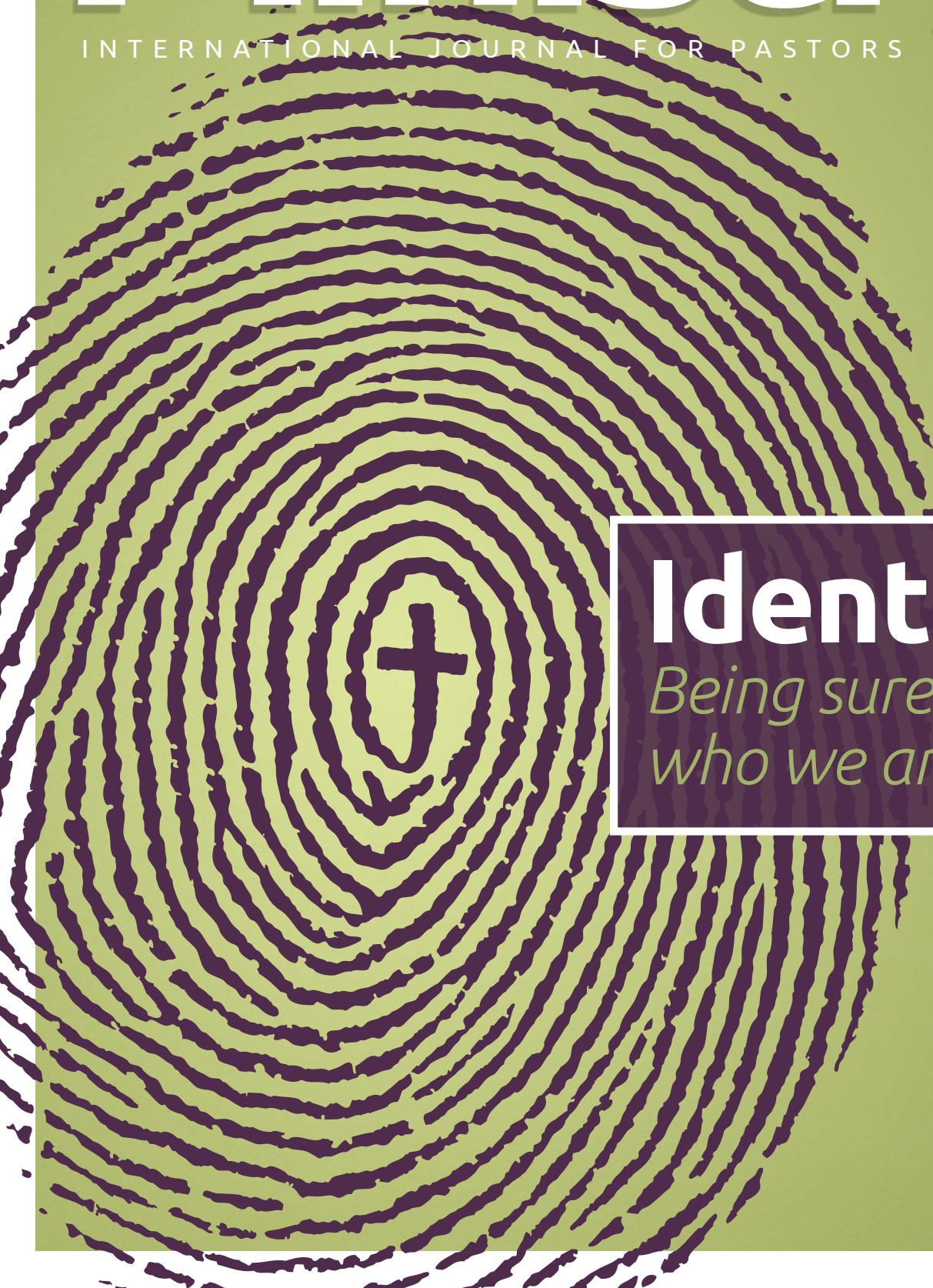


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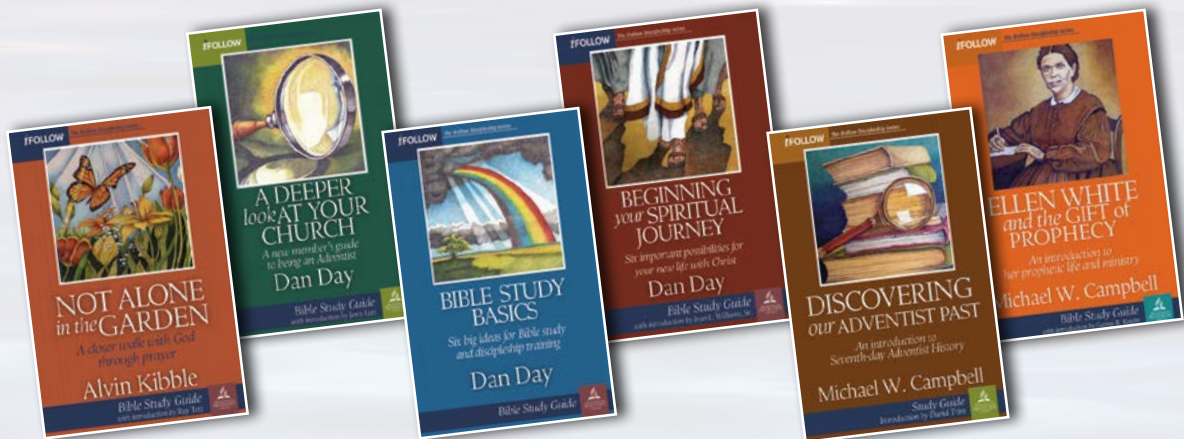
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06 Identity: Being sure about who we are

Reinder Bruinsma

Read the author's version of what Seventh-day Adventists mean when they speak of the need to carefully maintain their Adventist identity.

10 "The very atmosphere of heaven": Lessons from South Lancaster

Shawn Brace

What will it take for us to finally realize the revival that God wants us to experience?

13 Streaming to the Lord

Roy E. Gane

The author describes how, if the Israelites had continued to accept the loving guidance of the Lord, they would have received the wonderful blessings He was eager to lavish upon them.

16 Ordination: The neglected dimension

Dan Serns

This pastor says, "All baptized members are ordained at the time of baptism to a lifetime of mission and ministry." Do you agree?

20 The Sabbath: A delight?

Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

Read the six steps that ensure your family enjoys the Sabbath as a day of delight.

24 Literature ministry in today's church

Nelson Ernst

Literature ministry is a call to think of what life is all about—normal people confronting life in all its reality.

05 Editorial

19 Revival and Reformation

28 Dateline

29 Resources

30 Practical Pointers

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A clear sense of identity

In their recent book *Mission Drift*, Peter Grist and Chris Horst make the following prediction: “Without careful attention, faith-based organizations will inevitably drift from their founding purpose and mission.”¹ They cite several examples, including Harvard University, which began as a faith-based institution of higher learning but today is described as “godless.”² How can we avoid mission drift, both personally and as a Christian community?

We can learn from the example of Jesus. He had a clear sense of identity. When He was challenged by the religious leaders of His day, He responded, “I know where I came from and where I am going” (John 8:14).³ This clear sense of identity gave purpose and direction to His life and ministry: “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38). His mission was clear: “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

A clear sense of identity is also vitally important for every follower of Jesus, and particularly for every Christian leader. We should know where we came from. We are not here as the result of a cosmic accident. The testimony of Scripture is clear: “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). The psalmist confirmed this precious truth in his inspired song of praise: “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker” (Ps. 95:6).

As we study the Scriptures, we discover not only where we came from but also where we are going. As followers of Jesus, we believe His promise

that He will return to earth and take us to heaven (John 14:2, 3). When Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, the prayer of Jesus will be fulfilled for each one of us: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me” (John 17:24). This is the glorious destiny of all who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Our lives are filled with meaning and hope.


identity. We desperately need that same clear sense of identity today.

In the lead article in this issue of *Ministry*, Reinder Bruinsma addresses the important question of Adventist identity. He reminds us that we always need to remember where we came from and where we are going.

Some years ago, my wife and I had the opportunity to take a cruise up the Inside Passage from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Seward, Alaska. The scen-

As we study the Scriptures, we discover not only where we came from but also where we are going.

Not only do we need a clear sense of identity as individuals, but we also need to know who we are as a community of believers. Early Adventist pioneers recognized God’s providential leading in their midst. They were more than just another Christian community—they were a prophetic movement, called to boldly proclaim the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages. They believed that God was calling a remnant in the last days of earth’s history that was clearly identified in the book of Revelation: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17). Early Adventists had a clear sense of

ery was spectacular; the meals were delicious—but we were not on board for the views and the food. Approximately 500 other Christians were with us, seeking a closer relationship with Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Before we left the port of Vancouver, my friend Dwight Nelson summarized our assignment in one sentence: “We’re on a mission!” I never forgot those words. They were true for the next seven days at sea, but those words are also true for every day that we’re on planet Earth. We are a people who know where we came from, who know where we’re going, and we’re on a mission. 

¹ Peter Grist and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014), 16.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ All quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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Identity: *Being sure about who we are*

The new queen of the Netherlands, formally known as *Princess Maxima*, is of Argentinian origin. After she and the crown prince of the Netherlands fell in love with each other, her life changed dramatically. Maxima and Willem-Alexander married in 2001, and Maxima soon became the most popular member of the Dutch royal family. She mastered the Dutch language in an admirable way and has won her place in the hearts of the Dutch people. Willem-Alexander succeeded his mother in 2013 and became the king of the Netherlands. Maxima received the title of queen.

Six years before she became the queen, Maxima made a statement that drew severe criticism. In a formal speech before a Dutch advisory council of the government, she addressed the topic of “identity.” She said, “*The Dutch identity does not exist and neither does the Dutchman.*” Then she added, “*And the Argentinian does not exist either.*” While the second statement was hardly quoted, her reference to the Dutch identity was little appreciated by many of her new fellow citizens, who are usually quite proud of being Dutch.

However, Maxima was right. Identity is a complex phenomenon. Individual variations are so numerous and so different that one can hardly ascribe one single identity to a group of people. That is also true of *religious*

identity. Therefore, what do Seventh-day Adventists mean when they speak of the need to carefully maintain their *Adventist* identity? Does the *Adventist* exist? And if some fear that the church may suffer an identity crisis, what exactly are they afraid of?

What is identity?

According to one sociologist, identity is a definition, an interpretation of who we are, and where we are sociologically and psychologically.¹ Among countless definitions, the following is helpful to me: “The identity of an individual is not fixed, but is a complex of characteristics that develops as the individual interacts with his social environment.”² In a world that is constantly changing, not the least through the effects of grand-scale migration, more and more people can be said to have multiple identities.

Identity is a composite of many factors and far from static. It develops as we go through life, interact with people, and have all kinds of experiences. Who I am is not simply determined by the fact that I was born in Amsterdam. Neither is it by my profession or my religious choice. My identity has to do with numerous factors. My ethnic origin and nationality are important elements. My gender and the fact that I am a husband and father are also essential elements in my identity makeup. But so is my family background, education,

and professional vocation. My political and social convictions and my hobbies likewise helped to shape me into the person that I have become. And yes, the fact that I am a committed Christian, and not just any kind of Christian but an *Adventist* Christian, is a significant element of my identity.

What is *Adventist* identity?

When I identify myself as a *Seventh-day Adventist*, I believe I make a significant statement. But it must be admitted that, in itself, this label is not very precise. It does, indeed, put me in a category of people who worship on the seventh-day Sabbath and expect the second coming of Jesus Christ. This identity also points to other beliefs that allow people around me to expect certain characteristics, opinions, and behaviors, while it tends to exclude certain other opinions and behaviors. But, in many ways, the label remains quite vague.

This label makes, for instance, a great deal of difference whether I am married, single, or widowed; male or female; well-educated or illiterate; European or American. It also makes a great difference whether I am a third-generation Adventist professional or a blue-collar worker who recently joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Am I exposed to the cultural diversity of Adventism, or am I an elderly person in

a small village church who has never traveled beyond a 50-mile radius? Am I a fundamentalist and legalistic Adventist who abhors contemporary worship forms and any Bible version other than the King James Version? Do I consider myself a somewhat post-modern Adventist, who reads from a contemporary Bible version on his iPhone and enjoys an “alternative” kind of Sabbath School?

world in which we live. In some countries, Adventists are a major religious movement and seen as an important Christian church, while in other parts of the world Seventh-day Adventists are only marginally present and may still be regarded as a strange sect. Sometimes Adventists are seen as positive Protestant Christians, who, in spite of their distinctive views, nonetheless truly preach and live the gospel message. But all too often they

Is there one single Adventist identity?

Let us be honest: *The Adventist identity is a rather fluid concept.* There is not one single way in which 18 million Adventists around the world can (or should) be Seventh-day Adventists. Moreover, I believe the quest for such a static, uniform Seventh-day Adventist identity is a misguided venture. The main problem with such a quest is that

In a world that is constantly changing, not the least through the effects of grand-scale migration, more and more people can be said to have multiple identities.



I am not saying that the various characteristics are always found in these combinations, and I do recognize that there are many possibilities in between these extremes. But the point is simple: Seventh-day Adventists come in many varieties.

To make things even a bit more complicated: identity has to do not only with *reality* but also with *perception*. This is true, in particular, of our collective identity. How do people around us see the church? Much depends on the part of the

are still better known for what they are *against* than what they are *for*. This aspect undoubtedly also impacts how we see ourselves.

In addition, it must be noted that, although there usually is permanency in our individual or collective identities, there also is a gradual development over time of who we are. I am not quite the same person I was 25 years ago. And my church is not in all respects the same as it was when I attended church as a teenager.

it usually seeks to recapture something that never existed and never can exist. The search for such a “true Adventist identity” often focuses on the past, tends to read all kinds of personal preferences into that past, and then selects—either consciously or subconsciously—those elements from that past that supposedly form the core of this “true” Adventist identity that must be recaptured. For many believe that “only if we can regain our true Adventist identity” can we

successfully address the problems the contemporary Adventist Church faces. Only then will we be ready to complete our mission.

The beautiful reality is that God's people constitute a very diverse worldwide community that consists of young and old, literate and illiterate people with numerous different ethnic and national identities, educated in a wide variety of social and political contexts, and living within a myriad of vastly different cultures and traditions. In addition, many are, to varying degrees, affected by secularization and postmodernity, while others have remained

many instances there is a need to give careful thought to whether the church always chooses the right priorities and whether enough is done to create a climate in our communities that helps members better understand the major Adventist beliefs and to incorporate more intelligently and consistently the Adventist lifestyle into their daily lives.

On the individual level, many of us will have to admit that the various factors that constitute our identity are not always sufficiently in balance. But we must also remember that, as was indicated earlier in this article, our identity is not something completely fixed. This

asked the simple question "How are you?" one postmodern philosopher would retort with a somewhat strange counterquestion: "On what floor?" He compared his life to a house with a number of floors. He wanted to say that how he felt at a particular moment, and how he would react to things, depended on where he happened to be in his "house." He expressed a phenomenon that is more and more common. People may have different "lives"; they may interact with people and situations in very different ways. In fact, their lives can be very fragmented, and they may not be the

We are all in different stages of our development, of our growth—or, theologically speaking, of our process of "sanctification."

relatively unaffected by these trends. This *reality of diversity* is the direct result of the church's faithful response to the command of Jesus, " 'Therefore go and make disciples of *all nations*' " (Matt. 28:19; NIV; emphasis added), and also a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit, who transcended all borders on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and has continued to do so through the ages. As God intended it to be, His church today consists of a multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues (Rev. 7:9).

Individual and collective identity

Does this mean that we, therefore, cannot ask some serious questions about what many of us *are*, or *should be*, individually and that we should have no concerns whatsoever about some conditions existing in the church—locally and on the different organizational levels?

Certainly, not all is well everywhere. On the collective level, no doubt, in

means that important elements of our identity as Adventist Christians may yet be underdeveloped or gradually have been eroded. This certainly needs our constant attention.

There is the continuous challenge to develop and grow—individually and collectively. But this aspect must immediately be linked to another: we are all in different stages of our development, of our growth—or, theologically speaking, of our process of "sanctification." This presents another reason why there is not one "standard" description of the Seventh-day Adventist identity. As a faith community, we are supposed to grow spiritually as we continue our pilgrimage, but we are at very different stages in our journey to the kingdom. This reality greatly impacts who we are.

The essence of being a "real" Adventist

One of the greatest dangers of our postmodern times is that of *fragmentation* with regard to who we are. When

same person at work as they are at home, or in church, or among friends. To some extent, this is natural as we play a number of different social roles. But when people can change their values and behavior like chameleons as they move from one "floor" in their "house" to another, and at times can hardly be recognized as one and the same person, there is, from a Christian point of view, a major problem with their identity. Adventist Christians must show a coherence and stability in their identity on every "floor" of their "house." They must be clearly recognizable as Adventist Christians whether they are at home, in church, at play, or at work.

Is this all that can be said about our Seventh-day Adventist identity? Is our identity so vague that only a few essential common elements can be discerned? I do not believe that is the case. If we are to be identified as true Christians, there are a number of basic things we must believe and there are ways in which we will behave. If certain

essential elements are missing, we lose the right to refer to ourselves as Christians. Likewise, we may only claim the right to call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists if we subscribe to the church's key beliefs and translate those beliefs into a lifestyle that is sufficiently different from the average lifestyle of people around us. Only then we can indeed be recognized as Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

This latter element is crucial. What we are—our identity—is determined by many factors. Our Adventist faith is, however, not just one factor among many. Our commitment to God, in love and obedience, must inform all other aspects of our identity. It must be the element that gives coherence and credibility to our identity.

The doctrinal content of that faith—our fundamental beliefs—remains important. The way in which the

Adventist community has progressed in its understanding of its faith and the heritage that has shaped the way in which this faith is confessed in theology and worship are some things of which we must never lose sight. But that is not all. The manner in which this faith is given tangible expression in our daily lives must undergird our Adventist understanding of the biblical message that we support and proclaim. Perhaps there is no better way to describe the one thing that should form the underlying essence of our individual and collective identity than the words of the apostle Paul that we are “in Christ” (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:17).

Who am I? Who are you? Who are we collectively as a unique Christian community? There is, in spite of all diversity, a great measure of commonality that ties us together. Whatever questions we may have, and however much we

may be challenged by some aspects of our identity, there does not need to be an identity crisis, when all the elements that make us into who we are, are rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 2:6, 7). Let us ever remember that beyond everything else, “being in Christ” means that we are God’s children (1 John 3:2) and that we are called to be disciples, that is “learners” and followers of our Lord. Ultimately, that is what counts. And, should we insist on defining *the* Adventist identity, that definition should, at the very least, find its center in the sublime assurance that true Adventists are sons and daughters of God. 📖

- 1 Monserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995).
- 2 Vivienne Jabri, *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

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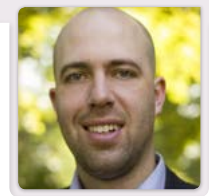
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“The very atmosphere of heaven”: *Lessons from South Lancaster*

Over the last few years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been emphasizing revival. As far back as 1887, Ellen White proclaimed, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”¹

But what does revival look like? How do we know what the fruits of revival are? And most important, what will it take for us to finally realize the revival that God wants us to experience?

Ellen White’s own experience can give us insight into evaluating modern revival movements. Less than two years after urging for revival among God’s people, Ellen White reflected upon a most glorious event that had her so overwhelmed with excitement that she proclaimed: “We seemed to breathe in the very atmosphere of heaven.”² In fact, she could not sleep at night, joyous over the fact that “the Lord had visited his people.”

Although the revival Ellen White participated in was not a lasting one, perhaps a study of her testimony might give us insight into how to recover the experience she rejoiced over and reclaim what began in her day.

Meetings in South Lancaster

Soon after the controversial General Conference Session in Minneapolis in

1888, Ellen White joined A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner on the road. Because the “light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted” in Minneapolis, according to Ellen White, “and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world,” she thought it prudent to take the message directly to the people.³ The message she bore was “right in harmony with the very message” Jones and Waggoner were sharing,⁴ and the first place they brought that message was South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

The meetings, which began on Friday, January 11, 1888, were supposed to last three days. The Holy Spirit had other plans, however. “The mighty movings of the Spirit of God were there,” Ellen White later reflected.⁵ “Every one [sic] had a living testimony to bear,” she added.⁶ This caused administrators at South Lancaster Academy to close down the school. “Nearly every student was swept in by the heavenly current,” she recounted, “and living testimonies were given that were not surpassed even by the testimonies of 1844 before the disappointment. Many learned . . . what it meant to surrender their hearts to God—what it meant to be converted.”⁷

Thus, the three-day conference turned into a ten-day event. They met

from early morning until late at night, with A. T. Jones speaking two or three times a day.⁸ Ellen White presented the morning messages and spoke on Sabbath. “I have never seen a revival work go forward with such thoroughness,” she recalled.⁹

But what made the meetings so effective to the point that school administrators were willing to close down their school? What message was shared that caused attendees to proclaim that they had “obtained an experience beyond anything they had known before?”¹⁰

Lessons learned

Ellen White later reflected on a number of occasions about that experience in South Lancaster, obviously longing for such an experience to be replicated. When one can sense that “angels were indeed hovering around,”¹¹ why would one not want to reflect frequently upon such an event, with hopes that it could be repeated? Based on a number of articles she and S. N. Haskell wrote about the event and on transcribed sermons Ellen White preached during her time in South Lancaster, we can put a few of the pieces together to construct a picture of what was preached.¹²

When one surveys the evidence from South Lancaster, the

overwhelming thread woven throughout Ellen White's various reflections is the great emphasis that was placed on the love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace of God. "The knowledge of God's love is the most effectual knowledge to obtain," she wrote.¹³ Thus, in her Sabbath morning talk on January 19, she started the sermon by proclaiming, "I am so anxious that all should drink in the mercy and the love of Jesus. The more we talk of his love and power, the more we shall have to tell of his tender compassion and truth." Continuing, she wondered out loud, "Why is it that our hearts have been so insensible to the love of God? Why have we had so hard a judgment of our Heavenly Father? From the light that God has given me, I know that Satan has misrepresented our God in every possible way. He has cast his hellish shadow athwart our pathway, that we might not discern our God as a God of mercy, compassion, and truth." With compelling pathos, she appealed, "Is there a heart here that will not be subdued by the love of Jesus?"¹⁴

Such wonderful news was music to everyone's ears, causing many to sing, "The Lord hath put a new song in my mouth, the matchless love of Jesus." They understood Christ as a "Saviour who was not afar off, but nigh at hand."¹⁵ Souls began to delight in Jesus, and many "testified their joy that Christ had forgiven their sins . . . and felt that they could rest in the love of God."¹⁶

On the first Sabbath afternoon, January 12, Ellen White rejoiced that she had freedom to talk of "the necessity of obeying the law of God," and the importance of having a "genuine faith which works by love."¹⁷ She pointed to the law as the perfect standard of righteousness, which convicted many that they were transgressors of that law. "They had been trusting in their own righteousness," she testified. "Now they saw it as filthy rags, in comparison with the righteousness of Christ, which is alone acceptable to God."¹⁸

This coupling of the law and love of God is what Ellen White so often referred to as the "law and the gospel going hand in hand."¹⁹ Upholding the law of

Self-examination is safe to do only when one is assured of God's forgiveness and love—else it leads to despair.

God as the perfect standard by which humankind is judged, and the fact that human obedience falls infinitely short of this standard, men and women were convicted of their sinfulness and thus prepared to receive the righteousness of Christ. The heart was melted by the love, forgiveness, and grace of God, and drawn into fellowship with Him. With the heart changed, Christ could now live His life in the sinner.

This was not a try-harder paradigm, however. Ellen White, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner did not encourage such a mentality. Ellen White, for example, shared in her last Sabbath sermon that there are those who "think they must make themselves a little better before they can come to Jesus." She continued emphatically, "But we cannot do this. Our only hope is to look and live."²⁰ Reflecting back on the meetings, she told of attendees who testified that "they had struggled to refrain from sin, but had trusted in their own strength." Such attempts were futile, and she encouraged all to "go to Jesus just as we are, confess our sins, and cast our helpless souls upon our compassionate Redeemer."²¹ When one goes to Jesus, he or she can then "have peace in believing that what God has promised he is able to perform."²²

Fruit borne

Repeatedly, Ellen White spoke of the "power of God [that] attended the message wherever it was spoken."²³ Rather than being merely a sentimental power that tickled people's emotions, however, souls were converted and hearts were reconciled to one another.

"As fallen men and women beheld Christ," she recounted, "they were changed, taking the impression of his image upon their souls."²⁴ Confessions were made, wrongs were righted, self was crucified; hearts, once alienated, were brought back into harmony with one another. This was because "the plan of salvation was so plain that a child in its simplicity could understand it,"²⁵ causing Ellen White to say that "you could not make the people believe in South Lancaster that it was not a message of light that came to them."²⁶

Interestingly, these fruits were not forced or compelled. The meetings remained "free from all undue excitement," she reflected. "There was no urging or inviting. The people were not called forward."²⁷

Writing a few weeks later for the *Review and Herald*, S. N. Haskell verifies this same idea—and more—in one of the most compelling reflections on the meetings. He explained that

the great desire manifested was for purity of heart, and all seemed to realize that we are in the investigative judgment, and that everything should be made right with God and with our brethren. The work went deep and thorough. There was a freedom in confession that is seldom witnessed, and nothing appeared to be forced. No pressure was brought to bear upon any; but when the sin was confessed, the song of praise and thanksgiving which followed was refreshing indeed. Expressions like the following, even from old Sabbath-keepers,

were frequently heard: “I never experienced anything like this.” “It seems we have a new gospel.” “I never understood the love of God as I do at the present time. His character appears so different to me from what it ever did before,” etc. . . . A solemn impression rested upon many that it was a few drops of what will be experienced by those who have a part in the closing work,—in the loud cry of the third angel’s message that will ripen off the grain for the harvest.

This “intense self-examination” and the deep confessions could happen only because attendees were able to rejoice in the reality that Christ had forgiven their sins. Self-examination is safe to do only when one is assured of God’s forgiveness and love—else it leads to despair. Again, it was a perfect blending of the law and gospel.

Haskell concluded his article by wondering out loud, “Can it be true that we are really in the midst of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? which will increase in power and extent until it swells into the loud cry of the third angel’s message? Do we realize that we are on the very verge of the time of trouble, and the scenes of the eternal world?”

Almost unable to believe it himself, he exclaimed, “These things are true!”

When the meetings drew to a close, 17 souls were baptized, with many more considering the matter.²⁸

Lessons for modern revival movements

While some might claim that the landscape of Adventism, more than 120 years later, has drastically changed, and that what was once relevant to souls in South Lancaster is no longer relevant to us today, Ellen White would disagree. They bore in South Lancaster, as well as in numerous other towns and cities in the months that followed, a message of the love of Jesus and the righteousness of Christ. This twin emphasis was

able to guard against the extremes of legalism—of trying to establish one’s own righteousness and earn God’s love—and lawlessness—of proclaiming that God loves us so much that it does not matter what we do. Such a balance is still needed and relevant to us today.


A year after South Lancaster, Ellen White shared this reflection: “This message as it has been presented, should go to every church that claims to believe the truth, and bring our people up to a higher stand-point.”²⁹ Sadly, her desire has still not been fully realized.³⁰

What can we learn for our own emphasis on revival, and how might we replicate what happened in South Lancaster? To begin with, the adage is true: we cannot give what we do not have. We ourselves thus need to be intimately acquainted with that same gospel that stirred Ellen White’s heart. It would then behoove us to expose ourselves to some of the original materials. Read E. J. Waggoner’s *The Glad Tidings or Christ and His Righteousness*,³¹ or Ellen White’s *Steps to Christ* frequently. Approach Scripture afresh, tracing Christ and Him crucified throughout all its pages.

When we thus become absorbed with the message of Christ’s boundless love and His empowering grace, it will be reflected in our preaching. We will then seek ways to preach all our messages—no matter the topic: stewardship, prophecy, the health message—through the lens of this motivating gospel.

On a wider scale, what would happen if we devote our workers’ meetings or take a two- or three-day retreat to pursue a study of this all-consuming topic—this “one subject [that] will swallow up every other,” according to Ellen White?³² We have done this in the Northern New England Conference for the last few years, spending a few days in the fall at our youth camp simply praying and studying the Bible together as pastors, and it has been some of the sweetest times of fellowship, leaving us revived and refreshed, and better

equipped to present the bread of life to our church members and communities.

When we ourselves experience revival through such experiences, it will flow out to the laypeople, and together we will move forward to victory, enjoying the revival that God desperately wants us to experience. 

- 1 Ellen G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, 177.
- 2 Ellen G. White, “Meetings at South Lancaster, Mass.,” *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146.
- 3 Ellen G. White Estate, comp., *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 1575.
- 4 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 542.
- 5 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 543.
- 6 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146.
- 7 Ellen G. White, “Draw Nigh to God,” *Review and Herald*, March 4, 1890.
- 8 Based on the available data, it does not appear as though E. J. Waggoner was present at the meetings in South Lancaster.
- 9 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 The reader would be greatly blessed to read these articles in their entirety. Besides the articles cited in this article by Ellen White, S. N. Haskell’s article, “The General Meeting at South Lancaster, Mass.,” *Review and Herald*, January 29, 1889, 73, is a fruitful read. It can be accessed on the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research Web site at http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/RH/RH18890129-V66-05__B/index.djvu.
- 13 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 145.
- 14 Ellen G. White, “In Him Is Light,” *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1889, 129.
- 15 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 145.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 145.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 19 See, e.g., *1888 Materials*, vol. 1, 217.
- 20 White, *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1889, 130.
- 21 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 145.
- 23 Ellen G. White, “The Present Message,” *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1890, 161.
- 24 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146.
- 25 *1888 Materials*, vol. 1, 371.
- 26 White, *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1890, 161.
- 27 White, *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889, 146. The “urging” and “calling forward” (what we might label an “altar call”) was also noticeably absent in subsequent revival meetings that took place over the next few years.
- 28 Haskell, *Review and Herald*, January 29, 1889, 73.
- 29 White, *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1890, 161.
- 30 For further reading on this important topic, see Ron Duffield, *The Return of the Latter Rain: A Historical Review of Seventh-day Adventist History From 1844 Through 1891* (n.p.: 4th Angel, 2010).
- 31 E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1900); E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890).
- 32 Ellen G. White, “Be Zealous and Repent,” *Review and Herald Extra*, December 23, 1890, 2.

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Streaming *to the* Lord

Isaiah prophesied, “In the days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go and say, ‘Come, let’s go up to the LORD’s mountain, to the house of Jacob’s God so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God’s paths.’ Instruction will come from Zion; the LORD’s word from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2, 3, CEB).*

This prophetic vision was so important that another prophet, Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, expressed it almost word for word in Micah 4:1, 2. The temple mount is *physically* lower even than the nearby Mount of Olives and Mount Scopus. But, speaking through Isaiah and Micah, God said it would become higher than all other mountains in terms of its *significance* for the nations.

This would fulfill an earlier hope. Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses urged them regarding God’s instructions: “Keep them faithfully because that will show your wisdom and insight to the nations who will hear about all these regulations. They will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and insightful people!’ After all, is there any great nation that has gods as close to it as the LORD our God is close to us whenever we call to him? Or does any great nation have regulations and case laws as righteous as all this instruction that I am setting before you today?” (Deut. 4:6–8).

If the Israelites continued to accept the loving guidance of the Lord, who had already redeemed them from slavery and provided cause-and-effect principles for their good (Deut. 10:13), they would receive the wonderful blessings He was eager to lavish upon them (cf. Lev. 26:3–13; Deut. 28:1–14). These include, “Then the LORD your God will set you high above all nations on earth. . . . The LORD will make you the head of things, not the tail; you will be at the top of things, not the bottom” (Deut. 28:1, 13). Other nations would see the blessings on the Israelites and be drawn to the deity who gave them. In this way, God’s covenant promise to Abraham that “all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you” (Gen. 12:3) could be fulfilled.

Challenge by “Babylon”

Of course, in our fallen world, no divine vision goes unchallenged. Isaiah and Micah speak of peoples streaming to the Lord’s temple mount (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). The only other use of the rare Hebrew verb from the root *n-h-r*, “to stream,” which is derived from the noun *nahar*, “river/stream,” is found in Jeremiah 51:44. In this verse and the beginning of the next verse (v. 45), God warns, “I will punish Bel [lord, the title of the god Marduk] in Babylon; I will force him to vomit what he’s consumed. Then nations will no longer stream to him, and Babylon’s walls will collapse! Get out of Babylon, my people!” Until this point, people have been streaming to the predatory god

of Babylon, rather than to the Lord at His temple in Jerusalem.

Ancient Babylon did fall, but the book of Revelation describes an end-time “Babylon” that opposes God and that is supported by many peoples (Rev. 17:1, 15). Again God warns, “ ‘Come out of her, my people’ ” (Rev. 18:4, NIV).

Fulfillment through Christ

Was the prophecy of Isaiah and Micah already fulfilled, or will it be fulfilled in the future? This classical prophecy is conditional according to human cooperation. God’s chosen people did not cooperate. The temple in Jerusalem, referred to here as “the Lord’s house” and “the house of Jacob’s God,” has vanished. So the prophecy cannot be fulfilled with regard to that structure. However, it can be fulfilled in another way.

Jesus made a related prophecy that does not refer to the temple in Jerusalem: “ ‘When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me.’ (He said this to show how he was going to die.)” (John 12:32, 33). Like the mountain of the Lord’s house, Jesus is exalted. He called His body a temple (John 2:19–21) because in Him, God was dwelling, literally tabernacling, in human flesh (John 1:14). So the hill of Golgotha where Jesus was lifted up on the cross was a temple mount, higher than Mount Everest in significance.

Solomon had built a temple on Mount Moriah at the threshing floor

of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Chron. 3:1), where innocent Isaac and guilty David were redeemed through animal sacrifices (Gen. 22; 2 Sam. 24). This location showed that the temple was all about ransom for human life. Now Jesus came and accomplished that ransom, to which all the animal sacrifices pointed. This is why He draws/attracts/pulls all people toward Himself as “the true light that shines on all people” (John 1:9). This does not mean that all people accept Him; it means that God gives them the opportunity.

We have an awesome privilege to participate with Christ in drawing

(1 John 4:8). This is not Hollywood love, but the kind of unselfish love that Jesus demonstrated. He told His disciples: “ ‘Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other’ ” (John 13:34). That kind of love is a high standard. In fact, it is an impossible standard—unless we have the transforming miracle of the Holy Spirit pouring love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5) as a divine gift of amazingly free grace that we can receive only through faith.

God saves us with our free choice intact, and He does not want sin, which is destructive, selfish un-love, to

that those who do not receive this victory from God will not be in the New Jerusalem (v. 8; cf. v. 27; 22:15).

Like God, we do not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9), and we devote ourselves to helping as many as possible to live. But a popular teaching now exists, saying that total commitment to Christ is optional and “nice” people will be saved just because God is so gracious. This is a dangerous deception that proclaims “ ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; cf. Ezek. 13:10, 16).

Jesus saw this condition. He spoke of ten girls who went to sleep at the

We have an awesome privilege to participate with Christ in drawing precious people to Him and eternal life.

precious people to Him and eternal life, thereby reversing the streaming of people to Babylon and destruction. Jesus does the pulling, but we can increase the results by pointing to Him primarily through our lives and, secondarily, through our words, provided that our words and lives are in harmony with each other. As God commissioned the ancient Israelites to teach all nations about Him and His character through the way they lived, Jesus commissions us: “ ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you’ ” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Requirement to choose love forever

The greatest of Christ’s commandments, which is the basis of all other commandments, is love (Matt. 22:37–40) because “God is love”

arise again after He purges it from our fallen world. How can human beings voluntarily keep on choosing to live in harmony with God’s love for all eternity so that every imagination of our hearts will be only good continually (reversing Gen. 6:5)? We must choose in this life to submit to God’s radical change of the source of our choices. The result is change in our characters as we progressively receive and grow in His love, thereby becoming more like Him (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12, 13).

Fatal complacency

Tragically, many in our broken world do not experience enough of a “thirst” for something better to motivate them to fully accept God’s offer: “ ‘To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring. Those who emerge victorious will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my sons and daughters’ ” (Rev. 21:6, 7). The next verse makes it clear

time of a wedding (Matt. 25:1–13) and a church of Laodicea that is lukewarm (Rev. 3:14–22). Theoretically, our numbers are booming, with somewhere around 18 million Seventh-day Adventists worldwide. These numbers are based on baptisms. But are baptisms enough? Do those who are baptized understand our message enough to live it and share it with others or even to really believe it themselves? Or are many merely cultural Adventists, regarded as Adventists because they self-identify as such, even if they do not really believe and live the basic pillars of the Adventist message? Will a social club of merely cultural Adventists finish the gospel work? Or do they dilute and distort the Adventist mission, confusing people and thereby slowing down real progress? What happens to their children who see a disconnect between their profession and their practice?

Need for ministers to awaken cultural Adventists


Why are many of our members cultural Adventists? Perhaps they have not been warned or taught to be otherwise? This is where the work of a gospel minister comes in. Ministry as a pastor, chaplain, or teacher is not merely a job; you cannot accomplish a fraction of it by yourself. This is a calling to receive power from the Holy Spirit and wisdom from careful study of God's Word that empowers you to effectively influence, lead, and teach other people to make radical changes, perhaps including at least some of the following:

- The need to be broken and revived to new life at the foot of the cross.

- The need to wake up and realize how close we are to Christ's second coming, as shown by biblical signs of the times and the sanctuary teaching.
- The need to sense a burden for lost souls all around us.
- The need to learn the Bible and the inspired guidance provided through God's modern messenger to see the true character of God and how to live in harmony with Him.
- The need to experience true, interactive worship rather than performance.
- The need for more times of prayer and less times of religious monologue.
- The need to revive the priesthood of *all* believers, with a variety of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

Conclusion

The towers of this world are coming down, the enduring mountain of the Lord's house is coming up, and "peoples will stream to it." This is an exciting and challenging time for those involved in pastoral ministry. The demands are overwhelming. There is not a moment to waste. But the God who created and sustains the universe says to you, His servant, through Isaiah:

"Don't fear, because I am with you; don't be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand" (Isa. 41:10). 

* Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are from the Common English Bible.

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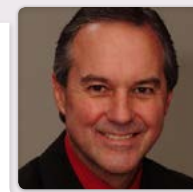
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Ordination: *The neglected dimension*¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in *Anytown* has just reached 500 baptized members. To carry out their mission effectively, how many ordained ministers should they have?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. Whatever the conference decides
- e. Depends on their tithe
- f. Depends on location: city, suburb, or rural area
- g. 500

My answer is 500, not because more paid ministers are needed there, but because all baptized members are ordained at the time of baptism to a lifetime of mission and ministry. This ordination of all believers at the time of baptism is often overlooked or devalued.

Ellen White described it as, “All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. Their hearts will throb in unison with the heart of Christ. The same longing for souls that He has felt will be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place in the work, but there is a place and a work for all.”²

“We are to be consecrated channels, through which the heavenly life is to flow to others. The Holy Spirit is to animate and pervade *the whole church*,

purifying and cementing hearts. *Those who have been buried with Christ in baptism* are to rise to newness of life, giving a living representation of the life of Christ. The commission has been given to us. Upon us is laid a sacred charge. Go then, Christ says to them. Make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. ‘And, lo,’ he declares, ‘I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ You are dedicated to the work of making known the gospel of salvation.”³

Jesus’ baptism signaled His official ordination to ministry. Throughout the New Testament, baptism is linked frequently with discussions of using spiritual gifts in ministry. For example, Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 12 that baptism is the initiation process for becoming part of the body and using one’s spiritual gifts in ministry (see v. 13). He later explains in Ephesians 4 that certain equipping gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, v. 11) are given to some individuals so all God’s people who have been baptized (v. 5) can be prepared “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (v. 12, NIV). Just after Peter has emphasized the importance of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21), he talks about the importance of each member using

the gifts God has given in ministry (1 Pet. 4:10).

This biblical truth—that all believers, at their baptism, are ordained to a lifetime of ministry—was lost during the great apostasy but rediscovered in the Dark Ages by the Anabaptists, who called it the priesthood of all believers. They said that baptism was not sprinkling water on babies before they knew what was happening to them. Instead, they believed that baptism should take place when a person is old enough to repent, surrender his life to Jesus Christ, be taught the basic principles of the Bible, and be ready to minister to the needs of others in service and outreach. As the candidate for baptism was standing in the water, the pastor would not raise his hand toward heaven, as is often the case now, but would instead place his hand on the head, signifying an ordination to a lifetime of ministry.⁴ Being baptized “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” was recognized as God giving the candidate power to live a godly life, which included service to God and others.

General ordination versus specific ordinations

In addition to the general ordination all believers receive at baptism, some receive a more specific ordination. They are set apart and/or have hands laid on them to serve as deacons⁵

(Acts 6:1–7), local elders (Titus 1:5–9), missionaries (Acts 13:1–3), and those who are designated to ordain other leaders (1 Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5).

None of these ordinations, general or specific, impart special grace to the receiver. Each is intended to allow the church body, in a visual and concrete way, through its leaders, to affirm what God is doing in the lives and hearts of the individuals being ordained, and what God has called them to do in the future. When done properly, this results in “a uniting influence upon the entire flock.”⁶

The special ordination of Paul and Barnabas gives us insight into the dis-

“... Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were *solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands*. Thus they were *authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.*”⁷

Recognizing this distinction between the general ordination of all believers at baptism and the more specific ordination that some receive based on need and biblical criteria can keep us from undervaluing the respective roles of church members and

which is absolutely vital in the last days. No longer is the church a building where we go for perhaps two and a half hours a week. Instead, we recognize that we are the church 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When I went to the Ukraine to hold evangelistic meetings in the early 1990s, I tried to learn to read and pronounce the Cyrillic alphabet. On my first Sabbath there I looked at the sign beside the door of the church building.

“Moh leet vun ee dome,” I attempted. “Does that mean church?”

“No,” said my translator. “It means ‘House of Prayer.’”

Recognizing this distinction between the general ordination of all believers at baptism, and the more specific ordination that some receive based on need and biblical criteria, can keep us from undervaluing the respective roles of church members and church leaders.

inction between what all baptized members are called to do and what those with special ordination to “gospel ministry” are authorized to do. “*God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry.*” They had now reached a point in their Christian experience when God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church. . . .

church leaders.⁸ This distinction can also help members, pastors, and the world church become far more effective and united in their collective mission of taking the Adventist message to all the world in this generation. It keeps us from overlooking *vital* truths while discussing *important* truths.

Church members: “Going to church” (important) versus “being the church” (vital)

For church members, the focus shifts from “going to church,” which is important, especially in the last days (Heb. 10:25), to “being the church,”

“So, isn’t the House of Prayer the church?”

“No.”

“What’s the difference?” I asked.

Then someone explained. “You and I are the church. Wherever we go, we represent Jesus, His Word, and His message. Sometimes we are good representatives and sometimes we aren’t. But on Sabbath we gather at the House of Prayer to pray and study and worship together.”

Evidently the San Francisco and Oakland churches in the early 1900s understood this as well. Ellen White describes a long list of ministries being carried out primarily by

church members rather than by paid employees:

“During the past few years the ‘beehive’ in San Francisco has been indeed a busy one. Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward by our brethren and sisters there. These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans and work for the unemployed, nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house, distributing literature, and conducting classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. A school for the children has been conducted in the basement of the Laguna Street meetinghouse. For a time, a workingmen’s home and medical mission was maintained. On Market Street, near the city hall, there were treatment rooms, operated as a branch of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In the same locality was a health-food store. Nearer the center of the city, not far from the Call building, was conducted a vegetarian cafe, which was open six days in the week and entirely closed on the Sabbath. Along the water front, ship mission work was carried on. At various times, our ministers [pastors] conducted meetings in large halls in the city. Thus the warning message was given by many.”⁹

Pastors: “Being a minister” (important) versus “training ministers” (vital)

When we recognize the ordination of all believers at baptism, pastors begin to shift their focus from “being a minister,” which is important because of all the needs in the world and the church, to “training ministers,” which is vital if more of the world is to be reached with the healing touch and teaching of Jesus.

When a group of us set up the student pastor program at Southwestern Adventist University about 20 years ago, we carefully monitored its success, especially during the first few months. But within four weeks, one of our student pastors dropped out of the program. I went to visit him in his apartment.

“I came to see how you are doing. I hear that you dropped out of the student pastor program. What happened?”

“Pastor,” he replied, “when I became an Adventist a few years ago I was so on fire for Jesus I wanted to tell the whole world. But I noticed that the only person in the church that felt the same way I did was my pastor. So I thought I’d better become a pastor so I can keep sharing my faith. That’s why I came to Southwestern.”

“So, how did you decide to drop out of the student pastor program?”

“I began to realize that the pastor’s job is not to run around giving all the Bible studies and doing all the ministry. It’s his job to train and mentor the members to do that. And since I don’t really like being around people that much, I’ve switched my major to something that will help me become a pharmacist. That way I can help people and share my faith without having to be around people all the time!”

Today, as far as I know, that man is a committed Adventist pharmacist, sharing his love for Jesus. Fortunately, a few weeks in the student pastor program saved him tens of thousands of dollars by showing him that you do not have to become a pastor to share your faith. In fact, all who have been baptized have already been ordained to a lifetime of sharing their faith. And the pastor’s main role is showing people how to carry out their ministry.

Ellen White tells us, “The best help that ministers [pastors] can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others. Help all to see that as receivers of the grace of Christ they are under obligation to work for Him. And let all be taught how to work. Especially should those who are newly come to the faith be educated to become laborers together with God.”¹⁰

Paul informed Timothy that his work as a pastor should not be measured simply by what he did as a minister, but by how effective he was in taking the things he and others had learned from Paul, his mentor, and

passing them on to others, who in turn could teach still others (2 Tim. 2:2). That is four generations of training!

World church: “Specific ordinations of some” (important) versus “general ordination of all” (vital)

At the time I am writing this, our world church is engaged in a worldwide study of the theology of ordination. Various scholarly papers have been presented that are all available online.¹¹ A key point in the discussion is whether it is appropriate to ordain women. When I read papers in support of women’s ordination, I find myself saying, “Good point, good point.”¹² But then as I read other papers with concerns about women’s ordination, I also find myself saying “Good point, good point.”¹³ This whole process of study addresses some very important issues, such as how the Bible is to shape our church’s understanding of truth, the nature of unity, the importance of humility in the church, and leadership roles at each level of the world church.

But it seems to me that the focus has been primarily on the special ordination that some receive, with almost nothing said about the general ordination given to all believers.

What would happen if, as a world church, the focus shifted more fully to the “ordination” of the 18 million members¹⁴ who were ordained for mission and ministry at their baptism? What if every baptized believer determined to use their spiritual gifts in ministry every day? What if every pastor determined to train more lay leaders to win souls to Jesus and His final movement? What if each member recognized the Bible as God’s voice speaking to them; the importance of unity in the local church body for effective ministry; and the role of every man, woman, and child in taking the Adventist message to their entire community and beyond?¹⁵

God has given the Seventh-day Adventist Church a tremendous mission. As more members in *Anytown* and *Everytown* see what piece of the mission

God has given them, we can expect to see new blood flow through the arteries of the church body, and new life in our churches and communities. Pastors will spend more and more of their time empowering and training members. The Adventist message will be expressed in a greater variety of ways through a growing number of members and leaders. And soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior will go to the entire world! 📖

- 1 The word *ordination* is not found in the KJV Bible. The words *ordained* and *ordination* are used in this article to designate setting someone aside for general or specific ministry through a process that often includes the laying on of hands. For a detailed discussion of the use of the word *ordain/ordained* in the KJV, see "Theology of Ordination by John McVay," October 2012, at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/113426840/Theology-of-Ordination-by-John-McVay>.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 301.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990); 28. italics supplied.
- 4 Compare Acts 8:14–20; 19:1–7; Hebrews 6:1, 2. See also Russell Burdill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996), chap. 7.

- 5 While the word *deacon* does not appear in the Acts 6 passage, it is used throughout the inspired commentary found in Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 87–96.
- 6 "These men [the seven deacons] were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock.
"Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony." White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 91, 92.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 160, 161; italics supplied.
- 8 For example, "To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown. The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human

- instrumentality will be enabled to co-operate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God." *Ibid.*, 164.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 117.
 - 10 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), 69.
 - 11 See Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2013–14 GC Theology of Ordination Study Committee Web page, accessed December 22, 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/gc-tosc/#UrdXTSjfvw>.
 - 12 See, e.g., Jiji Moskala, "Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation—Fall—Re-Creation Hermeneutic (Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women)," July 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/back-to-creation.pdf>; and Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8–15," July 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/paul-woman-and-the-ephesian-church.pdf>.
 - 13 See, e.g., Ingo Sörke, "Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations," July 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/adam-where-are-you.pdf>; and Stephen P. Bohr, "Issues Relating to the Ordination of Women With Special Emphasis on 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28," July 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/a-study-of-1-peter-2-9-10-and-galatians-3-28.pdf>.
 - 14 See Mark A. Kellner, "Fast-Growing Denomination Hits New Milestone in 2013's Third Quarter," December 2013, <http://news.adventist.org/all-news/news/go/2013-12-19/adventist-church-membership-passes-18-million-member-mark/>.
 - 15 See White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 110, 111.

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Mutual submission

When a revival of true godliness in our own lives does not have the impact on our fellow believers that we want, how should we respond?

The easy way is to invoke the spirit of the Old Testament prophets and of Revelation 3:14–17—to reprove, reproach, and rebuke. There is something appealing, after all, about assuming the prophetic voice, about standing alone against corruption and pointing God's people to the right path. We all want to be the hero of the story.

The more difficult way would be to follow in the footsteps of the apostle Paul. He called every Christian to mutual submission: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph.

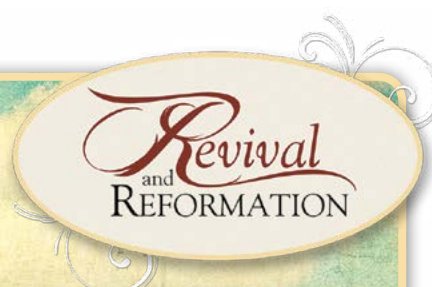
5:21). He wanted God's people to be clothed with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" and told the early believers to "bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Col. 3:12–14, NIV).

Mutual submission—bearing and forbearing—is not heroic. But it is essential. As Christ faced the ultimate crisis of the cross, He was not thinking about Himself; instead He was concerned about us, wanting His followers to be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). The perfect unity that God desires will be achieved more readily through

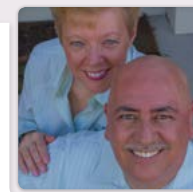
compassion and kindness than through condemnation.

At times, a Christian needs to stand boldly against sin and error. But a true revival will unite rather than divide—it will make us more at one with each other, as well as with our Savior.

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The Sabbath: *A delight?*

Is Sabbath a delight when you are in the ministry? To be honest, the Sabbath can be the busiest day of the week. You may have to rush to multiple churches to preach, fellowship at potluck, engage in an afternoon outreach activity, attend a spaghetti supper with the Pathfinders, be present at an evening vespers program, and join in nighttime bowling with the youth. And, all that on an average Sabbath day and Saturday night! None of these activities is wrong, but the question that stares at you is troublesome: How can pastors and their families experience Sabbath as a delight in the face of so many activities?

Pastors need to be intentional in not allowing the Sabbath to deteriorate into a day full of activities without any rest (personal or family) and in not letting the business of the day rob them and their families of the delight for which the Sabbath is intended.

In their book *Rebuilding the Family Altar*, John and Millie Youngberg remind us that the “twin Edenic institutions . . . the Sabbath and the family belong together.”¹ However, it has become rather easy to separate the two, and there lies the danger to the *concept of delight*. When you are a pastor, Sabbath and family time do not seem to be compatible, and Sabbath duties get preferential treatment.

If yours is like most pastoral families, there are times that the thing for which they are most thankful on Sabbath is when the sun sets on Saturday, as only then will they have a chance of being

a part of your life. Families are used to not seeing you or spending much time, if any, with you during the period that Scripture refers to as a “delight” (Isa. 58:13).

Ellen White has some very succinct instructions about the Sabbath and the family:

All who love God should do what they can to make the Sabbath a delight, holy and honorable. They cannot do this by seeking their own pleasure in sinful, forbidden amusements. But by exalting the Sabbath in the family, it may be made the most interesting day in the week, so that its weekly return will be hailed with joy by every member of the family. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their children and to interest them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of them in order to attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it, and have a welcome for it in their hearts. Thus will God be honored in the home.²

Many church members would quote these and other counsels from Ellen White, excusing themselves from any church obligation on the Sabbath, while at the same time expecting the pastors

to do it all: abandon their families and violate the very words they so readily quote.

What delight is there in working nonstop from sunrise until well after it sets and not having any time to spend with the family? What are some practical steps that you can take to ensure that your entire family enjoys the Sabbath as a day of delight, rest, renewal, and celebration, even though it is a time of intense ministry? Here are some steps that can help.

1. *Self-caring.* You are only able to give as your health dictates. “Being an effective leader in your ministry requires self-care and balance to respond to the complex issues and needs of people.”³ This includes self-care in all aspects of life. Yes, the Sabbath can actually be a day to care for and recharge self. Here’s how:

- a. Plan some personal time in the day for meditation, prayer, and reflection. Personal time can be anytime in the day as long as this has been scheduled. You will be a stronger shepherd because of it.
- b. Maintain your spiritual health by daily Bible study and prayer.
- c. Perhaps some of those meetings or conversations that occupy your Sabbath day could take place as you walk around the block or even around hospital grounds. The fresh air and exercise will do you good.
- d. Enjoy at least one family meal at the table on the Sabbath. That time will help you connect with your

family as well as be beneficial to your overall health.

- e. Develop good, positive family traditions around the Sabbath. For many years in our home, we had sundown worship with the lighting of Sabbath candles (a practice we borrowed from a Jewish family). We also enjoyed a simple meal of Mexican tostadas and donuts for dessert. That simple Sabbath tradition was so ingrained that our older daughter, on her first Sabbath in a boarding academy, called us crying

your members' perception of your family relationship:

- a. Speak of your family in positive ways from the pulpit.
- b. Make sure all members know that your family is a priority.
- c. Take a family day and make sure the church members know what day of the week that is. Designate an elder to take emergency calls on that day. Announce it in church and put it in the bulletin. What a testimony to visitors who walk in

It is important, however, to not replace on a regular basis the time you need to spend with your family on the Sabbath with time spent during the week. While conducting evangelistic meetings in one church, I (Claudio) noticed that our daughters seemed to be extremely hyper and having more negative behavior than usual. It was obvious to me that the change in their behavior was a result of my absence. One of my professors used to say, "Positive attention is

How can pastors and their families experience Sabbath as a delight in the face of so many activities?



because they did not serve Mexican tostadas for the Friday evening meal. The connection of the meal, the Sabbath, and the family gathering was part of the Sabbath delight for us and obviously something our daughter missed when she was away from home.

2. *Modeling.* Remember that you are a spiritual role model for your church members. Members may say that you preach powerful sermons, visit regularly, baptize large numbers, and are always there when they need you. However, how do they view you as a husband or wife, mother or father? What type of role model are you? Here are some things you can do to enhance

your church on Sabbath morning: family is valued here!

You might ask how this relates to the delights of the Sabbath. The reality? There will be some Sabbaths when your ministerial obligations will take you away from home. What we suggest is that your family will handle that day away from their ministerial parent better if you plan to spend time with them on a regular basis during the week. In particular, if you know you will be busy on an upcoming Sabbath, make plans to spend as much time with your family before and after to make up for the time away from them during the Sabbath hours.

better than negative attention, but negative attention is better than no attention at all." Often our children sense our absence in their lives and begin to misbehave as a plea for our attention. Time spent with them, during the hours of Sabbath and other days of the week, will meet that deep need. But we must be careful not to consider actions such as church activities or watching television as time spent together. Each member of the family needs quality "alone time" with us. What is most important are those activities that build connections among the members of the family—family meals, games, camping, hiking, conversations, etc.

d. As you look at your sermonic year, be certain to include Sabbaths with a focus on family. By the way, when you plan for those special Sabbaths, keep in mind those who are single, whether they have ever been married or not.

3. *Calling.* Be faithful not only to your calling as a pastor but also to your calling as a spouse and parent. Be a godly husband or wife, father or mother. The call to ministry is not more important than your call to being the type of spouse God has called you to be and your call to disciple your own children.

- a. As you pray for guidance in your call as a minister, pray for wisdom in your call as a spouse and parent.
- b. Be faithful with leading out in daily family worship. Do not allow sermon preparation, prayer meeting, or Bible studies with nonmembers

to rob you of this sacred time with your own family. Treat this time as an appointment that deserves the highest priority—even on the Sabbath. Sabbath can be a hurried day, but making worship a daily habit will also help the Sabbath day flow more smoothly.

- c. Be careful not to use your spouse or children as sermon illustrations too often—some would say not at all. Never tell stories that are embarrassing to them even if you think they are cute or a warm illustration of a biblical principle. Doing so may cause them to dread going to church, afraid of what their pastor parent may say about them and therefore drain the delight the Sabbath is supposed to bring them.

4. *Shepherding.* Be mindful that your spouse and children are members of your church too. They occupy a pew and listen to your sermons. Yet, they

often get the leftovers. It is far too easy to push them aside and replace time meant for them with other “more important” church matters. So, do the following:


- a. Look at your calendar and be sure that your priorities are in order.
- b. Schedule family time and be faithful to keeping those commitments in the same manner as you would any other church commitment.
- c. If you have a multichurch district, do not expect your spouse and children to go to every church with you every Sabbath. Your children need the stability of one church every week. They need to have continuity with their Sabbath School teacher and program and the safety of being surrounded by their friends. All churches would like to see the pastor’s family, and there may be times when they can go with you, but they do not need

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to be constantly uprooted only to satisfy the members' need to see your family.

5. *Planning.* Sometimes the Sabbath becomes overwhelmingly full of church activities because we have not planned properly ahead of time. Because Sabbath may be the one day we have most of the church members present, we want to make the best use of the limited time together. We may think, *If we don't get them now, we won't get them any other time of the week.* Here are several suggestions:

- a. If you have a Sabbath day full of activities, do not plan for anything on either Friday or Saturday nights

family should be martyred at the altar of pastoral service. On God's day of rest, you must do all in your power to make the Sabbath a delight for your family, particularly your children. Here are a few ideas:

- a. Plan activities that your spouse and children find enjoyable, not just those you like.
- b. As children grow, so do their ideas and feelings. What was enjoyable when they were toddlers may not be so when they reach their teenage years.
- c. You will find that it may not be necessary to answer the phone each time it rings. When you always answer the phone, you are sending

some other activity so you can spend that time with your loved ones. Make sure this does not happen often, or they will come to conclude that they will never have you on Sabbath.

There is no way to avoid emergencies and interruptions to your personal life. That is the very nature of ministry. There will be times when you will need to respond to such; however, if your family members know that they are a priority, those emergencies will be easier to bear for all involved.

Conclusion

Ministry and family are not in an "either-or relationship, and our families

You will find it possible to be faithful to your calling as a minister and as a spouse and parent at the same time.


so you can spend that time with your family.

- b. Plan for at least one Sabbath a month to be "Family Time Sabbath," during which there will not be any additional church activities but rather members are encouraged to enjoy the day together as a family. Perhaps those months that have five Sabbaths in them would be a great place to start.

6. *Enjoying.* When you set aside time for a delightful Sabbath, guard that time fiercely. There will always be forces trying to pull you away, appealing to your ministerial call to meet their needs always and first of all. We do not know of any place in Scripture or other writings where the ministerial

a message to your spouse and children that they are not as important as the person calling, and you are also training your members to expect immediate attention to anything and everything they want and need, when in reality some things may be handled just as well by others or can wait for some other time. Emergencies need to be attended to as soon as possible; nonemergencies can wait.

- d. When an emergency, or some other activity that must be attended to on Sabbath, takes your time away from your family, be sure to make time soon after for them. Do not allow the activity to simply take time away from your family permanently, but if necessary, cancel

and our calling need not be in competition. We can achieve a balance and give proper attention to both of these critical areas."⁴ You will find it possible to be faithful to your calling as a minister and as a spouse and parent at the same time. Take an inventory today. What needs to change? Small changes can yield eternal results for you, your family, and your congregation. And your Sabbath can indeed be a delight! 

1 John and Millie Youngberg, *Rebuilding the Family Altar* (Miami, FL: Inter-America Division Pub. Assn., 1994), 7, 8.

2 Ellen G. White, "A Sabbath Reform Needed," *Signs of the Times*, May 20, 1886, 289.

3 Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2004), ix.

4 Donald Harvey and Gene Williams, *Living in a Glass House: Surviving the Scrutiny of Ministry and Marriage* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 73.

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Literature ministry *in* today's church

To give or not to give? The question kept going through Nancy's mind¹ as she rode a bus in Phoenix, Arizona. An Adventist layperson, Nancy had some small Bible pamphlets, and she sensed an uncomfortable conviction to give a pamphlet to the man sitting next to her. If she gives him one, would she be considered rude? If she does not, would she miss a great opportunity to share her faith? She thought it over, hesitated, not knowing the man, and pushed the conviction away. Soon, the bus came to a stop, and her inner conviction would not go away. She may never see the man again. She collected herself, dared to brave the consequences, stepped outside of her comfort zone, and handed the tract to the man, expecting the worst. The stranger in the bus looked at her intensely, and said, "You know, I've been praying that God would give me a sign if He didn't want me to commit suicide . . . and I think this might be it." Both got off the bus to be on their way, one to her routine, the other to think again of what life is all about.

Literature ministry is a call to think of what life is all about—normal people confronting life in all its reality. For many, though, literature ministry evokes mental pictures of fully suited men with briefcases walking in the country, selling hardcover Bible Stories to families for hundreds of

dollars. While at times this has been the predominant mode of literature evangelism, such a picture not only is antiquated but also illustrates a narrow category of the broader scope of literature ministries—especially as it relates to the local church.

Literature distribution

Today's literature ministry envisions engaging all believers in the local church in two ways: first and primarily through literature distribution, secondly through sales. Having played a lead part in developing a literature ministry called GLOW (Giving Light to Our World),² I have had a unique opportunity to see the results of hundreds of laity distributing tracts one at a time in various communities.

In Fresno, California, Jason, an Adventist church member, had a rare experience. One particular day Jason went to the courthouse to attend to some business. While there, he passed through the security checkpoint, where he emptied his pockets into a bucket for inspection. In went his keys, wallet, and Bible pamphlets. The security guard, inspecting the bucket, asked Jason whether he could have one of the pamphlets. Jason replied that the guard could have them all. The security guard shook his head, stating that he already had the other ones.

The Upper Columbia Conference received a call from an inner-circle

staff of a famous television personality. Apparently he had found a Bible pamphlet on health in his hotel room and then found the same tract title on the plane the next day. He ordered 1,000 more tracts stating that it was the best write-up on health he had read and that they would be calling to order more.

Then there was the woman who owned a salon in Madera, California. She received two pieces of literature at different times on the topic of the Sabbath. She prayed that God would make it clear if He was trying to speak to her. Soon afterward she was approached by an Adventist who gave her another Sabbath tract—this time in the mall. Amazed, she accepted the tract, called in for Bible studies, eventually was baptized, and is now the literature leader in her local Adventist church.

These are just a few of many stories illustrating the impact of Adventist literature in communities when our members are engaged in active distribution.

Benefits of local church literature ministry

To assess the effectiveness of literature evangelism, some might ask, "How many baptisms does literature distribution generate?" I would propose another reasonable question: "Are immediate baptisms the appropriate indicator of the success of literature

ministry?” The point to be noted is that implementing a literature distribution program yields multiple benefits to local churches and conferences, and these benefits are not always necessarily baptism related.

Here are two benefits:

1. *Increased lay involvement.* One clear and immediate benefit of literature distribution is member activation. Lay activation is a goal in itself: “When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of his Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together

b. *Fearlessness.* Literature provides a fearless medium of communication. This simple fact alone galvanizes the hearts of many laity. After all, their only part in the whole process can be as simple as placing the literature in public—the Holy Spirit will apply the message of the tract to the hearts of the readers.

c. *Eloquence.* Most laity may feel they cannot adequately articulate their beliefs. Well-written literature makes them “silent preachers,” with the literature doing the speaking on their behalf. An Adventist in San Francisco, for example, has a two-foot high statue of the image of Daniel 2. He simply puts

purse. Small though it might seem, this ease of use and mobility is a large factor in the decision-making process of laity. One church member even told us how the tracts are just the right size for his one-legged cockatoo. The man takes his bird with him on walks. When children are attracted to the bird, he gives the bird a tract and the bird gives the tract to the kids with his beak. Apparently he has a high success rate with this method.

2. *Increased Bible study.* A second stated purpose of literature ministry is to get people to study their Bibles. This often means that they will study alone in their home without immediately contacting the Adventist Church. Ellen

Opportunities present themselves continually and in unusual manners. Shall we make the most of them?

with God.”³ What makes literature distribution an easy facilitator of member participation?

a. *Simplicity.* Literature distribution does not require any special or expensive modes, such as erecting satellite dishes, syncing projectors, purchasing plane tickets, designing banners, cooking a vegetarian meal, or delivering a sermon. All it takes is a willing heart.

Take, for example, Edith from a small rural church. She is an elderly person with only one functioning arm. When her church found an opportunity to sell vegetarian burgers at a local agricultural expo, she decided she would put a Bible pamphlet in every napkin that went with the meal. That year, Edith, as well as others in her church, distributed hundreds of tracts—one of which ended up in the hands of former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Edith later said, “This is one ministry that even I can do!”

the statue outside and sits next to it in a chair. When passersby stop and ask him what the statue is all about, he does not have to say a word. He simply gives them a tract on Daniel’s prophecy and allows the pamphlet to do the work.

d. *Economy.* Most literature is inexpensive, some tracts costing only pennies each. This makes literature distribution a viable option for all. This also reduces inhibitions regarding indiscriminate mass distribution methods, given that this is such a small loss if the receiver actually discards the literature. A Samoan evangelical pastor requested Bible studies for his entire church after he found a tract on the ground outside of a taco shop.

e. *Mobility.* Over and over again, we hear church members telling us how they like the convenience of literature work, particularly with GLOW literature, because of the actual size of the tracts. They can carry them in their pockets or

White said, “More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications.”⁴ She even gave a specific example of the delayed, but sure, results of literature ministry: “The results of the circulation of this book [*The Great Controversy*] are not to be judged by what now appears. By reading it some souls will be aroused, and will have courage to unite themselves at once with those who keep the commandments of God. But a much larger number who read it will not take their position until they see the very events taking place that are foretold in it. The fulfillment of some of the predictions will inspire faith that others also will come to pass, and when the earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord, in the closing work, many souls will take their position on the commandments of God as the result of this agency.”⁵

These statements lead us to believe that thousands (if not millions) will read our publications and be convicted by them, yet they may not make immediate decisions.

Partial decisions

While some readers will not take their stand for the truth until the great harvest, many will be convicted and make immediate decisions on the topic of the tract. Often people who receive literature do not request additional Bible studies but simply make decisions on the light given in the tract they received.

In 2013, a church member placed a

being distributed each year. Adventist leader John Loughborough credited the Tract and Missionary societies with ‘creating and increasing a missionary spirit . . . of direct labor for the salvation of souls’ in church members’ hearts. The results were inspirational as well: from 1871 on, as many souls were won through tracts and literature ministries as by public evangelists, according to Loughborough.⁶

Literature still has the power to convict and convert. The more literature we begin to distribute, the more results we will witness. The top literature-distributing conference in the North

One such wheel is literature. Simply placing literature in one’s pocket tends to help us remember our missionary opportunities throughout the day. Visits to the gas station, grocery stores, Laundromats, and restaurants now take on a more exciting air as they are transformed into potential missionary escapades. Walks in the neighborhood, around the park, and through parking lots may transform into adventures to reach out and draw people into God’s family.

On a flight from Norway to Holland, I gave a tract, “Myths About Hell,” to my seatmate, a university psychology pro-

*The more literature we begin to distribute,
the more results we will witness.*

literature rack in a Christian bookstore, of course, with the store’s permission. Later, a customer took one of the free tracts, which happened to be on the Sabbath. The customer was so impressed that he returned to the Christian bookstore and showed the tract to the store owner. The store owner was also convicted—so much so that he began to close his bookstore on the Sabbath from then on.

It is not unusual for literature to produce some immediate baptisms. According to our statistics at GLOW for the North American Division, pamphlets tend to produce one Bible study request per 1,000 tracts distributed. Some of these *do* lead to baptisms.


Commenting on early Adventist baptismal success with literature ministry, Andrews University history professor Brian E. Strayer states, “By 1874, when the General Conference Tract and Missionary Society was formed . . . , nearly 5 million pages of Seventh-day Adventist literature were

American Division averages only two to three tracts per member per month, currently. The story illustrates what could happen *much more frequently* if our members distributed more literature on a regular basis.

The final word

“Every year millions upon millions of human souls are passing into eternity unwarned and unsaved. From hour to hour in our varied life opportunities to reach and save souls are opened to us. These opportunities are continually coming and going. God desires us to make the most of them.”⁷ Ellen White’s powerful words must convict us of our missed opportunities to witness. This is no time to keep to our own business. Indeed our business should be the business of God—to reach out to those who do not know Him. If we are ever going to fight tendencies towards insularity and become a more opportunity conscious people, we must make use of all the training wheels God has given us.

When she noticed the topic, she was surprised and mentioned that she had a colleague at the university who was currently in the process of writing a book in which he was showing that hell did not exist. She then took another copy of the tract for him. At the end of our conversation she said something I will never forget, “You know, you are lucky in a way because at least you have something to believe in. Most of us are still looking for that.”

Opportunities present themselves continually and in unusual manners. Shall we make the most of them? 

1 Narrated names in this article are pseudonyms.

2 GLOW has printed more than 42 million tracts, translated into more than 55 languages since September 2007.

3 Ellen G. White, “Why God Waits,” *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1896, 449.

4 Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953), 151.

5 *Ibid.*, 128, 129.

6 Brian E. Strayer, “Called to Witness,” *Adventist Review*, January 2002, <http://archives.adventistreview.org/2002-1504/story1.html>.

7 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 373.

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► Bahamas Prime Minister commends Adventist Church for health commitment

Nassau, Bahamas—The top leader of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas recognized the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the areas of health, education, and youth ministries on November 2, 2014. Prime Minister **Perry G. Christie** commended the Adventist Church for the role the church has played in the development of the Bahamas and challenged church leaders in the Caribbean nation to develop a health and wellness center, saying that the church has a very effective healthy living program.

“You have an extraordinary history of commitment to best health practice,” Christie told church leaders following a report from the church’s top leader in the region. “In this report it speaks to the success of wellness programs that you have, but it also says we must move to create in the Bahamas a wellness center.”

Christie delivered his remarks at the Hillview Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nassau during the opening business session of the denomination’s South Bahamas Conference. He went on to lend his support for the wellness center, saying that the Seventh-day Adventist Church “has an international reputation for its commitment to wellness and healthy lifestyle,” and that if the wellness center is built, “the government of the Bahamas will find a way to help you succeed at doing that.”

“As Adventists, we have many ways we can help people in the community live healthful, joyful lives with our



Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas Perry G. Christie. [photo courtesy ATCU]

principles,” **Belkis Archbold**, Health Ministries director for the denomination’s Inter-American Division, said following the meeting. “We are pleased

to see this being recognized by government leaders.” **Leonard Johnson**, president of the denomination’s Atlantic Caribbean Union, informed the delegation of upcoming plans to launch a health initiative entitled “I Want to Live Healthy” throughout the territory in 2015 and reaffirmed the church’s commitment to continuously pray for the leaders of the country. “When we visit with leaders of our country, it is not just to solicit help from them or to deal with issues, but, as spiritual leaders, it is to take time to pray for them,” Johnson said.

There are more than 23,000 Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the Bahamas. [ATCU and ANN staff] ▼

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The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration

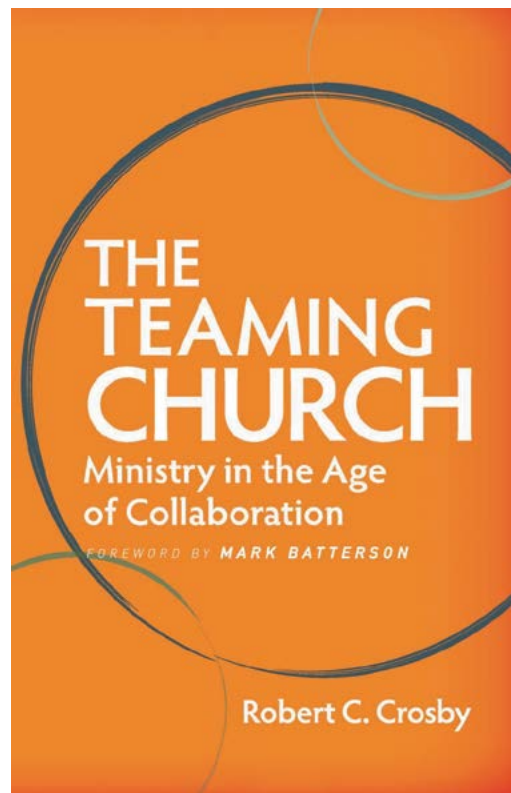
by Robert C. Crosby, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012.

Today's pastors and congregational leaders often wonder whether going it alone is their best option for ministry. Yet, the notion of working closely with others and team ministry can elicit fear and confusion. *The Teaming Church* offers clear and thoughtful guidance about the how and why of team ministry. Serious study of this material will move leaders far ahead in their thinking and increase the chances that a robust and renewed ministry will result.

The foundational premise behind *The Teaming Church* is that the time in which we live requires one ministry skill, perhaps more than any other: cooperation. While growth-driven leaders focus on putting people to work, teaming leaders aim at getting people to work together.

"In a world where leaders had drawn triangles and hierarchies, Jesus came on the scene drawing circles: circles of honor, circles of teamwork, and circles of community" (12), writes author Robert C. Crosby, professor of practical theology at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. He then organizes his book in three sections: (1) Draw Your Circle: Creating a Team; (2) Teach Your Team to Draw Circles: The Teaming Technique; and (3) Circle Thinking: A Teaming Mind-Set.

Crosby presents what he calls "The Teaming Church Principle": "To become



a great team your group must have a deeply challenging goal, a creatively empowering leader, and a collaborative, biblically honoring community" (16). This principle incorporates four key components:

- The character: the right kind of people and practices on the team
- The carrot: the right kind of challenge
- The coach: the right kind of leader
- The community: the right kind of culture

The author develops in great detail each of these key components. He also addresses what he calls "The Four Fatal Teaming Errors" and how to avoid unnecessary, time-consuming missteps. He then discusses how a group can become a team, the DNA of a winning team, how to motivate a team, how to lead a team, and how to unleash team brilliance. The concept of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the Divine Team is discussed to illustrate how a teaming culture not only accomplishes the things God wants done but also reflects who God is.

This 179-page book comes packed with practical information that provides a wealth of ideas and instruction for pastors and church leaders. The book also provides biblical motivations; vivid examples; practical approaches for creating a teaming culture in any faith community; and transcripts of interviews of several lead pastors who have had success in forming teams in small, medium, and large churches.

The book is a good resource for leaders who wish to discover how relational networking and teamwork are the way forward for Christ's kingdom in the twenty-first century. ▣

—Reviewed by Raj Attiken, DMin, principal moderator, the Innovation Commons, and retired president of the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists headquartered in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

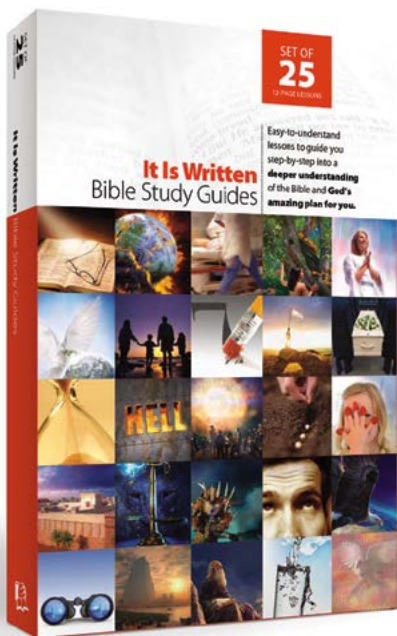
Lawrence H. Balleine is a retired clergy (Congregational/United Church of Christ)



Forty tips *from* 40 years of ministry

1. Have an active prayer life.
2. Cherish and spend time with your family.
3. Honor tradition, but do not worship it. After serving a congregation for a while, you may tweak or adapt traditions.
4. A church's ministry is like an iceberg: 90 percent of it goes on beneath the scenes. But the unseen part is what supports the other 10 percent.
5. Be willing to do any task that needs to be done. Just because you may hold a theological degree does not mean you cannot join a group in picking up the litter from a nearby highway.
6. Be as careful *how* you say something as in *what* you say.
7. God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason: spend twice as much time listening as speaking.
8. We are not called to be successful but to be faithful.
9. The local church is not yours. It is Christ's, and you and everyone else are privileged to serve it.
10. Your absence is often noticed more than your presence.
11. Only make promises you can keep. If you say to a hospitalized person: "I'll see you tomorrow," you need to appear tomorrow.
12. It is always better to be kind than to insist that you are right.
13. The customer (the person in the pew) is *not* always right. But, usually, instead of pointing out their faults, lead people in such a way that they discover for themselves the error of their ways. Gentleness and discretion go a long way.
14. Ministry is more about planting seeds than about reaping harvests.
15. When particular thoughts on themes come to mind for upcoming sermons, such as hope, forgiveness, and so forth, place them in folders dedicated to these themes.
16. Prepare the best you can and leave the rest to God. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.
17. There will always be some people whom you can never satisfy.
18. Practice what you preach as best you can.
19. Read not only the Bible and theology but other topics as well.
20. Take time for personal rest.
21. Keep confidences.
22. You are never as bad, or as good, as some say you are.
23. Honesty is an indispensable quality.
24. Establish boundaries, including time limits.
25. Compliment others when they merit it.
26. Do not be afraid to admit that there are often "better" Christians than you are, and that some are sitting in your pews. It keeps you humble, another essential quality for a minister.
27. Respect where each person is along his or her faith journey.
28. Just being there in times of crisis is more important than saying the right things.
29. Doing the compassionate thing is almost always more important than doing the sensible thing.
30. Exemplify forgiveness.
31. Spend quality time with colleagues.
32. Folks generally respond more to love than to knowledge.
33. Do not expect everyone to agree with you.
34. Always speak with kindness to everyone.
35. It has been said, "In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty; in all things love."
36. Know that God works in each person in His own way.
37. Participate in community events.
38. Cultivate good, healthy friendships whenever and wherever you are able.
39. God, not the congregation, is your boss. But God may be speaking through your congregation.
40. Offer grace, express gratitude, and be generous.

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