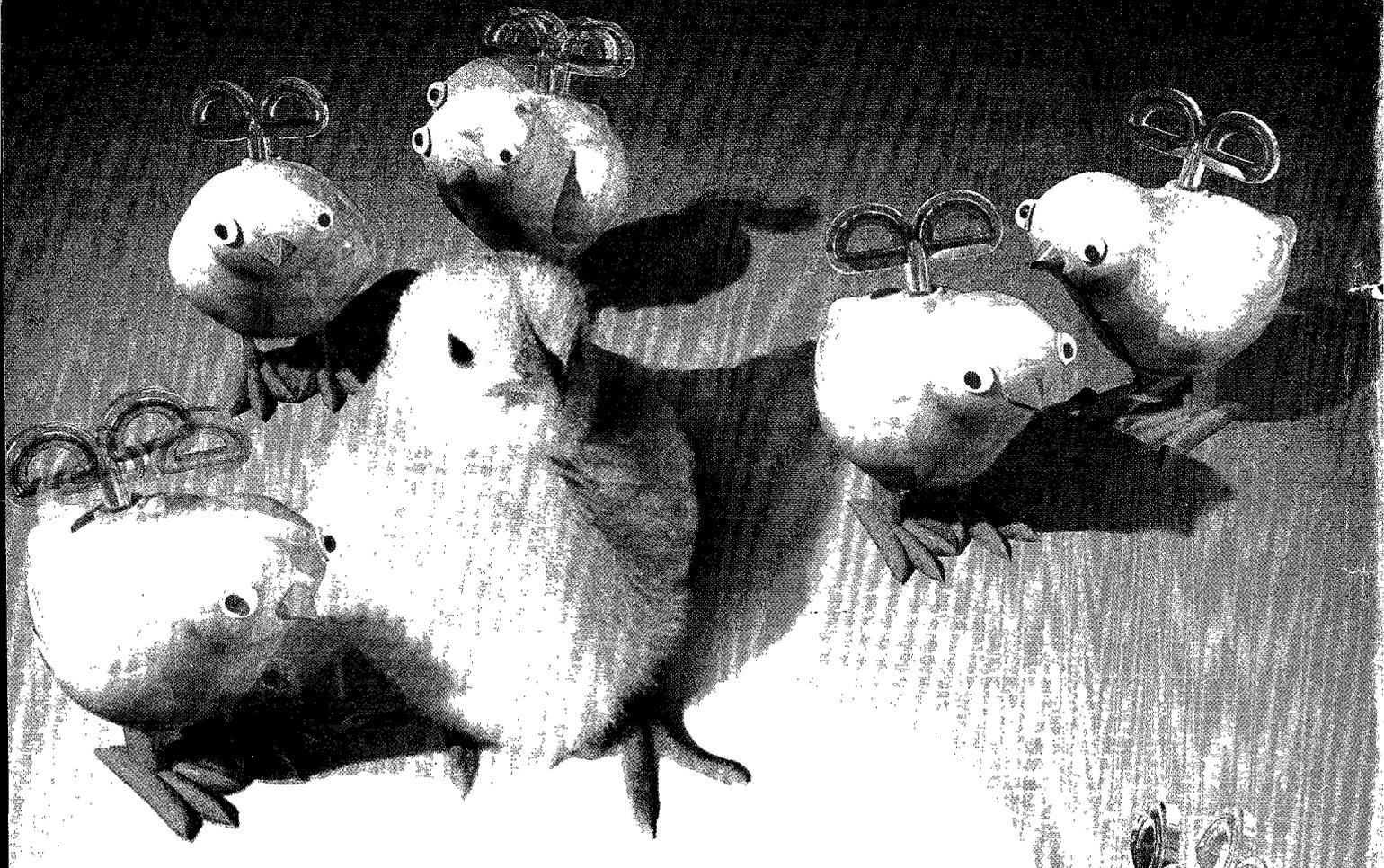


# Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

January 1996



## Authentic Spirituality

*Being Genuine in a  
Plastic Age*



## In appreciation

The November issue of *Ministry* is an excellent collection of information on abuse and how to deal with the subject as the church.

I would like to use the booklet "When the unthinkable happens. . ." This is a good resource to use in follow-up to parish teaching on physical, mental, and sexual abuse in families.

Again, I do appreciate the quality of articles in *Ministry* and the fact that you share this knowledge freely with other Christian bodies. Thank you.—Rev. Arthur D. Turnbull, Trail, British Columbia, Canada.

## Cracks in the evolutionary facade

Your article, "Cracks in the evolutionary facade," by John T. Baldwin (*Ministry*, volume 68, number 8, September 1995, p. 6-8) is very helpful in informing your readers of the flaws of Darwinism and similar philosophies and I applaud you for bringing to your readers' attention Phillip Johnson's very fine book, *Darwin on Trial*. To that and the other works cited in the end notes to the article I would like to suggest R. C. Sproul's *Not a Chance: The Myth of Chance in Modern Science and Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994; ISBN 0-8010-8386-0).

It may very well be that there is now "an opportunity flung wide open by the scholarly community itself to be informed by the latest science and religion research." However, we must be as honest and open about what the author of Genesis is really saying in his Creation Story as we expect the scientists to be in dealing with their evidence, and this we have not done. We must restudy the Creation Story with the open minds that we are demanding from scientists and we can profitably start with the word "Firmament," an anglicization of the Latin word *firma mentum*, found in the Latin translation of the Bible called the Vulgate, which means "a strengthening, a support, a prop." In this context it means "the sky fixed above the earth." This was translated from the Greek word, *otepewva*, found in the Greek translation of the Bible called the Septuagint (from which Jerome

translated Genesis), which means "a solid body." This word was translated from the Hebrew word [and] denotes a solid [extended surface as if beaten out]. This is only the beginning; there is much more to be discovered. When the study is completed it will be obvious that the Creation Story was written in terms of the cosmology of its time, and we must deal with that.—Rodney H. Mill, Deltona, Florida.

## A plea for balance and fairness

(November 1995)

I was deeply interested and appreciative of this special issue. It was timely, and it was filled with valuable material and an eloquent appeal.

(But I do have one very big reservation on the assertion regarding the checklist provided in the insert and restated by Cress on page 31 that children do not lie about such matters.)

There are two colossal errors in those sentiments. (And they can, and are, leading to legal liability, just as surely as the failure to take action.)

1. Where is the compassion for the falsely accused? Do we condemn the accused without a hearing? Do we automatically assume guilt of the accused? Do we ruin the life of the accused summarily? That is what is implied throughout the issue. As in the checklist: #7 says you believe the child, #8 says you report it to authorities. There is no place given for rational, caring, investigation of the accusation before someones reputation is destroyed! One would probably never be able to repair the damage done to his reputation if the accusation were made public without first carefully investigating the validity of the accusations. I must say that I am appalled at the cavalier attitude implied to the concerns of one who is accused. These extreme positions you have taken must, in the name of human decency, be retracted if you are going to appear fair and just. . . .

2. It seems impossible that anyone who has ever raised children can say that "they can't describe what they have not experienced!" Children create, out of whole

cloth, imaginary "playmates," and "pets" that are so real to them it baffles the mind! They can carry on in incredible detail about the unreal and the unexperienced. When questioned about misbehaving, they can create and innovate with lying stories that would do credit to a "con artist."

You no doubt protest that, "we are talking about the context of sexual abuse, and that is a different matter." Maybe so, maybe not. But you have totally ignored the most likely possibility, when a child falsely reports sexual abuse: That some children have a parent that is trying to destroy the other parent, as in a child custody battle, or as in angling for a larger alimony judgment, or simply to get a divorce. The parent coaches the child to accuse, and plants the seeds of imagination in the mind with suggestive questions. This also happens in the cases where counselors or social workers are suspicious and trying to build a case against some targeted person. How anyone can consider themselves qualified to write on the topic, and not know about and see that side of the issue is puzzling indeed!

I also have a minor concern about the inclusion of "whipping" (Alberta Mazat, page 5), which most equate with "spanking" as "cruelty and sexual abuse." That kind of broad inclusiveness robs you of credibility. If you include these kinds of things in your abuse stats, your whole position is undermined. . . .

The bottom line is this: There very much needs to be some balancing information given out in *Ministry*. Ministers can get in very deep legal and ethical problems if they take the information you gave as the last word.

There is a vast amount of material on the other side of this issue if one looks for it. I suggest beginning by contacting: *The False Memory Syndrome Foundation*, 3401 Market Street, Suite 130, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Phone: 215-387-1865 or fax: 215-387-1917.—Name and address withheld.

**Editorial Comments:** Contributing further to the cause of balance: The cau-

*Continued on page 29*

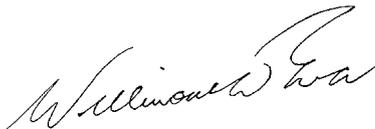
If you're receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead.

It is not difficult to see that the days have arrived for Christian ministers to take a much needed journey back to the basics. But what are the basics? Stripped down, that which is imperative for the Christian minister is indisputably the spiritual authenticity of his or her daily encounter with God and the potency which that gives to everyday ministry. That is the theme of this new year issue.

Morris Venden's article is the first of four theme articles this month challenging us to experience that which is indispensable in ministry. Philip Samaan calls us unequivocally to a life of prayer. Barry Black takes a practical approach to pastoral spirituality, inspiring us to take up the disciplines on which genuine spirituality is built. Caleb Rosado presents a unique view of spirituality that adds extraordinarily valuable dimensions to the personal inner life of the pastor.

This issue also inaugurates a high quality, twelve-part continuing education series, overseen by Rex Edwards, that will be presented in the pages of ministry month by month through 1996. The theme of the series is *counseling people in crisis*. Darold Bigger is the contributor this month taking up the question of the pastor's role in a crisis situation.

The remaining support articles, though not directly on the theme of the pastoral spirituality are nevertheless of great value. Please enjoy this issue.



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# The challenge of spiritual dissonance

Willmore D. Eva

Fifteen minutes into the lesson study I surrendered, without realizing it, to the haziness that settles over a class during a rather average presentation. I was sitting next to a young woman whom I have known for a number of years. Quite suddenly I felt a gentle nudge from her as she handed me her church bulletin. On it she had scrawled a remark expressing frustration with what was happening as the lesson progressed.

All my knowledge of this young woman tells me that she is a genuine Christian. She is not negative about her church or about life in general. So I was eager to ask her later what it was that had kindled her reactions. "I just could not relate to the teacher," she said. "He seemed superficial." Then she added, "What he talked about did not seem real to him, and so he did not come across as real to me. I did not feel he was being honest." As I listened to her I realized that for this young adult, a serious thing was happening. What should have been meaningful to her was coming across as close to meaningless. In church that morning, meaningful things seemed to become meaningless.

This kind of experience is not new to any of us. It was close to uppermost in my mind as I, until recently, wrestled with the demands of pastoring a challenging suburban church. A majority of us ministers are living uneasily with similar lackluster realities. However, talking with that young woman made me realize that I have come, without realizing it, to the point of seldom being willing to stare spiritual mediocrity squarely in the face. Even as I write this there is a prominent voice in me that says "Don't be so negative! Don't make simple, everyday problems look all that serious."

What was happening in that lesson study? What is happening within me? As I think about that teacher and as I reflect on my own feelings about myself and the church, one word surfaces to describe the essence of the challenge we face: "dissonance."

## What dissonance is

Within the setting of our faith commitment, dissonance describes the internal dispute within many of us between the dubious, fashionable values we tend to live by and the deep faith of our souls that cries out to regulate who we are and how we live our lives. As we all know, it is too easy for us to proclaim ideas or take positions that are not answerable to our inmost convictions. When we neglect those convictions, a significant internal discomfort is created, from which we have a strong need to find relief. In trying to find this relief, we tend to be governed more by the social, political, and pragmatic values about us, making us disloyal to the center of our true inner faith and conscience.

When making these convenient adjustments develops into a way of life, we become what has been described as "unselfed." That is, we become disconnected from what makes us who we really are in Christ. Learning to live satisfied with this disharmony impairs our credibility. It causes us to become glib and empty. The result is that our words and leadership influence tend unwittingly to make meaningless what is otherwise very meaningful.

Dissonance and its companion, spiritual mediocrity, take over whenever we proclaim and live by what is not from that true, inner faith, but rather from what we

know to be "doctrinaire" and most palatable to our audience. We experience dissonance along with the hollow ring in our life and proclamation when, almost unconsciously, we have simply been "mouthing off" rather than drawing things fresh from what I like to call the Original Voice. Dissonance and spiritual mediocrity occur when we have slipped into spiritual and ecclesiastical "auto pilot," and have been flying this way for some time. All this is especially serious when the most seminal things of Christ once were the seat of our most significant convictions, but no longer are, while we go on as if they still were alive and current in us.

## Meeting the challenge of dissonance

The antidote for the toxin of spiritual dissonance in myself is actually to find a fully renewed passion to be true in Christ to my deepest, most authentic convictions about Him and all He stands for. It is practicing with integrity the ministry He has called me to. That means finding exactly what my deepest convictions are and, by the grace and power of God, living by them and proclaiming only what proceeds from them.

All of this cries out to us to get back to the basics of Christian ministry, that is to the essentials of biblical Christianity. This means a deliberate turning away from the preoccupations of professional clericalism and ecclesiasticism. We simply must burn again with the quality of faith and hope that plummeted the early Christian and Adventist communities into a flourishing way of life.

I confess that all this is much more easily said than done, but it is nevertheless

*Continued on page 29*

# The pastor: searching for authentic ministry

Morris Venden

**A lifelong pastor presents five defining markers for authentic ministry.**



*Morris Venden is pastor of the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church, Grand Terrace, California.*

**B**efore we can understand what authentic ministry is, we need to deal with three major hurdles on the way to ministry.

■ *First, a sense of calling.* A student may decide to enroll in a college and major in theology. Years of experience reveal that almost anyone can decide to do that. Some of us, going off to college, had the impression that we were supposed to have some great light break across our consciousness, or bells go off in our heads, to convince us that we had indeed been called to ministry. Many of us became nervous because we hadn't experienced anything like that. The only call that some of us could point to was that we had seriously tried to consider a number of other vocations, and each of them had fallen through.

What, then, is a call to ministry? When the late H. M. S. Richards Sr., of the *Voice of Prophecy* radiobroadcast, was asked by students if they should become ministers, he said, "Not if you can get out of it." That was his way of saying that if you're called to ministry you won't be able to escape it.

One preacher of yesteryear said, "I became a minister of the gospel simply because I had to or be forever lost. I do not mean that I am saved by preaching the gospel. I am saved simply on the ground of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and that alone. But my becoming a Christian and accepting Him as my Savior turned upon my preaching the gospel. For several years I refused to come out as a Christian because I was unwilling to preach, and I felt that if I became a Christian I must preach. The night that I surrendered to

God I did not say, 'I will accept Christ' or 'I will give up my sins.' I said, 'I will preach.'" <sup>1</sup>

If you floundered around, considering and probing and trying everything, and there was still that persistent, quiet conviction that you must be a minister, it just may be that you were driven to that point of decision by Someone bigger than you or me.

■ *The second hurdle to becoming a minister is to receive a call into the ministry from the organized church.* Here again, time and experience have shown that all kinds of people have received calls into the ministry from the church. Perhaps almost anyone could negotiate this hurdle also.

■ *The third hurdle is God Himself, standing by us in a unique way, as our call becomes a recognized reality.* This hurdle presents itself when a person is ordained to the gospel ministry, set apart by the laying on of hands. This is a solemn moment.

I will never forget some of the words of the preacher at my ordination. One of the things he said was "It will be a great day for Seventh-day Adventists when people, upon hearing that name, instead of saying 'Oh, you're the people who keep Saturday for Sunday and don't eat pork,' rather say 'Oh, you're the people who lift up Jesus and have a close acquaintance with God.'" It will be a great day when that happens.

Having outlined the main hurdles on the way to ministry, we are now ready to look at five significant definers of authentic ministry.

**Authentic ministry: It's indispensable**  
Crucial to genuine gospel ministry

is the realization that ministers are not simply salespersons for the organization. We are ministers of Jesus Christ. Norval Pease has said it well: "It is easy for religion to become big business, with church leaders acting the part of administrators rather than spiritual guides; with the clergy degraded to the level of salesmen for the organization; and with the membership and the public serving as its customers. . . . The only remedy is constant emphasis on Christ and the great inspired truths of His gospel."<sup>2</sup>

Some of us have been disturbed by those who have the wrong idea of which way is up. The way up is not being behind a desk somewhere. The way up is where the people are. As H. M. S. Richards, Sr., prayed, "God save us from petering out into great executives." Today the church is preoccupied with organization. There are medical institutions, educational institutions, world expansion, church buildings, filling the pews, and evangelism. All these ventures are good, but we are always haunted with the possibility that Christ may be standing outside the doors of the buildings we have built and in the indistinct backgrounds of our organizational structures.

There are some of us who were converted after we became ministers. I'll always remember a godly older woman in my first church who regularly came through the church door after each service to thank me for my sermon. Then she would say, "It will be a wonderful day when you get to know Jesus." It is a painful and awesome experience to be on the receiving end of something like that! But it was the experience that I needed to help me understand the difference between being simply a supersalesperson for the organization and a genuine minister for Jesus Christ.

Knowing Jesus is something that can never be overemphasized. If there is in us a wistful desire, if we are looking longingly toward heaven, and have a response of love in our hearts toward the One who first loved

us, be it large or small, we must continue to follow that response and continue to let the Holy Spirit do His work (perhaps through our own church members) until we find ourselves kneeling at the foot of the cross. That is the highest place that we can reach—kneeling low at the foot of the cross.

### **Knowing the essentials**

The first thing to know, if I want to be sure I am a real minister of the gospel, is that I have found salvation. This means that I have experienced the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit and that I am converted. I must know by my own experience that Jesus always accepts anyone who comes to Him, regardless of who they are or what they have done or where they have been (John 6:37).

It is true that we may not be able to trace exactly the circumstances leading to our salvation in Christ, but we can know whether or not we have been converted. We can know if Jesus is the absolute focus and center of our life (1 John 5:11, 12). We can know if we have a deep interest in the Bible (1 Peter 2:2). We can know if we have a meaningful prayer life (John 17:3). We can know if a daily private life with God is top priority in our life (Luke 9:23). We can know if we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). We can know if we have a burning desire to share the good news (Mark 5:19). We can know if we love one another (1 John 4:7; John 13:35).

A second thing to know if we want to be sure we are real ministers of the gospel is that we are being saved. There is more to Christian life and ministry than coming to Christ. There is the matter of actually staying with Christ. "He who has the Son has life" (1 John 5:11, 12) and he that does not have a continuing relationship with the Son does not have life. Paul uses some strong language in Philippians 3 to tell us that knowing Christ on a continuing basis is everything. All the other things we think are of so much value are nothing but "rubbish" (Phil. 3:8, NIV).

The third thing to know if we want to be sure we are real ministers of the gospel is that we will go with Jesus when He comes. When we know this we will be anxious to communicate it to the world. 1 John 2:28 has lately become one of my favorite texts. Read it! Share it! Shout it from the housetops! The assurance of something more than a few short years on planet earth is fantastic news, and people need to hear it!

### **Keeping priorities in tact**

What about the daily life and work of a minister? Some of us have found it helpful to divide the day into four parts. From 6:00 to 10:00 in the morning, time for study and prayer and meditation. From 10:00 to 2:00, in the middle of the day, time for administrivia, writing letters, keeping the copy machine supplied, taking care of the paper clips, and sharpening pencils. From 2:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon, visitation and Bible studies, and from 6:00 to 10:00 in the evening, meetings and/or visitation and more Bible studies with people.

To all this, a minister may well be saying, "What kind of life is that? Sixteen hours a day?" Of course a minister takes time out of those four sections for eating, for family, and for exercise. Organizing the day keeps us from sharpening pencils all day instead of making that important hospital visit. I have also found that my church appreciates knowing that I spend the first part of my day letting my soul catch up with my body.

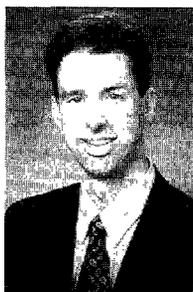
One other important thing is to be deeply grateful that we are in the work of ministry. If we are involved in this work of God, we are involved in the very thing that will drive us to our knees. And this is a great blessing. If anyone would really like to find out what the weekly Bible lesson is all about, they only need to commit themselves to teach it, and they will find out. If we really want to find out what our Bibles are about, we will commit ourselves to being gospel ministers, and then we will find out what is in



# Ghosts on the way to the pulpit

**Calvin J. Thomsen  
and  
Richard A. Blackmon**

## How to handle psychological and family ghosts that influence the choice to become a pastor



*Calvin Thomsen, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Vallejo Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Glendale, California.*



*Richard A. Blackmon, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist specializing in clergy and their families in Pasadena and Westlake Village, California.*

**T**he call to ministry, like the Incarnation, involves a mysterious mixture of word and flesh. While most pastors probably can't tell stories of being blinded by heavenly light or touched by live coals from God's throne room, they take comfort in the fact that they have something in common with Paul or Isaiah. Their decision to enter the ministry wasn't simply a pragmatic outcome of a vocational test. It was a response to God's call.

There is, however, a human element to the ministerial calling, a seldom-acknowledged collection of "ghosts" that can accompany the pastor into both study and pulpit. These are the ghosts of childhood family roles, of parental expectations, of unresolved family conflicts, and of emotional yearnings crying to be satisfied. These ghosts, clearly faced and rightly managed, can help humanize pastors, create compassion, and give an individual's ministry its own unique shape. But left to follow their natural dynamics, they can also cause torment, undermine effectiveness, demoralize, and even sabotage a ministerial career. They are often the silent specters behind pastoral burnout, chronic emotional pain and depression, and the sorts of flagrant self-destructive behavior that have toppled many pastors from their pulpits.

From the complementary perspectives of a psychologist and a practicing pastor, we have kept in close contact with issues that affect pastors. As we have listened to stories of countless pastors in pain, we have become increasingly aware of the ways in which hidden family forces from the past affect present ministry.

### **The paths to ministry: ghosts from the past**

Identified below are seven common "paths to the pulpit." These paths embody some of the psychological and family issues that influence the choice to become a pastor—a choice that, no matter its origin, God can transform for His service.

**1. The family hero.** *Don, a gifted, brilliant overachiever, was deeply stressed by his unsuccessful efforts to bring harmony into the fractious church he pastored. At one particularly painful point of conflict in the church, he became aware that he was reexperiencing the same emotions he'd felt as a child when his parents had fought. He had hoped that his attempts to reconcile his parents would hold the family together and take away the cloud of shame. After his parents divorced, he felt a deep sense of personal failure.*

Pastors who played the role of family hero or family messiah when they were growing up may have been overachievers who made their parents proud. They may have functioned in the role of family therapist, calming conflicts and unconsciously pulling people together. At some point they may have discovered that ministry was a way to make a career out of the messianic role they played in their families. Both the acclaim and the sense of pressure they experienced in their families carry over into their ministries.

For such family heroes, ministry can become a burden. Fickle congregations can withhold adoration, leaving the one-time hero with a sense of desolation. To rescue all the hurting people in a con-

gregation can be a crushing, impossible burden. Family heroes often tend to overfunction, assuming every possible burden in the church. They feel any lack of appreciation from their churches keenly and are especially prone to burn-out.

### 2. The dramatic conversion.

*Carl's youth involved fast cars, women, alcohol, and some recreational drugs. At 19 he accepted Christ. The change in his life was dramatic. He joined a local evangelical church, spent many hours reading the Bible, and became actively involved in witnessing. He quickly became convicted that God was calling him to ministry. He got his seminary training. His natural warmth, charisma, and down-to-earth style easily won over his first two congregations. But during his third pastorate, while in his late 30s, he realized that something was missing from his life. Much of what was demanded of him as a minister was burdensome and artificial.*

A dramatic conversion experience often prompts a decision to become a minister. But such pastors often run into trouble when the magic of the initial conversion experience wears off. They may spend years in pastoral ministry wrestling with a nagging sense of disequilibrium that at some point may provoke a crisis.

**3. The substitute family.** *Elaine was an associate pastor of a church that had a history of loving their pastors through thick and thin. She shared openly her abusive background and the deep feelings of abandonment that had been a part of her life since childhood. At first the members of her church went out of their way to make Elaine feel loved and included in the life of the church. But after a while she noticed that people were avoiding her. Her own needs were pushing them away.*

People whose families were emotionally desolate may select a pastoral career as a way of fulfilling their deep need to belong to a caring family. It may

work for a while, but something usually goes awry. When the church becomes the primary vehicle for experiencing a sense of family, most pastors ultimately do not find what they expected. Instead, they are confronted with an especially painful replication of their most painful feelings of abandonment.

**4. The spotlight stage.** *Joe entered the ministry after working as a gospel musician. He knew the spotlight well, since he had traveled from church to church as a child singer. Many of those who had listened to him sing in his youth had marveled at his wonderful voice, infectious stage presence, and sincere love for the Lord. They had often told him that he should be a minister.*

As a gospel musician and later as a church pastor, Joe was able to live out the childhood experience of being in the spotlight. He relished the enthusiastic response from the congregation. But whenever the positive emotional strokes were not forthcoming, he struggled with depression and often poured on charm to get affirmation.

Pastors who have grown up in the spotlight are often gifted performers and charismatic leaders. Many of them elicit a high level of allegiance from their congregations, and many are effective leaders. But some become excessively dependent upon congregational approval. Some tend to rely more on personal charm than good sense. Others become controlling, manipulative, and even seductive. This path can lead to a narcissistic, power-hungry style. Many of the casualties of pastoral sexual violations within the congregations come from pastors who fit this pattern.

**5. The perfect atonement.** *Michael had struggled with pornography ever since he was an adolescent. He tried in vain to control his desire for sexually explicit literature. He finally bargained with God, promising to become a pastor if God would give him victory over his problem. The bargain worked for several years, until he was forced to be apart from his wife for two months be-*



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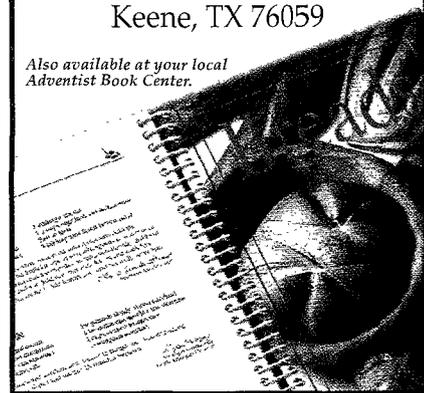
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cause of her mother's illness. Then he gave in to the temptation of pornography. The result was terrible depression and a sense of crisis about his call to ministry.

Sometimes a person enters ministry against the backdrop of painful personal struggles or even a family disgrace such as parental infidelity. Entering the ministry is perceived—sometimes unconsciously—as a way of

gaining God's favor and even His power over personal shame. Ministry may also be seen as offering both an individual and his or her family a chance to replace a person who brought disgrace with somebody who will shine brightly and make atonement before the watching world.

Pastors with this motivation for ministry may seal themselves off from their own weaknesses and become harsh and judgmental toward the sins of others. Some, as their own painful issues continue to fester, may struggle with anger and betrayal, feeling that God has not honored their bargain.

**6. The surrogate spouse.** *Daryl's father, like many men, was often aloof, uncommunicative, and utterly disinterested in religion or the arts. He seldom expressed feelings, and his detached style left his wife starving for affection. As Daryl grew, it became clear that he had many of the traits his father lacked. He was expressive, caring, artistic, and deeply spiritual. He became increasingly significant to his mother. In him she found the emotional fulfillment that she wanted so desperately from her husband. Daryl became a minister; the same qualities that had so appealed to his mother were valued by the congregation.*

Some male pastors can be described as "the kind of man Mom wished Dad had been." A similar pattern for women can be found in those who functioned as "the little mother" or as the confidant of their fathers. This adult role, thrust upon a child, can create an early sense of responsibility and a noticeable inclination to serve others. It can also lead these persons to embody traits often associated with the opposite sex—the sex of the parent who used them as an emotional surrogate spouse.

These persons may bring resources to the ministry that make them more effective than a gender-stereotyped individual. But they may also experience a sense of personal disequilibrium. Such pastors may struggle privately with a feeling of alienation from same-sex peers or from their own sexuality. Some

may have a deep desire simply to be "one of the guys" or "one of the girls." Others may search for a same-sex mentor, while still others may have an undercurrent of anger against members of the opposite sex that affects their relationships personally and in the congregation. Some struggles with sexual temptation may be related to this problem.

**7. The family mantle.** *Rob, whose extended family included several pastors, was christened by his mother as a minister the moment he was born. Nothing in his childhood or adolescence would have suggested that he had great ministry potential. But he dutifully completed his seminary training and went into ministry. He fulfilled his family destiny, even though in his heart he longed to be a golf instructor.*

When pastors are asked to draw a family tree, the presence of a designated "holy person," such as a pastor or priest, is often revealed in every generation for which information is available. Sometimes the "call" comes shortly after the death, retirement, or vocational failure of a spiritual leader of a previous generation. Other professions can be passed on from one generation to another, but with ministry it can be a special problem because of the spiritual aura attached to the pastoral mantle. What is presented as God's call may have more to do with family needs and expectations than with the desires and aptitudes of the individual. The mantle conferred on him or her may become a suffocating shroud that chokes out personal and professional vitality.

### Confronting the ghosts

Pastors who struggle with a crisis in their calling can often find emotional healing and a renewed sense of satisfaction and purpose by confronting "the ghosts from the past." The following steps can facilitate this healing process.

**1. Go home and meet your "ghosts."** Pastors who seek freedom

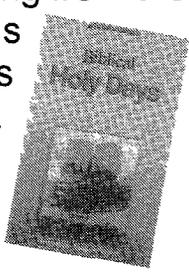
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from family ghosts must “go home again.” Going home, in this case, means reconnecting with the emotional energy of the family forces that have impacted the decision to become a pastor. It may mean visiting home, writing letters, or spending time with family photo albums and historical records. It may also involve mapping out the family tree, looking for patterns amid the seemingly random interaction of roles and personalities.

We ask pastors attempting this type of homecoming to study the major themes in the family drama. Families of all types are characterized by predictable patterns of emotional interaction that repeat themselves in subsequent generations. These patterns are remarkably resilient; even the infusion of new blood doesn't change them. The fights, roles, dramatic struggles, failures, and successes play themselves out anew. Religion in general and decisions to enter religious vocational service in particular often play key roles in family

dramas. The goal of this homecoming is to help pastors increase their level of self-awareness and become experts in recognizing their own ghosts.

**2. Practice a new role in your family.** The person who is stuck with a predictable role in the family is likely to be stuck in ministry as well. Pastors who can redefine themselves and gain more flexibility within the family that shaped them are likely to experience more freedom in ministry. One pastor was encouraged to go back to a family reunion and “have a problem of his own.” He ended up asking advice from surprised family members who were used to looking to him for help. He began to open up about some of his own struggles. He let other family members lead in family prayer and worship. He tried to spend time with various members of the family, but refused to step in and play the role of rescuer when a significant conflict developed between any of them. There were times he found

himself slipping into his old, familiar role, but he was able to recognize it when it happened. He returned to his parish feeling more relaxed, real, and at peace with God and with ministry.

**3. Develop an identity and personal life distinct from your congregation.** Ministry can become problematic because boundaries between the church, the pastor's family, and the pastor as an individual are often blurred. Pathway ghosts fester amid ambiguous boundaries. Many pastors find that their sense of personal identity is almost entirely bound up in their ministerial role.

The pastor who develops significant sources of satisfaction and identity that do not involve the church is, paradoxically, likely to enjoy ministry more and be more effective as well. A pastor who was stuck in the superstar role was greatly benefited by a support group of people who were not afraid to challenge his grandiosity.

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**4. Develop a "nonprofessional" spiritual life.** Because spiritual pursuits are rich fodder for professional performance, ministry can be hazardous to personal spirituality. It is hard to simply study the Bible without thinking about how a particular text might be developed in a sermon. Pastors learn how to preach, pray, and perform a variety of spiritual functions effectively even when they are feeling very dry spiritually. It can become very difficult to know where the professional role ends and one's personal experience with God begins. Such professionalized spirituality can ultimately erode both personal spirituality and professional functioning.

**5. Use the dynamics of congregational life as the catalyst for greater self-definition.** Congregations can replicate the most painful conflicts pastors experience in their families. They can also provide a setting in which the pastor can learn to be more self-defined and less reactive. The difficult people, the unrealistic expectations, and the intense emotional reactivity that often characterize congregational life can emotionally exhaust a pastor. Used as an oppor-

tunity for learning about how people work and for experimenting with new styles of response, they can provide pastors with a tailor-made setting for the very growth most needed to gain freedom from pathway ghosts.

**6. Develop practical, personally fulfilling reasons for being a pastor that are distinct from the original paths.** There are many reasons for enjoying ministry. Among them is a desire to work with people, a love of teaching, and a preference for flexible hours and fluid roles. Pastors who acknowledge these unspectacular reasons for enjoying ministry often feel a greater sense of spiritual peace and divine calling. Those who perpetually strive to infuse their ministry with drama fully commensurate with a dynamic conversion or with the glory of the kingdom may be more vulnerable to pastoral failure.

Some pastors who work through issues raised by their pathway ghosts decide that they can never make pastoring their own. They can then leave without a heavy cloud of guilt and failure. But the majority, in our observation, discover a new freedom and fulfillment in ministry as they unshackle the mys-

terious forces that have contaminated their sense of calling.

Both the "word" and the "flesh" of the pastoral calling can be the occasion for God's work. Rightly understood, these components can work together to equip individuals for effective service in sharing the good news of the kingdom. ■

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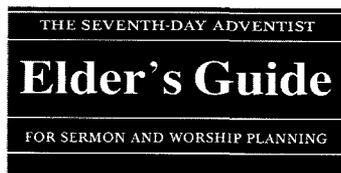
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# Making family a priority

Rich DuBose

## Tips for balancing pastoral work and family needs

As a pastor's kid (PK) you quickly learn that nearly everything revolves around the church. At least that was how I perceived matters when I was growing up. My father pastored a busy church. Our Sabbaths were phenomenal. With morning services, potluck dinners, afternoon meetings and activities, vespers, and recreation, there was never a dull moment.

My father spent many hours in committee meetings and other church-related activities that often kept him away from home in the evenings. Our phone rang frequently. Sometimes members just called to find out when vespers would be, or to get someone's phone number.

When it came time for vacation, the last place we'd go just before leaving town was the church. My father either had to drop something off at his office or pick up an item to be mailed. We would wait in the car in the parking lot, with Mom trying to entertain my three brothers and me. Ah, those were the days.

### Balancing family and work

Am I complaining? Not really. I used to tell my dad I'd never be a pastor because of all I had witnessed "behind the scenes." Ministering to people's lives can be extremely ful-

*Rich DuBose is an associate director of the Church Resource Center, Pacific Union Conference, and director of Plus Line. He wrote this article when he was pastoring the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church, Grand Terrace, California.*

filling. Now that I am a pastor, I've found that if family and work are kept in balance, positives can outweigh negatives.

While our church has always had a sacred regard for marriage and family, administrative attitudes seemed to convey the idea that a pastor's priorities should be (1) God, (2) church, and (3) family. This was true even when I entered the ministry in the mid-seventies. Through the years I've seen these priorities change so that they are now commonly accepted as being (1) God, (2) family, and (3) church. This shift has occurred out of necessity because the process of ministry has ravaged so many ministerial families.

I don't pretend to have all the answers, but having been raised a PK and having pastored for 15 years in various sized churches, I've picked up some bits and pieces of the puzzle called "family survival." It's hardly profound. However, you may discover that there's more to some of it than initially meets the eye.

### Family survival tips

To be an effective church leader:

1. Drink daily from the fountain of life.
2. Know that family is a precious garden to be cultivated.
3. Look for ways to be constructive and positive at home.
4. Know how to fly a kite and play ball.
5. Listen carefully to the constituents who eat at your table.

6. Do not spend more money than you make.
7. Know when to stay away from the church.
8. Include your spouse in your appointments as often as possible.
9. Know when to ignore the answering machine.
10. Take regular vacations with your family.
11. Delegate church responsibilities.
12. Carry your household responsibilities.
13. Know how to lead out in family worship, give back rubs, and tuck children into bed.
14. Be sensitive to others' feelings.
15. Admit and learn from your mistakes.

### The minister's first work

As leaders the most important work we'll perform for our churches will not be what we do on the platform, in committee meetings, or in the homes of our members. Our most significant contribution will be how we minister to the people who live in our homes, the ones we call family. It has been well said, "Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first. . . . Great good done for others cannot cancel the debt that he owes to God to care for his own children. There should exist in the minister's family a unity that will preach an effective sermon on practical godliness." ■

\* Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), pp. 204, 205.

# Measuring success in ministry

**Steve Willsey**

**After years of struggle, I found the way.**



*Steve Willsey is associate pastor of the Spencerville, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

**W**hen I decided to leave the position of senior pastor of one church to become associate pastor of another, my friends thought I was seriously jeopardizing my career. The decision was quite out of character for me; at least, it would have been a few years ago. My life and interests had changed, though; I now had a good idea of who I really was and how I could best use the gifts God has given me. The story of how ambition drove me to succeed might be a shock for members who want to believe their pastors are driven by much purer motives. I hope my story is unique.

From very early in life I set my goal on achieving success. For me that meant becoming a highly respected and well-paid leader. As a boy growing up, I remember dreaming of being elected president of the United States. When I graduated from the seminary, my goals changed to suit my profession, but I still intended to climb as far and as fast as I could in the church's hierarchy. In due time I expected I would pastor a large congregation and from that position be appointed to the conference staff, eventually to become conference president. I even secretly hoped to become General Conference president, to crown a distinguished career. I thought I knew some of the requirements: accumulation of a good baptism record, surpassing my yearly Ingathering and *Signs* goals, and general recognition as an innovative but loyal pastor.

## **Success and status**

A major step toward the accomplishment of the plan came one year after leaving the seminary. I accepted a call

to serve as secretary-treasurer of an overseas mission. After five years, while on furlough, I was elected mission president. I was pleased and began planning the innovations I would introduce to force growth and gain the respect I coveted.

My excitement was short-lived. The government of that newly independent, Marxist-leaning country was incensed that the Adventists would appoint a foreigner as leader of the church. Eventually I was forced to admit that my leadership there would not be in the best interests of the church. My new assignment was to pastor two churches. My wife says I was depressed for the first six months after that change.

When we took our permanent return to the United States, my pursuit of success began in earnest. I was only in my mid-30s, and there was plenty of time to earn the esteem of "the brethren" and achieve my goals. I had already established work habits that kept me away from home for long hours. Now I developed a full-blown case of workaholicism. Programs of all kinds were introduced in my church in order to make sure we had the highest records in the conference.

As I reflect on those years, I wonder how the congregation tolerated all that I forced on them. For the most part they accepted my leadership and embraced my plans. Maybe they also had delusions of grandeur. Or could it possibly be that they were motivated by a commitment to the gospel commission? I am indebted to all those members for their kind forbearance.

Our monthly ministers' meetings at the conference office were, for me, op-

portunities for being noticed. If the conference president gave me a pat on the back, I took that as a sign of acceptance. Being asked to have a part on the day's program, however insignificant, was registered as an edge on my equally aspiring colleagues. I coveted the position of the "fair-haired" young men who were regularly recognized for some outstanding achievement. When I was honored, I felt euphoric; if I were ignored, I left the meetings fighting depression.

After three years in my first stateside pastorate, I had not been elected to anything in the conference office, and began to wonder if something was wrong. A call came to pastor in a small Midwest conference. I telephoned a friend who had already made it into the office, and asked his advice. "It will be easier if you are in a smaller conference where there aren't as many competing for the positions," he said. It seemed a bit too risky, but because the counsel came from someone I admired, I accepted the call.

Since the new congregation was one of the larger churches in that small conference, its pastor automatically had a seat on the conference committee and the academy board. I found committee meetings stimulating. My gut feeling was that I was about to achieve what had been predestined for me. Imagine the fulfillment I felt when the conference president sat down with me during camp pitch one day and asked me to consider moving to headquarters as a departmental director. It didn't take long to be convinced I was needed.

Unfortunately for me, before the committee was asked to vote, the union president proposed to his local conference leaders that it was high time for some mergers to take place in order to use the available resources better. At dizzying speed our union merged with another, and several local conferences, including mine, merged as well. Now there were too many departmental directors for the available positions, and I was eliminated from any consideration; in fact, my conference president would soon need to move.

When a call came to leave that conference and become pastor of a higher visibility church on the East Coast, I needed little persuasion to accept. Early in my ministry in that church, however, a transformation began in my life that forced a reexamination of my priorities. Up until that time spiritual security for me was in good works.

In this there was no personal assurance, of course, and I had a rather negative image of God. The Spirit had been gradually wooing me away from "works righteousness." It was a sense of dissatisfaction He had planted that made me ready for God's message when He spoke, as if in a Damascus road experience. "Your good works will never be enough," I heard Him say. "Salvation is in what I did at Calvary, not in what you do."

#### **Assurance at last**

Assurance washed over my anxious spirit. I realized a satisfaction and peace that had evaded me for decades. Changes came fairly quickly in my understanding of God, the role of the church, and even ministry style. My ego-centered ambition was not completely checked, but looking back now, I can see that the Spirit had a complete reformation in mind.

Later, when I read about the importance of "being" rather than always "doing," I knew the Spirit had chosen that message for me. Seldom had I ever considered Bible study, meditation, and prayer as appropriate to be included in my daily pastoral schedule. Though I did begin the day with a period of Bible study and prayer, my devotional habit did not lend itself to any real opening to God. To lay aside my busy daily schedule for being with God did not occur to me to be productive work.

As my image of God changed, a desire developed to know Him better. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you" (John 15:4, NIV) became a commitment I intended to take seriously. Attempting to maintain the balance between being and doing was not easy, but I began to have less and less guilt when I gave attention to my own spiritual

journey, even during the most productive hours of the day. I also learned that one of my most important needs was to spend time regularly in intercessory prayer, which was difficult because of the activist I had always been.

#### **New discoveries**

Along with an attention to spiritual development, opportunities came for discoveries about myself that had been hidden before. At a conference-sponsored conflict management workshop I learned that my style was to search for ways to create harmony. Confrontation made me uneasy, which is why chairing church board meetings had always been a particularly burdensome task. After some introspection it occurred to me that I enjoyed the pastoral aspects of my ministry much more than the administrative functions. Visiting members in their homes, where I could offer encouragement and give spiritual guidance, brought great fulfillment.

If I were to be true to my self-discovery, I would have to give up the notion that success was measured by the amount of power and recognition I had achieved. Downward mobility did not make a great deal of sense in the world I had known, but my values were changing. I was still struggling to maintain a balance between being and doing. My work habits produced guilt if I were not constantly active, but I was beginning to develop a new rhythm that I intended to nurture with the hope that I would soon be at peace.

The idea of a change in position began to interest me. About that time I was working on a project for a degree. The project involved developing a model for a pastor to use in introducing the spiritual disciplines that enhance one's relationship with the Lord. I had thoroughly enjoyed the project and was wishing to use my model in a new kind of ministry. Perhaps I needed to look for a position as an associate pastor, in which I could specialize in those areas of ministry that best suited my gifts and temperament.

Expecting that a change to an asso-

*Continued on page 29*

# The pastor: maintaining spiritual fitness

**Barry C. Black**

**Five spiritual calisthenics to keep your pastoral life fit.**



*Barry C. Black, CHC, USN, has a Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Psychology, and is the Fleet Chaplain of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.*

**T**he sun beamed mercilessly. “Before you graduate from this place, you’ll run three miles in under 25 minutes,” barked a Marine Corps drill instructor. His words sounded like a death sentence to those of us who aspired to become chaplains—pastors in a military setting. During our civilian pastorates, most of us had led less active lives. But now at the Navy’s chaplain school, the rules were different. In this new milieu physical readiness was an absolute essential. Miraculously each of us survived the three-mile “freedom run” as we entered military service and ministry to God and country.

During the past 19 years my thoughts have often returned to the challenges that confronted me in my chaplain school training. I can still hear the staccato commands of my drill instructor. As a minister determined to maximize my ministry potential, my concern for spiritual fitness now takes precedence over my quest for physical excellence. Paul’s admonition, directed at a young pastor, seems most appropriate: “Keep yourself in training for a godly life. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future” (1 Tim. 4:7, 8).\*

Commenting on this passage, Warren Wiersbe observes: “When I see high school football squads and baseball teams going through their calisthenics under the hot summer sun, I am reminded that there are spiritual exercises that I ought to be doing (Heb. 5:14). Prayer, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, and submission to the will of others, witness—all of these can assist me, through

the Spirit, to become a more godly person.”<sup>1</sup>

My spirit resonates with Wiersbe’s sentiments. Combining physical and spiritual exercises has, in fact, strengthened my relationship with Jesus. For example, during my daily jog, I listen to Bible tapes. The experience is simply transforming: the Bible has come alive for me in a way I never expected. Spiritual calisthenics does make a difference.

## **Importance of spiritual fitness**

How important is spiritual fitness for clergy? Because of our ministerial calling, some assume we stay spiritually fit simply by doing our work. Yes, we are remunerated for studying the Bible, for participating in worship, for lifting our hearts in prayer, just like basketball players are remunerated for doing their jobs and for training to be fit.

The sad truth is that just because we do our work, we as pastors are not necessarily spiritually fit. Didn’t Jesus confront one of his disciples, who would soon preach on the day of Pentecost, and warn him of the danger of falling short of the standard of spiritual excellence? After Peter had declared his undying loyalty, our Lord challenged him with these words: “Simon, Simon! Listen! Satan has received permission to test all of you, to separate the good from the bad, as a farmer separates the wheat from the chaff. I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith will not fail. And when you turn back to me, you must strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31, 32).

## **Clergy—an enemy target**

Why should ministers be so con-

cerned about spiritual fitness? Shouldn't all Christians press toward the mark of the prize in Christ Jesus? While each believer should grow in grace, ministers need to be even more vigilant. The fall of a minister has more far-reaching consequences than that of a member. As a leader of the flock of God, a spiritually unfit shepherd can endanger the sheep.

Richard Baxter, the great Puritan preacher, believed ministers must be prepared for greater temptations than the average Christian. "Take heed to yourselves," he once wrote to ministers, "because the tempter will more ply you with his temptations than other men. If you will be the leader against the prince of darkness, he will spare you no further than God restraineth him. He beareth you the greatest malice to those that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, the Captain of our salvation, and doth more than all the world besides against his kingdom; so doth he hate the leaders

under him, more than the common soldier: he knows what a rout he may make among them, if the leaders fall before their eyes."<sup>2</sup>

### Spiritual disciplines

What spiritual disciplines can help produce spiritual fitness? Are there spiritual calisthenics to enable one to maintain a spiritual glow? Even as a variety of exercises bring positive results in physical fitness, so it is in spiritual fitness. Simplicity, confession, fasting, meditation, worship, celebration, prayer, silence, submission, and study can each contribute to spiritual fitness. While my focus will concentrate on only five of these disciplines, remember God's power can make any spiritual exercise valuable.

■ **Study.** Paul, old and awaiting martyrdom, wrote to Timothy to bring his books (2 Tim. 4:13). The great preacher, having written works that would last as long as history, still wanted books. He enjoyed direct communion with Jesus, yet he wanted books. He had preached

for three decades, but still wanted books. Paul was a student all his life.

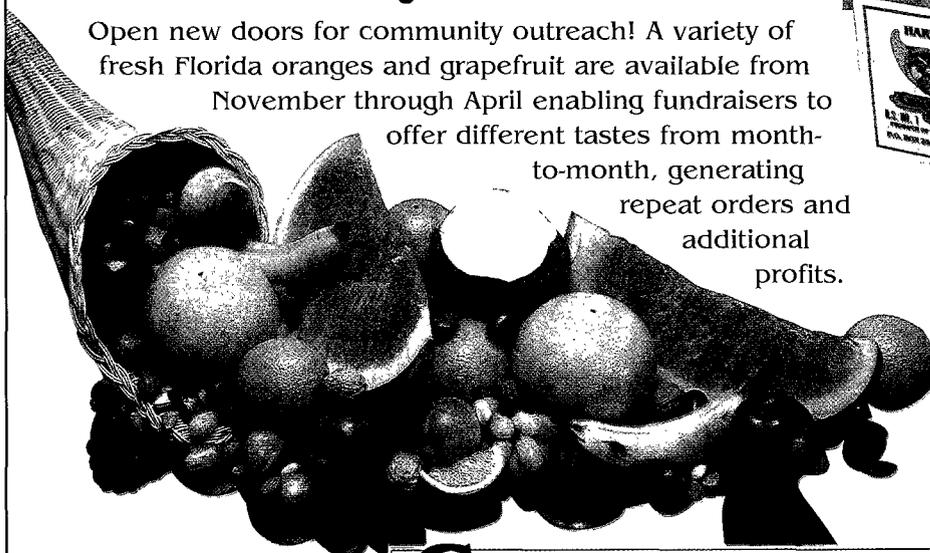
Study is an essential component of ministry. Preparing sermons, researching and writing, conducting spiritual development classes, helping a counselee—each of these ministerial activities usually involves some study.

The study that Paul intended to do went beyond sermon preparation or doing research to write an epistle. Paul studied to nourish his soul, to prevent spiritual malnutrition.

What should ministers study to maintain spiritual fitness? Obviously, we must study God's Word. I have often found it helpful to read through a book of the Bible, a portion each day. This practice nourishes me spiritually. We should also read spiritual classics by such writers as Augustine, Thomas a Kempis, Brother Lawrence, Blaise Pascal, George Fox, William Law, Ellen White, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Kelly, and C. S. Lewis. We should also study nonverbal books, such as nature and relationships.

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With our ears eager to hear the voice of God, we may find sermons in stones, and books in babbling brooks.

■ **Self-examination.** Once after listening to a powerful sermon, I asked the preacher for the secret of his power. He told me he had spent the night in prayer and soul-searching.

Do we really engage in substantive self-examination? This important spiritual discipline can mean the difference between a productive and unproductive life. Benjamin Franklin accomplished great things in his life through the use of self-examination. At the end of the day he would reflect to see how well he had mastered the virtues of silence, temperance, order, frugality, industry, sincerity, moderation, humility, cleanliness, and others.<sup>3</sup> Though he never reached his ideal, Franklin's life was immeasurably enriched.

■ **Prayer.** Most ministers know that prayer imparts life to the soul. When life's vicissitudes disconcert us, prayer provides a wonderful source of strength. Jesus frequently sought the strength-renewing reservoir of private prayer. If our chief pastor and exemplar depended so totally upon this wonderful exercise for His spiritual fitness, should we be any less dependent?

Charles Spurgeon assiduously applied himself to private prayer and believed other clerics should do the same. He wrote: "If there be any man under heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept 'Pray without ceasing,' surely it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and remarkable duties; he has to deal with God in awful relationships, and with men in mysterious interests; he therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength, and say 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.'"<sup>4</sup>

I have found it helpful to use scripture as a springboard for prayer.

Pouring a little water into an old pump primes it, and the pump begins to work. Likewise, the water of prayer begins to flow in my spirit when primed with the water of God's Word. I also seek to keep a prayer list. Although it's only a 3 x 5 card, it helps me keep a focus and avoid distractions during intercessory prayer. These simple strategies have enlivened my prayer life.

■ **Silence.** As a tool of spiritual fitness, silence provides a powerful force for growth. Ralph Heynen puts it this way: "God's usual way of working is in silence. The breaking of the day or

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## Submission entails embracing the revolutionary life of subordination taught by Jesus.

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the setting of the sun or the falling of the dew are not heard by the human ear. The character of a man is built like the temple of Solomon that rose in silence on Zion's hill."<sup>5</sup>

Silence can impart valuable spiritual strength. But we run from it. We can't drive without the distraction of the radio. We can't exercise without background music. Should we not realize and practice that there is a time for silence and a time to talk (see Eccl. 3:7).

■ **Submission.** Submission refers to self-denial without self-hatred; it entails embracing the revolutionary life of subordination taught by Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Submission means dying daily to self, taking up the cross of service, and following Jesus. "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, and being clothed with humility, possessing that love that is pure, peaceable, and easy to be entreated, full of gentleness and good fruits, is not an easy attainment.

Yet it is [our] privilege and [our] duty be a perfect overcomer here. The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness."<sup>7</sup>

It is not easy for ministers to practice submission. People place us on pedestals. We receive so much attention. Because of the high esteem we receive, we tend to forget the importance of servanthood, and instead like the disciples seek the chief seats in the kingdom.

According to Robert Greenleaf, author of *Servant Leadership*, submission and leadership are not antithetical.

"Servant and leader—can these two roles be fused in one real person, in all levels of status or calling? If so, can that person live and be productive in the real world of the present? My sense of the present leads me to say yes to both questions."<sup>8</sup> Ministers in full submission to the lordship of Christ will be servant leaders of His people.

Even with the spiritual calisthenics of study, self-examination, prayer, silence, and submission, the journey of maintaining spiritual fitness will always have hills and valleys. Like one of our preaching predecessors discovered, God can empower us to forget what is behind us and press toward the prize of Jesus Christ. ■

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\* All Scripture passages in this article are from Today's English Version.

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1989), vol. 2, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1983), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> George L. Rogers, Ed., *Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue* (Eden Prairie, Minn.: Acorn Pub., 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, (Lynchburg, Va.: Old Time Gospel Hour, 1985), p. 41.

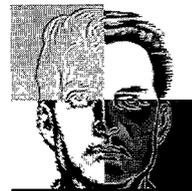
<sup>5</sup> Ralph Heynen, *Building Your Spiritual Strength* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Pub., Inc., 1978), pp. 96, 97.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association of SDA, 1995), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 7.

# The pastor as a crisis counselor



Counseling  
people in  
crisis

**Darold Bigger**

**How must a pastor understand and help in a crisis situation?**

**S**ummoned by the hospital emergency staff, I rushed to the hospital and found her absolutely devastated. Between sobs she told the story. With no warning, her husband had keeled over backward and passed out. She talked about how long they had been married, where their children now lived, and how they moved to this community recently. She and her husband had never talked about what they would do in case something happened to either of them. They had no pastor or church. Her only friend was a coworker at the factory.

The doctor walked in. "I'm sorry," he said. "We did everything we could."

*What's a pastor to do for an unbelieving 52-year-old woman plunged in the grief of death and loneliness?*

■ In less than three years their marriage had already turned sour. They discovered that courtship was one thing; marriage something else. They were both bright, articulate, competitive, and unwilling to cooperate with each other.

They could not even tell the story of why they'd come to the pastor without diving into a vitriolic attack on each other. Revenge flared and tempers flashed. Glares and seething words turned to shouts and accusations.

*What's a pastor to do for a couple in a crisis in relationship?*

■ A father with two of his earliten boys went out hunting. They sat down to rest. As one of the boys was laying down his gun, it went off accidentally and hit the father. The boys carried him to the pickup, where one cradled his bleeding head while the other peeked over the steering wheel, stretched for the pedals, and drove to the hospital.

Surgery was under way when the pastor arrived. He sat with the boys, helped them phone their mother hundreds of miles away, and then listened to their terrible story.

After the doctors broke the horrible news, the pastor took the boys to his home. The pastor's wife washed the father's blood off their clothes as they waited for their mother to arrive.

*What's a pastor to do for grieving children who feel guilty and angry, lost and lonely?*

*Darold Bigger, Ph.D., a successful pastor for many years, is associate professor of Religion and Social Work, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

Pastors frequently confront a variety of crises. Family violence, abuse and neglect, suicide threats or realities, medical emergencies, accidents, depression, financial stress, parent-child tensions, and other such crises clamor for their personal and professional attention.

How can pastors identify moments of crisis? Are there elements common to crisis situations? What special resources do pastors have to address crisis needs? What skills and Bible principles might be effectively applied to ease the pain of those who suffer?

## Moments of crisis

Some have described a crisis as an opportunity in disguise. While it may destabilize the present and make it look like a failure, it also presents opportunity for significant growth. The Chinese character for "crisis" is a combination of two characters—one meaning "danger," the other "opportunity." How startlingly accurate!

In spite of all the textbook definitions, each individual must define for themselves what a crisis is. We each have different limits and different sensibilities. For some, accidents are terribly traumatic, even when they are not personally involved. Others are able to distance themselves from the shock to function quite well under the "crisis" of an accident. Some cannot stand the tension of interpersonal conflict, while others seem naturally able to maintain their composure and facilitate the give-and-take of negotiating, compromising, and resolving conflict.

Our individual tolerances for stress and crisis vary over time. At one time we may be able to cope with change and loss with little long-term disorientation, while at another time or in different circumstances we may not be able to cope with the smallest trauma.

Because of such unique differences from person to person and from time to time we must accept the perception of those in crisis as valid and real in spite of how differently we may perceive it.

## Common elements in crises

Those in crisis, regardless of the cause, experience similar responses. The intensity of their response depends on the severity of the crisis and their own sensitivities and coping skills, but they will share to some degree most of the following.

■ *Disorientation.* Those experiencing a crisis will experience disorientation and lose touch with their present reality. People in accidents may wander aimlessly around the scene. Those grieving the death of a friend or relative may deny the reality of death. Some may forget what day or what time of day it is. Others may forget to eat or drink or take care of routine chores and responsibilities.

■ *Mental stress.* Crises affect our ability to think. Those making decisions while in crisis often fail to take all the facts into account. Quick solutions may seem more attractive than careful ones, even for those who are usually quite meticulous. Decisive persons may seem paralyzed, unable to make even the simplest choices.

Some may bury their true response to crisis and escape from the terrible reality by trying to be superlogical in their explanations.

■ *Emotional stress.* Emotional stress demonstrates itself in different ways. Some become very expressive, while others appear cool and aloof. Most go through the classical stages of the grief process and seek recovery.<sup>1</sup> Initially the shock and denial are most apparent and absorb the primary attention of supporters at the time of the crisis itself.

■ *Physical symptoms.* Physical symptoms can vary from person to person and situation to situation. Crying, wailing, yelling, withdrawn silence, frenetic physical activity, or weakness and fainting all express the inner turmoil and destabilization of a person in crisis.

## The needs of persons in crisis

Because of the cluster of mental, emotional, and physical reactions to crisis, most of those in crisis need someone outside themselves to rely on. They need to be able to turn to someone whom they can trust to take care of them and see them through their trauma. The following are some of their significant needs.

■ *Hope.* For those who believe, God is the ultimate refuge. In the midst of tragedy

they may have questions or doubts, but their experience and faith remain a strength. As God's representatives pastors are a living reminder of hope, mediators of spiritual confidence.

Even for unbelievers a pastor may be a symbol of that hope. While their past experience may provide no handholds to lift them from their plight, a pastor's confidence in God may become their vicarious exit from despair.

■ *Help.* Hope is humanity's greatest need, and God is best able to fill it. But those in crisis need help too, human help. A person in intense crisis needs company. Loss and fear are major responses to crisis, and most cope best when in the company of others. People they feel close to are best, but even supportive strangers are usually much better than no one.

While there may be some who respond to crisis by taking charge, most need someone else to make immediate decisions for them. Disorientation, blurring of the mind, emotional and physical distress all inhibit the ability to manage the moment. As one removed from the situation, you can be a sounding board to initiate and facilitate getting done what most needs to be done.

Recently a friend was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The

Some have  
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in disguise.

physician discussed with my friend all the treatment options and suggested a number of other specialists he might like to visit with before he made a decision. He had so many choices about which he knew so little! I asked, "Do you ever wish the physician had said 'Here is the situation, and here's what we need to do about it!'" "Yes," he said. "It would have been such a relief!"

This is not to say we usurp control. Self-control is important for those in crisis—the more we can do to restore control to them the better. But they may have forgotten some essentials or not be aware of what needs to be decided. For example, they may not have notified key relatives of a death or an insurance company of an accident. They may not know where they will spend the night or which hospital or funeral home they wish to use.

All of this does not mean we must know everything a crisis situation demands. But we do need to have the presence of mind to seek out the answers or make appropriate referrals. Seeking out resource persons or walking with a traumatized person to an interview or consultation is itself comforting. Done tactfully and personally, consultation and referral are reassuring and increase rather than undermine confidence in us.

■ *Touch.* Most traumatized people benefit from touch. It connects them with the real world, reminds them they are not alone, and is a symbol of concern and comfort. However, one needs to be careful and thoughtful that an expression such as touching is not misunderstood. Leave the doors open, stay in the company of others, do all the right things to avoid being misunderstood or entrapped.<sup>2</sup>

■ *Prompt, calm action.* Crises demand prompt, calm action. Promptness can prevent further injury as well as save the already wounded. Emergency highway personnel first flag other cars to prevent them from plowing into an existing wreck. Marital therapists promptly interrupt couples who begin verbally destroying one another. Prompt response to a request for non-emergency help, even if only to set an appointment in the near future, creates hope.

Helpers must remain calm. If they get upset too, those in crisis lose confidence in them.

Action is crucial. Initially many in severe crisis are paralyzed and unaware of the present. Knowing that others are busy taking care of the essential items comforts them. They rely on others and, for that period of time, become dependent. As they emerge from the initial shock, being busy themselves helps overcome the feeling of helplessness. Many want to be doing something, even though it may be meaningless or irrelevant. Activity is helpful.

## Skills and Bible principles

Behind and beyond the techniques and skills we learn as professionals lie several fundamental truths. To miss them, neglect them, or abuse them is to blur our identity and blunt our effectiveness as pastors.

If people in crisis needed only skilled professionals, caring friends, and loving family, then they would not need you. Our

pastoral presence proclaims that human warmth and skill are insufficient to meet deep human needs. When faced with the reality of human trauma, sympathetic friends and skilled professionals only cover up symptoms or provide temporary solutions. Lasting hope comes only from the eternal God (see Ps. 121:1, 2).

Might we not expect pastors to be champions of trust in helping those in crisis to surrender to God? We preach and teach the value of giving everything to God. How essential that message is for those in crisis! Human beings can waste a lifetime determined to change what they cannot control. A vital step in crisis recovery is to accept the crisis whether we like it or not. As that famous prayer says so well, we must ask God for the courage to change what we can, the serenity to accept what we cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Jesus the model crisis counselor

When Lazarus died, Jesus demonstrated the interaction of human tragedy, crisis counseling skills, and divine aid. When He arrived at Bethany, He greeted Martha with a promise: "Your brother will rise again" (John 11:23). Martha grieved intellectually. She was caught up with the reasons for and meaning of the event. Jesus met her doubts and confirmed her hope.

When Mary came to Jesus she was in emotional shambles. Jesus shared her emotions, and He wept (John 11:35).

Pastors need never apologize for sharing sympathetic tears. Every pastor may not cry visibly, but every pastor should cry inside, should weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn. Those sympathetic streams communicate more than thousands of words!

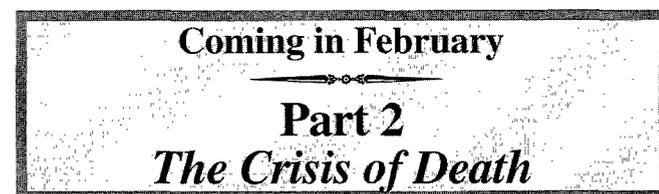
Jesus shared the trauma but didn't let it overcome Him. Behind His tears He never lost track of who He was or why He was there. If grief overwhelms us, we cannot provide professional help.

Jesus maintained a constant awareness of human needs and ministered to them. Drawing on the reservoir of His own faith, He became the source of people's hope and victory.

God created humans with intelligence and empathy. Discovered and developed psychological and relational skills allow us to work within the boundaries of His created world. God offers help beyond the natural and hope through His power and promises. People have a right to expect both skills and hope from us who minister in God's name. ■

<sup>1</sup> See Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1970).

<sup>2</sup> See Peter Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1989); also Karen Lebacqz and Ronald D. Barton, *Sex in the Parish* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).



## Part 1: The pastor as a crisis counselor

### CONTINUING EDUCATION EXERCISE

**1. Spend an hour** in the waiting room of a hospital emergency room. Observe the physical and emotional reactions of patients, friends, family, and staff to a variety of situations. What similarities and differences do you see? What personal responses does observing them stir in you? What staff responses seemed most helpful? Least helpful?

**2. Remember a time of crisis** (or stress or tension) in your own life. What professional person was most supportive at that time? What did they do or say that helped? What family member or friend was most helpful and why? Could the professional person have done/been what the family member or friend has done/been? Why or why not?

**3. Remember a crisis** in which you were a pastoral helper. Outline what you saw as strengths in your response. Are there things you did or said that you'd do differently if you could?

**4. Read the book of Job** (or a section of it) from a crisis intervention point of view. Analyze each speaker's behavior and speeches. On what assumptions are they based? How do they address Job's need for comfort? Which were most effective and why? Write your own scenario of what an ideal comforter might have done and said.

### Suggested reading

1. Donna C. Aguilera, *Crisis Intervention: Theory and Methodology* (7th ed. St. Louis: Mosby-Year Book, Inc., 1994).

A longtime standard in the field of crisis intervention, this version is an update from the previous one in 1990. If you're going to read one book in this field (in addition to the text for this series, of course!) Many say this would be their first choice.

2. Robert L. Barker, *The Resource Book: Directory of Organizations, Associations, Self-Help Groups, and Hotlines for Mental Health and Human Services Professionals and Their Clients* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press, 1986).

Somewhat dated now, but still a useful reference tool for referral and support resources.

3. Frank M. Datilio and Arthur Freeman, ed., *Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies in Crisis Intervention* (Robbinsdale, Minn.: Guildford Press, 1994).

Combines crisis intervention with the specific, goal-oriented, measurable approach of cognitive-behavioural therapy so prevalent in counseling today.

4. Debra Linesch, ed., *Art Therapy With Families in Crisis: Overcoming Resistance Through Nonverbal Expression* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Pub., 1993).

An innovative blend of family systems approaches and crisis intervention, this book advocates using art (a right brain activity) to overcome the rational (left brain activity) resistance to dealing with crises. Specific chapters on alcoholic families, sexual abuse, and political refugees.



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# The pastor: quest for spirituality

**Caleb Rosado**

## The recovery of the divine in human experience



*Caleb Rosado, Ph.D. is professor of sociology at Humboldt State University.*

**T**he closer we get to the year 2000, the more apparent will be the paradox of religion: even as organized religion is losing its appeal to a growing segment of the educated populace, there is a general increasing interest in spirituality. Because many perceive organized religion to be more focused on ritual and trivia than on spirituality, they seem to be searching for spirituality elsewhere—outside “brand name” churches.

This demands a reordering of priorities to emphasize the spiritual and to make faith relevant. Faith must speak to the current and future concerns of our time. Such concerns include: environment, poverty, diversity, racial/ethnic conflict, respect for the other, and a purposeful existence.

Among the problems the twenty-first century will pose for people, a major one will be a result of the information highway and the technological reconstruction of all aspects of life. Wherever people go they will be interconnected with others through computer technology. At some point people are going to want to be alone, away from it all, with all systems turned off. They would need silence and quiet zones where people can separate themselves from the wired life of technology and experience peace, sanity, and rest from “technoise.” Such a need raises a crucial issue on the quality of our well-being in the twenty-first century. Will the information highway have a “rest area”? The answer is yes. In spirituality. But this quest for tranquillity gives rise to another issue: that of the general sense of alienation that is so much a part of twentieth-century life.

### **Human alienation and the quest for spirituality**

The reality of human alienation and

estrangement from all life forms is a most evident social fact in our day. This reality is not a sudden phenomenon, but one that has been gradually growing throughout human history. Albert Bergensen, in an important article, “Eco-Alienation,” published in a special issue of the *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* (vol. 21, No.1, [1995]) suggests that humankind has gone through “three stages of alienation”—alienation from the divine, alienation from the human, and alienation from nature.

The original, and the fundamental alienation is from God and emerges in a primal or “Edenic” beginning as a break with the divine, an estrangement from the sacred world. This manner of describing the human experience as estranged and separated from God pervaded human understanding until the fifteenth century with the rise of the Renaissance. Up until this time period theology was the queen of the sciences, and humankind’s world view had a predominant religious framework.

From the sixteenth century to the twentieth the focus shifted from God as the center of the cosmos to humanity as the locus of the center of meaning. Alienation took on another form as separation from ourselves, our work, our fellow human beings. This was also a period of extreme forms of inhumanity. Fueled by an insatiable greed and an excessive quest for materialism, this period saw the rise of European expansionism, the imposition of slavery, genocidal acts on indigenous populations, and the reordering of the world into the haves and the have-nots. But such thirst for self-aggrandizement at the core of a secular humanism already had within it the destructive seeds of the third alienation—separation from nature, or ecological alienation.

From the twentieth century on, the forces of human greed have marched steadily forward in an endless wave of environmental destruction, with little thought for the future of our planetary home. The result is that in the latter part of the twentieth century a new awareness of estrangement has emerged, alienation from the natural world and from our "ecological" selves—the human interconnectedness and interdependence with all earthly life forms.

The cumulative result of these three forms of alienation has been spiritual disintegration. Along with the disintegration has come a disconnected, fragmented social self without a sense of meaning and purpose to life, destitute of a connection to God, to ourselves, to other humans, and to nature.

There is a natural flow to all these forms of alienation: first separation from God, then separation from ourselves and from one another, and finally separation from our natural environment and all the life-forms to which we are related and indebted.

What human beings are now beginning to discover, acknowledge, and experience is that we are not merely religious, or human, or ecological beings, but *spiritual* beings. We are at odds with the divine, with each other, and with nature, because our human spirit has lost its moorings from God, the origin of our need for interconnectedness. The result of this loss is a progressive alienation from everything else. All three forms of alienation are in their essence a spiritual estrangement—a separation of the human spirit from the Spirit of God and from nature. When such a separation takes place it is easy to see how human thinking has evolved—from God as the creator of life, to humans as the creator of God, to all life-forms being God.

#### Our table of life

In order to understand this spiritual estrangement we need to recognize that there are four dimensions or entities to human well-being: the physical, the social, the mental/emotional, the spiritual. Any semblance of a healthy human life needs these four dimensions in an operative condition. By this I don't necessarily mean they should be perfectly sound (for who of us is perfect in any one of these

dimensions?), but at least functional. The physical is the area of the body; the social deals with our relations to others; the mental/emotional is concerned with the mind and attitudes; and the spiritual focuses on meaning and purpose.

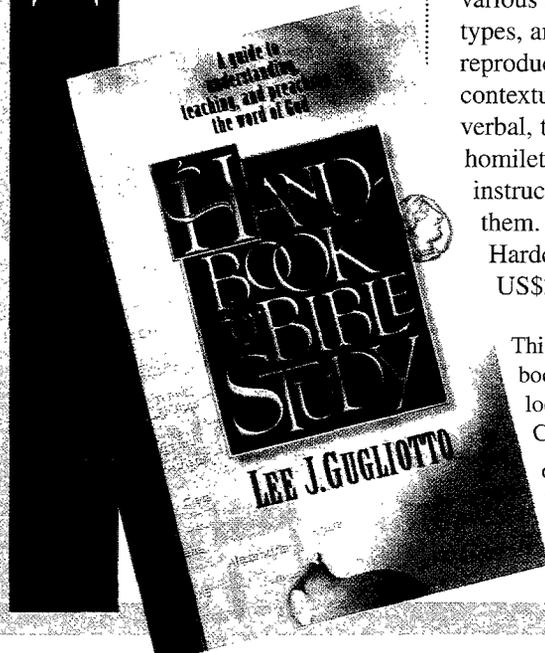
The interrelationship of these four dimensions can best be illustrated with a table. Our "Table of Life" is in balance when all four legs or dimensions are developed in a harmonious or proportionate manner. When there is a balance to the table, when all four legs are squarely on the ground, it can withstand a great deal of pressure as weight is put on it. A table can appear to be balanced, however, even if one leg is short. But the resulting imbalance is not easily detected until pressure is put on the table. We only see the imbalance when whatever is on it, spills. Some people look reliable and dependable, but when pressure is placed on them, they prove to be untrustworthy, and cannot be counted on. For most people the one leg that is usually short or the one dimension that receives minimal attention is the spiritual.

A table can also be unbalanced if a leg is too long. This type of unbalance is more easily detected, since it tends to stand out. We tend to have special names when there is an unbalance in each of the dimensions at the expense of the others. People with too long a physical leg are often called "jocks" or "babes." If the social is too long, they are called "party animals," "socialites." If it is the mental leg, they are called "geeks," or "nerds." And if the spiritual leg is the longer one, they are called "religious fanatics."

While all four dimensions are important for a balanced life, the most important of the four is the spiritual dimension. This is the one that gives meaning and purpose to the other dimensions. If one of the other dimensions undergoes transformation or sudden change, the spiritual anchor leg provides a sense of well-being, purpose, and significance.

The concern today with the recovery of the spiritual as the fourth dimension of life is an effort—jaded as it may be in its many and diverse expressions—to recon-

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nect us once again with God, alienation from whom results in all the other forms of alienation. What we are calling for today is a wholistic form of spirituality that not only seeks to connect humans once again to God but also to other humans and to the natural/ecological world, our environmental home, of which we are all responsible stewards. The result is a coming full circle.

How did concern for this kind of spirituality emerge?

### **The rise of spirituality**

Following the restructuring of world society after World War II, humanistic science took center stage as the great savior of humankind. After all, it was the deployment of the best of scientific research that produced the atom bomb and brought an end to the war. With the launching of *Sputnik* and the race toward the moon, science was seen as the solution to human problems. Interest in religion appeared to wane. In the 1960s, with the rise of secularism as a way of life devoid of God, sociologists began to predict the demise of religion as a soon-to-be-forgotten footnote of history. Liberal theologians and secular humanists proclaimed the "death of God."

Throughout the seventies and eighties Americans rushed toward materialism and greed, including the continued destruction of the environment. Voices of concern from various parts of the world, however, were already raising a cry of warning above the din of materialism and scientism coming from the money changers in the temple of capitalism. These voices began calling people back from a mechanical, fragmented, isolationist, dehumanized view of the world, to a world view permeated much more with human and environmental concerns.

The late 1980s and early 1990s has seen a turn toward spirituality. The global concern for human connectedness and communalism and the realization of our interdependence with the ecosystem is part of this turning, limited as many Christians may see it to be.

This global awareness of the commonality of humanity was made possible in part by two factors. First, an advanced technology that has turned our world into a telecommunications electronic village,

where each instantly knows what is happening to the other. Second, the realization that scientific materialism, instead of being a savior to solve human problems, is in large measure responsible for the destructive dualism that fragments the human spirit and leaves us alienated from our natural environment.

A new paradigm or way of perceiving our world has emerged as a "global consciousness" focused on the interconnectedness of all life-forms, both human and environmental. This wholistic—and very biblical—view of life has a profound spiritual undergirding.

With much of religion losing its focus, a whole generation disappointed with the trivia of organized religion is now turning to New Age forms of religious expression in hopes of recovering a sense of the spiritual. But the essence of New Age is an inward turning, a self-help style of religious experimenting that connects the human with nature and with the supernatural. This has resulted in an inadequate, popular new kind of spirituality.

But what is "spirituality"?

### **A definition of spirituality**

I teach in a state university, world-renowned for its environmental programs of study. It is also located, not coincidentally, in an area in which New Age thought is highly valued—Arcata, California. Many of my students are concerned with spirituality. In my classes, especially my sociology of religion course, I have to define spirituality in such a way that it encompasses the needs of all groups and extremes, from born-again Christians to those earth-first environmentalists enthralled by New Age forms of thinking.

Let me put forth two working definitions of spirituality pulled together from various sources and developed after years of seeking to communicate this elusive concept to different audiences with varied but often vague understandings of the term.

Spirituality is an intangible reality and animating, integrating life force that cannot be comprehended by human reason alone but is nonetheless as important as reason, intellect, and emotion in accounting for human behavior; and is the center of our devotion, loyalty, and concern for that which gives us security and a sense of worthwhile purpose, the

worship of which constitutes our god—whether that god be our self, race, or ethnic group, church, money, ideological beliefs, sex, another person, Allah, Buddha, the Great Spirit of Jesus Christ—and is the object of our ultimate love, human drive, commitment, and source of power; and is the interconnecting bond between humans, humans and the natural world, and with the divine.

In this definition of spirituality, God is spelled with a small g because the god at the center of most people's lives, even among many professed Christians, is not the biblical God, but a human construction—an idol. An idol is any product of human construction, whether material or nonmaterial, to which people give their ultimate devotion, loyalty, and concern, and around which they organize their lives.

Langdon Gilkey, in his outstanding book, *Shantung Compound* gives us the reason that God must be the center of our spirituality.

"The only hope in the human situation is that the 'religiousness' of [human beings] find its true center in God, and not in the many idols that appear in the course of our experience. If [people] are to forget themselves enough to share with each other, to be honest under pressure, and to be rational and moral enough to establish community, they must have some center of loyalty and devotion, some source of security and meaning, beyond their own welfare.

"This center of loyalty beyond themselves cannot be a human creation, greater than the individual but still finite, such as the family, the nation, tradition, race, or the church. Only the God who created all [peoples] and so represents none of them exclusively; only the God who rules all history and so is the instrument of no particular historical movement; only the God who judges His faithful as well as their enemies, and loves and cares for all, can be the creative center of human existence" (p. 234).

Let me, in light of this, now give a simpler definition of spirituality. Spirituality is that intangible reality and animating, integrating life force that connects us to the divine—however defined—to each other, and to the natural world, resulting in a state of security with

a sense of worthwhile purpose. This is wholistic spirituality, spirituality in three dimensions, that connects the human center, our social self, with: a vertical to God, the world of the sacred; a horizontal to humankind, the world of people; and a downward to nature, the world of all nonhuman life-forms.

Most Christians tend to see only a one-dimensional form of spirituality—the vertical, as a personal devotion to God divorced from concern for humankind. This was the type of spirituality that led to the rise of monasticism early in Catholicism and later to pietism in Protestantism, and eventually to the rejection of Christianity by humanism. Other forms of one-dimensional spirituality have been humanistic approaches focused only on the horizontal realm. Pulling strongly from popular, self-help forms of psychology, there is a growing spiritual movement seeking to get human beings in touch with their feelings, their emotions, and connections to each other through Eastern philosophy, meditation techniques, and personality development theory. Along with this, the “New Age,” quick fix, trendy form of spirituality is invading the corporate structures, university campuses, and suburban communities of America, in an effort to get people more in tune with their “true inner selves.”

Many of these spiritual forms eliminate the need for the vertical dimension to God, since divinity is believed to be within and not without. According to this form of spirituality we are all gods, and all one has to do is to discover the god within and in nature. Neopagan groups, Wicca, and some forms of Goddess spirituality are examples of this one-dimensional form of spirituality.

The Social Gospel movement in Christianity around the turn of the century and liberation theologies since the 1960s have both emphasized a two-dimensional form of spirituality—the vertical to God and the horizontal to humankind. The result has been much political involvement focused on social change and socio-economic justice. Yet a missing element in both approaches has been a concern for our ecological/environmental home.

All these forms of spirituality, however, are one—or at best two-dimensional constructs of spirituality. What is needed

is a three-dimensional, wholistic spirituality that connects us to God Himself, to humankind, and to our ecological world. This is a spirituality that serves as an integrating life force that dissolves all forms of alienation—religious, human, and ecological—and infuses all three worlds of dimensions with meaning and purpose.

People today are searching for meaning in all the chaos of society and in their lives. This is the driving force behind the quest for spirituality, a desire for a sense of meaning to life, a sense of worthwhile purpose—the *why* behind the *what*.

Gilkey tells us that “meaning in life is the spiritual fuel that drives the human machine. Without it we are indifferent and bored; there is no ambition to work, we are inspired by no concern or sense of significance, and our powers are unstirred and so lie idle. Without ‘meaning’ we are undirected and a vulnerable prey to all manner of despair and anxiety, unable to stand firm against any new winds of adversity.” This spiritual depletion lies at the heart of the hollow meaninglessness experienced in so many of the Christian churches of our time. A recovery of authentic Christian spirituality in its three dimensions will change much of this.

We find genuine or wholistic spirituality, security, meaning to life, when our lives are centered in *that which cannot be taken away from us*. Why? Because only that which cannot be taken away from us is able to give us a sense of genuine security, and is the only thing that can qualify as God in our center of spirituality. Everything else dissolves under pressure or changes with time.

### The source of spirituality

In an unstable age of rapid socio-political change, people are desperately searching for a reliable soul anchor. Many are now seeking for it in spirituality. But this area can be just as bankrupt as science, if people place at the center of their life that which is not eternal and divine, but temporary and transitory. Failure to center life on the sacred has resulted in the various forms of alienation throughout history—religious, human, ecological, and now spiritual.

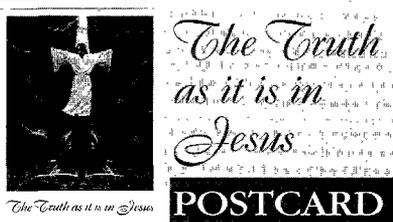
A balanced Christian approach calls for a wholistic spirituality that is centered

in God, the true object of our worship. It calls for a God who does not change but is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and who thereby creates a sense of integrated balance between the human, the natural, and the spiritual worlds. This kind of *spirituality* is found in none other than the Holy *Spirit*, who creates a longing and yearning for God in the human heart, along with a deep respect for—but not worship of—nature and our fellow human beings.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430), recognizing humankind’s need for spirituality, declared: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.” Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), reminded us that “there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each [person], which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.” This is the essence and source of genuine, wholistic spirituality.

The challenge posed for the Christian Church and for Christian ministers is to model authentic spirituality, and to fashion paradigms of ministry built on wholistic spirituality, rather than on traditional one-dimensional or at best two-dimensional patterns. Only then will churches come alive, carrying on a mission relevant to the deep-seated spiritual needs of the twenty-first century. ■

\* This definition is adapted from ideas from Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), and Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound* (New York: Harper Collins, 1966).



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# The pastor: partner in His petitions

**Philip G. Samaan**

**Intercessory prayer is not an option; it is a necessity in pastoral life.**

**B**ut, Daddy, you promised to pray for him. Did you forget?" our 4-year-old daughter disappointedly asked as we finished our family prayer. She was right. I had made that promise. Thanking her for reminding me and for her caring, we knelt again and offered a special prayer for him.

Mulling over this episode, I thought of our great need to emulate Christ in His prayers of petition. Our hearts need to beat with the praying heart of Christ for all humanity. Christ our advocate ever lives to make intercession for us (see Heb. 7:25).\* His life has ever been overflowing with prayer. As Adolph Saphir says: "In the Lord Jesus Christ we see most clearly the union of prayer and life."<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah speaks of the concern of the preincarnate Son of God: "For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns" (Isa. 62:1). Moreover God calls on His watchmen to join Him in His tireless intercession in behalf of His people: "I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, who shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (verses 6, 7).

## **Intercession: God's chosen way**

Jesus employs a three dimensional strategy in His intercession for us. In this He engages Himself, His watchmen (angels), and the Father. In His petitions He does not rest; He calls on His angels not to rest; and He calls on them not to give

the Father any rest until His glorious purposes are accomplished in His people.

Of course, the Father is pleased with such intercessory initiatives, because He is of the same heart as they are. He Himself is doggedly looking everywhere for intercessors. "I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one" (Eze. 22:30).

Intercession ever flows from the heart of God and needs to overflow our hearts. God still searches our hearts, our homes, and our hurried lives in His quest for intercessors. In His relentless pursuit He looks for someone to "stand in the gap" in behalf of others. It is genuinely amazing to see that God affords us such high honor in calling us to be intercessors before His throne and in sharing with us His burdens for humanity. He actually wants us to participate in the holy intercessory ministry of Jesus.

How do we do this? I think of my childhood and my devout mother. My memory of her prayers still helps me to have confidence in prayer. Passing by her room, I would often hear her pour out her heart to God. It was difficult to disregard such a profound spiritual encounter. It held me in its grasp. I would leave such moments gripped by the conviction that God must have heard and answered her prayers. She seemed to be in living connection with Him and spoke to Him heart-to-heart as to an intimate and trusted friend.

## **More caught than taught**

This kind of prayer is sacred, more caught than taught. I find myself challenged to emulate my mother's ex-

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ample. I, like the disciples, am asking Jesus to show me how to pray (Luke 11:1).

The disciples frequently observed Jesus in prayer for Himself, for them, and for others. They knew that His life and work were directly linked to His prayers. They were moved when they saw Him "to be in the very presence of the Unseen, and there was a living power in His words as of one who spoke with God."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus poured out His heart to God with such fervent intensity that Paul writes: "In the days of His flesh . . . [He] offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).

If Jesus sensed the need to pray and intercede so constantly, how much more should we who are pastors? Is it possible that we would rather preach than pray, study and serve than supplicate, organize than agonize. Dare we say that we would rather participate in a prayer seminar than prevail in an actual session of prayer?

A prominent theologian once visited a seminary to evaluate its ministerial training program. At the end of his week he commended the faculty on different aspects of their academic program. Then he paused for a moment and asked pointedly, "But when do you people ever pray around here?"

This question echoes Andrew Murray's challenge when he wrote that God "looks to the thousands of young men and young women in training for the work of ministry and mission, and gazes longingly to see if the church is teaching them that intercession, power with God, must be their first care, and in seeking to train and help them to do it."<sup>3</sup>

We pastors may get involved with the routine of our profession so much that we become too busy to connect our lives significantly with God's life. Let us ask ourselves: when did we last shed tears for our own transgressions, weep for the waywardness of our people, and cry out to God about the sins of the world? Samuel Chadwick said it well: "It would seem as if the biggest thing in God's universe

is a man who prays," yet there "is only one thing more amazing, . . . that man, knowing this, should not pray."<sup>4</sup>

### Partners with Jesus

Once again, let us consider Christ. All His important decisions were conceived in prevailing prayer. All His steps were guided by intercession. He commenced His ministry with prayer at the Jordan. He mingled His teachings and deeds with prayer. He culminated His life in prayer at Gethsemane and on Golgotha. He lived, moved, taught, healed, and died praying.

Hanging on the cross, Jesus interceded for His crucifiers! In His anguish He pleaded with His Father for His enemies who delighted to see Him suffer and die: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). His intercession seemed to anticipate the possibility that some might turn away from their evil ways even at that last moment.

Jesus longs to have us become His special partners in petition for enemies and friends. The Father in His boundless love "raised us up together [with Christ], and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). If we are seated together with Christ, should we not share in His compassion, and enter into His mighty intercessions in behalf of humanity?

Listen to Wesley Duewel speak of this intercessory privilege of the Christian: "There is no more Christlike role than to be a cointercessor with Christ for the priorities upon His heart . . . Prevailing prayer is glorious because it unites you with the heartbeat of Christ. It is glorious because in prevailing prayer you share the vision of Christ."<sup>5</sup>

Such is the glorious reality of intercessory prayer. As James notes, the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). We may feel how unrighteous we are, and therefore how little our prayers avail. This text is not speaking of our righteousness. It calls upon us to claim the righteousness of Christ and become partners in His prayers.

Christ is indeed "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6), and He is the righteous man whose prayers avail much.

Thus when we unite our lives with His, blending our stunted prayers with His concerns and His omnipotent life of intercessory prayer, then our prayers avail much. We are never alone when we pray, for Jesus is there encircling us with His presence, buttressing our prayers with His in their course to the throne of God. Accordingly, our petitions, mingled with His, become truly effective.

In mingling our prayers with His own, Jesus takes up our cause as His own. Infinitely more than the most competent attorney, He takes up a case always fully committed to win. He puts Himself on the line, backed by all of heaven's resources. In continuing to trust Him, we possess His ironclad guarantee to treat our case decisively with a perfect blending of justice and mercy. "No sooner does the child of God approach the mercy seat than he becomes *the client* of the great Advocate. At his first utterance of penitence and appeal for pardon Christ *espouses* his case and makes it *His own*, presenting the supplication before the Father as *His own request*."<sup>6</sup>

### The Holy Spirit and intercession

The Holy Spirit is also engaged with Jesus in this ministry of intercession. "Likewise the [Holy] Spirit also helps in our weaknesses," Paul writes. "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). Furthermore, Paul assures us that "through Him [Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18).

The Holy Spirit is the "implementor"<sup>7</sup> who pleads God's cause with us, conveying and carrying out God's will in our lives. "In a truly blessed sense the Holy Spirit gives birth to His petitions within us, and kindles faith within us."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the Holy Spirit not only prays for us and with us, but also in us. Paul prods us to pray *in* the Spirit: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . . for all the saints—and for me" (Eph. 6:18, 19). As

we pray in the Spirit, we enter the mind of the Spirit who "searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). God who knows the mind of the Holy Spirit also knows our minds, responding to our united supplications in accordance with His purposes.

Let us face up to it. Often we do not want to pray; we do not know how to pray, or what to pray for, or when to pray. That is why we need the Spirit to permeate our hearts and to enable us to pray. "Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27).

Once a friend said that he stopped praying for others simply because it did not work. I asked him how he prayed and how often he prayed. "Once or twice," he said, and then discouragement stopped him from praying. *Intercessory prayer doesn't give up that easily. It is not sporadic. It is continual, perpetual. It recognizes what Paul said long ago that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 6:12). Engaged in such a mighty spiritual conflict, we cannot afford to be lax in our prayer life. We cannot afford to be other than perpetual partners in Jesus' prayer ministry. ■

\* All Scripture passages in this article are from The New King James Version.

<sup>1</sup> Adolph Saphir, *Our Lord's Pattern for Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1984), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), pp. 168, 169.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Chadwick, *The Path of Prayer* (Kansas City, Kans.: Beacon Hill Press, 1931), pp. 11, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Wesley L. Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. Corp., 1990), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 364. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>7</sup> See Judson Cornwall, *Praying the Scriptures* (Altamonte Springs, Fla.: Creation House, 1990), pp. 147, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Duewel, p. 222.

## The challenge of spiritual dissonance

*Continued from page 4*

less undeniably true, and I believe God is especially calling us to it here and now.

As I try to tune into where many of us are, I sense a healthy disillusionment with our own nominalism. The truth is that our present expressions and understandings of Christianity cannot stand up to the eschatological eloquence of the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of the world, as they confront us today. All of this cries out for an authentic demonstration of the real thing in us and in our churches.

It is true that we have made certain impressive advances. In all kinds of ways we have made some striking and genuine progress, and we are still making it. We have adapted with varying degrees of success to the immense changes that have swept the planet during the past 30 years. But our adaptations are wearing thin. We cannot afford any longer to believe the illusion that organizational adjustments, clever innovations, or mere creative programming genius—necessary as these things are—will bring about the far-reaching renewal that our time and situation call for. Hence the imperative to seek the real thing. This search involves efforts that we would rather overlook in favor of activities more "practical," politically correct, and not so spiritually demanding.

With all this in mind, here is the January issue of *Ministry*, with its theme—the personal spiritual authenticity and integrity of the pastor. The theme articles in this issue challenge us to search our souls and to get back to living and ministering by the basics. They call us to come into significant contemporary contact with the epicenter of the faith once delivered to the saints. They present us the classic moral challenge of actually being rooted in and operating from the great center of Christ and His ministry. Taken seriously and acted on decisively, they could lead to critical personal turning points.

As we begin the new year, I commit myself in Christ along with you to elimi-

nate spiritual dissonance within myself. I believe we are being called to be true to a living, genuine, biblical faith that leads to an unprecedented potency in our witness as ministers of Christ. I know I need this. I think that the church does also. ■

## Measuring success in ministry

*Continued from page 16*

ciate pastorship would require a move of some distance, my wife and I were beginning to think of the pain of pulling up our roots of 10 years. God had a big surprise in mind. For 10 years we had ministered to an urban congregation while living in the suburbs. God's surprise was the opportunity to join a team ministry just two miles from where we lived. A suburban church had been experiencing spectacular growth over the recent years. I was interviewed and called. From the moment we entered the doors of that church we felt at home.

My dream of success has been realized. I feel completely fulfilled in my role as a pastoral caregiver, doing those things that I enjoy most. My work is no less strenuous; in fact, the hours are sometimes longer, however, the satisfaction is much greater. It is much different from what I had planned earlier in my life, and it fits better the values of the minister I have come to be since God revealed Himself as the loving and accepting Saviour I had not known before. ■

## Letters

*Continued from page 2*

tion by Alberta Mazat, also in the November issue of *Ministry* (p. 6), is important for every clergyperson to read to keep in mind: "Every state now has laws that make it mandatory for a person in a counseling/therapy/medical/teaching role to report evidence or suspicion of abuse. In some cases clergy are exempted, which often brings a sigh of relief that this difficult task is not expected of them. But let the clergy take heed. When, in the course of their ministerial duties, pastors assume the role of a counselor to a victim of abuse, they are mandated to report."



# How to destroy your leadership

James A. Cress

**W**hat destroys leadership? A boring committee meeting recently turned into a gold mine when a group of leaders turned from the routine to focus on issues that destroy leadership. Their points were enhanced by practical remedies.

**Lack of credibility.** When leaders act differently than their expressed values, people lose confidence. If my life does not match my proclamation, people ultimately disbelieve my words.

*Remedy: Beyond the obvious need for a closer walk with our Lord, which is integral to remedy all these areas, adherence to a code of ethics is essential. Situational leadership must never mean situational ethics.*

**Incompetence.** Too often pastors reach a plateau of competence beyond which they no longer struggle to achieve. Settling for mediocre too often means abandoning excellence. Ideals and performance that once aimed high now rest in job security and accumulated years of service credit. *Remedy: Develop an atmosphere of growth. Break out of the routine, resist the humdrum. Stretch to accomplish something new and different in your ministry. Experience regular continuing education.*

**Lack of vision.** Those who cannot see beyond the immediacy of today will seldom prepare for tomorrow. Some remain focused on the present when they could—and should be reaching for tomorrow! *Remedy: Wayne Gretzky, hockey superstar, describes success as skating to where the puck will be, not where it is. Anticipate*

*the future and head there! Others will follow!*

**Self-service.** Leaders too easily develop an attitude of self-seeking. What's in it for me becomes the motto as we forget servant leadership and strive for personal greatness. *Remedy: Jesus' own model of ministry is compelling. As His disciples strove to climb, Jesus modeled the greatness of descent. Preach Philipians to yourself and then to your members!*

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## Experience, then teach the impact of the gospel in your daily life and work.

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**Overextension.** Face it now. You will never accomplish all that you could and, seldom, all that you should. Pastoral work is never done. Leadership reality is that someone will always need to be led. You will destroy your leadership by concentrating on endless urgencies while ignoring the important. *Remedy: Balance and prioritization. Determine what you can accomplish and then pursue excellence there without being side-tracked by urgent matters of less importance.*

**Exclusivity.** No one ever resents the "in crowd" until they are excluded. Avoid the trap of associating with and listening only to those who comprise your inner circle. Ministry is compromised to the extent that anyone believes they are

shut out. *Remedy: Become a mentor. Share the magic. Seek those who can be recruited and trained for service. Model ministry until they are effective and then encourage them to train others.*

**Cronyism.** Job criteria should never be previous proximity to the leader. Committees that are staffed only with your buddies will soon be full of detractors. Nothing destroys creativity more quickly than compliant agreement. *Remedy: Listen to those with alternate views.*

*Solicit input from those who are critical. Hire staff who are strong in your weak areas. Elect those who ask challenging questions and encourage term limits.*

**Lack of common sense.** If you don't get it, you don't get it! Nothing compensates for simple practicality. Too many leaders chase the impossible right past hundreds of opportunities to ac-

complish the possible. *Remedy: Ask, Will it work? Seek counsel. Refuse to elevate stupidity to a virtue. Chances are that if trusted counselors see no wisdom in a plan, it will not succeed just because it took root in your mind. Demand scrutiny of any idea.*

**Failure to integrate faith and life.** A professional member of my last congregation consistently emphasized ministry in the workplace. Her message was clear. If my belief does not impact performance of my vocation, I am not a believer. *Remedy: Experience, then teach, the impact of the gospel in your daily life and work.*

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*Special thanks to Bert Beach, Ray Dabrowski, Ben Maxson, Rose Otis, and Dick Stenbakken for sharing their wisdom.*

## Seeds '96

A church planting summit will meet at Andrews University from June 12 to 15, 1996. Seeds '96 is sponsored by the North American Division, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and the NAD Evangelism Institute. Featured speakers will be Al McClure and Charles Bradford. Bob Logan, described by Peter Wagner as "America's foremost authority in the field of church planting," will conduct a major training seminar at the summit. In addition, multiple Adventist church planters will share insights into church planting during 15 exciting seminars. All registrants will receive a new resource to be released at the summit: "Seed Planters Guidebook." This practical Adventist guide will be the best tool available for planting a new church. For further information, call 1-800-ALL-PLNT (1-800-255-7568).

## Testimony of blessing

Our small church decided to change the way that it collected tithes and offerings, seeking to rejuvenate the spirituality of this act of worship. Instead of an "appeal," we do a "testimony of blessing" just prior to the collection. A different person each week shares how the Lord has blessed. We believe the Lord has blessed the giving of our members, as they are not prodded or begged but give from a joyful heart.—John Seaman, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

## Taped baptismal testimony

I ask each candidate to write a paragraph on "Why I want to be baptized." After

they compose their answer, I have them record it on cassette tape. Just before the candidate is immersed I have their testimony played aloud for the church to hear. It has added a nice warm touch to this important occasion for both candidate and church body.—Charles Mitchell, Palm Springs, California.

## Funeral transcripts

Ministering to the bereaved and relating to their pain may be our greatest challenge in ministry. Often a carefully prepared message is not remembered after the funeral service. Why not make it lasting in a form more tangible than a memory? You can provide transcripts of your message for the immediate family, handing it to them directly after the graveside service. Again and again I've heard comments from the grieving ones that the printed word is read multiple times, providing strength and healing.—Kevin James, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39402.

## SDA database

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## Faith books

A number of books by E. Harold Roy assist pastors in their ministry. Included are: *Decisions Determine Destiny* (how 10 Bible characters made decisions), *Men Jesus Met* (radio sermons ready to

use), *In Remembrance of Redemption* (Communion sermons), *Morning Is Coming* (funeral sermons), *Bible Promises for Days of Illness*, and *Courage for Hospital Days*. All profit goes to Sabbath school investment. For a complete list of books and prices, contact Faith Publications, 2417 West Highway 22, Crestwood, Kentucky 40014.

## Bible study with spouse

Recently I found a new way of daily Bible study with my wife. We read a passage bit by bit after breakfast for about 30 minutes. I then interpret it as much as I am able. Then my wife—using the simple question "So what?"—makes an extensive application on the basis of the interpretation. We then discuss any additional application.

My wife and I always come away from our study greatly enriched and united. Each day we wait eagerly for this time to hear God's voice to us. Joel Nyarangi, Kenya.

## Youth book

Malcolm Allen's book *Divine Guidance or Worldly Pressure* is helpful to pastors and youth workers in understanding the principles of ministering to teens and young adults. Available for US\$4.00 plus shipping from the General Conference Church Ministries Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904.

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