the presence of God (v. 56; cf. Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25; Rev. 4:5). So from here on, the focus of Luke is not the earthly localized temple anymore but the heavenly universalized tabernacle.

Daniel 9:24 speaks of the anointing of the “Most Holy place” (ESV, NASB, NET) within the 70-week prophecy. The anointing here may refer to the consecration of the sanctuary (see Lev. 8:10–12). But the sanctuary, inaugurated in Daniel 9:24, may prophetically refer to the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb. 9:8; 8:1, 2).

So, the historical and thematic connections of Daniel 9:24–27 and Acts 7 may suggest a spatial shift of the locus of the salvation ministry in Luke-Acts from the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary. ❖

- 1 James Dawsey, “The Literary Unity of Luke-Acts: Questions of Style—a Task for Literary Critics,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 48. Cf. Robert C. Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985): 69, accessed October 27, 2010, from Ebscohost.com. Although a few scholars challenge the consensus of a Luke-Acts literary unity, this paper accepts the overwhelming and explicit evidences presented by the scholars who favor their literary unity.
- 2 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 220.
- 3 Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 106.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970), 52.
- 6 Marshall, *Luke*, 19.
- 7 Joseph Fitzmyer stresses that the aim of Luke-Acts has to be the stated purpose of Luke 1:4, a point generally recognized by many scholars today. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 9. For example, Luke’s usual reference to time and historical events in his Gospel account may reflect his purpose in writing an orderly or chronological account (1:5, 26; 2:1–3; 3:1, 2).
- 8 Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural references are from the New American Standard Bible.
- 9 Although Luke explicitly states his purpose in the prologue, some scholars see secondary purposes in Luke. See Robert H. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American

- Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 35–44.
- 10 Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 219.
- 11 John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 1993), 1–3.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Helmut Flender, *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, trans. Reginald H. and Ilse Fuller (London, SPCK, 1967), 143. He further notes, “The whole divine economy of salvation is designated by the term *boulē*. (Luke 7:30; Acts 20:27; and, in reference to Christ only, Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38)” Ibid.
- 14 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 59–61. Cf. Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 105. Hans Conzelmann originally proposed the idea of “salvation history” in Luke-Acts. See *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 137–69.
- 15 Guy Nave Jr., *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2002), 25.
- 16 Cyprian Robert Hutcheon, “God With Us’: The Temple in Luke-Acts,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 44 (2000): 3, accessed December 4, 2007, from Academic Search Premier database.
- 17 Ibid., 4.
- 18 Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 168.
- 19 J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 1, accessed October 17, 2010, from Google Scholar.
- 20 Ibid., 1.
- 21 In the OT imagery, aside from the familiar belief that God dwells with His people in the Jerusalem temple/sanctuary (Pss. 5:7; 48:9; 65:4; 68:29; 79:1; 138:2), He was also sometimes seen in His temple in heaven (Ps. 11:4).
- 22 Cf. Davidson Razařanivony, “The Meaning of the Temple in Stephen’s Speech” (M.A. thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, October 1996), 122.
- 23 James P. Sweeney, “Stephen’s Speech (Acts 7:2–53): Is It Anti-Temple as Frequently Alleged?” *Trinity Journal* 23 (2002): 198, journal online, accessed October 27, 2010, from Ebscohost.com. Sweeney notes: Hence Bruce (*New Testament History* [Garden City: Doubleday-Gallie, 1971], 222) talks of Stephen’s “polemic against the Temple order,” while Marshall (*Acts*, 130) speaks of Stephen’s “sharp criticism of the actual temple.” Richard N. Longenecker (“The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelstein; vol. 9 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990], 229–31) also characterizes this portion as “a vigorous denunciation of the Jerusalem temple and the type of mentality that would hold to it as the apex of revealed religion” and an “anti-temple polemic” (pp. 345, 346). See further Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 285, 290; and Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 56. Dunn’s reconstruction in *Parting of the Ways of the “parting” between temple-centered Judaism and (particularly Hellenistic) Christianity with respect to the temple is largely predicated on this interpretation. See James D. G. Dunn, The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991), 63–71. The same is true of Paul Barnett’s recent work, *Jesus and the Rise of Christianity*, 219–21.
- 24 Cf. Daniel 6:10.
- 25 E. Earle Ellis also recognizes the salvation-historical nature of Stephen’s language, noting that “Stephen interprets ‘hand-made things’ (χειροποίητοι Acts 7:48) by his quotation of Isa 66:2: ‘My hand made (ἡ χεὶρ μου ἐποίησεν) all these things’ (Acts 7:50).” He further notes: “In this way [Stephen] expands the reference beyond the tabernacle and temple to include the whole present creation.” E. Earle Ellis, “Isaiah and the Eschatological Temple,” in *Christ and the Future in New Testament History*, *Novum Testamentum Supplement Series* 97; (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 6; quoted in Sweeney, 204, 205.
- 26 John Kilgallen also pointed out that, when he analyzed Stephen’s speech, “the central thought and main purpose of the speech is to show that the salvific presence of God is not tied down to temple dwelling (of Jerusalem).” John Kilgallen, *Stephen Speech*, *Analecta Biblica* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 17, 18; accessed October 17, 2010, from Google Scholar. Bo Reicke also asserts that “God’s revelation was never limited to the Holy Land or Holy place (the Temple).” Bo Reicke, *Glaube und Leben und Urgemeinde*, *Abh.z.Th. Des A.u.N.T.* 32, (Zurich, 1957), 133, 134. Quoted in Kilgallen, *Stephen Speech*, 18.
- 26 See Hebrews 9:5; Exodus 40:34, 35; Leviticus 9:23; Numbers 14:10; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6; 1 Samuel 4:22; Psalms 26:8; 29:9; 63:2; Ezekiel 43:5; 44:4.
- 27 In the book of Ezekiel, it was already mentioned that the “glory of the LORD” departed from the earthly temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 10:3, 4, 18, 19).
- 28 The implicit ones are Hebrews 1:3; Matthew 19:28; John 17:5.
- 29 The passages that allude to the “glory of God” in the heavenly temple (in the NT) are John 12:41; 17:5.
- 30 In the first century A.D., this imagery is usually associated with prestige or power, especially of persons with royal figure. It is a place of honor of the Messiah or God. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed., rev. and aug. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “*deios*.”
- 31 *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* also infers that one of the objectives of Stephen’s speech is “to show the nature and meaning of the worship that God had prescribed for the patriarchs and for His chosen people, in relation, as must be recognized, to Christ’s newly inaugurated work at the right hand of God.” Francis D. Nichol, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., vol. 6 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 207.
- 32 Cf. Hebrews 10:12.
- 33 Sweeney also argues, “Similarly in Heb. 9:11, there is a clear contrast between the qualitatively greater and more perfect tent into which Christ entered as high priest that was not *handmade*, that is, not part of this creation (της μείοντος και τελειότερος ακηνης ου χειροποίητου, τουτ’ εστιν ου ταιτης της κτισειως). It is further described in 9:24 as “heaven itself” (αυτων του ουρανου). The theological understanding reflected in these passages is once again salvation-historical in orientation, reflecting a contrast between the new and old orders or covenants.” Sweeney, 205.
- 34 Alwyn P. Salom asserts that “the contexts of a number of the ‘right hand of God’ passages are cultic in nature.” Alwyn P. Salom, “Sanctuary Theology,” in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 4, ed. Frank Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 210. On the other hand, F. F. Bruce suggests that “a standing posture is mentioned here because the Son of man at God’s right hand is not only viewed as king and priest, but also—and this is most relevant to Stephen’s special situation—as a witness.” F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 168.
- 35 Stephen seemed to be the last messenger of God to deliver His indictment in order that they might repent and accept the Messiah whom they betrayed and murdered.
- 36 Based on the NT chronology, the stoning of Stephen happened in A.D. 34. Longenecker dates Acts 6:8–9:31 between 33 and A.D. 37. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” 334.
- 37 For an interpretation of 70 weeks or 490 years and their culmination in A.D. 34, see *Andrews Study Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1129; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* on Daniel 8:14; vol. 9, 24–27.
- 38 “The name [Just One] had already been applied in Jewish literature to the expected Messiah (Enoch 38:2) and may have been suggested in Isaiah 11:4, 5.” “The Just One,” (Acts 7:52), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, 205.

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# A quarter century of ministry: *A few observations*

**T**he circle of life has crept up on me in a way I never could have anticipated in the recent months of ministry. As a pastor serving outside of Chicago, I live in two worlds: the world of my youth and the world of current ministry.

Now, a quarter of a century after starting in ministry, I see the joys and struggles of a variety of pastors and “students.” I say “students” because I have come to believe that I am as much a student as they are, and thus, we all learn together. From this perch—a varied combination of being a local pastor, experiencing 25 years of pastoral ministry in local congregations, being educated throughout the formal ministerial education process with colleagues in ministry, and now returning to the classroom—a confluence of seven observations regarding ministry find their expression.

## Marathon, not a sprint

First, pastoral ministry is a marathon and not a sprint. The energy necessary to launch is extremely important. However, one of the side effects of this energy heading into the journey is that I approached ministry as a sprint.

One normal response for people following their formal educational experience is to rush into their careers and establish those careers. This *establishing* requires much energy, and pent-up energy compelled me to move fast and

furiously. This season combined these three different “establishments”: my calling, my ministry, and my home.

Most people I interact with share that somewhere between years five and seven in their career, a shift begins to occur. There starts to be a career (“calling”) reassessment, part of which is accompanied by the question, is this all there is? The idealism of the launch now meets squarely with the calling—at least as it was envisioned at the moment of launch. The aspirations of transforming local congregations and local lives now meets squarely with hospital visits, church board meetings, local school fund-raising, and doing worship for the first grade. I began to detect the cycles of congregational life and saw those cycles repeating throughout time and space. As I remember one pastor observing, “Regardless of the congregation, the problems are the same. It’s just the faces that are different.”

## “Being” trumps “doing”

Second, “being” trumps “doing,” while acknowledging the necessity of “knowing.” Between workers meetings and reports, local area pastors’ gatherings, and popular writings on pastoral ministry, the unspoken value that rang louder than all others was this: doing determines distance. Through all the various reporting systems I had come across, I came to believe that pastoral identity came through what I could

report as “accomplished” or “done.” Of course, this aligned beautifully with my desire to “change the world for God.” The numbers of Bible studies, numbers of small groups, numbers of people fed in homeless ministries, numbers of baptisms, numbers of *Signs of the Times* distributed—as good as all these are—easily became the markers of my identity.

Yet, upon entering the second phase of ministry (“the post-assessment period”), I began to discover that different kinds of seminars attracted my attention, as well as different kinds of books, podcasts, and so forth. I began reading the Scriptures differently. Something was occurring at places I had not anticipated. Suddenly, what I began to discover as “being” surfaced. The reality of the soul, the feeding of the inner world, the sustenance of “being,” soon began to take hold. Along with this, my own personal family challenges emerged, as well as watching friends I knew burn out of ministry, some leaving as the result of moral failures. All these began to collude in a way as to make me reexamine a facet of ministry that, at that point, I had found largely ignored by the system at large.

## Prescriptive ministry

Third, prescriptive ministry is a model of disappointment and heartache. This is the practice of gathering methodologies from a variety of

successful ministries and seeking to make the local congregation the test tube for those strategies.

In my launching days of ministry, I was eager to head into congregational life and change the world for God. This necessary energy for launching into ministry would also serve as a source for future disappointment. The energy, vision, idealism, and sense of destiny easily combined to keep me occupied with the latest congregational methodology books, seminars, conferences, podcasts, and so forth. I was flush with information but had not the prerequisite wisdom to make the information actu-

ally work. I did not find many people coming to a 26-year-old intern asking for my wisdom. Of course, I would not “learn” until later that unfortunately, wisdom comes only through processed experiences and not from idealism.

I have since learned that the yearning for congregational quick fixes, quick-growth methods, and strategies built from other congregational cultures and other denominations are not the solutions to what ails most congregations. This prescriptive model of pastoral ministry easily became a crutch and a distraction from doing the necessary hard work of listening to what already was present in our midst. Yes, the gathering of data is important but occupies only one part of the congregational/organizational dynamic.

### The life of a pastor

Fourth, the life of a pastor must be understood against the backdrop of

lifelong learning. As inferred above, part of the idealism of younger pastors is a requisite for leaving the nest of formalized education and heading out into the yet-to-be-conquered world of congregational ministry. And as such, we who are along in years must cease from our complaining and “concerning” and spend more time building, strengthening, and encouraging. The amount of debt these new entries carry into their first districts would stagger most of us further along the journey. This issue of lifelong learning, as pastors, cannot be underestimated. The assumptions born within the context of a certain season of

life do shed light regarding the issues of learning, leading, and evangelizing. More often than not, whether through our local pastors’ meetings, classes taken as continuing education units, or engaging with online learning, there is very little in the way of understanding the impact seasonal-life issues carry into these various delivery systems. What would it be like to gather pastors together on a regular basis who are at the same seasonal mile marker in their journey? To take a lifelong approach to learning will do much to improve the being, knowing, and doing sides of pastoral ministry.

### Fearless colleagues

Fifth, pastors, especially newly placed pastors out of seminary, must not do life and ministry alone. I love the fearlessness with which many of these new pastors enter into ministry as they seek to follow the call of God.

I experienced this recently when I gave one class an assignment that centers on them examining various “leadership moments” in our history and write up a case-study leadership assessment. What subjects did they cover? The Kellogg crisis, the response of many Adventist leaders to the rise of the Third Reich in prewar Germany, the question of homosexuality from the perspective of leadership, the topic of woman’s ordination (not from a theological perspective but through the eyes of organizational learning and leadership), the question of separate conferences, and the unbelievably delicate subject of how our system handles sexual indiscretion. What these responses indicate is the fearlessness with which this cohort willingly tackles the tough stuff of life and ministry. This is to be applauded, not discarded or marginalized. I find it an unbelievable privilege to minister alongside these fearless colleagues.

### Models of leadership

Sixth, our models of leadership must evolve if ministry will continue to grow in effectiveness. The command-and-control model of leadership carried within our system of pastoral ministry cannot withstand the relentless cry pastors have for encouragement. New pastors, while facing similar challenges of launching into the pastoral workforce that I faced when I started in ministry, will not stick around long enough to find true community within the pastoral workforce. Their sources for pastoral calling companionship are far more vast than most of us experience. They will not do life and ministry alone. If they feel that the support systems and structure are stronger outside the fellowship of our faith-tradition, they will run there.

While much of their launching experience may reflect the age-appropriate experiences of those of us who launched decades ago, their loyalty to stay within the system and work through the system is far from staunch. They will pursue wherever they sense is the call of God—even if it leads them away from the formal structures of pastoral ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*God is in control as much with heavy, pastorally dependent congregations as He is with less dependent congregations. God works.*

They will launch their own ministry (perhaps around a social media or online outlet) or simply disappear into the darkness of discontent and disillusionment. This is especially true for those who enter ministry with a tremendous amount of unprocessed and, therefore, unproductive pain—something that is a generational hazard.

## God is in control

Seventh, God is in control. Perhaps this is the most freeing and fear-reducing force I have observed throughout this quarter century. The reality of God's activity, present before I arrive at a congregation and after I leave, frees me from believing that congregational life and ministry begin and end with me. God works through all of pastoral life and ministry—not just the programs, sermons, evangelistic campaigns, board meetings, school programs,

etc. I know this sounds rather obvious, but God works with or without me. I am amazed through the journey of ministry to see people grow deeper in their faith in my absence!

A tension exists between the decades-generated pastoral dependency that many congregations have developed and the reality that God is in control and works through the Spirit-planted gifts in the life of a local congregation. The issue of pastoral dependency by local congregations and pastoral identity cannot be mitigated by a program but requires transformative work. As difficult as I have found it, God is in control as much with heavy, pastorally dependent congregations as He is with less dependent congregations. God works. Period.

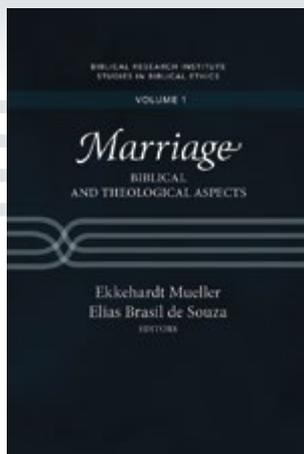
## Conclusion

Twenty-five years ago, I never would have imagined that I would be at this

perch looking out over the landscape of calling, life, and ministry. I have come to believe that perhaps the greatest proof of the existence of a God is the existence of His church. There is no way we would exist as a people if we had not been carried by Him. I have found, to my shame, that He works more often despite me than through me. And in this return to this "first place," I hear echoes from the voice of poet T. S. Eliot in his timeless words a century ago, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time."\* And here, in this place, I pray God can provide through me another place for future generations of pastoral leaders to encounter the faithfulness of God dynamically living through me and, yes, perhaps, know Him for the first time. 

\* T. S. Eliot, "The Little Gidding," section V, from *Four Quartets*, 1942, accessed April 8, 2015, at [en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Four\\_Quartets](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Four_Quartets).

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## ▶ Ellen G. White Estate gets a world-class visitor center

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—**James R. Nix**, director of the Ellen G. White Estate, felt a pang of jealousy when he saw a statue of Joseph Smith several years ago. The statue, which depicted Smith being commissioned as a prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, caught Nix's eye when he and his wife entered a visitor center in Salt Lake City, Utah.

As he walked by, he saw a father looking at the statue with his young son, who was about three years old. "Look, son," the father said, "that's where God called the prophet." Nix turned to his wife and said, "Where in the Seventh-day Adventist Church can I have that kind of experience with my child or grandchild?"

The incident planted a dream that Nix finally saw fulfilled on April 12, 2015, with the dedication of a new visitor center at the Ellen G. White Estate.

Church leaders declared the attractively presented collection of original historic documents and memorabilia and a multimedia presentation as the grand finale to be on par with exhibits

people to discover Adventist Church history and ultimately gain a closer connection with the Bible and Jesus. "May it always point people to the Word and most of all to the Living

Word," **Ted N. C. Wilson**, president of the Adventist world church, said in a dedication prayer at the visitor center, located on the lower level of the church's headquarters.

The White Estate's visitor center is divided into two parts: one devoted to the life of Ellen White, who Adventists believe had the biblical gift of prophecy, and the other to her ministry. The smartly decorated rooms are filled with original books and 19th-century furniture, state-of-the-art displays, and interactive activities for all ages.

Tours of the White Estate will begin June 1, 2015, to be offered on the half hour, Monday through Thursday. *[Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review]*



Sculptor Victor Issa posing with his bust of Ellen G. White in the new visitor center.  
Photo: Andrew McChesney / AR

at world-class museums in nearby Washington, D.C.

Nix and other church leaders hope that the new visitor center will allow

## ▶ Adventist leader new secretary-general of the Christian World Communions

**Bern, Switzerland**—Dr. **Ganoune Diop** was voted the new secretary-general at the annual meeting of the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions. Once a year, secretaries-general or equivalent officers from approximately 20 Christian world communions take part in an informal two- or three-day conference to

present the work done in their churches and discuss current issues.

The group includes the Anglican Communion, Ecumenical Patriarchate (Eastern Orthodox), Catholic Union of Utrecht, Baptist World Alliance, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Pontifical Council for Promoting

Christian Unity, The Salvation Army, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonite World Conference, World Methodist Council, Ecumenical World Council of Churches, and World Evangelical Alliance.

The secretary-general organizes annual conferences and is elected for two years, usually with



multiple reelections. The Conference of Secretaries represents about two billion Christians and covers more churches than any other organization.

“It isn’t an ecumenical movement. The purpose is not to build the visible unity of the Christian family, but to share information, concerns, and reports, and to become better acquainted with each other. No church is encouraged to change its beliefs or to create a new Christian community. Doctrinal issues are not on the agenda. The members represent their churches and their beliefs,” former secretary-general, **Dr. John Graz**, reports.

Diop, a native of Senegal, West Africa, is an ordained minister of the

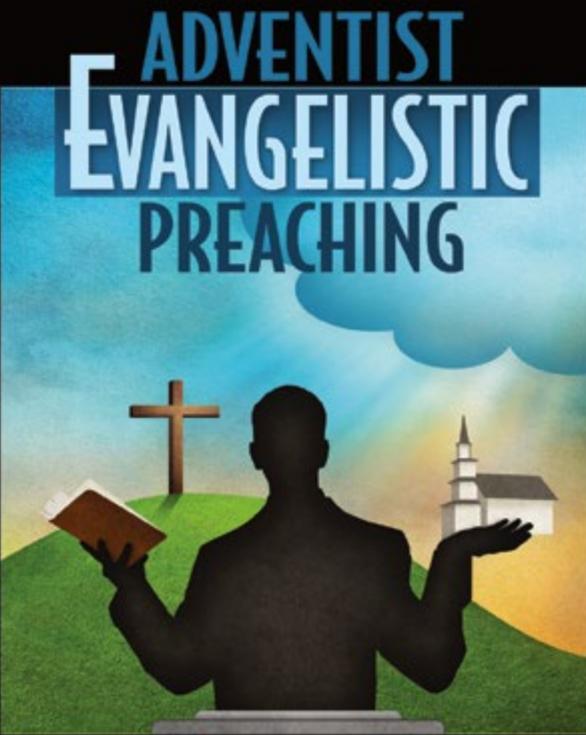


Picture: Dr. Ganoune Diop, new secretary general of the Christian world communions [ANN].

Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is the contact person for the worldwide

church at the United Nations (UN), and deputy director of the General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. Diop is also part of the planning committee of the Global Christian Forum, which is a platform for meeting and conversation between Christian churches and communities to promote mutual understanding and address common challenges.

For several decades, the secretary-general of the annual Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions have been Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. Bert B. Beach served from 1970 to 2003, and Graz served from 2003 to 2014. [APD, CD EUDNews]



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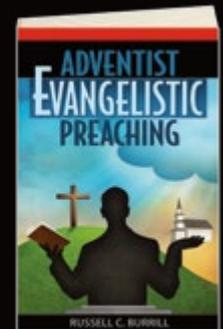
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# The value of a church brochure

**M**any people consider a wide variety of options when looking for a church home. Some may want to know about the theological stance of the denomination, opportunities for community service, or church programs. Other families are drawn to specific programs for their children or whether the church *feels* like the right one. An often overlooked way to help people make a decision about joining your congregation is by providing clear, useful information about the church in a brochure. This brochure can provide an overview of the congregation and answer some of the initial questions a visitor might have.

## Creating a church brochure

An 8" x 10" sheet folded in thirds makes an attractive and convenient size, providing six panels for different sections, or you may want to make the brochure a part of your weekly bulletin. Remember that this project requires organization and the ability to work with graphic design to make sure the brochure is attractive. You will also need an able coordinator.\*

## Communicating about the congregation

What does your church want to communicate about itself? How is this congregation different from others in the same town? Before launching into the details of how to design the brochure, take time to decide what you want to say. Consider raising this question with the leaders of the church at a planning retreat or with a group of church members at a workshop on outreach. You might divide people into small groups and have each agree

on three words that best characterize this particular congregation. Each group could even design a logo for the church, incorporating those words.

As each group reports back, have the whole group discuss their insights and look for common threads. By the end of the session, aim for consensus on what is special about your congregation and some key words to use in communicating that image to others.

Another approach is to hold a congregational contest to find a slogan for the church. Ask people to create a phrase that describes the congregation for use in your new brochure.

With the image of the church well-defined—a slogan, theme, and logo to work with—the committee is ready to work on the details.

## Organizing information

One of the keys to creating a good outreach brochure is recognizing that different people are looking for different kinds of information. The challenge is to design a brochure that addresses questions in a clear, readable format—without overloading the reader. Be sure to include the following sections, possibly in a frequently asked questions (FAQ) format:

- Fundamentals about your denomination, including beliefs and history. Frame these in the light of the gospel and God's love.
- A short history of the local church, including the vision and mission.
- Programs and outreach ministries, divided into such categories as worship, education, mission, fellowship, and community outreach.
- Testimonials from members and visitors.
- A brief message from the pastor.

- Map and contact information.
- Service times and worship styles.
- Descriptions of the various Sabbath School classes for all age-groups.
- How to join either specific ministries or the church congregation.

Another element to include is pictures of the congregation involved in various activities. These can add a personal touch to the brochure, giving potential members a sense of the membership and their role in the church.

Once the committee has agreed on the basic sections to cover, it is probably easiest to have someone write a rough draft for the committee to edit. Direct people to the section of the church's Web site that keeps updated information about the days and times of specific programs to avoid making your brochure quickly out-of-date.

## How to use a church brochure for outreach

Make sure the congregation knows ways to use the brochure. Encourage people to take a few with them to give to those who might be interested. Put them in the pew racks, and have greeters hand them out with the bulletins to guests. Brochures might be included in outreach mailings or emails, displayed in the church foyer, and stacked near the door to the church school. They also can be used in new-member classes. A well-done church brochure can enhance your outreach program and help a visiting family know whether yours could be the right church for them. 

\* If you do not feel capable of creating your own church brochure, many organizations, such as Outreach.com, provide tools for customized brochures.

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# I'm a Parent Christian Parenting in the Real World

By Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

**Also Available in Spanish**



*Help! I'm a Parent* will inspire and encourage parents, grandparents, and caregivers as they journey toward becoming disciple-makers of their children. It addresses common challenges experienced when raising children from birth through age seven. This resource is ideal for use individually, as a couple, or in a small group.

The complete set includes a two-DVD set, facilitator's guide for small groups, lapel pin, and two books.

Complete Set #351763 \$69.95

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Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra,  
NAD Family Ministries  
**Hosts**



Drs. Leslie and Prudence Pollard,  
Oakwood University  
**Topic: Relationships & Rivalry**



Mike and Gail Tucker,  
Faith for Today  
**Topic: Firm Foundation**



Dr. Sung Kwon,  
Adventist Community Services  
**Topic: Sharing & Service**

### Additional Presenters:

Dr. Christine & Pastor Kevin Bryne  
Dr. Rose Gamblin  
Dr. Katia Reinert  
Dr. Cesar & Carolann DeLeon  
Dr. John & Janice Mathews  
Edwina Neely & Carolann DeLeon



Scan to watch a video featuring Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra or go to <https://vimeo.com/86716931>

Available from AdventSource at [www.AdventSource.org](http://www.AdventSource.org) or 402.486.8800.

For more information visit [www.HelpImAParent.org](http://www.HelpImAParent.org).