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Faithful  
contextualization

*Crossing boundaries  
of culture with the  
eternal gospel*

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# Ministerial Student Writing Contest

## *Ministry,*

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

## Submission requirements

1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission.
  - a. Biblical studies
  - b. Historical studies
  - c. Theological studies (including ethics)
  - d. Applied religion (preaching, leadership, counseling, evangelism, etc.)
  - e. World missions
2. All submissions must follow the Writer's Guidelines as to length, endnotes, style, and other features of the manuscript. Please carefully read the guidelines found at [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org).
3. Submit your manuscript in MS Word to [www.MinistryMagazine.org/swc](http://www.MinistryMagazine.org/swc). Please include the following information at the top of the manuscript: your name, address, email address, telephone number, category for which you are submitting (see above), religious affiliation, name of college/university/seminary you are attending, and title of your manuscript.
4. *Ministry* will accept only one submission per writer.

## Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than **JUNE 30, 2016.**

## Prizes

<b>GRAND PRIZE</b>	<b>\$750</b>
<b>FIRST PRIZE</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>SECOND PRIZE</b> (five possible)	<b>\$400</b>
<b>THIRD PRIZE</b> (five possible)	<b>\$300</b>

The evaluation panel will determine if all prizes will be awarded. The decisions of this panel are final.

## Publication

1. All submissions become the property of *Ministry* and will not be returned.
2. Writers who are awarded a prize give the rights to *Ministry* as outlined in the Writer's Guidelines. While the editors intend to publish such manuscripts, publication is not guaranteed.
3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased at a price to be negotiated.



## Warning signs

**M**y most recent visit to my doctor included some shock therapy. No, I didn't receive any electric shock treatments. Rather, my physician gave me a harsh reality check. He challenged me to notice some warning signs:

He pointed out that my blood pressure is slightly above normal and offered no excuses like "well, that's to be expected considering your age."

He noted that I weigh almost ten pounds above my ideal weight and asked me whether I had noticed the need to lose a few pounds.

He chided me for not being involved in a regular, vigorous, exercise program. My report about taking walks with my wife and trying to get at least 10,000 steps per day didn't seem to impress him too much.

If he hadn't been such a competent and caring practitioner, I might have left his office upset or offended, but instead I departed with a new level of motivation to make some much-needed changes.<sup>1</sup>

That doctor's visit caused me to start thinking about other warning signs. What are the warning signs when a spiritual leader might be at risk? Here are just a few thoughts that came to my mind:

**We are at risk when we become preoccupied with ministerial functions and neglect quiet communion at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38–42).** We can become so busy doing ministry, we ignore the One who called us to ministry. Instead of continuing earnestly in prayer, we pray on the run. We read the Bible professionally, but neglect to meditate on God's Word personally. We

preach about secondhand experiences rather than sharing from a personal life-changing encounter with Christ.

**We are at risk when we start seeking our own honor and glory rather than giving all honor and glory to God (Mark 10:35–39).** Times of great success in ministry are particularly dangerous—we might find ourselves declaring, "Is this not a great ministry that I have built?" Like King Nebuchadnezzar, we might begin to focus on our mighty power and the honor of our majesty (Dan. 4:30) rather than constantly recognizing that "'the Most High rules in the kingdom of men'" (4:17).<sup>2</sup> A healthy model for ministry is John the Baptist, who selflessly declared, "'He must increase, but I must decrease'" (John 3:30).

**We are at risk when we become depleted, neglecting important health practices like adequate rest.** On one occasion, Jesus gave this warning when His disciples didn't even have time to eat: "'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while'" (Mark 6:31). A balanced healthy diet, a regular exercise program, quality time with loved ones, and adequate sleep are not optional extras; rather, they are essential components of a balanced life for a spiritual leader who intends to stay on course and finish strong.

**We are at risk when we begin to make excuses for our lapses in integrity.** When we try to justify our behavior with comments like "I'm only human" and "nobody's perfect," our feet are already slipping. Our only safety is found in following the counsel of Solomon: "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the

*What are the warning signs when a spiritual leader might be at risk?*

way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on" (Prov. 4:14, 15).

**We are at risk when we withdraw from active ministry and become passive observers rather than active participants.** Nehemiah was working on the front lines when he participated in a great victory for God's people (Neh. 4:21–23). In contrast, King David was loitering in his palace when he wandered down a slippery slope that resulted in adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:1–17).

Perhaps you can think of some additional warning signs when spiritual leaders are at risk. We would like to hear from you. Write to us at [feedback@ministrymagazine.org](mailto:feedback@ministrymagazine.org), and we may publish your letter to the editor.

Please don't ignore the warning signs. If you receive a word of caution from your doctor, a family member, or a colleague in ministry, don't just ignore it. Take time for prayerful reflection and self-examination. We all need to take heed lest we fall. 

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this editorial, I have started working out at a gym and my numbers are already improving—but I recognize that it's a daily commitment and lifelong journey.

<sup>2</sup> All Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version.

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# Faithful contextualization: *Crossing boundaries of culture with the eternal gospel*

**T**he church is now called to carry the everlasting gospel to more people in more diverse cultures than ever before. When the early Christian church launched its evangelism in obedience to Christ's great commission, the world population is estimated to have been about 285 million.<sup>1</sup> By A.D. 1000, the world population rose to about 300 million; by 1800 about 970 million; by 1900 about 1.65 billion; and by 2000 more than 6 billion. Today, the world's population exceeds 7 billion and is growing rapidly. Since 1900, about one-third of humankind has been Christian.

The great numerical challenge of mission is augmented by major cultural and religious challenges. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Animists, and Agnostics have some things in common: they shop for high-fashion clothes, use iPhones, and post messages on Facebook; but the differences that divide them have become starker. To reach them, the church must cross the ever-widening chasms of faith and culture. Two-thirds of humanity are non-Christian, yet the great majority of converts to the Adventist Church are from the one-third who are already Christian.

In spite of major cultural and religious boundaries needing to be

crossed, we often use one-size-fits-all, habituated strategies. The same methods developed for Methodists or Baptists are used to reach Muslims and Buddhists. Sometimes we identify the Adventist message with a particular method of sharing the message. The same sermons may be preached in the same sequence with the addition of ethnically appropriate pictures and local sermon illustrations. These adaptations could be appropriate, but many times they do not go far enough. As a result, many spiritually receptive people do not hear the universal gospel in a way that is credible and understandable. When people do accept Christ, they sometimes retain cultural elements that are unbiblical and discard others that are biblically acceptable or neutral. Hence, the need to understand the important topic of contextualization.

## Understanding contextualization

"Although the term *contextualization* was quite recently minted, the *activity* of expressing and embodying the gospel in context-sensitive ways has characterized the Christian mission from the very beginning."<sup>2</sup>

The word *contextualization*, coined in 1972 by Shoki Coe of Taiwan, can raise questions and fears. Some fear that

*contextualization* necessarily means abandoning the primacy of the Bible for the sake of being culturally relevant. This discussion seeks to demonstrate that faithful contextualization can actually deepen a person's conversion and discipleship. Contextualization is necessary, not only for peoples far away but for multigenerational Christians in predominantly Christian countries whose culture evolves constantly, often in unbiblical ways.

The starting point in understanding faithful contextualization is to affirm that the Word of God is the absolute, universal, unchanging rule of faith and practice for humans in every time, place, and culture. The scriptural design for human life, summarized in the Decalogue and encapsulated in Christ's command to "love the LORD your God" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39, NKJV), applies to all.

The next point is to understand the scriptural perspective of culture. At Creation, God made Adam and Eve to be both individual and corporate creatures. Their individual nature sometimes receives more attention than their corporate selves. Their corporate, or communal, nature was based on their relationship with the Triune God, who regularly communed and had fellowship with them. Their

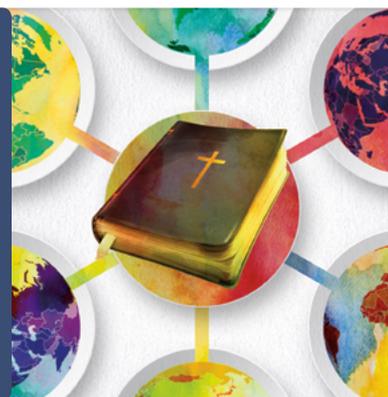
corporate nature was also expressed in their marital and family relationships. As they had children, the first family grew to eventually become clusters of families with multiple generations. Adam and Eve were given dominion (Gen. 1:28, 29), and that gave them both freedom and responsibility to decide how to use the resources of nature. In their exercise of dominion, they developed communal lifestyle patterns and behaviors that make up culture. Were we privileged to view the first family in Eden, we would have observed a perfectly sinless culture in operation.

The most profound instance of God's identification with human culture is the Incarnation. The Creator became Jesus of Nazareth, who was not a generic human being but a member of a particular cultural group, living in a particular village, in a specific time period. As the apostles inaugurated the earliest church, the pattern of Christ's incarnation was followed. The eternal, unchanging gospel of Jesus reached beyond the cultural characteristics of Jerusalem and Galilee to those of Corinth, Philippi, and Rome. A Roman believer did not need to adopt the cultural styles of believers in Jerusalem,

of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behaviors and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel and do.<sup>3</sup> Underlying culture is a set of deep assumptions about the nature of reality called *worldview*. To be effective, cross-cultural mission must reach well beyond the surface level elements of culture.

To summarize our discussion thus far on contextualization: various words, such as *accommodation*, *adaptation*, *inculturation*, *indigenization*, and *nativization*, have been used to name the process of carrying the gospel into the

*Today, as in biblical times, everyone who reads or hears the Bible uses cultural lenses or filters to understand and apply it to themselves.*



The Fall perverted both the individual and corporate cultural dimensions of humanity. After God scattered humanity at Babel (Gen. 11), people groups developed widely different cultures as they spread around the globe. The growing cultural diversity was neither good nor bad, in and of itself. To the extent that individuals and groups responded to God's gracious plan of salvation, they reflected His character individually and culturally.

God's love and respect for both the individual and cultural dimensions of humanity continue to be clear in the Bible after Babel. Biblical authors wrote from within their own cultures, using local languages and thought patterns. Between Genesis and Revelation a vast range of cultural variation is exhibited in the biblical narrative of true believers serving God faithfully in different cultural ways.

which included circumcision (Acts 15).

Today, as in biblical times, everyone who reads or hears the Bible uses cultural lenses or filters to understand and apply it to themselves. Almost everyone who shares the gospel instinctively tries to make it credible and relevant within the local cultural context. The issue really is not *whether* we should do contextualization but *how* to do it effectively. The greater the religious, cultural, or linguistic chasms being crossed, the more difficult and challenging is the task. However accurate and Spirit-empowered the "sent message" may be, the communicator must not assume that the "received message" is accurate. "Receiver-oriented" communication, which asks how the hearer needs to receive the gospel message, is essential.

Culture goes much deeper than such externals as food, clothing, and music. Paul Hiebert defines *culture* as "systems

deeper levels of a culture. Evangelical Protestants prefer *contextualization*.

There are some variations of the word *contextualization*. Charles Kraft uses the term *appropriate contextualization*.<sup>4</sup> This term can imply that culture is privileged over the Bible. Paul Hiebert favors *critical contextualization*.<sup>5</sup> By *critical* he means the careful, intentional, selective, disciplined, thoughtful incarnation of the normative gospel into particular cultures. The term *faithful contextualization* builds on Hiebert's intention that the Bible be primary and adapting to culture secondary, although essential.

Thus "contextualization is at the 'mixing point' of gospel and culture."<sup>6</sup> Just as Jesus, in His humanity, was a person of culture, so His religion is always embedded in believers of specific cultures. No "culturally generic" or "noncultural" Christianity exists, just as

no Christian exists who lacks individuality. When the mix of gospel and culture occurs, the resulting church community is to be “defined by Scripture but shaped by culture.”<sup>7</sup>

### The process of faithful contextualization

Faithful contextualization is both a process and an outcome. As a process, it starts with critiquing my own cultural practice of Christianity so that it remains biblically faithful and culturally appropriate in my ever-evolving culture. Confronting the way I live within my own culture becomes absolutely essential before I engage in cross-cultural mission. A look into my own so-called “Christian culture” in the United States quickly reveals that there are pitfalls to avoid at the “mixing point” of the Bible and culture. The principles of the Bible are very imperfectly embodied in my own mother culture, even with its Christian heritage of centuries. If that is the case, the task of leading peoples who have no Christian heritage to mature Christian discipleship can be seen as a long and demanding process.

Cross-cultural contextualization is “the process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content, and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith as a whole—not only the message but also the means of living out of our faith in the local setting—understandable.”<sup>8</sup> The greater the cultural-linguistic-religious distance between the missionary and the recipient, the greater and more patient the effort will need to be. Merely transplanting the missionary’s way of being a Christian is both impossible and unacceptable. Doing mission among peoples of varying persuasions—Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.—requires long-term service that includes knowing the language and culture in order to embed successfully Christianity within their cultures.

The process of cross-cultural contextualization includes several steps, of which five may be noted:

1. Study the culture carefully to perceive deep underlying worldview questions and assumptions. At this stage, judgment of apparently unbiblical parts of the culture is withheld in the search for deeper knowledge.
2. Study afresh the Bible with the local culture in mind, asking “What does the Word say to this particular people group?”
3. Engage the local community of believers in a thoughtful, unhurried discussion about the local culture and the Bible. As specific issues are discussed, explore three questions: What is approved by the Bible? What is biblically neutral? What is forbidden by the Bible? The goal is to reach decisions by consensus because the local people understand their own culture best and will have to live with the decisions.
4. Identify functional substitutes to replace practices that are changed or abandoned. When people stop doing something, a disturbing vacuum exists that must be filled with something better.
5. Develop a transformational discipling ministry for supporting change that may include redemptive church discipline.

Consider an example. The missionary observes aspects of local funeral rites that seem unbiblical because they relate to ancestor worship. He or she does not rush in with prescriptive changes but starts observing and discussing each element of the ritual to understand the meanings behind the ritual. With the group, he or she identifies each element as biblically acceptable, neutral, or unacceptable. When the unacceptable elements and those needing modification are identified, the group chooses functional substitutes and designs a revised funeral ritual. They formally introduce the revised funeral service to the congregation and explain why certain elements of the old service were changed. When the next death occurs, they implement the new funeral service and afterwards evaluate the modified

funeral rite, making additional changes as needed.

### The outcome of faithful contextualization

As an outcome or condition, faithful contextualization means practicing a culturally appropriate Christianity patterned after the Word of God in every dimension. Practicing contextualized Christianity includes experiencing growth in sanctification in personal behavior and lifestyle, family relationships, and personal spirituality in a culturally appropriate style. The believer lives as a cultural insider insofar as the Word permits and as a cultural outsider as the Word requires. The believer has a culturally appropriate Christian presence and witness in the surrounding community.

Faithful contextualization holds two principles in tension—the “pilgrim principle” and the “indigenous principle.”<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, the “pilgrim principle” means that the Bible judges every culture and makes all believers foreigners in their home cultures. Peter referred to his audience as cultural “sojourners” and “pilgrims” (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11, NKJV). Believers were to live “by different priorities, values, and allegiances than their . . . neighbors.”<sup>10</sup> This means that when Indians step into an Adventist church in India, they should not feel that they are in a Hindu ritual, because something important and essential is different. The degree to which a believer must be a cultural alien varies a great deal in the contemporary world, depending on the degree of religious freedom. Christ’s “salt and light” principle (Matt. 5:13–16) teaches that believers should not take a more culturally alienated position than that imposed by their society or required by Scripture. For example, Christians in restrictive parts of the world may need to be secret believers, while those living in the United Kingdom, where there is religious freedom, should not live as hermits.

On the other hand, the “indigenous principle” means that the gospel can be incarnated into every culture. Believers need not adopt a foreign cultural lifestyle

to be authentic Christians. Churches should be places where people can feel culturally at home, with culturally familiar architecture, music, dress, liturgy, and communication styles that are in harmony with Bible principles. When Cambodians step into an Adventist church in Cambodia, they should not feel that they have gone to America. Except where Christianity is totally banned, the principles of the Bible can be practiced within every culture. Even in restrictive contexts, believers can and do live as hidden or partly hidden followers of the Bible within their cultural styles.

Peter advocated a “differentiated acceptance and rejection of first-century culture.”<sup>11</sup> A Christian should “live by the good values of society that are consistent with Christian values and reject those that are not, thereby maintaining one’s distinctive Christian identity.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the Indians find something different from Hindu rituals, the

Cambodians find something culturally familiar and feel like they have gone to neither Brazil or Norway when they go to church. Clearly, the “mixing point” or “meeting place” of Scripture and culture, a complex junction, and faithful contextualization persist as a demanding task that has few shortcuts.

### Conclusion

The goal of faithful contextualization is that the absolute, universal, unchanging Word of God will dwell in individuals within today’s particular cultural groups as authentically as Jesus dwelt among His own Jewish kinfolk in Nazareth. When this happens, believers will be authentically Christian and also authentically members of their birth cultures, immigrant cultures, or chosen cultures. They will be Christian and Japanese, Christian and Arabic, Christian and Chinese, Christian and American, or European, or African,

or Latin American—all around God’s earth. 

- 1 Population numbers are at the median point between low and high estimates for ancient times per the United States Census Bureau Web site, [https://www.census.gov/population/international/data/worldpop/table\\_history.php](https://www.census.gov/population/international/data/worldpop/table_history.php).
- 2 Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 15.
- 3 Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 30.
- 4 Charles H. Kraft, ed., *Appropriate Christianity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005).
- 5 Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 171.
- 6 A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012), 19.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 9 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 7–9.
- 10 Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 4.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*, 171.

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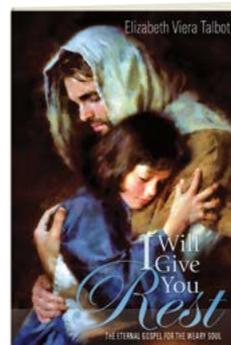
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# Ellen G. White and the 1873 revival: A case study in revival and reformation

*Editors' note: This manuscript merited one of two third-place prizes in the most recent Ministry Student Writing Contest.*

Church growth in the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist Church came to a virtual stop during the early 1870s. By 1871, the trend of rapid growth reversed so badly that church membership actually declined that year.<sup>1</sup> Two years later the Seventh-day Adventist Church, after its first formative decade, had reached a crisis point.

## The condition of the church

Perhaps one of the most obvious symptoms that things were not all well was that members failed to practice what they believed. Part of this challenge to Adventist life in 1873 is reflected by the resolution made by church leaders at the 12th General Conference, held in Battle Creek, Michigan. They observed the “opposition of many of the Advent people to the Sabbath and the law of God.”<sup>2</sup> While in theory these were foundational truths of Adventism, the reality is that church leaders noticed that belief in foundational doctrines such as the Sabbath and law of God did little to change the spiritual climate.

Seeing the problem, Ellen G. White warned: “It is difficult for those who feel

secure in their attainments, who are believing themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace.”<sup>3</sup> She developed her concerns regarding spiritual life more succinctly in *Testimony No. 23* about the “Laodicean message.” She went on to articulate these concerns in a series of articles in the *Review and Herald*, from September to October of that year.<sup>4</sup> She urged: “I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is because they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them.”<sup>5</sup>

Resistance to the warnings by Ellen White was causing spiritual darkness. She warned them that they did not even recognize their spiritual peril. This spiritual apathy carried over into other pragmatic aspects of their lives, most notably a blatant disregard for Adventist lifestyle, with new light about the importance of healthful living and “dress reform.”<sup>6</sup>

In late 1872, as Ellen White initially wrote *Testimony No. 22*,<sup>7</sup> she specifically warned about the lack of health reform at the Battle Creek church. Members from this congregation, according to Ellen White, did not recognize the light that they had received even though they had

learned “firm religious principles.” They had not implemented lifestyle changes. Many treated dress reform “with great indifference and . . . with contempt.”<sup>8</sup>

Another area of blatant disregard surrounded the fledgling educational system. Church leaders had not supported the new school and, therefore, “did not then see the significance of the little church school started in Battle Creek by Goodloe H. Bell.” Ellen White called upon church members to wake up and see the importance of education for the youth.<sup>9</sup>

Before 1873, evangelism primarily centered upon North America. At this early stage some early “missionaries” began to travel to California.<sup>10</sup> The publishing house needed “renewed effort” to expand beyond America “to people of other tongues.” This was the situation during the 11th General Conference in March 1873, where several decisions had been made to go forward. However, the action was not immediately followed. The mission of the church was in jeopardy. Revival was needed to return the heart of the people to God and for them to become freshly motivated in doing His work.

## Appeal from the Rocky Mountains

On April 22, James White experienced another stroke, the worst of at least four successive debilitating

events.<sup>11</sup> While on retreat in the Rocky Mountains in order for James to recover, the Whites were not idle. They continued to write for church periodicals, especially about the deep concern for the progress of God's work and the spiritual welfare of the church.<sup>12</sup> During this time they also focused on their personal relationship with God. Ellen White described their time: "We devoted to prayer and to writing. We cried earnestly to God to know our duty in reference to Battle Creek."<sup>13</sup> The Whites spent time meditating and drawing themselves nearer to God, reflecting upon the work they had done, the spiritual condition of God's people, and the overall direction of their lives and the church.

As they opened their minds to God and asked for His guidance, God led them to write *Testimony No. 23* and *An Earnest Appeal*, which expanded upon their views of the progressive ministry of the church. Ellen White, in *Testimony 23*, focused at length about how the self-righteous, self-sufficient, and unwilling do not receive correction and become barriers to God's people for spiritual growth.<sup>14</sup> James White wrote about the need of the people to be corrected by an instrument of God. Meanwhile, he addressed his tract *An Earnest Appeal* to church leaders, saying that they should not depend on a single person as a leader. He appealed to all leaders to unite and work together. He offered ideas about how to advance the work in education, health, and publishing ministry.<sup>15</sup>

James White focused on practical issues related to management; Ellen White focused on the hearts of God's people and their relationship to God. Her counsels gave fresh energy by challenging church leaders to remember their work in terms of service for the Lord. The reaction of some leaders showed the positive impact of the Whites' combined efforts.

## Response from church leaders

The work of the Whites touched a few key persons in different areas. S. N. Haskell responded that the two combined pamphlets, *Testimony No. 23*

and *An Earnest Appeal*, were important because "we have reached an important crisis in the history of his work." He concluded that "it seems to me that all who believe this work to be of God, should be stirred to new engagedness by the solemn admonition given in *Testimony No. 23*. It should be read with prayer and meditation by every Seventh-day Adventist in the land."<sup>16</sup>

G. I. Butler resonated with Haskell when he observed that spiritual disease was permeating the denomination. He was convinced through the message of the Whites that such spiritual disease was a hindrance for the church. He admitted: "we are mostly asleep; and when we do receive a warning, either directly from the Lord, or from those whom the Lord has called to act as watchmen, we appear very much like a person in a dozy, stupid state." Butler did not just talk; he reacted rapidly by rushing to Battle Creek from Iowa and arranging the next General Conference.<sup>17</sup> James White suggested the date of the meeting, and it was approved.<sup>18</sup> Now, the church was ready for the 12th General Conference.

## Revival begins at the 12th General Conference

The meeting that was held at Battle Creek on November 14–18, 1873, was an extraordinary assembly because it was the second General Conference session held in that year. During the actual meeting, a significant revival took place. The spirituality of the church was paramount as the first resolution noted: "We deeply regret the opposition of many of the Advent people to the Sabbath and the law of God."<sup>19</sup> Corporately church members affirmed their need to obey the truths that God entrusted to Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Another topic for discussion at the 12th General Conference was an acknowledgment by church leaders and an affirmation of the gift of prophecy as manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As a result, the General Conference executive committee needed to prepare several reasons "for believing the testimonies of Sister White to be the teaching of the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup>

As the meeting took place, a shift occurred from their needs alone toward the needs of others, especially those who did not speak English. This session encouraged the spread of the material where there were many people waiting for the message of truth from Adventist publications. The case of publishing ministry was presented, where all the conferences and the publishing societies could go together in spreading Adventist publications to both church members and non-Adventists.

Another area of evangelism centered upon the need to educate Adventist young people for a life of service. The General Conference formed a committee of four persons in which they would discuss the development of Adventist education. Another important issue was the awareness of the church not to depend on one person in leading God's work and that there should be some persons elected to help the leader. The idea of collective leadership was confirmed.<sup>21</sup>

## The characteristics of revival

What was happening was that the climate of the church had changed. They now had a sense of their spiritual need and collectively affirmed the importance of counsel from Ellen G. White. Butler, president of the session, gave his testimony about this meeting: "I regard it as one of the most important meetings ever held among S. D. Adventists." Butler concluded the situation of the session as: "Never were there such clear evidences that God's Spirit was cementing hearts which have been more or less divided. Never were the principles so plainly seen before, upon which true union must be founded."<sup>22</sup> The revival environment felt by Butler was described as *unique* compared to any previous General Conference meeting he had attended.

J. N. Andrews, the first official denominational missionary, commented on the "extraordinary" session, writing that "the hearts of the servants of God are more closely united in the bonds of Christian love, and probably there has never been a time when such perfect

unanimity of feeling and of judgment has existed as at the present time.”<sup>23</sup> He knew that the Spirit of God was working in the 12th General Conference meeting and revival was occurring in the hearts of the attendees.

J. H. Waggoner, another early Adventist minister present, said that all people, including him, rejoiced. He felt all the meetings “were profitable. The utmost harmony prevailed throughout. Those who had doubted were confirmed in the faith, and the distrustful became confident. The preaching was practical and stirring, and the social meetings were marked with deep feeling.”<sup>24</sup> He was impressed with the atmosphere and that this conference brought a great advancement of the Adventist work.

### Conclusion

The gift of prophecy, as manifested through the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, combined with the strong spiritual leadership of James White, played a pivotal role as a catalyst for revival. When the early Adventist leaders ignored correction, they fell into deep spiritual darkness. However, as they paid attention to inspired counsel, a significant spiritual revival took

place. The revival and reformation in 1873 demonstrate that as the pioneers humbled themselves and received guidance from Ellen White, revival took on dimensions that expanded to include reformation in education, publishing, and health branches of the work.

The revival occurred in 1873, after Ellen G. White wrote *Testimony No. 23*, containing the Laodicea message, which was addressed to Adventist people. The same situation occurred in the early Christian church, when the church of Laodicea felt rich and increased with goods and did not realize her spiritual weaknesses (Rev. 3:14–18). The message delivered to the church in Laodicea was repeated to the Seventh-day Adventists in 1873. The ingredients that triggered revival and reformation in the past could be the same ingredients that can cause revival and reformation today. 

- 1 James White, “Business Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, February 14, 1871, 68. See also Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking the Sanctuary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 138.
- 2 G. I. Butler, “Business Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the S. D. A. General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1873, 190.
- 3 Ellen G. White, “The Laodicean Church,” *Review and*

*Herald*, September 16, 1873, 109.

- 4 The message appeared in the *Review and Herald* on September 16, 23, 30, and October 7, 1873.
- 5 Ellen White, *Testimony No. 23* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873), 5, 12.
- 6 G. I. Butler, “Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1873, 108.
- 7 Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Biography* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn. 1981), 2:376.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Testimony No. 22* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press 1872), 57, 65.
- 9 Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 5, 131.
- 10 In the membership report of 11th General Conference meeting. G. I. Butler, *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1873, 108.
- 11 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 6, March 22, 1873, Ellen G. White Estate.
- 12 A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:386.
- 13 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 12, October 11, 1873, 9.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Testimony No. 23*, 3–71.
- 15 James White, *An Earnest Appeal*, in *Testimony No. 23*, 1–47. See also A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:389.
- 16 S. N. Haskell, “Testimony No. 23,” *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1873, 152.
- 17 G. I. Butler, “Testimony No. 23 and Bro. White’s Address,” *Review and Herald*, November 4, 1873, 164.
- 18 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 12, October 23, 1873, 9.
- 19 Butler, “Business Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Meeting,” 190.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 G. I. Butler, “The Conference and the Work at Battle Creek,” *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1873, 188.
- 23 J. N. Andrews, “The General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1873, 188.
- 24 J. H. Waggoner, “Blessings Acknowledged,” *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1873, 188.

## Transforming grace

**“It is by grace you have been saved”**  
(Eph. 2:5, NIV).

True revival and reformation focuses on grace. We recognize the grace that God lavishes upon each of us in forgiving our sins, calling us His children, and saving us in His kingdom. Then we respond to such grace by allowing Him to transform us into His likeness.

When we internalize the truth about grace, we will experience a depth of humility that results in becoming grace-filled, grace-giving Christians. We will extend God’s grace to others—all others—recognizing that at the foot of the Cross we are all equal.

Grace informs us that how we treat other people matters, whether they are fellow church members or those outside our faith; whether they are our coworkers, family members, or strangers. Grace demands that we treat everyone with respect and dignity.

With members of our family we are called to be especially kind, gentle, and patient (Eph. 5:21–6:4). Grace leaves no room for a person to display a caring public persona and be an overbearing tyrant in the family. Abuse of any kind—verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, financial—will not be practiced by the person who truly understands that he or she has been saved by grace. There is no place for controlling behavior. After



all, Jesus, our Example in all things, never used brute force or demeaning language to punish or control anyone. Instead, He drew people with love, compassion, and respect.

Transformation in the way we treat others comprises a visible evidence of revival and reformation in the heart.

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# Developing spiritual leaders like Jesus

One of the greatest challenges we face in local pastoral ministry involves developing spiritual leaders, Spirit-empowered men and women who are able to lead in expanding the kingdom of God. Every church has people God has called to be spiritual leaders in their local church as well as their community. When one recognizes that call to spiritual leadership, the challenge becomes *how they continue to develop and grow as a spiritual leader*. There are many resources for teaching skills such as how to give Bible studies, preach sermons, and provide pastoral care. However, developing them as strong spiritual leaders cannot be done through just a weekend seminar or by reading a book. The development of spiritual leaders takes time, effort, and energy.

The greatest model of how to develop spiritual leaders is found in the ministry of Jesus. Over the course of three and a half years, Christ developed fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot, and a half dozen other men to be spiritual leaders and serve as the foundation of the Christian church. While the disciples were recipients of Christ's teaching and preaching, they were also mentored by Him. Mark 3:14 summarizes the mentoring process of Jesus, "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them

out to preach."<sup>1</sup> Could mentoring, as Jesus undertook with His disciples, be a very effective process for developing spiritual leaders in the local church?

## Mentoring

*Mentoring* has become a buzzword in both secular and religious circles. But what is it? While there are many different definitions of *mentoring*,<sup>2</sup> one of the most concise and applicable is, "a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources. . . . Mentoring is a positive dynamic that enables people to develop potential."<sup>3</sup> As one looks at the Scriptures, while the words *mentor* or *mentoring* are not mentioned,<sup>4</sup> clearly "mentoring was the primary means of instruction in Bible times."<sup>5</sup> A closer examination of the Scriptures shows that there are many examples of mentoring relationships contained in its pages.<sup>6</sup>

## The mentoring model of Jesus and its application

The mentoring model of Jesus, as outlined in Mark 3:14, contains three characteristics of mentoring: selection, association, and delegation. We will examine these characteristics as well as apply them to a contemporary example of mentoring.

While much has been written on mentoring and its importance, there are

just a handful of guides and curricula that actually help a mentor develop spiritual leaders.<sup>7</sup> One such curriculum is *Joshua's Men*, by Dr. Dan Reiland.<sup>8</sup> *Joshua's Men* is a year-long spiritual leadership curriculum designed to foster and develop spiritual leaders in the local church. While *Joshua's Men* is designed to develop men as spiritual leaders, the mentoring process outlined here can also be effective in developing women as spiritual leaders. So, while the curriculum is gender-specific, the mentoring principles can be applied to developing both men and women as spiritual leaders.

*Selection.* While it was the tradition of disciples to seek out mentors, Jesus "does not wait to be selected as a mentor. He chose a group of twelve men."<sup>9</sup> While this process of selection took place over a period of time,<sup>10</sup> the culmination is recorded by Mark 3:13-15, "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons."

While the criteria for the selection of the twelve was not given, the Gospels show the process. Jesus spent significant time in prayer before the disciples were selected (Luke 6:12). This important part of the selection process indicates that it was not His choice, but

His Father's choice as to the identities of the twelve men who were to be formally called disciples and apostles.

Once the twelve were selected, they became constant companions and fellow ministers with Jesus. What they experienced as the protégés of the Ultimate Mentor would determine the future of the Christian church.

As I began the selection process, I formulated a list of potential participants for the program. I looked for men who met the following criteria: (1) is supportive and positive about the church, (2) is not a new Christian, (3) attends church regularly, and (4) has spiritual leadership potential. Over the course of six months, the list grew and then also constricted as I felt led to add or subtract names from the list. The final list consisted of ten men.

I contacted each man and shared with him the expectations of Joshua's Men. Over the course of a year, each would be required to attend a four-hour meeting once a month, read an assigned book, complete a project that coincided with the topic to be presented, and attend an overnight retreat. If the men were married, their spouses were included in the conversation so they were aware of the commitment that their husband was being asked to make. I also made clear to them that they were making a year-long commitment that I expected them to keep throughout the year. Only under extreme circumstances were they able to drop out once they began. In the end, six men accepted my invitation to be mentored as spiritual leaders.

*Association.* Mark 3:14 makes it clear that one of the reasons the disciples were chosen and set apart was to "be with Him" (see also Luke 8:1; 9:18; John 3:22). One may assume that unless the narrative specifically mentions instances when Jesus and the disciples were not together (e.g., Matt. 14:23), the disciples were with Jesus 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Gospels record that the disciples were with Jesus in the streets (Luke 8:40–45), on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 8:23), in the temple (John 2:12–17), in

the synagogue (Mark 1:21), in homes (Matt. 26:6–10; Mark 1:29; Luke 10:38), and in the countryside (Matt. 5:1, Luke 6:1). "The Twelve walked with Jesus as He taught, ate, dialogued with religious leaders . . . blessed children, prayed, wept, and He was betrayed. As they shared life, Jesus spoke truth to them, revealed sin in them, and modeled His Father's ways for them."<sup>11</sup> They were His constant companions.

However, the disciples were not just selected for fellowship and companionship; they were selected for something more. Hendriksen points out that the phrase "in order that they might be with him" has an educational aspect to it.<sup>12</sup> They were not only to "be with Jesus," they were also to be recipients of His teachings. Not only were they present for the lessons He gave the crowd (Matt. 13:1–35; Matt. 19:1–34; Mark 4:1–33; Luke 11:29–36; John 8), but they were also recipients of private, individualized teachings (Matt. 21:18–22; 24:3; Mark 4:10–12, 34; Luke 9:18; 18:31–34; John 14–17).

The association of the disciples with Jesus was not just for the reception of information or for companionship. Instead, it was ultimately for the purpose of fulfilling the mission He was to give them (Matt. 28:18–20) and to continue His ministry to the ends of the world.

While there were many opportunities throughout the year for the men whom I selected to associate with me for mentoring, the main focus of my mentoring relationship with them took place at the monthly meeting. Each meeting lasted four hours and included four components: a meal, the lesson of the month, a book discussion, and prayer time.

During the course of the year, a different topic was studied and discussed at each monthly meeting. The topics included leadership, spiritual practices, connecting with others, living out your purpose, finances, family, and sharing your faith among others. These topics would not only be the focus of the book and project that were completed prior to the meeting but also the lesson that was taught during the meeting.

I also, over the course of the year, took each of the men out for lunch. This gave me the chance not only to see their place of employment and what they did but also to have some individual time to mentor them one-on-one.

Another valuable opportunity for association came when we attended a two-day leadership conference. At the conclusion of the daily meetings, we discussed what we had learned and how the men were going to apply it to their lives. Each man was encouraged to develop an action plan that would guide him in implementing the insights he had gained from the conference and the follow-up discussions.

There were also opportunities for fellowship and deepening relationships between the men and their various families. Over the course of the year, we had two family social events where their spouses and children were invited to our home and we enjoyed food and fellowship. Invariably, the relationships not only between the men but also their families grew deeper as a result of these times of informal fellowship.

*Delegation.* The Gospels make it very clear that Jesus did not allow the disciples to be mere observers of His ministry but instead had them participate with Him in His ministry. While there were times when they watched Him minister and do miracles (Luke 7:11–17; John 11:1–44), they were also given opportunities to participate. During the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:15–21), Jesus not only told the disciples that they were to feed the crowd, they were also given the task of distributing the loaves and fishes to the crowd as well as collecting the leftovers. They were given the same tasks when Jesus fed the 4,000 (Mark 8:1–9).

However, the greatest opportunity for the disciples to minister as Jesus ministered came when He sent them out two by two (Matt. 10:5–8; Mark 3:14, 15; 6:7–13; Luke 9:1–6). As one examines the narratives, it is clear that Jesus sent the disciples to minister as He ministered. They were given the authority to heal the sick, raise the dead, heal leprosy, drive out demons,

and preach repentance. Up to this point, they had been mostly observers to the activities of Jesus, but now He delegated them to go and minister in His name. Boedeker points out that this was the Ultimate Mentor at work: "The mentoring methodology of Jesus embodied an on-the-job training. Jesus would 'do ministry' as his disciples observed Him. He would then encourage them to minister as He observed and taught them. He would finally send them out to do ministry together without Him."<sup>13</sup>

Following His resurrection, Jesus told the disciples of their ultimate delegation. They were to minister on His behalf to the entire world. All four of the Gospels end with Jesus commissioning the disciples to minister and take His gospel to the ends of the world (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:47–49; John 20:21). The mentoring results of Jesus were seen as the disciples ministered and preached in all corners of the then-known world.

### Functioning as a spiritual leader

At the conclusion of the year of meeting together, discussing various topics, and being mentored, the men were ready to serve as spiritual leaders. Their confidence grew because of the *Joshua's Men* spiritual leadership development process. They were ready to step in and help lead the ministry of the local church. Two of the participants were elected local elders, one was elected to our school board, one was elected church clerk, while the others also serve in other ministries of the church. They also related that their leadership influence grew in their homes, workplaces, and community.

Most of the men in that first group were very excited to in turn mentor other men. The next year, four of the six men were leading *Joshua's Men* groups to develop more spiritual leaders. By the end of 2015, 26 men will have

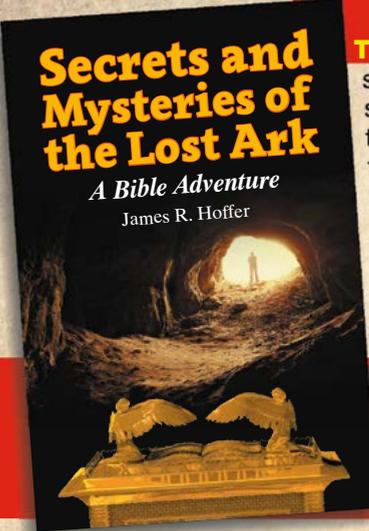
been mentored to be spiritual leaders through this process.

Every man that experienced spiritual leadership development as a result of the *Joshua's Men* process has stepped into various ministry leadership positions in the local church. But, more importantly, each man continues to develop into a spiritual leader who "will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall."<sup>14</sup>

Mentoring and developing spiritual leaders as Jesus developed His disciples will raise up committed spiritual leaders in the local church and expand the kingdom of God. ✎

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- 2 Other definitions of *mentoring*: "a relationship between a younger adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the young individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work." Kathy E. Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organization Life* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foreman & Company, 1988), 2. "Mentoring is a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps a protégé reach his or her God given potential." Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor and How to Become One* (Lake Mary, FL: Ayleen Pub., 2005), 19.

- 3 Paul D. Stanley and Robert J. Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 12.
- 4 The first use of the word *mentor* is in Homer's *The Odyssey* in the eighth century B.C.
- 5 Howard G. Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 179.
- 6 Parent and child (Deut. 6:6,7); Moses and Joshua (Deut. 31:1–8; 34:9); Jonathan and David (1 Sam. 18:1–4; 19:1–7; 20:1–42); Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16–21; 2 Kings 2:1–16; 3:12); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 4:36, 37; 9:26–30; 11:22–30); and Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 2:19–23; 1 and 2 Timothy).
- 7 The author is aware of two others not mentioned. One is Radical Mentoring developed by Regi Campbell, [www.radicalmentoring.com](http://www.radicalmentoring.com). The other is the book *Going Deep: Becoming a Person of Influence* by Gordon MacDonald (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011).
- 8 Dan Reiland, *Joshua's Men* (Atlanta, GA: Injoy, 2000).
- 9 Ron Belsterling, "The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 5, no. 1 (October 2006): 78.
- 10 Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 910.
- 11 Alicia Britt Chole, "Purposeful Proximity: Jesus' Model of Mentoring," *Enrichment Journal*, accessed November 5, 2014, [enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/062\\_proximity.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/062_proximity.cfm).
- 12 William Hendricksen as cited in Bertram L. Melbourne, *Slow to Understand: the Disciples in Synoptic Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 45.
- 13 J. E. Boedeker, "A Model for Mentoring Persons Called to Ministry in the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana in Florida" (Doctor of Ministry dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2001), 24.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), 57.



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# Perpetuity of the Sabbath: *Evidences from the creation accounts*

**D**isputes about the “eternity” of the Sabbath remain rife, even today. Some theologians argue that the Sabbath is largely a Jewish institution, because it was during the Exodus that God prescribed it to the Jews. The Genesis Creation, it is argued, indicates nothing about the perpetuity of the Sabbath but is merely descriptive rather than prescriptive.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, others argue that the Genesis Creation accounts give hints that the Sabbath was meant to be a perpetual institution for the entire human race.

This article explores three aspects in the Creation accounts of Genesis regarding the “eternity” of the Sabbath: man’s creation in the image of God, God’s blessing the Sabbath, and God’s sanctification of the Sabbath.

## Man in the image of God

The account in Genesis 1:26, 27 indicates that God created man in His image. Man was created to function in the manner that reflected God’s own functioning. Some of the ways in which God intended man to function in His likeness include the ability to rule the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26) just as God rules the whole universe. Humans were to relate well with one another, in partnership and unity, as God demonstrated during Creation by

using the plural “we” (Gen. 1:26; see also Gen. 2:23, 24). They were also to communicate with God, just as God communicated with the first pair (Gen. 2:16, 17).

“Rest” was another dimension in which man was to emulate God. Exodus 20:10, 11 indicates that the Israelites were to rest on the Sabbath, the seventh day, just as God had. The instruction is not an afterthought to be required of the Israelites centuries later; rather, just as God had rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2), human beings, who were created in His image, were to follow His example. Man would observe the seventh day just as God had observed it and pass it on to future generations. In this sense, the image of God would be perpetuated throughout all generations.

Further, at Creation, the first pair was placed in the Garden of Eden. Here, these people were expected to increase in numbers. These “numbers” would be living outside the garden, because they would fill the whole earth (Gen. 1:28), while Eden would remain just a small and limited locality on earth (assuming that sin had not arisen). God intended that the pattern and lifestyle He had articulated for man would be replicated in future generations, who would learn and copy what had been delivered to Adam in the garden. The implication

is that the instructions and experience conveyed to the first pair—created in the image of God—would be a model to be replicated in future generations as they lived and utilized the ground (Gen. 2:15). Consequently, the “very good” maxim would equally be their story. Because the Sabbath institution had been introduced to the first pair, it would certainly be replicated in these generations bearing the image of God as part of their lifestyle.

Church historian Dorothy Bass wrote that the term *remember* in Exodus 20:8 in the giving of the commandments on Sinai “is grounded in the first creation story in Genesis.” In that respect, this injunction becomes a reminder that the pattern that humans ought to follow is six days work and one day of rest, just as God had done, because, as Bass writes, “in both work and rest, human beings are in the image of God.”<sup>2</sup>

## God blessed

In Genesis 2:3 God *blessed* the seventh day, the same day that He also rested. Blessing (*brk*) is also what He had done to the human pair (Gen. 1:28), as well as with sea animals and the birds of the air (1:22). Nothing else in the Creation accounts was “blessed” as these were. This connection in blessing man, animals, and the Sabbath

cannot be overlooked. Clearly, from this *blessing formula* God considered these items, singled out for blessing, as outstandingly significant.

In the first two instances where the term *blessing* is employed as it relates to animals and man (1:22, 28), blessing is associated with a duplicating activity. “God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth,’ ” and “God blessed them and said to them,

Sabbath and commanded its holy observance for all time.”<sup>7</sup>

Because the term *blessing* is used in the context of activities to be continued, it is only fair that its use in connection with the Sabbath, in Genesis 2, be understood in a similar sense. That is to say, the institution of the Sabbath was intended by the Creator to be perpetuated throughout time. This means that as long as there would be time, there would be the perpetuation of the Sabbath rest.

E. F. Harrison’s thinking that holiness is a basic aspect with God that fundamentally conveys “His separateness, i.e., His uniqueness, His distinction as the Wholly Other, the One who cannot be confused with the gods devised by men (Exod. 15:11).”<sup>10</sup> In that regard, items said to bear holiness express their uniqueness or distinction from others of their nature. Holiness, Lambert adds, “expresses a relation, which consists negatively in separation from common use, and positively in dedication to the service of Yahweh.”<sup>11</sup>

Scripture portrays God as holy in several instances. Two Bible writers connect His eternal nature with holiness. Habakkuk asserts this link when he writes: “O LORD, are you not from everlasting? / My God, my Holy One, we will not die. / O LORD, you have appointed them [the Babylonians] to execute judgment; / O Rock, you have ordained them to punish” (Hab. 1:12). As Habakkuk deals with his perplexing question as to why God seems to be overlooking the evil committed in the land, God responds that He will use the Babylonians to inflict His judgments upon the chosen nation. He describes “God” as both “everlasting” and “holy.” This nature gives the writer confidence that the dependable and unchanging God has not overlooked the situation in Judah—for He has assigned the Babylonians the responsibility of punishing the Jews.

The second writer, John the revelator, describes the worship scenario in Revelation 4. In verse 8 he portrays the God who is worshiped in the following terms: “Holy, holy, holy / is the Lord God Almighty / who was, and is, and is to come.” It is interesting that the revelator perceives the God who is worshiped in heaven as the One who has not changed, the One who will not change. His nature of holiness has remained intact throughout the ages.

In consistency with the holy nature of God, the Sabbath intimates its connectedness with Him. But the Sabbath equally elucidates its “durability” beyond limits of epochs/eras. From this fundamental theological understanding,

*The Genesis Creation account points in directions that indicate the seventh day is more universal than many think.*

‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’ ”<sup>3</sup> The blessing pronounced upon the animals and human beings has the consequence of ensuring that both animals and human beings reproduce and perpetuate their kind into future generations. In commenting on Genesis 1:22, the Keil and Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament* considers the term *blessing* in the following way: that it was “the actual communication of the capacity to propagate and increase in numbers.”<sup>4</sup> In that regard, as long as and wherever there could be these creatures, propagation would be expected of them.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Sherman argues that God’s blessings set things in motion for the future.<sup>6</sup> Hence, New Testament scholar Willard Swartley rightly asserts that “Sabbath, rest, and seventh day are permanently and unalterably linked together by God for all creation for all time. God both created the seventh-day

### God sanctified

The word *sanctified* is a verb form of the Hebrew adjective *qds*, which can be translated as “to be consecrated, dedicated, holy, sanctified, separate/set apart from common use.” *Sanctified* can also be seen as something cut off or separated from the rest—for the purpose of specific usage. J. C. Lambert in the *Net Bible* indicates that “holiness attaches itself first of all, not to visible objects, but to the invisible Yahweh, and to places, seasons, things and human beings only in so far as they are associated with Him. . . .

“. . . Nothing is holy in itself, but anything becomes holy by its consecration to [or by] Him.”<sup>8</sup>

In other words, an item cannot be holy if it is not associated with God.

Abraham Heschel reasons that *holy* is a distinguished term in the Bible, which “more than any other, is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine.”<sup>9</sup> This is in agreement with

it is fair to conclude that if God's nature remains unchanged, then forever the term *holy* and its derivative forms must express His majesty—otherwise He will cease to be “majestically holy.” Because holiness expresses God's mystery and majesty, the institution of the Sabbath as set forth in Genesis shall continue to be a constant reminder of the holiness of God by virtue of its association with God.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

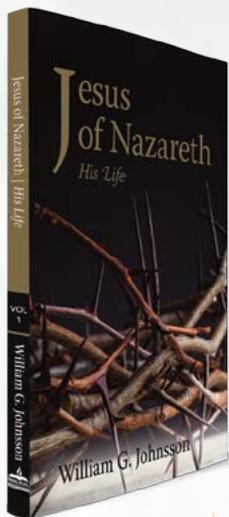
As seen in the above study, the Genesis Creation account points in directions that indicate the seventh day is more universal than many think. As this study has sought to show, God has given hints to perpetuity of this eternal memorial of His Creation—the seventh-day Sabbath. Thus, Heschel was right: “the Sabbath and eternity are one—or of the same essence.” Every week when the Sabbath comes,

we have a perpetual reminder of the majesty, power, and holiness of God. ❧

- 1 Stephen P. Bohr, for instance, has highlighted how the “descriptive” as opposed to “prescriptive” observance trend of argument regarding the Sabbath is rife in theological circles. “Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women with Special Emphasis on 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28,” July 23, 2013, 5, 6, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/a-study-of-1-peter-2.9-10-and-galatians-3.28.pdf>.
- 2 Dorothy C. Bass, “Christian Formation in and for Sabbath Rest,” *Interpretation* 51, no. 1 (January 2005): 29.
- 3 Scriptural references are taken from the New International Version.
- 4 C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, electronic edition (Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).
- 5 In Genesis 9:1, after the Flood, God again blessed the human race. He set the whole earth before the remaining human beings and told them it was all their own, while it remains, to them and their heirs, so that the stream of their race should be supplied with a constant succession.
- 6 Robert Sherman, “Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest,” *Interpretation* 51, no. 1 (January 2005): 41. In the same vein, he points out that the Sabbath bears blessings on its own and becomes the “calendar unit by which future holy days and seasons are determined” (*ibid*).
- 7 Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), 67.
- 8 J. C. Lambert, *Net Bible* online, s.v. “Holiness,” accessed June 11, 2013, <http://classic.net.bible.org/dictionary.php?word=Holiness>.
- 9 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2003), xvi.
- 10 E. F. Harrison, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Holiness,” electronic edition, revised, (Eerdmans, 1979). Parenthesis original.
- 11 J. C. Lambert, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online*, s.v. “Holiness,” accessed May 23, 2013, <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/H/holiness.html>.
- 12 It is a basic understanding in biblical theology that the Ten Commandments describe the character that should be demonstrated by believers in God. A closer observation of the commandments indicates that the term *holy* is applied to one word only, the Sabbath. In a sense, in the entire Decalogue, it is only the Sabbath that perpetuates the holiness of God—which is the basis upon which He requires man to fashion his character. As long as this character (in which holiness is an element) shall be perpetually required of believers in God (see, for instance, Heb. 12:14), it becomes impossible to imagine a non-eternity of the Sabbath.

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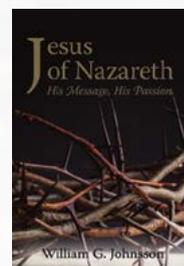
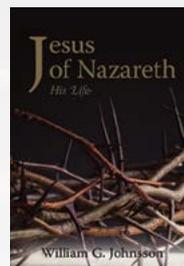


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# Spirituality: Biblical and nonbiblical—Part 2 of 2

## Prelude

In 2008, Review and Herald Publishing Association published my book *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*. In the volume I tried to do two things. First, I wanted to testify to the journey God had taken me on to find closeness to Him and true, biblical heart religion. Second, I wanted to help others who also long to grow closer to God. At the time I first wrote, there was little or no controversy about what came to be called *spiritual formation*. Soon after the book was published, however, some in the Christian world (eventually including some Seventh-day Adventists) began to use the term *spiritual formation* to describe dangerous, counterfeit spiritual practices.

Given the current climate, I would like to clarify several things. I am a lifelong Seventh-day Adventist who cares deeply about my church. I am opposed to all forms of spirituality that are contrary to the principles of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. I would also be the first to admit that my book is far from perfect. If I could turn back the clock, I can think of a number of changes that I would make in the original manuscript. For example, I would quote passages from Ellen White that speak to the subject, even though Review and Herald suggested that I not do this because of their plans to market the book to the non-Adventist public. I would correct a chart

that, at first glance, makes it appear as if I believe in Karma. Obviously, I do not. I would attempt to clarify that the term *spiritual formation*, as I understand it, is a term very similar to *sanctification* or *spiritual growth*. I would also not include a bibliography of books for additional reading, since some critics apparently understood this to be my blanket endorsement of all that the various authors wrote or believed. This is certainly not my position. Furthermore, I would be more careful to clarify, define, or omit terms that have become the center of so much misunderstanding and suspicion. Finally, I would explain that while I support biblical repetition within the appropriate context (see Ps. 136), I oppose, as the Bible does (Matt. 6:7), meaningless, mind-emptying repeating and/or mantra-like meditation and prayer. I hope that such changes would have allowed all my readers to more easily understand my position.

In a certain sense, this two-part article (part 1 published in the October 2015 issue and part 2 published in this issue) is meant in part to answer two larger questions that have arisen in connection with the book. In part 1, I explored how biblical Christian spirituality contrasts with that of the so-called Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the New Age. Part 2 is a response to the question of whether Adventist spirituality is unique. I hope

this two-part article can be a blessing and further promote a closer walk with Jesus.

## Adventist spirituality

Is there anything unique about Seventh-day Adventist spiritual life? Do Adventists have anything special to contribute to Christian spirituality? I propose that Adventists have four key convictions that, taken together, form a distinctive package heavily shaping Adventist devotional/spiritual life. While each individual conviction is not necessarily unique, the complete package is one that is unparalleled. This kind of spiritual/devotional life should be not only practiced by Adventists but also shared with all who seek God.

## A valid question

The many varieties and practices of spirituality, both Christian and non-Christian, make the question of uniqueness pertinent. Not only the proliferation of spiritualities makes the question important, but a biblical precedent exists for asking this type of question about uniqueness. In Luke 11:1 Jesus' disciples ask Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (RSV). The Jews of Jesus' time evidently believed that followers of important rabbis could receive from their teacher specific prayers that illustrated their distinctive beliefs. John the Baptist and Jesus were both part of

a larger circle called Judaism. Within that larger circle, John had given a specific “prayer” (spirituality) to his disciples that embodied his unique teaching. Jesus’ disciples are realizing the importance of their Rabbi. They want Jesus to do for them what John did for his disciples. The time had come for them to receive from Him a prayer illustrating and reinforcing His unique teaching.

Within the larger circle of Christianity, Adventists see themselves as a people with a special mission. It is only right, then, that a believer ask, “What kind of spiritual life (prayer) should we practice that illustrates our teaching and key beliefs?”

### Four key convictions

I believe that the following four convictions powerfully influence and epitomize Adventist spirituality.

1. *Adventists believe and practice a symbolic and literal Sabbath.* Many other Christians now talk of the Sabbath as a key part of their spiritual life; however, most use the Sabbath only symbolically. For them it symbolizes spiritual rest and salvation and may provide time for spiritual reflection. As to the necessity of actually observing the literal seventh day, they are often silent or negative.<sup>1</sup> Adventist spirituality believes in a symbolic *and* literal Sabbath. Keeping a literal weekly Sabbath gives structure to life and time. This makes us regularly set aside a time for God to be present.

Adventists not only believe in the literal Sabbath day but also believe it needs to be observed in the way the fourth commandment states. No work should be done. Thus, the day itself and how it is observed combine to create space for worship, rest, and communion with God. Instead of confining us, the Sabbath frees us. It releases us from work and our regular activities and encourages us to seek God. This seven-day cycle and structure of actual rest symbolizes not only God’s creative and saving power but also a foretaste of the heavenly rest. The symbolic meaning of the Sabbath as a memorial for creation

and salvation rests on and works with the literal to create real spiritual impact.

To a certain extent the same is true of the second coming of Jesus. Although many Christians now accept a literal second coming of Jesus, a significant number still hold to a belief often called *realized eschatology*. This view sees the second coming of Jesus taking place or being accomplished (“realized”) already in the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Second Coming is spiritualized, and hope for a literal Second Coming is lost. Adventists, of course, believe in a literal, imminent return of Jesus. Early

in relationship to God. This leads to major differences in both doctrinal and experiential issues.

For Adventists, the body is part of our person, or soul. Nourishing and caring for the body is caring for the soul. Properly cared for, the body is an ally supporting the spiritual life, not an enemy. Care for the body is part of spiritual life. Adventists cannot support ascetic practices that cause pain or torture to the body in an effort to benefit the soul. Punishing the body to benefit the soul does not make sense, for punishing the body means harming our soul.

*As believers engage in both mission and compassion for human need, spiritual life is nourished and enlivened and others are helped and healed.*

Adventists saw their devotional time as a meeting with Jesus through His Spirit, which was a foretaste of their experience of actually seeing Jesus soon. This literal expectation gave reality and urgency to their everyday spiritual life and can do the same for us today.

2. *Seventh-day Adventists hold a wholistic view of human beings.* Adventists believe that people are souls—not that they have some separate entity called a soul. Other Christians use the word *soul* in a different way that divides a person into separate components. When those who believe in the soul as a separate, spiritual part of a person think of spiritual life, they picture in their mind only that part. For them this piece of a human being, called soul, is what relates to God. When Adventists hear the word *soul*, we think of the whole person

Not only is the body part of the soul but so are the mind and emotions. Properly understood, mind and emotions are not only part of the soul but are assets to communion with God, not barriers. When we worship, we should worship with all of these various facets joining together in complete harmony. Mind, heart, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30) are all components of who we are, not separate, self-existent entities. All can work together in synergistic unity in our spiritual life.

Another implication of this wholistic view for our spiritual life has to do with care for social justice and the poor. Evangelism and social justice are not separate issues. Both have to do with the life of the soul (person) and are the work of God. As believers engage in both mission and compassion for human need, spiritual life is nourished

and enlivened and others are helped and healed.

3. *Seventh-day Adventists believe that the spiritual life takes place in the context of the cosmic conflict, also known as the great controversy.*

At the 2005 General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists, the church voted a new fundamental belief entitled “Growing in Christ.” I quote it here:

“By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seem to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. . . . In this new freedom in Jesus we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.”<sup>22</sup>

Several points in this statement should be noted. First, this is one of our fundamental beliefs. Many statements of belief, confessions, and creeds of other Christians do not have such an affirmation of the devotional life. This shows how important the spiritual practices should be in the life of an Adventist Christian. Second, the statement calls for a *daily* practice. This shows again how regularity of communion with God is crucial. Third, the belief emphasizes the triumph of Jesus and the positive, victorious context of the spiritual life. Because of this, the spiritual life should be one of joy and peace that experiences the presence of Jesus. This spirituality should not be one that focuses on potential danger, problems, and fear of deception but rather emphasizes the accomplishments of

Jesus. Believers can, with confidence, pray for continuing victory over evil and evil powers because of the ongoing triumph of Jesus in this cosmic conflict.

4. *Adventists believe that Ellen G. White makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life.* Ellen G. White is preeminently a spiritual writer in whom Adventists believe is a manifestation of the spiritual gift of prophecy (see Ephesians 4). However, Adventists, including Ellen White herself, see her writings as subject to the Bible, which is the “greater light.”

The most serious scholarly studies of Ellen White have emphasized her teaching on doctrine, ethics, and theology. While she does deal with these areas, I feel her biggest contribution is her writing and teaching on spiritual life. Her writings breathe an atmosphere of deep personal communion with God and open the path to an intimate experiential relationship with Jesus.

I give two examples, which, if followed, profoundly affect Adventist spirituality. First, a familiar statement from *The Desire of Ages*:

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, . . . our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”<sup>23</sup>

Several points should be noticed. First, this contemplation of Jesus’ life is highly recommended as a daily exercise. Second, the call is for “contemplation” and use of the imagination. Third, this practice results in powerful positive spiritual results.

Some Protestant Christians, including some Adventists, have questioned the use of contemplative prayer. While some types of contemplative prayer are not appropriate, Adventists should be clear that there does exist a type of contemplation that is not only acceptable

but recommended. This is not the only place Ellen White calls for this kind of practice in her writings.<sup>4</sup> Words spoken against contemplative prayer must carefully define terms so this valid and beneficial devotional practice does not become misunderstood or lost.

Much the same thing can be said for the use of visualization of biblical passages or scenes. While the practice of visualization and imagination can be wrongly done, manipulative, or even demonic, these passages show a dynamic, positive way to do it as a means to benefit the spiritual life in a practical way.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect of the devotional life that Ellen White teaches is found in her book *The Ministry of Healing* as the climax and conclusion of the chapter “With Nature and With God” that describes Jesus’ devotional life. Here are her words:

“All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10). This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God.”<sup>26</sup>

This quote deserves a careful reading. Note the key points. All who want to be trained by God need a quiet hour for communion with Him. That communion is threefold—with our own hearts, with nature, and with God. In this practice we experience the personal reality of discovering God’s will. We must do this by individually hearing Him speak to our hearts. The quietness makes His voice more clear. All effective labor for God is based on this, and it will give us a changed life.

Those who may have worried about the practice of quietness before God and the validity of listening to God’s still

small voice should rest at ease. While what we claim to hear must be tested by the Bible, listening for God in this way is a proper practice that bears wonderful fruit in the life. The possibility of error must not rob us of the joy of listening for God.

At the root of both of these examples lies two core convictions that Ellen White operates with. First, the Bible is a living word through which God still speaks to us as we absorb it and contemplate it deeply. Second, real interchange takes place between God and humans. Jesus is a resurrected Lord and is present and active among us by His Spirit, and we can and should daily commune with Him.

### Conclusion

Two main conclusions may be drawn from this discussion. First, not only is it a valid search to look for a

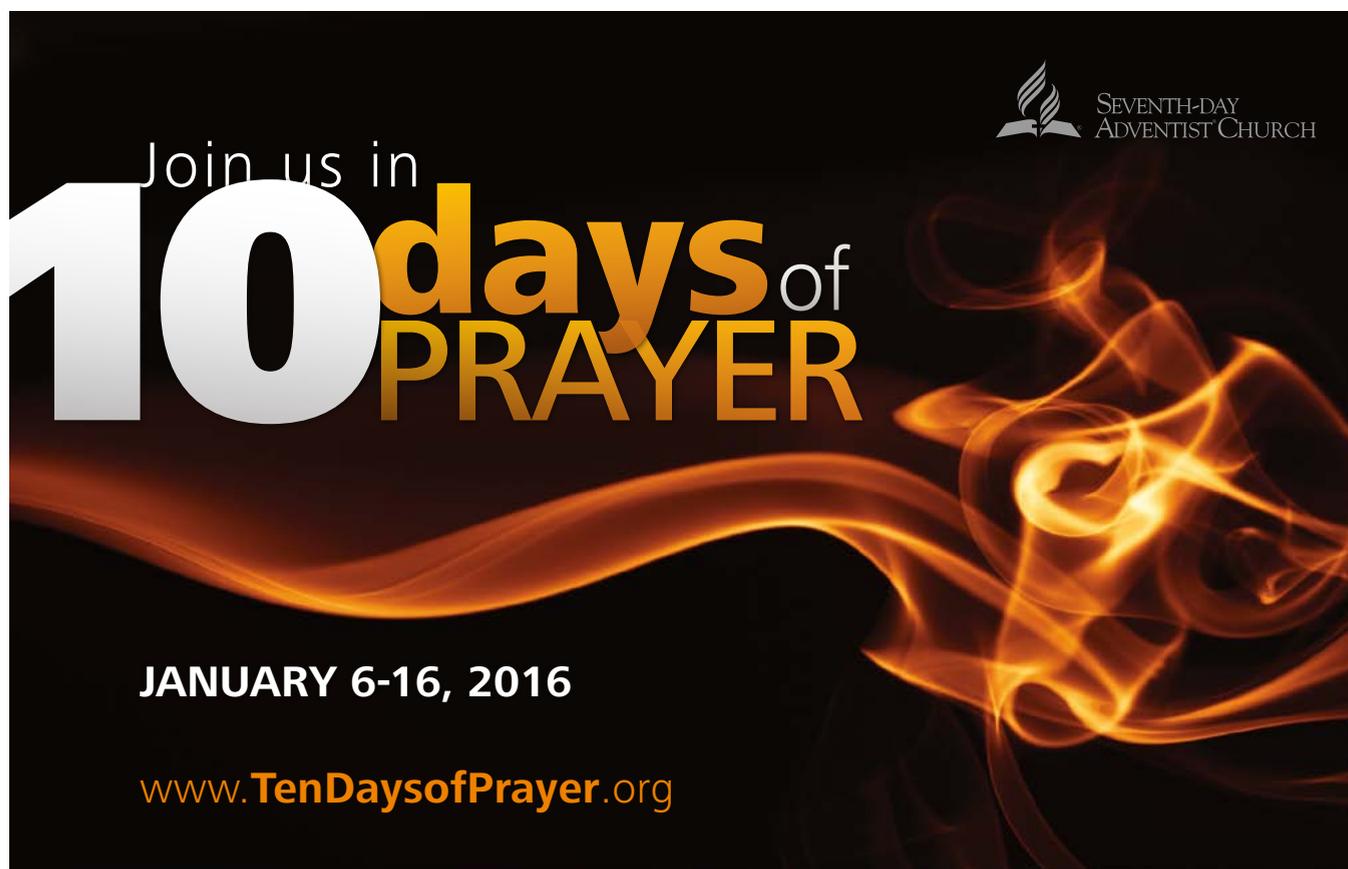
possible unique, Adventist spiritual life, but also we do have a special perspective that can be joyfully shared with others. Do we know this, and even more importantly, are we living it in our daily devotional practice?

Second, Adventists have been known for their emphasis on true doctrine. We have not always been known for our communion with Jesus. We have not always connected the two in a meaningful way. We must not abandon our study and proclamation of true doctrine, but we must not forget that all true doctrine must have an experiential impact as well. My prayer is that the day will come when the truth and clarity of our doctrine will be vitally connected to the depth and fervor of our religious experience. Our mission will never be completed by the single-sided teaching of cognitive truth. People will only be permanently and positively changed

when the intellectual truth is closely tied to the truth of close personal communion with God in an experiential relationship. This is the heart and soul of Adventist spirituality. 

- 1 See Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 141–49.
- 2 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 159, 160.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 83. Another measure of the influence and popularity of this quote is that the popular adaptation of this book *The Desire of Ages* called *Messiah* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2003) uses that statement as preface and introduction to the book (p. 3).
- 4 See Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 10, 47, 60, and 71; *Our High Calling* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1961), 96.
- 5 See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 661; *Steps to Christ*, 58; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), 1.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 58.

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# Interpreting the writings of Ellen G. White

**A**s Seventh-day Adventists we believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Revelation 12:17 and that God has graciously given this church the gift of prophecy as manifested in the life and work of Ellen White. Because we do not believe in degrees of inspiration, we have to recognize that her inspiration, though not her authority, is on the same level as the inspiration of the Old and New Testament prophets. Therefore, when using and interpreting her writings, we must apply the same principles of interpretation to them as we do to Scripture. Both are inspired literature; both, therefore, must be interpreted by the same principles.

## The interpretations of biblical texts

Biblical texts can be understood and used in different ways. A preacher on Sabbath morning, like yourself, may explain what the biblical author wanted to say when he wrote the text, which, as you know, is called “exegesis.” However, a preacher often uses biblical language without regard to what the text originally meant. This would be called a homiletical use of Scripture. For example, in Mark 1:15 Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.”<sup>1</sup> The kingdom

that Jesus was proclaiming at that time was the kingdom of grace, which He established at His first advent, but the language of the text can also be applied to our situation today.

All the time prophecies have been fulfilled, so a preacher may call upon his congregation to repent and believe in the gospel because “the kingdom of God is at hand.” The kingdom this time, however, is the kingdom of glory that Christ will inaugurate at His second coming, not the kingdom of grace. The first interpretation of Mark 1:15 is called exegesis, the second a homiletical use of the text.

Both uses are legitimate, but we must distinguish between them, and any teaching or doctrine of Scripture must be based on a careful exegesis of the text, not on a homiletical use of it.

## Ellen White’s use of Scripture

Ellen White frequently used Scripture homiletically.<sup>2</sup> She was steeped in the language of the Bible, and whenever she spoke or wrote on a topic, she would use biblical language and biblical texts to convey the message she had received. For example, in the book *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White wrote, “Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things

which God hath prepared for them that love Him,’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”<sup>3</sup>

In this passage Ellen White applies 1 Corinthians 2:9 to the new earth. When we study the text in its context, however, we discover that Paul is not speaking about the new earth but about the Cross and salvation (vv. 1–8). Ellen White used the language of the text and applied it to the new earth because what the text says is also true of the new earth—no eye has seen and no ear has heard what God has prepared for his people.

Reading through the books of Ellen White, we discover many other examples where she uses the language of a biblical text or passage to express the message that God has given her for the church. The fact that she uses these texts does not mean that she is thereby interpreting them, i.e., explaining what the biblical author meant to say. Understanding the difference becomes important when some people try to use her writings as the last word on the meaning of a particular text.

## Interpreting the writings of Ellen G. White

Besides paying attention to how Ellen White used Scripture, we must

also use care in interpreting and applying the things she wrote. Much controversy and misunderstanding in the church concerning her literary works could be avoided, if, in the interpretation of her writings, we always observe three guidelines:

1. *Consider time and place.* In 1897, Ellen White wrote an article for the *Review and Herald* entitled “The Bible in Our Schools,” in which she said, “There are times when Greek and Latin scholars are needed. Some must study these languages. This is well. But not all, and not many should study them.”<sup>4</sup> A few years ago, a ministerial student in one of our colleges refused to take Greek on the basis of this quotation. Was he justified? What situation caused Ellen White to write these words?

Battle Creek College was founded in 1874. A few years later it offered bachelor degrees in arts and science. The curriculum, during the early decades, however, followed the classical education curriculum of the state colleges at that time. This meant bachelor of arts students had to study classical Latin and Greek for three years each. And what they read in these classes were Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, Seneca, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Homer, and other pagan authors.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, except for the mission course, the courses offered did not include any Bible subjects. Thus in 1877–1878, the college had an enrollment of 413 students, but only 75 took a Bible class.<sup>6</sup>

For years Ellen White urged that the Bible, and not infidel authors, should be the center of our educational program. In 1896 she wrote, “The greatest wisdom, and most essential, is the knowledge of God. . . . The Bible must be made the foundation for all study.”<sup>7</sup> In the following years, the situation began to improve. In 1897 E. A. Sutherland became president, and the classical curriculum was abolished. From 1898 on, only New Testament Greek, New Testament Latin, and medical Latin were taught.<sup>8</sup>

The two-year Greek program in our colleges today is the result of the reforms in the 1890s. Ellen White never

again criticized the study of Greek or Latin. Her statement in *Fundamentals of Education*, therefore, cannot be used against the study of Greek or Hebrew today.

2. *Study the immediate context.* The immediate context is what comes before and what comes after a particular statement. What does Ellen White refer to in the paragraph or chapter from which a statement is taken?

In the book *Christ’s Object Lessons*, Ellen White makes the statement that “those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved.”<sup>9</sup> Many Christians then and now believe in the erroneous doctrine of “once saved always saved.” Ellen White was clearly against this teaching. In the immediate context she wrote, “There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.

“Peter’s fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. Never can we safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation. Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved. This is misleading. Every one should be taught to cherish hope and faith; but even when we give ourselves to Christ and know that He accepts us, we are not beyond the reach of temptation.”<sup>10</sup>

The context makes it clear that she focuses on addressing the issue of self-confidence and temptations after conversion. Because we are never secure against temptations, we can never say that we cannot fall or that we are saved and therefore secure from temptation. But this does not mean that we cannot, day by day, have the assurance of salvation (1 John 5:12, 13). In fact, she clearly stated that we can have assurance of salvation. “We are not to doubt His mercy, and say, ‘I

do not know whether I shall be saved or not.’ By living faith we must lay hold of His promise, for He has said, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’”<sup>11</sup>

3. *Study the larger context.* The larger context refers to other statements Ellen White has written on a particular topic. To illustrate this principle, we will look at one aspect of the Adventist health message—meat eating. On this issue she has very absolute-sounding statements, but also many modifying statements that need to be considered.

In 1903, Ellen White made what seems an absolute statement. She wrote, “Vegetables, fruits, and grains should compose our diet. Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs. The eating of flesh is unnatural. We are to return to God’s original purpose in the creation of man.”<sup>12</sup> Anyone reading this statement by itself would have to come to the conclusion that under no circumstances are we to eat meat.

However, just a few pages further on in the book, we find a modifying statement, from the year 1890, on the same topic: “Where plenty of good milk and fruit can be obtained there is rarely any excuse for eating animal food; it is not necessary to take the life of any of God’s creatures to supply our ordinary needs. In certain cases of illness or exhaustion it may be thought best to use some meat, but great care should be taken to secure the flesh of healthy animals. It has come to be a very serious question whether it is safe to use flesh food at all in this age of the world. It would be better never to eat meat than to use the flesh of animals that are not healthy. When I could not obtain the food I needed, I have sometimes eaten a little meat; but I am becoming more and more afraid of it.”<sup>13</sup>

The modifying circumstances are cases of illness or when other food was not readily available. She admitted that she had eaten meat herself from time to time. Therefore, in a very balanced statement made before the delegates at the General Conference in 1909, she

said, “We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God’s people. . . . If meat eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumors, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating.

“We are not to make the use of flesh food a test of fellowship, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others.”<sup>14</sup>

We should certainly aim for a vegetarian diet, but never make it a test of fellowship. In some circumstances a diet that includes some meat may even be the best, but this should never serve as an excuse to continue eating meat when no necessity exists. “A meat diet is not the most wholesome of diets, and yet I would not take the position that meat should be discarded by everyone. Those who have feeble digestive organs can often use meat, when they cannot eat vegetables, fruit, or porridge.”<sup>15</sup> When we look at the total body of what she has written on a given topic, a balanced picture emerges, considered invaluable for every Christian who takes his religion seriously, but particularly for Seventh-day Adventists, whom God has called to be His witnesses in these last days.

4. *Look for principles.* Prophets convey God’s truth as principles or policies. Principles are universal and apply to all people, in all places, and at all times. Policies are the applications of principles to particular situations. Policies may change with different circumstances and may look different in different cultures and places. “That which may be said in truth of individuals at one time may not correctly be said of them at another time.”<sup>16</sup> One example from the writings of Ellen White comes readily to mind.

In 1903, at a time when the general availability of cars was still a thing of the future, Ellen White wrote, “And if girls, in turn, could learn to harness and drive a horse, and to use the saw and the hammer, as well as the rake and the

hoe, they would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life.”<sup>17</sup> The principle in this statement is that girls should be “fitted to meet the emergencies of life.” Applied to our time, this could mean that girls should learn how to drive and look after a car.

### The growth experience of Ellen G. White

Apart from these principles of interpretation, we need to remember that prophets did not receive all the light at one time. They, too, experienced growth in their understanding of heavenly things. In Daniel 8:27, the prophet says, “I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.” About ten years later, the angel Gabriel came and explained to him the full import of the vision.

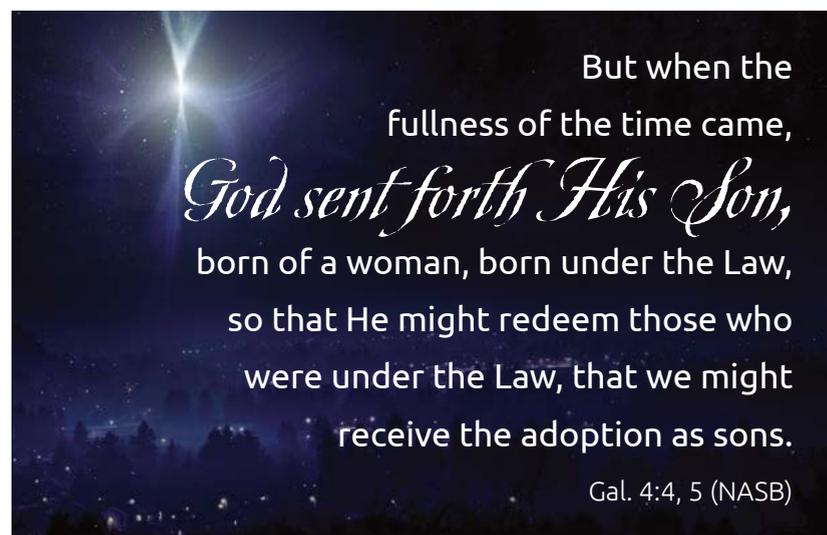
Similarly, Ellen White experienced growth in her understanding of what God revealed to her. In 1904 she wrote, “Often representations are given me which at first I do not understand, but after a time they are made plain by a repeated presentation of those things that I did not at first comprehend, and in ways that make their meaning clear and unmistakable.”<sup>18</sup>

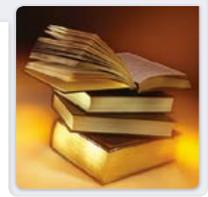
### Conclusion

In the interpretation of inspired writings, time and place and the immediate and larger context are all important. The historical and literary

context will help us in our interpretations of the writings of Ellen White to navigate safely between too literal an interpretation and one so far removed from the intent of the author that her writings become useless. ❧

- 1 Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture Quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
- 2 This has been recognized for a long time. Robert W. Olson, former director of the Ellen G. White Estate, in 1981 wrote, “Ellen White’s writings are generally homiletical or evangelistic in nature and not strictly exegetical.” *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 41.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 675.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), 468.
- 5 Emmett K. Van der Vere, *The Wisdom Seekers* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1972), 59.
- 6 Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub Assn., 1976), 47.
- 7 White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 451.
- 8 Neufeld, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 47.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 155.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 154, 155.
- 11 Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995), 296.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), 380.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 394.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 9:159.
- 15 White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 394, 395.
- 16 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:470.
- 17 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 216, 217.
- 18 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 56.





## A Practical Guide to Evangelism: How to Win and Keep New Members

by Balvin B. Braham, Miami, FL: Inter-American Division Publishing Association, 2014.

If you are looking for a simple and clear resource on the “how to” of evangelism, I strongly recommend *A Practical Guide to Evangelism: How to Win and Keep New Members* by Balvin B. Braham.

The author coordinates evangelism and church growth for the burgeoning Inter-American Division. You will find biblically based and time-tested strategies for getting your local church involved in evangelism. Each chapter concludes with thought-provoking discussion questions. Sample church assessments and community surveys will be a helpful resource for any church wanting to intentionally prepare for effective outreach activities.

Crucial to the success of evangelistic activity is the formation of evangelistic small groups. The author outlines the key components of a healthy evangelistic small group: devotion, nurture, community, and mission. The 22 suggestions for those leading a small group Bible study would be helpful for even the most experienced small group leader (76, 77). Braham not only outlines the steps for conducting a traditional evangelistic series but also discusses a variety of other creative forms of evangelism: family, women, men, youth, children, and comprehensive health. The common goal is impact for the kingdom of heaven.

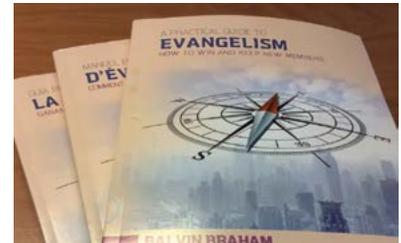
The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always emphasized the importance of Christian education, but have we recognized the mission opportunities on our primary, secondary, and tertiary campuses? According to the author, the goal of evangelism, in connection with Adventist educational institutions, is “to foster social and spiritual growth among teachers and professors,

Adventist students, and non-Adventist students” (179). Professors, teachers, and Adventist students play a significant role in on-campus evangelism through collaboration, modeling, and mentoring. Non-Adventist relatives and friends of students are also impacted when evangelism occurs on educational campuses. Unfortunately, the author does not explore strategies for evangelistic outreach to the thousands of secular and private campuses, many of which include Adventist students who might serve as a core group for evangelistic outreach.

The author devotes an entire chapter to discuss the importance of discipleship and nurture. Five core values of a disciple of Jesus are identified: devotion, evangelism, fellowship, outreach, and stewardship. A spirit of “sacrifice is a key component in order for these core values to become a reality in the life of the disciple” (187).

New believers also need to be nurtured. As the church experiences growth through a variety of evangelistic activities, the welcoming church family must be intentional about nurture and conservation. This involves careful training and accountability. What are the pressing needs of the new members who have been dislocated from previous support systems? The author suggests four immediate needs: affirmation, love, assurance, and support. I am certain the reader could augment the list of ways to show love to new members, but the 26 suggestions offered by the author are a great place to start (199).

The author also shares a sample program to nurture new members that has proven to be remarkably effective.\* The seven practical strategies outlined



in this program can be implemented with minimal cost, and the results will be long lasting.

The reader might be surprised to see a closing chapter addressed to the new believer. Evangelism is presented as a way of life, not just an event, and evangelism is for every believer, not just a select few. Each disciplined and nurtured new member becomes an integral part of the church’s comprehensive evangelistic team with the assurance “you will find immeasurable joy in living and sharing your faith” (215).

This helpful resource on the “how to” of evangelism also includes valuable appendices on topics including planting new churches, reaching non-Christians, and connecting with former members (217–37).

At a recent training event conducted by the author, a church leader exclaimed, “Every church member needs to read this book!” Even though the book is user friendly for individual church members, a great start would be for each pastor and lay leader to read this valuable resource prayerfully and carefully. This might change your evangelistic ministry for good.

—Reviewed by Derek J. Morris, editor, Ministry, International Journal for Pastors. 

\* In a case study using this sample nurturing program, 90 percent of approximately 240 new members were still active in church after two years.

## ▶ Alberto C. Gulfan Jr., longtime Adventist leader in Southeast Asia, passes away

**Silang, Cavite, Philippines—Alberto C. Gulfan Jr.**, retired president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD), passed away on September 26, 2015.

Gulfan served the church for 42 years. During that time, he was a literature evangelist, church and district pastor, hospital chaplain, health educator, union health and temperance director, mission president, union ministerial secretary, union executive secretary, and union president before being elected president of the SSD.

He served as the SSD president from 2003 to July 2015. Throughout

his tenure, he fully supported world church initiatives and helped develop the Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle initiative for SSD. But for many, he is best known for his passion for evangelism, as he regularly conducted as many as six evangelistic series per year—all while maintaining his busy presidential schedule. Elder **Ted N. C. Wilson**, president of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, remembers Gulfan as “a wonderful champion of God’s truth and evangelistic proclamation.” Gulfan was a lifelong Adventist. He was married to **Helen Bocala-Gulfan**, SSD women’s

Alberto Gulfan Jr. addressing Annual Council delegates during the Council on Evangelism and Witness, October 10, 2014. [Photo by Ansel Oliver]



ministries director and Shepherdess International coordinator, for 38 years. He cherished their three children—Helen Zella, Lloyd, and Jarbien Pol, as well as their two grandchildren, Sam and Hugh. [Southern Asia-Pacific Division]

## ▶ Long-awaited Adventist school opens in Timor-Leste with 32 students

**Dili, Timor-Leste**—For some children, the start of a school year is a dreaded time as they leave behind their summer fun. However, students at the new Timor-Leste Adventist International School (TAIS) in the capital city of Dili could hardly wait for opening day on September 28, 2015.

School staff anticipated approximately 10 Kindergarten/International School Preparation (K/ISP) students; however, the staff was surprised when almost 30 children enrolled for the K/ISP class.

Since the school’s temporary building is small, it can accommodate only a few classes at a time. In spite of this challenge, the staff did not want to turn away interested students and parents. They will instead offer both morning and afternoon K/ISP sessions to accommodate all the students.

Timor-Leste Mission (TLM) administrators credit the unexpected enrollment total to a community approach that involves building relationships and meeting practical needs

in the community. Missionary couple **Janette and Manuel Lonoza** arrived in late June and quickly began making friends with the community children. In July they partnered with church members and One Year in Mission Timor-Leste to introduce informal game times to the children.

Next, TAIS staff offered a free children’s English as a second language (ESL) program. The other component involved TAIS staff visiting homes of potential students and holding an informational meeting for parents. In addition, church members shared news about the school with friends and family.

Next year, the plan is to add grades 3 and 4. In order to do this, a larger, permanent building is needed. Members have been praying for such an Adventist school for years. Donations from the third quarter 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will hopefully make this a reality.

Timor-Leste missionary Manuel Lonoza (center) and church members teach community children new games. [Photo by Janette Lonoza]



Although the Adventist Church began its work in Timor-Leste in the 1970s, a 20-year occupation of the island by Indonesia halted its activity. Thus, the first Adventist church was finally established in 1992. Organized as a field in 2009 and a mission in 2011, the Adventist Church continues its growth in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste with one official church in the capital of Dili and more than 500 members in the country. Predominantly Catholic, Timor-Leste is one of only two Christian countries in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. [Teresa Costello, with additional reporting from Kevin Costello]



## ► Religious freedom takes center stage in Madagascar at Adventist-sponsored festival

**A**ntananarivo, Madagascar—More than 17,000 people rallied in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, to pledge their support for religious liberty. The day-long Festival of Religious Freedom, held September 26, 2015, was the first such event to be held in that Indian Ocean island nation.

The festival drew community and national leaders, including government minister **Olivier Mahafaly**, who heads the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization. Its purpose, said organizers, was to focus national attention on an often-overlooked, yet fundamental, human right, and to say “thank you” to the national government for continuing to protect the

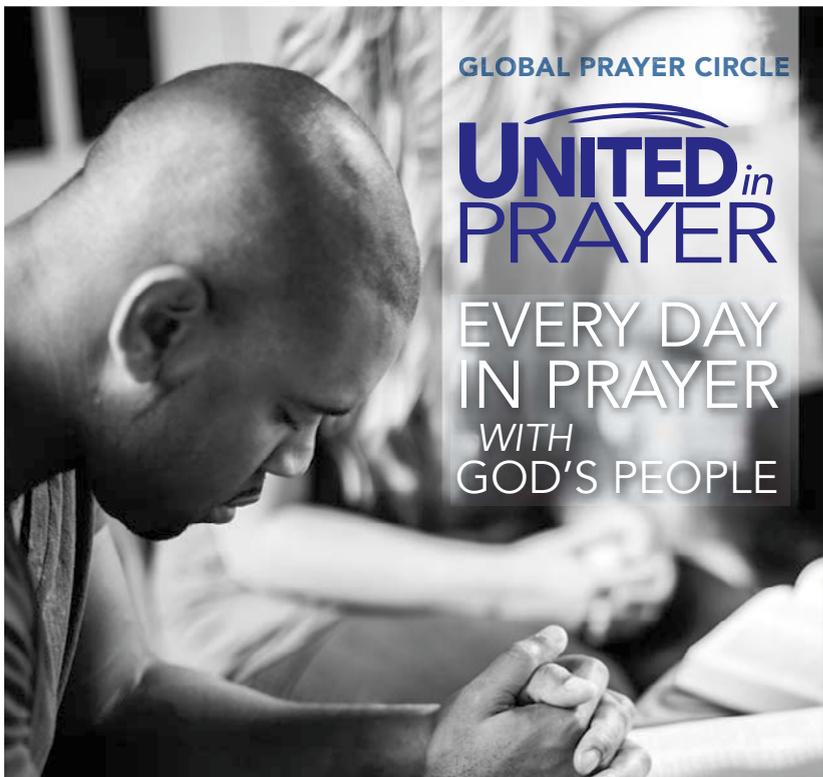
ability of all Malagasy citizens to worship in peace and security.

**John Graz**, longtime religious liberty advocate and former secretary general of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), gave the keynote address at the festival, which was broadcast by the national media. Graz also met with Madagascar’s prime minister, **Jean Ravelonarivo**, and commended the government for its continuing strong commitment to religious freedom and its care for religious minorities. Ravelonarivo thanked the Adventist Church for supporting the principle of religious freedom for all people of faith and spoke about the value Adventists add to Malagasy



society through the church’s health and education work.

There are 140,000 Adventists in Madagascar. Just over half the country’s population of 23 million people practice indigenous animist beliefs, while about 40 percent claim affiliation with a Christian denomination. [Laurent Brabant/IRLA Staff] 



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Lydia Young, MA, is a middle school teacher residing in Phoenix, Arizona, United States.



# What pastors should not have to do

Every time the doors at our church were open, I was there. My parents were involved, because my dad was a pastor, and we lived right next door to the church. Living next door to the church and being very involved in church life led to my dad being overworked, stressed, and exhausted.

When I became an adult, I helped the pastor with trivial duties. However, these trivial things grew into a full-time job, and I realized something—there are some things pastors should not have to do.

to church, we do not always assist. If you have the extra time to plan social events, then invest that time and energy to assist, because your pastor certainly does not have the extra time.

**Operate the sound system.** This is the place where I picked up the slack for both my dad and my current pastor. This does not take much time to learn, and it is a behind-the-scenes job, so if you are like I am, you will find it the perfect job.

**Work seven days a week.** You realize that pastors work through the weekends for church and every day

your pastor can handle. He or she does not take vacations that often, so let him or her have a week off now and then. Any emergencies should be filtered through local church leaders just to make sure there is no one else who can fix the problem. Pastors are turned into workaholics by their love for people and God's work, but work is not always healthy, and they need the break just like we do.

**Preach without prayer support.** The pastor stands between the enemy and the church all the time, constantly under Satan's pressure and attacks.

*Pastors are turned into workaholics by their love for people and God's work, but work is not always healthy, and they need the break just like we do.*

**Clean the church.** These chores consume many hours during the week. That is not what God called them to do.

**Fill the baptistry.** Or prepare the communion emblems. These tasks are time consuming. My younger sister, my brother, and I always cleaned and filled the baptistry for our dad, and this took a few hours. The night before a pastor preaches, he/she needs to spend much time in prayer.

**Plan social events.** My dad loved to plan and organize things, but I also know that quite a few people in our churches had organizational and management skills. We do it also in our everyday jobs, but when it comes

during the week studying, getting ready for Bible studies and sermons, making house calls, visiting, and counseling. They do not ever stop working. In our family, the phone was on all day and night, which means that my father could receive a call at 2:30 A.M. and he would leave to go take care of someone. How long could your body last working 24/7? My current pastor takes a day off from being a pastor every week, and I think every pastor should do that. That time off is required so the body can relax and be able to function at its optimum best.

**Abort a vacation for minor emergencies.** More than likely, this emergency is not something that only

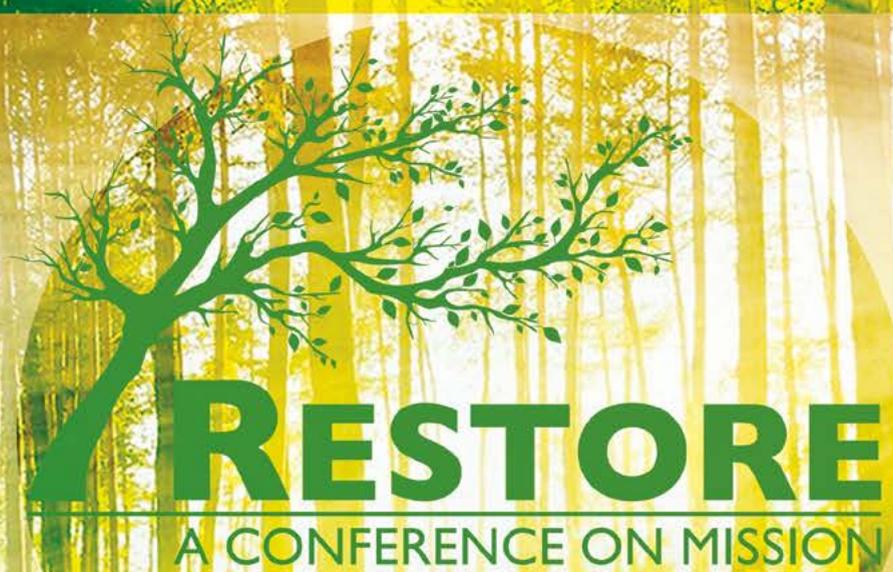
We would deal with spiritual attacks nearly every week growing up. Yet we knew the difference it made to us when our prayer warriors were on their knees praying for us. Never stop praying for your pastor!

**Do everything.** A pastor should not have to do everything. The main thing he or she needs to focus on is sharing the Word of God with God's people.

It's time we, as members, stop sitting down and making our pastors do all the work. I pray that you will join me in lifting the nominal tasks from our pastors' shoulders so that they can focus on what God has called them to do—preach the Word. 🙏

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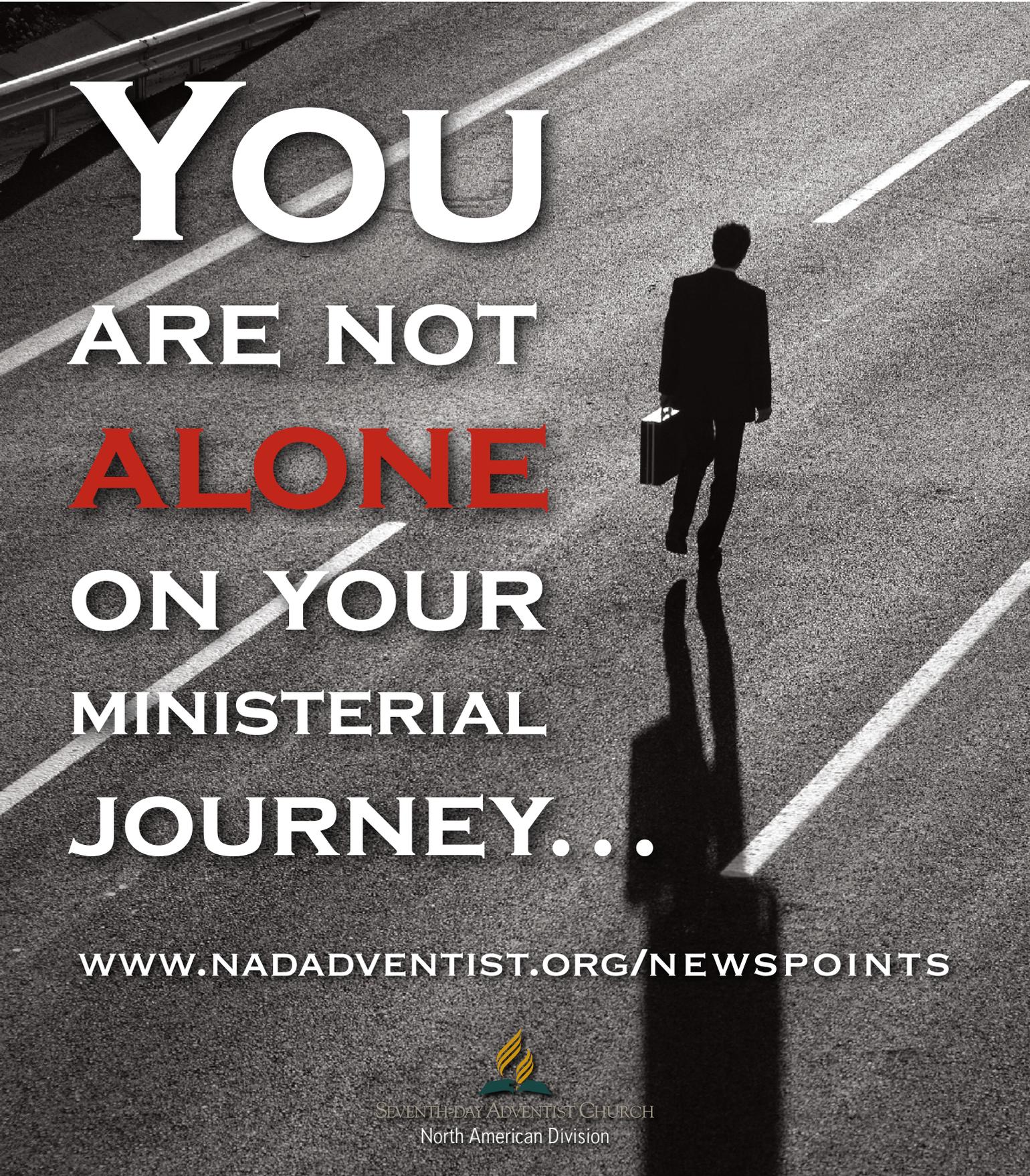
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