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FEBRUARY 2012



A **Passion** for **Revival**

An interview with
Lee Venden

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“THANK GOD FOR THE BIBLE PROMISES THAT TRUTH WILL TRIUMPH OVER EVIL. ALL WHO OVERCOME IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SIN AND SATAN WILL HAVE A RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE.”

The certainty of death

Stephen Bauer's view on Genesis 2:17 in his article (" 'Dying You Shall Die': The Meaning of Genesis 2:17" —December 2011) was very thought provoking. I wonder now if he would make a study on "Living you shall live," based on Genesis 2:16 and Revelation 2:7.

The King James Version of that phrase employs the word *surely*—“thou shalt surely die.” *Surely* gives strength to Bauer's “divine announcement” theory. It is a shame that some translations omit that word. However, there are several versions that use stronger English words, like *certainly* (NEB) and *doomed to die* (TLB).

On page 60 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White makes Bauer's theory stronger yet, “The warning given to our first parents—‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ (Genesis 2:17)—did not imply that they were to die on the very day when they partook of the forbidden fruit. But on that day the irrevocable sentence would be pronounced. . . . That very day they would be doomed to death. In order

to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct.”

Thank God for the Bible promises that truth will triumph over evil. All who overcome in the battle against sin and Satan will have a right to the tree of life. And by eating, they will live forever. Let all our Bible teachers exalt these promises to our students.
—Pastor Ed Graves Sr., email

I really appreciated Stephen Bauer's article. It seems to me that while discussing this verse we have made too many excuses for God because Adam and Eve did not die that day. This article helps to clarify the meaning. I believe also the following quotation of E. G. White helps greatly to enhance this article, as recorded in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 1, page 1085: “The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let

the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance.’ ”

—Dwight Taylor, retired pastor, Alvarado, Texas, United States

Stephen Bauer's article in the December 2011 issue puzzled this 88-year-old Seventh-day Adventist. Genesis 2:17 was addressed to free moral agents and is a part of the great controversy over the character and government of God. Is the message of this verse threatening legal punishment? Or is it a gracious warning by a loving God who foresees the inevitable and disastrous results (consequences) of choosing to separate from Him, the Source of life?

At Calvary, Jesus died in consequence of bearing the guilt of the world for all time. There is no record that God laid a hand on Him.

Ellen G. White's chapter titled “ 'It Is Finished,' ” in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 758–764, is most helpful in clarifying the great controversy issues. It can profitably be read over and over.

—Esther McCluskey, California, United States



Discerning the signs of the times

Most people have never heard of Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron. No thrilling narratives are recorded about these four brothers or their offspring. However, the sons of Issachar and their descendants exhibited one character trait that is desperately needed by leaders in our generation. The chronicler records, “All these men understood the signs of the times” (1 Chron. 12:32, NLT).

Take a look around you. What do you see? Avarice, violence, economic turmoil, political unrest, and spiritual confusion. The apostle Paul prophesied to the young preacher Timothy, “In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boast-ers, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:1–5, NKJV).¹ That sounds like a description of our day, doesn’t it? Have we become so accustomed to the chaos of our time that we cannot see the signs of the times?

Jesus rebuked the spiritual leaders of His generation for a lack of discernment. “ ‘When it is evening you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red”; and in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times’ ” (Matt. 16:2, 3). What would Jesus say to the spiritual leaders of our generation? What would He say to us? Do we understand the signs of the times?

The sons of Issachar not only understood the signs of the times. The chronicler records that these leaders knew what their people should do. It’s important to discern the signs of the times, but it’s equally important to know how to respond to the events happening around us. To quote Francis Schaeffer, “How should we then live?”² The prophet Isaiah would cry out, “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:6, 7).

We need to experience revival and reformation, personally and corporately. We have little control over most of the events around us, but we can choose how to live. We can choose how to lead the people of God in these troubled times. The chronicler records these words from the Lord to King Solomon: “If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). How should we then live? Humble ourselves, pray, seek the Lord, and turn from our wicked ways.


It is my prayer that you will be blessed and challenged as you read this issue of *Ministry*. I was blessed as I spoke with Lee Venden about his passion for revival in his own life and in the life of the church. Lee and his wife, Marji, not only speak about the need for revival but have devoted their lives to Christ in revival ministry. Be inspired by their example and

gain insights that will help you to lead in these troubled times.

After more than 25 years as the lead pastor on a university campus, Dwight K. Nelson continues to speak with holy boldness. I am still prayerfully considering his thoughtful question to all of us in our Revival and Reformation column: “Given the razor edge of eternity on which we’re

WE NEED TO
EXPERIENCE
REVIVAL AND
REFORMATION,
PERSONALLY AND
CORPORATELY.

now living, isn’t this the right time for ‘extraordinary’ asking?”

Hear the word of the Lord through the psalmist Asaph: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Ps. 50:15). Discern the signs of the times. Now is the time for extraordinary asking. Now is the time to call upon the Lord. 

¹ All subsequent quotations are taken from the New King James Version.

² Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976).

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A passion for revival:

An interview with Lee Venden

Derek J. Morris (DM): *After many years as an effective church pastor, you have accepted an invitation to serve as a full-time revivalist. What events and convictions motivated you to make this transition?*

Lee Venden (LV): About fifteen years ago, I began to feel a passion for revival among God's people. That passion continued to grow. I read my Bible trying to learn what would facilitate revival and also began reading about great revivals. After I waited many years, a church administrator asked me, "Lee, have you ever considered being a full-time revivalist?" I was stunned. Just a few weeks earlier, I was wondering how God would make this passion a reality. The administrator continued, "God has put a burden on my heart that revival should be our first focus." Within a year, I was serving as a full-time revivalist.

DM: *You mentioned developing a growing passion for revival. What fueled that passion?*

LV: Surveys that I have conducted indicate that less than twenty-five percent of Adventist church-attending members spend any personal time each day seeking to become better acquainted with God through His Word and prayer.

This is especially sobering when we consider that, according to 1 John 5:11–13, salvation comes only to those who develop and maintain a personal relationship with Christ.

I was also startled by the following statistics shared by Paul Richardson, coordinator for the North American Division Reconnecting Ministries:

1. At the present time, up to two million inactively attending and/or former Seventh-day Adventists live in North America.
2. Of the nearly 1.2 million North American Adventists currently on the church books, less than five hundred thousand attend church even once a month.
3. Based on the above statistics, for every North American Adventist who regularly attends church, five have either left the church or no longer attend.

Jim Gilley, president of the Three Angels Broadcasting Network, shared with me that if the church in North America had retained eighty percent of its own youth (since its inception), and had only experienced biological growth, there would presently be more than eight million Adventists in North America alone. Numbers like these motivate me to try and do what I can to help solve this problem.

DM: *Have your studies revealed any sort of fundamental problem that may be contributing to such a condition?*

LV: It seems to me that, in North America, most Seventh-day Adventists join the church because they see our doctrines as biblically sound or because their parents were Adventists. Somehow, though, they don't see Jesus as the core of each doctrine. I'm concerned that too many church members search the Scriptures thinking that in them they have eternal life but they don't see how these are they that testify of Jesus. Too many people come to church but don't come to Jesus that they might have life. Consequently, like the seed that fell on rocky soil, they spring up quickly but wither away almost as quickly.

DM: *As you visit churches in various parts of North America and around the world, what are you learning about the need for revival?*

LV: We have discovered that Adventists everywhere are hungering for Jesus and long to know how to have a personal friendship with Him that is tangible and life changing. Most of those we meet are thirsting for clear, practical instruction on how to experience a meaningful

relationship with Christ. It is the lack of this understanding that leads members to backsliding.

In the last three and a half years, we have crisscrossed the continent several times and have been to more than sixty churches. At every church we conclude our series with a short, anonymous survey and the findings have been startling! The first question asks, Which best describes your spiritual life before attending the revival meetings?

- A. Basically drifting from God and the church.
- B. Attend church but lack a meaningful daily relationship with Jesus.
- C. Maintaining a vibrant relationship with Jesus and eager to share it.

Of those attending the meetings, seventy to eighty percent described their spiritual life prior to the revival series as “attend church but lack a meaningful daily relationship with Jesus.”

DM: *That is a startling statistic. Logic would suggest that the more spiritually alive people would be attending your revival meetings. And of that number, seventy to eighty percent confess that they lack a meaningful daily relationship with Jesus. That tells me that many really need revival. How have you developed a revival series to address that need?*

LV: God led us to a thirteen-part package presented over a period of nine days, with each presentation building on the preceding one. We start on Friday night, meet three times on Saturday, then every night of the week and three times the following Saturday. Here is a brief summary of the meetings:

- “Can We Be Friends?” God Himself wants to have a meaningful friendship with us. In fact, He is

more interested in us than we are in Him.

- “It’s Who You Know!” Christianity is not about what you do, but who you know—and who you know will change what you do.
- “Born Twice.” All need to be born of the Spirit. It is His job to bring us to conversion, but if we lift Jesus up, the Holy Spirit will draw us more quickly into the second birth.



Lee and Marji Venden

- “Blessed Assurance!” The majority of Seventh-day Adventists lack assurance of salvation. Our assurance is based on relationship, not behavior. Jesus promises to save and cleanse if we abide in Him.
- “Recipe for Bread.” Jesus (in His Word) is the Bread of Life. The devotional life is how we “eat” that Bread.
- “The Answer Is Prayer!” Prayer is foremost for communion with God, and it is both ways, if we are still enough to listen.
- “Gotta Tell Somebody!” God shares with us the privilege of serving and telling others

about Him for our own good and happiness.

- “Dealing With Failure.” Victory and overcoming are gifts the Spirit gives to those who, by beholding Jesus, are changed into His likeness.
- “This Is War!” The enemy will do everything possible to prevent or hinder us from daily seeking Jesus. There are three weapons that are especially useful.
 - “Comforter and Friend.” Our Friend, the Holy Spirit, is deeply committed to our spiritual growth and usefulness.
 - “Surviving a Revival Seminar.” Suggestions for individuals and churches wishing to insure that the flame of revival grows brighter instead of fading away.
 - “Homecoming!” It is good to be reminded of why we are Adventists. What will it be like to finally go home?
 - “Is Jesus Enough?” A conclusive demonstration that making and keeping Jesus central will satisfy every personal and corporate need!

DM: *How do you invite your listeners to respond?*

LV: We urge attendees to take the tools that we hand them and use them to develop a daily relationship with God. The focus of this entire series is to encourage people to spend time, morning by morning, with God in Bible study and prayer and then share that with others. Without all three legs of this “relationship stool,” our spiritual experience will stagnate and eventually go sour.

The first leg of the relationship stool is Bible study for the purpose of becoming acquainted with God. The focus here is on relationship rather than information. We’re not trying to *prove a point* but rather

become acquainted with a Person. The second leg of the stool is prayer for the purpose of communion with God, rather than simply making requests to God. The third leg of the stool is sharing with others what they are discovering within the first two legs. We encourage attendees to daily invite God to open their eyes to opportunities to make a difference for His kingdom in the lives of others. People regularly tell us, “We experimented with that challenge, and it is amazing to see the opportunities He gives!”

on the part of our members in learning to have a more meaningful relationship with God.

DM: *What changes do those attending the revival meetings observe in their spiritual condition by the end of the thirteen meetings?*

LV: There is a clear change, at least in the short term. When asked at the end of the seminar to describe their spiritual condition by choosing one of the same three options mentioned earlier in our survey, ninety to

need to make sure they know how to use the tools for experiencing a personal relationship with God.

DM: *For years, our denomination has invested heavily in public evangelism, often hiring evangelists who specialize in public meetings. Could you envision a similar niche for denominationally supported revivalists who travel from church to church?*

LV: In the health care industry, specialists stem from the reality that no

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU DO, BUT WHO YOU KNOW—AND WHO YOU KNOW WILL CHANGE WHAT YOU DO.

DM: *How do you see revival ministries complementing the church’s mission to evangelize?*

LV: A revivalist assists local shepherds in growing healthier sheep, with the belief that healthy sheep will reproduce for the glory of God. Revived members, who are experiencing a personal relationship with Jesus, are spontaneously evangelistic and contribute to exponential kingdom growth.

DM: *How well attended are your revival seminars?*

LV: We have found that approximately seventy to eighty percent of a church’s typical Sabbath attendance will attend nearly all of the meetings and that attendance grows with each meeting. That seems to indicate a genuine interest

ninety-five percent check that they are “maintaining a vibrant relationship with Jesus and are eager to share.” Something significant has happened. They have taken the tools that were provided and use them to develop a daily friendship with Jesus.

DM: *Do those startling results suggest that many Christians are just longing for some practical instruction in regards to experiencing a more meaningful spiritual life?*

LV: Yes. I’m concerned that we have assumed for far too long that nearly everyone has a daily personal experience with God. That is a false assumption. The vast majority of our church members openly admit that they don’t have a daily walk with Christ, but we must do more than just tell people *what* they need. We

doctor has time or energy to delve deeply into every particular field. For this reason, neurologists, cardiologists, gynecologists, radiologists, pediatricians, etc., work closely with general practitioners (GPs) to provide specialized assistance. The GP is indispensable and the first point of contact. It is the GP who refers a patient to a specialist. In many ways, a revivalist can provide similar support to a local pastor. Evangelists provide a specialized and focused form of ministry that many pastors appreciate. I believe the same would be said about revivalists and that there would be pastoral support for such a ministry.

In Luke 15, Jesus described a sheep that knows it’s lost but doesn’t know the way back; a coin that was lost in the house and didn’t even know it was lost; and a prodigal who chose to be lost, then wondered if

he could be reaccepted. A revivalist specializes in helping find the lost, especially the “lost coins.”

DM: *I understand that your wife, Marji, also participates in this revival ministry.*

LV: That’s right. The truth is, I wouldn’t be doing this if she weren’t working with me. Though she receives no salary, Marji works as hard as I do. A certified teacher, she left the classroom in order to join me in this ministry. Her most visible support is the special children’s feature she does as a lead-in for each of our presentations.

Marji believes what Ellen White wrote, “It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years.”*

Marji loves to help children understand how they, too, can have a meaningful, daily relationship with Jesus that grows and


matures as they become older. At each location, many of the “young-at-heart” express their appreciation for her simple illustrations that make righteousness by faith more understandable for everyone.

DM: *God is using you and Marji to impact communities around the world, but you are just one team. Are those thirteen presentations available for pastors who would like to preach that revival series in their churches?*

LV: Yes. Each presentation is available as an audio file on our Web site www.allaboutJesusseminars.org. In addition, we have developed a resource package containing sermon outlines, PowerPoint slides, participant guides for adults and children, and brochures for inviting others to attend the series, that can all be used by local presenters. We also have our presentations available in DVD format for churches or individuals wishing to host a seminar using prerecorded material.

DM: *Those are wonderful resources for pastors. What important lessons*

have you learned as a revivalist that pastors might make use of as they engage in revival preaching?

LV: Three important lessons: First, you can never preach too many messages about Jesus. Every sermon should present the matchless charms of Jesus. Second, Jesus is the Bread of Life, and you have to be at the table before you can pass the Bread. I’ve learned in my own experience, and by talking with my peers, that Satan works hard to keep pastors away from daily, intimate communion with God. Time alone with God must be our top priority. We need to fellowship with Him daily in order to help others find Him daily too. Third, as we provide fresh tastes of the Bread of Life, people will want the “recipe.” Every sermon should include fresh reminders of how important (non-negotiable) spending meaningful time with Jesus is, and encouragement to daily go to the “table” for communion and fellowship with Him. 

* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 515.

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Extraordinary asking

The Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards observed, “When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people.”¹ Edwards was, no doubt, reflecting on Ezekiel’s line, “ ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them’ ” ” (Ezek. 36:37, NKJV). In other words, there are some divine actions that come only in response to human petition.

But that’s the problem, isn’t it? To be honest, it is not an easy task to keep your pastoral heart focused on God’s appeal to petition Him for revival,

and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this generation. “I will also let . . . [you] inquire of Me to do this,” He declares. But I forget to keep asking. And thus, so do my people.

Could it be that what the church needs most right now is the fulfillment of a preliminary promise? “ ‘And I will pour on the house of David [church leadership] and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem [church membership] the Spirit of grace and supplication’ ” (Zech. 12:10, NKJV; emphasis supplied). We need to be asking Christ to give us the spirit of asking! What else will unleash our hearts to, as Ellen White urged, “Plead for the Holy Spirit”?²

Revival and REFORMATION

Given the razor edge of eternity on which we’re now living, isn’t this the right time for “extraordinary” asking? Then shouldn’t our first prayer be for the spirit of supplication?

DWIGHT K. NELSON, DMIN, IS SENIOR PASTOR, PIONEER MEMORIAL CHURCH, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES.

1 Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, 1740* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 427.
2 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 147.

Teena M. Stewart is cofounder and ministry leader of Java Journey, a coffee shop ministry, Hickory, North Carolina, United States.



Becoming benevolent leaders

Things were tough enough when Brent Williams lost his job, but quickly went from bad to worse when someone set on fire the American flag he displayed at the front of his house. Flames spread to the siding of his North Carolina home, causing extensive damage. When a local contractor read about Williams's plight in the paper, he was moved to action, completing repairs for Williams at no cost.¹

When Jim, Joan Maven's husband, abandoned his family of seven in order to pursue an affair with another woman, he was so wrapped up in his own well-being that he evicted his own family from their home in order to make room for his new "love."² Joan, a stay-at-home mom, had no income, and Jim refused to pay support. When several church members learned of her plight, they came to the rescue. They helped the displaced mother to look for a new home, but the most they could afford was a dilapidated house badly in need of repairs and updates. Another parishioner heard about her circumstances and organized other families and volunteers who rounded up furniture; helped with painting, roofing, wiring; and even collected food. Additional volunteers worked to help Joan get public assistance. Today, volunteers

continue to assist Joan with household repairs, groceries, and clothing.

When a small group from Creekside Church in Aurora, Colorado, United States, decided to hold a garage sale to raise funds for a local charity, they asked their congregation to donate items they could resell for their cause. As volunteers sifted through piles of donated goods, they found several trash bags full of what could best be described as junk—stained or filthy clothing, broken CD players, and dirty pots and pans. Puzzled, they looked at each other and mused over what the donors possibly could have been thinking to give items in such poor condition.

Why are some people so tenderhearted and willing to give back, while others are reluctant to part with their time or resources? Why do some church groups excel at serving the needy and hurting, while others cannot seem to take their focus off themselves? Could the compassionate nature of congregations trickle down from their leadership?

A church with a heart for benevolence takes its cues from its pastor and other key leaders whose hearts have been softened and broken for the hurting. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the two most familiar definitions of *benevolence* are either "an act

of kindness" or "a generous gift."³ Benevolent opportunities present themselves to us nearly every day, often when we are busy, entrenched in our daily schedules. Needs may seem inconvenient, and we may be unaware that our attitude toward those in need is one of more pastoral obligation than of sincere or deeper concern.

Why should we care?

Deuteronomy 15:11 reminds us, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."⁴ Jesus said, " 'The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me' " (Matt. 26:11). Part of Jesus' mission, as prophesied in Isaiah 61:1, was to "preach good news to the poor. . . . [And] to bind up the brokenhearted." If God commands us to give back and charged His Son with caring for the less fortunate, then, as imitators of Christ, clearly benevolence is not an option. True, some may have the spiritual gift of giving (Rom. 12:8), but this does not mean that those of us lacking that gift are not to be concerned with giving back. Rather, we will have to work harder at being generous because benevolence is not something we excel at, even if

we oversee this action in our daily operations.

No cheap grace

In 2 Corinthians 8:7, Paul urged the Corinthians, “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” Charles Swindoll, in his book *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, points out that King Amaziah did right in the sight of God.⁵ But Scripture also says he did not follow God’s commands with a whole heart but merely obeyed the

to egoism).⁶ Our human nature makes us self-focused, and when we give back, we are actually working against our natural makeup. We are often inclined to ask, “What’s in it for us?” We may give cash to the needy person who solicits help because we feel guilty for saying no. Or we may give to earn credit with God or to look good in the eyes of our peers or parishioners. But do we have the recipient’s best interest in mind? Almost always we find it easier to hand out cash than to engage with someone desiring assistance and find out his or her deeper needs.

and pacesetters from whom people take their cues. If we exhibit generosity, others will be inclined to mimic us and do the same. If we actively look for opportunities to give back, we are more likely to see them. When benevolent opportunities arise at church, we typically help because it is an expected part of what we do. We field calls from congregation members needing help or outsiders in desperate circumstances, and there are biblical guidelines for managing these situations.⁸

Many benevolent needs, however, require extra effort. How many of us take the time to dig down to

OUR HUMAN NATURE MAKES US SELF-FOCUSED, AND WHEN WE GIVE BACK, WE ARE ACTUALLY WORKING AGAINST OUR NATURAL MAKEUP.

letter of the law rather than the spirit (2 Chron. 25:1, 2).

When Cain presented his sacrifice to God along with his brother Abel, God was not pleased with his gift. Cain either did not give his best or lacked the right attitude (Gen. 4:3–5). Giving with the right attitude is important to God. Cain was like the parishioner who donated the bags of stained and filthy clothing to the garage sale for charity. Cheap grace is unattractive and insulting to the receiver and to God.

The right motive

Dictionary.com defines *altruism* as “the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others (opposed

Becoming a pacesetter

Aristotle observed, “It is easy to perform a good action, but not easy to acquire a settled habit of performing such actions.”⁷ If it is this difficult to give with the right motives and attitudes, how can we sincerely show compassion to those in need? I believe benevolence is a learned skill. Like any discipline, the more we practice it, the better we become at it. For pastors, it begins on a very personal level. Starting out we may only give back out of obligation; but the more we do it, the more sincere and natural it becomes.

Deliberate acts of kindness. One of the uncomfortable facets of being a pastor is that, like it or not, we are in the spotlight, acting as mentors

the root of the problem of someone who keeps coming back to ask for help? Usually, we find it easier either to give the money he or she wants or deny the request. Growing a benevolent heart may mean volunteering after hours or giving up some leisure time. We may resist deeper involvement because we fear the messiness of the situation or further helping infringes on our free time, and we argue that we have given enough already. James 2:14 reminds us that our actions mirror our beliefs: “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” Though we are saved by grace, our deeds speak volumes about our spiritual maturity.

That is not to say that extracurricular giving and service should not be done with balance. The nature of our work makes it easy to overextend ourselves. How much time and energy we have to commit beyond our normal working hours depends on our individual lifestyles and commitments. We need to gauge and periodically readjust to maintain healthy boundaries. However, once again, we should avoid merely giving back the bare minimum while on duty.

Spontaneous acts of kindness. If you are weak in the area of benevolence, you can start building your compassion muscles through small acts of kindness. It may be as simple as buying cookies from the kids selling them in front of the grocery store, letting someone go ahead of you in line, or answering the phone when the office help is tied up with another call. If you are alert to opportunities, you will find them,

like the man, who, on a frigid day, handed a hot cup of coffee to the traffic cop directing traffic in the pouring rain.⁹

I will never forget the time I was in the San Francisco Bay Area on business, having flown out to work on a Web site and newsletter for a friend's company. Wendy was driving me back to the airport, and we were crossing a toll bridge into the city. I had about one dollar in change. Not being from the area, I had not thought about a toll at all and Wendy had completely forgotten about it too. She was fretting as we neared the toll booth because she did not have the needed funds. Imagine our surprise when the window attendant waved us on through. As we pulled up, she explained that the car ahead of us had picked up our tab. The driver had no way of knowing our predicament, but his or her random act of kindness touched us.

Compassion becomes contagious

Generosity is catching. When someone does something like that for you, the human response results in wanting to pass it on. How do we get our congregational members to catch the compassion? More and more, churches today are organizing outreach events that teach members to give back. Some do this on a quarterly basis, while others may engage more or less frequently.

Plan a Random Acts of Kindness Week. Once you have stretched yourself doing random acts of kindness on a personal level, you can motivate your congregation to get involved in doing them too. You might want to schedule a Random Acts of Kindness Week for your church. Encourage folks to do something unplanned and compassionate for people they chance upon all week long. Then select a few folks to share touching stories of what happened

LEAD NEW MEMBERS IN DISCIPLESHIP

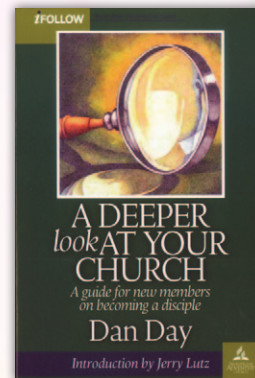
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Grow your compassion

- Choose one resource, either time or money, from which you are least inclined to give. Commit to giving away more of that resource.
- Do something nice for someone you do not like.

Grow your church's compassion

- Determine one way to improve how needs of hurting members are made known to your congregation (with their permission) so members can help.
- Include a questionnaire in your bulletin to gauge how members feel your church is doing with benevolence. Ask for suggestions.
- Research the needs of several charitable organizations in your area. Publicize these to your congregation, and plan a week of compassion where you and your members can assist these charities.

during your worship service the next week.

Go out and serve the homeless.

Several months ago, our small coffee shop church had the opportunity to make and serve lunch to low income and homeless people. We set up a few griddles and organized an assembly line of helpers who buttered bread, slapped on cheese, toasted sandwiches, and handed out chips and drinks. Youth worked alongside of older church members, chatting amicably, many getting to know each other for the first time. When lunch was served, we prayed for the meal and then asked volunteers to sit among those eating to chat with them and find out if they had any prayer needs. Several people did share needs, and we were able to pray for them on the spot.


Our volunteers were touched and asked to do it again and so we have scheduled another event. Hands-on giving can have a strong impact. Most people find it easy and convenient to give cash or write a check for a cause, and financial contributions are always needed, but it takes a much more serious commitment to roll up one's sleeves and get to work. Doing so puts a face on the need. When people see what their contributions of time and resources

do to help, it can be life transforming for both the person serving and the person being served.

Work alongside your members.

Scheduling planned opportunities takes more work than spontaneous ones, but they can have a far-reaching impact. Many church members want to help the poor but are unaware of how to do so. Be willing to search needs out and promote them to your people. A good place to start is your local city mission. Many pastors spend much of the week in their offices planning out the week's events. Consequently, church ministry can be like working in a protective plastic bubble. Though we may have a heart for reaching the world, we may have difficulty getting out into it to make those connections. We

can talk all we want to our members about helping a hurting world, but until we put our own faith in action, our words are merely empty. Do not just plan events for your church, be willing to get physically involved and work alongside your members.

Jesus said, " 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God' " (Luke 6:20). God's heart breaks for the poor and hurting. Should not ours as well? Deep caring starts with personal transformation, a commitment to get out of our comfort sphere and change our lifestyles. It means being intentional, looking for ways to personally serve. As you do so, your eyes will be opened to the myriad of possibilities where your church can also get involved. The seeds of benevolence grow from the hearts of leaders. As they take root, they will spread and compassion will grow like a wild thing. 

- 1 "Good Samaritans, June 2011," *Daily Dumper* (blog), <http://www.dailydumper.co.cc/2011/06/good-samaritans-june-2011.html>.
- 2 Names have been changed for privacy.
- 3 *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, s.v. "benevolence," accessed June 7, 2011, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/benevolence>.
- 4 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- 5 Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 48, 49.
- 6 *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, s.v. "altruism," accessed July 1, 2011, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/altruism>.
- 7 "Goodness," Quoteland.com, accessed July 1, 2011, <http://www.quoteland.com/topic/Goodness-Quotes/66/>.
- 8 Teena M. Stewart, *Benevolence: Ministering to the Poor and Needy* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011).
- 9 "A Warming Gesture," Random Acts of Kindness Homepage, accessed July 1, 2011, <http://www.noogenesis.com/malama/kindness/Stories/0033.html>.

Resources

- The Web site www.volunteerguide.org includes a section on ways to help the homeless as well as suggestions for areas where busy people can get involved. Other volunteer sites include www.volunteermatch.org and www.christianvolunteering.org.
- Sider, Ronald J., Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh. *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community With Good News and Good Works*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002.
- Sjogren, Steve, and Janie Sjogren. *101 Ways to Help People in Need*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.

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Is that who I am?

The challenge of remaining human in the midst of the attraction to be otherwise

Talking about the health problems many clergy face, an article in the *New York Times* said, “Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could. Public health experts . . . caution that there is no simple explanation of why so many members of a profession once associated with rosy-cheeked longevity have become so unhealthy and unhappy.”*

Though, of course, no simple answer to this dilemma exists, I propose that at least one important factor is involved—the challenge to remain human in the midst of the attraction to be otherwise. Of all other professions involved in the call and art of assisting other human beings, none but ministry seems to demand a denial of the human condition and experience.

What do I mean?

The challenge of remaining human

For starters, the greatest source of grief and disillusionment in ministry today hinges on an unbalanced approach to identity formation and delusions about ministry. As a clinical pastoral education supervisor, I get calls and hear stories from many colleagues in ministry who struggle with basic human needs. And what I have seen is that, too often, we have inverted the paradigm of pastoral formation, putting the emphasis on the *doing* rather than the *being*. As a result, this causes some of the burnout and difficulties ministers encounter in providing balanced care for themselves and others. In other words, pastors are so busy “doing” that they have lost their sense of being. Yet who we are informs what we do; thus, would it not make sense that we spend more time working on self-awareness and identity formation because, after all, these parts will eventually inform what we do anyway?

At the risk of sounding too simplistic, let me take this to the most

basic place of development: our humanity. We are all human beings. The temptation and attraction to be and live life as human “doers” rather than as human beings brings incongruity into life and spirit. It is at the core of sin, as sold to us by the serpent in Eden, when it said, “‘You will be like God’ ” (Gen. 3:5, NIV). In other words, “You will be able to know and do things that are beyond the realm of your humanity, of who and how God created you to be.”

We bought the lie, and so, here we are today. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV), not only as expressed through the Ten Commandments but as defined by the law of life and how God created us. If this basic concept startles or catches you off guard, chances are you may already be on the road to burnout. There are two basic components to the phrase *human being*. The *human* is the part of self that experiences all aspects of intimacy conveyed through emotions and feelings, which, in turn, create an awareness of life and what life means. Pain, fear, sadness, joy, and

anger are all primal places where the human being ultimately finds a sense of self.

The *being* part is the meaning-making aspect of self—that which creates meaning out of perceptions, relationships, and surroundings. A

and existence. They are to be celebrated and enjoyed to the fullest. But a healthy life and ministry live in the tension of figuring out a balanced approach to both being and doing. Our challenge and demise come when we live in the either-or

Polarity 1: Finitude and possibilities. The first polarity I call the tension between finitude and possibilities. When God created the human race, He said basically, “Here are your possibilities, and here are your boundaries. See that



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human being is a being who has the capacity to create purpose and meaning in life as a created being in the image of God.

The capacity to do amazing things

Yet, it is not all about being, either. God did not create us to meditate all day under a tree in search of self-awareness and meaning while life passes by. God created us with the capacity to do amazing things as a result of who we are. In fact, we call them amazing because they push the common boundaries of our human condition

polarities of life, either all *being* or all *doing*.

Some time ago, my wife had shoulder surgery. Before long, her healthy shoulder and arm were hurting. “Your healthy arm hurts,” the doctor said, “because you’re overusing it now to compensate for the other. When you heal and are able to use both arms again, the pain will go away.” Much of life’s pain subsides when we learn to live in the tension and grace of both being *and* doing.

Following are four polarities—four areas of tension—that must be balanced out.

tree? Stay off it. However, see the rest of this place? Have a blast.”

In ministry, we face the temptation of pushing away our own finitude or dismissing our own possibilities, especially when we have people around us requesting stuff that goes beyond the realm of our human condition or capabilities. When we push those boundaries, we suffer by moving into unrealistic places of ministry, or we make others suffer by providing unrealistic expectations and answers. I hear this tension and cry in the voice of patients when they confront a finite moment in their illnesses and

ask, “Chaplain, what can I hope for?” This is a normal and healthy question that reflects the grief and hope of being human.

Polarity 2: Contingency and control. The second set of polarities in life and ministry includes the tension between contingency and control. This is a particularly difficult tension in ministry, because, as pastors, we are surrounded by people who are calling us, seeking answers, explanations, and directions for their lives. The euphoria and delusion of control kicks in. After all, we are trained to figure out theological answers to life’s difficult dilemmas and mysteries. Meanwhile, there are things in life that do not have explanations. The fear of losing control, of coming across as incompetent or not spiritually savvy, creates pressures that push ministers into irrational expectations and grandiose interventions. In that place of human vulnerability, explanations

become more of projections of our own needs and desires rather than of comfort, care, and support.

There are things in life that can be explained, and I can have a certain level of control over them. But a healthy life is lived in the tension of figuring out those things that are in my control and those that I must leave in God’s hands. The most honest and humanlike response we can provide at times is to say, “I do not know.” Again, this question comes up when patients ask, “Chaplain, this just happened. What can I depend on?” We can depend on the same God who, when asked by His Son, “ ‘Why have You forsaken Me?’ ” (Matt. 27:36, NKJV) did not give an explanation but sustained Him in silence and was faithful enough so that His Son could also say, “ ‘[I]nto Your hands I commit My spirit’ ” (Luke 23:46, NKJV).

Polarity 3: Autonomy and dependency. A third set of polarities in

the human experience exists in the realm of autonomy and dependency. Here patients usually ask, “Chaplain, what am I responsible for?” God created us with the capacity to make decisions, to select where to go, what to do, and whom to be with. Babies are born, and their first cries are calls for immediate attention, announcements to the world of their autonomy as human beings. At the same time, they are in complete dependency on others to give them warmth, comfort, and sustenance.

As we grow up, these interpersonal dynamics change in form but not in principle. We continue to exercise our autonomy at new levels while needing the support and comfort of others. Isolation and loneliness are two familiar but unhealthy places that ministers go when the balance and tension between autonomy and dependency becomes compromised.

Additional resources

There are many resources I have found helpful in my own journey toward learning who I am as a minister, a unique person, and a child of God. Here are four:

White, Ellen G. *Mind, Character, and Personality*. 2 vols. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1977.

These two amazing volumes are well worth your time. I have personally found the thinking and writing in these books to be helpful and far ahead of their years—a remarkable blend of spirituality and psychology. In particular, I recommend chapters 1, 8, 45, 48, and 72.

Tupper, E. Frank. *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995.

A wonderful resource that helped me to understand how the providence of God rarely conforms to the expectations of His people. It did not happen in Christ’s time, and rarely happens in ours. Yet evidence of God’s loving care and purposeful guidance of His church and

people remains abundant. Do not miss chapter 8, “The Mystery of the Death of God.”

Sorajjakool, Siroj, and Henry Lamberton, eds. *Spirituality, Health, and Wholeness*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2004.

Chapter 1 by Richard Rice is worth the price of the book alone. It is entitled “Toward a Theology of Wholeness: A Tentative Model of Whole Person Care” and looks at the healing ministry work of Christ during His lifetime and how it applies to our own. The rest of the book is equally powerful.

Kurtz, Ernest, and Katherine Ketcham. *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Journey to Wholeness*. New York: Bantam, 1992.

The title of this book may be enough to put ministers off, but, after a fellow minister recommended the book, I gave it a try. I did not agree with everything, but I found chapters 3 and 4 particularly interesting in their discussion of the reality of limitation and finding a sense of balance.

Polarity 4: Meaning and nothingness. The fourth set of polarities lives in the tension of meaning and nothingness. We were created by God as beings who, at their core, cry out for meaning and purpose in our lives. They are intrinsic capacities and needs that we bring as humans. However, there are moments when life just does not make sense, and the meaning we seek just does not seem to be there.

If I think that everything has to have meaning, I will either create that meaning out of my own needs and projections, or I will impose irrational forms of meaning in order to avoid my human vulnerability and ultimate reliance on God. If, on the other hand, I live in the polarity of nothingness, I run the risk of constant suspicion, sarcasm, and cynicism. Patients raise this healthy tension when they ask, "Chaplain, what or who can I trust now?" This is a question of faith and a search for balance between meaning and nothingness.

Hitting bottom

The biggest challenge for pastors in the journey of sustaining a healthy sense of self-identity is to remain human in the midst of the attraction to be otherwise. Not embracing the balance and tension leads people to rely on unhealthy behaviors that numb the suffering and pain that arise from a sense of inadequacy and futility. By living life and ministry in the polarities, going from one extreme to the other, we push away balance and end up in cynicism, shame, depression, and despair. Then we start relying on artificial things to keep us going, such as overeating, antidepressants, egocentric behaviors that damage our closest relationships, and unhealthy behaviors that end in greater suffering and pain.

When toddlers begin to walk, what we desire most is for them to

keep their balance so that they do not fall and hit bottom. But then we grow up and something happens: we start taking balance for granted until one day when we fall and hit bottom too. Some realize the pain and grace of hitting bottom, and they search for balance, get up, and walk again. Others ignore the need for balance and keep trying to walk sideways from one extreme to the other, hitting bottom from time to time. Falling down and feeling the pain of a sore bottom may be the grace needed to raise our hands to God and ask Him to lift us up and teach us to walk in balance through His grace.

Four principles for sustaining a sense of self-identity

First, slow down and take time to reflect on who you are in God's eyes. " 'Be still, and know that I am God' " (Ps. 46:10, NIV). The implication in this verse is that unless I take regular time to be still, to slow down, to rest and reflect, and to gauge how balanced or unbalanced my life is, I may forget that God alone, and not myself, can sustain me.

Second, surrender to God the need to overextend your God-given boundaries. This is an ongoing process of recognizing daily those things within yourself that push you to be who you are not and to do things that you were not created to do. I suspect that Paul knew something personally about this spiritual-human struggle when he wrote in Romans 6:17–19, "[T]hanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations" (NIV). Paul then says in verse 23,

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV).

Third, remember that humans discover meaning when they are able to experience and express their feelings and emotions and process them through a balanced, rational-reflective approach to life. Be kind to yourself; open your heart to the possibilities of healthy personal and professional relationships that can help bring perspective to life's precious moments of grief and hope, pain and joy, isolation and community, anger and gladness, rejection and acceptance, fear and trust, and forgiveness and grace.

Fourth, do not lose sight of the eternal impact that your caring pastoral presence has when that presence is shaped by the gifts of your humanity. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, NKJV). That verse calls to human vulnerability and transparency in ministry as we bring the good news of salvation, just as Christ did when He lived on earth as one of us. When that mystery of the gospel made flesh touches the human race, we will then behold God's glory, a glory that has touched and transformed millions of human hearts.

Conclusion

The words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, summarize my prayer for ministers: "It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become" (*The Message*).



* Paul Vitello, "Taking a Break From the Lord's Work," *New York Times*, August 1, 2010, accessed March 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html?scp=1&sq=clergy%20now%20suffer%20from%20obesity&st=cse>.

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The magnificent seven: Principles to reach the unchurched

According to a Gallup survey, 78 percent of Americans claim to be Christian.¹ Of this, however, only 20 percent ever attend church.² Even more disturbing is the accelerating decline of young people attending church. In his book, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, Thom S. Rainer says, “Each new generation becomes increasingly unchurched.”³ The most often cited reason for this decline in church attendance is the irrelevance of the church. Simply put, people do not enjoy church. Currently, only about 29 percent of people in their twenties and thirties are interested in attending church, compared to 41 percent of people in their fifties and sixties.⁴

In today’s climate, if church is not fun, church attendance tends to suffer. By the word *fun* we do not mean superficial, jovial, or playful; we mean enjoyable. When we say, “I had fun at work today,” or, “My class was so much fun,” we really mean that our experience at work or in class was enjoyable and pleasant. Our church services need to be enjoyable. How can we achieve that objective—making church enjoyable?

Here are seven principles that have consistently turned otherwise irrelevant and unappealing churches into intensely interesting places where people connect with Jesus Christ in a life-transforming way. I call them the magnificent seven.

Principle 1: Make your preaching biblical and relevant

The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth conducted a six-year study involving more than 2,000 churches from numerous denominations in a wide variety of geographical regions. From these churches, 353 persons were selected for in-depth interviews. These were formerly unchurched persons who have become actively involved in church attendance. The findings of this research were published in the book *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*. Thirteen factors were identified as significant in leading the unchurched to become active in church attendance. Of these 13, one factor identified by more than 90 percent of those surveyed is biblical preaching. Says Rainer, “Now we are hearing from the formerly

unchurched that preaching that truly teaches the Bible in its original context is a major factor in reaching the unchurched. . . . Pastors who understand this and who communicate doctrine clearly are among the leaders whose churches are reaching the unchurched.”⁵ The apostle Paul understood this principle. He spoke from the Word, and his messages were met with interest by the people he encountered. That made his messages relevant.

In Des Moines, Iowa, there is a Lutheran church that thousands of people attend each Sunday. When I asked a member what accounted for such growth, he said, “It’s our pastor. He preaches the most interesting and relevant sermons right from the Bible.”

At a time when Christian faith and values are under attack and being eroded, and when more and more are becoming unchurched, is it not the responsibility of the church, the believers, and the pastors to affirm and proclaim a message that is biblical, relevant, and interesting? We have the light of the Bible and the truth that the world looks for. We have the most interesting and compelling messages to give to a world groping

in darkness. Should we, as pastors, not emphasize biblical preaching in a planned, serious way?

Principle 2: Be caring and authentic

Personal interaction with the pastor was identified by 90 percent of the formerly unchurched as the second most important factor that influenced their return to church. They did not say they had a friendship with the pastor, but that their interactions with the pastor left them feeling confident that the pastor was authentic and that he or she cared for them. Ellen G. White understood

Principle 3: Build a friendly and receptive church

The unchurched identified the receptivity of church members as the third most significant factor in their decision to attend that particular church. "Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do," wrote the apostle, "but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near" (Heb. 10:25).⁷

Ellen White emphasized the powerful influence church members have on visitors. She wrote, "The Lord does not now work to bring many

hearts, genuine smiles, joyful greetings, and a willingness to show up and support others. You never hear them criticize others, but often their voices are lifted up in prayer for those in need. With members like these, is it any wonder the church remains strong and influential?

Principle 4: Cultivate creative and attractive church services

Much thought, prayer, planning, and preparation are essential to make a worship service creative and appealing. Few churches invest that kind of time in their programs. In many

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this critical relationship between the pastor and the members of the church. "The people will seldom rise higher than their minister."⁶

Some time ago, I was standing in the fellowship dinner line of the church when I noticed a lady I had seen only a couple of times before. As I was selecting my food, I engaged her in some casual conversation. A few days later, I got a phone call from her friend, a member of my congregation, who had invited her to church. "Pastor," she said, "thank you so much for talking with my friend at lunch last Sabbath. She told me no pastor had ever inquired about her well-being in her whole life and it meant so much to her. She decided our church is the one she wants to attend." It was a brief conversation, but through the Holy Spirit, it meant all the difference to that lady.

souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?"⁸

Clayton and Audrey Child of Spokane, Washington, are a perfect example of the influence church members can have on the desirability and growth of a church. They constantly seek out visitors, get acquainted with them, and invite them home for an enjoyable Sabbath lunch. Often they attend special occasions such as birthday celebrations, weddings, funerals, and graduations in the lives of these newfound friends. Their friendliness and sincere concern are almost contagious. The Childs have sincere

churches, the liturgy, or the order of service, has not changed in years.

Here are some practical suggestions that may help you make your church service more appealing.

1. Simplify your liturgy. Do not try to crowd in too many things. People often get lost in the details.
2. Use art. PowerPoint slides, videos, skits, paintings, banners, natural greenery, even stuffed animals, and the like add to the visual appeal of your sanctuary or worship hall.
3. If you can, incorporate music into your messages. A well-placed song will reinforce your message in a way nothing else can. Invite the congregation to sing with you. In doing so, you have accomplished two things—more participation and auditory enrichment.

4. Use illustrations in your preaching. They are still the windows of the sermon, allowing fresh air to fill the room of listeners.
5. Encourage participation. Some pastors field impromptu Bible questions from the congregation in place of a sermon. Thus, constant interest is maintained.
6. A concert now and then is another powerful element to incorporate into your worship schedule.
7. Testimonies from the congregation, whether planned or spontaneous, will draw the attention of people in a very meaningful way.

Principle 5: Prayer is still the key

Prayer is essential to achieve a positive atmosphere in the church and to bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus. The apostle Paul urged Timothy, a young pastor, to be faithful in prayer: "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. . . . This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1, 3, 4).

One evening as I was considering the thoughts God had impressed on my heart to share that week in church, I knelt to pray. Soon I was drawn into an intense period of prayer for the unchurched. This continued for some time, and finally, I was released from the burden.

The next day, as I was greeting people at the door after the service, I noticed a young lady in her early thirties sitting nervously in the back pew of the church, waiting to visit with me. Tracy said she occasionally came to church to support her Christian husband. She admitted she normally did not listen to the sermon but brought reading material instead. However, on this particular Sabbath, she was compelled

to listen to the sermon and could think of nothing but how much she needed God. When the sermon was over, she and her husband left immediately. When they were only a few blocks from the church, Tracy insisted her husband turn around and take her back. "I just have to talk to the pastor," she said.

As Tracy told me her story, she was shaking and I could see she was very troubled. She said, "Look at me. What has happened to me? I have never felt like this before, and I don't know what to do." I shared the gospel story with Tracy, emphasizing how much God loves her, and how Jesus died to take away her sins. When I finished, I invited Tracy to accept Jesus as her Savior. She readily agreed, and we prayed right then. As soon as she said "Amen," a peace and joy settled over her entire being. From that day till now, she has been a great blessing to our church. Prayer made the church service intensely personal and powerful to Tracy that day.

Principle 6: Provide for recreation and friendship

I am convinced that recreation in an enjoyable setting brings people together and makes it much easier to cultivate friendship. It has often been said and anecdotally noted that many Seventh-day Adventists who leave the church do so not because of doctrine but because of an absence of meaningful relationships with other members. Spending time together in more relaxed settings builds such relationships.

I am also convinced that when we open our church social programs to interested community members, we find friendship and communication develop between church members and the unchurched. Of course, when you do so, you may need to budget sufficient funds, and, if necessary, charge a small fee, so as to make these social events special and interesting. Through such

social interactions, church members will have opportunities to make new friends and such friendships may lead to sharing one's faith.

Principle 7: Engage in spiritual conversations

Once new friendships are formed, friends will ask questions regarding your faith in such a natural way that it will be easy for you to give them an answer because, after all, they are your friends. The next thing you know, you are leading them to know and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Jesus said to His disciples, " 'Now you are my friends' " (John 15:15). Likewise, He considers us as His friends and wants us to make friends of others and bring them to Him. That is the import of the Great Commission: " 'Therefore, go and make disciples [friends] of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' " (Matt. 28:19).

Conclusion

How do we reach the unchurched? The history of missions and evangelism has much to say about the *how*. But consider these seven simple yet magnificent principles of reaching the unchurched or the once-churched, for you will find that none of these is too cumbersome or difficult to implement. Yet they all contribute to evangelism in the truest sense. **M**

- 1 "This Christmas, 78 % of Americans Identify as Christian," Gallup, December 24, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/124793/this-christmas-78-americans-identify-christian.aspx>.
- 2 Fred Jackson and Jody Brown, "Fewer Americans Than Thought Going to Church, Says Study," Crosswalk, May 12, 2006, <http://www.crosswalk.com/1396537/>.
- 3 Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 33.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 5 Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*, 58.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 2:645.
- 7 All Scripture passages in this article are from the New Living Translation.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:371.

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Ministry at the door

In the early seventies, my wife and I were living in New York City and were members of the Prospect Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church. The pastor of the church was a great preacher, and I will never forget his sermons, full of theological substance, spiced with great anecdotes and gems taken out of the archives of history. Each sermon filled my heart with joy and satisfaction. But what impressed me the most was the pastor's personal commitment to warmly greet each member and visitor at the front door each Sabbath morning. There was nothing formal in his greeting, but everything about him—be it a smile, a handshake, or a hug—spoke joyfully and personally that he was happy to see us that morning. When he said, "I'm glad to see you," he meant every word; and we were glad to be in church every Sabbath.

During that sojourn, I promised myself that if I ever joined the ministerial ranks, I would be just like that pastor with my parishioners and visitors. Years later, God did call me to the ministry. Through the years, I have been able to serve as a chaplain and pastor. My greatest joy in ministry involves serving people both inside and outside the church, and especially in greeting them as they come to church Sabbath mornings.

Reason for the ministry at the door

The ministry at the church door is fascinating and practical in the

accomplishment of our mission. Within the first five minutes of entering the church a person will decide whether to return to the church or not. In that brief period, visitors will quickly evaluate the environment of the church depending on how they were greeted—with warmth and love or with coldness and indifference. Every expression and gesture, every smile and body movement, shouts out loudly of a warm welcome or a cold indifference. This process of greeting at the door, whether by the pastor or a designated elder, becomes so important that I have called it the *evangelism of the open door*.¹

Honesty and the ministry at the door

Pastors (or in the case of large churches, designated greeters) are the first component of this ministry at the door. People who come to us should see us as ministers with honesty in the cause of Christ. Both our members and visitors want to see that we live what we preach and have no skeletons in our closets. Our lives should be open books. Taylor G. Bunch, the famous Adventist evangelist, once wrote that the secret of being a saint is to be a saint in secret.² As pastors and greeters, we need to exert a spiritual influence that flows out of our inner connection with Christ. Greeters at the door should be aware of what is happening in the congregation—a couple may have been blessed with

a baby, a family member may be sick at home, loss of employment may have hit the family, or they may be struggling with a particular spiritual problem. On Sabbath morning, the pastor or greeter should say an appropriate word of affirmation, joy, concern, or an assurance of prayer. The entry point of the church must become the first place where each member and visitor may encounter Christ through us as ministers.

Be ready for the unexpected

When you stand at the door for the greeting ministry, all will not go as planned. Be prepared for surprises. On one Sabbath morning, I was greeting members at the door. A woman—not a member of our church—walked in and immediately impressed me as a person in need. Her face reflected trouble and fear, and as she held out her hand, it was shaking. The deaconess and I took her to my office and offered to be of help. After a few minutes, she told us that she had wanted to visit our church for some time, but her husband did not approve. That particular Sabbath, she was so impressed by the Holy Spirit to come that she walked the few miles to the church. The fear she was now demonstrating was of what her husband would do. We asked her if we could pray for God's assurance and safety. With her consent, we prayed, and after a while, her husband showed up at the church

door. God gave her the strength to tell him in a quiet but firm manner that she had found the God she had been looking for at the door of this church and would never leave the Adventist Church. Somehow, God touched the heart of this man because he bowed his head while the woman kept looking at him in God's strength. He finally left, and she worshiped the God she came looking for.

Watch for details

Begin with parking. The parking lot provides the first experience to visitors of what your church is

lunch and that they are welcome to join the fellowship meal at the end of the service.

As we welcome the visitors, we give them special welcome cards. The cards have a place for their names, addresses, and phone numbers. At an appropriate time, either as we close the service or when I greet them as they leave the door, I invite them to fill out that card if they desire a special pastoral visit or prayer. I make sure that this is absolutely voluntary. Cards are later sorted out, and, on Monday morning, we mail a Thank-you note for each one who has filled out the

card attentively. Physiologically, we find it hard to listen for we have been designed to hear five times faster than we talk. So, let us say that you are talking at a speed of 120 words per minute, I have the ability to perceive five times that speed—some 600 words per minute. That may be one of the reasons why it is hard to concentrate when listening to someone.

We must concentrate on words that convey feelings or emotions—for example, anger, happiness, or disappointment. We must lead people to the Holy Spirit's intervention, for He is the Healer of our wounds

THE PARKING LOT PROVIDES THE FIRST EXPERIENCE TO VISITORS OF WHAT YOUR CHURCH IS LIKE.

like. Have you reserved a few parking spots for visitors, with proper indicators? Are the deacons placed in that area trained to welcome visitors with courtesy, kindness, and cheerfulness? Are they soft in their speech and gentle in their manners? The first message we should give our visitors is "You are important to us."

When visitors arrive at the church entrance, I meet them warmly and try to provide as much information as possible about the Sabbath School service and our visitors' class. We also have deaconesses nearby to guide the children to their respective Sabbath School classes. I use the guest registry but with great sensitivity because some may have concerns about it, fearing some kind of commitment. I also let them know that we have prepared a

card. During the week, I phone those who requested a visit and confirm the appointment. During the first visit, I share information about our church and the services it provides and offer to be of pastoral help, if needed.

During the visit

The first visit is not to press for a Bible study or enter hurriedly into a spiritual conversation. The Holy Spirit will lead and provide that opportunity at the appropriate time. Pastor Robert Pierson, a great evangelist and a former president of the General Conference, used to say that God gave us two ears and one mouth so we should listen twice before we speak. The more we listen to people, the more we learn about them. We do not learn when we talk; we learn when we listen

and disappointments. Usually, during the flow of a conversation, I ask how they came to know about our church. At that time, I share with them how I knew about the church and came to visit for the first time. I also try to assess any particular need that we as a church may be able to fill or perhaps pray about.

Follow the method of Jesus

As pastors, we should recognize the particular importance of following Jesus' method in our ministry. The multitudes encompassed Him and came close because they sensed and felt that this Man was more than a Teacher: He took a personal interest in people. For the first time, many of them encountered a Rabbi who spoke like no one they had ever heard, healed the sick, and

met the needs of those who came to Him. As Ellen White says,

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. . . .


There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and

rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.³

Conclusion

Ministry at the church door may be one of the best ways to meet visitors and make them feel welcome and loved. Perhaps this may be the only way some will find love and respect in a way they have never before felt. A lawyer came to one of our churches for the first time on a Sabbath morning. At the door, an elderly lady greeted him with a cheerful smile. After the service, the pastor shook hands with the visitor and during the conversation asked him what impressed him the most (perhaps thinking that his

remarkable sermon may have made the difference). The lawyer surprised him by answering, "What impressed me the most were the words of the lady who received me at the door of the church. I have not been able to forget her words: 'Sir, I sincerely wish that you may find happiness in Jesus today in the same way I found it many years ago.' " That's ministry at the door.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta used to say that the opposite of love is not hate but indifference. What do people see in our church? Do we have a ministry at the door? 

1 For more information, access our Web site at www.upasj.org. See also the author's book *The Evangelism of the Open Door*.

2 Taylor G. Bunch, *Secrets of Godly Living* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953).

3 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 143, 144.

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SHAWN BRACE is Camille's husband and Camden and Acadia's father. He also pastors two churches in Maine. Besides sharing God's love, he is passionate about New England, the outdoors, and photography.

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Changing your management style: Lessons from the life of Jethro

Armed with a degree in theology and serving as a volunteer pastor at my home church in Inobulan in Northern Mindanao in the Philippines, I needed a paying job. I found one at the local state university as a part-time lecturer. It was a perfect setting: living in my hometown, ministering to my local church, and a teaching job for my living expenses. Shortly thereafter, however, the university indicated that I must have a graduate degree to continue my teaching job. With no other option, I commenced a master's degree in management—somewhat of a detour from my theological pursuits. But soon I discovered that theology can influence other areas of study. I began to use Jethro's paradigm on change management in my management studies (Exod. 18). Soon I realized that long before Weber's bureaucratic and Taylor's systematic management approaches,¹ Jethro placed before Moses an organizational management plan whose efficiency led Israel during the 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Jethro's principle of management is a simple illustration of change management. Jethro told his son-in-law,

Moses, that what he was doing was not good either for his health or for managing such a vast company of people through the desert. So he told Moses to be the people's representative before God, teach the people the way to live, and select capable men as leaders over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (see vv. 17–26). Jethro's change-management approach starts by identifying the source, then completing the form of organizational change. Jethro's approach involves eight fundamental changes.

Changing the source of change

The changes called for by the Jethro principle begin with a strong chief executive officer (CEO). Strong leadership from the CEO and his or her associates makes effective changes. God used Moses' 40 years of self-exile as a source of change for Israel; but during the Exodus, Jethro stepped in. Moses needed Jethro to tell him that what he was doing was not advisable (v. 17). In most cases, external forces are the best agents of change; it took a Midianite to change the entire Israelite organization.

Outsider change agents must be worthy of respect, authority, and wisdom. Respect develops from an intimate relationship over time; in the case of Jethro and Moses, a father- and son-in-law relationship of more than 40 years built such respect.² Jethro's authority and wisdom grew from his experience in managing his own people as a father and priest (Exod. 2:16).³ Wisdom must be expressed in a clear, simple, and easy-to-apply-and-follow process. Because Jethro had the qualities of respect, authority, and wisdom, Moses listened to Jethro and followed his advice (Exod. 18:24).

Changing the attitude

With the source of change identified, a change of attitude follows. Changes start with the leadership. A change of attitude will not happen when the leader is of the view that all is well—like Moses, seated comfortably, counseling people from morning until evening (v. 13) not realizing that the current system was not good until Jethro told him (v. 17). Leaders must realize that what seems good for now will not always be good. Location will also

be a factor regarding the effectiveness of a method. What was good in the valleys of Egypt was not necessarily applicable in the desert of Sinai.

Embracing new ways and changes of attitude are not easy unless a clear line is drawn between the old and the new, where leaders can clearly see that a change will bring about a new and better mind-set. Jethro told Moses that the old ways of highly centralized governance would stress and wear him out (v. 18), and hence he should consider ways of participative organization.

Changing the behavior

The right attitude precedes the right behavior. When Moses realized that something was wrong with his organizational setup, Jethro told Moses to listen to him (v. 19).

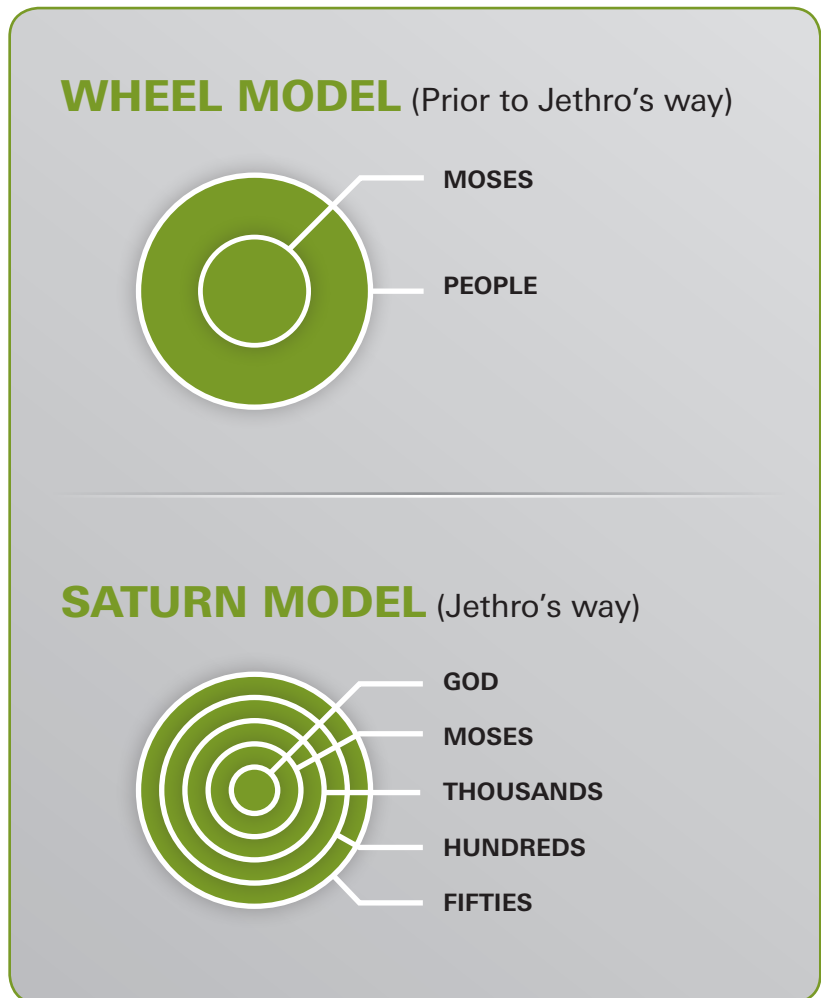
Sound reasons for every change must be communicated well in the organization.⁴ Leaders must act to see, feel, and hear the need for change in their organizations. Moses did hear and was able to confirm that there really was something wrong in his organization.

Changing the position

At the burning bush (Exod. 3), God asked Moses to go to Pharaoh as His representative to demand freedom for the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Now in the wilderness, Moses became a mediator between God and the Hebrew people. So Jethro told Moses to change his position and be the people's representative to God (Exod. 18:19). Moses' position was now clarified and established, allowing him to do new things with his position. Leadership positions must vary according to the environment. Prior to Jethro's visit, Moses saw himself as the center point of the organization, so that everyone had to come to him. After Jethro's intervention, God was seen as the center point while Moses and the other leaders became rings around that point—the Saturn model of

organization, with each ring of people managing things among themselves. In this way, leaders bear less stress. Below are the two leadership models (see vv. 24–26).

According to Jethro, decrees and laws were the two subject matters to start with (v. 20). When leaders live by what they teach, followers can easily follow what they see, and



Changing the culture

Imposing cultural change is a challenge for every leader. However, Jethro provided a simple way of bringing about change. He told Moses to teach and show the people the way to live—their culture (v. 20). A teaching strategy must be simple, and the subject matter must be basic and well defined. Having too many things to teach complicates the process and diminishes learning. A minimum of subject matters, taught by example, results in organizational learning, which leads to cultural changes.

cultural change through learning occurs.

Changing the people

Resisters of cultural change must be excluded, as their resistance to change might destroy the new agenda that organizational change demands. Remove such resisters even if they are well known and had satisfactorily performed in the past⁵—people such as Korah, Kohath, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:1–4). New people are easily taught and can easily adopt a new culture.



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The employees need two characteristics: (1) fear of God, and (2) trustworthiness and hate of dishonest gain. Jethro's new leadership process started at God and moved to Moses and then to leadership at various group levels as illustrated in the new Saturn model.

Changing the structure

Some of today's systematic approaches to management were practiced long ago by Jethro and Moses. Moses' sole-centric organizational form, whose movement from the outside to the inside then back to the outside, was replaced by

like the believers of the early church, learning new things with humble and teachable spirits. When changes are hard and seem impossible to implement, we need to understand that "Christ came to change this order of things."⁸ Jesus Himself gave an example: He changed His

BECAUSE JETHRO HAD THE QUALITIES
OF RESPECT, AUTHORITY, AND WISDOM,
MOSES LISTENED TO JETHRO AND
FOLLOWED HIS ADVICE.

Changing the roles


The population of 600,000 men fit to fight, excluding women and children, required extraordinary leadership.⁶ Leading this vast number without any help or sharing of responsibility would wear out Moses. Jethro's idea of assigning judges—leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens is a call for a role change. Each group, from thousands to tens, was empowered to handle cases they could manage while leaving the very difficult ones to the inner layers of leadership, with God at the center. Sharing the responsibility and accountability among the people in the organization lightens the burdens of the leaders, giving them more opportunities for creativity. Leaders with less stress become more efficient in performance.

a Saturn structure with God at the center, surrounded with layers of leadership, whose movement was from the inside to the outside then back to the inside.

The pastor as the modern Moses

Pastors experience frequent moves in their calling; transferring from one place to another. This dynamic pastoral work requires Jethro's wisdom. Pastors must adapt to changes either from better to worse or worse to better situations. Change management is the key. As Peter Drucker remarked, "Every organization has to prepare for the abandonment of everything it does."⁷

Change management is a necessity. Our church calls for revival, and we must respond to it. We must be

methods of ministry as it drew to its end.⁹ Thus, we, too, must be prepared to change our organization and methods of labor in order to effectively complete the task given to us. Jethro's method has much to teach us as we lead the community of faith toward its eschatological goal. 

- 1 Khoo Kheng-hor, *Sun Tzu and Management* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1992), 177, 178.
- 2 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. W. Whiston (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1878), 136. (5.2.3.)
- 3 S. H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1979), s.v. "Jethro."
- 4 Jack Welch and Suzy Welch, *Winning* (New York: Harper Business, 2005), 145.
- 5 Welch and Welch, *Winning*, 141, 142.
- 6 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 75.
- 7 Peter Drucker, *Classic Drucker* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2006), 142.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lesson* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 366.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 485.

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Evangelism symposium urges simpler gospel presentation

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Top administrators, evangelists, and ministerial secretaries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are reprioritizing the role of God’s Spirit and simple Bible truths in public evangelism.

Rather than complicating the gospel or endlessly repackaging it, leaders are advocating a simpler approach. They say preaching basic Bible truths is the most compelling way to present the Adventist hope.



Ernestine Finley reminds church evangelists and ministerial secretaries that baptism is just the beginning. Her spiritual-friendship plan matches new believers with existing church members who share similar interests and backgrounds. [Photo: Ansel Oliver]

“This approach requires admitting one’s own vulnerability,” said **Shawn Boonstra**, associate director for the Ministerial Association of the church’s North American Division. “The world is tired of religious know-it-all,” he said, citing

a New Testament story in which the apostle Paul identifies with his audience to make a point.

The symposium is a broadening of the church’s Council on Evangelism and Witness to include more regional evangelists and ministerial secretaries in the discussion. Approximately 40 leaders from each of the church’s 13 divisions met at Adventist world headquarters on November 28–30, 2011, to share resources, exchange ideas, address challenges to evangelism, and pray together.

“Jesus’ mission is to seek and save everyone who is lost, so the number one priority of the church should be to win people to Jesus,” said **Jerry Page**, secretary of the world church’s Ministerial Association.

“In an increasingly secular world, evangelists can no longer assume their audience is either familiar with Christian principles or biblically literate. I would say my preaching has become more Christ centered, more biblically basic, and certainly ministering more to the felt needs of people,” said veteran evangelist **Mark Finley**.

Church leaders said a clear, authentic message of truth can even connect with the world’s growing postmodern population—a group of 1.8 billion people worldwide, according to **Miroslav Pujic**, communication director for the church’s Trans-European Division.

“We are realizing that Jesus’ message is exactly what this generation is looking for—the real truth, transparency, and an alternative to the systems and churches they don’t trust,” said **Robert Costa**, an associate secretary for the world church’s Ministerial Association. [Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN]

Church missiologist shares the Adventist perspective to Christian mission

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—“Christ is the mobilizing force for witness and the Bible offers a comprehensive diagnosis and cure to the world’s problems,” a top Seventh-day Adventist missiologist, **Ganoune Diop**,¹ says in a recently published book on Christian mission.

Dr. Diop brings the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s perspective to the book *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths*.² This book, a product of last year’s Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, also includes perspectives on missions from Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal church representatives.

In his essay, “Mission to World Religions and Contemporary World Views: An Adventist Perspective,” Diop calls Christ the “ultimate criterion” for assessing a religion’s need for mission.

“The idea that Christ motivates Christian witness lies at the core of Scripture,” Diop says. The Bible is abundantly clear that fellowship with God is restored only through acceptance of God’s love and Jesus’ incarnation, life and teachings, sacrifice, victory over death, and priestly ministry. “Nowhere but in the Bible do we find this whole chain of truth. What we find is Jesus—who He actually is, His divinity. The Bible provides a comprehensive diagnosis of human problems and a comprehensive solution. Ultimately

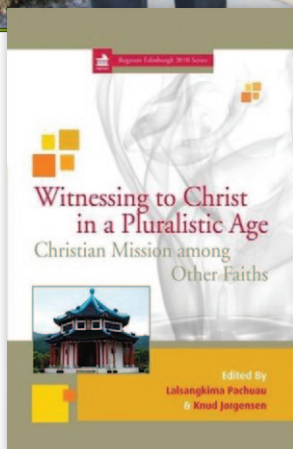


From left: Cheryl Doss, director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Institute of World Mission, Adventist missiologist Ganoune Diop, and New Testament scholar John McVay at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference last year. [Photo: Gorden Doss]



that solution is Jesus, who came to cancel all the negatives. He defeated evil and death, and he is coming again to restore peace, justice and righteousness. And that we don't find anywhere else."

The distinctiveness of the Adventist faith stands out as some Christians may be tempted to dilute what sets Christ apart to better fit a culture of tolerance. But today's notion of tolerance



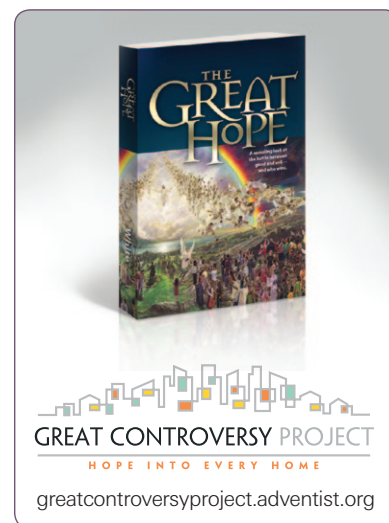
is a misnomer, Diop continues. "There's a naive assumption that tolerance means endorsement. No. People have the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to expression, the right to their own choices, but that does not make those choices compelling to everyone. Respecting their rights? We must, unquestionably. We owe every human being respect, dignity, courtesy and decency, but

that does not mean accepting, endorsing or embracing their values," he says.

Diop says that while mission begins with common ground, it must go beyond that. Muslims and Christians can find commonalities between the Koran and the Bible, but ultimately the words they use are caught in what Diop calls "webs of meaning," or context. "The Jesus of the [Koran] is different from the Jesus in the Bible. He didn't die on the cross; he's not God. Muslims and Christians say they are both 'people of the Book,' but strictly speaking Christians are not people of the Book. They are people of a person, Jesus Christ."

Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age is expected to serve as a textbook for students of missiology worldwide. [Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN]

- 1 Ganoune Diop now serves as an associate director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department as well as its liaison to the United Nations.
- 2 Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen, eds., *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths* (Edinburgh: Regnum Books, 2010).

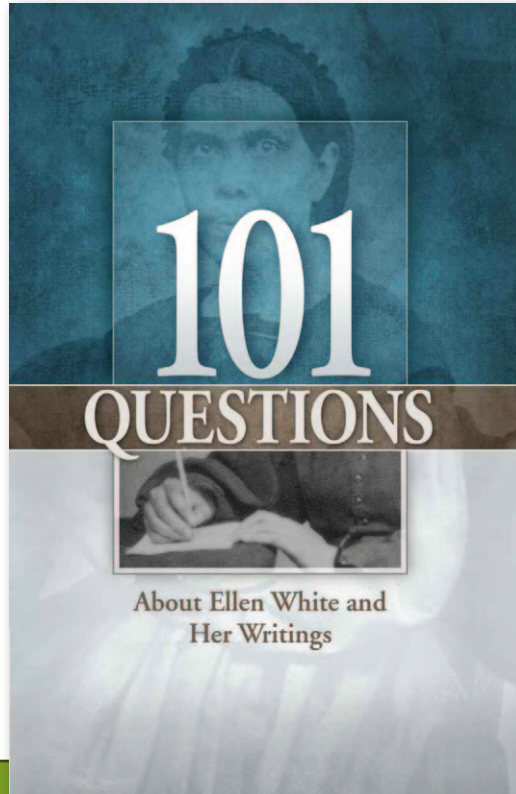




101 Questions About Ellen White and Her Writings

by William Fagal,
Nampa, ID: Pacific
Press Publishing
Association, 2010.

Find William Fagal's book *101 Questions* to be very useful for the busy minister and church member—an authoritative response to 101 questions people have sent to the Ellen G. White Estate. For many years, William Fagal, an associate director of the White Estate, has provided well researched and



us in Jeremiah 10:1–5. Fagal points out that the text—supplied by the questioner—does not mention evergreens and that the context for this passage has to do with carved idols. He also points out that Mrs. White approved of Christmas trees in church as a vehicle for giving gifts of money for the Lord's work. This book will help build confidence in Ellen White as well as increase faith in the church and its practices as it has developed under God's leading through the years.

While all of this material is available now on the Ellen G. White Estate's Web sites, www.whiteestate.org and <http://drc.whiteestate.org>, you will find it convenient to be able to pull a book off of your shelf to find the

THIS BOOK WILL HELP BUILD CONFIDENCE IN ELLEN WHITE AS WELL AS INCREASE FAITH IN THE CHURCH AND ITS PRACTICES AS IT HAS DEVELOPED UNDER GOD'S LEADING THROUGH THE YEARS.

thoughtful responses to questions submitted to the White Estate. Now many of the most interesting and important questions are available in this handy book. The questions answered range from Ellen White's work (whether everything Ellen White wrote was inspired, Ellen White and epilepsy as a source for her visions, plagiarism, failed prophecies, and

editorial assistants writing her books for her), Adventist theology and doctrines, lifestyle, and the last days.

The Ellen White portrayed in this book is one of balance and reason. For example, regarding the questions on Christmas there is one about bringing an evergreen tree into church and the concern about that based on the counsel given to

answer to a member's question. The answers are relatively short—one to three pages. There is a table of contents to help find the question for which you need a quick answer. **M**

—Reviewed by Jim Ford, MLS, associate director, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

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