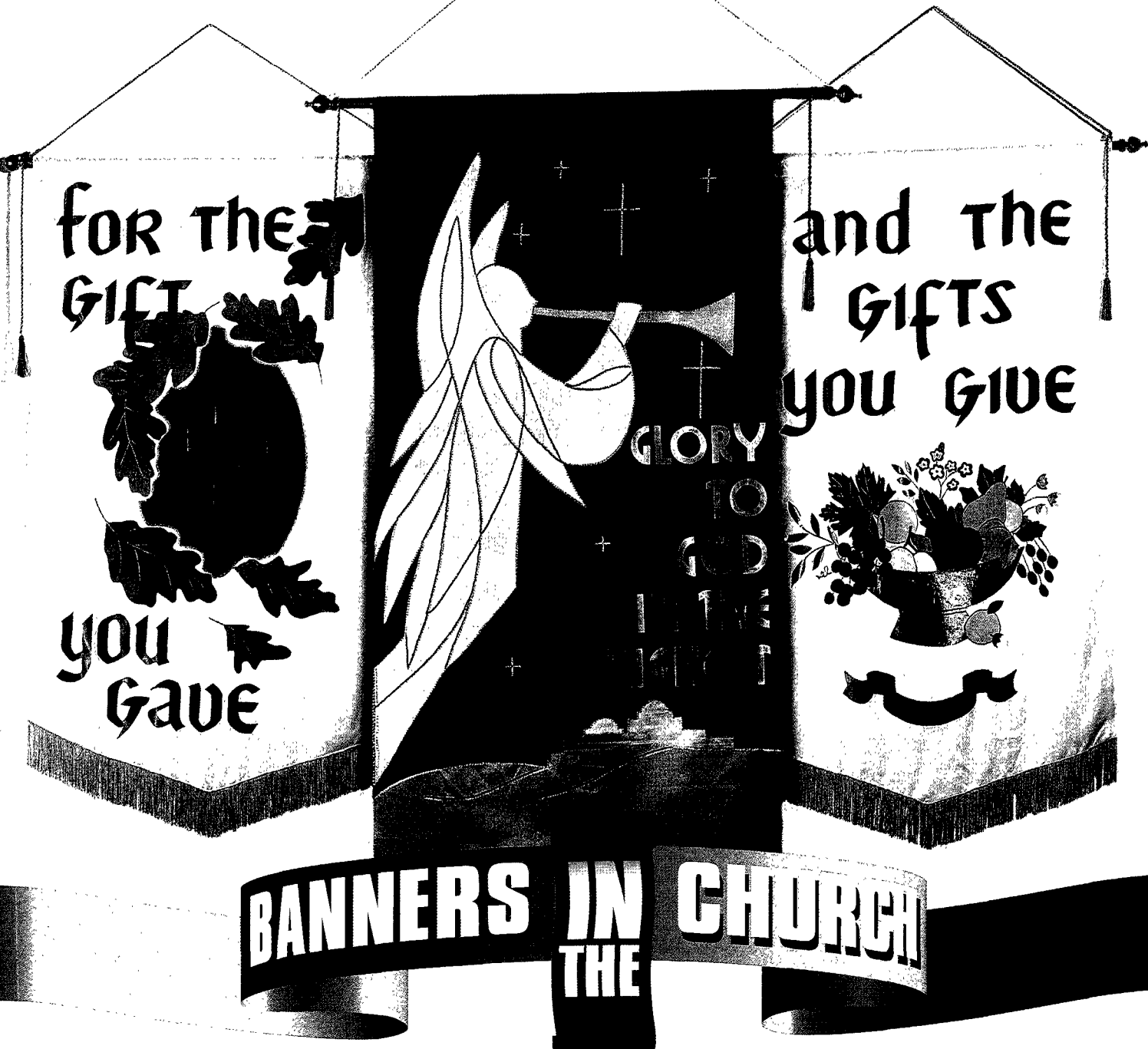


Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

July 1994



Can pastors keep the Sabbath?

You ask, "Can pastors keep the Sabbath?" (March 1994). Of course they can, and they should be models in observing God's holy day.

About pastors being models, my wife and I were invited for dinner to the same home that the pastor was invited. It was a lovely June day, and dinner was served in the yard. Several times during the meal the conversation drifted into questionable topics for Sabbath discussion. At every time the pastor tactfully and carefully led the discussion to another topic that was oriented toward proper Sabbath thinking. What a lesson it taught me! I was young and needed this kind of training, and God used him to help me although he probably never knew how I felt.

While it is true that the Sabbath may leave pastors drained physically and emotionally, yet their very work is just the work God commissioned all of us to do. We are to visit the sick, the outcast, and the homeless, as well as those who may just need a pastoral visit. I seriously doubt that Jesus consulted anyone as to whether He was doing too much on the Sabbath day. If getting tired while doing one's duty on the Sabbath day is wrong, then Jesus broke the Sabbath. Certainly He became tired as a result of His tireless efforts to bless humanity on the Sabbath day.

So when are preachers going to get their rest? They will have to learn to budget their time and be well rested when the Sabbath duties come upon them.—George Huffaker, Muscatine, Iowa.

■ Can a pastor keep the Sabbath?

Most decidedly. There have been times when a member has said to me, "You work on Sabbath." My response has been "I don't work on Sabbath. I work during the week. What I do on Sabbath is witness." As a pastor, or

when working out of the conference office, I found my Sabbaths were filled with activity, but I did not consider myself to be working. I was witnessing for my Lord. This understanding is something to learn and grow into.

It is stress that spoils the Sabbath for pastors. There is the stress of being unprepared. Teaching and preaching can be very rewarding when one has taken the time to prepare; otherwise they cause stress. There is the stress of unexpected happenings, ranging from problems with church facilities and no-show participants to all the people problems and conflicts that are dumped onto a pastor on Sabbath. For pastors with children and multiple church districts, absence from family causes stress even as they are about their Father's business. We are crowding too many things into the hours of the Sabbath.—David Manzano, Rockwood, Tennessee.

■ For me Sabbath keeping is a unique experience. Sabbath is God's holy time, and I am involved in communicating His message of love to two or three congregations. As I drive 120 miles each Sabbath conducting services at three churches, my mind is focused on the Creator, the creation, the plan of redemption, and the value of souls for whom Christ died. I listen to tapes of hymns or sermons. Stopping to eat my sack lunch along a riverbank before an afternoon service gives me an opportunity to relax and think of biblical themes and reflect on God's second book, nature.

When our children were young we had special Friday evening supper, with music and children's stories. Sabbath afternoons were often reserved for nature walks with children. Pastors should always bear in mind family needs, both spiritual and social, when they make Sabbath

plans and appointments. They need to take time to pray, to study, to exercise, to rest, to be re-created, to visit and touch the lives of others. Balance is necessary.—Paul B. Peterson, Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

■ Jesus often provided a principle of universal truth to correct the quagmire of errors religious people get into. In regard to Sabbath, Jesus emphasized three moral axioms: (1) "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," (2) "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath," and (3) "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28; Matt. 12:12, NIV).

When we allow principle to guide specific behaviors, our starting point is our spiritual union with God.

Consider, for instance, the endless debate that can occur on pastoral responsibility to family on the pastor's busiest day of the week. Is the pastor's family more important than church responsibilities? How do pastors maximize effective ministry to give all they have to the flock on the one day they are all available? Should pastors take off another day of the week to devote themselves to family? But how to find such a day since the kids are in school most of the week, Sunday is catch-up day for house chores, and the spouse may work full-time?

If pastors allow the three principles mentioned above to guide their ministry on Sabbath, (1) the Sabbath will be a delight to them, (2) Jesus, as the Lord of the Sabbath, will minister through them, and (3) they will do good on the Sabbath. Rules will not accomplish this, but principle-driven behavior and a personal closeness to Jesus will.

To define precisely the limits of proper Sabbath observance and to establish rules for all to follow would

(Continued on page 26)

First Glance

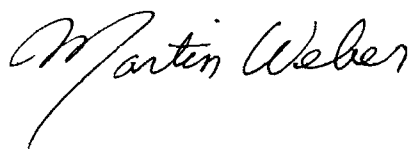
The most exciting development in the history of Adventist communication is the new SDA Forum on CompuServe. Whoever you are or wherever you live, beginning July 5 you can communicate instantly with peers around the world and access a wealth of vital information, both spiritual and secular.

Ralph Blodgett, with his background as a pastor and editor, is well-qualified as the forum's systems operator. A computer genius, he wrote some of the best-selling manuals for popular software programs. Start reading on page 10 and you'll soon be "cruising down the information highway."

Have you ever been shot during a "battle at the board meeting"? Then you'll relate to the article on page 18. The anonymous author describes being ambushed by a former pastor who had retired and remained in the district. He describes but does not diagnose their conflict. You can attempt that at your next workers' meeting by using the article as a discussion starter.

One of the most respected Christian leaders of this century is Richard Wurmbrand, the Lutheran pastor and author who remained faithful to Christ through long years of Communist torture in Romania. His article on page 14 forces us to reappraise the content and method of our preaching.

Caleb Rosado is one of the most significant sociologists in the Adventist Church. His analysis of two books about the Waco debacle will stimulate your thinking.



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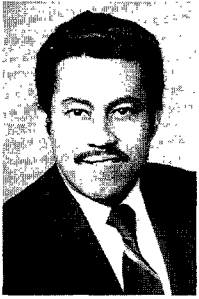
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Conquering mediocrity

Miguel Angel Cerna

Are you an average pastor? Average is as close to the top as to the bottom. I believe God designed every human being for unique excellence.

Consider Jabez, one man among 600 names in the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles: "And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (1 Chron. 4:9, 10).

What did he do to gain God's attention?

1. *A great ambition.* Jabez really wanted to make his life count. He wanted to expand his territory—not to be transferred to another territory, but to expand the one where he was. Too many in the ministry lack vision for their present circumstances. They have many small ambitions but will never transcend mediocrity until they get a vision. Jabez is an example of big thinking.

2. *A great faith.* The short prayer and biography of Jabez does not mention any specific ability, gift, education, or possession he might have had. Evidently, greater than talent is faith. It isn't necessarily the most intelligent or gifted workers who achieve the greatest for God's cause, but the ones who have faith and work.

In Jabez's situation, perhaps he may have been handicapped in some way because his name in Hebrew means

"pain." How would you like to be named "pain"? Perhaps you have been called other uncomplimentary things. If so, Jabez's example shows that difficult circumstances need not doom us to mediocrity. In Christ's name we can get out of the same old rut. We need not worry about talents we don't have when we have faith in God and know that He has called us to ministry. We simply trust Him and move on.

Are we repelling people by indifference, or attracting them to God by fervor and passion? Are we among the minority who are eager to take up the challenge of the day and make a difference? Remember, Jabez's faith was greater than his problems.

3. *A great prayer life.* Ask for God's power in your life and ministry. Jabez prayed, "Bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory" (NKJV). The prayer was specific. And it was not selfish because God answered it! Ambition itself is either good or bad depending on the motive.

Why would you want your church to be the largest? Why would you want your conference, union, or division to be the largest? If we only want God's glory, let us keep praying and working to that end. When we pray for big things, God is able to do much more than we can ask or think. Jabez asked for God's presence in his life and for protection.

Popular misconceptions

Every minister desperately needs to avoid three popular misconceptions.

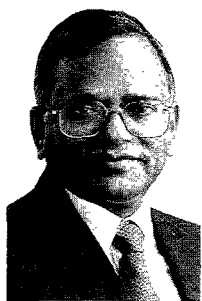
1. *Confusing humility with fear.* Often seemingly "humble" pastors and leaders won't attempt great things for God because perhaps in reality they are

afraid. The devil is an expert in making us think small, and in deluding us into thinking we are simply humble. Humility does not deny our strengths; it acknowledges our weaknesses and drives us to seek God's grace and do great things for Him with His help.

2. *Confusing being content with being lazy.* Philippians 4:11 states that Paul learned to be content in every situation. But that didn't mean he lacked great ambitions or great goals. Paul was simply saying that he had learned to enjoy life even while his goals were not yet reached. If contentment is an excuse for laziness, who, then, will train and organize church members for ministry and soul winning? Who will stand for justice? Who will strive to complete an education?

3. *Confusing little thinking with spirituality.* Some hold the myth that quality is the opposite of quantity. If quality were measured by size, then a one-member church would be the best of all. Let us not blame God for our lack of growth. Quality yields quantity.

To summarize: How do we triumph over mediocrity? Like Jabez we need a great ambition, a great faith, and a great prayer life. From the day these characteristics are seen in our lives, we will never again be mediocre. As coworkers with Christ, let us allow Him to use us as agents for creation and re-creation. Let us *be* so that we may *do*, so that we may *have* the fulfillment that comes from serving our great God, whose Word says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). May our ambition in service for Him be to focus on that vision and make the difference in the very territory where He has called us to labor. ■



The mystery of Christ

John M. Fowler

When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:4-6).*

The cell in Caesar's prison provided the apostle Paul ample time and opportunity for spiritual and theological reflection. Away from the pressures of evangelism and the mission frontier, the apostle was now forced to consider quietly the tumultuous life he had led hitherto. The personal counted very little with the old warrior, for he had written this off as nothing (Phil. 3:7, 8) because of the surpassing commitments and claims involved in his discipleship to Jesus. As Paul reflected upon all that was involved in that discipleship, from the discovery on the Damascus road through the establishment of churches all over Asia, the Holy Spirit inspired him to write some of the most magnificent Epistles of the New Testament, one of which is Ephesians.

In this letter, Paul contemplates in wonder upon the nature of the church, "consisting of Jews and Gentiles, Asians and Europeans, slaves and freemen—all symbols of a disrupted world that was to be restored to unity in Christ."¹ The apostle notes the destruction of "the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14) by the Man of the cross. That historic truth overwhelms him with indescribable feelings of ecstasy and joy that he considers it as nothing less

than the work of the entire Godhead. Indeed in the extraordinary conclusion of chapter 2, Paul calls to witness the names of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as the architects of the marvelous unity that should characterize the Christian church, made up of people of every hue.

For his part, Paul calls that unity a "mystery," and he uses this word several times (Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9) to underline the divine nature of it.

What is this mystery? What are the contents of this mystery? What does the mystery mean today?

Meaning of the mystery

The Greek word *musterion* in classical usage referred to "anything hidden or secret," and it was used . . . to refer to the sacred rites of the Greek mystery religions in which only the initiated shared."² However, in New Testament usage the word "signifies a secret which is being, or even has been, revealed, which is also divine in scope, and needs to be made known by God to men through His Spirit."³ To Paul, both the content and the purpose of this mystery are incomprehensible to the human mind without divine revelation and assistance. Even to the apostle, it was made known only through "revelation," obviously a reference to his calling on the Damascus road and his training by the Spirit afterward (see Gal. 1:11, 12). Paul sought "to show that it was through a special manifestation of divine power that he had been led to see and grasp the great truths of the gospel. It was through instruction received from God Himself that Paul was led to warn and admonish . . . in so solemn and positive a manner. He wrote, not in hesi-

tancy and doubt, but with the assurance of settled conviction and absolute knowledge."⁴

Another characteristic of this mystery is that generations who had lived before the coming of Christ were not fully aware of it. God has chosen to reveal it fully in the person of Christ, and Paul was a recipient of this revelation. Note Barclay's comment: "Into [Paul's] life had come the revelation of the great secret of God. That secret was that the love and mercy and grace of God were meant not for the Jews alone but for all mankind. . . . In the ancient world the barriers were complete. No one had ever dreamed that God's privileges were for all people. It was Paul who made that discovery."⁵

The contents of the mystery

What are the contents of this mystery? The apostle leaves no doubt about them in Ephesians 3:6: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (NIV).

Paul outlines three great contents of this mystery. First, Gentiles become fellow heirs with Jews. Second, both become members of the same body. Third, both become partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

To the apostle, then, the mystery is God's redemptive activity through Jesus that made the one body of Christ possible. The unity between Jew and Gentile is part of this mystery, and the apostle spends all his spiritual and theological acumen to define its structure (Eph. 2:11-22). Note Paul's argument:

Without Christ—Gentiles were:

- “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel” (verse 12),
- “strangers to the covenants of promise” (verse 12),
- “having no hope” (verse 12),
- “without God in the world” (verse 12);
- “far off” (verse 13).

In Christ—Gentiles are:

- “brought near in the blood of Christ” (verse 13),
- “no longer strangers and sojourners” (verse 19),
- “fellow citizens with the saints” (verse 19),
- “members of the household of God” (verse 19),
- “built . . . into a holy temple in the Lord” (verses 20, 21).

In Christ—both Jews and Gentiles alike experience:

- peace: “has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (verse 14),
- unity: He “has made us both one” (verse 14),
- a new man: He creates in Himself “one new man in place of the two” (verse 15),
- reconciliation: He reconciles us “both to God in one body through the cross” (verse 16),
- access: “we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (verse 18).

Having laid out the structure of the unity between Gentile and Jew so carefully, Paul makes sure that his readers understood his primary burden: that this unity is not a result of human factors, but of divine intervention in human history in the Person of the cross. Peace and reconciliation between the broken pieces of humanity are not possible without God conceiving it, God revealing it through the reconciling “blood of Christ” (verse 13), and God executing it as His gracious act. In fact, to the apostle’s mind, the cessation of hostilities between Gentile and Jew, the breaking of the barrier between them, and their unity are nothing short of a divine miracle: the miracle of the cross (see verse 16). No human power or potentate could conceive or bring

about the creation of the new person, the one person, the person in Christ Jesus. Only God can.

The meaning of the mystery today

What does this mystery mean today? The same as it did in the apostle’s time. First, it should make us aware of the oneness of the human person. The Pauline mathematics of Ephesians 2 and 3 declares $1 + 1 = 1$. Now, that is beyond any human mathematics or logic. But the mystery of the gospel is neither mathematical nor logical. The mystery expects the impossible. The mystery empowers the creation of the new humanity, in Jesus, that must accept the indivisibility of the human person.

Second, the mystery should make us aware that while differences may exist between persons, genders, cultures, races, and nations, those differences must not be allowed to diminish the worth and dignity of any human person. The cross teaches us that. Ephesians bears out that the household of God has no dividing walls. Bigotry—racial, cultural, or of any other kind—is fundamentally anti-Christian, and hence is an unacceptable conduct for one who claims to live by the gospel.

Third, the power of the mystery should so permeate our own inner lives that it will become a personal discovery so that all our relationships are governed by its dynamic. Paul’s words must become our own: “Of this gospel I was made a minister” (Eph. 3:7). ■

* Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), vol. 6, p. 995.

² *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Pubs., 1980), vol. 2, p. 1041.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 386.

⁵ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 122, 123.

Resource assistant appointed

James A. Cress

As part of the General Conference Ministerial Association’s growing emphasis on providing pastors and local church elders with practical and reasonably priced resources, Pastor Michael A. Speegle has been appointed to the General Conference Ministerial Association as assistant for resources. Mike comes from a strong pastoral background and has participated in several international evangelistic endeavors, including planting one of the eight new congregations resulting from It Is Written’s 1993 Moscow crusade. His expertise in advertising, desktop publishing, project management, creative design and materials production have well prepared him for this new assignment that involves research, development, and production of resources for pastoral effectiveness. This new position has been created without increasing the overall Ministerial Association budget, through staff reductions and reassignment as well as more cost-effective utilization of available resources.



After earning his B.A. degree in theology from Pacific Union College, Mike, with his wife, Lorie (Erickson), served in the Nevada-Utah Conference, earned a M.Div. degree from Andrews University, and had other pastoral assignments in Utah, Nevada, California, and most recently Marietta, Georgia.

The Speegles have two sons, Aaron (6) and Benjamin (5). Mike is the author of the study guide for the new *Elder’s Handbook*, for which book he also served as editor. He also has developed and edited several seminar projects. We are pleased to add this outstanding individual to our staff and know that the world field will be blessed by his resource development ministry to pastors everywhere. ■

Banners in the church

Karen Holford

Banners can open fresh channels of communication.



Karen Holford writes from Essex, England. She is a pastor's wife and is active in Shepherdess International.

We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners" (Ps. 20:5).

Banners were used in Bible times as a standard or ensign to declare an army's allegiance. They were symbols of nationality and helped direct the soldiers before, during, and after a battle. Banners declared a specific message: "His banner over me was love" (Song of Sol. 2:4). Banners gave a visual message. Jesus used visual aids to tell His parables and teach the people. He taught in places surrounded by observable images and lessons. Today, confined within the four walls of a church building, we don't have the same access to immediate visual aids. Banners can help provide the link. Banners can also carry a clear message to children in a church. The pictures and messages will stay with them, even if they never hear a word of the sermon.

Why use banners?

Many churches use banners as part of their worship. Some banners have a more permanent place in the church. Some banners may declare the name of the church or one of its important beliefs. Other banners may have a temporary use and be designed for a special event or to enhance a current study or worship theme. There are many benefits in using banners:

1. Banners can help create a worshipful atmosphere by helping to focus the thoughts on a theme prior to the service. A flower arrangement is beautiful and brings joy, but even the simplest banner can speak a thousand words and can facilitate meditative thoughts

where flowers may remain silent.

2. Banners can help enhance the atmosphere when a church has to meet in a multipurpose building. A banner can be used to cover up notice boards or posters used by other organizations and thus prevent unnecessary distractions. Or it can bring color and beauty to a drab meeting place.

3. Working together on a banner can bind people together. A small group can work as a banner team. Each banner needs careful thought, study, prayer, and a range of skills. There may be some members who would function better in such an activity focused group rather than the more conventional study or prayer group.

4. People who have artistic and needlework talents can feel that the Lord can use their skills as much as He uses a musician, florist, or poet, and feel more included in the worship experience. We often forget that when the tabernacle was made God actually provided creative skills as a spiritual gift (see Ex. 35:30-35) in order to enhance the beauty of the sanctuary. Some Christians look down upon creative skills as second-rate and even "time-wasters." Because of such attitudes, those with artistic skills may feel guilty about using them. But all talents are gifts from God, and banner-making can give these imaginative people an opportunity to contribute to the worship experience.

5. Each banner is totally unique and can be made to suit the environment and the fellowship better than a ready-made poster.

6. Banners last a long time. A floral display may last only a few

days and cost more than a banner.

7. Some may hesitate to "adorn" their churches in this way. But as long as the purpose of the banner is to raise our thoughts to God, rather than show off the skills of the makers, there need not be a problem. A banner for the church should, of course, be well made and attractive, using the best avail-



able materials and design.

8. Banners can also be used on church and youth/Pathfinder marches to share the message of Christ with the world in vivid, beautiful ways.

If there is reluctance on the part of some members to use banners in the church sanctuary, then it may be possible to consider the foyer or vestibule for such use. Banners also can be used as part of the children's spot, or they may be confined to special occasions such as dedications, baptisms, Communion, Thanksgiving and harvest festivals, and weddings. Such use may be more acceptable to those who have concerns.

Church board backing for use of banners is important. It may be necessary for the board to screen designs. Submit several designs to the committee, and let them select one. Some churches may let a banner group work as they wish; others may want the group to operate with some guidance from the pastor. Pastoral input is essential when a banner is to be designed for a special event or for a sermon series.

If you know of churches that use banners, borrow some samples and

have a display to show how effective they can be. Local church schools could also be involved in banner projects as part of their design and skills program. Schools could also use banners in their own worship services, especially if they have to use a multipurpose area as a chapel. Eventually it may be possible to set up a banner library where other local churches can come and borrow or rent a banner for a special event. Thus resources can be shared, and it won't be necessary for every church to "re-invent the wheel."

Designing and making a banner

1. Settle on a theme. It could be the theme for the sermon series, or the theme of the Sabbath school lessons. The theme may come from special events such as baptisms, Communion, etc., or from our special beliefs such as creation or the three angels' messages.

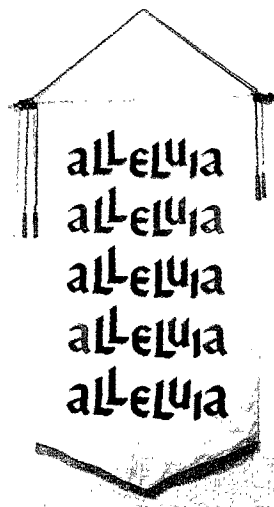
2. Have a group work on a banner. Encourage the group to pray together, and study the topic or theme from the Bible, and pool inspirations about the theme, sifting through them to find the best ideas and words to use. In some churches, one person may be able to accomplish the task.

3. Plan the design out on paper first. Use few and forceful words to convey the theme accurately. Employ simple but clear symbols that enhance the message rather than distract from the theme. Don't clutter the banner with too many symbols. Once you have a sketch, draw it out full size on large pieces of paper and use this as a pattern for cutting your fabrics.

4. Show the banner design to the pastor, and, if necessary, to the church board. Be willing to be flexible about the ideas others offer, and prayerfully consider the suggestions.

5. Once the basic design has been established, consider materials and methods, uses of the banner colors, shape and techniques, cost, and how it will be displayed. A cross-shaped frame on a sturdy base can be useful to hang different banners on and can be easily made. Or a hook on the wall may be all that is needed. Banners need not always be made in fabric.

Thin card, folded and curved into a design, can yield beautiful three-dimensional effects. Bits of wood, bark, sheep's wool, and other natural materials may be used if appropriate to the design. A fabric banner needs to have a channel along its upper edge so that a dowel can be inserted to let the banner hang straight. Screw eyes can



be screwed into the dowel, and ribbon or silken cord used to hang the banner from its frame or hook.

6. Avoid depicting people—it is difficult to make them look right. If you must have people on the banner, then the line drawings from *The Good News Bible* may be helpful. These are copyrighted designs, and you need to obtain permission in writing from the publisher before you use them. Permission usually is granted to banner-makers. Silhouettes and the backs of people are easier to achieve than facial features.

Helps for making banners

1. For a series of practical books on banner-making, write to Priscilla Nunnerley, Christian Banners, 9, Chestnut Court, Chestnut Lane, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, England. Priscilla, an evangelical Christian, writes from extensive experience, and her books include *Banner in His Name*, *An Army With Banners*, and *Banner-Makers to the King*.

2. Materials you will need. Drape and upholstery fabrics. These are usually of a heavier weight and come in a wide range of colors and effects. If

you are mixing fabrics, make sure that they are preshrunk. You may not want to wash the banner, but if it is ever in a damp atmosphere you could end up with a disaster! Check out remnant boxes for useful pieces at lower prices. All kinds of other fabrics can be used in collage; fleece, cottons, satins, taffeta, lace, chiffon, and net can produce wonderful effects.

3. Make use of scraps, but be sure the fabric is what you really want. Collect and organize odds and ends in boxes so you can find materials easily.

4. Bondaweb (fusible webbing) can be bought off a roll and is an easy way to do appliqué, as you can draw designs directly onto its paper backing, cut them out, and iron them onto a backing fabric. Edges can be left as they are and won't fray but can be covered with machine stitching, couched threads, or one of the new fabric paints in a squeeze bottle that leaves a raised line. When using Bondaweb, remember that the design you draw on the backing paper must be a reverse of the design you want, and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

5. Fabric paints or even car-spray paints and stencils can create wonderful effects. Check craft books for ideas and uses of paints on fabric.

6. Heavyweight vilene can provide stiffness to the banner if necessary. Once the banner is completed, let its front hang so that it will drop and relax before backing and stiffening it.

7. Explore the use of beads, fabric flowers and leaves, and even Velcro fastening for an add-on banner (see ideas section).

8. Print the lettering for banners on a banner-program of a computer. This makes possible large lettering that can be cut out and used as a pattern and also offers a variety of styles. Poor lettering can ruin a wonderful banner! If you like some lettering but it is too small, use an enlarging photocopier to bring it up to the right size. Or check with your local schools or public library for letter templates and patterns. If you are borrowing a design, make sure you are not contravening any copyright laws.

Ideas

For a series on the Ten Commandments a large banner was made with the text "This is God's love that we keep His commandments." The traditional shape of the stone was ironed onto the backing fabric and 10 Velcro spots in a matching color were stitched on in two vertical rows of five. Then 10 cardboard heart shapes were cut out, covered in fabric, and decorated to depict the positive aspects of each of the commandments. Each heart shape had a Velcro spot attached to the back so that each week a new commandment symbol could be added to the banner by the children. For example: "Thou shall not kill" was a picture of a chick hatching from an egg to show the importance of protecting life; a gift package was used to represent not stealing (we should be giving rather than taking). The symbols were explained by the pastor so that no confusion could arise.

For a retreat weekend a banner was made of unbleached muslin (calico) with the simple words "Bind Us Together, Lord." The word "Lord" was placed in the center of a circle of hearts, each heart having a different color and pattern of fabric. The hearts touched at their edges, and different colored ribbon bows appeared to tie each heart to the next one.

Both these banners were simple and made in a day by one person.

If you like the idea of banners but don't feel able to make any for your

church, experiment with making miniature wall-hangings for your home and for gifts. You may find that someone who is in the hospital for a long time or confined to their home might appreciate having a banner for their room, using a text that has meant something special to them. It is possible to cross-stitch a text on even-weave fabric and then embellish the text with bonded appliqué, lace, buttons, etc. Make a fabric border for the mini-banner and include fabric loops at the top or an upper channel for the dowel so that it will hang well.

As you make banners, you will develop ideas of your own. Cards, stickers, and other items in your local Christian bookshops can also give you simple ideas for banners. Your own personal prayer and study life will provide you with ideas, too, and it is important to pray about every design you make. Keep a file of design ideas.

Mini-banners in homes and hospitals can be a special witness to friends and staff and open up channels of communication. As in Bible times, the banners will show whose side you are on.

Above all, enjoy your banner-making, on whatever scale, as you use your time and talents for the Lord.

Happy banner-making! ■

John Sullivan, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Damascus, Maryland, crafted the banners on the cover and in the article except as noted.



Courtesy of Karen Holford



Courtesy of Karen Holford

Cruising the information highway

Ralph Blodgett

If you have a computer with a modem, you have access in your office to a world of information.



Ralph Blodgett, M.Div., M.A., was a pastor and editor before becoming director of the new Seventh-day Adventist on-line forum on CompuServe. He writes from General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Wouldn't it be great to contact a professor at the seminary about a sermon you are preparing and receive an answer a few hours later? Or download an out-of-print manuscript from the Ellen G. White Estate office? Or search for every article published in *Ministry* about salvation by faith over the past three years and then retrieve them all on your own computer? Or be able to join in on a live town hall meeting with the president of the General Conference?

If you have a computer and a modem, you can do all that and much, much more. The Seventh-day Adventist Church now has an on-ramp to the information superhighway that you've been hearing and reading so much about. On April 6, 1994, the General Conference and North American Division signed a contract with the CompuServe on-line service to set up a Seventh-day Adventist forum on CompuServe that can be accessed by virtually *any* church worker or lay member around the world.¹ The forum is scheduled to open officially on July 5, 1994—90 days after the contract signing.

In anticipation, Adventists everywhere have been asking questions about the new SDA forum and how they can start driving on the information superhighway. What follows are the answers to some of the most frequently posed questions about the new SDA forum.

What exactly is an "on-line service"?

An on-line service is to computer users what a CB radio is to 18-wheel truckers. On-line services such as

Prodigy, America Online, and CompuServe (the three most popular services) make it possible for computer users to *post* (or send) messages to other computer users anywhere in the country or (in the case of CompuServe) around the world. On-line services are excellent resources for getting all kinds of questions answered in a relatively short time.

On-line services also have gigantic libraries of information that users can tap without leaving their living room chairs. Some on-line services also have sections (called *forums*) where users can visit and get answers to questions or download files and articles related to the kind of work they do, hobby they have, or information they need.

The amount of information available on-line is almost overwhelming. "Going on-line is like walking into a giant library, post office, shopping mall, and nightclub all at once. Everywhere you turn, there's something fun or useful," said *PC Magazine* staff editor Andrew Kantor in the March 15, 1994, issue.

What do I need to access an on-line service?

If you already have a computer manufactured in the past five or six years, all you need is a modem and a phone line. A modem, which lets your computer talk to another computer over a regular phone line, costs as little as \$50. It can be either an external modem, which plugs into the back of your computer, or an internal modem, which is mounted inside the computer case.

The speed of a modem—how fast it can transmit data—is measured in bits per second (or bps). A 2400-bps modem is today considered a slow modem. Better modems transfer messages and files over the phone lines at higher speeds. If you will spend much time on the information highway, you will be happier in most cases with a faster 9600-bps or 14.4-bps modem. More expensive modems also include fax hardware and software, which lets you send and receive faxes right from your PC.

Why did the denomination choose CompuServe?

Four reasons influenced the joint NAD/GC committee to select CompuServe over other services such as Prodigy, America Online, and GENie. First, CompuServe has a huge selection of overseas phone connections in 130 different countries. (The list of overseas numbers for CompuServe that I have is 33 pages long, single-spaced.) Second, 90 to 95 percent of homes and businesses in the United States can access CompuServe with a local phone number rather than by long distance. Third, CompuServe lets companies and organizations set up private forums that can be run by their own personnel. (Other churches that have private forums on CompuServe are the Baptists, Lutherans, and Catholics.) Fourth, the cost for accessing a private forum on CompuServe is a fraction of the cost of using any of the other on-line services.

Interestingly, a few weeks after the joint NAD/GC committee selected CompuServe as the denomination's access route to the information superhighway, *PC Magazine* also gave CompuServe its Editor's Choice award as the best on-line service in the world today (see the cover story in the March 15, 1994, issue). In giving the award the editors said, "CompuServe strikes us as the right on-line service for most people. It has an amazing array of information, . . . excellent electronic mail, and the most comprehensive and active discussion forums in the business. . . . For the broadest array of information at a reasonable price, CompuServe is your best bet."

How much will it cost on the SDA forum?

Most on-line services charge a monthly fee for certain basic services and then an additional charge based on the number of hours you spend on-line. CompuServe's basic monthly fee (which includes 70 different free-of-extra-charge services and 180 pages of E-mail) is \$8.95. (The term *E-mail* stands for electronic mail—letters sent over the phone lines rather than by the post office.) In addition to the \$8.95 basic fee for CompuServe, the SDA forum costs only \$7 a month for *unlimited use*. In other words, SDA forum members do not have to worry about an hourly charge for using the forum.

What is included in the basic services?

CompuServe's basic services package includes late-breaking news from the Associated Press and Reuters on-line, in-depth sports coverage, and U.S. National Weather Service reports (even full-color Accu-Weather maps for any part of the world), air-

line reservations, car rentals, hotel accommodations, stock quotes, mutual fund analyses, business news, a mortgage calculator, a restaurant guide, a full 21-volume on-line encyclopedia (updated quarterly), a 300,000-word dictionary, articles from *Consumer Reports*, the electronic edition of *Peterson's College Guide*, *Consumer Reports Complete Drug Reference Guide*, answers to health questions on *HealthNet*, an electronic shopping mall featuring more than 100 nationally famous merchants and specialty shops, classified ads, and even on-line games.

CompuServe Mail processes regular E-mail, E-mail with a return receipt, fax, telex, paper mail in an envelope to a postal address, and connections to other popular networks and services (such as Internet and MCI) through a single interface. You can even send the same letter to 50 different people with the click of a button. The \$8.95 monthly charge provides 180 single-page E-mail letters (or 60 three-page letters) for free.

The SDAs On-line Forum

The Seventh-day Adventist forum, called SDAs On-line, has 17 different sections where users may post questions and read messages from other forum members. Each section also has its own library containing files and articles related to the section topic. These library files and articles can be *downloaded* (or sent to your computer over the phone line) as needed. Here are the section titles:

1. Adventist News
2. Bible/Science/Theology
3. Church Resources
4. Education/Schools
5. Ellen G. White
6. Finance
7. General Info/Facts
8. Lifestyle (i.e., health)
9. Missions (Global Mission, Mission Awareness, etc.)
10. Pastoral Practices
11. SDA Magazines
12. Service Openings
13. Statistics
14. The Bookstore
15. GC Administration
16. NAD Administration
17. Town Hall (a general discussion area)

What other features does CompuServe offer?

In addition to basic services, CompuServe has more than 600 special-interest forums on topics ranging from health, investment, and music to pets, religion, sailing, and writing. Included are more than 250 computer hardware and software forums, with some 400 computer industry vendors ready to provide on-line help with their products. It also has 4,000 software libraries and 2,000 databases (including Phone*File, a national phone directory not found *anywhere else*) that users can access. In addition, CompuServe has full-text articles from more than 200 magazines and 60 newspapers.

Magazines available on-line include publications like *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Car and Driver*, *Chang-*

ing Times, *Computer Shopper*, *Country Living*, *Forbes*, *Home Office Computing*, *Outdoor Life*, *Parents*, *PC Magazine*, *PC Week*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Popular Science*, *Psychology Today*, *Road and Track*, *Science*, *Scientific American*, *Smithsonian*, *Sports Afield*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. Some of the 60 different newspapers available on-line include the *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, and the *Washington Post*.

What does the SDA forum contain?

Like the other 600 forums on CompuServe, the SDA forum has 17 sections. Each of those 17 sections has a message area, a library area, and a conference room. (See "The SDAs

On-line Forum" sidebar.)

The library for Section 11 (SDA Magazines), for example, will contain full-text feature articles from *Adventist Review*, *El Centinela*, *Liberty*, *Message*, *Signs of the Times*, and *Vibrant Life*. The articles will date back to January 1, 1994, and will be updated monthly. *Ministry* magazine articles, on the other hand, will be found in the Section 10 library (Pastoral Practices) and will go back three years at first—eventually 10—for research purposes. Not everything published in the above magazines (except *Ministry*) will be on-line, but certainly all their feature articles.

In the Bookstore (Section 14) you can place orders for books and magazines directly through to your local ABC, or even to the Review and Herald and Pacific Press. You also can read announcements and details about new books from both of the publishing houses.

The library for Section 1 (Adventist News) will contain Adventist News Network releases, From the President (a weekly news report from the GC president), the GC *Communique* (weekly news from inside the General Conference), Annual Council statements as soon as they are voted, and other late-breaking church news items.

Section 2's library (Bible/Science/Theology) will contain creationism articles and scientific papers from the Geoscience Research Institute, 60 different papers from the Biblical Research Institute, plus resources from Andrews University Theological Seminary.

Section 3's library (Church Resources) will contain a large variety of materials from the North American Division headquarters for children, youth, adults, elders, Pathfinders, prison ministry, reclaiming, singles ministry, Sabbath school, and Net 95.

Section 6's library (Finance) will contain annual financial statements, GC and NAD calendar of offerings, GC and NAD annual budgets, NAD tithe by conferences, 13th Sabbath offerings, annual offering funds, GC session offerings, etc.

The library for Section 7 (General Info/Facts) will contain the latest SDA

Pastoral Practices on CompuServe

James A. Cress

Here is the tentative list of what the Ministerial Association will provide pastors on the CompuServe SDA forum. You can "access" the following features under the section Pastoral Practices.

Biblio File—Monthly updates of professional books on subjects of pastoral interest.

Catalog—Ministerial Association supplies, resources, and courses available.

Evangelism Skills—Information on soul-winning techniques and resources.

Evangelism Source—Reports on evangelists: availability, skills, series successes, etc.

Pastoral Family—Tips and resources for pastoral family support and encouragement.

Pastoral Process—Information on pastoral skills such as administration, training, nurture.

Publications—Articles from *Ministry*, *Shepherdess International* journal, *Elder's Digest*.

Sermon Share—Sermon scripts and outlines provided by pastors to share with other pastors.

Sermon Source—Sermon scripts and outlines provided by the Ministerial Association.

Shoptalk—Tools and ideas for pastoral work.

Spiritual Formation—Devotional readings and other materials for developing the pastor's personal spirituality.

Worship Resources—Bulletin insert information and layout material on evangelism and nurture skills.

Yearbook, the 1994 Calendar of Events and Offerings, 800 numbers for the denomination, fax numbers for the denomination, the departmental portion of the new GC directory, ready-to-use photos of church leaders, etc.

How will the forum work?

In addition to sending E-mail messages to another user (messages that only you and the recipient can read), CompuServe forums let users post messages for anyone to see and, of course, reply to. In the message areas of each forum, members may post a message, make a statement, or raise a question about any topic they choose. For example, someone might ask in Section 5 (Ellen G. White), "Is it true that Ellen White published a special pamphlet on the Nashville Sanitarium shortly before she died?" Tim Poirier of the Ellen G. White Estate, who is the section leader in charge of Section 5, would reply, "Yes, that pamphlet is number 18 of Series B of the *Special Testimonies* and was published in 1912. It can be downloaded from Section 5 of the forum library, if you like." His message would also include the name of the file to be downloaded. Other items planned for the EGW section library include issue-and-answer papers, EGW articles, out-of-print books and pamphlets, and other CD-ROM books and materials.

In a typical forum, lots of users just love to sit on the sidelines and browse the forum sections—finding answers to questions they haven't even yet thought to ask. The electronic nickname for people who read but rarely post questions is *lurker*. In some forums, more than 70 percent of the users are lurkers. It's like listening on a phone extension while others converse on various topics.

How can I join the SDA forum?

It's easy to join—in North America just call (800) 260-7171, overseas callers use (616) 471-6083. To join CompuServe, you'll need a credit card (VISA or MasterCard) and you must know which PC platform you plan to use to access the forum—Windows, DOS, or Macintosh. The Adventist Information Ministry at

Andrews University will then bill your account \$15 and mail you a packet with CompuServe Information Manager software and instructions. When the software arrives, turn on your computer and follow the instructions for signing up to CompuServe. The New Member Signup card enclosed in your packet will include a serial number, a temporary ID number, and a temporary password. A few days later you will receive a permanent ID and password in the mail.

When you join the forum, CompuServe gives you a \$15 credit toward on-line usage beyond the basic services. They also provide free of cost your first month of basic services (\$8.95) and SDA forum usage (\$7). So you spend \$15 but end up getting back more than \$30 worth of on-line credit.

Conferences, unions, and church institutions planning to order 10 or more software packets at a time get a significant discount. Contact the GC Communication Department office at (301) 680-6300.

Is the forum membership limited to Adventists?

Of course not. Any pastor or church leader from any denomination can join the forum and access all the forum features. While the forum is intended primarily as a service to the Adventist Church, church leaders in other denominations are always welcome.

How can I access the SDA forum?

On CompuServe, forums are accessed by typing GO and the forum name, and pressing Enter. For the SDA forum, you type *GO SDA* and press Enter.

If you have the CompuServe Information Manager software in a Windows or Macintosh version, you click the green traffic light icon, type *SDA*, then click OK. The first time you visit the forum you will see a message from the forum *sysop* (the forum director) telling about the forum and listing the section leaders in charge of the various sections.

Can I really talk with the GC president on-line?

Last January, Albert Gore became

the first U.S. vice president to answer questions live on-line. He used a CompuServe conference room, and some 900 CompuServe users from all over the world took part in making electronic history. As they waited for Gore, many users posted questions they would like to have answered by the vice president. Selected questions appeared on everyone's computer screen. As the vice president typed each line of an answer and pressed Enter, that line appeared on all 900 monitors simultaneously. During the hour-long town hall meeting, the vice president answered about 20 questions.

As of this writing, plans are under way for Robert S. Folkenberg, the General Conference president, to be the first Adventist president to conduct a live town hall meeting on the CompuServe information superhighway.

Get hooked up

Most people who take a test drive on the information superhighway agree that once you have tried it, you *will* become hooked. You will enjoy talking and sharing sermons with fellow pastors and church workers all over the world. You will appreciate chatting with the editor of your favorite SDA magazine, a professor at one of our colleges or universities, or a departmental leader at your own local conference office. You will find weekly current event updates for the Sabbath school lessons on-line that will help you teach a class on Sabbath morning.²

It is truly a world that can stretch your horizons, sharpen your pastoral skills, and help you to be a more productive pastor and church leader. If you want a ride on tomorrow's information superhighway today, warm up your modem, dial your local CompuServe access number, and hop aboard. You can do it right now. ■

¹ Interested ministers from other denominations are also welcome to join the forum.

² During mid-April when this article was written, the features and services cited were in the planning and developmental stage. By the time the forum opens in July, new features may be added and planned features delayed because of the shortage of time and/or resources.

Preaching for eternity

Richard Wurmbrand

The art of preaching has to do with the heart of preaching: salvation from sin.



Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, known around the world as a keeper of the faith in former Communist Romania, spent 14 years in jail and founded 40 missions to serve the suffering church in Eastern Europe during the Communist reign.

When I was a very young preacher in Romania, a renowned actress attended our Sunday services. After three or four weeks she gave me a call. "Please come and have dinner in my home."

On the evening designated, the table featured all kinds of dainties. Together we enjoyed the food, talking banalities. After the meal she looked at me, smiled cryptically, and said:

"You are wondering why I invited you. It was for a definite purpose. There is a story I would like you to know.

"During the Reformation in Germany, thousands came to listen to Jakob Bohme, a self-styled Christian philosopher, I believe a shoemaker by profession. He preached the newly discovered gospel with such power that thousands wept and laughed at his command. The rumor spread: 'A great man from God has arisen among us.' Bohme got used to being highly appreciated by his audience.

"One Sunday he observed in church a man who looked like Jesus as shown in sacred pictures. Bohme could read on the face of this young man that the sermon did not satisfy him, but rather grieved him. The next Sunday and the Sunday after, the same thing happened. Bohme could no longer bear it. He stopped this man at the end of the service and confronted him.

"You seem dissatisfied with my sermons—is that so? What do you dislike about them?"

"Your sermons are much too beautiful to be true" was the reply. "Two

and two are four. This sentence is not beautiful, but it is absolutely true. You want to win souls. Your purpose is good. But in your enthusiasm, you launch yourself further and further from the basics. Two and two become four and a half, then five, then six, eight, and 10. Truth is simple, prosaic. How simple are the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes! God is truth. He does not agree with your sermons. Neither do I."

"These words made a great impression on Bohme. He could not forget them. And as often as he got worked up in his peroration, he would feel as if someone were whispering to him, 'Is what you say really so? Do you speak the truth?' He would begin to stammer and lose his train of thought. People wondered what had happened to the eloquent preacher of times past. He must have lost his gift. Fewer and fewer attended his services.

"Finally, the one who had been beloved of thousands came to church one Sunday to find only a few old women and this one Jesus-like person. At the exit, the latter said to him, 'Now for the first time you have preached the naked truth. Your future task is not to allow it to remain naked and to tremble. Clothe the truth in beauty. No ornament is too costly for truth. Adorn it with jewels.'

"And so once again Bohme preached beautifully. But now he preached *the truth* beautifully.

"I have heard you preach several times," the actress continued. "You are young and you preach beautifully.

So I thought it would do you good to know this story.

I've always remembered the sage advice of that godly woman.

After my many years in prison, she visited me in the hospital. She too had suffered persecution. From her I learned much about preaching and writing, but above all how to communicate simply and effectively.

I don't consider it important to be what people call a "good preacher." Some say Livingstone, who opened up the heart of Africa to Christ, had been a poor one. On the other hand, many golden-tongued spellbinders have done much harm. People swallow their false teachings without discernment.

Preach the truth

But I do consider it important for everyone to be able to tell others what they think so as to bring home to the hearers the truth they hold. The art of earnest preaching is none other than earnest witnessing for one's faith, or the art of communicating with others so as to influence them.

I do not write this for the pleasure of writing, but because I wish to share with you my thoughts on how I learned to preach and write so as to influence souls. My experiences might be helpful to anyone in any profession. These thoughts concern not only pastors but also those who must choose from which pastor, political leader, or educator they want to learn. They might also help you to teach others, at least your children, what you know.

Most of what is learned in seminaries—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, church history, dogma, hermeneutics—unfortunately does not serve the supreme purpose. Sometimes it may even go so far as to cripple future pastors in their task of winning souls for Christ. Something else is needed. I believe the actress was very insightful.

Preach for saving

I learned another important aspect about preaching and speaking to others about serious matters from Garrick, a renowned Shakespearean actor of the eighteenth century.

I read his correspondence with a young pastor who had questioned him

as follows:

"You are a master of the spoken word. People vibrate to every word and gesture of yours. Teach us as pastors how to handle the Word. Suppose you had to play on stage the role of a priest who preaches—how would you do it? What would be the modulations of your voice, the expressions of your face, your movements?"

Garrick answered by saying that he lives his roles. When he plays

Othello he is jealous, when he plays Hamlet he is torn by doubts, when he plays Romeo he is enamored. He transposes himself into the state of heart of the personalities he has to reveal.

"So," he continued, "if I had to preach on stage, I would transpose myself into the following state of mind: I am a young physician. Before me lies, deathly ill, my beloved bride. She may have a chance to recover, but only if she takes a drug that I have

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specially prepared for her. She is in a bad mood and does not wish to take it. I plead with her, 'Take this medicine, otherwise you will die, and with you my happiness too. Life without you means nothing to me. If you take it, you will live, and we will both enjoy unspeakable felicity.'

Garrick wrote to the young pastor, "Think like this when you preach, and you will not have to worry about the right intonation, gesticulation, or expression."

Hundreds of books and dozens of courses about the art of preaching could not have played such a decisive role in my manner of delivering the Word as this letter of Garrick's to that young pastor.

At the start of my career as a Lutheran pastor, I was usually only the preacher. The liturgical part of the service was taken care of by someone else. I used the time when others sang or said their prayers to project in my mind a definite image: *Those before me are souls born in sin, born to sin. All are doomed to perish for eternity unless they agree to take the medicine I offer them.* I loved every one of them. If it was a small congregation, my gaze would pass from one person to the other and I would pray for each one: *Save this man. If not, he is lost, and I cannot be happy without his being in the kingdom.*

When I spoke before thousands, I would pray for the right side of the gallery, then for the left side, then for those in the rear, those in the front rows, those who stood. I would love them with the feelings of biblical Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children or I die!"

Be humble

A third episode in my life also influenced my preaching.

When I was a young pastor, I was very proud. Standing well over six feet tall, I was considered handsome, and the cassock suited me well. When I entered the church, I saw people looking at me with love, admiration, and great expectation. I am also Jew-

ish, and a Jewish Christian pastor is a rarity. Christians make the mistake of spoiling Jewish Christians, showing them an affection apart.

An Orthodox monk, a friend who had heard me preach, observed how things were. At a dinner he told me a story, saying that I could use it as an illustration in a sermon.

"On Palm Sunday, when the Lord entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, He was received with shouts of 'Hosannah to the Son of David!' and with the waving of palm branches. That evening the donkey told his fellow donkeys in the stable, 'If only you could have seen with what honor I was acclaimed in Jerusalem! They called me "Son of David, King of the Jews." I had never before known the

Humility wins. People have enough trouble with their own pride. They will not swallow yours.

name of the donkey who was my father. I was very pleased to find out that he was called David. And the crowd seemed very determined to make me king! They threw their clothes before me on the road in order that I might walk on softness. I suppose they will come tomorrow to enthrone me. I imagine that when a donkey becomes king, he gets plenty of hay and is not made to carry burdens anymore!"

The monk finished. He looked at me significantly. "There are quite a few such donkeys. Young pastors are prone to believe that the honor they receive is for them."

A preacher has to be humble.

If he has natural abilities, it is surely a great asset. But he can do without. Neither Peter's sermons nor Paul's discourses nor the speech Stephen delivered before his death showed great rhetoric. They also have shortcomings in scholarship. My examiner in hermeneutics gave me a

bad mark. He was sure that I would never do as a preacher. Perhaps the apostles would have failed his tests. Saint Jean Vianney, curate of Ars, did not have a high IQ, but he was a very effective preacher because he was humble and never pretended to have what he lacked.

My son delivered his first sermon as a seminarian with these words: "From this pulpit many great preachers have spoken. One of them sealed his sermon with a martyr's death. Don't expect much from me. I cannot preach like them. I cannot give you deep teachings. But I point toward One who will satisfy all the needs of your soul and your intellectual demands. This is all I dare do. I enter the shadow and let Him speak to you."

The audience listened to him attentively because he was modest.

I knew a preacher who was greatly loved because he would say in the middle of his sermon, "Wait a little—I have forgotten what I was going to say. I remember it was something important. Just be patient a moment."

With most preachers such a thing would never happen. They would fill a gap in their memory with empty words. Humility wins. People have enough trouble with their own pride. They will not swallow yours.

Preach with life

Thomas Edison said, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." I agree with him. In order to be a good preacher, a man has to work hard. The sermon must be the result of the labor of a whole Christian life, not of a few minutes or even a few hours of preparation.

The worst ink is better than the best memory. I write down every significant word I hear in a sermon or private conversation or read in the Bible or a newspaper, every episode from my life or that of others that can be used as an illustration. For every idea, I have one sheet of paper. I put on top the Bible verse with which I believe it could best be used. And then I classify the ideas from Genesis

to Revelation. A person who makes 10 notes a day will have 36,500 notes after 10 years. I once had 100,000. Some were confiscated by the Communist police.

When I have to deliver a sermon on a given subject, I go to the respective drawer and usually find far too many illustrations, plus linguistic and theological explanations, for my immediate needs. I have much to choose from. People sometimes wonder about the richness of thought in my sermons. However, they are not the thoughts of the previous week, but those I have gathered across the years.

What I say in this article applies not only to pastors but also to everyone who wishes to witness effectively for Christ, to everyone who wishes to communicate on a spiritual level.

Pastors should not preach just once a week. Bishop Latimer recommended the devil to his clergy as an example

of a good pastor. He visits his whole parish every day. He speaks not only with the head of the household but also with the wife and with each individual child, and then he enters the kitchen to say a word to the maid who might be there.

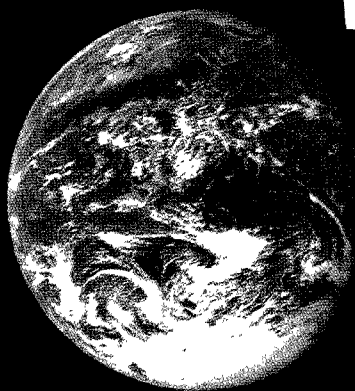
I heartily recommend that you do the same when you pay a visit as a Christian. Have a story prepared for every child according to age. Prepare yourself for a private conversation as you would prepare yourself for a sermon before thousands. I was won for Christ in a private conversation. Since that time, thousands have been influenced for Christ through me. Who knows the value of the one man, woman, or child to whom you dedicate your time? He might be a future Spurgeon or a great saint in process.

Consider that every sermon or simple conversation may be your last or the last one heard by the person before you. It is a sin to give less than

the best of which you are capable. Never care what your bishop, your board of elders, or the audience will think about your sermon or what the world will think about your talk. Simply deliver the message that you have from God, always adjusting it to the level of understanding of the people to whom you speak.

Preach the truth about *the* Truth, then embellish it with beautiful illustrations. Preach "as a dying man to dying men," as a physician to a terminal patient, as a lover to his deathly ill bride. Preach with eternity in your line of sight. And preach about Jesus, the greatest lover of all, who not only preached to dying people but Himself died for all that they might have eternal life.

You will have great reward in this earth as you bring souls to Christ, and the greatest joy of all—to spend eternity with them in the presence of the One you now represent. ■



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Battle at the board meeting

Jack Drumm

My unresolved struggles with a retired pastor

The conference president called me one morning. He needed a phone number I had, and I wanted to schedule him to speak in my church. That taken care of, our conversation turned to my ministry. "How's it going with Elder Schmidt?"* he asked. "Is he giving you any trouble?"

"Actually, he's been out of town so much he hasn't had time to make a lot of trouble."

The truth was that Elder Schmidt[†] did not need much time to make trouble for me. He was a retired pastor with two decades' accumulation of authority in this congregation. I was just a boy pastor two years beyond ordination. Pastoral success required cooperating with Elder Schmidt, which was a liability not without its blessings. He was brusque yet generous, inconsistent yet wise.

Our relationship was rather one-sided. I initiated almost every contact we had. Conscious of his power, he did not feel the need to call me or suggest that we meet. Yet he clearly enjoyed our relationship, and I certainly benefited from it. As Elder Schmidt shared wisdom from his experiences, I learned essentials of urban ministry that no book could teach. He taught me how to handle both the needy and the wealthy and how to cope with situations I had never dreamed of: old people unable to marry because of Social Security complications, parents terrorized by 60-year-old children, single women with scant resources and no skills struggling to pay rent on roach-infested apartments. In short, I learned the art of pastoring from Elder Schmidt. We even were becoming friends.

Meanwhile, the church was trans-

forming under my ministry. Many new and younger faces appeared at services. Elder Schmidt began to speak with delight of *our* success. His approval and excitement was mirrored among the old-timers, who told me with glowing faces how nice it was to see all those young people on Sabbath morning.

As the congregation grew and their needs expanded, I spent less time with Elder Schmidt. I moved from serving him to serving the city, from pleasing him to ministering to strangers. The church experimented with Sabbath school, tinkered with the worship service, and began having frequent fellowship dinners. Suddenly and unexpectedly, Elder Schmidt began rebelling against the changes in the church.

One bad board meeting

A crisis erupted one Monday night at a board meeting I'll always remember. After the opening prayer, the meeting immediately went downhill. Our first agenda item was a baptism I had planned.

"I'm glad to hear about your converts," Elder Schmidt said, "but I want to know what your plans are for evangelism in the coming year. I wish we had a copy of your schedule that you distributed earlier this year. What happened to it? We need an evangelistic campaign that teaches the prophecies. That's what really helps people make decisions.

"It seems that since Elder Drumm has come," he went on, now addressing the rest of the board, "this church has become a social club. We never used to have potlucks; now you have them almost every week." Then he turned again

Jack Drumm is a pseudonym.

to me. "Are all these new people attending really becoming Seventh-day Adventists, or just having a good time?"

My first impulse was anger. Given the membership "growth" from 250 to 84 under Elder Schmidt's former leadership, what right did he have to castigate me? And what was wrong with a "social club" if it was helping people respond to the gospel?

I reminded Elder Schmidt about one unusual evangelistic endeavor God had blessed. "What about our seminar last September on recovery for homosexuals? Two of them are coming to church, and they've arranged for me to study with some others."

That was the wrong thing to say. Our seminar for homosexuals happened to be the next item on Elder Schmidt's death list for the board to consider.

"A lot of older members are upset about your inviting all those homosexuals here. We don't want to get AIDS. Who gave you the right to make this a homosexual church? I remember in the sixties when every Adventist church was trying to get at least one hippie. Now we have a new fad with these gays. Listen, we're not here to get involved with every fad that goes by. Homosexuals may need the gospel too, but we have to think about our longtime faithful members."

"Elder Schmidt," I protested, "we have an obligation to help people in need, especially when they are looking for a way out. We cannot do less and be true to the gospel."

The most amazing thing about Elder Schmidt's tirade was that he had originally approved of our outreach to homosexuals. What made him change his mind now?

What would Jesus do?

Rather than confront his inconsistency, I announced: "It's time to go on to the next item on our agenda. We've already voted to install replacement windows in the apartment and the office. I would like your guidance on how to finance them."

"It's about time you sought our guidance," Elder Schmidt declared with an ugly edge to his voice. "What right do you have to arrange a loan for the church?" Then he addressed me by my

first name. "Jack, not even the church board can borrow thousands of dollars. We need a business meeting!"

I felt like tearing my hair out. Why was he being so rough on me? The board already had discussed the windows at two separate meetings. I had even requested Elder Schmidt's advice. He said we should borrow funds for the windows rather than dipping into savings. Now he had reversed his course—and was blaming me.

Although thoroughly exasperated, I calmed myself with the thought that my defense was God's business. Besides, if I counterattacked, I might not win the battle.

Sometimes in recent months I had wondered what would happen if a head-to-head war developed between Elder Schmidt and myself. Who would win? What would be the cost? Tonight he was pushing me toward explosion. What would Jesus do?

I struggled for the right words, explaining how I had not obligated the church for any money borrowed. I kept hoping someone on the board would speak up and defend me. Once or twice a member tried but could not get in more than a couple words before getting cut off by Elder Schmidt. One good soul protested that it was a pretty serious thing to level accusations at the pastor. But nothing stopped the onslaught.

For Elder Schmidt's benefit I explained in detail what I had done in securing bids and checking references, then protested: "This is not fair to the board. We processed this window business in two separate meetings before tonight. I think we should borrow the \$4,000, then ask the congregation to raise the money as we repay it quarterly."

"Greg, what do you think? Should we go ahead?" I addressed the "naysayer" on the board. He was not negative, just careful. If there was a defect in our thinking, Greg would spot it.

"Edith, what do you think?"

"Dr. Smith?"

"Kurt?"

"Mrs. Trares?"

She was the one I most worried about in polling the board. The widow of a much-beloved former pastor, highly respected and loved in her own right,

she was the treasurer of the church and a longtime friend of Elder Schmidt. Would she agree with my proposal? I worried about the consequences for her if she offended Elder Schmidt.

"Yes," she said, "I think we should go ahead."

The vote was unanimous. But it was also dangerous. What about Elder Schmidt's need to feel like a vital part of the church? He still had technical questions about the installation of the windows, which gave me opportunity to restore some of his authority. When I asked him if he would call the contractor in the morning, he agreed.

Well, by now it was late. Everyone was weary. I was drained, exhausted. The meeting had been two and a half hours of unrelieved conflict. Afterward, there was little of the usual banter. When Elder Schmidt had left, Mrs. Trares came over and held my arm. "Don't feel bad," she said soothingly. "He treated my husband that way too."

The next morning Elder Schmidt called to discuss his conversation with the contractor. The elder was polite, but his voice was strained. Last night's war was not forgotten. Did he think he had won or lost? Had I kept him with me or was the breach irreparable? Trying to bridge the gap between us, I asked if he could preach for me in the near future.

"No, I'm very busy these days."

"Well, would you be willing to have the pastoral prayer this Sabbath? I really appreciate your prayers. They really sound like pastoral prayers."

"Yes. I could do that."

An unusual prayer

That Sabbath Elder Schmidt invited everyone to kneel, then proceeded to pray as usual concerning typical blessings and petitions. Then his voice changed and he shifted gears: "Father, we need Your forgiveness. Sometimes we hurt people when we don't mean to. Forgive us, God, when we say what we should have better not said." His voice was thick. Unspoken pathos gripped the entire congregation. I worried whether he would be able to finish his faltering prayer. "Forgive . . . Thank Thee for Thy mercy. We need it so much. May Thy Spirit bring healing to

(Continued on page 28)

Vulnerability, accountability, and growth

W. Clarence Schilt

Weekly breakfasts with a fellow pastor fostered personal and professional progress.



W. Clarence Schilt is associate professor of relational studies on the faculty of religion at Loma Linda University in California. Formerly he was an associate pastor at the Loma Linda University church.

I was in trouble, and I knew it. Nobody else but my wife realized the extent of my perplexity. I appreciated her support but I needed a pastoral peer to confide in. With my situation becoming increasingly desperate, I contacted a friend who was pastoring about an hour's drive from me.

"I'm hurting a lot," I told him. "It's affecting my work and my personal life. I need to talk." He suggested we meet at a pancake house that was halfway between us to have breakfast and spend the morning together. I had no idea we were starting something that would become a permanent part of my life.

At that first meeting we just talked at a personal level about our work and private lives. I was relieved to discover he shared some of my anxieties, the common dilemmas of trying to fulfill responsibilities while maintaining some kind of balance in daily living.

We decided it would be helpful to share breakfast every week. While eating we would catch up on the stuff of our lives since we last visited, then push the dishes aside and address areas both of us had selected for growth.

Right from the start we agreed not to tell each other where we thought the other needed help. We would simply disclose our own areas of need and then discuss ideas for change. We also agreed to hold each other accountable by reporting progress.

Learning how to help

During the first months, we focused

on areas of behavior. My internal anxieties had trapped me in a cycle of procrastination and guilt. We decided to remedy this by instituting small changes in my work that might get me unstuck.

At the time I was supervising two pastoral interns and felt I was not doing it well. We enjoyed our association as colleagues, but I felt guilty about shortchanging the practical education they needed to be pastors on their own. My friend suggested that I outline a curriculum that emphasized specific functions of ministry. I felt overwhelmed with his suggestion and for several weeks failed to implement it.

My friend was the consummate workaholic. He confided his desire to change this and take a day off each week to be with his family. For several weeks he did little about his resolve.

Each time we met we reported to each other our lack of progress. After several weeks of this, we looked at each other and admitted: "This isn't working. What's wrong?"

It turned out we were both feeling guilty about having to admit to the other the lack of progress. We also were feeling uneasy about inquiring about each other's growth, for fear we might trigger resentment or resistance. Right then we resolved that this venture would not sabotage the bond of trust and safety we felt for each other. No matter what was happening, we would minister to each other spiritually and not fall into the success/failure trap. Because we had determined that

our relationship was not based upon our attainments, the pressure to perform was off. With renewed trust we were able to be fully vulnerable to each other.

This still left us with our lack of progress to deal with. We learned two things while unpacking this issue. Either we were fooling ourselves about wanting to grow in a given area, or we were attempting too much at one time. Usually it was the latter.

For example, I certainly wanted to develop that curriculum for my interns, but every time I approached the job it seemed overwhelming and I would run. My friend suggested that before our next meeting I simply list the topics I wanted to cover. That sounded reasonable enough, and I did it. At our next session I was happy to show it to him.

I'm a bit uneasy admitting that something so simple needed all that attention, encouragement, and accountability. All I can say is that all of us have our areas of brokenness; having a friend involved in the healing process is one of the most helpful and enriching experiences I have ever known.

With my list of topics in hand, my friend and I discussed which area to address first. We agreed that my next step was writing on it point by point. Each week I would show my work to my friend. If I got stuck at any stage, we would break the material down into even smaller pieces to keep the threat level low and successful productivity high. Eventually the job was done!

As for my friend's problem of overwork, we concluded that because it was hard for him to go from no time off to a whole day off, he might begin with smaller segments. Eventually he built that up into taking off a full day each week.

Together we discovered the importance of taking on very small changes, to which we would hold each other accountable. The accountability, however, was something we asked of rather than imposed on each other. Our priority was trust and safety within the relationship.

Finding a new helper

Within a year job changes separated us. I determined to find a new

spiritual helper, someone able to listen without passing judgment and who could also provide affirmation. I have learned that I grow best under positive feedback. I also wanted someone who would join me in focusing our lives upon Christ. During the brief year with my first spiritual helper we had worked more on professional progress than on our relationship with Christ. The growth that came was important, but I needed more emphasis on Bible study and prayer.

I turned to a man from whom I had taken a class in the seminary, one whose spirituality I trusted and admired. I approached with my request, specifically stating that I did not want an immediate answer. I asked him to pray with me and then share what guidance we were sensing from God. If we felt prompted to move ahead, I suggested a trial period of several months. A few days later he contacted me feeling positive about the spiritual partnership. It soon became obvious that we were well suited for each other; we have been meeting for more than 10 years.

In this new relationship I learned that the temperament of spiritual helper friendships varies a lot. While my first partner was task-oriented, the new one was almost the opposite—unstructured and spontaneous. I had a picture of what I thought our fellowship ought to be like and it was not turning out that way! We mostly focused on our fellowship in the lordship of Jesus. Had I not liked him so much I might have pulled out before discovering all that God wanted to offer me through him.

I believe one of the risks of Christian fellowship is putting one's friend in a place where only God should be. My second spiritual partner helped avoid this by focusing on Scripture and prayer—not in a mechanistic or simplistic manner, but as a formative experience. This has been so valuable in my journey with Jesus that I am hard pressed to find adequate words to express it. I find myself awed, humbled, grateful, and serene at levels unimaginable a few years ago.

I recommend the same experience to you. ■

Helps for spiritual helpers

Spiritual Friend, Tilden H. Edwards. New York: Ramsey/Paulist Press, 1980. An overview of the history of spiritual helpers full of practical suggestions. The author's insights are enriched by his expertise in psychotherapy and pastoral counseling.

Mentor and Friend, Timothy K. Jones. Batavia, Illinois: Lion Publishing Corporation, 1991. This little paperback is the best starter I have run across. It is practical and covers all the basics of the experience.

Restoring Your Spiritual Passion, Gordon MacDonald. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1986. This is not a book on spiritual helpers, but I recommend it for its sixth and seventh chapters, wherein the author discusses five kinds of people that affect one's spiritual passion.

Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity, Eugene H. Peterson. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. The third section of this book is on spiritual direction. While it is not comprehensive coverage, Peterson's thoughtful and creative style comes through.

Spiritual Direction: An Invitation to Abundant Life, Francis W. Vanderwall, S.J. New York: Ramsey/Paulist Press, 1981. A deeply spiritual book from the author's long experience of being a spiritual guide.

Surviving and thriving as a PK

Laurie Denski-Snyman

Life can be good for a “preacher’s kid.”



Laurie Denski-Snyman, a social worker in Lansing, Michigan, shares from her own experiences as a mother and pastor’s wife.

You’re lucky!” Kristen’s friend Amanda exclaimed. “You get to go so many places just because your dad is the pastor.” Our daughter at that moment was happy with her place in the parsonage, but there were times she didn’t think being a “preacher’s kid” (PK) was such a great thing.

During my college days, after I announced plans to marry a minister, my roommate responded with a warning. Being an unhappy PK, she felt duty-bound to prophesy grief for my future children. Bitterly she recounted her own trials: “My clothes were under constant scrutiny by church members. And once my father was scolded because I accidentally smiled at my brother during a serious sermon.” She went on to describe other examples of criticism from her father’s congregations, such as the time her school took a field trip to Disneyland. A fellow classmate’s mother smugly remarked: “I was surprised that the pastor’s own daughter went along to the amusement park.”

After I married and we entered the ministry, my roommate’s trepidations proved realistic. In our first church the senior pastor’s daughter confided that her peers ostracized her from conversations. “I suppose,” she surmised, “they fear I might tell my father about something and they would get into trouble.” Another

PK told me at a retreat that he was tired of pretending to members that everything was okay at home. “When my parents fight, or something bad happens, we go to church and have to act like nothing happened.” Actually, all families experience difficulties—whether a parent is a pastor, physician, salesperson or zookeeper—but the expectations placed upon pastors puts unusual demands upon their children.

How to cope? Instead of moving to a deserted island or shunning members who injure our child’s feelings, we can learn to manage problems appropriately. When handled well, these dilemmas can be opportunities for family discussions and education, all leading to growth and maturity.

Prioritizing parenthood

Although ministry is a calling from God, whenever children are born into the parsonage God also calls the pastoral parents to be mothers and fathers. The Bible offers no exceptions. One’s calling as a parent remains firm even in these hectic times with excessively busy lifestyles and church responsibilities. The situation is compounded by the fact that the majority of pastoral spouses must work outside the home, which heightens the need for God’s grace to maintain equilibrium in the family and care for the children’s emotional needs.

Safeguarding PKs

1. *Get real.* Don't relate to your children as a pastor or pastor's spouse. Be honest and vulnerable with them. Talk about your mistakes, things you have learned, and circumstances you wish could be different. Admit your weaknesses-but make sure you are doing it for their benefit and not for your own needs. Let your children know how God is helping you change for the better. For small children, tell stories about errors you made and what you learned. Teach your children that making a mistake is not as significant as learning from that mistake.

2. *Invest time.* Relationships with family come first in your dealings with people. Schedule time to spend with them, just as you do with church members. Try to share one or two meals on a daily basis. Don't let mundane tasks interrupt your meals. Answering machines are excellent for screening calls from "Come quickly, Pastor: my father was in an accident" to Mrs. Johnson calling for the sixth time that afternoon about a phone number she needs. My former roommate, mentioned earlier, knew her father was a good man, but she was resentful that all the church members came before family. Don't let your congregation's unrealistic expectations overwhelm family responsibilities.

3. *Pray for your family.* Ask God to protect your children from the snarling sheep in your flock and the fiery arrows of Satan. Any church has both supporters and opponents of the pastor. When people aim anger at the pastor or spouse in front of the children, they should be stopped and redirected. Pastor's children who listen to a constant barrage of criticism can become fearful, disillusioned, angry, and even permanently bitter. A disenchanted member stopped by our house, angry over a typographical error and threatening to sue the church. My child stopped playing and clung to me, fearful of the member's harsh tone. This opened my eyes to the effect that this uninvited guest was having on my child. Kindly but firmly I said, "Take this

issue up with my husband in the privacy of his office, not in front of my family." The member became more infuriated, but I stood my ground and opened the front door. My child's spiritual experience was at stake here. The member abruptly left. The experience joyfully resulted in a written apology, which I shared with my child. "People make mistakes, but apologizing shows how wise they are," I explained. Although not all stories have happy endings, it is of utmost importance to protect your children from people who are negative about the church. Educate your members about when, where, and how to air their grievances without threats and disrespect for others.

4. *Let your children be themselves.* At the end of a youth program a video ended with music that had a

rapid beat. In full view of the members, my 3-year-old daughter danced to the sounds. I scolded her firmly while people laughed at the silly situation. Had this been at home, I might have laughed myself. But looking back, I realize that I was reacting to the embarrassing question "What are my church members thinking?" Before publicly reprimanding my child, I try to ask myself: "Am I doing this to save face, or is she doing something needing to be stopped?" Rebuking children because of embarrassment communicates a double standard to children. Often this explains why PKs rebel.

Children do need discipline, whether they are pastor's kids or church members' children. As pastoral parents, however, we must fight the attitude that everything done and

Especially for teen Pks

If you have teenagers in the parsonage, please encourage them to read the following advice especially for them:

You can probably recall many wonderful experiences in being the pastor's son or daughter, but I'm sure there also were many times you wished you weren't a PK. Church members or even your friends can make life tough. Here are some ideas for dealing with unpleasant experiences:

1. *Forgive* church members who are unkind to your family or make demands on your parents' time. Rarely do they mean to hurt you. Come to terms with the bitterness you feel, or you will carry it long into your future. Rebellion may settle a score, but it doesn't bring happiness and peace of mind.

2. *Respectfully demand* the time you deserve from your parents. If you feel you need more opportunities to get with them, schedule an appointment to talk with them.

3. *Cultivate* your own relationship with Christ. Don't become desensitized by all the church meetings and religious discussions in your home.

4. *Be honest* about who you really are. You aren't trying to win the congregation's approval. Just please God. And remember that you don't need to be perfect to enjoy His love.

said is linked with the ministry. We are responsible to God, not to people.

5. *Be available.* Set times when your children can freely interrupt you. Take their phone calls; give them your beeper number. Don't allow others to rob you of the fulfillment of educating your children, listening to them, and watching them mature. Always remember: the "Lord's work" involves nurturing your children.

6. *Have regular family meetings.* Every week or month, get the family together to discuss appropriate ways of handling angry people, repetitive phone callers, busy church schedules, and school concerns. Prepare your child for upcoming crises you know about. If a member targets a PK for a complaint about the church or his/her parent, practice ways children might respond, such as "Perhaps you should talk to an adult about that, because I'm not a part of that problem" or "Do you think this is something a kid should listen to?"

Good communication doesn't mean telling all the negative things about the church and its members. It involves addressing issues that impact the family and also recounting positive developments. Discuss problems before they become storms, and talk about how to turn them into learning experiences.

7. *Nurture the pastoral marriage.* However much there is to do, spend time on a routine basis with your spouse. It will relieve anxiety and bolster morale in the family. Children feel more secure when parents communicate well between themselves and provide a role model of how they should run their own homes some day. Besides that, being too busy to nurture your marriage encourages the denial of problems until it is too late. Expensive outings are nice, but there are also thrifty methods of adding spice to any marriage: walks together, picnics, and romantic phone calls during the workday.

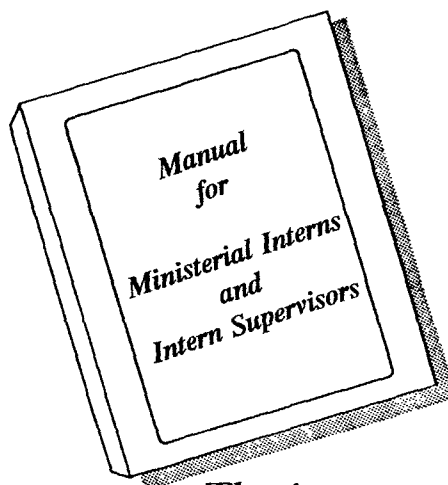
Fortifying PKs

Sometimes PKs really enjoy living in the limelight. One Christmas my child was deluged with gifts from members. Other times I've seen the

look of pride when a member introduces her to a visitor as "the pastor's daughter." Older ladies have greeted, hugged, and asked her about her week while inadvertently overlooking her friends nearby. But there is the opposite extreme—a member is angry at the pastor, and the family becomes a vulnerable target. With some foresight, we need to fortify our children for these inevitable experiences. Not by chance are pastoral families

healthy and strong. Nurturing takes time and effort, but the payoffs last a lifetime.

Ultimately, children make their own choices whether to follow God. Pastoral couples have an opportunity to guide them, with the help of Jesus, through the challenges of ministerial life. And with a solid family life and strong marriage comes increased strength to serve God in our churches. ■



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George R. Robie, D.Min., is the chaplain of Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Health care today is characterized by shorter hospitalization and more outpatient procedures. As a result, nurses and technicians have less time to complete their tasks. Patients feel this pressure to get the job done as quickly as possible, and many interpret it as an assault upon their dignity.

Pastoral visitors, by their actions and style of ministry, can help patients retain their dignity in an environment that is complex, hurried, mysterious, and often threatening. Here are some specific approaches that clergy and laypeople can use to make a patient's hospital stay more personable.

Respect privacy

As you approach the patient's room, keep in mind that you are entering his or her bedroom. More than likely there has been a steady stream of nurses, therapists, technicians, and doctors in and out. These are people whose job is invasive: they poke, prod, pry, listen for sounds, diagnose, and give medicine that seems to taste bad. As a pastoral caregiver you, on the other hand, are *not there to do something to the patient*. You are there to lift up values and considerations that often get lost in the rush of daily activities.

Knock and ask permission to enter the patient's room. This is important whether the door is open or closed. Staff may seem to enter and leave at will, but your act of knocking and asking permission to visit may help the patient recognize that he or she does have control over some matters at least. Knocking is a way of letting the patient know that you respect privacy and a person's rights. It also gives the patient

a moment to cover up or adjust the bedclothes.

Introduce yourself

Telling the patient who you are may be important even if you know the patient well. The reason is that being hospitalized in an unfamiliar environment can produce some disorientation. Also, the patient may be receiving medication that affects cognitive function for a short time, producing a reaction similar to coming out from under the effects of anesthesia. In addition, some illnesses like stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack) can impair memory or the processing of information. Furthermore, if you haven't seen the person for some time he or she may not recognize you. Introducing yourself also indicates that you are interested in taking the first step to establish a personal relationship with the patient during the time you will be visiting. Also remember to introduce yourself to relatives or friends who are present.

Visit eye-to-eye

Reduce the space between yourself and the patient. Walk over to the bed but don't sit on it. In some cases that may cause physical pain or be interpreted as a violation of personal space. Ask the patient if you may pull up a chair and sit down. This will let the patient know you are willing to invest some time and energy in the visit. Remember the situation in which the patient finds himself or herself. Health care workers have spent considerable time leaning over and looking down at the patient while he or she looks at the ceiling. Sitting down and visiting eye-to-eye is incarnational in the sense that

by doing so the pastoral visitor commits himself or herself to meaningful personal interest.

Define why you are there

Remember that the hospital patient, significant others, and hospital staff don't necessarily know why you are there. Every pastoral visitor arrives with an agenda in mind. Make sure to clarify for yourself why you are there and what you want to accomplish. Share that information with the patient. Then the goal is to help the patient discover and work on his or her agenda. As a pastoral caregiver, remember that the goal is to deal with the needs and concerns of the patient rather than to address one's own personal issues.

Sharing a ministry

Your visit is a ministry. In sharing that ministry, touch can become a precious experience. Touch is a means of confirming dignity and worth in the midst of illness. By using gentle touch you can affirm a person at a time when he or she may feel unacceptable. Touch is powerful when it is combined with prayer. Invite the patient and others present, including hospital staff, to join hands and form a prayer circle.

Prayer, of course, can become an escape mechanism. By this I mean you think to yourself, *I've said all there is to say. I don't know what to talk about any longer, so I might as well pray and get out of here.* Rather than using prayer as a tidy way of exiting, I suggest you use it as an interlude. Insert it in the middle of a visit. Pray when you feel a milestone has been reached or a roadblock encountered. Use spontaneous prayer to speak to the issues and concerns that you and the patient have just been discussing. Such an approach has the potential to propel the remainder of your visit in new and exciting directions. When praying during pastoral visits, remember that the patient has rights. Just because you represent the church, do not automatically assume the patient wants you to pray. Ask.

Leave your card

Just as there are times when certain patients will not recognize you, there will also be times when certain patients

will not remember you were there. So, bring something from your church with you. When the visit has ended leave a church bulletin, devotional, or audiotape of the worship service. You may also wish to leave your calling card. Whatever you leave, write your name on it along with the date and time of visit. Doing so is an important part of your ministry to the patient's family.

Every pastoral caregiver develops his or her own unique style of visitation. The approaches offered here are not meant to supplant your style. Instead, they are tools that can strengthen and enrich the work you already do. They need not be adopted *en masse*. Perhaps only one or two of them will speak to your situation. Take what you need, add some of your own approaches to the list, and pass it on to your friends. As the network grows, encourage others to do the same. In this way the ministry of hospital visitation will receive a continuous supply of fresh ideas and energy. So will the patients. Remember, hospital visitation is a precious responsibility. Those who are entrusted to our care deserve the best. ■

Letters

From page 2

accentuate external conduct to the neglect of the inner spiritual condition of the heart.—Ivan C. Blake, pastor, Urbandale SDA Church, Battle Creek, Michigan.

■ The issue is one of motivation. One Sabbath we invited a homeless man to lunch at our home after meeting him at church. He needed a bath, so we offered him our bathtub, and we washed and dried his clothes while he bathed. Unfortunately my wife had to use the laundromat at the Adventist college campus, and my wife got some dirty looks. But this was not a regular work; it was a special act of love.

If pastors preach merely for their

paychecks or to keep up their reputation, they are breaking the Sabbath. They are hirelings. But if they do their ministry out of love for God and His flock, they are fulfilling the law. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:12, NIV). Of course, pastors must not use their calling to abuse the Sabbath. They need to complete as much preparation (for sermons, teaching, training) as possible during the week so that the Sabbath is not cluttered with too much work.

Pastors do need to spend time with their families, but Sabbath is a special day when the entire flock is available to be ministered to, trained, and educated. Therefore pastors need to give themselves to their congregations on the Sabbath and use its hours wisely. Pastors' families have a special calling, and should plan days other than the Sabbath for family time. Hopefully pastoral families will cheerfully schedule things a little differently than nonpastoral families.—Greg Bratcher, Moscow, Russia.

"Soft touch" church discipline

I wonder if Jesus really did give the money changers at the Temple "soft touch" discipline (March 1994).

I also wonder if we really are supposed to skip every place Ellen White states that the "straight testimony" must be given—especially in these last days.

Christ was not severe all of the time, but when the occasion called for it, He was. As long as our Laodicean church keeps insisting she is rich and increased with goods and has no need of eye salve, I believe the straight testimony needs to be presented.—Mary Jane Eaklor, Penrose, Colorado.

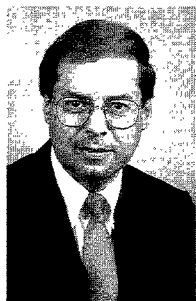
Wine and fermentation

In the January Letters column a letter referred to the book *Bible Wines, or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients*. The book is currently published by The Challenge Press, P.O. Box 5567, Little Rock, AR 72215.—Lester N. Hawkes, Redland Bay, Queensland, Australia.

Dynamics of spiritual leadership

James R. Newby

Passion, pain, and prayer are qualities needed in today's spiritual leaders.



James R. Newby, D.Min., is executive director of Yokefellow Institute and the D. Elton Trueblood Academy for Applied Christianity at the Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, Indiana. He is also the editor of Quaker Life.

We are experiencing in today's church not only a crisis of leadership in terms of numbers but a crisis of the spirit. The problem of too few leaders is apparent to all. Even more difficult to discern, yet a more serious problem than the numerical shortage, are the feelings of discouragement, low self-esteem, loss of passion and purpose in ministry, and the overall deep gloom in which many of our leaders find themselves. With a forced expression of contentment, and an encumbering sense of duty, we trudge though the "tyranny of the oughts" in our various roles as institutional leaders with no real experience of ministerial joy. How do we alleviate this spiritual hunger and thirst for joy?

When we consider this question and assess the qualities needed in the development of spiritual leadership for the future, three areas of need become clear.

1. The recovery of passion

There will be no renewal within the leadership of our churches until there is a recovery of passion in their ministry. Passion in one's life is a gift of God that can easily be lost somewhere between a meeting of the stewardship committee and an evening with the elders. And yet there are ways to keep the passion alive and vibrant, even in the midst of the most deadening forms of institutional religion.

One way in which we can recover passion in our ministry is to discover among our friends and acquaintances at least one person who can be a true spiritual friend and soul mate. This is a crying need of church leadership who

are called upon to be the spiritual elders in the faith community.

To take the risk and openly share a spiritual kinship with another person places one in a vulnerable position. And yet church leaders need to be in touch with spiritual friends who can help them stay in relationship with the passion that gives their ministry meaning. You need more than physical presence or humorous anecdotes. You need more than a lunch partner or a colleague who will never share more than amusing political or social commentary. What you need is a friendship that is without pretense, and a friendship that is without the fear of expressing deep emotion. It is a friendship centered in a spiritual union of souls wherein nothing is to be considered too personal, too sacred, too outrageous, or too emotionally disturbing to be shared together.

Discover a person or persons in your life who will know when something is not quite right, and that you need to talk. Discover a spiritual friend who will keep you anchored in your ministerial passion, and who will not let you become a mere cog in institutional religion. Discover that soul mate who can be open and honest with you in a way that is devoid of the pretense that tends to get in the way of the ministry you are called to do. Until passion in one's ministry can be recovered, there will continue to be a crisis of the spirit in leadership.

2. The sharing of inner pain

During an annual Yokefellow conference a few years ago, Mary Cosby

from the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., spoke about how we can prepare to enter into the presence of God. In making her point, she said that pain needs to be brought to speech, and that where there is no sharing of pain there can be no sense of community.

To illustrate, Mary told the story about a new pastor in the church where her mother was an elder. Just prior to his first Sunday, the pastor went to visit Mary's mother and asked her, "If you could say one thing to me before I enter the pulpit of that great church on Sunday morning, what would it be?" She responded, "Just remember this: Each person that you see in the congregation as you are speaking is sitting beside his or her own pool of tears."

Each of us sits beside our own pool of tears. Church leaders are not exempt from this basic human condition. Some pools are deeper than others, to be sure, but all of us have a pool of our own.

Only recently I have been able to share some of the pain in my own life. My pool of tears is certainly more shallow than many others', but it is still real for me. Recently I participated in the memorial service for a dear friend's father. As I spoke and shared my memories of a man who had been my next-door neighbor while I was growing up, my thoughts wandered to my own father's memorial service six years ago. My neighbor had died suddenly, like my father, and so I found myself sharing my own inner pain with my childhood friend, whose father went to bed alive and never awakened. We hugged, we cried, and we supported each other in our mutual loss.

The stoic leader who chooses to avoid his or her inner pain will never be able to reach into the hearts of a congregation that needs to verbalize its pain. The question each leader will have to ask is Am I willing to take the risk? The answer should be yes.

In his now classic volume *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen writes: "The minister is called to recognize the sufferings of his time in his own heart and make that recognition the standing point of his service. Whether he tries to enter into a dislocated world, relate to a convulsive generation, or speak to a dying man, his service will not be per-

ceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which he speaks."¹

The members and attenders within a local congregation are hungering for authentic leadership: leadership that will be open and honest about the struggles in their own faith journey; leadership that will express unapologetically the pain in their own life; leadership that will "tell it like it is" without the plastic coating of artificial respectability and the thin veneer of "what is proper." Spiritual leaders need to share their inner pain and acknowledge the fact that they are, indeed, wounded healers.

3. The renewal of a life of prayer

As spiritual leadership prepare to do ministry in a hurting world, they will need to recover the importance of prayer in their too busy and hectic lives.

When we study the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, it is important to note a pattern that can be helpful in our own ministry. The pattern is one of *encounter* with the world, and *withdrawal* from the world. Over and over again the Gospels depict His ministry as one of teaching, preaching, and healing, and one of prayer. We are helped in seeing this pattern in the following examples.

"And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35).²

"And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray" (Mark 6:46).

"But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:15, 16).

It is especially important for church leaders to note this last passage, for when Christ was needed most, He went to the wilderness to pray. He realized what many of us are still trying to understand, that His ministry could not be effective unless it was continuously fed by a life of prayer.

To recover *passion*. To express inner *pain*. To renew a life of *prayer*. These, I believe, are the three most important qualities of a spiritual leader. *Recovering, expressing, and renewing*

these three dimensions in our lives is not easy. There are no quick-fix techniques in the work of spiritual leadership development. No Dale Carnegie courses of the spirit. But there is the Spirit of the living Christ working within us, challenging our institutionalization, our indifference, our inability to share pain, and our loss of a meaningful prayer life. For the sake of our own spiritual lives and the lives within the congregations we serve, are we being attentive to this inner challenge? ■

¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. xvi.

² All Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

Battle at the board meeting

From page 19

the hearts we have hurt."

His voice returned to normal as he prayed about my sermon. My thoughts turned to a conversation I had earlier that week with the conference president, discussing how Elder Schmidt had chopped me into little pieces at the board meeting.

"You're not the only one," the president interjected. "He's really given it to me more than once. I don't know what makes him so unreasonable. He gets mad at everybody."

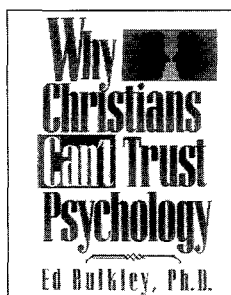
"You know," I responded, "he may be a rascal, but much of what he says is true. And I've learned a lot from him. I don't like his obnoxiousness, but I could not have accomplished half of what we've done this past year had it not been for him."

Beyond that, I felt touched with the way he nearly choked with tears in his prayer, begging for forgiveness. He hadn't mentioned Monday night's meeting, but the board members all knew what he was talking about. It takes a sincere person to apologize in public. ■

* All names in this article are pseudonyms.
+ "Elder" usually designates the leading lay office in a Seventh-day Adventist congregation. When used in front of a name, however (e.g., Elder Schmidt), the word designates an ordained pastor.

Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology

Ed Bulkley, *Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 1993, 368 pages, US\$9.99, paper. Reviewed by H. Newton Malony, senior professor of psychology, Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.*



Ed Bulkley, an evangelical pastor, warns Christians of the dangers in integrating biblical counseling with psychology. He attempts to show modern psychology as a nonscientific, atheistic alternative to the Christian faith that needs to be exposed as ineffective and inadequate. He does a good job.

Bulkley's work reflects wide research, mastery of the issues, and a penetrating critique of weaknesses in treating mental disorders.

Though interesting, the book's weaknesses outweigh its strengths. If evangelical Christians take Bulkley seriously, constructive dialogue between theology and the social/behavioral sciences will be set back to ground zero.

In reading the book, I felt I was reading once again Bobgan's diatribe, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way* written in 1979. I had hoped we had made progress during the intervening years. Just as many of us had convinced our secular colleagues that not all religious people are anti-science, along comes a book like Bulkley's!

His thesis has some warrant. I too have concluded that a significant component of psychology is grounded in a materialistic, agnostic ontology.* Christian counseling has at times bowed to the seductive conclusions of psychology. But to assume that *all* psychology is unmotivated by compassion, untrustworthy, and ineffective grossly overstates the facts.

Though the book is replete with quotations, the author uses biased choices of sources and a simplistic understanding of science. His blanket approval of natural science methods in treating emotional illness seems based on splitting the person into a body/spirit dichotomy that ignores the reality of the mind. Such dichotomizing confounds the trichotomous idea of humans as bodies, minds,

and spirits—a biblical view. Thus Bulkley adopts a position that contradicts his professed biblical foundation. What he proposes is another type of psychology.

Bulkley's contention that psychology is not a science misperceives the nature of science. We define science by its method. Psychology has adopted the scientific model, grounding its tenets on empirical observations. Like all sciences, psychology fails to avoid metaphysics. It makes assumptions about the nature of reality and bases its research on those assumptions. But so does natural science.

The author does not seem to realize that the concepts of psychology are terms of convenience whose reality can never be demonstrated beyond their use in diagnosis and treatment. To say these concepts have no value in helping troubled people ignores the immense complexity of human behavior.

The author fails to see that the tenets of the Bible are also a set of concepts whose reality cannot be demonstrated beyond their function. We may assert truth vigorously, but we should realize we are making faith statements, not reporting the news of the day. Faith statements may be profoundly necessary for life. But those who make them are called to reaffirm their faith in every generation. This must be done in interaction with the secular truth of each historical period.

I do not want to discount all of Bulkley's thesis. Psychology, of all the sciences, has been the least religious. We need to ask why rather than debate. Perhaps it is because religion and psychology compete for the same market—troubled people who need help.

Both religion and psychology study people. Therefore they tend to be more competitive and less affirming of each other. Bulkley reveals no appreciation of these interactive issues.

I admire the author's strong efforts to affirm the value of biblically grounded answers to human problems. Far too often pastors mimic faddist psychological answers with no such grounding.

However, I do not affirm Bulkley's method. I am a proponent of integration—an approach to science and reli-

gion of which he disapproves. I see possibilities in relating psychology and biblical teaching. First, psychology helps us understand how humans *do* behave; the Bible helps us understand how they *should* behave. Second, because the Bible reveals what God wants humans to be, the *should* penetrates the *does*. What is wrong in the life experience of those who come for counsel is always a combination of their human frailty (the *does*) and their failure to live up to the ideal (the *should*).

Occasions when we need to call people to the comfort and challenge of God's will do occur. Yet persons also need assistance in changing the confused ways they think and act. After dealing with the persons' human frailty, counselors can challenge them with the teachings of the Bible. Bulkley leaves no room for this type of situation. But many of the problems presented to counselors are of this type. To confuse the two is tantamount to confusing the role of a mechanic and a chauffeur.

In conclusion, while I disagree with the book's thesis, I find the volume so well written that I want my students to read and react to it.

Many Christians, like the author, feel the Bible details all the answers for every age, and view psychological training as a waste of time. Thankfully, the great majority of Christians do not agree, but many may be seduced by reading a book like *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*.

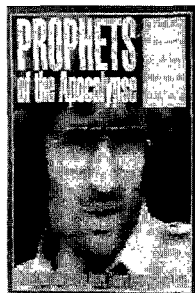
* *Integration Musings: Thoughts on Being a Christian Professional* (Pasadena, Calif.: Integration Press, 1986).

More on Waco

Events in the spring of 1993 at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, focused world attention on the dangers of cults. As expected, books and films emerged to capitalize on and explain the 51-day siege. The following two books seek to go further than sensationalism. The first attempts a sociohistorical analysis of cults; the second is a sociopsychological testimony of why people join cults. They are reviewed by Caleb Rosado, professor of sociology, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California.

Prophets of the Apocalypse: David Koresh and Other American Messiahs

Kenneth R. Samples, Robert J. Lyle, Erwin de Castro, and Richard Abanes, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1994, 300 pages, US\$9.99, paper.



Attractively packaged with illustrations, *Prophets of the Apocalypse* has reader appeal. The four authors wrote the book while affiliated with the Christian Research Institute International (CRI) in California. According to their newsletter, CRI, established by the late Walter Martin, serves as a "bastion for orthodoxy."

The authors show David Koresh as neither new nor unique, but fitting into America's fascination with messiahs and doomsday prophets. The book begins by focusing on Koresh's life and the events leading up to the final conflagration. The authors also discuss the Millerite movement and the early history of Seventh-day Adventists, the role of Ellen White, and how the Davidians under Victor Houteff broke from Adventism 60 years ago. The book retraces the roots of apocalyptic interest in America and distinguishes three types of American messiahs: prophet reformers, Eastern gurus, and New Age teachers. The authors then note five modern groups they feel have the potential for physical harm: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Children of God, the Church Universal and Triumphant, and the Christian Identity Movement. The book ends with three appendices: a chronological history of the Branch Davidians, partial transcripts of interviews with persons who knew Koresh, and a treatise on deprogramming and mind control.

The book has some strengths: comparing the Branch Davidians with other apocalyptic groups in American history, the biographical sketch of Koresh, and the interview section. Unfortunately the authors do not make use of the interviews to explain why people join such groups.

In spite of these strengths, the book's flaws devalue its contribution to the literature on doomsday cults. It reads somewhat disconnectedly, typical of books written by multiple authors. The material lacks footnotes to give sources for

the data. For example with no footnoting, the authors claim that Houteff attracted 10,000 followers and that more than 1,000 true believers came to Waco in 1959 to await Christ's return. According to George Reid of the Biblical Research Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland, who studies

such groups, these figures are inflated. He calls the 10,000 figure "fantasy." And according to eyewitnesses, no more than 500 came to Waco in 1959. The bibliography appears added on. Some leading authorities on sects and cults, such as Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, are not cited. The definition of a sect and a cult lacks precision. The book thus comes across as lightweight scholarship.

The authors conclude that since the death of Ellen White, Adventists look for another prophet. Adventist Church history and belief do not bear this out.

The authors state that Ellen White was responsible for leading Adventists to orthodoxy. But after noting that she wrote 46 books and more than 25 million words, they attempt to discredit her by focusing on a peripheral quote against "solitary vice" (masturbation). Connect this to the amount of space spent on Koresh's sexual deviance, even in the interviews, and the writers come across as having a hang-up on this topic.

When I examined carefully what the writers said about Mormons, I came away with a sense of another distorted analysis. Though parts of this material are informative and can serve as footnotes, the book fails as a serious text.

In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists Among the Victims?

Cari Hoyt Haus and Madlyn Lewis Hamblin, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1993, 224 pages, US\$9.95, Cdn\$13.45, paper.

In the Wake of Waco, written by two Michigan businesswomen who lost friends at Waco, reflects a personal view of the crisis.

The authors use a conceptual theme derived from Eric Hoffer's classic, *The*

True Believer. Haus and Hamblin describe the allurements of Koresh and the Davidians against the backdrop of Hoffer's analysis of fanatics and the psychology of mass movements. Reading more like a novel than a research treatise, *In the Wake of Waco* traces the life of Vernon Howell and his worldwide proselytizing efforts. It does not dwell on the grisly details of sexual deviance.

Haus and Hamblin do refer to Ellen White's writings to complement Hoffer's insightful statements.

The book moves from scene to scene, portraying the efforts of a person desperate for converts and influence. Interspersed are comments, personal testimonies, interviews, and interpretations of former Koresh followers.

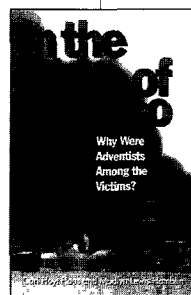
A strong chapter is "Those Magnetic Mass Movements." The book makes clear that deception remains an open possibility for most people, therefore we need to be careful to whom or what we give our loyalties.

The material could have benefited from sociological explanations of why people join cults, especially the concept of *attachments*. Attachments are the social bonds that give people security, dignity, and self-worth. Those who have strong social bonds can seldom be persuaded to leave their churches because of their investments and involvements. But this works both ways, by also preventing people from leaving cults.

The book's strength is also its weakness—the writing style. Reading smoothly from one section to the next, capturing the reader's attention and holding it throughout makes one wonder if the information is all fact. For example, is some descriptive material filler or fact?

This leads to a second weakness. The authors fail to explain, beyond a simple statement on the back cover, how they went about their research, interviews, and data collecting. Failure to discuss methodology raises again the question of filler versus fact.

In spite of these critiques, this book remains valuable to church and national history. David Koresh was the 1993 model of religious deviance. What will future models look like?



AIDS video

The new AIDS video *A Call to Compassion* is available for showing in churches. On behalf of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Dan Matthews of the *Lifestyle Magazine* telecast interviews a young man with AIDS and describes what the Adventist Church is doing to help. Available in English. The cost is US\$4 for shipping via library rate in the United States. Canadians, send US\$6. Sorry, but unavailable internationally. Write: ADRA AIDS Video, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600.

Computer-generated banners

Keeping in touch with homebound members is essential in pastoring. One way I've found to do this is sending a computer-generated banner to each of them on birthdays, and also at Christmas and Easter. Banners are created and placed on a table in the church fellowship hall for members to sign after the Sunday morning service of worship. Volunteers then deliver them to the homebound members. Months afterward I find these banners still being displayed.—Frank T. Shomo, South Charleston, West Virginia.

Office supply party

If your church office is anything like ours, all types of office supplies are needed, with little or no budget to purchase

them. So why not have an "office party"? A few weeks before the party date, post a sign-up sheet in the foyer for members to fill in. On that sheet, list items that your office needs, followed by blank lines for them to fill in their names. Encourage your people to "come to the party and help the church office in the process by bringing an item of your choosing." Example:

- Staples (3 boxes):
- Paper clips (5 boxes):
- Stamps (1 roll):
- Copy paper (2 reams):
- Stamps (1 roll):
- Ballpoint pens (2 boxes):
- 3-ring binders (5):
- Paper clips (3 boxes):

You will notice that I split up the two needed rolls of stamps; that way, not any one person is placed in a spot where they need to contribute a major amount to the cause. The fill-in sheet helps to avoid duplicate gifts. What church office can use 32 boxes of paper clips? You see the point.

Begin the party with a brief devotional on maintaining the house of God, and thank for their diligence those who brought an item. Then have some games for adults and kids, refreshments, background music, and anything else you can think of to make for a pleasant atmosphere. You don't want people to feel that their church can do nothing for them socially. This party not only fills a need for the office but also brings the church together for fellowship, something every church

needs even more than office supplies.—Gary Richard Manzella, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Belonging Day

Here's a plan I've found helpful for employing local elders in their shepherding role. All members and other regular worshipers have an elder assigned to their care, with the initials of an elder listed by each name on our church fellowship roll. Besides their continuing nurture, on one Sabbath a year the elders meet with their individual flocks during the worship hour. We call it Belonging Day. The various meetings with the elders, which take the place of the sermon, provide opportunity for inspiration, fellowship, and planning. Visitors that day meet with the pastor, who delivers a short devotional after which he or she asks for feedback regarding their perceptions of the church.

On Belonging Day, the names of the elders and the members of their groups are displayed on bulletin boards in the foyer. Also listed is the location in the church complex where each group will meet.

Our plan for using the talents of local elders has elevated their role in the

minds of our members; they see the elders as assistant pastors. Another benefit is that the body of Christ is being knit together in love and caring.—John M. Denne, Papatoetoe, New Zealand.

Sermon notebook

Often we might think of a sermon idea or illustration but not have a suitable place to write it down. What I've found useful is the four-by-eight-inch notebook that reporters use. These notebooks are reasonably priced and have more than 100 pages. They also serve as a deposit for creative ideas and can be labeled for future reference by the month and year.—Joseph B. Modica, Madison, New Jersey.

\$25 for your ideas

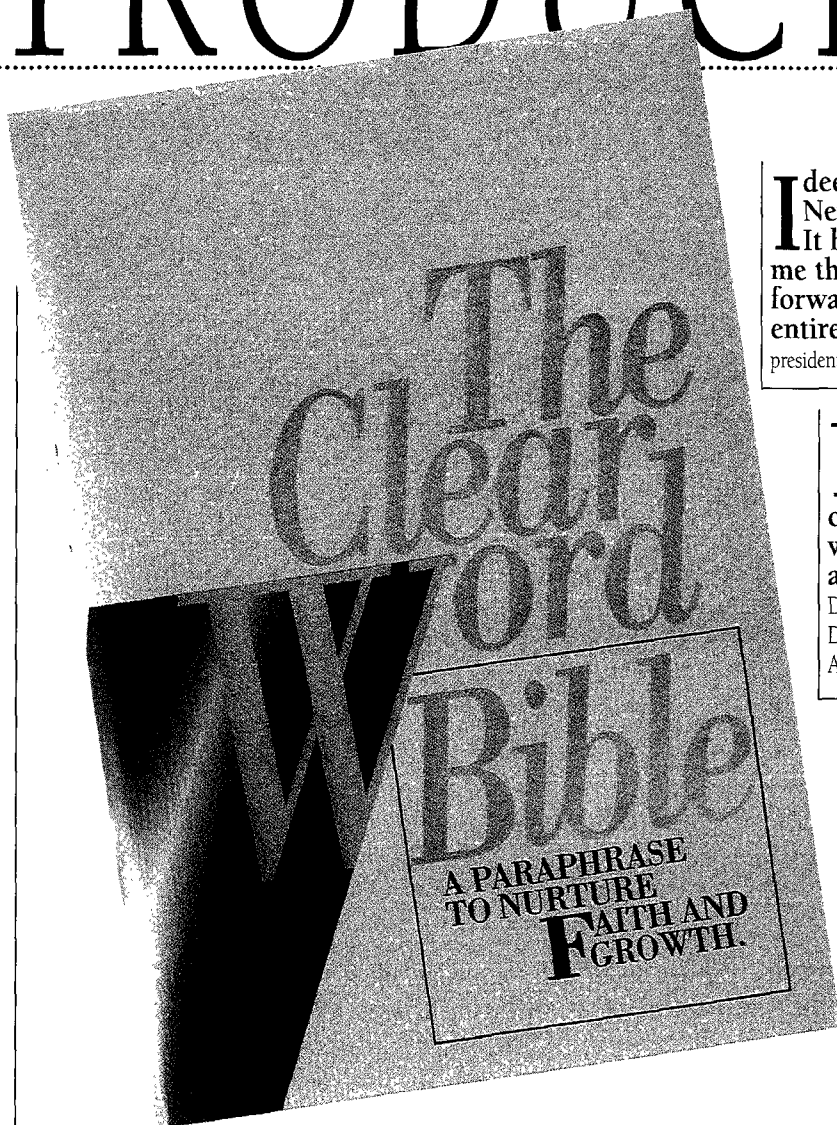
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