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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

SEPTEMBER 2013



## Another gospel?

(Galatians 1:1-10)



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## 06 Another gospel? (Galatians 1:1–10)

*Marguerite Shuster*

What we need is the plain gospel of Jesus Christ, kept intact and rightly expounded in our age and every age.

## 10 From just a “church service” to a “serving church”: Witnessing to the community

*Richard Daly*

If your church functions in isolation, showing no regard to the needs of the community’s residents, can you expect positive results from a spiritual outreach program?

## 14 Sex offenders in the church: From apathy to action

*Lynette Frantzen*

Learn about risk factors and simple rules for handling sex offenders within your congregation.

## 18 The reproaches of Christ versus the treasures of Egypt: New findings confirm biblical data

*Richard Litke*

What was the effect of Moses’ dramatic announcement that he would not be the “son of Pharaoh’s daughter” upon ancient Egypt? Read the new information that has been found.

## 21 Murmuring discontent: A lethal spiritual addiction

*Elizabeth Ostring*

Look out for a hidden enemy within your church—a common but deadly condition that infects most congregations.

## 24 After the apostles: Lessons from the post-apostolic church

*Eliezer Gonzalez*

Lessons from post-apostolic times should compel Christian leaders to go back to the Word and, more importantly, to its Author.

### 04 Letters

### 05 Editorial

### 13&20 Revival & Reformation

### 28 Resources

### 29 Dateline

### 30 The Pastor and Health

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+1 301-680-6511  
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#### COVER ILLUSTRATION

EMILY HARDING

#### LAYOUT

316 Creative

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99;  
Canada and overseas US\$47.00. To order:  
send name, address, and payment to  
Ministry® Subscriptions, 12501 Old  
Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-  
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monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial  
Association, General Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists.® Ministry is a  
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PRINTER Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.,  
1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687

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

Member of Associated Church Press.

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Vol. 85 Number 9 © 2013

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



*“I was surprised to find that the bold assertion ‘Junia the Apostle’ (on the title page, no less!) appeared without a question mark.”*

## Junia

In reflecting upon Nancy Vyhmeister’s article in the July 2013 issue (“Junia the Apostle”), the single mention of Junia (Rom. 16:7) in what has been a disputed verse for centuries, seems to be carrying an inordinate degree of authority of late. In seeking to understand God’s counsel, whatever happened to “line upon line”? I fear any approach that isolates some part of Scripture from the whole with an inclination to run with the understanding one has of that part.

Jesus’ hermeneutic, as demonstrated in Luke 24, provides a second-to-none approach by which we may come to a unified understanding of biblical subjects. We must avoid building a case for some desired action on the basis of this single passage where Paul is not writing with theological intent or instructive purpose. Above all, we must avoid a “Paul versus Paul” outcome. The problem is our understanding, not Paul’s.

*Kent Knight, Grandview, Washington, United States*

I appreciate the historical and informative article on Junia, as shared by Nancy Vyhmeister. However, it is sad that this type of discussion continues this late in history. Especially since Scripture clearly states, “there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one

in Christ” (Gal. 3:28). Women have been utilized in ministry all through scriptural history. A first witness and evangelizing spokesperson for Christ was Mary hastening to announce the Resurrection.

It is past time to stop using time and energy when the Spirit is calling *all*. Hang-ups on tradition and meanings of ordination have been a stumbling block to accomplishing God’s end-time mission!

*Virginia Myers, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States*

In the article “Junia the Apostle,” Nancy Vyhmeister acknowledges that the proper noun *Iouniās* does not, as it appears, specify gender. Then she tries to convince her readers that she knows which gender is intended. But how does she know if the gender cannot be determined? Her best argument boils down to this: the name is probably feminine in this case.

If her purpose really is to teach about the office of the ministry, why does she ignore the elephant in the room? That point is clearly addressed in Scripture: “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For

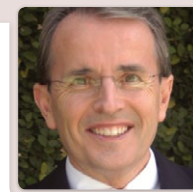
it is shameful for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor. 14:33–35, ESV).

*Phil Rokke, email*

I was surprised to find that the bold assertion “Junia the Apostle” (on the title page, no less!) appeared without a question mark. Vyhmeister proposes the apostleship of Junia but does not provide any evidence when she claims that Eldon Epp “made a well-documented case for Junia as a woman and one of the apostles” (8, 9). Since I suspect that most readers do not have access to this source, some examples would be helpful. The author cites Belleville who dismisses Pauline evidence of the phrase “the apostles” on the historical-critical notion of the *kerygma* (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:7)—but it is Paul nonetheless who pens the term “the apostles”! It is difficult to agree with Belleville that this simple masculine plural would be foreign to Paul’s mode of thought and writing.

Considering the prepositional phrase “among the apostles,” Greek syntax offers a dative of respect in this regard, or a locative of sphere. This syntactical ambivalence deserves recognition; the case of Junia as an apostle is not as clear as the article suggests. Paul offers four marks of identification and recommendation here; would he have to do this if Andronicus and Junias had been part of the apostolic circle? Additionally, Paul could have expressed Andronicus’ and Junia’s *identity* with the apostles by simply rendering the phrase as an adjectival qualifier: “well-known apostles” (cf. Matt. 27:16). Instead, he maintained two separate groups: Andronicus and Junia and their reputation among (*en*) the apostles. This does not make them apostles. The Old Testament

*Continued on page 27*



## Sources of **life** and **hope**

I was chatting with my father recently about his experience during the Second World War. Because of frequent bombing raids, he was evacuated as a young lad from his home in Bristol, England, to a small village in South Wales. A caring couple named the Yerburys welcomed him into their humble home and became his wartime family. They lived on the grounds of the Abertillery Park, where Mr. Yerbury served as one of the park caretakers. Times were hard and food was scarce. Mr. Yerbury helped transform the fertile portions of the park down by the Abertillery River into small allotments where the locals could grow food. Then *once fallow ground* became a source of life and hope.

As I listened to this fascinating story, I thought about our lives today. Are there places where the ground has laid fallow for far too long? Is there fertile ground that, with diligent work and loving care, could become a source of life and hope?

Marguerite Shuster begins this issue of *Ministry* by reminding us that Jesus is the ultimate Source of life and hope. This is the gospel message that we are called to proclaim. Though some may object that the gospel is too easy and others claim it is too hard or too implausible, the good news about Jesus is still the power of God to salvation for all who believe. There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. Jesus is our Life and our Blessed Hope.

Richard Daly serves as a pastor in the metropolis of London, England. He firmly believes that Christian churches can become sources of life and hope for entire communities. He advocates that pastors and their churches should live in and pray for their communities,

get to know the key leaders in their communities, hold a community leaders' appreciation day, make the church facilities available for community events such as adult education classes, support local organizations that share common objectives, and assist in times of local crisis. Just imagine what a difference God could make through a church that was willing to become a healing stream to its community.

Unfortunately, not all churches are sources of life and hope. Elizabeth Ostring challenges us to identify the lethal habit of murmuring discontent and address it in a constructive way. We can learn lessons from Scripture and contemporary case studies that help us move from murmuring discontent to a vital and vibrant faith. Lynette Frantzen writes candidly about the issue of sex offenders in the church. Rather than ignore the challenges and potential dangers, we need to address them with the wisdom and love that only God can provide.

Eliezer Gonzalez takes us back to early church history and discovers lessons that are valuable for our lives and ministries today. In his article "After the Apostles: Lessons From the Post-Apostolic Church," he emphasizes that "popular pressure, numbers, and votes do not decide truth; neither do the eminence of people who hold to particular views; nor the antiquity of established beliefs and practices. The Word of the Lord must reign supreme; Jesus must be Lord in our lives and in the life of the church." Christ is our Life, and He is our Blessed Hope. Even today, He builds His church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (see Matt. 16:18). We have the privilege of joining Him in His life-changing, world-transforming work. With Christ as our Head, our lives

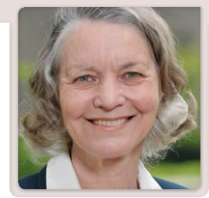
and churches can become wellsprings of life and fountains of hope.

The current residents of Abertillery probably don't need allotments in the park anymore in order to provide food for their families. The ravages of war have passed and the grocery stores are well stocked. The park can once again be utilized for cricket, football, and family picnics. But there are still

*Is there fertile ground that, with diligent work and loving care, could become a source of life and hope?*

some places where the fallow ground needs to be ploughed, and we find it still possible and necessary for once unproductive territory to become a source of life and hope. My prayer is that the articles in this current issue of *Ministry* will challenge you personally and professionally. Perhaps you will hear again the words of the Lord through the prophet Hosea: "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12, NKJV). ❧

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# Another gospel?

## *(Galatians 1:1–10)*

**T**homas Oden, longtime professor of Theology and Ethics at Drew University, for years wrote volume after volume elaborating and espousing the latest theories and practices—successful, up-to-date, modern, in the best liberal tradition—yet somehow he remained dissatisfied. So, quite a while ago now, he shifted gears sharply and produced a volume entitled *Agenda for Theology*. Toward its beginning, he recounted a dream, from which the only scene he could remember took place in the New Haven cemetery. As he wandered through the graveyard, he accidentally stumbled over his own tombstone. Naturally, he stopped to read the epitaph, which said, “He made no new contribution to theology.” That does not sound too complimentary on the face of it, especially for one whose mentors and colleagues aimed self-consciously at offering new contributions to the field. Surprisingly enough, then, Oden reports not being dismayed by this final evaluation of his work but rather tremendously reassured. Why so? Because he had come to believe that the last thing we need is supposed “improvements,” embellishments, or additions to the fundamental apostolic teaching. What we do need is the plain gospel of Jesus Christ, kept intact and rightly expounded in our age and every age.

### Turning away to another gospel

Preservation of the gospel in its integrity has never been easy, not even in the first century. “I am astonished,” writes Paul to the Galatians, with dismay and with none of the commendatory phrases about his recipients that mark all of his other letters,

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed (Gal. 1:6–9, NRSV).

Accursed? Delivered up in a final way to God’s wrath? Strong words, repeated twice for emphasis, and clearly suitable only for a situation marked by the most serious danger. The language of perverting the gospel is strong language, too, suggesting that wrong-headed “adjustments” aren’t a mere fine-tuning but a turning of the gospel into its opposite. Something is luring

Paul’s converts away from their first convictions in a way that puts their very salvation at risk.

Paul does not lay out the content of the gospel once again, but only alludes in passing to the resurrection of Jesus (v. 1), and then speaks particularly of His giving Himself for our sins, to set us free from the present evil age (v. 4)—probably the earliest written statement about the meaning of Jesus’ death in the New Testament. Jesus died for our sins; Jesus frees us from those powers that so easily overtake and enslave us in this life. These are huge claims, involving huge and not altogether pleasant assumptions about us and the world, but Paul does not elaborate: he obviously assumes that the Galatians know perfectly well what he is talking about. After all, Paul was never one to mince words. Presumably he had preached clearly and powerfully to the Galatians of the stunning fact that Jesus did for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves, dealing in the most unlikely way possible, on the cross, both with our sins and with the spiritual powers that entrap us—a victory made visible in His resurrection. (Interestingly enough, Galatians 1:1 is the only place in Galatians where Paul mentions the Resurrection; his emphasis is on the cross.)

On the cross, God has definitively invaded our world; on the cross God has, astonishingly, set things right

and set a captive humanity free. Paul does not explain *how* such a thing could be but simply asserts that it is so. He then spends much of the rest of Galatians contrasting the inadequacy of what we seek to do for ourselves—especially our efforts to establish our

maybe more culturally appropriate approach than something as primitive and violent as a cross.

### Reason 1: It is too easy

Those who were troubling the Galatians, like many in the ancient

to curry favor and popularity with the people (v. 10).

Not only Jews argued against grace on such grounds. Virtuous pagans such as Celsus in the second century were puzzled by a religion that did not demand purity but welcomed



**On the cross,**  
*God has definitively invaded our world; on the cross, God has, astonishingly, set things right and set a captive humanity free.*

own righteousness by obedience to the law—with the full adequacy of what Jesus has done *for* us and offers us by sheer grace.

Paul seems baffled as to why anyone would turn away from good news like that, why, as Galatians 1:6 puts it, anyone would desert the God who calls him or her in the grace of Christ and turn to a different gospel, as if there could actually be another. Why, indeed? Consider at least four possible reasons:

1. It is too easy.
2. It is too hard (not to mention altogether implausible).
3. It is not enough.
4. There just has to be a better, more up-to-date, more scientific,

world and some today, were particularly concerned about answer 1: the gospel is too easy. It makes the old ceremonial laws unnecessary—worse than unnecessary, fatally wrongheaded. Paul's opponents, who were presumably earnest Jews committed to their heritage, felt about grace superseding the law as a way of making us righteous before God about the way we would feel if some wild-eyed reformer advocated establishing righteousness in our society by throwing out the statute books and opening all the prison doors. *It is crazy. If people are not required by the law to uphold certain religious standards, everything will come unglued, they thought.* They suspected that Paul was preaching such a soft doctrine just

and forgave the corrupt. Celsus said, “‘Whosoever is a sinner, they say, whosoever is unwise, whosoever is a child, and, in a word, whosoever is a wretch—the kingdom of God will receive him.’ And [church historian Martin Marty comments wryly] there goes the neighborhood.”<sup>1</sup> Or, consider poet W. H. Auden's line, “Every crook will argue: ‘I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged.’”<sup>2</sup> It is too easy.

### Reason 2: It is too hard

But that same fact that we are saved by grace alone makes the gospel seem too hard, too pessimistic, to another group of people. Those are the ones who have been well taught

that human beings are essentially good and that most of their troubles come from failing to think well enough of themselves, whether because of bad genes or a toxic early environment or a host of troubles that are not, after all, their fault. Such folks are offended at the very thought that their sins are sufficiently bad that only the death of Jesus could provide a remedy for them. What could a bloody, unjust death have to do with it, anyway? Maybe, too, they need desperately to feel in command of their own lives and are angered or frightened by the amount of waiting and trust and disentanglement from worldly standards that faith requires. See Galatians 1:4: Jesus gave Himself for our sins to deliver us, it says, “from the present evil age”: something about our world can be counted on to lead us in the wrong direction (NRSV).

Remember that every time you are tempted to govern your behavior by what others are doing or by what the culture—*any* given culture—approves. Even to make deliverance from ourselves and “the present evil age” sound desirable, it takes a fairly clear-eyed view of our own depth of corruption (at a time when “self-esteem” is the popular panacea for our ills). People must make a rather judicious estimate of the world’s transient rewards (in a culture that presents worldly pleasures as the ultimate satisfaction—“he who dies with the most toys wins,” and that sort of thing). “Losing one’s life in order to save it” has never sounded exactly attractive; living life not as servants but as masters sounds much more appealing. That such proud self-sufficiency can and, indeed, *should* be realized—through this or that investment plan, mental health program, educational pursuit, or physical or spiritual discipline—is one of the main alternative gospels proclaimed in our day. As a recent radio ad puts it, “Take charge of your future: become your own chief life officer!” It is a false gospel, but the true gospel is just too hard.

Besides, the whole thing appears wildly implausible: a God who would die in humiliating fashion for us and rise

again, and by that means make our salvation possible? Really? It doesn’t take the so-called New Atheists to cast doubt on this scenario: their arguments, as has often been observed, differ in no important respect from those of the old atheists. Actually, Paul himself was perfectly clear that the gospel was an offense to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles: such objections are hardly fresh and startling. The only startling thing is what our Lord has done for us and then asks of us—hard, implausible.

### Reason 3: It is not enough

Then there are those who are not so much bothered about whether the gospel makes things too hard or too easy, but rather about its not being enough—enough, that is, to satisfy their curiosity or answer various pressing questions or deal with certain personal concerns. Recently, it has been common among some scholars, and even popular writers, to assert that since history, including texts such as the Bible, is written by the winners of the relevant culture wars, we need the apocryphal gospels and all sorts of other ancient texts to figure out what was *really* going on. (Consider the wild popularity of a piece of raw fiction such as *The Da Vinci Code*.) In their view, Scripture is just one more book with no unique authority. Well, so many things are obscure to us, and the Bible is such a relatively small book, that some such arguments sound reasonable: Are we missing out on something essential, something that has not even occurred to us yet? Is it not precipitous to make a final commitment to Christ when so much remains unknown?

Or what about the things that have occurred to us? What about all the ethical questions posed by the possibilities of contemporary science that the Bible does not address at all—things such as cloning, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, and nuclear waste? Where shall we find guidelines that get past mere political rhetoric? What about the particular concerns of women and persons of a variety of ethnic backgrounds; that

they be treated fairly and their history and gifts be taken seriously? The gospel just does not address these things. How, then, could it be enough?

### Reason 4: There has to be a better way

Yet another reason for being attracted to another gospel is the conviction that, given how times have changed and how much scientific and technological progress we have made, surely we must have come up with a more adequate way of salvation by now (or, at least, have disabused ourselves of old, primitive hopes). Let’s be honest: many of us have transferred most of our daily expectations for practical help from God to science, led on by the genuine achievements of human knowledge. We turn more to doctors than to prayer for healing, more to irrigation than to Providence for success in farming, more to military technology than to an army of angels for protection from our enemies. Should we not likewise transpose our ideas of salvation into a new key? We have come of age in so many ways; is it not time we grew up with respect to our religious beliefs?

The trouble is that all of these objections and achievements, seductive though they are, do not, in the end, address our most fundamental problem. We hunger for a universe in which we matter, in which what we do and who we are has some larger importance. Without that, we will be restless and dissatisfied, no matter how comfortable and secure we manage to make our earthly lives. And we also suspect, deep down, that our internal unease has to do with faults we are powerless to correct in our own strength. No matter how often we say, “Never again,” after some particularly egregious human wickedness, the horrors continue: the “war to end all wars” led only to increasing violence; the Holocaust did not put a stop to genocide; and on and on. Even when achievements are real, the false gospel of progress can never by itself answer the question of what the progress is for. It leads us by its siren



song without ever telling us that the road ends—nowhere, as our sun finally burns out and our planet spins off into oblivion. Furthermore, the false gospel of progress has shown itself impotent to produce *moral* progress: we are as helpless to become truly better people by our own strength as we ever were.

## Holding fast to the genuine gospel of Christ

You see, it does not really matter whether the genuine gospel of Christ is easy or hard, whether it fails to satisfy our curiosity, does not answer all our contemporary questions, refuses to submit to our efforts to nail it down rationally, or declines to put on altogether modern dress, but only if the gospel is true. Probably most of us have, at one time or another, been troubled by some of the objections I have raised; I surely have. Even so, the

fact remains that our *ultimate* help comes from one place alone—from Calvary. The other alternatives show themselves again and again to fail, leaving us in our moral impotence and final futility. There is no other gospel—no other truly good news—than that Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again for our salvation, to save us from our sins, to remake us at last to be like Him, and to give us the sure hope of being with Him forever. There is no other gospel than that salvation is by grace, by God's free gift of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is easy enough to be available to the worst, most broken, most helpless sinner, who knows he has no righteousness to offer to God, no hope of making himself better, indeed, nothing at all that he can do for himself. The gospel is hard enough to challenge the most successful person's illusions about control of her own life, hard in its

demand that we serve rather than seek to be served, hard in its clear-eyed view of our relentless sinfulness. The gospel remains up-to-date in addressing the perennial human need for meaning in a universe that seems to run on with blind indifference to the hopes and fears of its human occupants. The gospel is complete with respect to the one thing we need most, so complete that nothing fundamental can be added in its provision for our salvation. As the old gospel song puts it,

I need no other argument,  
I need no other plea.  
It is enough that Jesus died,  
And that He died for me.<sup>3</sup>

1 Quoted in Martin Marty, *Context*, May 15, 1988, 1.

2 W. H. Auden, *For the Time Being* (New York: Random House, 1944).

3 Eliza E. Hewitt, "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place," 1891. Lidie H. Edmunds is a pseudonym for Eliza E. Hewitt.

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# From just a “church service” to a “serving church”: *Witnessing to the community*

Any pastor who has a committed regular number of people attending church on a weekly basis ought to have a degree of influence within the local community. This influence can be used for good, especially when the pastor sees the pastorate as extending beyond the church itself.

In my community I have sought to play a leading role in helping shape plans and events in a positive way. It is my privilege and prerogative to be a major player in the community. Therefore, I sit on neighborhood renewal committees, attend police advisory meetings, help organize community events, and even chair my local interdenominational clergy fraternity. Such involvement helps break down misunderstandings and prejudices, and raises the profile of the local church in the community in a positive way.

## Lodgers, not residents

Any church functioning in isolation shows no regard to the heartfelt needs of the people outside of the church; thus, who can expect positive results from any spiritual outreach programs planned in the church? People will see us as mere lodgers in the community rather than as true residents.

Being involved as a volunteer chaplain in my local hospital, prison, and university has enabled me to meet with people from an array of backgrounds and experiences. This has allowed me to understand some of the issues people are facing today as well as the social concerns of the various groups in the community, which, in turn, helps me guide my church in developing effective community projects to meet those needs.

This may not always be easy, especially if members are not too community focused and simply see the church as a place of worship. Most churches tend to have a natural inclination toward an inward focus and self-preservation. For older, more established churches, becoming externally focused can be as tough as a U-turn for an aircraft carrier.

On this area Ellen G. White mentions, “Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church, thus wearying themselves. . . . They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.”<sup>1</sup>

In their book *The Externally Focused Church*, Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson describe this kind of church as “willing to step outside the safety net of our church pews and cross the street into real-life, real-world acts of service

in order to share the truth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

## Refocusing

What is important is not only how members are trained to know how to engage with people in the community but to reprocess the traditional mind-set and attitudes among some members. While the church has been called to be separate in lifestyle, it has never been called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.

Very often a church’s attempt to engage its community is motivated solely by a proselytizing agenda. Community involvement is simply seen as dumping our faith on others in the streets with no regard to understanding where people are and what issues they are facing. We huddle in our Christian circles praying for the lost but never engage with them in any meaningful way. When we do engage in conversation, we directly or indirectly communicate the need for them to make a huge cultural leap and somehow join us.

One of the challenges that prevents effective community influence exists when churches fail to have a clear understanding of their mission. Dropping leaflets through the door or participating

in the annual Ingathering appeal may seem for some as doing their community outreach; but until there is a purpose-driven direction, the church will fail to make a positive impact. The Christian faith does not just ask us to believe something; it asks us to do something with our faith. So when we say we love our neighbor, how do we express that love? If we say we care about the poor, how do we show that we care?

It is no secret that today's churches must look beyond the traditional internal programming of the church if they are to reach the lost. Eric Swanson writes, "In a post-modern world most people are neither impressed with the size of a church or its commitment to 'truth.' . . . Perhaps, in this century, the greatest apologetic for the reality of Jesus Christ living in a community will be observational more than propositional. To have a faith that can be observed is to be living out the truths we want others to grasp and the life of the Savior we want them to know."<sup>3</sup>

When Jesus chose one passage to describe His mission and ministry, He picked up the scroll of Isaiah and read from Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, . . . to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion" (vv 1-3).<sup>4</sup>

The way He preached best was by holistically combining proclaiming with comforting and providing. Jesus ministered this way: "The Word became flesh and *made his dwelling among us*" (John 1:14; emphasis added). Likewise, the apostle Paul was as eager to "remember the poor" as he was "eager to preach the gospel" (Gal. 2:10; Rom. 1:15). Effective ministry has always been holistic, combining good deeds with good news (Acts 10:36-38).

### Christ's method

The familiar "Jesus approach" from White allows us to focus on the order of

priorities: "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. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>5</sup>

We see a sequence in procedure that Christ adopted:

1. Mingled with people—desired their good
2. Showed sympathy
3. Ministered to needs
4. Won confidence
5. Follow Me

In order for the church to fulfill its mandate, it needs to gain favor not only with God but with the people. "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

gained their trust; thus, they could respond positively to a spiritual solution for their present needs. Sometimes we can be guilty of jumping from step 1 straight to step 5 and expect results, but an appreciation of the whole process will result in far more meaningful and lasting relationships.

### Outreach

This approach was used successfully when a group of members from my church felt led to form a simple ministry of providing food to the down-and-outs in our local vicinity. Through the work of providing support and direction, each Sunday afternoon this group of 20 would assemble in the area of the community where the people hung out and provided soup, sandwiches, and rolls. The consistency of the group paid

*While the church has been called to be separate in lifestyle, it has never been called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.*

Christ mingled with people as one who desired their good; He showed no partiality within the people groups He came in contact with, for example, Pharisees, publicans, women, children, and foreigners. He showed sympathy for their needs. This would come through listening and understanding—for example, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery—they all received an opportunity to express their vulnerabilities without being condemned. By ministering to their emotional needs, be it acceptance, comfort, or encouragement, Christ

off as eventually their efforts became noted and appreciated.

Many of the ministry team got to know those who attended by name. We established genuine friendships and local attendees began to feel comfortable to share the stories of how they ended up on the streets or were hooked on their addictions. The focus of these weekly encounters moved from just being about food to providing a safe place for them to talk. After a few months, these Sunday afternoon meetings were followed up by a breakfast church service, which was held each

Sabbath morning in a rented hall. Today, we have a small church group composed solely of homeless people that meets each week. A church plant started as a result of the vision of a small group of members seeking to reach people where they were.

The possibilities are virtually unlimited when the local community sees that those people who attend church every Saturday morning also have a vested interest in what happens outside of the church. Also, this is of lasting benefit when they see that the church does not manifest exclusiveness but that the community can come into the church. Opening the doors of the church for community programs provides a meaningful link.

### Nightshift

The inspiring story of Hereford Baptist Church demonstrates how an unpromising situation can be turned to good and effective engagement. Set in the middle of a provincial market town, the church found itself with an aging congregation. The church was located in an area that had slowly become the nightclub section of the town. On Sunday mornings, the congregation would find the front area of the church full of rubbish and smelled of vomit and urine.

The membership wanted to build a wall around the front of the church to keep the clubbers out. Then one of the older members made a suggestion. Recognizing that she needed less sleep now that she was getting on in years, she proposed opening up the entrance hall of the church on Friday and Saturday nights and inviting the clubbing fraternity to use the toilets and to offer them a chat and a coffee. A group agreed to join her; that was the beginning of Nightshift.

From these small beginnings, some 200 people each weekend came in for free hot drinks, to use the toilets, and have a chat between 11 P.M. and 3 A.M. every weekend. How interesting that it was the older people who had the time and the skills to make the engagement, being nonthreatening grandparent

figures, and were able to bridge the generation gap. Peer engagement is not necessarily the most effective.

The story also illustrates the hunger for a sense of family. Many of the 18- to 20-year-olds would struggle to hold such conversations with their own parents, or might miss this relationship with their own grandparents because of geographical distance.

The church now has a committed volunteer to work specifically with Nightshift, and over the past couple of Christmases has held a clubbers' carol service. This has proved popular, and slowly a new congregation has begun to form. The church has turned a corner and begun to grow.

So how can your local church become a community-focused church? Here are some pointers:

### Consider your church

It will make sense to discuss and review with your leaders, board, or if possible the church at large, certain key questions, such as the following:

1. What is the mission of our church?
2. What are our core strategies?
3. Is our programming balanced for each strategy? What are the strengths? What are the weaknesses?
4. What could be streamlined?
5. If you are an older, established congregation, why do you think God has allowed your church to be where you are for so many years?
6. If you are a new church, why do you think God has placed you where you are right now in relation to your community?
7. If the church (not the building) ceased to exist, would the community notice?

### Research your community

Define your territory. Seek to establish a clear understanding of where your community lies. Is it the entire city where your church is? Or could you decide on a six-mile radius from the center of your church building?

A great first step to becoming an externally focused church is to know the community you want to help and the people you need to serve. Information can help direct your path, so do a community assessment.

Where can you find information about your community? One starting point is reviewing the statistical data available, for example, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>, or the local census data in your area. For some regions, it may be as easy as simply doing a Web search of your city to receive the data instantly. The facts give more than population data and will show social, economic, and housing characteristics. Dig a little deeper and you can find out things like how many people are out of work because of disability, what the major health issues are, how many are divorced, and how many people live below poverty level.

Why does this information matter? Behind the numbers are people, families, and neighborhoods. Statistical information can be the first step at "seeing" and understanding people.

### Identify a need

Another key element, having researched your area, is discovering the crucial needs and issues that speak loudly through the data. Then starting with one need, do something new and start small with the resources you have.

I was attending a church leaders' conference on community cohesion when a minister asked, "How large does your church have to be before you can effectively engage with the community?" We may assume that it must require more people than you may have. But to engage effectively with the families in your community, you do not have to be any larger than a family.

The usual question of how big your church is should be replaced with asking how big the impact you are having on the community is. Every other measure is interesting but not relevant. Let us refuse to be impressed by numbers alone.

A church of 12 adults wanted to engage its community but was unsure where to start. As they considered their options, one of the church leaders read in the local paper that there was a real need for foster parents. He brought the need to the congregation and asked whether any would consider this. Amazingly, six of the congregation agreed, and for a while they became known as the foster church.

Size is not the issue; willingness is. Unchurched people are less likely to be attracted to the church service but will be more responsive to the service of the church.


### Meet the needs

When a tornado ripped through town, the needs were evident to one local church. The pastor played host, opening the doors of his churches for

shelter and provisions. He then followed this by offering counseling and a “listening ear” program for those in need. A month later his church held a joint community-wide prayer service for those with destroyed homes and uprooted lives. Needless to say his initiative gained overwhelming communal support.

Another pastor in England, concerned about the levels of antisocial behavior in his community, took the initiative, together with his congregation, in forming “Street Pastors.” Each Saturday night laypeople, wearing distinctive blue jackets with “Street Pastor” printed on the back, parade in groups of two, engaging with youth on the street to listen and dialogue. The initiative, which received acclaimed recognition from the local police, has gone a long way toward reaching local

people’s needs and offering prayer as a way of helping them through their problems. This ministry has earned this congregation the title, as given to them by the community, the “church for the people.”

If all our churches were viewed in this way, we would be fulfilling our God-given mission to the community. It is about the local church coming together to bless the community or region in which it is placed. 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 291.
- 2 Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2004), 12.
- 3 Eric Swanson, “Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation,” *Mission America*, accessed July 17, 2013, [www.missionamerica.org/Brix?pagelD=13539](http://www.missionamerica.org/Brix?pagelD=13539).
- 4 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- 5 White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 143.

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## Reflecting Jesus

The call for revival and reformation in the church today invites us to advance to a new level of reflecting Jesus to the world. Our understanding of mission—living a life that brings glory to God—is the motivation for revival and reformation. Nothing else will work.

Revival and reformation need to be seen through the lens of mission. We must be careful lest the idea prevail that what we expect is a return to some previous state of presumed superior spirituality. A risk exists that some may assess revival and reformation in terms of a formula-driven code of behavior. History should teach us that a singular emphasis on piety for its own sake

ultimately fails; piety destroys itself because it becomes inward looking and self-referencing.

Though not the only prophet to do so, Amos spoke in unmistakable terms about God’s view of prayer and worship (sacrifices) that bore little connection to the business and social relations outside the place of worship (Amos 5:21–24). Spirituality cannot be some walled-off segment of one’s life in which a special relationship with God is cultivated.

God expects that discipleship will be something visible—at home, at school, in the marketplace as well as in the church. The Christian life should be something seen, not hidden.

The world too often fails to see in the followers of Jesus a compelling reason to take Him seriously. Revival and reformation should fit in the life of the believer. Will it not be true in our day, as in the days of the disciples, that when people discover that Jesus leads in our homes and churches they will break down the wall to get into His presence?

—LOWELL C. COOPER SERVES AS A VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.



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# Sex offenders in the church: *From apathy to action*

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a tremendous focus on clergy who sexually abuse parishioners. Many church denominations now require leaders and lay leaders to have background checks and attend seminars on issues of sexual abuse. While an admirable and important measure, the focus on leaders who sexually offend is too narrow. Focus should also include the creation and implementation of policies pertinent to visitors, attendees, or church members who have been accused, convicted, or adjudicated<sup>1</sup> of a sexual offense.

According to a report by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, there were 747,408 registered sex offenders in the United States by January 2012, with the number rising to between 754,000 to 776,000 by January 2013.<sup>2</sup> These figures are not fully accurate, however, because not every convicted or adjudicated sex offender is required to register, and not every individual who commits a sexual offense is convicted or adjudicated.

Social support is a crucial element in a sex offender's reintegration into the community;<sup>3</sup> however, many have lost the social support of family and friends. They turn to churches for the social support they need. Thus, some clergy and churches have become a social support for sex offenders, but

they do so without being equipped to understand the motivational and cognitive behavioral aspects of sexual offenses or how to handle conflicts that can arise when a sex offender visits, attends, or is a member of the church.

Perhaps even more difficult are situations in which an individual has been accused of a sexual offense but was never convicted or adjudicated. The alleged offense was never reported or there was not enough evidence for an adjudication or conviction. When it comes to sex offenders in the church, issues are either often swept under the carpet or clergy attempt to moderate these issues internally, within the church, often to the detriment of the victim, perpetrator, and congregation. While the church can play an important social and spiritual role in helping a sex offender avoid the risk of reoffending, the role of the church in ministering to these individuals must be moderated by the needs of victims and the safety of the congregation.

Some simple but important rules for handling current allegations of sexual abuse within a congregation include the following:

1. *Encourage victims to report allegations.* Silence is a disservice to both victim and offender, denying both the opportunity for healing. Judith Herman writes, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, "It is very tempting to

take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering."<sup>4</sup>

Victims should be afforded the chance to heal; they need the opportunity to work through the pain by talking with family, church family, friends, clergy members, professionals, or whomever they choose. While in the short term, remaining silent may help them to avoid the hurt and trauma of an investigation, it also deprives them of vital opportunities and tools for healing. Victims often experience shame and embarrassment that make it less likely they will seek help. Many, who never report abuse, wait until years later to seek help, even though their lives are falling apart because they never addressed the abuse. Silence deprives a victim of the opportunity to move from being a victim of sexual abuse to a survivor and, eventually, to someone who thrives.

At the same time, silence perpetuates the destructive cycle of perpetrators and denies them the opportunity for healing. The perpetrator needs to realize that there are consequences. Because of the shame and embarrassment, most sex

offenders are unlikely to reach out for help on their own.<sup>5</sup> The perpetrator benefits when sexual abuse is reported. Reporting a perpetrator lets him or her know that sexual abuse is not tolerated, that there are consequences for such behavior, and provides him or her with mandated and specialized help to avoid offending again.

Silence also places clergy in a difficult position. Clergy who know about but do not report sexual offenses can be prosecuted.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, an unreported instance of sexual abuse can haunt and split a church for years.<sup>7</sup> A sex offender is an excellent manipulator. He or she cultivates a charming façade with one group of people while preying on an individual or another group of people whom the first group is unlikely to believe. Moreover, when sexual abuse is not reported, clergy members are placed in the difficult position of “he said, she said” if both victim and perpetrator attend the same church. In these cases, typically, the victim becomes ostracized and isolated. Clergy should encourage victims and/or family and friends of victims to report abuse. If not, the clergy member should report the incident(s) to the police immediately.

*2. Mediation is not appropriate in issues of sexual abuse.* Do not try to mediate allegations of sexual abuse within the church. Mediation often does not work. In a victim-perpetrator relationship, there is a “power differential,” which means that the perpetrator had power over the victim due to age; life experience; physical strength; community, career, or family status; or in other ways. There is no way in which to create a level or neutral environment for mediation, especially after an alleged assault. Mediation negates the experience of the victim, belying the hurt and harm. Mediators can only ask the victim to compromise and remain silent, which ultimately punishes the alleged victim for the perpetrator’s destructive behavior. Mediation between the alleged victim and perpetrator should not be used.

*3. Do not try to handle the situation alone.* As one clergy member stated, “I

don’t trust myself fully to know the best course of action.”<sup>8</sup> Create an attitude of prayer, ask God for guidance, but also reach out to others for advice. Work with denominational and local church leaders. Utilize resources available in the community, in print, and online.

## Risk factors

So what can clergy do if there is an individual who wants to attend or is attending church, but who has been accused, convicted, or adjudicated of a sexual offense? First, the church leadership should examine risk factors. Risk

help keep myself from offending again.” A low-risk sex offender acknowledges that a risk always exists of reoffending; in contrast, a high-risk sex offender does not understand or is unwilling to admit that he or she is at risk.

*2. Has little or no support systems.* High-risk sex offenders have few or no family or friends, and their relationships are often unhealthy. They are unemployed or jump from job to job. They also jump from one friend or family member’s house to the next, or live in a house or apartment in a high-crime neighborhood. Sex offenders are

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factors do not look at guilt or innocence but provide warning flags in regards to whether an individual may be a danger to vulnerable populations in the church (vulnerable populations include but are not limited to children, the disabled, the elderly, and individuals who have experienced debilitating physical and/or emotional trauma). By examining risk factors, clergy and church leaders can determine if it is appropriate for the individual to attend that specific congregation and, if so, on which boundaries and restrictions attendance should be contingent. Indicators of risk include the following.<sup>9</sup>

*1. Not understanding that they are at risk.* A high-risk sex offender uses statements such as, “It will never happen again”; whereas, a low-risk sex offender focuses on “This is what I’m doing to

low risk and less likely to reoffend if involved in healthy intimate, familial, and/or social relationships, have stable employment, and safe and reliable housing.

*3. Considers sex to be an entitlement.* A high-risk sex offender regards sex as an entitlement, as something owed him or her. On the other hand, a low-risk sex offender understands that sex cannot be viewed as an entitlement. Instead, he or she acknowledges that sex is a privilege that comes as a result of a healthy, intimate relationship based on mutual love and respect.

*4. Has access to potential victims.* The more access sex offenders have to potential victims, the higher the risk of reoffending; the less access sex offenders have to potential victims, the lower the risk.

5. *Is not compliant with supervision and/or treatment.* High-risk sex offenders skip check-in times with their probation or parole officers and miss treatment appointments. This violates their probation or parole requirements; persistent violations will lead to arrest. If sex offenders are noncompliant with supervision and treatment, they are unlikely to be compliant with any boundaries or restrictions the church asks of them. Low-risk sex offenders are consistent in checking in with their supervision officers and attending treatment sessions. They are willing to abide by the boundaries and restrictions the church asks of them.

6. *Is hostile and angry.* A high-risk sex offender easily becomes hostile and angry. A low-risk sex offender, on the other hand, uses the tools he or she has learned in treatment to manage his or her anger, striving to remain calm in potentially explosive situations.

7. *Uses drugs and alcohol.* High-risk sex offenders consume alcohol and drugs. Low-risk sex offenders understand that drugs and alcohol lower their inhibitions and ability to avoid risky situations. Low-risk sex offenders avoid drugs and alcohol.

8. *Persistently denies or blames others.* High-risk sex offenders take no responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors, denying or blaming others instead. In contrast, low-risk sex offenders are open and honest with their clergy members about their offenses. When describing the offense, they take responsibility for the choices they have made without blaming the victim, law enforcement, or anyone else.


9. *Asks forgiveness but does not apologize.*<sup>10</sup> A high-risk sex offender uses forgiveness to manipulate others. Nothing would make him or her happier than for a church to forgive and forget. When a sex offender asks for forgiveness, the victim may not be ready to forgive. The healing process for a victim takes an indefinite period of time, and forgiveness may be a long way away.

Therefore, the victim becomes the unforgiving bad guy in the church. The church welcomes the perpetrator with open arms because he or she asked for forgiveness but ostracizes the unforgiving victim, allowing the sex offender to manipulate the church into silence. Low-risk sex offenders, however, apologize for their behaviors but do not ask for forgiveness. They understand that they have already taken from their victims, and to ask for forgiveness is to take even more. While forgiveness comprises an important part of healing for victims, it should happen on the victim's timetable and not the perpetrator's.

### Additional help

In addition to examining risk, clergy can utilize available resources. Denominational headquarters frequently employ lawyers who can offer advice or have useful materials about sexual abuse. Some churches retain local lawyers who are familiar with community and state laws concerning church legal responsibilities. Clergy can also contact the probation or parole officer of a convicted or adjudicated sex offender who is under supervision. A probation or parole officer is better able to give a clear and balanced picture of the individual's offense; this is better than relying solely on the word of the sex offender. Mental health providers with experience in the treatment of sex offenders are also excellent resources and are typically more than willing to answer general questions. Additionally, clergy can read materials available on the Internet or in books and journal articles. The Safer Society Foundation, at [www.saferociety.org](http://www.saferociety.org), is an excellent resource. This organization has accurate and insightful information, including links to other quality professional resource sites. Another resource includes the Safe Sanctuaries books by attorney Joy Thornburg Melton.<sup>11</sup> These resources were developed by the United Methodist Church, upon which they have built their Safe Sanctuary

policies. Remember that online and printed materials need to come from respected sources that use peer-reviewed research to provide the most accurate information possible.

Ministering to sexual offenders without ostracizing victims or placing vulnerable populations in a high-risk situation in the church can be difficult. There are no perfect solutions. However, by using some general rules, examining risk factors, and utilizing available resources, denominations, churches, and clergy can create church policies and boundaries that enhance safety for vulnerable populations in the congregation and ministers to the needs of both victims and perpetrators. 

- 1 Adjudicated means sentenced but not carrying a conviction on his or her criminal record.
- 2 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, "Number of Registered Sex Offenders in the U.S. Nears Three-Quarters of a Million," news release, January 23, 2012, <http://www.missingkids.com/News>.
- 3 W. R. Lindsay et al., "Self-Regulation of Sex Offending, Future Pathways and the Good Lives Model: Applications and Problems," *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 13, no. 1 (2007): 37–50.
- 4 Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 7, 8.
- 5 J. S. Levenson and L. P. Cotter, "The Effect of Megan's Law on Sex Offender Reintegration," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 21, no. 1 (2005): 49–66.
- 6 J. Eligon and L. Goodstein, "Kansas City Bishop Convicted of Shielding a Pedophile Priest," *New York Times*, September 6, 2012, accessed July 23, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/07/us/kansas-city-bishop-convicted-of-shielding-pedophile-priest.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/07/us/kansas-city-bishop-convicted-of-shielding-pedophile-priest.html?_r=0).
- 7 L. Frantzen, "A Theoretical Analysis of Protestant Clergy and Their Management of Internal and External Conflicts Regarding Congregants Who Have Sexually Offended" (PhD diss., Capella University, 2012).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Council on Sex Offender Treatment, *The Management and Containment of Sex Offenders* (Austin, TX: Texas Department of State Health Services, 2005), [www.dshs.state.tx.us/csot/csot\\_mgmt.pdf](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/csot/csot_mgmt.pdf); K. Hanson and A. Harris, "Where Should We Intervene? Dynamic Predictors of Sexual Offense Recidivism," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 27, no. 1 (February 2000): 6–35.
- 10 Number 9 is not an empirically based risk factor as are numbers 1–8. It is a part of treatment with sex offenders that, in my professional and personal experience, is vital in determining the risk level of sex offenders in churches. R. E. Longo with H. L. Bays and S. Sawyer, *Enhancing Empathy* (Holyoke, MA: NEARI Press, 2002).
- 11 Joy Thornburg Melton, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008); *Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2009); and *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2003).

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# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

## Ministerial Student Writing Contest

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

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1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission.
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  - c. Theological studies (including ethics)
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  - e. World missions
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3. Submit your manuscript in MS Word to [www.MinistryMagazine.org/swc](http://www.MinistryMagazine.org/swc). Please include the following information at the top of the manuscript: your name, address, email address, telephone number, category for which you are submitting (see above), religious affiliation, name of college/university/seminary you are attending, and title of your manuscript.
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### Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than **JUNE 30, 2014**.

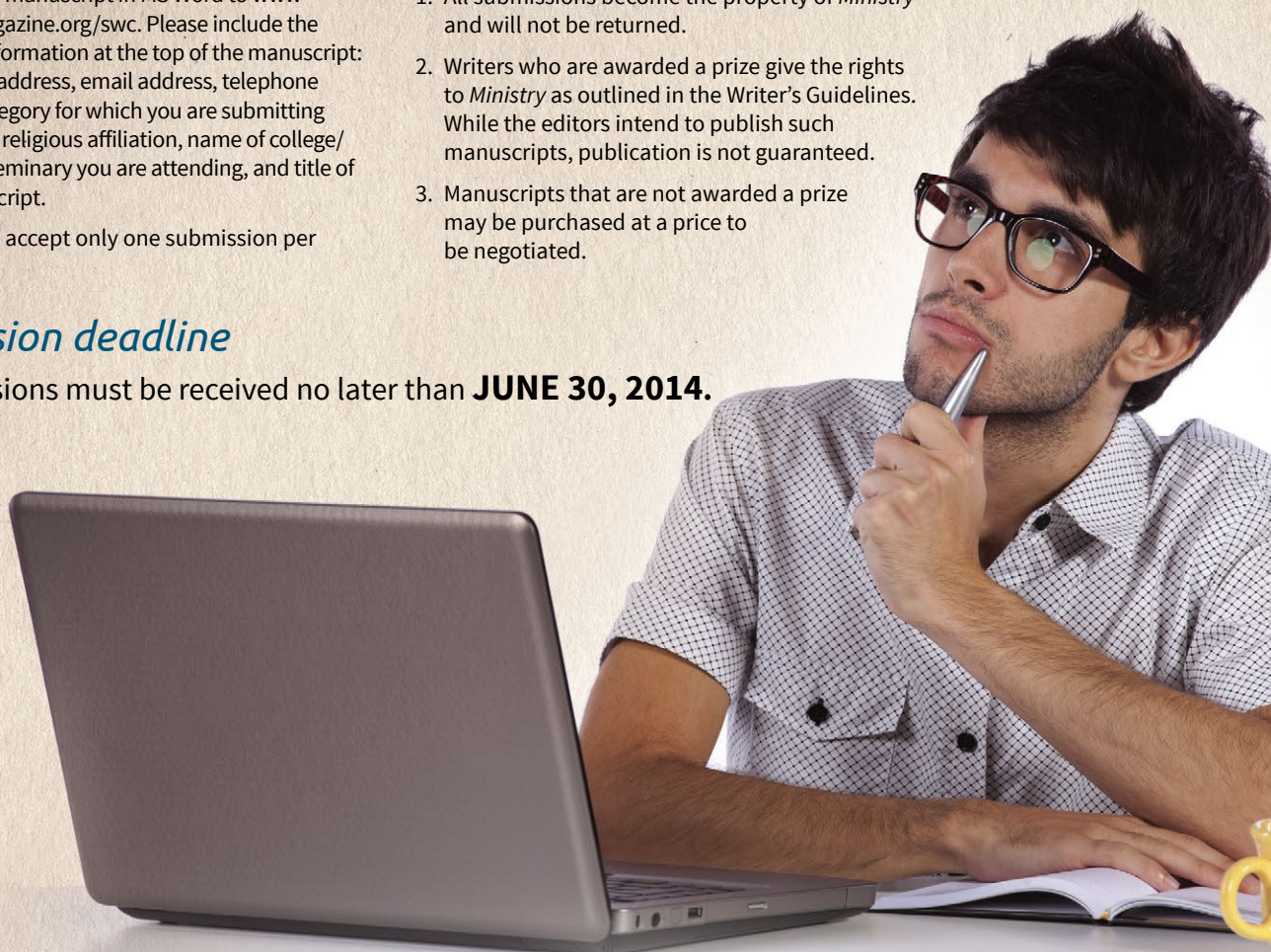
### Prizes

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

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

### Publication

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



**Richard Litke, PhD**, is professor emeritus at Walla Walla University, College Place, Washington, United States.



# The reproaches of Christ *versus* the treasures of Egypt: *New findings confirm biblical data*

If we were only there in person, we probably would have thought that we were witnessing one of the bitterest family quarrels in history. The older lady, with her chin thrust out in a picture of royal determination, may have been almost 50 years of age at the time; and because she was the next royal personage in line to the throne, she must have been accustomed to having her personal wishes promptly acted upon. But here was a younger man—a prince to be sure—who was carelessly uttering such obstinate words to her very face. What could she do to make him see the profound wisdom of her demands, and the complete nonsense of his decision?

The Bible gives us only the briefest of insights into that emotion-packed moment; but the words are still very revealing, and they are immensely significant. We read them in Hebrews 11:24–26: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than

the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”<sup>1</sup>

What makes the decision of Moses so extremely fascinating is the recent publication of some hitherto unknown details. These details provide us with new and exciting evidence about this ancient family quarrel and allow us to get a close-up picture of the mummy of the Egyptian princess who had adopted Moses and with whom he chose to quarrel. We can now understand more fully than ever before (indeed much more fully) just what the effect of Moses’ dramatic announcement had upon ancient Egypt and the royal family of pharaoh in particular.

We now know that Moses’ decision not only affected his life and future actions, it also had a profound effect upon the government of Egypt itself for several generations to come, even after the time of Moses.

## Supportive chronology

Consider this. In the January 2012 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, the editor quoted new information that located the dating of the Exodus as being two centuries earlier than what

the scholarly world usually believed.<sup>2</sup> This means that even liberal-minded scholarship is now able to agree with a dating of the Exodus that must have occurred close to the year 1445 B.C., as biblical chronology itself has always suggested. But how does this impact our understanding of Moses’ experience? The proper timing of the Exodus now allows us to give a more exact time for Moses’ life episodes, including the year of his birth and his decision to renounce his position in the royal family. This information of the timing of Moses’ life permits us to link up his life more easily with the individual members of the royal family that ruled Egypt during his lifetime.

Accepting an Exodus date of 1445 B.C., and recognizing the Bible clearly states that Moses was 80 years of age at that time (Exod. 7:7), that leads us to conclude that Moses must have been born in the year 1525 B.C. Then, if we assume that Moses was approximately 30 years old when he came of age, we can arrive at the year 1495 B.C. for the time when Moses made it clear that he was not the “son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” By making such a declaration,

Moses was obviously renouncing the possibility that he would ever become the next ruler of Egypt. And, therefore, this represented a most highly consequential decision.

## The family setting

Consider also another article. The *National Geographic* published an article by Chip Brown that places Moses in his proper family setting within the royal families of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> This helps us determine just who the pharaoh and “Pharaoh’s daughter” were during the years when Moses was growing up in the palace of Egypt as well as confirming the year when Moses made his momentous decision.

With Brown’s article before us, apparently without Brown’s notice as to what his article has innocently accomplished, it now has become possible to identify the woman described in the Bible as “Pharaoh’s daughter.” In the light of the details Brown mentions, the woman must certainly be identified with the famous princess known in the ancient Egyptian records as Hat-shep-sut, whose life span and later rule over Egypt now correlates perfectly with the pertinent episodes in the life of Moses. Therefore, it appears historically clear that the Hatshepsut of Brown’s article must be viewed as actually representing the same ancient princess of Egypt who rescued Moses out of the Nile River.

In the article, for example, Brown interestingly mentions a small detail: that “her chief steward and architect Senenmut refers to her as ‘the king’s firstborn daughter,’ a distinction that accents her lineage as the senior heir of Thutmose I rather than as the chief royal wife of Thutmose II.”<sup>4</sup>

Of course, those who are familiar with the reference to her in the book of Hebrews will remember the apostle’s description of Moses’ adoptive mother as “Pharaoh’s daughter.” Obviously, there is now a historical reason as to why, in the renunciation statement of Moses, it should be mentioned that he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

But in the area of the relative chronology of Moses, the *National Geographic* article has become especially helpful and informative. We would doubtless be justified in assuming that pharaoh’s daughter, in the Moses’ story of the Bible, must have been around 20 years of age when she took the baby Moses from the Nile; and this would place her birth year at a time close to 1545 B.C. But, according to Brown, Hatshepsut did not begin to rule Egypt until 1479 B.C.<sup>5</sup> Her total reign was 1479 B.C. through 1458 B.C.<sup>6</sup> This means that the royal family must have had at least 15 or 16 years (1495–1479 B.C.) to consider the potential effects of Moses’ statement.

his decision publicly known, Moses remained in Egypt only ten more years, that is, until 1485 B.C. Then, after killing an Egyptian, he fled the country (Exod. 2:12–15) because he feared the king of Egypt (at that time, the ruler of Egypt would still be Thutmose II, the father of Hatshepsut). Six years after Moses left Egypt, Thutmose II died and Hatshepsut needed to act. She obviously did not feel comfortable about marrying the youngster who would later become Thutmose III, and there was no other male heir left for her. Hence, in a bizarre chapter of ancient history, Hatshepsut boldly took command as though she were a male and declared herself to be the

**We can only imagine** *the internal turmoil that Moses’ decision must have caused in the Egyptian palace during those few critical years after 1495 B.C.*

We can only imagine the internal turmoil that Moses’ decision must have caused in the Egyptian palace during those few critical years after 1495 B.C. There surely would have been many pleading for Moses to change his mind and not be so obstinate. This possibility is pointed out by the fact that male heirs for the throne of Egypt were in very short supply at that time. In addition to Moses, there was only one other boy who could be remotely considered, and he was the son of a secondary wife of the previous pharaoh—a boy (later to bear the name of Thutmose III) who was 10 to 20 years younger than Moses.

The remaining years of Moses, and of the other actors in the dramatic events of that period as well, are now easy to work out. After making

pharaoh of the land of Egypt (hence, the title of Brown’s article “The King Herself,” or the title on the cover of the *National Geographic* as “The She-King of Egypt.”). It was as though she were replying to Moses, “All right, if you won’t cooperate and become the next pharaoh, I will do it myself!”

Hatshepsut ruled Egypt as a male ruler for approximately 21 years. During this time, she had a number of pictures and statues made of herself, but she always appeared with clothing that typified a king—never in the garb of a queen. In fact, she typically appeared in her representations, even with an artificial beard to accentuate her assumed maleness. Then, soon after her assumption of power, she elevated young Thutmose III to be a second pharaoh

with her. But he was always forced to appear in a secondary role—always with her out in front—a role under which he surely chafed.

Thutmose III revealed his true feelings about Hatshepsut soon after her death in 1458 B.C. First of all, her carefully mummified body was rather rudely taken out of the sarcophagus that she had previously prepared, and her mummy was carelessly tossed even out of her burial chamber into a small adjoining room that had been prepared for the location of some of her servants and their supplies for the supposed afterlife. Then in various places throughout Egypt, her pictures and statues were systematically mutilated to show the contempt that her successor felt towards her.

Brown has provided us with a splendidly helpful article about the life and times of Hatshepsut. His article is even more interesting because he seems not to detect the place that this ancient queen-king might have had in the life of the great lawgiver. But placing the two articles together makes it plausible now to make an obvious identification;

and Brown's article provides all busy pastors with much more of the human interest details that pertain to the early life of Moses, should they ever wish to employ these in a sermon. Also, Brown provides a number of interesting details about the search for Hatshepsut's mummy, including such topics as the fascinating discovery of a mummified tooth that eventually helped with the final identification of her mummy.

### Making the right choice

For preachers planning to prepare a sermon that uses Moses' early life, it will certainly prove highly interesting and valuable to refer to the *National Geographic* article, to read the details the article provides, and to look at the mummified face of the woman who tried to adopt the boy Moses as her own son, and who later failed in her quarrel to make him the next king of Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

The telling of the dramatic story, of course, seems to possess a powerful built-in sermonic appeal that encourages us all to make right choices in life. There may come to any of us times of personal struggle when, if we were to choose the

wrong way, great advantages seem to be promised—such as the throne of Egypt for Moses. But the example of the great lawgiver should encourage us to look the choices over very carefully and then choose correctly. Otherwise, a person might end his or her life story as an interesting exhibit in a museum case somewhere. Moses, instead of becoming an interesting museum exhibit, was given the privilege of being one who could personally encourage our Lord on the mount of transfiguration, and he probably now possesses a lofty administrative responsibility of some kind in the heavenly government of God above. How wonderfully good that he knew anciently just how to make the right choice. ❏

1 All Scripture passages are from the New King James Version.  
 2 See Hershel Shanks, "When Did Ancient Israel Begin?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 59–62, 67.  
 3 Chip Brown, "The King Herself," *National Geographic* 215, no. 4 (April 2009): 88–111.  
 4 *Ibid.*  
 5 *Ibid.*, 94.  
 6 *Ibid.*, 104.  
 7 See the photo gallery at "Hatshepsut," *National Geographic*, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/04/hatshepsut/garrett-photography>.

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## Kingdom building

To join with the Holy Spirit to build the kingdom of God can be described as "fun." Kingdom building is people building.

Martha Rollins from Richmond, Virginia, United States, is a living example of a kingdom builder whom God uses to bless a city. She is an antique dealer. Her shop was repeatedly voted Richmond's best antique store. God had her path cross that of Rosa Jiggets, a middle-aged lady from Richmond's Highland Park neighborhood. This community houses a disproportionate number of men and women coming out of

Virginia prisons. The recidivism rates are about 66 percent and those former inmates cannot find employment.

These two ladies formed Boaz and Ruth Enterprises. They started six businesses, hired ex-cons, and the community of Highland Park experienced a change. Proverbs 11:10 says, "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth" (ASV).

Ellen G. White shares with us, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men. . . . He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won

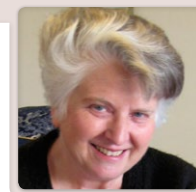
their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Look for ways to build people because building people is kingdom building—a practical revelation of true revival and reformation.

—IVAN LEIGH WARDEN, DMIN, SERVES AS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

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





# Murmuring discontent: *A lethal spiritual addiction*

Is your church membership on the decline? Has the stewardship growth and financial position of the church not been as robust as you planned or expected? Is your church finding itself unable to attract and minister to the youth?

Look out for a hidden enemy within your church. It is a common but deadly condition that infects most churches. It is as lethal to the spiritual body of the church as smoking is to the physical body. It is hard to overcome.

Its name?

Discontent. Murmuring discontent.

Such a deadly and dangerous condition has existed for generations and threatened the life and growth of faith communities for ages. An episode in the life of Israel shows that murmuring discontent is not only dangerous but also lethal, causing a host of spiritually ruinous conditions. The tragedy of murmuring discontent is cancerous in nature; a slow and insidious poison, its effects take years to be seen. Worse, murmuring discontent can also be very addictive.

## Wilderness stats

Observe how this cancer of murmuring and discontent wormed its way through the tribes of Israel wandering in the wilderness. Behind the statistics census recorded in the book of Numbers, chapters 1 and 26 tell the tragic story of murmuring discontent.

A quick look at the total tallies seems to confirm that Israelite numbers were much the same when they left Sinai (603,550 able-bodied men, 20 years old and up) as when they arrived on the borders of the Promised Land (601,730 men) 40 years later. From these statistics, it would be expected that all the tribes might be down by a few hundred men. But that is not true. Most of the tribes, seven of the 12, actually increased in number, one spectacularly. The tribe of Manasseh increased by 20,500, Benjamin by 10,200 men. The three tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, together, increased by 14,900 men; and Dan, Asher, and Naphtali together increased by 5,600 men. If these seven tribes *increased* by 51,200 men, where is the deficit?

The concentration of deaths was in Reuben, Simeon, and Gad—a tragic 45,020 fewer than when Israel left Sinai 40 years earlier. The tribe of Simeon *decreased* by a disastrous 37,100 men. Ephraim and Naphtali both decreased by 8,000 men.

## Dangerous cliques

The Israelite camp was not a haphazard affair, but carefully organized. The tribes camped in four triads arranged around the tabernacle. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were friendly neighbors camped together on the eastern side of the tabernacle with the priests camped between them and the

entrance to the tabernacle. The tribes from the sons of Rachel—Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin—were camped on the west, and to the north were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. The Levites were separated from all the other tribes, and divided so as to camp, with the priests, in a ring closest to and guarding the tabernacle (Num. 3:16–37).

The tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad were neighbors, mates camped together on the southern side of the tabernacle. Their closest neighbors, camped just to the north beside the tabernacle, were the Levite family of Kohath.

Among the family of Kohath was Korah, a cousin of Moses (Exod. 6:20–24), who turned out to be a discontented murmurer and leader of the rebellion against Moses (Num. 16). His associates in the rebellion were his next-door neighbors from the tribe of Reuben: Dathan, Abiram, and On. These men, gathering around their tent doors in chitchat conversations and discussions, encouraged each other in their discontent and rebellious thoughts and actions. Initially, the rebellion was confined to these men, their immediate families, and friends, and they died in an earthquake and fire sent from God (vv. 24–35). But soon the discontent and unhappiness spread; and the next day, more people were blaming Moses and Aaron for the deaths of these leaders.

The tragedy ended with an additional 14,700 dead. The text does not say that the rebellion was limited to the tribe of Reuben and its neighbors, but the statistics of 40 years bear its witness. It would be easy to blame God for these deaths, but God's will for the people is neatly indicated as a choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today . . . that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life" (Deut. 30:19).\*

(v. 6). A plague fell and killed 24,000. The disease of discontent is extremely contagious, and its results lethal. The census recorded in the next chapter of Numbers, suggests that very likely most of the 24,000 dead were from the tragically discontent-infected tribe of Simeon.

The tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad decreased considerably more than expected, while other tribes prospered. The leaders in the Baal Peor apostasy

and complaining that led to enormous tragedy among the children of Israel?

1. Take statistics seriously. If your church membership, participation, witness, stewardship, and other hallmarks of effective ministry begin to show a decline, ask the congregation and leaders for self-examination. Is there a spirit of discontent and complaint slowly spreading in your midst? If

*If your church membership, participation, witness, stewardship, and other hallmarks of effective ministry begin to show a decline, ask the congregation and leaders for self-examination.*

### The party at Baal Peor

Forty years later, again right on the border of the Promised Land, and just months before their triumphant conquests, Israel encountered trouble. Terrified Moabites hired Balaam to curse Israel. Three times he tried to curse, three times he failed. God clearly was protecting Israel. But what could not be achieved by cursing was achieved by inappropriate friendship. The Moabites invited Israel to join them for a bit of celebration, a party to their gods (Num. 25:2), and some Israelites accepted. After 40 years of smoldering discontent, what better than a neighborhood party to relieve the misery?

The party was a success, and friends were invited home. "Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites" (v. 14), brought home "a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel"

were also from the same geographically connected group of tribes as were those in the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. This suggests that the discontent of Korah and his group still caused disease 40 years later, resulting in the tragic death for many of its members. In the case of the tribe of Simeon, it was, horrifically, *most* of its members.

### Lessons to learn

But the greatest tragedy was that these people were almost home. At both times, Korah's rebellion and the Baal Peor party, they were on the border of the Promised Land. At both times, the discontent and murmuring resulted from people focusing on their own desires. The people had completely forgotten their mission—to take possession of God's gift, the land of Canaan.

What can we learn from these two instances of murmuring, discontent,

so, approach it prayerfully and, in time, deal with it so that harmony and unity once again return to the church.

2. Complaining leads to decline. If a group is declining or just not growing, murmuring discontent may be an unrecognized cause. This message needs to be shared with the membership. Personal appeal is probably a good place to start, but public messages are also important. These messages can be general or explicit if the nature of the discontent is clear. This is not easy work, especially for those dedicated to caring for others, such as pastors.
3. Examine your own heart. A discontented pastor, such as the Levite Korah, is just as much a church risk as a discontented member.
4. Look for unhealthy cliques that spread a culture of murmuring

and discontent. They need to be confronted in a spirit of God's love and power. The Israel narrative indicates that there are three characteristics of groups that lead to danger: (a) they know *better* than anyone else, usually in retrospect (Korah, Dathan, and Abiram); (b) they consider their own *leadership* superior (Korah); and (c) they *focus on their own needs* to the exclusion of the community (Zimri).

5. Recognize that the issues may have either occurred, or been around, for decades.
6. Encourage members to develop an attitude of gratitude. Research shows that this is a powerful factor in general good health and well-being. Simply asking people to note and record a few things each

day for which they are grateful is powerfully effective.

7. The reality of the Promised Land needs to be kept before the congregation. Christians need the vision of building up the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of the church in the wildwood.

### With God there is always hope

The good news? That by the grace of God *anything* can be overcome, even murmuring discontent. Not all of Korah's family died in the rebellion (Num. 26:11) and some descendants later became, under the leadership of King David, noted worship leaders in Israel, composers of beautiful poems and music that we still rejoice in today (see Pss. 42, 44–49, 84, 85, 87, 88).

Jesus offers wonderful promises of life, not death, to those who overcome. "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life.' . . . 'He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.' . . . 'I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone . . . [with] a new name.' . . . 'And I will give him the morning star.' " "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; . . . I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.' . . . 'I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.' . . . 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne' " (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:5, 12, 21). ❖

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

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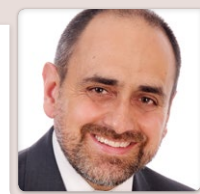
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**Eliezer Gonzalez**, with master's degrees in both Theology and Early Christian and Jewish Studies, is a PhD candidate in Gold Coast, Australia.



# After the apostles: *Lessons from the post-apostolic church*

**W**hen we think of church history, we typically think of the New Testament period, the Reformation, or the more modern history of the church. We may not focus on the immediate post-apostolic times, yet this was a vital time for the formation of Christianity. Lessons from this period should compel Christian leaders to go back to the Word and, more importantly, to its Author.

By the end of the first century, the apostles—the witnesses of the life and resurrection of Jesus—had all died. They had done their job well. They had given their lives in far-flung lands throughout the world, proclaiming that there is a Savior who had risen from the dead.

This all seemed to be working out well in spite of strong opposition from both Roman persecution and pagan philosophic and cultural attacks. But some of the largest threats the church had to face were from the inside—from the “fierce wolves” that Paul predicted (Acts 20:29).<sup>1</sup> The apostle’s letters are firsthand evidence that the wolves were already at work, and serious divisions were threatening the church.

## Philosophical onslaughts

Two principal philosophical onslaughts struck at the church early in its life: Gnosticism and Docetism. Gnostics were dualists who taught that

matter was bad and spirit was good. Hence, the body was evil and the soul was good. The body was a dead loss; but by acquiring special knowledge (*gnosis*), the soul after death could leave the body and lead an immortal life—say, up in heaven. The special knowledge that provides such a liberation is something only a privileged few could have, and this knowledge is hidden in the Bible through all kinds of symbols and concealed modes.

Such Gnostic ideas were present even in New Testament times as evident in Paul’s advice to Timothy to avoid “the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ [*gnosis*]” (1 Tim. 6:20). The Gnostic positions were fought long and hard by post-canonical church leaders from Ignatius to Tertullian.

Closely related to Gnosticism was Docetism. Docetists also taught that the body was bad; in fact, it was so bad that Jesus could not have had a real body because He was God. His human appearance and experiences were just an illusion, and, of course, He could not have really died on the cross. Such false teachings influenced some early Christians, even in the apostolic period, that they doubted the reality that Jesus was indeed God in flesh, so much so that John emphasized in his first letter that he was writing about the real Jesus, whom “we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have

touched with our hands” (1 John 1:1). A little later, Ignatius of Antioch similarly argued for the reality of “Jesus Christ . . . who really [*alethos*] was born, who both ate and drank; who really [*alethos*] was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really [*alethos*] was crucified and died . . . who, moreover, really [*alethos*] was raised from the dead.”<sup>2</sup> The word translated as “really” is also the root word for *aletheia*, meaning “truth.” Thus, Ignatius and others like him held that the bodily incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus were real and true.

Gnostic and Docetic ideas were propagated through a multitude of “gospels” and other literature that sprang up within Christianity from the second century and onwards. The following illustrates the nature of some of these texts: in one of them, Jesus is talking about the Crucifixion, and He says, “It was a joke, I tell you, it was a joke,”<sup>3</sup> and He then mocks Christians who “proclaim the doctrine of a dead man.”<sup>4</sup>

Gnosticism and Docetism were wildly popular views within the church, because they seemed to make sense. If salvation was so special, then you needed to know special things in order to be saved. If Jesus was God, then there was no way that He could have really immersed Himself in the evil that *was* this world. Since the flesh is matter and hence evil, to say that Jesus



became flesh in the process of incarnation implies that He became sinful. Hence, Jesus was not really human. All these teachings were in line with the intellectual and cultural paradigms of the day and only supposedly “ignorant” people disagreed with them.

The twin ideas of Gnosticism and Docetism brought serious consequences to Christianity. To look for the plain meaning of Scripture was no longer good enough for many Christians. If only special people could have access to the special knowledge, then it was important to learn only from them, since they held the key to your salvation. If the body was evil, what need was there for the resurrection of the body? Instead, the soul could ascend immediately to heaven. In fact, there was no longer any need for Jesus to come again since it was not just the body, but the whole world that was evil. If Jesus did not really die and rise again, then this could not be the basis of salvation, and the focus shifted to what humans had to know and what they had to do in order to be saved. In this way, the truth of righteousness by faith was obscured.

For these reasons, the “church fathers”—church leaders who lived in the post-apostolic times—had a difficult job in the defense of the gospel as it was proclaimed by the apostles. On the whole, however, they rose to the challenge, and writers such as Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus, Minucius Felix, and Irenaeus, variously mounted strong defenses of the New Testament teachings on issues such as the nature of humanity, the state of the dead, and the end of the world. But even in these writings, the seeds of future problems were sown.

How they interpreted Scripture was part of the problem. Many of them, such as Clement and Origen, saw the Bible as having hidden levels of meaning requiring interpretations that, at times, were far-fetched. By abandoning a clear and literal basis for understanding the Bible, they discarded the hermeneutic boundaries that had guided the writers of the New Testament. Origen,

for example, was well known for his allegorical method of interpretation. A simple narrative of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1–7), in the hands of Origen, became a vehicle to allegorize that the donkey represents the Old Testament and the colt the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that we can find the allegorical method of interpretation in the New Testament, the New Testament authors displayed a restraint and consistent hermeneutic that is notably absent in Origen and other Alexandrian fathers.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to methods of interpretation, the church leaders faced another problem: as they engaged with

but who were essentially pagan in belief and lifestyle. By the end of the second century, the large majority of professing Christians across the Roman Empire did not meet in house churches or church buildings; instead, they met in cemeteries, and celebrated the Lord’s Supper on the graves of the dead, amid nightlong drunken feasts.<sup>7</sup>

Even the pagans were shocked by the behavior of these Christians, since civilized people went to the temples to pray. We have the record of a pagan mayor of a North African town who, in speaking to the Christians, refers to the cemeteries as the places “where you all make your prayers.”<sup>8</sup> You can almost

*God always has had His people in every age who have stood up for what is right, and we know that He will have the final word.*

intellectuals of their day in defense of their faith, they obviously used the philosophical language and ideas of the time. Such engagement was not the problem; the problem was that as they did this, they gradually absorbed more and more of those intellectual philosophies and cultural paradigms themselves. Indeed, some of these church fathers, such as Athenagoras and Clement, considered Plato as a kind of honorary Christian and as having been used by God to prepare the way for Christianity.

### **A dead church—literally!**

The church kept growing rapidly and soon ended up consisting of vast numbers of baptized pagans. These were people who professed Christianity

hear the sneer in his voice. Many of the first Christian basilicas, including what is now St. Peter’s Basilica, were built on cemeteries.<sup>9</sup>

Why did Christians do this? The reason is simple: they were just practicing the traditional cult of the dead as they had always done when they were pagans; and in their minds, they had created their own amalgam of Christianity and their pagan lifestyle and beliefs.

For 200 years, the church leaders tolerated this “Christian” cult of the dead because they could do little else. By the time they started to write against it or ban it, it was too late. Most people did not listen; they were too used to what was by now simply “Christian” tradition. When Augustine, the bishop of

Hippo, tried to reform these practices, the people complained: "Why now? Those who allowed it in times past were surely not unchristian."<sup>10</sup> Eventually, bishops like Ambrose and Augustine decided on another strategy; instead of banning these popular practices altogether, they brought them under their control.<sup>11</sup> And so the semi-Christian cult of the dead morphed into the official cult of the saints. The offering of the Lord's Supper on the graves of the saints became the offering of the Mass for the dead on the altars of the large churches, under which the bodies of the saints had been reburied.<sup>12</sup>

The progressive physical changes to worship, made in the fourth and fifth centuries, corresponded to the official acceptance of changes to the teachings of the church. But these "new" teachings were ones that most Christians had popularly believed for a very long time. The cult of the saints required the church to reduce its focus

on a resurrection at the second coming of Jesus, since the martyrs and saints were already in heaven with God; and most Christians believed that when they, themselves, died, they would just go up to join them. Obviously, together with this, the church also had to give up its long-standing battle against Platonic dualism. And if the saints and martyrs could intercede in heaven, then the whole question of Jesus as our Intercessor became rather downgraded since there were other means for salvation with which the people were better able to relate.<sup>13</sup> Human works, in terms of keeping the saints in the afterlife pleased, started to take on a lot more importance in Christianity; and, of course, the church needed to find new ways to interpret the Bible because the old ways just did not work for the "modern" times.

The big question remains not whether these things happened, but why, after having fought against them

for more than 200 years, did church leaders cave in so stunningly? Why did they betray the New Testament beliefs that those who had gone before them had so strongly upheld? The facts that they interpreted the Bible in allegorical ways and that they had absorbed much of the philosophical paradigms of their day might be counted as factors that contributed to their capitulation, but these facts do not explain it fully. Ultimately, it was not these things, nor was it Gnosticism or Docetism, that caused them to capitulate. The fundamental reason why the church leadership caved in is to be found in numbers. When they saw that the popular positions would win, they took the easy route. Lack of courage went hand in hand with the desire to have the acclaim of the people. They accommodated the views and practices of a vast number of church members.

There were courageous people who protested. Vigilantius was one; he

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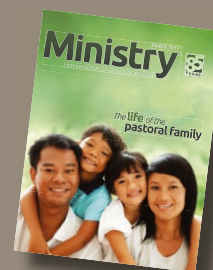
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protested in Italy against the Christian practice of the cult of the dead. As a result, Jerome called him “insane in the head.”<sup>14</sup> Nothing that Vigilantius actually wrote has survived, and anything we know about him is from the writings of his enemies. But God always has had His people in every age who have stood up for what is right, and we know that He will have the final word.

## Lessons from history

History often repeats itself, and Christians should find this important to remember, for people are still fundamentally the same; they crave acceptance and popularity. It is always easier to accept the view of the majority, but it takes courage for Christian leaders to stand on the principles of the Word of God. If, at one time, Christian

leaders capitulated to error one by one, today they must also stand for God one by one.

Of all the important lessons that we need to learn from the history of the early church, one stands out: popular pressure, numbers, and votes do not decide truth; neither do the eminence of people who hold to particular views; nor the antiquity of established beliefs and practices. The Word of the Lord must reign supreme; Jesus must be Lord in our lives and in the life of the church. This concept is no less relevant for the church today than for the church when the apostles lived. 

- 1 All Scripture passages are from the English Standard Version.
- 2 Ignatius, *Trallians* 9.1–2, 10, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed., ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 220, 221.
- 3 Marvin Meyer, trans., *The Second Discourse of Great Seth*, 60.13, in

*The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts*, ed. Marvin Meyer, The International Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 482.

- 4 Meyer, *The Second Discourse of Great Seth*, 60.20, 482.
- 5 Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 10.18.
- 6 Some of Jesus’ parables, such as the parable of the soils (Mark 4:1–20), are intended to be interpreted allegorically. Paul also used allegorical interpretation in several places in his epistles, as in Galatians 4:21–31.
- 7 See Augustine, *Letter* 29.10–11; *Sermon* 311.5; Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 27.542–567, 595.
- 8 *Acta purgationis Felicis 5*, in *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, trans. and ed. Mark Edwards, *Translated Texts for Historians* 27 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 174.
- 9 Ramsay MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010): 597–613.
- 10 Augustine, *Letter* 29.8, in *St. Augustine: Select Letters*, trans. J. H. Baxter, Loeb Classical Library 239 (London: Heinemann, 1965), 81, 82.
- 11 Augustine, *Confessions* 6.2; Augustine, *Letter* 22.3; 29.8–9; *Breviarium Hipponense 29; Concilium Hipponense a.*, 393.
- 12 Robin M. Jensen, “Dining With the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context—Studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials*, eds. Laurie Brink and Deborah Green (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 120.
- 13 Cyprian, *Letter* 21.3.2.
- 14 Jerome, *Vigilantius* 5.

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## LETTERS

Continued from page 4



pseudepigraphal source the Psalms of Solomon 2:6 employs the same construction Paul uses in Romans 16:7 and is clearly exclusive: “the Jews were (in)famous among the Gentiles.” The Jews were *not* Gentiles. Thus Junia not being an apostle still falls into the realm of academic possibility. Finally, even if the preposition *en* + dative is normally inclusive (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:11, LXX), truth is not established by quantity but by use in context and authorial intent.

After several *Ministry* articles espousing an egalitarian interpretation of Phoebe, Junia, etc., a contrarian (complementary) view is still biblically defensible.

Ingo Sorke, Joshua, Texas, United States

## The woman at the well

Signe Tonstad’s article “Ministry Lessons From the Woman at the Well” (July 2013) was very well written.

I, too, have spent time writing on the Samaritan woman for my seminary thesis and agree that both Jesus and the woman had a need for each other. I respect that he sought to understand how this was a relationship built on respect for each other, not based on her sin alone as has been preached through generations.

Thank you for sharing this writing with the world.

Denise Meyer, St. Petersburg, Florida, United States


## Visiting the members of your congregations

Michael Campbell did a well-balanced job of covering the various aspects of visitation in his article (“The Art of the Pastoral Visit”) in the July 2013 issue of *Ministry*.

Throughout our 41 years of ministry and later during active retirement, my

husband has utilized most of the principles Dr. Campbell wrote about. One day, early in our ministry, I answered the doorbell to find my husband, expecting to be invited in. I knew he was visiting in our neighborhood, and was so totally caught off guard that I snickered. But he was dead serious. When I realized his sincerity, I invited him in. He genuinely asked about my spiritual concerns and prayer requests. As we prayed together following his visit, I was touched that he included me as part of his congregation. I *never* forgot it. Since then he has “visited” our home numerous times.

Your readers may find other unique ways to include their families in their visitation, but whatever method is used, please be sure to include your family on a regular basis.

Dorothy Toppenberg, email 



## Preaching Christ From Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons

By Sidney Greidanus, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.

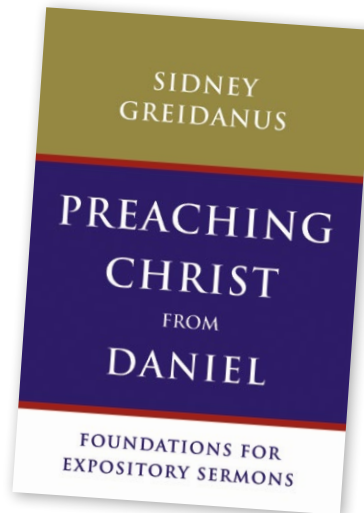
Sidney Greidanus, a professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, has penned books focused primarily on Old Testament preaching.

Greidanus accepts the long-held view that Daniel was written during the sixth century and not second century B.C. He points out that as early as the third century A.D., a critic of Christianity, Porphyry, “attacked the traditional position, claiming that prophecy cannot predict events four hundred years in advance. He held that the author of Daniel was a forger who wrote the book in the second century B.C., after these events had taken place (*vaticinium ex eventu*)” (5). Unfortunately, Porphyry’s position has been accepted by a significant number of scholars. How one preaches from Daniel will be impacted by the view of authorship. Those who accept early authorship will find this book helpful in their preaching.

The most useful feature of the book is the method the author uses to develop sermons from each chapter. He approaches the chapter in the following manner: Text and Context; Literary Feature; Theocentric Interpretation; Textual Theme and Goal; Ways to Preach Christ; Sermon Theme, Goal, and Need; and Sermon Exposition. This is a helpful approach; but occasionally some categories are not as helpful as the author assumes. This is especially true for the section labeled “Ways to Preach Christ.” In some chapters, that section goes somewhat beyond what appears to be in the biblical chapter. Even though, on a number of occasions,

I found myself disagreeing with the author’s interpretations of texts and symbols (e.g., his statement that “there is virtually unanimous agreement that this little horn must be identified as the Seleucid king Antiochus IV,” [257] is not as unanimous as he assumes), his disciplined approach for each chapter is helpful.

The bibliography is fairly extensive, though the use of these sources is not as broad as it should be. It seems that the writer is familiar with certain groups of authors and thus advocates those views. His reference to the nineteenth century student of Daniel, William Miller, is one such example. Greidanus points to Miller’s interpretation of the 2,300 days of Daniel that Christ would literally come in 1843 or 1844. The author ignores the fact that others (mainly Protestant) also understood the 2,300 days prophecy to end at about the same time.<sup>1</sup> Greidanus’s book would be stronger and would have avoided this misconception if he had



consulted a broader spectrum of sources. While he makes an incidental reference to Zdravko Stefanovic, a deeper engagement with this quality commentary would have strengthened his book.<sup>2</sup> Another helpful source, William H. Shea’s book on Daniel, is not referred to at all nor listed in the bibliography.<sup>3</sup>

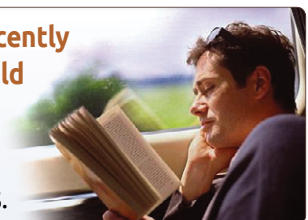
Referring to Stefanovic’s book, the author reminds us that Daniel was often quoted in the New Testament and that according to Stefanovic, Daniel was a favorite book of Jesus (27). In spite of such a testimonial, many do not preach Daniel. This book is a helpful source to those who take the book of Daniel seriously and who wish to share its message of hope.

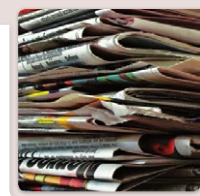
—Reviewed by Nikolaus Satelmajer, DMin, retired editor, Ministry. ✉

- 1 Miller and the others did not disagree on the time aspect of the prophecy—they disagreed on the nature of the event. Miller believed in the literal return of Jesus Christ; whereas, most others believed that at that point, an earthly millennium of peace would start.
- 2 Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2007).
- 3 William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader’s Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2005).

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## ► Southwestern Union hosts “Jesus All” 2013 Young Adult Festival of Worship

**Arlington, Texas, United States—**The second annual union-wide Young Adult Worship Festival hosted record-breaking attendance this past spring as it convened in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex (DFW). Themed “Jesus All,” the intent was to encourage the next generation to put Jesus at the center of their lives.

The festival launched with speaker **Russ Laughlin**, vice president for spiritual development, Southwestern Adventist University, and performances by the University Singers under the direction of **Jonathan Wall**. Dr. **A. Allan Martin** and Pastor **Leah Jordache**, Southwestern Union Conference coordinator of discipleship and young adult ministry, led worship sessions.

“The message in each worship service was excellent,” lauded young adult **Jorge Mardones**. “The speakers and artists were on fire for Christ and their passion transferred over to us.” The afternoon afforded attendees options for spiritual growth seminars as well as a volunteer service opportunity at Mission Arlington, a community agency providing support to families in need.

“Serving the community allows us to develop our character and use our talents—to get out of our comfort zones,” shared collegian **David Kuchurivsky**. “It allows us to pursue

something that God is driving in us—to be involved and try something new that will help us become better believers.” “Spiritually, it gave me more reasons to sing about what I believe,” shared student **Nethania Amanuel**. “I want to be a bit more Jesus-inspired in my faith.”

The festival culminated with an evening concert by YG (Young Generation) Worship and award-winning recording

at the festival and continue the movement to make Jesus the center of it all. With such great worship experiences, service and growth activities, and social opportunities, young adults are already looking forward to next year’s Young Adult Festival of Worship.

“The emphasis on Jesus as everything was very, very important,” reflected Jordache. “So often we get confused about what our religion is



artist **Chris August**. With the desire to praise Jesus Christ, the concert engaged and inspired the audience with worship songs, and August shared his personal testimony.

Registered young adults were given a “swag bag” filled with books and resources to share what they learned

about, or even what our lives are supposed to be about. We need to be reminded that Jesus is everything, and when we are in Him, we have everything we need. That was the theme for the festival and I think it’s crucial, especially for young adults who are trying to live out their faith.” [Oddie Olazaran]



**Fred Hardinge, DrPH, RD**, is associate director, Health Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

## Lessons *from* two lepers

**F**rom the time I was a young boy, one of my favorite stories in the Bible tells how God miraculously healed Naaman (2 King 5)—a classic story of God’s provision for unbelievers. I find this chapter to have both a joyful section and a troubling one as well. Each of these sections powerfully illustrates two important principles of effective health ministry today.

First, the joyful section. Naaman visited all the best physicians and healers in Syria but found no help. Through the witness of the Hebrew maid in his home, he learned of God’s prophet in Israel. The king of Syria readily agreed

left Elisha’s house in a rage. After all, were not the rivers of Syria far nicer than the muddy Jordan? As he headed back home, some of his wiser servants reasoned with him. “‘If the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?’ ” (v. 13). As his anger cooled, he turned toward the Jordan, jumped in, and dipped himself seven times “and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (v. 14).

A very grateful Naaman and his retinue of aides rushed back to the prophet’s home to offer him costly gifts in exchange for his healing. However, Elisha refused to accept any payment at all and wished him peace.

Many of us today are like the Naaman of old. We refuse the simple things God asks us to do, especially in the area of the prevention of many common diseases. We would rather spend small fortunes on pills, potions, syrups, and claimed cures rather than give up our health-destroying habits by adopting and using God’s simple, wholesome lifestyle of balanced living and eating—a way of life that is readily available around the world and is most economical and effective.

What healed Naaman? Did the special minerals that made the Jordan River muddy or the ritual of dipping seven times heal Naaman? No! It was “only through following the specific directions of the prophet that he could find healing. Willing obedience alone would bring the desired result.”<sup>2</sup>

Now the troubling section of the chapter. The prophet refused all payment for what God had done. Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, could not tolerate seeing Naaman return to Syria with all the wealth he had brought with him and was determined to profit from

God’s miracle of healing. So, he ran after Naaman to get something for himself (vv. 20, 21). When Naaman saw him, he gladly stopped, thinking something must be wrong. But the greedy servant now lied to Naaman. Out of a grateful heart, Naaman offered Gehazi more than he asked for, plus two servants to transport it back to his home. After lying to Elisha about where he had been and what he had done, the prophet declared that Gehazi would become a leper, and indeed it was so.

Why, when people are desperate for help, does there always seem to be some who willingly take advantage of them? While we might expect this from the unsaved, we find it very troubling when this same behavior lives inside the church.

Today, the world is filled with greedy opportunists, and sadly there are Gehazis in the church as well. They seek to sell unproven health products through multilevel marketing schemes: nutraceuticals, botanicals, cancer cures, equipment, and others. Rarely are these things inexpensive, but almost always the claims are fanciful.

“Solemn are the lessons taught by this experience of one to whom had been given high and holy privileges. The course of Gehazi was such as to place a stumbling block in the pathway of Naaman, upon whose mind had broken a wonderful light, and who was favorably disposed toward the service of the living God.”<sup>3</sup>

Our goal must be “not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33, KJV). ❏

*Poor Naaman.  
He was expecting  
something  
entirely different.*

and wrote a letter of introduction. With a heart filled with new hope, he set off for Samaria with considerable wealth to be used to pay for his healing.

Finally, after a detour to visit the king of Israel, he arrived at the residence of the prophet Elisha. Rather than come out and meet Naaman, the prophet sent his servant to him with a very simple message. “‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean’ ” (v. 10).<sup>1</sup>

Poor Naaman. He was expecting something entirely different. Angry and frustrated, he turned around and

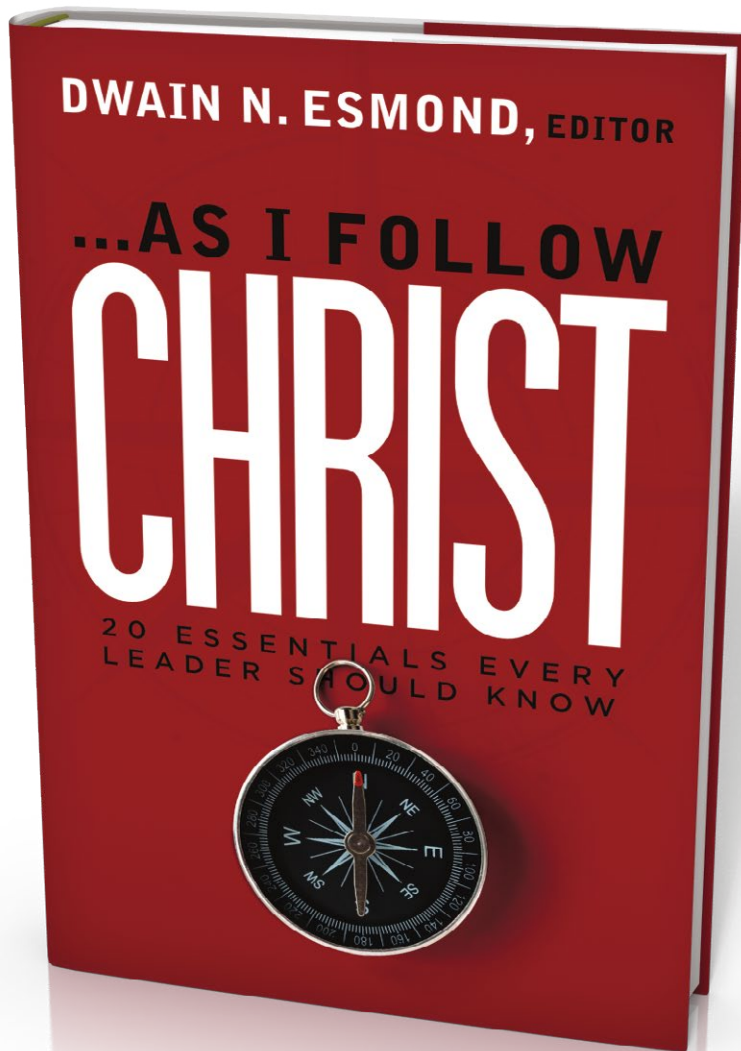
<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), 249.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

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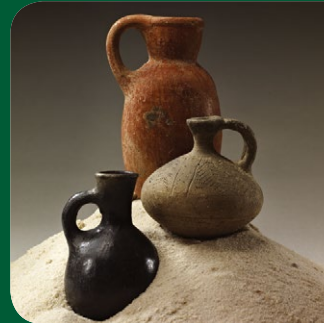
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