

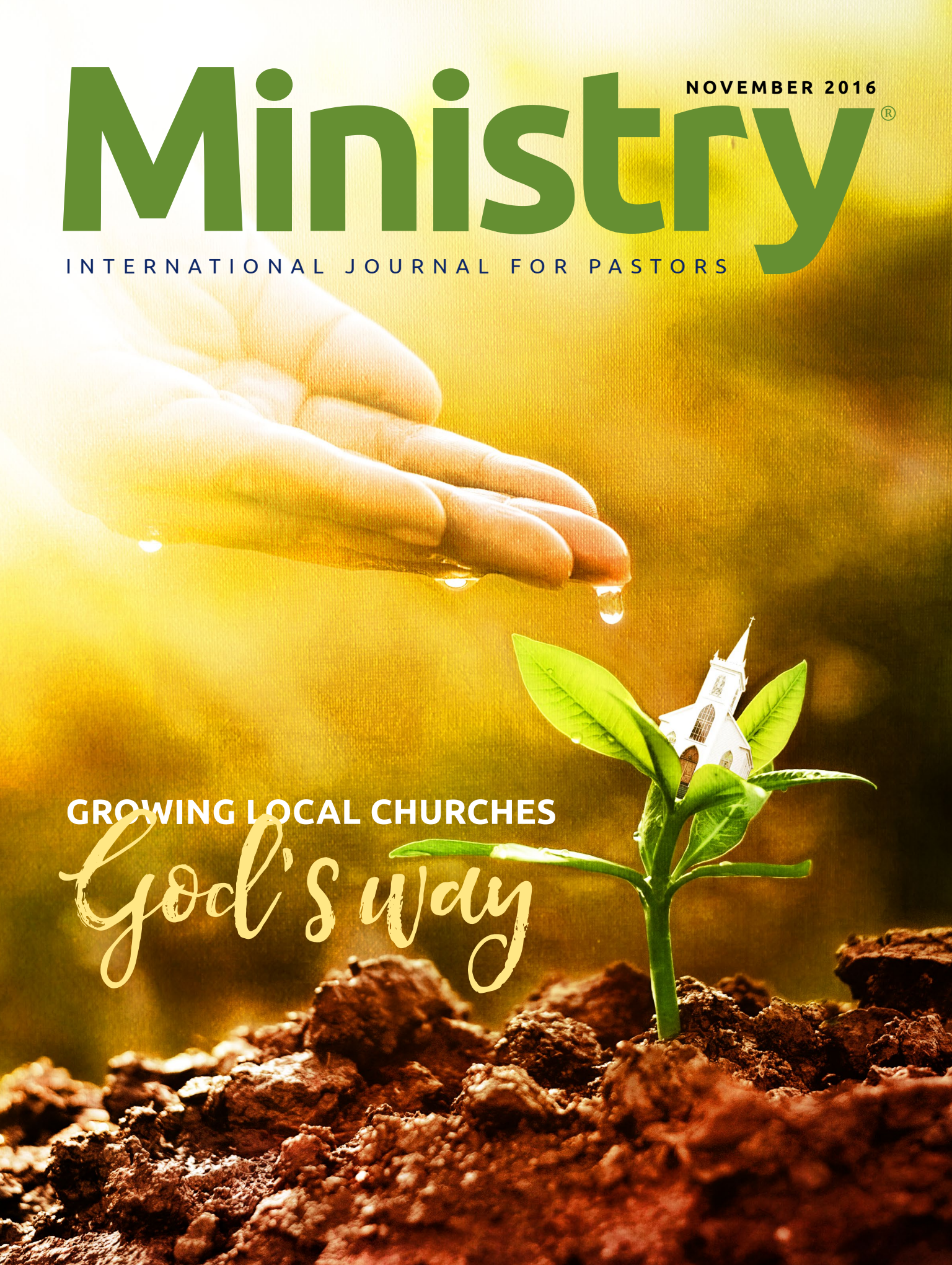
Ministry[®]

NOVEMBER 2016

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

GROWING LOCAL CHURCHES

God's way





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“Articles like these make your magazine a benefit to ministers of the gospel everywhere, and I would encourage you to include more of Mueller’s work.”

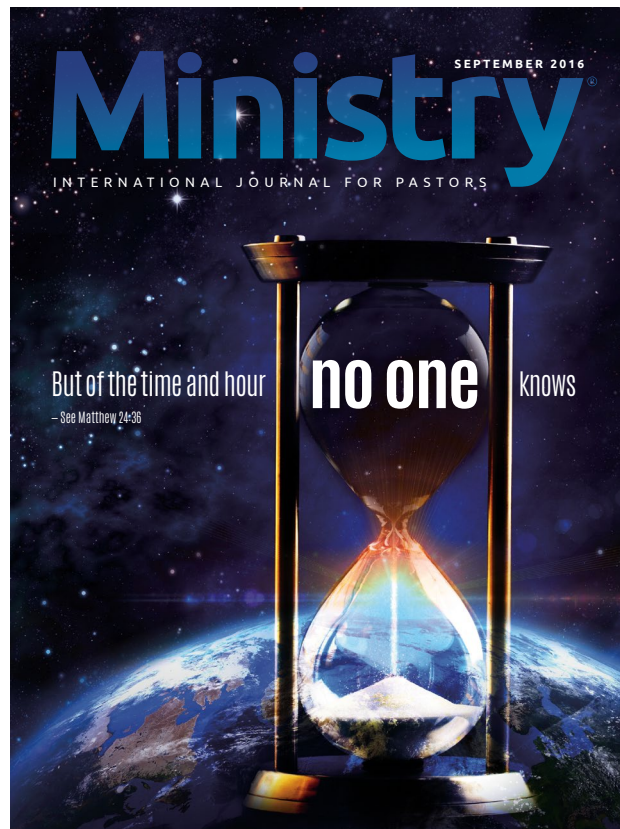
Blessed to read, convicted to serve

I have just finished reading the excellent lead article by Ekkehardt Mueller from the September edition of *Ministry* magazine. I am writing to commend you for publishing articles like this for the edification of ministers worldwide.

Mueller has written a masterful article on a very difficult subject, namely the purposefully-limited knowledge of Jesus Christ during the days of His incarnation. His review of the Matthew 24 passage was exemplary in the way that he began with the context of the passage, and proceeded to a scholarly and yet accessible analysis of the verse in question. He then laid out the central question of his article:

“Does Jesus’ limited knowledge militate against His divinity and His place within the Trinity?” and stated clearly his position (“We do not think so.”)

He enumerated the theological reasons for his position persuasively,



and concluded with an admonition that we take the passage to heart and let its truth form our thinking and affect the way we live as Christians.

Articles like these make your magazine a benefit to ministers of the

gospel everywhere, and I would encourage you to include more of Mueller’s work. I would particularly like to see his treatment of the syllogistic paradox, “God cannot be tempted. Jesus is fully God. Jesus was in all points tempted . . .”

—Steven R. Jones, president, The Missionary Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, United States of America

I just read Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller’s article in *Ministry* magazine, September 2016 edition. His exegetical surgery of Matthew 24:36, “But of the Time and Hour No One Knows,” was both compelling and enlightening.

I took away from the article the following: Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ should be actively waiting His return by serv-

ing the least among us, i.e., the lost, hungry, lonely, abused, rejected, and forgotten . . . , with all our heart, mind, and strength. Glory to God! Have a blessed day!

—Rev. Dr. Robert A. Smith, Jr., email

Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, has been elected General Conference Ministerial Association associate secretary and associate editor of *Ministry*.



Write the vision, make it plain

While I was speaking with a pastor in London, England, he told me, “When I was in school, I was very focused on studying and writing. Now that I have a church, I am very focused on preaching and visiting. As a result, I may not be able to write an article for you.”

I reflected on a quotation printed on a poster advertising a church film festival: “If it can be written or thought, it can be filmed.” My mind rewrote the poster: If it can be preached or thought, it can be written. Complimenting my colleague on his passion for ministry, I suggested he not think of it as ministry *or* writing but ministry *including* writing. Ellen White put it this way: “Let the ministers regard it as a part of their duty to send short articles of experience to our papers. . . . We want truth, solid truth, from solid, consecrated men, women, and youth.”¹

A pastor may respond, You ask us to write; how aware are you of the heavy load we bear in the field? I answer, it is *because* of your heavy load that we ask you to write; and, yes, we are aware. I have been blessed to be a church pastor, college professor, and conference president. In each capacity, I have been pastor of a church. Even as conference president, I pastored a church; and my successor is doing the same.² My heart is with the local pastor because the local church is the heart of the work. Ben Schoun states, “The local church and, consequently, the local pastor is central in the task of reaching the world for Christ.”³ It is *because* of what pastors go through that we need them, and those who support them, to write.

We cannot abandon pastors on the battlefield. They must have the very

best of resources to stand a fighting chance. They are at the epicenter of the battle. It’s where David sent Uriah. It’s risky, dangerous, and deadly. It’s home to both enemy fire and friendly fire. Why, then, would anybody want to stay on the battlefield? Schoun quotes *Christian Century* editor Harold Fey: “The more dedicated, intelligent and sensitive a minister is, the more he will be wearied by the tedium of the daily rounds, frustrated by his frequent inability to get things done, [and] harassed by the petulant, grumbling, meddlesome members of which every parish has its share. Every day he will die a little under the weight of his cross. He will be many times tempted to flee from such ordeals. But he remains on the job because he knows that the parish—not the bishopric, the professorship, the executive office or any other laudable ministerial post—is the arena where Christ’s battle for the world must be fought.”⁴

In this great controversy, pastors are fighting for their very lives. That’s why Habakkuk shouted, “O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?” (Hab. 1:2, ESV). Long before the advent of Samsung’s Galaxy Tab, Microsoft’s Surface Pro, or Apple’s iPad, God replied, “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it” (Hab. 2:2).

God gives the mandate: write the vision. In order to write it, you must catch it. Pray and meditate on Jesus

every morning because whatever ministry battles we are fighting, we must write that Jesus is the answer.

God gives the method: make it plain. Our writing must involve thorough exegesis, faithful hermeneutics, and courageous exposition. As Stephen Covey says, “Sharpen your saw.”⁵

God gives the mission: “So that a runner can carry the correct message to others” (v. 2, NLT). Our goal is urgent and audacious: for the gospel—or as John called it, the everlasting gospel⁶—to reach the world for Christ.

Start today—even as Chad Stuart has in the lead article. “The articles published in our papers should be full of practical, elevating, ennobling thoughts, which will help and teach and strengthen the mind that reads them. God help our editors to choose wisely.”⁷ Send in your best, and we will give you our best. May the same God who guides you in your task guide us in ours. 🙏

1 Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), 18; emphasis added.

2 Dr. Kenneth L. Manders, president, Bermuda Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3 Benjamin Schoun, *Helping Pastors Cope: A Psycho-Social Support System for Pastors* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 200.

4 Harold E. Fey, “Ministers Are Not Quitters,” *The Christian Century* (Dec. 5, 1962): 1471, quoted in Schoun, *Helping Pastors Cope*, 200.

5 Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

6 Revelation 14:6, KJV.

7 White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 19.

For *Ministry* writer’s guidelines, please see www.ministrymagazine.org/article-submissions.

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Jerry Page is General Conference Ministerial Association secretary and interim editor of *Ministry*.

Chad Stuart is senior pastor of Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Spencerville, Maryland, United States.



Growing local churches God's way: An interview with Chad Stuart

The Visalia Seventh-day Adventist Church in California, United States, was reported to be among the fastest growing churches in the North American Division. According to Chad Stuart, in the six years he pastored that church (2008–2014), attendance grew by 133 percent. Membership had a net increase of 284 persons, with 209 of them joining through baptism or profession of faith. During this period, annual local church giving nearly doubled—from \$370,000 to roughly \$700,000—and the church's annual contribution to the world church increased from \$550,000 to more than \$850,000. What are the factors responsible for such growth? Can such growth be replicated elsewhere? Ministry magazine wanted to find out from Chad Stuart, currently senior pastor of the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Spencerville, Maryland, United States.

Jerry Page (JP): As pastor of the Visalia church in California you witnessed enormous all-around growth in your church—in membership, stewardship, global giving, and local member support and involvement. How would you describe this?

Chad Stuart (CS): I hesitate to speak about the growth of Visalia Church. How can I when I see the phenomenal growth around the world, in places such as Brazil, Rwanda, and other areas where the church is exploding tenfold and beyond what I've ever seen? Yet in spite of that hesitancy, I am happy to share some feelings that spring from my heart when I think of what God did in the Visalia Church. I believe with all my heart that Jesus who built the church can cause that church to grow beyond our expectations. Church growth can actually happen at any time in any place, and that church growth can also fail to happen even when all

the best things are happening. Jesus uses prayer, strategy, focus, vision, and intentionality in powerful ways to make the difference between a stagnant church and a growing one.

JP: In your strategy for church growth, you give first priority to prayer. Can you expand on this?

CS: I cannot sufficiently emphasize the fact that at the core of what happened at Visalia is the foundation of prayer. I would love to say that this foundation was due to the deep spirituality of the pastor! The truth is, I was like most pastors: I worked first and prayed later. I gave token platitudes to prayer, and I did not really know or experience the power of prayer—until one day I met Katy. From the first day I arrived in Visalia, Katy began her gentle and friendly nagging. *Nag* is not a nice word, but I can't think of a better word. She was persistent in encouraging me to

focus more and more on prayer. She practically forced a prayer partner on me. She gave me books to read about prayer. But most of all she prayed that her pastor would pray more. Well, the Lord answered her prayers, and prayer—our talking with Jesus and receiving His power—became the foundation of what we did in Visalia.

JP: How did that happen?

CS: We intentionally placed prayer partners in the church. If you were going to be a leader, you were going to have a prayer partner! We had individuals that prayed every Sabbath morning before church started and another group that prayed Sabbath afternoons at our sister campus. We organized a women's group that met Wednesday mornings, placing before God the prayer requests that came the previous week. We spent 40 days as a church praying every day at 7:14 A.M. and at 7:14 P.M. After this

40-day period, we organized prayer gatherings in the church each morning, and the church was open for people to come and pray. Every single person that was connected to our church, whether member or not, was on a list and was prayed for weekly by one of our prayer warriors. We preached about prayer regularly. We sent out more than 300 books on the subject of prayer on two separate occasions. Prayer and its power filled our church. Individually we were not the same again, and our church wasn't the same again.

JP: Prayer can unleash God's power to change, to transform—even to move a self-satisfied congregation into a dynamic witnessing force for the gospel of Jesus. There must be some other powerful motivating principles that also moved the Visalia congregation to take on the challenge of church growth.

CS: Yes, there are some fundamental principles, but the way we arrived at them was not by our own doing. While I was in the seminary at Andrews University, I heard a story about a doctoral student who was doing research on church growth for his dissertation. This doctoral student went to visit the pastor of the largest church in the world at the time. This Adventist doctoral student wanted to know the secret and strategies of such phenomenal growth within this church. The pastor went into his library and returned with two books, *Gospel Workers* and *Evangelism* by Ellen G. White. He told the doctoral student that most of the growth principles he employed in his ministry came from these books. When I heard that story, I was blown away! We have the secret, but ignore it . . . her! At Visalia, I took the first opportunity to read these books again, mine out the buried gems, and apply those principles of church growth to our situation.

JP: After praying for an active and growing church and earnest study of God's revealed principles of church growth, what was the next step?

CS: When I arrived in Visalia, I was thrilled to find that the church had several individuals with a gift and a burden for various areas of ministry. It was only a matter of time to organize different forms of ministry, utilize the talents we had in the church, and reach out to the community. If a church does not have experienced members to be involved

day-in-and-day-out challenges of a Bible worker. I say "true" because many who complete Bible worker training enter the work, but in their inmost heart the real objective is to become a pastor, and the Bible work becomes a back door entry into pastoral ministry. Church growth needs those who want to be Bible workers—to keep knocking



Chad Stuart

in church growth ministry, training such a group must become a pastoral priority. Meanwhile, to those churches that are unable to have a trained "staff," I would recommend that the church should start with employing at least one *prayerful, true Bible worker*. "Prayerful" because Bible work is tough; rejection is more common than success. An individual truly needs to be in continual prayer to stay strong in the face of the

on doors, giving Bible studies, connecting with guests, and motivating other members to join them. If you can't hire a Bible worker, get three or four members and train them and send them out as lay Bible workers. If you don't have the budget for this, then cut another area of ministry in order to make it happen!

JP: The principles that you have enunciated so far are very good. But

are there factors that the congregation itself should become aware of and involved in to attract new worshippers?

CS: Yes, several of them. One is quality in whatever we do in the church. It's been said, "God's people must strive to reach the very highest standard of excellence."¹ When visitors come to our church, they must see a difference. Within Adventism I have sometimes found a dearth of excellence. I don't say this to be critical; actually yes, I do; anything less than our best effort in our service to God is unacceptable! When we come to worship, we must remember that we are in the presence of the God of the universe. We often throw worship services together at the last minute without much thought or prayer. This is not biblical! Read the last four books of the Pentateuch and it is obvious that God cares very much about the details of worship. This doesn't mean that services need to be elaborate, but they must reflect order in preparation and excellence and humility in delivery. From the individuals playing the instruments, the song leaders, the Scripture reading, and the pastoral prayer to the sermon or the benediction—each should render glory to God and lead the worshipping community into a profound experience of the presence and blessings of God.

JP: So you were intentional about doing things well.

CS: Even little things done right make a huge difference, and a visitor will be more likely to return and potentially connect with Jesus if they experience excellence each time they attend. Take, for example, greeting the worshiper at the door. Most greeters hand a bulletin—looking somewhere else—and move on. Where is the eye contact, the smile, and the handshake so that the person who comes into the church feels that he or she is among friends and not just receiving a piece of paper from a bulletin dispenser? From the moment a guest crosses the threshold

of our parking lot until the moment they leave, it should be the most *excellent* experience of their week. In fact, it should start with the moment they look online at our church's Web site; that should be excellent too!

JP: Sounds like you were not afraid of change.

CS: We changed our leadership teams. No longer were they deaconesses and deacons ministering separately; now they were mixed teams of men and women working together. We changed our staff, adding a number of individuals and transitioning others. We changed the format of worship. We dropped *all* offering appeals and *all* announcements, and yet still our giving grew by leaps and bounds and more people were involved in the activities of the church. We looked at everything for the glory of God and with the guest who would be attending our church in mind. And growth was the gradual result.

JP: What did change look like?

CS: When I arrived at Visalia, the church was about 80 percent Caucasian and 20 percent Hispanic even though our community was only 48 percent Caucasian. By the time I left, we were closer to 55 percent Caucasian and forty-five percent Hispanic. Visalia church is in a very poor county, and we intentionally went about ministering to the less affluent; then we invited them to follow Christ. Prior to my arrival there had been zero evangelistic campaigns in the last ten years. In the years I was there, we had three full evangelistic campaigns and several other shorter campaigns. An open, welcoming, caring church cannot but grow.

JP: When growth brings change, not everybody's happy. Did you face opposition, and if so, how did you handle it?

CS: Change creates tension and sometimes opposition. For us, growth in and of itself was a change that brought some challenges and conflict. But a

church that would rather stay the same than grow is not a church. If you're planning for growth in a church setting, it means bringing in something new and getting rid of something old. At Visalia, there were changes in staff, music, nominating committee process, board structure, expectations of volunteers, and so on. In every change there was pushback. Some stuck, some failed, but just like in nature, that which does not change does not grow. If a pastor is unwilling to change things due to a fear of conflict, then he or she is in the wrong profession.

Too much is done in churches without a real purpose. "Why is your children's program run that way?" "Why do you start your church service at that time?" "Why is that person the leader of that ministry?" If the answer to any of these questions is, "Because that's the way it's always been," then that needs to be reexamined. Whatever we did at Visalia, there was a purpose behind it, and when those things started to lose their purpose or impact, then we became intentional about closing them down or changing them.

JP: What is one of the most satisfying achievements of Visalia's church-growth program?

CS: The planting of a new church, three years after I arrived in Visalia! A year into my tenure at Visalia someone placed before me the ten-year plan of the city of Visalia. As I studied that plan I noticed that all the growth was planned for the northwest quadrant of the city, and the city's population was projected to rise by a hundred thousand over that ten years. A handful of us in leadership thought to ourselves, *Rather than having a church react after the growth, why not plant a church in that territory in anticipation of that growth?* There were those who thought this planting would fragment the existing congregation. If you're growing and your room is filling up, don't get scared of the naysayers; act quickly and decisively and make physical room for growth! Ellen White's counsel was, "Do not those who know

the truth understand the commission of Christ? Why then do they feel no burden to add new territory to the Lord's kingdom, to plant the standard of truth in new places?"² And in another place she said, "Lights were to be kindled in many places, and from these lights still other lights were to be kindled."³

was minimal, the motivation of seeing this evangelistic endeavor in their town spurred them on to greater work for Jesus. The existing congregation did what I had been taught it would do by those who had gone down that road before me: it actually grew more than it had in previous years.

would have done differently to have even better growth?

CS: First, *prayer*. Perhaps we should have expanded our prayer ministry more as we continued to claim God's promises. We did increase our prayer partners fifteenfold, yet it still seemed

She prayed that her pastor would pray more. Well, the Lord answered her prayers, and prayer—our talking with Jesus and receiving His power—became the foundation of what we did in Visalia.



So, in 2013, as the Visalia church baptized more people in that one single year than at any previous year in its hundred-year history, we planted the Ark Community Church—quite appropriately named—to provide a shelter from the storms of life for many in that part of the city. There was no money from the mother church or the local conference. Only eight persons from the mother church joined. Even though the mother church's role in the planting

One important point: from then on, we made it a point to keep before our people that the most important thing about a church is "seeking and saving the lost." With this in mind, we spent our money, shaped our calendar, and preached the Word around this passion, and we urged it to be the passion of each person that joined our family.

JP: That's great news. However, looking back, is there anything you

like we were so far from where God wanted us to be. Perhaps our Visalia church would have grown more if it was the majority membership, not the minority, who were united in prayer.

Second, *involvement*. Ironically, *our growth stifled our growth*. What do I mean by this? We were not equipped to absorb and train the new members in evangelizing their friends and family. In our first phase of rapid growth some sat too long without any

active involvement in church life and growth and their initial enthusiasm waned. Members became content. With growth and overcrowding of the church, members no longer saw “the need,” and their evangelistic fervor began to dissipate. We didn’t make room for the new people quickly enough, and our hesitancy caused our growth to sputter. Only 33 percent of our members regularly volunteered; that is, gave an hour a month. It should be at least one hour a week to really thrive, and it should be 100 percent of the members . . . but I’d take even 50 percent.

Third, *commitment*. I must begin with myself as the leader. What I do or fail to do affects the corporate body—maybe not open violation of the Ten Commandments, or even the occasional intrusions here and there, but other intrusions in my commitment: pride, for example. Holding resentment and bitterness in my heart. Neglecting personal private time with God in prayer and Bible study. Not having enough faith in the vision God has placed on my heart. Laziness. Fear. Over the six years I was in Visalia, I went through stages of struggles with all these sins. While I am not consciously aware of specific sins influencing my decisions or limiting growth, based on my knowledge of Scripture, I believe they could have limited the growth at times. A church cannot grow unless leaders grow in their relationship with and love for Jesus.

JP: If you had the opportunity to do it all over again, what would you change or do better to ensure a steadily growing church?

CS: My starting point would always be the same: *prayer*. To be a growing and a healthy congregation, a church must be continually looking for ways to facilitate more prayer, encourage corporate prayer, and recruit more prayer warriors. Where there is prayer, there is power.

Second, *delegate*. Church growth is shaky if it is solely dependent on the pastor. One of the privileges of membership is responsibility. I don’t find a single story in all of Scripture about a true disciple of Jesus that went to church once a week and then went home, had lunch, took a nap, did yard work on Sunday, went to their paying job during the week, cleaned the house Friday, and went back to church Sabbath and considered this an acceptable pattern for a follower of Jesus. This is, in fact, a denial of true Christianity. Jesus said very clearly that we are to feed the hungry, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, and shelter the homeless. He also said we are to *go* and witness. The only place most members “go” is to the church to sit, and then they start the routine of life all over again.

When I assume the pastorship of a church, I want to know exactly how many members are actually serving Jesus in a proactive, intentional way, and then I want to grow that by 10 percent or so each year, as new lives are being saved. Because no pastor is permanent, I asked myself, *Have I done enough for Visalia’s growth as her pastor, and have I done enough for that growth to continue when I am gone?* Far too often a church may be doing well, and then the pastor leaves and everything slows way down or even ceases completely. Attendance drops, evangelism is missing, and the church goes into maintenance mode. A growth-oriented pastor must make sure that systems are in place so the church is not pastor dependent and so that it is in a position to remain strong and keep growing even after the pastor moves. The new pastor should not have to deal with a struggling or a dying church.

Third, *small groups*. Church growth remains strong and spiritual where there is an active Sabbath School; but we need that and more. If we’re going to get bigger, then we must simultaneously get smaller or more connected; this will only happen through small

groups. The book of Acts speaks of two aspects of the early Christian Church: “house to house” gatherings and larger “temple” gatherings (Acts 2:46). Good things happen when members get together to study the Word of God, and one of those good things is church growth.

JP: Thank you, Pastor Stuart, for sharing with our readers some of your experience in church growth. Where can a pastor start in creating a mighty movement of God in his or her church?

CS: Cast a vision. We got people to serve by casting a vision, defining the ministries, and celebrating their “wins.” People want to be part of something bigger than themselves. We would have tables in the foyer so that people could sign up for various activities. We went from 8 greeters to 30 and from 6 elders to 15, many of them young adults. Our prayer warriors grew from 4 to 70 plus. We prayer-walked every street in our city of a 150,000, and we visited every single home delivering *Great Hope* books.

Remember, the church is the body of Christ, which means if your church is lifeless, if it isn’t functioning and growing and reaching the lost and loving on everyone, well, then it is not really the church, and it is definitely not the body of Christ. But don’t despair. Even if you are the only one in your church that is committed to seeing your church become the body of Christ, Jesus will honor your commitment and work with you to bring that desire into reality. Make a decision now to begin to change yourself and your church, and watch how God grows both! 🌱

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- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 127.
 - 2 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases 10* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999), 220, 221.
 - 3 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, 28.

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Creation, salvation, and the divinity of Christ: A look at John 1:1–13¹

Until Darwin, Christians generally believed in a literal Creation happening about 6,000 years ago. Darwin’s work, and the resulting growth of the theory of evolution, have shattered this uniformity, and in its place a variety of approaches have emerged.

On one hand, many Christians, including respected scientists,² still hold on to a literal Creation. This is also the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In contrast, a majority in the scientific community hold to evolution. In between Creation and evolution, and within Christianity itself, a number of models have developed that try to bridge the gap and explain the story of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2 within a broader evolutionary framework.

The scientific dimension of the discussion is exciting. So is a study of Genesis 1 and 2. But Genesis is not the only book of the Bible that speaks about origins. Interspersed throughout the pages of Scripture are direct references and allusions to the Creation story.

Luke, listing the genealogy of Jesus, follows the account of Genesis back to Adam and God: “[Jesus] . . . the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son

of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:37, 38).³ Paul repeatedly points to Adam: “Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come” (Rom. 5:14); and, “as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22); and “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13). Jesus notes that Abel, the son of Adam, was the first martyr: “So that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar” (Matt. 23:35). Hebrews 11, the chapter of faith, contains a long list of persons and events from the Old Testament. It begins with the Creation story (v. 3); continues with Abel and Cain (v. 4); and mentions, among others, the story of the Flood (v. 7)—assuming throughout the historical reliability of the accounts described. Many more examples could be cited.⁴

Any Christian outlook on the issue of origins should, then, take these other texts into account as well. This article will look at the creation language in John 1:1–13. What does it teach us about the biblical position on origins?

“In the beginning . . .”

John 1:1–13 is seen as an exposition on the divinity of Jesus.⁵ Yet within this passage there are seven references/allusions to the story of Creation.

The first is in the first words of the Gospel.

John 1:1 begins with the same words as Genesis 1:1, *en archē*, “in the beginning,” as expressed in the Septuagint, the LXX (an early Greek translation of the Old Testament). “The opening words of the Gospel are clearly intended to recall the first words of Genesis,” notes John McHugh.⁶ Before everything, Jesus was there. In John 1:2, John repeats the statement for emphasis: “He was in the beginning [*en archē*] with God.”

As Herman Ridderbos has pointed out, John refers “to the Word and to the Word’s existence with God ‘before the world was made,’ ”⁷ meaning that Jesus was not a part of the created order. He was there, with God, *before* creation began. He was with God from eternity.⁸ He was not created but Creator.

“... God . . .”

In Genesis 1:1, God continues to be the focus of attention: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” So also in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the

Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Genesis presents the person of God in summary fashion as one unity. That is not to say that plurality is not present. We find a telling interplay between plurality and unity in Genesis 1:26, 27: “Then God said, ‘Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image, after our [plural] likeness. . . .’ So God [singular] created man in his [singular] own image, in the image of God he [singular] created him; male and female he [singular] created them.” Indeed, the Hebrew word *élôhîm* used repeatedly in the Creation account is plural.

The plural of Genesis 1 has been interpreted in various ways,⁹ though there remains no reason the plurals in relation to God could not point to the Trinity.¹⁰ John, in fact, unwraps the plurality within the divinity that was hinted at in Genesis, explaining that God is composed of at least two persons, the Father, whom he here calls “God” —and Jesus, the Word, who is also God.

John twice notes that the Word was “with” God (John 1:1, 2). The Greek for “with” is not the expected preposition *meta* (“with”) or even *para* (“by”) but the unusual *pros* (“to/towards”). In biblical Greek the meanings of prepositions often overlap. So a number of scholars are happy to see *pros* as having essentially the same force here as *meta* or *para*.¹¹ Others, more correctly, see *pros* indicating not merely physical proximity but a close bond and relationship, a deep attachment to the Father. Edwin Abbott gives it the meaning “devoted to, and in converse with” God.¹² As such, there is a close bond between God and the Word, a bond founded on their common nature as God.

And John does not leave it there. Just as the Spirit appears hovering over the waters in the Creation account (Gen. 1:2), likewise John witnesses the Spirit not only hovering but descending in the bodily form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus (John 1:32).

Logos—the Word

Three times in John 1:1 and once in John 1:14, John refers to Jesus by the title “Word,” *Logos*, a noun used

here as a title. While it was customary a few decades ago to see the origins of the term primarily in Platonic thought, we find it more recognized now that, in using *Logos*, John draws from a Hebraic background.¹³ In light of John’s abundant use of Creation imagery in his introduction to his Gospel, it seems reasonable that *Logos* likewise comes specifically from the Creation account.

The verb *legō*, “to speak,” from which *Logos* derives, appears 11 times in the Greek text of Genesis 1 (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29), always in relation to God’s creative acts. No surprise because, according to the Creation story, everything came into being through the spoken word of God; at least apart from Adam and Eve, whom God formed with His own hands.

Likewise, *logos* is elsewhere used in reference to Creation: “By the word [LXX *logos*] of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” (Ps. 33:6). By tying Jesus, the *Logos*, with the *logos* of God, who brought everything into existence, John makes Jesus the acting agent in the work of Creation, a point he spells out in John 1:3.

“All things were made through him . . .”

John continues his hymn to Jesus with a further reference to Creation: “All things were made [*egeneto*] through him, and without him was not any thing made [*egeneto*] that was made [*gegonen*]” (John 1:3). In this one verse, three times John uses forms of the verb *ginomai*, “to be, become.” This very verb is the one used profusely in Genesis 1 (23 times) of God’s creative acts.

The fact that John clarifies that “all things” were made by Jesus leaves no room for alternative means of origins of life. As such, the use of the verb *ginomai* further elucidates the concept of Jesus as the acting agent of the work of Creation.

The fact that “all things were made through him” and “without him was not anything made that was made” automatically places Jesus outside the created order. He was not part of all the

things that were made. The thought already introduced in the first clause, “in the beginning was the Word,” which shows that Jesus is before and above the created order, is clearly spelled out here again: Jesus is Creator and not created.

“In him was life . . .”

John continues, “In him was life [*zōē*], and the life [*zōē*] was the light of men” (John 1:4). The double reference to *zōē* is not accidental. The concept of life plays a prominent role in the Gospel of John. While the other three Gospels refer to the everlasting reign of Jesus as “the kingdom of God,” in John we read, instead, of “eternal life.” Because through faith in Jesus eternal life is received, it is fitting that John should clarify that Jesus possesses life and, as such, is able to impart it.

This concept of life also seems to draw from Genesis. In the Creation story, God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the “breath of life [*pnōēn zōēs*]” (Gen. 2:7), and Adam *became* a “living creature [*psuchēn zōsan*].” He did not possess life of his own but, rather, received life from God. Because in John’s Gospel the *Logos* was the acting agent in Creation, it is probably fair to say that, for John, it was the *Logos* who knelt over the lifeless form of Adam and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. When Eve was created, Adam named her “Eve” (“life,” *zōē* in the LXX), because “she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

All humans owe their life to Eve, because she is the mother of all, and she, in turn, was created from Adam’s side. Adam, in turn, received his life from God. In that sense, the life of all humans has been borrowed from God, the originator of life. By contrast, Jesus has life in Himself, uncreated and unborrowed. His life was shared with Adam; and this same life will, in turn, be manifested in the form of eternal life for all who believe.

“[Jesus] . . . the light of men”

John then declares that Jesus was “the light of men,” and that this “light shines in the darkness” (John 1:4b, 5).

“Light,” Greek *fōs*, is another favorite term of John.¹⁴ Jesus is the “true” light (v. 9) who has come into the world (John 3:19). The thought of Jesus as the true light is repeated in John 8:12; 9:5; and 12:36, 46. Also, we find a repeated contrast between light and darkness. Though the light has come into the world, the world has loved “the darkness” because their deeds are evil (John 3:19; cf. 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 John 1:5; 2:8–11). Yet those who love the truth come to the light (John 3:21) and no longer walk in darkness (John 8:12).

The contrast between light and darkness presented in John’s introduction and developed throughout the Gospel harkens back to Creation. In the Genesis account, light was the first thing God created, and light was the element that dispelled the darkness, beginning the process of Creation; from darkness to light, from chaos to order. In Genesis no notion exists that darkness was a negative reality, though after God created light, God declared that “the light was good” (Gen. 1:4).

John takes this motif and gives it a spiritual dimension, in the sense that the world in its sinfulness and without God is dark, but the coming of Jesus has begun to disperse the darkness and bring order and spiritual beauty. Just as Jesus brought forth light at Creation to disperse the darkness, likewise He brought spiritual light to disperse the spiritual darkness of sin. The work of redemption, thus, replicates the work of Creation in the spiritual realm.

Sonship

John has a final reference to Creation in the concept of Sonship. Adam was a “son of God” by virtue of creation (Luke 3:38). He was a “son of God” in both a physical and spiritual sense. He was a “son of God” physically, in that God created him with His own hands. And he was a “son of God” spiritually, in that he and Eve were formed in the image and likeness of God. The spiritual dimension of sonship, however, was marred when Adam and Eve sinned.

But now, in Jesus, this process is reversed, and humans can again become

sons and daughters of God, not only through physical descent from Adam and Eve but spiritually as well: “But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

John then adds that these children of God “were born, not of blood [*aimatōn*] nor of the will of the flesh [*sarkos*] nor of the will of man [*andros*], but of God” (v. 13). All three words, *blood*, *flesh*, and *man*, appear in the Genesis account.

Blood is a symbol of human origin in God: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:6). The flesh points back to the

The new birth, by comparison, comes essentially as a repetition of the act of Creation—but in a spiritual sense. The result does not represent a physical reality but rather a new spiritual reality that replicates the sonship of Adam and Eve—but on a higher plane. This spiritual rebirth represents an act of God to bring the new birth experience to reality and turn sinners into sons and daughters of God.

Evaluation

Evaluating the brief analysis above, we noted seven points of theology in John 1:1–13 that draw from the Genesis account: (a) the phrase “in the beginning”; (b) John’s depiction of God;

The contrast between light and darkness presented in John’s introduction and developed throughout the Gospel harkens back to Creation.

creation of both Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:21, 23) and more importantly to the divine plan of marriage and procreation instituted in Eden: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh [*sarka mian*]” (v. 24).

Man points back to Adam as the father of all humans and even the source from which Eve was created: “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man [*andros*]” (v. 23).

What John expounds in John 1:13—and in his mention of blood, flesh, and man—is a juxtaposition between the physical order of procreation established in Eden and the spiritual. After Creation, which originated in God, procreation takes place through physical means by the human will, resulting in persons who have flesh and blood—the signs of life.

(c) the title *Logos* applied to Jesus; (d) the picture of Jesus as the One through whom creation came into being; (e) the concept of *zōē*, “life”; (f) the concept of light dispelling darkness; (g) and the concept of physical and spiritual sonship.


What can we conclude?

First, Christians need to realize that the story of Creation is not told only in Genesis 1 and 2. Creation imagery permeates a large part of Scripture. A few passages were mentioned in the introduction of this article and in endnote 4; and John 1:1–13 was analyzed in more detail. But in many more biblical texts and stories, Creation looms in the background. As such, any attempt to adopt alternative models of origins entails not only a rejection of a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2 but a

foundational rereading of many other portions of Scripture, including John 1:1–13, in ways most Christians would not be comfortable with.

Second, evidence exists that John, in harmony with other biblical writers, accepts the Genesis account as historically accurate. If he considered the Creation account an embellished myth, he would not have utilized it to build his theology. How could Jesus be “in the beginning” with God if there was no “beginning” in the biblical sense? How can Jesus be Creator if there was no Creation to begin with? How can He be the “creating Word” if there was no “Word” active in the creation process? To what kind of sonship are we restored if there were no Adam and Eve as children of God but instead humans evolving from hominids or inanimate matter?

John’s theology presupposes the historical reliability of the foundation

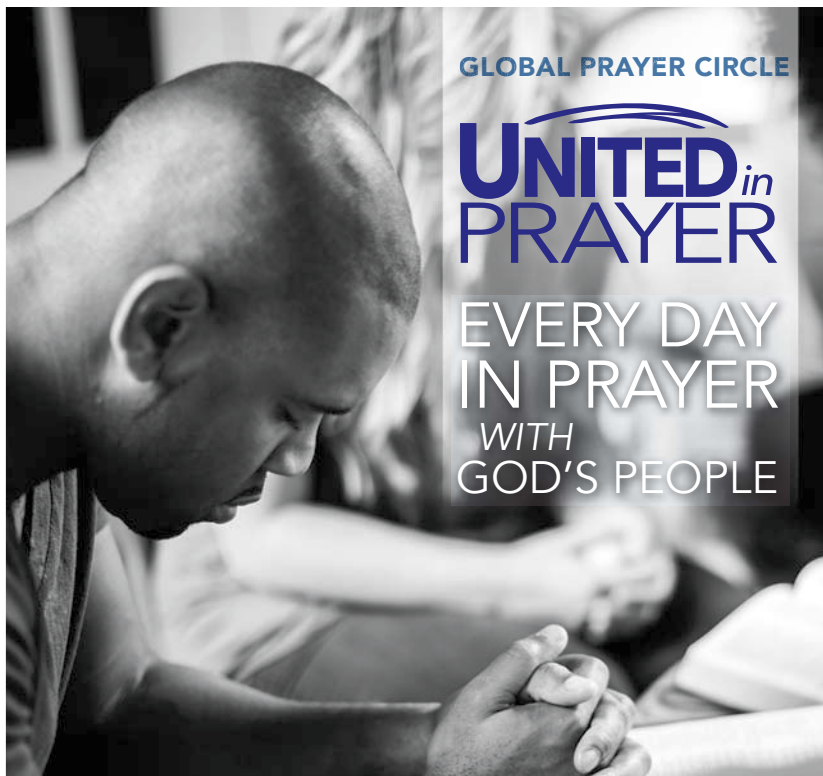
he builds his theology on, namely—the story of Creation. It is the historical reliability of a foundation that helps ensure the historicity of the theology built on it. 

- 1 A shorter adapted version of this article was published in *Spectrum* magazine online at spectrummagazine.org/article/kim-papaioannou/2012/01/13/john-11-13-creation-divinity-salvation.
- 2 For example, John F. Ashton, ed., *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation* (Sydney, Australia: New Holland Publishers, 1999); David DeWitt, *Unraveling the Origins Controversy* (Lynchburg, VA: Creation Curriculum LLC, 2007).
- 3 Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.
- 4 For example, Matthew 13:35; 19:4, 5; 25:34; Mark 2:27; 10:6–8; 13:19; 16:15; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24, 26; Romans 1:20, 25–27; 4:17; 5:12, 17–19; 8:19–22, 39; 11:36; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 8:6; 11:8, 9; 15:45; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 5:17; 11:3; Ephesians 1:4; 3:9; 5:31.
- 5 John F. McHugh observes that the first clause of John’s Gospel (John 1:1a) “asserts the pre-existence of the Logos, the second (1b) affirms that He was in a certain relationship with God, and the third (1c)

states that He is some sense to be identified with God.” *John 1–4: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 10.

- 6 McHugh, *John 1–4*, 6. Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 113.
- 7 Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 24.
- 8 William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1956), 43, 44.
- 9 For example, McHugh, *John 1–4*, 6. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 58, 59.
- 10 Beyond Genesis 1:26, 27 there are a host of other plurals in relation to God, for example, Genesis 2:18 (LXX); 3:22; 11:7; 20:13; 35:7; Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 4:7, 37; Joshua 24:19; Job 13:8; 35:10; Psalms 58:11; 149:2; Proverbs 9:10; 30:3; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 6:8; 41:21–24; 54:5.
- 11 For example, C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: 1978).
- 12 E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 2363–2366. See also the detailed discussion of L. de la Potterie, “L’emploi dynamique de εἰς dans Saint Jean et ses incidences théologiques,” *Biblica* 43 (1962), 379–81.
- 13 Cf. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: St. Andrews, 2001), 29–43.
- 14 Eight references in Matthew, 0 in Mark, 7 in Luke, and 23 in John.

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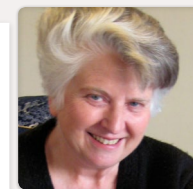
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Praying and anointing: A look at James 5:14–16

A group of experienced ministers was discussing their role in the healing ministry of their churches.

“I had this sick parishioner,” one began, diffidently. “The family asked me to anoint her. I did, but two days later she died. What did I do wrong?”

A mumble of commiseration showed that everyone in the group had experienced similar situations of apparent defeat. Some, it seemed, even questioned the point of anointing the sick. In this matter, ministers are not alone. A dedicated Christian physician was asked to pray for a seriously sick family member, which he willingly did. In the midst of his prayer, and to the horror of both the physician and the assembled family, the patient died.

“I’ll never pray for a patient again,” he uttered.

David Levy, a Christian neurosurgeon, developed the policy of praying with his patients before surgery. He had some amazing outcomes. But he admits honestly, “Early on, when I first began to pray with patients, God seemed to answer all my prayers and reward me and my patients with success. I began to think that perhaps I had found the key to perfect surgical outcomes. I even began to think that if I prayed I could control the outcome and would never have a failed surgery again. Boy, was that the wrong prognosis.”¹

How then are we, as Christians and especially ministers, to understand what James wrote about praying for, and even anointing with oil, those who are sick?

Prayer

James’s admonition to pray for the sick is in the context of the general prayer of faith. Douglas Moo notes: “Prayer is clearly the topic of this paragraph [James 5:13–18], being mentioned in every verse.”² There was nothing new about apostles exhorting people to pray when they experienced difficulties or sickness. Paul does so repeatedly (see Rom. 15:30–32; Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2–4; 1 Thess. 5:17). Few Christians, then or now, would question the efficacy of prayer that James extols in verse 16.

James indicates that the *prayer* of faith will *save* the sick person. *Save* has a double meaning, as the Greek *sōzō* can be used for both physical and spiritual salvation.³ James acknowledges this dual meaning when he mentions forgiven sins. But it is not the prayers of the sick person, or even that of the elder, that bring physical and spiritual healing; rather it is the name of Lord that brings the relief. If, therefore, the saving of the person, whether physically or spiritually sick, is the work of God, then why are anointing and confessing added to prayer?

Confessing to one another

I remember the anointing of a seriously sick man who had been rather free in his criticism over the years. The congregation was surprised by his request to be “publicly” anointed. The church was crowded, perhaps because he was well-known but also perhaps because few people had ever had the opportunity to witness an anointing service. Immediately after his anointing, this man expressed his wish to be forgiven by people whom he had hurt. In the 18 months that remained of his life, some wonderful reconciliations occurred, most surely through the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Those reconciliations were not just between the sick man and others; the whole church began to think of relationships in a different way.

Though efficacious prayer is the focus of this passage, James states that confessing sins to one another will bring healing (James 5:16). This is the only passage in the Bible that explicitly advises Christians to confess one to another, suggesting the importance of the whole community being involved in mutual confession, bringing health to the group.⁴

A significant shift exists from the *him* of the sick person to the *you* of the group. This recognizes the extreme importance of offering the sick, their family, and their friends opportunity

to forgive those who may have harmed or offended them. Dr. Levy notes personally that the gnawing pain of an unforgiven hurt caused harm: “When I first began praying for patients, I had no idea that it would lead me to discover the power of forgiveness. I became convinced that one of the greatest thieves of joy and health is the unwillingness to forgive the people who have hurt you.”⁵ The important connection between forgiveness and health is also well documented in monographs such as Dick Tibbitts’s *Forgive to Live*.⁶

The importance of forgiveness as a group activity seems to have faded from the practice of prayer, whether for

and His disciples. “And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. . . . So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and *anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them*” (Mark 6:7–13).⁷

The Gospels are filled with spectacular stories of restored sick, large numbers of people receiving physical healing. Although Jesus came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), He spent more time healing the physically sick than He did preaching sermons leading to spiritual healing.⁸

Also, when the disciples were sent out two by two to proclaim the gospel,

treatments would be presumption, not faith. This comes in marked contrast to the emphasis of many current healing ministries. The range of healing treatments has increased dramatically since apostolic times, but the principle of making full use of God-given healing resources still applies.

The sick should not be abandoned to scientific medical care, however, without attention to their spiritual needs. We find this illustrated by a disquieting Old Testament story. King Asa of Judah, toward the end of his 41-year reign, was “diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought

As baptism is a public declaration of acceptance of the saving power of Jesus, so anointing is a public declaration of total dedication to the will of God for His special use.

the sick or for others. Perhaps, for the health of both the suffering sick and the church, the time has come for a revival of forgiveness.

Why anointing?

All this, though, leads to the question, *Why add anointing to prayer for the sick? If prayer is so effective and confession and forgiveness lead to healing, why must anointing be added?*

The practice of anointing the sick has roots in Jewish history and the practice of Jesus, and these roots elucidate two important reasons for adding anointing to efficacious prayer.

The first reason is that oil represents healing therapies. James’s admonition to anoint the sick did not initiate the practice, but we find that this concept was founded on the example of Jesus

they may have not only performed healing miracles but also used simple healing remedies illustrated by anointing oil. We find the importance of oil as a therapeutic agent illustrated in the parable of the good Samaritan, who treated the wounded traveler with oil and wine (Luke 10:34). In the ancient world, oil was regarded as useful to cure almost everything⁹ and would be understood as a remedial substance at the time of Jesus and the apostles. Thus James seems to be urging elders to come to the sick armed with both prayer and medicine.¹⁰

If the anointing oil represents available therapeutics that should be offered the sick, then James says the use of medical treatments should accompany the prayer of faith. To pray for the sick without using appropriate available

help from physicians” (2 Chron. 16:12). Medical help without “seeking the Lord” is not endorsed. Pastors are therefore an important part of the healing team and should not see their work for the sick as separate from medical care.

There is a second, and even more important, reason for adding anointing to prayer for the sick: setting a person aside for the work of the Lord. Anointing had special meaning in Old Testament practice, one that would be familiar to James’s Jewish Christian readers and whose import they would have grasped.

Jacob, a fugitive fleeing for his life and awed by a spectacular dream of angels moving on a ladder reaching heaven, recognized the presence of God and anointed a mere rock, in a place called Bethel, “the house of God” (Gen. 28:18, 19). This acknowledged the

presence of God and Jacob's willingness to dedicate himself to God. Anointing was *commanded* by God for the dedication of the Aaronic priests (Exod. 28:41; 29:7), who were set apart for special service. Even the tabernacle and all its furniture (Exod. 29:36; 40:11) were anointed "so that it may become holy" (Exod. 40:9). Here, anointing is associated with dedication to the *purpose* of God. Samuel, at God's command, anointed and set apart Saul as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9:16, 10:1). Saul was reminded of this anointing when sent to annihilate the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:1) and was rejected because he did not appreciate that he had been set apart to do God's work. When Samuel, at God's command, anointed David, "the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:13). Anointing indicated receiving the Holy Spirit and being set apart for the service of God.

This Old Testament understanding of anointing needs to be recognized and emphasized when applied to the sick. By appreciating that the anointed person has been given to God, to be managed as He sees fit, the outcome can be left in God's hands. Often much is made of the faith of the person prayed for or of those who are praying. If a person (or persons) has enough faith, the sick will be healed, but if a person is not healed, they carry the double burden not only of their illness but also of their alleged lack of faith.¹¹ The concept of the sick person being dedicated or given to God deals beautifully with these problems. Like Paul with his thorn in the flesh, they can trust themselves to God and His grace (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Healing for believers does come in God's timing and through various means. They may be healed immediately, through various treatments and prayer over time, or ultimately and eternally at the resurrection. Everyone who believes in the promises of James 5, and is anointed accordingly, "shall be healed" or made whole in God's way and timing. Of that truth we can be assured.

Anointing thus carries the sick person beyond the immediate distress of their illness to simple trust in God. Whether their remaining life is short or long, they can be confident that God will use them to be a blessing to others. If they are restored to health, then they remain, for the rest of their lives, an anointed person, especially dedicated to God for His use. Thus, anointing should be the choice of the sick person and no one else.

Anointing can be likened to baptism. As baptism is a public declaration of acceptance of the saving power of Jesus, so anointing is a public declaration of total dedication to the will of God for His special use. Whether God heals immediately, allows suffering to continue, or lays a person to rest in death therefore becomes immaterial. An anointed and healed person will focus not on the blessing of physical health but rather on God's salvation and how He plans to use their life. They will praise God for the evidence that He will use them for a special purpose and pray that this purpose will be revealed.

Opportunity

Pastors can use opportunities to train their church families to understand God's healing plans. Sermons on not only prayer but also the importance of forgiveness and the significance of anointing can be shared. Confusion between anointing and "last rites" needs to be cleared so that the sick, particularly the embattled and chronically sick, can experience the blessing of total commitment to God. While the physician pours out medicinal healing oil, the pastor pours out oil representing the power of the Holy Spirit and points the struggling person, their family, and the church family to God.

Anointing occasions have tended to be private, with restricted participants or observers. While privacy for very sick people is important, giving opportunity for public declaration of total dedication to God and opportunities for forgiveness would bless the whole church family. The pastoral practice of anointing the sick can be revitalized so that it will contribute to a fully committed, healthy church on fire for God. What if pastors receive so many requests for anointing that they strain to cope with the numbers? Unlikely, but has any pastor ever complained about too many baptisms? What a wonderful situation it would be to have seriously sick people, totally dedicated to Jesus Christ, become catalysts for forgiveness and revival. 🙏

- 1 David Levy with Joel Kilpatrick, *Gray Matter: A Neurosurgeon Discovers the Power of Prayer . . . One Patient at a Time* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011), 166.
- 2 Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 234.
- 3 James Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, rev. by John Kohlenburger III and James Swanson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 1647, entry 4982.
- 4 Moo, *The Letter of James*, 245.
- 5 Levy, *Gray Matter*, 131.
- 6 Dick Tibbitts, *Forgive to Live: How Forgiveness Can Save Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006).
- 7 Emphasis added. Scriptural quotes are from the English Standard Version.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 19.
- 9 Moo, *The Letter of James*, 239.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 239.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 244.



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“Everyone a Sower.”

—Ted N.C. Wilson



TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

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What is Total Member Involvement?

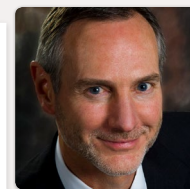
Total Member Involvement is a global initiative that empowers every Adventist to become an active disciple for Christ. It engages everyone, everywhere in evangelism and witness, using every potential means to hasten the coming of Jesus.

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- ▶ **Comprehensive Health Ministries:** Volunteers are experiencing the thrill of working with Pathways to Health and other health expo outreach events.
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What Can I do?

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6. **Volunteer** with a local Community Service event or ADRA project.
7. **Organize** a health seminar, small group, Bible study, or evangelistic series in your home using the New Beginnings DVD.
8. **Help** with children's, youth, or Pathfinder community service projects.
9. **Volunteer** with evangelistic events or Prophecy Seminars.
10. **Befriend** new members and disciple them.
11. **Pray like never before** for the advancement of the Gospel in hard-to-reach areas of the world. Pray that God will reveal ways that you can personally work in His vineyard.



Worship in the book of Revelation: How true worship aligns us with God—Part 2 of 2¹

Part 1 of this article (September 2016) discussed what the book of Revelation reveals about the true meaning of worship and how believers today should worship God. Those who worship God in Revelation are seen adoring God's being, declaring the Lamb's worthiness, celebrating God's glorious presence, submitting to His authority, and fearing and serving Him. The concluding part of this article will focus on how true worship affects the worshiper and what kind of fruits it should produce in the worshiper's life.

The book of Revelation, as already noted, reveals the manner and mode of worship. There is worship for God's creative works (Rev. 4:11),² for Christ's redemptive activity (Rev. 5:9; 7:14, 15), for God's righteous judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5; 19:2), and for the marriage of the Lamb with His bride (Rev. 19:7–9).³

We express the worship of God in heaven through praise and thanksgiving (Rev. 4:6–11; 5:1–14; 7:12; 11:17; 19:1), songs (Rev. 5:9, 10; 14:3; 15:3; cf. 4:8, 11; 5:11, 12; 7:10, 12; 12:10–12; 16:5–7; 19:2, 3), prayers (Rev. 5:8; 6:10; 8:3–5), offering of gifts (Rev. 4:10; cf. 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12), response to God's revelation (Rev. 5:8–14), anticipatory silence for divine intervention (Rev. 8:1, 2), and festive celebration of God's goodness (Rev. 7:9, 10; 12:12; 18:20; 19:7).⁴

We learn much about worship in heaven by following the worship pattern of the redeemed. What happens when we put the words of the heavenly worshipers into our own mouths and frame our own worship with Revelation's worship thoughts and performance? We can only imagine the

moral orientation and inner formation inherent in expressing our own worship with such language and liturgy.

Revelation's God-centeredness is imaginative enough to enlist our bodies, minds, and emotions in our worship.⁵ In true worship, which Revelation portrays, self is reconstituted, character is reshaped in direct correlation to moral and spiritual truths confessed, and foundational attitudes and dispositions, such as gratitude, humility, reverence, penitence, obedience, and moral life; are engendered.⁶ The human being is, after all, a worshiping creature whose very act of worship, if it is not perverse, establishes or deepens belief and the desire to do what is good.⁷

The issue does not emphasize whether worship has an effect on the worshiper or evokes a response. Rather, it is how true worship affects the worshiper and what effect it produces in the worshiper's life.⁸ How true worship is misunderstood or distorted will be directly reflected in the life of the church and the lives of individual Christians.⁹ Worship—true or false—is a critical factor in forming or deforming

character and conduct. To adapt and modify worship inevitably affects its role in forming Christian identity.¹⁰

All that happens in one's life provides the context for worshipful response to God, and the specific response of one's worship practices influences, both directly and indirectly, who they are as they worship through the rest of their lives.¹¹ False worship can nurture a character inward turned, which thinks first of self rather than of God.¹² Or, worship can nurture a character outward turned toward God and others.

Worship as being—character

Who and how one worships becomes inseparably linked to *being*. Worship involves *being*—both the *being* of the One worshiped and the *being* of the one who worships. Worship touches one's inner moral and spiritual orientation and has to do with values, attitudes, motives, and ways of thinking. It is a way of *being-in-the-world*,¹³ which includes a way of *thinking-in-the-world*. It is character, the habits

of the heart. It is a life orientation,¹⁴ a comprehensive category describing one's total existence before God.¹⁵ In this way, worship truly describes every human activity, both cultic and otherwise.¹⁶

Revelation expresses this facet of worship—*being*—most profoundly in the imagery of the 144,000 who have God's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).

In the book's apocalyptic vision of the final conflict between good and evil, everyone will be stamped on their foreheads with one of two names: the

"everyone has become conformed to either the image of God or the image of Satan. Everyone bears the character of the divine or the demonic."¹⁹ This comes as a matter of *being*, moral and spiritual orientation. It comes down to mind and heart—indeed, character (Rev. 2:23).

The implications of the seal and mark include fixity of character and the fundamental link between *being* and *doing*.²⁰ The eschatological sealing or mark depicts characters fixed in loyalty to either God or the beast. As those with the mark of the beast no longer experience repentance or change of character

the conclusion, however, it suddenly turns personal and insistent as it enters our present reality:²² "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy" (Rev. 22:11).

From John's perspective, the end remains so close that there is hardly any time left (if any at all) to alter a person's character and habits.²³ There are two declarations about the destiny of the unrighteous and two about the destiny of the righteous. In these

No greater act of worship can be given God than to align our thinking with His and in our own heart of hearts mirror God's values, attitudes, purposes, and ways of thinking—that is, to have the mind of Christ.

name of God (and the Lamb) or the name of the beast (Rev. 14:1; 13:17).¹⁷ In ancient times, a name represented character, *being*.¹⁸ Revelation's moral vision portrays two types of character: likeness to God, personified in Christ, the Lamb; and likeness to Satan, personified in the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These two opposing types of character are symbolized either by the seal or name of God written on the foreheads of the followers of God, on the one hand (Rev. 3:12; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4); and by the mark or name or number of the beast written on the foreheads and hands of the followers of the beast, on the other (Rev. 13:16, 17; 14:9; 16:2; 20:4). Thus the primary meaning of the seal of God or the mark of the beast (consisting of the names of God and the beast respectively) stamped upon individuals means that

and their characters are permanently fixed in hatred and opposition to God (Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:2, 9, 11, 21; cf. 22:11), God's servants likewise become unmovable in their loyalty to God (Rev. 3:12; 7:14, 15; 12:17; 14:1). The forehead and the hand as the sites for receiving the seal or the mark are significant in that they point to the total response of the mind, emotions, and behavior. The forehead symbolizes the mind, the thought life and character, and the right hand indicates deed or action.²¹

This focus on character and the fundamental link between *being* and *doing* is nuanced dramatically toward the book's close (Rev. 22:11, 12; cf. 2:23; 19:8; 22:15). Throughout its apocalyptic discourse, Revelation stays full of imagery, symbols, and visions (like the 144,000 on Mount Zion) that take us beyond immediate physical reality. In


twin-paired declarations, one phrase in each emphasizes character while the other highlights behavior. The "Semitic poetic structure,"²⁴ together with the Greek parts of speech, link our *being* and *doing*.²⁵ *Being* is ontological. *Doing* is existential. *Being* and *doing* are related to spheres of moral orientation and action. Deeds are mentioned first, then character, thus emphasizing that the unchangeable destiny of all persons is determined by their character as demonstrated by their deeds.²⁶ The bent of one's choices (actions) forms an unchangeable character so that the imperatives have the sense of "be what you always have been as you face judgment."²⁷ The most straightforward reading of the imperatives shows that "sinners are commanded to continue sinning and the righteous to continue doing righteousness."²⁸

Both the righteous and unrighteous will continue in their present condition unless the person makes a radical, moral decision to reorient oneself to *be* (and *do*) otherwise.²⁹ Here worship has expressed its most profound implications.

Worship and celebration of God's character

Worship inevitably expresses our own inner relation toward God whom we confess. Worship becomes instructive because it celebrates God's deeds and character. It expresses, at the same time, commitment to the God it celebrates.³⁰ We acknowledge God's character and purpose, as revealed in His mighty acts.³¹ When we describe God's action and affirm His character, we thank God, bless Him, and praise Him; we express our own relation toward Him and who He is in the world. Such worship brings "reverent alignment with God's character from which God's actions spring forth."³² By aligning with God's character and purposes in worship, one also aligns oneself with God's ways and purposes in the world.³³ We align whom we are with who God is. Within this inner alignment process, one's own action in the world is given direction.³⁴

This is what the ethic of following the Lamb points to (Rev. 14:4)—not just *doing* (conduct, behavior, words, action) but *thinking, being*.

No greater act of worship can be given God than to align our thinking with His and in our own heart of hearts mirror God's values, attitudes, purposes, and ways of thinking—that is, to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Deut. 6:5; 10:12; Matt. 22:37). This shows the worship essence of what it means to "fear God and give him glory" (Rev. 14:7). 

1 This two-part series is an excerpt from the author's larger discussion "Worship, Eschatology, and Ethics: The Revelation of John and the Worshipping Imagination," in *Meeting With God on the Mountains*, ed. Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, forthcoming).

2 All Scripture passages are from the New American Standard Bible.

3 See Mazie Nakhro, "The Manner of Worship According to the Book of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158

(April–June 2001): 165–69.

4 Nakhro, "The Manner of Worship According to the Book of Revelation," 169–180.

5 Eugene H. Peterson, "Learning to Worship From Saint John's Revelation," *Christianity Today*, October 28, 1991, 25.

6 Michael R. Weed, "Worship and Ethics: Confession, Character, and Conduct," *Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 52.

7 Vigen Guroian, "Seeing Worship as Ethics: An Orthodox Perspective," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 333.

8 Weed, "Worship and Ethics," 51.

9 *Ibid.*, 49.

10 *Ibid.*, 53.

11 Marva J. Dawn, "Worship and Ethics," *Dialog* 32, no. 4 (1993): 297.

12 *Ibid.*, 298.

13 Miroslav Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the-World," in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 207.

14 David Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 17.

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16 Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "The Politics of Praise: A Reading of Revelation 19:1–10," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar 1977 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1977), 375.

17 The names of the Lamb and the Father inscribed on Christians' foreheads (14:1) is equivalent to the seal placed on the foreheads of the 144,000 in 7:1–8. The mark (= seal) of the beast on the foreheads of unbelievers in 13:17 is identified as "the name of the beast," and in 14:9–11 a mark on the beast worshiper's forehead is also called the mark of the beast's name.

18 Beatrice S. Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse With Implications for Character Education* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 150.

19 Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse*, 150.

20 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 734; Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse*, 150–154.

21 Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse*, 87.

22 Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002), 201.

23 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 1132.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse*, 87.

26 Kendall H. Easley, *Revelation*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 419.

27 Edward A. McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1951), 220; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1132.

28 Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1131.

29 *Ibid.*

30 William Hendricksen, *More Than Conqueror: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 182.

31 Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 210.

32 Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 270.

33 Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 210.

34 *Ibid.*

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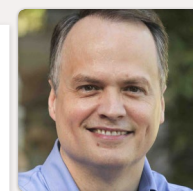
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Martin Thielen, DMin, serves as senior pastor of First United Methodist Church, Cookeville, Tennessee, United States.



Clergy contentment: An inside job

A familiar voice on the other end of the phone said, “Hi Martin, it’s Larry. I’m in Nashville for a few days at a conference, and I wondered if we could have lunch together.” Larry, a clergy friend, serves as senior pastor at a large church in the South. At the time of his call, I worked at the headquarters of my previous denomination. The next day we met at a Mexican restaurant and talked a long time about our work and families.

The time quickly passed, and I assumed our visit was nearly over. But then, in a rare moment of transparency and honesty, Larry shared something that caught me completely off guard. He said, “For the past several years, I’ve been struggling with a strong spirit of discontentment.” That revelation surprised me because, from my limited perspective, Larry lived a charmed life. He was an intelligent and outgoing man; he served a large and highly respected church, and because of his leadership and speaking skills, he often spoke at important events, sat on significant boards, and served as a major leader in his state’s denominational life. And yet, in spite of all his ministerial success, Larry told me he rarely felt satisfied and had no inner peace.

Concerned he might have clinical depression, he went to see a psychiatrist. However, the doctor told him he did not suffer from clinical depression

and did not need antidepressant medication. Still, Larry struggled daily with restlessness and discontentment.

Larry told me that, at first, he assumed the problem was his church. He thought, *If only I could get a bigger and better church, then I would be content.* But Larry, then, got a bigger and better church, and it did not help. As soon as the initial excitement wore off, he felt just as discontented as before. Because the problem was not his church, Larry figured the problem must be his career. He thought he must be in the wrong profession. So he went to a top-flight career counselor, took a battery of aptitude tests, and engaged in numerous vocational interviews. But in the end, he realized the problem was not his career. In fact, he discovered he was extremely well suited for pastoral work. After extensive evaluation, Larry’s career counselor told him, “I can’t think of a better vocation for you than serving as a minister.”

My colleague finally said to me: “It’s taken several years and numerous counseling sessions, but I’ve learned something extremely important. I’ve finally figured out that the problem is not my church or my vocation; but *me*. I’ve learned that my restlessness and discontentment are not an external problem but an internal problem. I’ve learned that happiness is an inside job.”

In other words, happiness is within us.

Outward success is not enough

Like my friend Larry, I once believed that perceived success in ministry—including church size, salary, and status—was the key to pastoral contentment. So I worked hard to be successful. I pastored a big church and then a bigger one. I got on the clergy speaking circuit. I earned a doctoral degree. I published a lot of articles and books. I accepted a highly visible, national, denominational job. At one point I even served as senior pastor at a megachurch. However, career “success” did not bring the fulfillment and happiness that it promised. Although I enjoyed my work, climbing the ecclesiastical ladder added no measurable increase to my personal or professional happiness and, in fact, sometimes even detracted from it.

Take, for example, my tenure at the megachurch. It was the largest church of my denomination in my state and one of the largest in the nation. It represented the pinnacle of my career—an extremely high-status and high-salary job. The church enjoyed exceptional facilities, a massive staff, a huge membership, and impressive ministries and programs. The job even came with a car. I had “arrived” in my profession.

Ironically, I did not like the job. The shift from a pastoral role to more of a CEO role was difficult. The daily

complexities of leading a huge organization exhausted me. The expectations to be an ideal preacher, leader, and pastor felt impossible to fulfill. Conflict, inevitable in all congregations, grew exponentially with size and took away much of the joy of ministry. Finally, the relentless criticism that comes from being in such a public and high-profile job took a toll on me. It did not take long in that setting for me to realize that I enjoyed smaller, lower-status, and lower-paying pastorates far more than I did the megachurch. I vividly learned through that experience that ministry

continued for the next 20 years. Richard served several other churches, all small congregations with small salaries. But he loved his work and felt grateful to be a pastor. However, when he turned 45, he began to pay close attention to the back section of his state denominational journal. That is where they listed all of the pastors and their salaries in his conference, from the highest to the lowest. Richard noticed that his salary fell slightly below the midpoint range. So, he began to look at those above him. The more he looked, the worse he felt. He saw one man who made a

prayer, he confessed his bitterness and resentment and begged God to forgive him. He then walked to his desk, picked up his conference journal, tore out the salary section, and burned it in the wood-burning stove.

Richard then made a promise to God that he would once again be grateful for his pastoral appointment. And he made good on that promise. From that day forward, for the next 15 years before his retirement, Richard constantly thanked God for the great privilege of proclaiming the gospel, administering the sacraments, caring for people, and

Through the years I have known many clergy who learned, often the hard way, that external ministerial circumstances, such as church size and status, are not the keys to pastoral contentment.

“success” factors like status, size, staff, and salary have virtually no bearing on life satisfaction and well-being.

Larry’s and my experiences are not unique. Through the years I have known many clergy who learned, often the hard way, that external ministerial circumstances, such as church size and status, are not the keys to pastoral contentment. For example, a few years ago, I met a newly retired minister, named Richard, with an interesting story to tell.

Richard’s story

At age 25 Richard graduated from seminary, and his bishop appointed him to a small rural church with a small salary. However, he and his wife loved the congregation, the people loved them in return, and it proved a wonderful pastoral experience. This story

higher salary and thought to himself: *I’ve been in ministry longer than he has. Why does he have a better appointment?* He saw another name and thought, *I’m a better preacher than he is, so why do I make less money?* This ritual went on for five years. Every year when the new journal came out, Richard turned to the back section, compared where he was on the salary and status scale, and became more and more bitter.

By now, Richard was 50 years old. All the gratitude and joy he had known earlier in his ministry disappeared. He became a jealous, bitter, joyless, and resentful man. One night, when his wife and son left for an overnight trip, Richard had a profound spiritual experience. For the first time in several years, he looked in the mirror and saw what he had become, and he did not like what he saw. That night, during his evening

leading his congregation—regardless of the church’s size. He decided to quit complaining about what he did not have and began expressing gratitude for what he did have, and it made a huge difference. He told me, “Even with the struggles—and I’ve had plenty—the past fifteen years have been the best years of my life.”

Learning to be content

Although the circumstances of our pastoral experiences have been different, Larry, Richard, and I have all learned an important lesson. We have learned that pastoral contentment does not come from external circumstances.

All of which raises the important and obvious question—if ministerial “success” does not make clergy happy, what does? The answer is simple: the factors that make pastors happy are

the same factors that make everybody happy. And those factors have almost nothing to do with external circumstances like affluence, accomplishments, or appearance. Instead, personal contentment and well-being are overwhelmingly, in the words of my friend Richard, “an inside job.”

Over the past several years, I have done a lot of reading about what makes people happy, not because happiness has become the ultimate goal of Christianity. It does not rate up there with the prophet’s call for justice, the great commandment, or advancement of the kingdom of God. But the quest for authentic contentment, which every heart longs for and every person seeks—including clergy—leads us to significant Christian themes, including relationships, generosity, service, forgiveness, gratitude, and faith.

In recent decades, leading experts in the field of happiness research called “positive psychology” have learned

that contentment is indeed an inside job. Through intensive research, psychologists have learned that external circumstances like career success, income, net worth, health, popularity, fame, beautiful homes, education levels, IQ, and personal appearance account for only about 10 percent of a person’s happiness. The other 90 percent is fairly evenly split between two factors: genetics, which we cannot control; and attitudes and behaviors, which we can. For an excellent overview of this research, see Sonja Lyubomirsky’s book, *The How of Happiness*.^{*} Psychologists have discovered at least ten factors that are under our control, which lead to authentic happiness. What I find especially compelling is that all ten of those happiness traits are taught in the Bible, and they are also confirmed by experience. So when it comes to overall life contentment—science, experience, and Scripture all converge into complete

agreement. The following ten attitudes and behaviors make people content. Contented people

- know that external circumstances do not determine happiness (Eccl. 2);
- use trials as growth opportunities (James 1:2–4; Rom. 5:3–5; 2 Cor. 12:8–10);
- cultivate optimism (Phil. 4:8);
- focus on the present (Matt. 6:34; Ps. 118:24; Jer. 29:4–7; Eccl. 9:7–10);
- practice forgiveness (Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Matt. 18:21, 22; Mark 11:25);
- practice generosity (Prov. 11:24, 25; Acts 20:35; Prov. 14:21; 1 Tim. 6:18);
- nurture relationships (Eccl. 4:9, 10; John 11:5);
- express gratitude (1 Thess. 5:18, Ps. 57; Phil. 1:3);
- care for their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19, 20, 1 Kings 19);
- care for their souls (Eccl. 12:1, 13).

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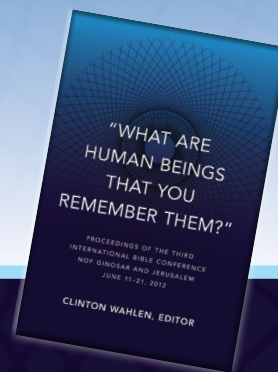
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The implications for clergy are clear. Pastors who want to experience contentment need to quit focusing on external factors like membership, attendance, budget, facilities, staff size, and salary. Instead, they need to focus on internal factors like practicing generosity, expressing gratitude, and nurturing relationships.

After several decades in pastoral ministry, I have finally learned that career “success” has virtually no impact on pastoral contentment. The size of my congregation, the amount of my salary, the number of people employed on our church staff, and my status in the denomination do not promote a sense of well-being in my life. They never have, and they never will. Instead, love of God and neighbor, serving others, building relationships, caring for my body, nurturing my soul, and constantly

expressing gratitude are the building blocks of a contented life.

Joy in my life


These days, the things that bring me personal joy include playing with my two-year-old granddaughter; having lunch with a friend; spending a quiet evening with my wife; connecting with my clergy support group; reading an engaging book; serving others; keeping a gratitude journal; practicing generosity with my time, money, and love; and being part of a community of faith. Some of the things that bring me professional joy include preaching a helpful sermon, anointing and praying for the sick, baptizing, burying the dead, leading worship, offering Holy Communion, building long-term relationships among the congregation, welcoming new people into the faith community, and providing the best leadership I possibly can for my church. At

this stage in life, I have learned that my misguided youthful ambitions concerning ministerial “success” have faded. Instead, I have learned that happiness truly comes from within.

A few months ago I went on a clergy retreat. During one of the sessions, our presenter asked each participant to write down on paper a brief statement of our self-identity. I wrote:

I am a . . .

- husband,
- father,
- grandfather,
- friend,
- pastor,
- author,
- beloved child of God.

And it is more than enough. 

* Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

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Revival and Reformation European style*

Adventist News Network (ANN): Where might repentance fit into how Revival and Reformation is expressed in the United Kingdom?

Ian Sweeney: I’m really glad for the whole emphasis on Revival and Reformation, because to me it’s about remembering our Adventist roots. One of the great challenges Britain has is that it isn’t as God friendly as the United States. Sure, the queen is the head of the church in England but, believe me, this is not a Christian-welcoming society. Christians are often in the media under attack. Having said that, there is also in Britain a search for some sense of spirituality. You have to be relevant to people’s lives

where they’re at. Most of the growing churches do things that impact their community—whether it be childcare, mentoring, youth clubs—they are there visibly in the community saying, “We’re here, we see your needs, how can we help you?” I think that’s what we are to do as a church.

ANN: How are you going to integrate faith and prayer into an action plan?

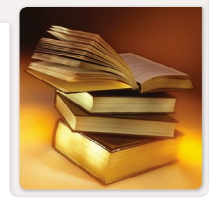
Sweeney: I’m looking at a book by Nigel Rooms, *Faith of the English*, which talks about integrating Christ with culture. I really want folk to go and witness because they love Christ. Jeremiah cried for the people, cried over Jerusalem. When last have we

cried over the lost? And I ask that starting with myself. If you’re not crying in prayer for the lost, you’re certainly not going to be interested in seeing them saved and working for their salvation.

—Pastor Ian W. Sweeney serves as president of the British Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

* An extended version of this interview can be found at <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2011-12-14/church-chat-where-did-londons-majority-white-church-population-go/>

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Survive or Thrive: 6 Relationships Every Pastor Needs

by Jimmy Dodd, Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015.

I need to experience outrage that more than half of those who are called to pastoral ministry leave within the first five years.” This dark and disturbing commentary from Jimmy Dodd’s introduction seeks to bring light and hope to this untenable situation. Denominations and seminaries invest millions of dollars, time, and emotional energy to prepare men and women for pastoral ministry. When pastors leave ministry after fewer than five years of service, this takes a financial and emotional toll on the church, the pastor, family members, and the congregation. Dodd challenges us to take the necessary steps to stop the bleeding.

Throughout the book, Dodd uses the powerful analogy of the front and back stages of our lives. The front stage becomes what we allow to be visible to the general public. The back stage is what we hide from public view. An “emotionally thick curtain” exists that separates the two and drives a wedge between our private and public lives, leading to “secrets and pretending.” Dodd maintains, “The majority of pastors are not truly known—by anyone. They subconsciously isolate themselves from both staff and congregations so their insecurities, doubts, and failures [back stage] aren’t exposed” (back cover).

To understand the strength of the analogy, note the following: often, listeners will praise a speaker not just for the message but with words like, “He’s incredible!” To this Dodd asks the following questions: “Have you ever met the speaker? Do you know anything about his marriage, his parenting, his temperament, his walk with the Lord, or his personal habits? Do you know how he treats his staff? Do you know how he handles money? Is his life characterized by humility? Is he a man of prayer? Far

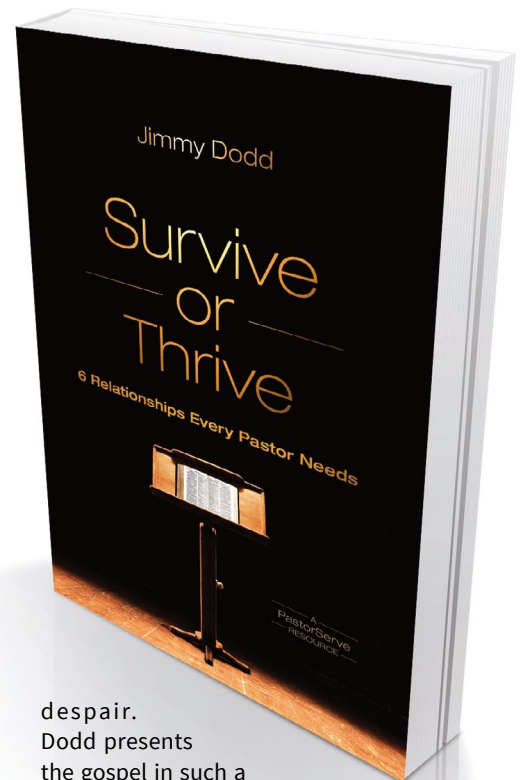
too often we link giftedness, talent, and skill with maturity and character. And this mistake contributes to multitudes of pastors shrinking into a life of hiding, deception, fear, and fraud” (38). The author then continues: “I should know. This is my story. . . . Sin flourishes in isolation” (38, 92).

Dodd divides the book into three sections. First, he addresses the heart problem: how pastors end up in a situation where they are barely surviving. His stories pull back the curtain on the life of any honest reader. Dodd then highlights six relationships every pastor needs in order to thrive in ministry. He concludes with how an understanding of the gospel can help us take the next steps.

The target audience is primarily men; however, female pastors or ministry leaders will find much that will also confront, challenge, and comfort them. The six relationships every pastor needs are equally applicable to men and women. These six relationships reflect those who walk beside us in both our professional lives and our personal lives—professional relationships (front stage): boss, trainer, and coach; personal relationships (back stage): counselor, mentor, and friend. One person can fill more than one role, and some of these relationships fluctuate with the seasons of our lives but should always be accessible to us.

The book addresses the gap between what pastors learn in school and what they actually need to know in order to meet occupational challenges. The gap can lead to burnout and problems in numerous relationships, hence the need for an intentional plan for continuing education in order to meet the core competencies of a pastor.

Another important aspect of the book is that we are able to read about our “sin” without the shame that leads to



despair. Dodd presents the gospel in such a powerful way that when you complete the book, you feel that you have been at worship.

I believe the reader will get the best value by reading this book in community. Each section contains questions that will help you build trust and begin to thin out the curtain. Whether you are a pastor, a pastor’s spouse, a ministry leader, or one who oversees the work of pastors, reading this book and implementing its principles will greatly help in the work of nurturing and protecting the hearts of our pastors, which will lead to healthier churches and thriving pastors and members.

—Reviewed by Esther R. Knott, associate ministerial director, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, and director of the InMinistry Center, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

► Helping refugees is “as important as preaching the Second Coming”

Belgrade, Serbia—Seventh-day Adventist pastor **Igor Mitrović** once believed that the church’s prophetic calling was to proclaim the second coming of Jesus. But after working in Serbia on the front lines of Europe’s refugee crisis for the past year, Mitrović sees a second and equally important prophetic calling: to help the helpless.

“Whenever you find a stranger, someone very helpless, you are called to raise your voice and protect,” Mitrović said, citing Old Testament prophet Amos and his strong denunciations of the exploitation of the helpless in passages such as Amos 2:6–8 and 8:4–7.

ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) took the lead in opening

a refugee crisis center with four other organizations near Belgrade’s main train station in July 2015, just when Europe’s refugee crisis spun out of control. “ADRA has invested significantly in establishing both an international and country level response to disasters,” said **Jonathan Duffy**, president of ADRA International. “The situation in Serbia serves as a good example of the plan working, where we were able to mobilize and respond rapidly.”

These days, about 5,000 refugees are living in Serbia at any given time, a decrease from a year ago when thousands of people flowed across the country’s border daily. Many of those refugees stop by ADRA’s Asylum

Information Center, which provides food and supplies, psychological support, activities for children, and information. The ground floor, which is run by another organization, provides legal support and free Internet. The refugee center is open around the clock, and ADRA has seven paid employees working with 50 to 70 unaccompanied minors or families daily.

Many of the small Balkan country’s 6,000 Adventists sprang into action as refugees poured in last year, collecting food, clothing, and water and then distributing the supplies. Church members also wanted to open up their homes, but the authorities forbade this, saying they needed to keep track



Photo credit: ADRA

of the refugees by housing them at state-designated facilities, said **Djordje Trajkovski**, president of the Adventist Church's South-East European Union, whose territory includes Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro.

"Church members have had a very positive attitude about the refugees coming to Serbia," Trajkovski said. "We were surprised at the speed some churches organized themselves to help. Many young people volunteered at the spots where refugees needed initial

help, especially at the beginning when other NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] were not prepared to help."

He said church members were able to empathize with the refugees because they had experienced similar hardships amid a devastating armed conflict that erupted following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

"All of the Bible's main characters have been refugees: Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jesus," said Mitrović. "When you have firsthand experience, you can appreciate the Bible stories a little differently."

While ADRA is doing all it can to help in Serbia, Mitrović said the refugee crisis remains enormous and is likely to only grow worse. "We are basically helpless," he said. "All we can do when we see a need is to be smart in providing the best possible remedy. But the only solution will be the Second Coming." Mitrović said the ongoing refugee crisis serves as a wake-up call for Adventists not only to dress up in "nice suits" and proclaim the gospel but to also engage with strangers who are helpless. [Andrew McChesney, *Adventist Review*]

▶ Adventist and iconic Bermudian Johnny Barnes passes away

Hamilton, Bermuda—A long-standing figure on the island of Bermuda, Johnny Barnes was known for greeting residents and visitors with a warm "I love you!" For more than 30 years, Barnes was a daily fixture at the Crow Lane roundabout in the middle of the island. From 4:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M., Monday to Friday, rain or shine, he would wave to commuters, saying, "God loves you, and so do I!" Visitors came from around the world to meet the man who felt called to share a message of love with everyone, every day. Barnes was a member of the Hamilton Seventh-day Adventist church.

"Johnny Barnes personified the North American Division's top priority of Transformational Evangelism," says Ken Denslow, assistant to the president for the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Denslow was one of several church leaders who attended Barnes's funeral. He recalls the first time he met the famous Bermudian and asked how Barnes could do the same thing for so many years. He responded: "God has something for everyone to do."



Photo credit: Daniel Weber

The iconic Barnes played a key role in helping make the Seventh-day Adventist Church a fixture on the small island

located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. A statue of Barnes in his familiar waving pose was raised by local business



owners to honor his role in spreading the image of a warm and friendly culture with visitors from all around the world. Tens of thousands received his cheerful greeting, wave, and smile.

Ninety-three years old, Barnes recently had to stop his daily greetings

because of failing health. He passed away early on the morning of July 9, 2016, from natural causes. Belvina, his wife of 65 years, was at his side. On July 18, Bermuda said goodbye to Barnes with a regal funeral in tribute to “Mr. Happy.” Many wore

bright colors in keeping with Barnes’s wishes as they lined the funeral procession’s way. In 2015, the North American Division featured Barnes in its General Conference session video report. [Daniel Weber, North American Division]

► *Hacksaw Ridge*, new film on Desmond Doss, to be released shortly

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—More than 70 years ago an unlikely hero saved the lives of dozens of American soldiers during one of the bloodiest battles of World War II. Now his story is about to explode onto movie screens all over the world (United States release scheduled for November 4, 2016).

The film tells the story of Corporal Desmond Doss, a Seventh-day Adventist combat medic who single-handedly rescued 75 soldiers during the battle of Okinawa, in the midst of a hail of enemy gunfire. As a result of his bravery, Desmond Doss was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the United States’ highest military honor.

While Doss’ story has been told many times, *Hacksaw Ridge* is the first feature film to recount his remarkable heroism. It is likely that millions of people will learn about not only his deeply-held beliefs and faith, but also about the remarkable God who enabled Doss to carry himself with such outstanding grace, commitment, and bravery. Corporal Doss, a Private First Class at the time of the Battle of Okinawa, is presented as a balanced, Sabbath-keeping, vegetarian, Bible-believing Christian who was moved by faith in God to adhere to his beliefs in the face of overwhelming



opposition. *Hacksaw Ridge* was not made by Seventh-day Adventists; nor was it made for Adventists. But it presents Adventists, indeed Christians everywhere, with an unprecedented opportunity to speak up for Christ.

In one of the later scenes of the movie, Doss—played by Hollywood leading actor Andrew Garfield—is doing all he can to save American servicemen. After lowering a soldier to safety, Doss prays, “Lord, give me one more!” Each time he lowers another soldier to safety the prayer is repeated: “Lord, give me one more!” Doss’s prayer is the prayer that should be prayed by

Christians everywhere. “Lord, give me one more. Help me get one more!”

Desmond Doss now rests beneath a simple grave marker in the Chattanooga National Cemetery in Tennessee. Ten years after his death Hollywood is telling the story of his battlefield heroism. It is up to us to tell the story of his Savior, the power of grace, and the promise of Jesus’ return.* [John Bradshaw/North American Division staff] ✓

* Doss became the first conscientious objector to receive the US Medal of Honor. Infantrymen who once ridiculed and scoffed at his simple faith and refusal to carry a weapon now owed their lives to him. A special sharing magazine can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/focus-1-16>



Fred Hardinge, DrPH, RD, is an associate director of the General Conference Health Ministries department, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

The feasibility study

I am a member of many committees. We frequently consider new projects and often are urged to do a feasibility study before moving forward.

A feasibility study, as the term implies, is defined as “an analysis and evaluation of a proposed project to determine if it (1) is technically feasible, (2) is feasible within the estimated cost, and (3) will be profitable.”¹

Throughout history wise planning has always included an analysis of the probable outcome of any desired undertaking. The Bible clearly urges us to “count the cost” (Luke 14:28).² “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Prov. 15:22).

However, if the work to be undertaken has been specifically commissioned by God, should the person or organization do a feasibility study before venturing in the direction of His expressed will? Where does faith begin and practicality end, or vice versa? Failure to understand the differences often results in tempers, personal stress, and burnout.

Would Noah have built the ark had he hired the primeval world’s most reputable minds to do a feasibility study of what God had ordered him to do? Would they have found the capacity of the proposed ark entirely inadequate to accommodate the people and animals expected to go on board, together with the enormous amount of food that would be required for the necessary time? Would they have pointed out that under no circumstances could sufficient water come from somewhere to cover the entire earth? Where would Noah find the skilled craftsmen to build such a vessel?

Noah had a clear command from God, and he went to work without delay. For 120 years he endured extreme mockery and scoffing. The Bible tells us the ark was built, the flood came, and Noah and his family with all the animals remained safe within the ark.

Israel endured slavery in Egypt approximately 400 years. The Egyptian armies were feared by all nations. God commissioned Moses to go to Egypt and deliver His people. Moses was frightened and saw no way to succeed in such an undertaking. With no more than a shepherd’s rod, Moses began his seemingly impossible mission.

Had Moses called for a feasibility study, would the result have encouraged him to believe the enslaved, downtrodden people would cooperate? Would it have instilled confidence they could overcome Egypt’s forces? Would it have assured him of the necessary resources and food to take for the great multitude? Would it have revealed that the sea would roll back and the vast Egyptian army with all of Pharaoh’s chariots would be buried in the water?

Israel did arrive at the borders of Canaan. A feasibility study was undertaken. Twelve of their ablest men were chosen to do a detailed survey and analysis of the Promised Land (Num. 13). After weeks of searching the land, the majority rendered their report, and it consisted of one word: “impossible.”

Why was it impossible if God had ordered the occupation? The reply, “ ‘The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants’ ” (v. 32). The minority spoke up “ ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it’ ” (v. 30).

Following the majority report, in this case, resulted in wandering in the wilderness for 40 years—along with much stress and suffering.

When we analyze God’s commands, they usually do not seem feasible. It is not feasible to return one-tenth of our income plus freewill offerings to the Lord. It is not feasible for an organization like the Seventh-day Adventist Church to operate a global system of education from grade school to graduate and professional levels. It is not feasible for the church to own and operate hospitals, clinics, publishing houses, and health-food factories. It is certainly not feasible to support an army of international workers scattered around this globe. If our pioneers had done feasibility studies, we would have no universities, no hospitals, and no publishing work. We would probably have no church organization. The best-performed feasibility study might say “impossible.” The fact remains, God is doing all of this through us and more!

God’s instructions are usually clear and precise with an eye to our physical and spiritual well-being. John says, “Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2, NASB). When we are certain that God has spoken, we must advance with the plans He supplies and trust Him to lead and provide as we move forward in faith. This is the best way to remain calm and prevent the stress and burnout that comes from wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. 🌱

- 1 Business Dictionary, s.v. “feasibility study,” www.businessdictionary.com/definition/feasibility-study.html#ixzz4J0siYLÉz.
- 2 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New King James version.

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