

# Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

April 1997



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### Ghosts on the way to the pulpit

After reading "Ghosts on the Way to the Pulpit" (January 1996), I am astounded at the "remarkable" lack of reader response. Could it be that there is a message coming out of that silence?

Two of my friends left the ministry in the past three months. I know of three contemplating the same, after 10 years in the ministry. Against this background all I can say is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a real conundrum with which it obviously cannot cope.

Whether leadership is indifferent, ignorant, apathetic, or overworked, I don't know. What I do know is this: as long as we persist in not training our leadership to manage these problems, the sad story will continue.

Those who may be in a position to effect change do not even know where to start. Perhaps the Ministerial Association and *Ministry* should take up the gauntlet to pursue this problem and suggest remedial action.—David Edgar, pastor, Rockhampton, Australia.

### A practical theology of ordination

Keith Burton may have achieved his writing objective in the article "A Practical Theology of Ordination" (November 1996) had he not chosen to use such a theoretical and professional format.

Many of us in the church are opposed to that kind of professionalism. We believe it prevents the effective communication of the gospel; as a result the church continues to decline. We are also against an "impractical" theology of ordination. When I remove Burton's article of its professional robe, I am unsure of my comprehension. Perhaps my feelings can best be described by that of one famous person when he said, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Ps. 102:6, 7).

Perhaps the Seventh-day Adventist Church is better equipped to deal with the

problem than we are. If not, then I am comforted that Ellen G. White and John Wesley would have appreciated my effort in writing.—Ellis C. Kennedy, minister, United Methodist Church, Athens, Alabama.

### Clarification

I wanted to mention two corrections regarding my article, "A Practical Theology of Ordination" (November 1996). The major problem is caused by a misunderstanding of the difference between *presbuteros* (elder) and *presbuterios* (presbytery/board of elders—notice the *i*). The corrections (italicized) are:

1. In the second column, third line from the bottom should read: ". . . they all bore the generic designation *presbuteros* (elder)."

2. The section entitled "Selection of Officers From Among the Ordained" should read: "Although the *episkopos* was the 'pastor' of the congregation, his office was probably administered by the *presbuterios* (presbytery or board of elders), which was made up of congregational *presbuteroi*. As mentioned above, the term *presbuteros* appears to be a general designation for church leaders, and not the title of a particular office. Since the qualifications for the person who is selected *presbuteros* is similar to that of the *episkopos*, it is safe to assume that the *episkopos* was chosen from among the *presbuterios* (see Titus 1:5-9). The tendency to view *episkopos* and *presbuteros* as synonyms is probably a result of the assumption that both are references to church offices. However, this association is diminished if one accepts that the *presbuterios* comprised a body of people who demonstrated gifts for ministry, only a select number of whom were church officers.

"The *presbuterios* was responsible for electing candidates into specific offices. . . . Since *presbuteros* is a reference to a person, rather than an office, it is possible that the college of *presbuteroi* embodied in the *presbuterios* consisted of potential,

current, and retired people who qualified for the offices of *episkopos* and *diakonos*."

Thank you so much for publishing the article and for taking care of these corrections. I have received a number of positive comments about the article, and I appreciate your giving me a forum to publish my research.—Keith A. Burton, assistant professor of New Testament, Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama.

### Annie

Pastor Seibold is correct when he states that Annie had found a church and Christ, yet wondered if she had found a church home (September 1996). Obviously she had not. He is also correct to state that not every person will blend with every congregation.

What about education? We educate about health, diet, Sabbath observance, and tithing. Should we not educate about "living for success," Christian and church life success?

Don't we owe it to the Annies in our congregations some guidelines that will help them fit more easily into our midst? I am talking about basic social skills that are lacking in so many of us. John Molloy's book *Live for Success* has some excellent ideas.—Bobbie Drake, Homedale, Idaho.

### Proving more than intended

It was refreshing to read George Knight's article (March 1996) on being faithful to the biblical text in our search for truth on various issues. I've often wondered why two hermeneutical questions are not constantly asked in studying Scripture: (1) whom is the writer writing to? and (2) why does that writer say those things? These two questions, applied to issues we have debated for nearly two decades, if constantly asked, would have saved the church precious hours, money, and spiritual energy that would have gone into the Lord's program for the finishing of the work. Thanks, George!—Walton S. Whaley, ministerial secretary, Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Abidjan.

### Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that 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 our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



**J**im and I have been very busy since we came to the General Conference. There are so many things we want to see accomplished for the pastors and their families. Feeling such a burden for the clergy and their spouses in our church, I became so completely caught up in all the work here at Shepherdess International that I neglected some other very important things. Perhaps sharing my experience will give you an opportunity to learn a lesson at my expense rather than yours!

For Jim and me, moving to the General Conference meant marketing and selling a house at our previous location and then spending a lot more time looking for another house in this new, strange city. Then came the actual packing and relocation, which was followed by unpacking. All of you know how that goes.

We barely managed to get settled into our new home when the ever-pressing responsibilities of the work here at Shepherdess began piling up. It seemed that no matter how long I stayed at the office or worked on the weekends I never got caught up. It was very distressing for me to leave work undone, and travel commitments meant long weeks away from home, during which time the work just kept accumulating.

Each year for most of our married life, Jim and I have faithfully taken our vacation time and relaxed in the desert. We both enjoy the hot, dry air and therapeutic mineral waters that nature provides. It has been a wholesome time, breathing fresh air, resting, reading, and refreshing ourselves for the responsibilities of our work. We look forward to this time each year, because afterward we can face our work again with renewed strength—body, spirit, and mind. We have several dear friends who live near our place of retreat, so our time visiting and fellowshiping with them is also a special highlight.

Our move to the Washington, D.C., area, with all the responsibilities and

changes that happened at the same time, meant that time rushed by too fast. Somehow we both got caught up in meeting all the appointments, obligations, and work that had been outlined for us. We did not set aside specific time for that integral part of our life—our vacation. This was a serious mistake.

As the months passed, I began to feel the effects of not taking this special time away from the pressure of responsibilities. The work still piled up, and I was still never finished. But I found that I tired more quickly, caught more head colds, had more sore throats, and my allergies reacted violently. I felt like I was falling apart physically.

## Take a vacation— you need it!

S H A R O N C R E S S

We made a bad judgment call. We had gotten our priorities all mixed up and decided that we didn't need to rest as Jesus did when He was here on earth. We assumed that we didn't have to take time for refreshment and fellowship with our friends, like Jesus took time to be with His closest friends. Somehow we had even decided that our work was more important than Jesus' own work.

Ellen White tells us the importance of healthful living. And she is careful and specific in conveying that this means a total "lifestyle," not just one or two areas of our lives. I wouldn't have considered eating something unclean or drinking alcohol, but I abused the temple of the Holy Spirit by not providing it sufficient rest. I broke a very important health principle, and I paid the price.

As pastoral families we often become so involved with work in the church that we mix up our priorities. Jesus is coming soon.

There are millions of people who still need to hear this. Local church work is never done. Members always have something that needs our urgent attention. All of these things can rob us of what we really need—rest, refreshment, and fellowship with our immediate family and friends.

Wherever you are, the vacation season is coming upon us quickly. Jim and I recently set aside time for our desert retreat. I try not to make the same mistake again and again! It has not been easy to schedule this time of rejuvenation. Work will still pile up, people will still plead for us to take one more itinerary. But we must do what is right while we do what is good! Modeling our lives after Jesus' own example is not always easy. But then doing the right thing is seldom easy.

What are you doing? Is your life balanced? Or are you and your family so involved with the church that you think that because you are the church's leader, programs or the church cannot possibly survive without you?

Jesus' time of ministry was very short—He had only those three and a half years to accomplish everything He needed to do. Jesus might have healed more people, preached more sermons, done more of every good thing if He had not spent time alone and time in close fellowship with His friends. But Jesus knew that He needed refreshment. Think of it this way: if Jesus needed communion with His Father and fellowship with His friends, as His created creatures we need this even more.

Plan now for that time. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that one of these days your family will get everything at the church accomplished and then you can take some time off. You will never get everything done. And if you do take some time away from the work, believe me, all of it will be waiting for you when you return.

So spend some time with your spouse *now*. Nurture each other *now*. Fellowship with your children *now*. Plan a vacation *now*, if you haven't. And spend more time alone with Jesus *now*. ■

# LEADERSHIP IS NOT A TITLE!

**A**ny organization committed to achieving goals is dependent upon leaders and followers. God's program too is dependent upon leadership and "followership." It is more than a truism to assert that the church will flourish as the quality of its leadership at all levels genuinely reflects the qualities of Christ Himself.



*Ricardo Graham is the executive secretary of the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

Obviously, a person cannot be a leader without followers. Some may think that they are leaders, but unless the leaders have a group of people who adopt their ideology and support them in their activities, the leader becomes nothing more than a committee of one. Rather than having loyal supportive team members, the followers then become critical spectators.

Leaders are not leaders because they have been elected or have a title. They are leaders because someone will follow them.

This raises the question What are the qualities that inspire or compel people to follow leaders? And on the other side of the coin, What characteristics make great followers? Let me identify four critical components that cause people to follow leaders.

## **Integrity**

Integrity is "incorruptibility." It involves being true to the core issues of the faith, a

deep inner commitment to living life in the atmosphere of heaven while rubbing shoulders with the earthbound. Integrity is: "To thine own self be true." But Christian integrity is more than this. It involves being true to God, His commands, and His call. Christian integrity cannot be bought or sold. It is the result of the Holy Spirit residing in our lives. It comes as we submit to God's presence. It involves being committed to the work of God in the world without respect to one's "personal agenda."

Out of personal integrity follows credibility. Without credibility the leader simply cannot lead. Credibility "accrues slowly, but spends fast." We all know pastors, teachers, and others whom we have trusted. Yet when they betray that trust, it is difficult to continue to support them, at least as leaders. Many have forfeited their positions of leadership because of a lack of integrity and credibility. But people fol-

low leaders of integrity and uncompromising honesty.

Another important characteristic or capacity inherent in integrity is that it militates against abusive leadership. A leader of integrity has nothing to hide. He or she is open and willing to involve other people in decision-making and a broad range of significant activities. When church leaders are not manipulative, controlling, or subversive, church members will follow them.

### Vision

Add to integrity vision. Leaders without vision—and a means of clearly communicating it in the organizations in which they serve—are not prepared to lead. Goals and direction both extend from vision. Without a clear direction or goal, the organization, especially an ecclesiastical one, will deteriorate and flounder. At best it will become a social club, and at worst it will be prone to the direction of others within the group. It may become “nomadic,” wandering in circles, emphasizing one thing today, focusing on another tomorrow, changing with the wind, directionless. A vessel without a declared destination or direction is bound to be lost at sea and ultimately shipwrecked.

Vision, as George Barna says, is “a reflection of what God wants to accomplish through you to build His kingdom.” “Vision is never about maintaining the status quo. Vision is about stretching reality to extend beyond the existing state.”<sup>1</sup> It comes not from the leader, but through the leader. God already has a vision for His church. Though He may be looking for a fresh understanding, commitment to, and expression of His vision, He is not looking for a new one. He is looking for leaders who will embrace His vision and implement it.

The leader who is in contact with God will be given vision that is personal, powerful, and practical. It will be a vision that a majority of the members of the church will accept. The vision itself must be clearly communicated, even while the detailed parts of it may be negotiable. Between a vision and its implementation lies a task. Benjamin Reaves, former president of Oakwood College, says, “With a vision there is always a task. A vision depicts what can be; a task entails what must be done to bring it to realization. . . . With every vision and task,

there is an assurance that our efforts, totally submitted to divine providence and direction, can and will become a reality.”<sup>2</sup>

Vision produces sustaining power. It can help leaders through tough times. It can propel them forward to complete the task if they review the God-given vision frequently.

Worthwhile vision is received in prayer and nurtured in the devotional life. It is communicated in an inspiring, personable manner. The person who receives and can clearly communicate God’s vision is a leader people will follow.

### Love

Third, an effective leader will be a loving leader, one who loves God and the people in his or her charge. The qualities of this love will not express themselves only in the vertical dimension of a personal rela-

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find that people will be quick  
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Jesus Christ.

tionship with God but will overflow to touch other humans. This love will be visible. It will be felt. It will disclose itself consistently as an undergirding quality of leadership behavior.

“When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennobles the affections.”<sup>3</sup>

All leaders may not show love in the same way, but it will be seen. The love that we have for God must not only burn within us, but consume us. It must set us on fire. It will create a warmth that draws people to us rather than a coldness that compels them to flee.

Boyd A. Stockdale, one of my professors, once discussed the idea of “high-tech” versus “high-touch” ministry. He noted that in our age of high technology people crave the caring touch of others. This is one reason that even though there is an automatic teller machine at practically every bank, many clients still insist on visiting the human tellers as often as they can.

In our impersonal age of endless telephone voice menus and detached associations, we crave to know that someone takes a personal interest in us, that someone besides God cares, that someone loves us and accepts us as we are.

It is well known that when loving pastors who are not necessarily adept at initiating great programs and the like leave a church, the members miss them sorely. On the other hand, pastors who are not generally missed as much often include those who may have shown themselves to possess excellent preaching skills and creative program leadership but do not have the caring touch.

Those leaders among us who truly love people will find that people will be quick to follow them, as they followed Jesus Christ. Leaders without love will not only be lonely; they will be “follower-less.”

### Humility

The fourth critical component of leadership is humility. Many leaders are showy, pretentious, ostentatious, and vain. They may excel in certain enterprises because the world seems to value those who push themselves to the top of the heap. A minister friend who attended law school commented to his professors and classmates that it seemed to be a dog-eat-dog world, and the hungriest dog seemed to arrive at the top. The response was “Learn to eat dog and like it!” This is not Christ’s method.

Sometimes even in the church there seem to be those who have climbed high in the denomination by pushing themselves forward. They are driven instead of called, and self-promotion appears to motivate them.

Godly leaders, however, will be humble and meek. Heaven still prizes those who humble themselves and follow God. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). Humility causes one to stoop low to lift Jesus high. We cannot exalt Jesus and ourselves simultaneously.

Jesus made humility a core principle of His kingdom. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

When the Holy Spirit takes us and molds us in the likeness and image of Jesus, facilitating our obedience to Christ in all things, the value of looking out for number one and pushing ourselves forward will cease to exist. It will be exposed for its of-this-world emptiness.

Humble leaders are willing to deny themselves for the sake of those they lead. They are willing to spend themselves for the glorification of their Master without being preoccupied with the need for human acclaim. It is in losing ourselves in service to God that we find ourselves.

#### Jesus, the consummate leader

Jesus is the only leader I know who meets all the qualifications for leadership and followership. Jesus had integrity that resisted

the pull of a devil who promised Him the world. Nor was Jesus intimidated by the political pressures of the ruling aristocracy of His day. His integrity produced the boldness in Him to resist the stress and strain of human and Satanic manipulation. "He dwelt among men an example of spotless integrity."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus knew what His mission was because it had been defined by His vision. Jesus' vision was born in heaven as He watched the fall of Adam and Eve. Throughout the years of His ministry, Jesus pursued His target unswervingly. That is because He was propelled by vision. His vision was refined and kept alive as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. His vision sustained Him as He endured the task of being rejected, beaten, and hung on the cross.

Love was consistently revealed in His living and in His dying. His love caused Him to heal the sick, to open blinded eyes, and to touch lepers. He associated with known harlots, thieving tax collectors, and rabble rousers, not to enjoy their sin, but to show

them God's love. It was love that held Him to the cross—love for sinners such as us.

Not only did Jesus teach humility as a core of His kingdom; Jesus demonstrated it daily. He did not promote Himself or boast about His talents and abilities. He always gave the Father the glory. Not once did He complain about His treatment. Instead, He prayed to the Father for the forgiveness of His executioners. No wonder people followed Jesus then. And no wonder people follow Him today. ■

<sup>1</sup>George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books), p. 29.

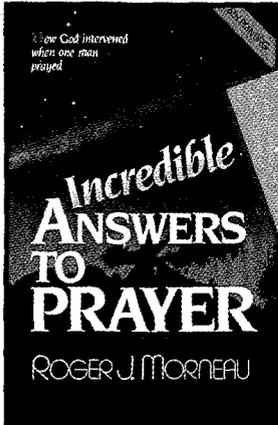
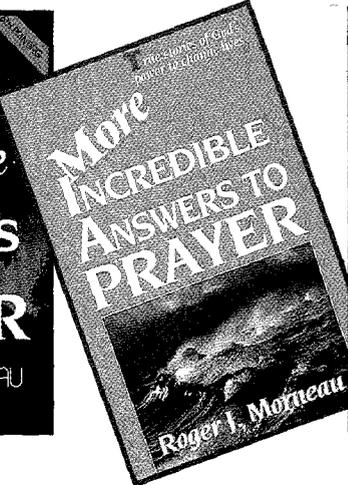
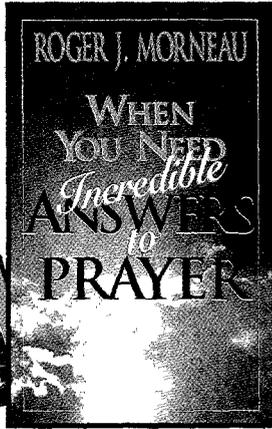
<sup>2</sup>Benjamin Reaves, "With the Vision Comes the Task," *Oakwood*, Winter 1996, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 223.

<sup>4</sup>———, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 243.

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# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE NINETIES

**A**s His ministry was drawing to a close, Jesus outlined to His disciples His formula for leadership. The disciples were anticipating His installation as king of the Jews. While they planned affairs of state, Jesus looked toward Calvary, trying unsuccessfully to prepare them for a great disappointment.



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

Excited about the prospects of position and power, they may have wondered why He wasn't interested in the organization of government. Zebedee's wife had probably listened to her sons discussing their plans. She understood their ambition to have the top positions in the new administration and had been secretly biding her time until the right moment when she would go to Jesus with her petition. She believed her sons deserved the top honors, and she felt sure Jesus wouldn't deny it to them, especially if the request came from her. It seems as though James and John were aware of their mother's mission when they went with her to see Jesus. I suspect they saw getting in ahead of others as a smart move.

"I have a favor to ask," said Zebedee's wife as she came to Jesus. "Grant that one of my two sons sits at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom." Jesus must have hesitated for some time before answering, as He envisioned His own future and the future of His movement. "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you

drink the cup I am going to drink?" Boastfully they answered, "Yes, we can." Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (Matt. 20:20-23).\*

## **The pressure to climb**

It's easy for me to relate to the ambitious plans of James and John, for I was raised in an environment that was always pushing me to climb the ladder of success. I had dreams that I dared not even express to my closest friends. I wanted to be at the top of something or the other so people would think well of me. Success, for me, was to have honor or prestige. I needed success. I dreamed of it. I planned for it.

Some may think ministers should be exempt from such ambitions. At least after ordination one would think those carnal needs would have disappeared. That may have happened to some, but for me ordination was a

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S T E V E W I L L S E Y

signal that what I dreamed of was soon to happen. If I only worked a little harder, it wouldn't be long. My observation is that most of my friends were little different from me. We all were climbing over one another to get the largest, most prestigious church or to have a position in the conference office. For most of us, the goal was to be at least president of a conference.

To get there I felt I needed more baptisms than anyone else, a higher tithe, more children in church school, and of course, the greatest increase in every arena that mattered. In order for this to happen I dreamed up more programs than even I can believe. I worked constantly and pushed my members until they were weary. This was the expected leadership style during the sixties and seventies. It was personality leadership and management by objective, and woe be to that one who wasn't on the bandwagon.

When the other 10 disciples heard about the request of Mother Zebedee, they were horrified, not because they had more lofty motives, but because she had gotten there before they did. Each one of those disciples had the same ambitions, and they wouldn't have thought twice about stabbing the other in the back if the need arose. Jesus was no doubt very disappointed. To think that these 12 men were the nucleus of the kingdom must have given Him little confidence for the future of His movement. He called them together to share with them the true basis of leadership. It must have come as a real shock. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant," He said (Matt. 20:26).

#### Success: the Jesus model

That's a much different road to success than I knew as I began my ministry. Of course, it's not really a philosophy that would go over very well in the world. It's the Jesus model of leadership. Christian leadership isn't measured by the same standard used in the world. Spiritual leaders represent Christ—they are literally "Christ-bearers."

The question isn't How much power do you have? How much money can you spend? or How big are your results? The question is How well do you represent Christ? I'm not sure there have been many leaders like this in the church. It's too radical. To be a "servant leader" almost seems far-fetched.

I believe the church of God is starving

for just that kind of leadership. It must be the commitment of all of us for the decade of the nineties if the church is going to fulfill its mission. The leadership style of the world must give way to the Jesus model: "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (verses 27, 28).

It's important that our people have pastors who know how to love as Christ loved. It's a love that is able to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying the glitter of the shell people wear. It's a love that's not afraid to be completely open and vulnerable with oneself in a demonstration of understanding and real care. Servant lead-

**T**he question

*isn't How much power do you have? or How much money can you spend? or How big are your results? The question is How well do you represent Christ?*

---

ership means giving unconditional love. It isn't weak and pusillanimous, but neither is it protecting of self and power grabbing. You see, people are much more needy of love and care and intimacy than they are even of knowing when the pre-Advent judgment began or how to keep the Sabbath.

#### Need for growing

Thankfully, Jesus didn't give up on His disciples. During the hours they spent in the upper room after His arrest, a lot of growing took place. Perhaps Peter had the most to learn. Graciously, his story was recorded. He took it as a personal affront when Jesus told him he would deny Him three times that night. When it happened just as Jesus had predicted, Peter looked into the sorrowing, pained eyes of His Master and went away from the high priest's palace a broken and distraught man. It must have been extremely

difficult for him to join the others in the upper room to wait out the long hours of the weekend, and he was there when the news came that the tomb was empty.

His heart was made lighter when a message came from the risen Lord just for him, for he knew he didn't deserve to see the Lord again or be restored to his place among His closest friends. A little later, near the lake in Galilee, his heart must have felt much lighter as he ate with Jesus and the others.

After dinner the two of them walked alone along a path close to the water's edge. Jesus spoke first. "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" (John 21:15-17). This time Peter was hurt because it was the same question again, as if Jesus didn't believe him. "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep" (verse 17).

Our job description is similar to Peter's. We're called to feed the sheep. That's our mission, as simply as it can be stated. The qualification for sheep feeding is the same as it was for Peter: we must be in love with Jesus. In order to give the kind of leadership needed in God's church for the decade of the nineties, we must first of all love Jesus. It's not possible to be a Christ-bearer unless we love Him deeply and intimately. Unless we reserve the time to cultivate a relationship with Him, our love will only be a token, and we'll never imitate His model of leadership. This love means to have such a passion for Him that nothing is so urgent as to be alone with Him.

#### Having a sense of assurance

It wasn't only my understanding of success that was faulty when I began my ministry. I also had no sense of assurance of my own salvation. My religion involved proving to God that I was safe to save by doing right things. I was about as good as the rich young ruler. I had kept the commandments from the time I was a child, but there was no sense of joy. The God I served was more like a tyrant; in fact, I was afraid of Him. All the work I had done to satisfy Him never seemed

*Continued on page 28*

# RIDING OUT THE STORM, PEACEFULLY

I have just survived the most sophisticated attempt to destroy me as a pastor and as a professional. I have met conflict before, but never like this. Unfortunately for me and the churches I have pastored, I seem to attract criticism. I wish I could be more like Eugene Peterson,<sup>1</sup> my alter ego in ministry style, and less like Ray Roberts.

*Ray Roberts is a pseudonym.*

But God called me into ministry with my strengths and weaknesses. This means that I create new paradigms for church, and the price tag for such ministry is sporadic criticism and conflict.

For many of us, ministry seems to be more about conflict resolution than nurture, care, preaching, and winning new friends for Jesus Christ. We resonate with Richard John Neuhaus' proclamation that church is "thus and so"<sup>2</sup> and not a perfect manifestation of Christ's character of love. In addition, we all feel the effects of our society's lack of trust in leadership. We have been tempted to conform to its "managerial" pressure to be spiritual jugglers rather than leaders shaping a community of God into His oneness. The moment we risk the proclamation of a new vision, a shifting

of church priorities and expectations occurs. In all of this criticism is a consistent and automatic response and will occur whether you and I are good pastors or not.

Consistent with my concern to shape a given church according to a new vision I have been on the receiving end of criticism for my style of leadership along with a long list of other "concerns," such as my theology, philosophy, organization, interpersonal relationships, family relationships—you name it. I have even had suggestions on what style ties to wear when I preach. One of the fondest memories of my internship was a retired pastor's counsel for me to keep my legs closed, knees touching, when I was on the platform. Chinese water torture could not be more painful than that exercise.

R A Y R O B E R T S

But I do not want to trivialize this discussion of criticism by mentioning the usual, and frankly inane, comments we get every week as we attempt to call our parishioners to God. Criticism hurts. There is no other way to describe it. What I have just gone through has hurt more than anything else in my entire ministry. Skillfully planned to destroy my integrity, these individuals crafted a unique style in their attempts to have me removed as pastor from my congregation. I was slandered, lied about, and campaigned against in a vain attempt to rally support from the majority in order to help God move me to another parish somewhere far, far away. What hurt the most is that some of what they said was true, just true enough to validate their accusations and create a three-month firestorm that is only now dying into embers.

#### Professional issues

Most of us have strong gifts in teaching and caring. Some pastors don't have strong gifts in leadership. However, we are nevertheless placed into the leadership position of our congregations, where this expectation is handed to us. Obviously, this dichotomy of gifts and expectations creates anxiety. Coupled with this anxiety is the more recognizable concern over where God is leading a particular congregation at that time and place. Yet in spite of these matters, vision is cast either by our proactive involvement or reactive entanglement.

Edwin Friedman<sup>3</sup> suggests that no matter how a vision is cast, 78 percent of any system or church will agree or acquiesce to that particular vision. This means that 22 percent of the church are not going to agree or always be agreeable about the direction the church is heading. Thus we will be criticized for too aggressive a leadership style. We will be criticized for too passive a leadership approach. We will be criticized if we find a happy medium. All of this occurs simply because we occupy a certain position with certain leadership expectations.

If you add to this mix our own personal limitation of talents, gifts, and real-life issues, we have handed certain individuals the "tithe-paying right" to criticize us. Our life is open to many of the church members. Every week we must share our philosophical perspectives of God, church, sin, etc., and cannot hide behind an annual sermon preached in 50 different churches. Our theology is suspect if we do not include a pet phrase someone wishes to hear. When we press the boundaries or touch on subjects that have not been discussed publicly, we are

Skillfully

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integrity, these individuals  
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accused of bringing in new theology. All of this is automatic, and it does not take any pastor long to experience these realities. Describing the problem is easy. Living through the dissonance is difficult.

#### Managing criticism

Managing criticism, therefore, is absolutely imperative if you want to succeed in your ministry. From my experience may I suggest the following helpful pointers in handling criticism.

1. *Develop and maintain a support system.* I belong to two small groups; however, they are church members, and I cannot freely share my journey with them. I almost stopped attending these two groups because they were aware of what was happening in the church and wished

to spend inordinate amounts of our group time discussing it. I tried to avoid dominating the group this way. It was more helpful to belong to a peer group of pastors who understood, gave advice, stood with me, and shared my burdens. Their friendship and prayers were invaluable during this crisis time.

I also sought out a licensed therapist and told him, "Help me stay balanced and keep my anger and stress from dominating my life." After all, I had a family to support, a church to lead, sermons to prepare, and whatever else goes into ministry. I did not want to have individuals with less than my best in mind to control my world.

My wife also became a great source of support. Previously she had helped me through significant crisis times and was equipped to handle this most intense confrontation. Obviously, at times most of our wives (if not ourselves) mouth words similar to those of Job's wife. But my wife never expressed such thoughts while I was being attacked. She kindly gave nurture, counsel, and wisdom when I could not see through the maze.

2. *Take time out.* My time-out included getting away from the fray and looking at the big picture. Twice a year I take my Bible and my dog and go to a remote cabin to pray. There is nothing like this weeklong adventure to clear my mind and allow me to see God through the murals He is painting in my congregation and in my own personal life. I could never survive ministry itself, much less a criticism crisis, without seeing the big picture. Unfortunately, last fall when all this was happening to me, I could not schedule time away. However, a speaking engagement overseas allowed me time on the flight over and back as well as during the 12-day absence. That time gave me a sense of God's vision and what was happening. From now on the first option and mandate for me is prayer and reflection. These must be scheduled!

3. *Develop a deeper sense of God.* This is not a cliché designed for spiritual readers

of pastor's magazines. This is me working closely with God. I knew that the battle would be won or lost by the power of God. I am an experienced pastor who knows the ropes and is comfortable with local church politics. I know how to get around, how to move large groups of people toward a common goal, and how to shape the attitudes of the thought leaders of my congregation. But by themselves, none of the techniques would have worked very well in the midst of my

crisis. It was too intense, too designed, too organized, for any of that to have much effect. This was God's battle and God's outcome. My role (and my intense inner battle) was to let God be in charge of this one and not attempt to manage and direct it. This is certainly not my usual *modus operandi*. While the slander and attacks increased, with eager ambassadors soliciting support in the hallways, I learned to back off and let God change hearts and heads.

Through the discipline of crisis, I learned as never before to enter into God's plan and let His power, rather than my professional expertise, be the defining reality. My prayer life entered another phase. I learned that it was God's purpose to bring my church to a crisis of belief. Henry Blackaby states: "When God lets you know what He wants to do through you, it will be something only God can do."<sup>4</sup> God permitted this circumstance in our congregation to bring the church into an awareness of its inadequacies and God's sufficiency. I simply had to learn to enter into that engagement. It was difficult for me to let go of managing the moment and let God be God through it.

4. *Try proactive pastoral intervention.* Eugene Peterson balances a passive "letting God be God" approach with a proactive pastoral intervention with the critics. Every pastor knows that a direct visit or encounter with disaffected individuals is helpful and needful. I had spent hours with the individuals who emerged as leaders in the opposition. I knew their complaints. I had heard their concerns. Most were centered on process. Our church had grown so rapidly that we did not have the time or resources to create the policies needed to handle the changing dynamics. I was already overworking and couldn't do it all myself. The process complaint was actually a smoke screen. The real target was me. They did not like the direction of the church, the variety of approaches and languages created, and the fact that the church was no longer a small, homogeneous group that attended the same functions at the same times. My declarations of wishing to stay long-term and develop a worshipping community leading to proactive engagement with our world was forcing the issue of leadership. When the smoke cleared, this attack upon me as leader was focused and declared. In the process, I recognized I had ignored these people during the previous year or so. I knew I wasn't going to change their minds, so I had decided to move ahead, not taking the time to stay in contact and

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keep in relationship. This was a serious mistake!

Eugene Peterson declares this to be "pastoral sloth."<sup>5</sup> He describes pastoral endurance of, or withdrawal from, fractured relationships not as "being courageous" (as we tend to think it is) and suggests we admit what our problem truly is—sloth. I had more work to do with these people. I was called to pastoral relationship, not agreement or consensus.

I learned the hard, humbling experience of reconnecting relationships that were fractured by the willing abandonment with which I tried to come to those from whom I was distanced. I needed to apologize to them individually. I was not going to debate vision. I was simply going to them, if allowed, to seek forgiveness in that I had let them down pastorally. For those who refused to see me personally, I extended invitations to sit with me while another elder or two were present. When that did not satisfy the disaffected, I extended an invitation to bring their concerns to the board. I wish I could say this has been a glorious success in healing and rebonding; it hasn't. Most people who didn't like me before still don't like me. Nothing has changed . . . except my heart.

5. *Cultivate a dialogue with denominational leadership.* Pastoring in a denominational system requires dialogue with denominational leadership. I have regular appointments with my conference leader to discuss the issues facing my congregation and the effects of our vision. In spite of this dialogue, the tendency for leadership is to try to fix the situation. If this happens, the criticism takes on political overtones that disallow a spiritually based approach to resolution on a local basis. The numbers were "on my side," but the politics would have hurt more than helped. Leadership allowed the discussion to remain on the local level. Words cannot express how important this was to the entire dynamic. If Matthew 18 can be avoided, most human beings will avoid it. If a person

or group can go directly to the conference leader and do an end-around on local church leadership, much is lost and little is gained. There is a time and place for resolution at that level, but most often it is only after the local dynamics have been spiritually and organizationally processed. It may be time for all levels to allow God to teach the lessons He wishes a congregation to learn prior to stepping in and managing a church "discussion."

#### The outcome

The outcome is a very personal one. I have grown in a variety of ways. I learned lessons of managerial detachment as well as relational reattachment. God is more real than ever before. My confidence that our church vision is God-based grew in strength. My valuing of my wife is greater than ever. My church staff and leadership grew while supporting me and I valued their individual walks and perspectives. I once again reassessed my calling to ministry and decided to remain faithful in congregational life.

To be a "priest" is so much more rewarding than anything else I can imagine doing for a life's work. To walk with people, seeing their good as well as their dark side, to know their secrets and remind them of God, to share Jesus' release from the depression of sin—all these energize my professional walk with this congregation in the context of God's glorious grace. God is good. I know it now. I regret questioning it a few months ago. ■

<sup>1</sup>Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987).

<sup>2</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>Peterson, p. 156.

#### Continuing education exercise

1. Is leadership a gift that God has given to me? If not, how does my church find leaders who cast an appropriate God-designed vision?
2. When criticism occurs, how do I manage it personally? How should I?
3. Is my need for conflict avoidance greater than my desire to follow God's vision for my congregation? If so, how do I learn to be God-driven and allow my church to come to a "crisis of belief"?
4. What do I do with my bitterness toward my "enemies"?

#### Suggested reading

Champy, James. *Reengineering Management*. New York: Harper-Collins. Management books come and go, but whatever sources pastors find to enhance their understanding of process, groups, and issues soon to appear on the professional landscape are important. This is one such source.

Erwin, Gayle. *The Jesus Style*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1983. Scriptural pictures of Jesus' interactions with individuals.

George, Carl. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Revell Company, 1991. Discusses issues of church vision and growth.

Spence, Gerry. *How to Argue and Win Every Time*. New York: Martin Press, 1995. A lawyer's perspective, but the chapters on credibility, listening, prejudice, and power of words are imperatives a pastor should read and understand.

# WHO NEEDS PASTORS?

**E**verybody knows that people need pastors! If this is true, then why do fewer and fewer people act like it? If people really valued their pastor, they would find more ways to show their appreciation. Perhaps they would:



*Rich DuBose is the associate director of the Church Resource Center for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

1. Fight over who gets to chair the nominating committee.
2. Call early to reserve a seat for Communion Sabbath.
3. Watch reruns all week of the pastor's latest sermon.
4. Raise the church budget by the first Sabbath of each month.
5. Ask only theological questions that can be answered in five minutes.
6. Give the responsibility of Ingathering to the deacons.
7. Make attendance at church business meetings a test of fellowship.
8. Call the church office to schedule the pastor for a home visit.
9. Write letters to the conference president about everything that's going right.
10. Include golf balls in the church budget.

Seriously, I don't know of any pastors who are holding out for such treatment. More than anything, they just want to know that their ministry counts—that it's making a difference in people's lives.

#### What members want in a pastor

Recently Jim Cress, Ministerial Association secretary of the General Conference, shared eight observations about pastors that

he has gleaned over the years from working with churches.

"1. Will our pastor uplift Jesus Christ in every sermon and make each service alive and interesting—such that we could feel comfortable inviting our friends to attend?"

"2. Will our pastor proclaim the distinctive message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and avoid concentrating on one or two issues that seem to be the pastor's pet concentration?"

"3. Will our pastor support the educational emphasis of our church school, academy, college, etc.? Will our pastor encourage ministry for our young people, both by proclamation and by participation?"

"4. Will our pastor help heal wounds and seek disenfranchised/missing members rather than contributing to further dissension or separationism in our congregation?"

"5. Will our pastor model God's will in the pastoral family rather than preaching one thing and practicing another?"

"6. Will our pastor affirm confidence in the gift of prophecy and the distinctive mission and message of the remnant church?"

R I C H D U B O S E

"7. Will our pastor encourage outreach appropriate for our community, and train, by example, our members to reach out to others?"

"8. What preparation (i.e., educational training) do potential pastors have that prepares them to lead in the increasingly complex challenges our congregation faces?"\*

### Caring for God's "trivia"

Ministry in today's world affords very little in the way of accolades and warm fuzzies. But then, I don't know of many who are in ministry for the perks. That's not to say there aren't some who see it only as a job, and who, with time clock precision, leave their work at the office and consider it an intrusion when the phone rings at home. Those who fit into this category have probably never understood the idea of being "called to ministry." They view it more as a professional pursuit than a life mission.

Those who understand the true meaning of service are willing to put their preferences on hold while they attend to what some call "trivia." They see the importance of little needs and are not afraid to lose themselves in helping people find meaning for their lives.

### Pastors that people need

As a pastor, what do you want to be remembered for? Do you want to be remembered as a great preacher, an effective administrator, or a creative visionary? Do you want to be remembered as a soul winner? These are qualities that many churches covet in a pastor. In truth, there is one quality that is even more highly prized.

First and foremost, people need divinely appointed shepherds who are known for their integrity—leaders whose lives validate what they preach!

When the pressure is on, people aren't interested in hearing sermons that focus on theoretical concepts and philosophical maxims. When people find their lives ravaged by guilt and pain, they look for men and women who can provide hope and healing! They look for pastors who are willing to share God through their personal struggles and triumphs. In a word, they look for pastors who are not afraid to be *authentic*.

The crown jewel of a successful ministry is not a perfect sermon, a full baptistry, or a busy church calendar. It is knowing that the fruits of one's ministry have sprung from a life committed to holiness—whatever the cost. Pastors who demonstrate this kind of commitment will always be needed!

### Questions to ponder

Here are some questions to ponder as you think about your ministry in its past, present, and future tense:

Are you pursuing an experience with Jesus?

Do you sense God's call in your life?

Are you real?

Do you mean what you say?

Do you look people in the eye when you talk with them?

Do you have a genuine interest in the people you serve?

Are you willing to be vulnerable with others?

If you can answer yes to these questions, your members and constituents will probably be very understanding of your weaknesses.

These are not qualities we can put on and take off at a whim. They are core values that are implanted by Christ as we sit at His feet in private Bible study and prayer. Someone once said, "Character is

what you do when you think no one else is watching." We'd be surprised to learn how many people are really watching when we think they aren't. While we don't want to make behavior our focus, our actions often reflect our true inner selves.

When people perceive we are genuine and that the ministry we perform is more than just something we get paid to do, they will need it!

### Caring pastors are here to stay!

There will always be a need for pastors who genuinely care about people's lives, who pray with and for their members, who are not stuck in a quagmire of ecclesiastical squabbling, who understand the difference between a "call" and a job, who live what they preach, and who know how to laugh and weep. If our church structure completely collapsed and all salary funding dried up, there would still be a need for true pastors. There will always be a need for those who have committed their lives to nurturing broken people and feeding hungry souls. ■

\*See *PlusLine Access*, January-February 1996, a newsletter for people involved in frontline ministry.

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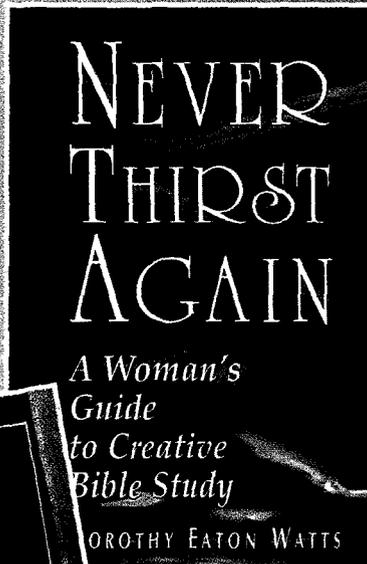
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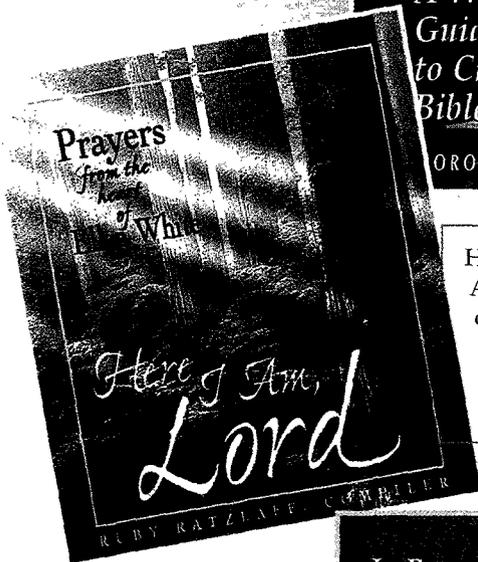
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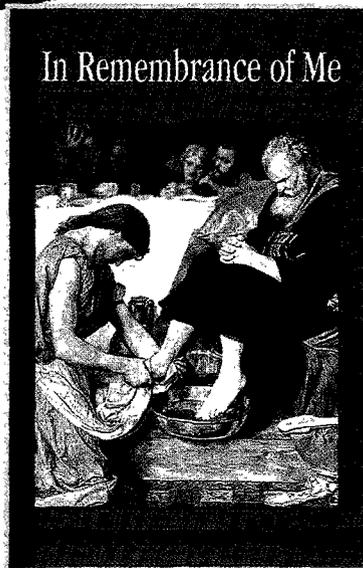
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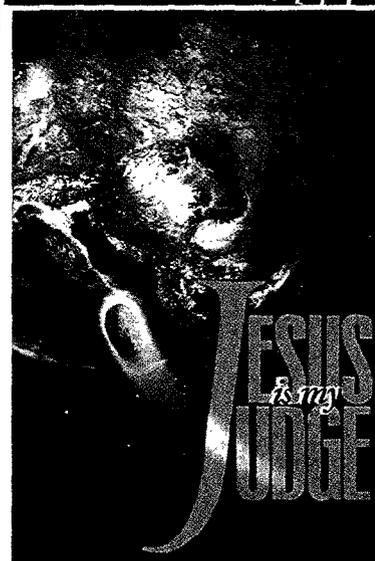
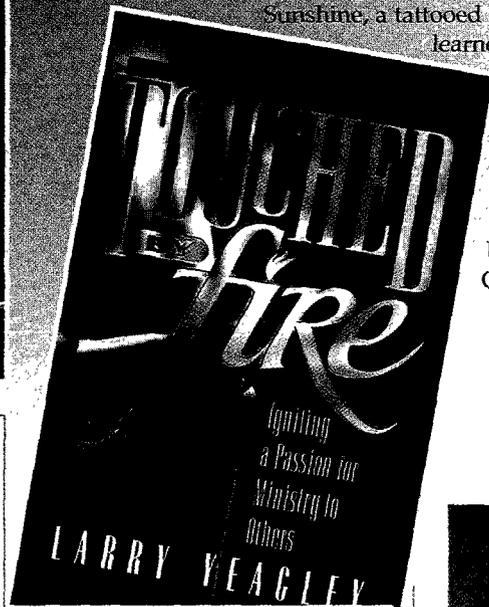
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# JESUS: THE LEADER WHO FAILED

It had been a bad week. Three church members had gotten on my case, the board meeting had been a struggle from beginning to end, there had been a teenage suicide, and my sermon had flopped.



*George R. Knight is professor of church history at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

Maybe I was in the wrong business. Maybe I wasn't cut out to be a pastor, let alone a church leader. *Perhaps, I thought, I ought to just hang up my gloves and call it quits. Maybe I simply ought to face the fact that I've failed.*

## The failure of Jesus

The good news is that Jesus, the greatest preacher and leader who ever lived, also "failed."

Just think about it for a moment. He had only 12 in His primary congregation. They'd not only heard His sermons; they'd lived with Him nearly constantly for three years. Yet not one of them had really grasped the message He had sought to teach them.

Not only had they failed to understand His repeated predictions of His death and resurrection, but not one of them appears to have been converted before His crucifixion. One betrayed Him, His chief disciple cursed and swore that he didn't know Him, and all of them disputed as to "which of them was to be regarded as the greatest,"

even while He was telling them that He would die for them. His disciples were still hung up on this topic as He and they trod the path to Gethsemane (Matt. 26:69-75; Luke 22:14-53; cf. Matt. 20:17-28). They hadn't even made it to first base. Yet it was to these very disciples that Jesus had willed the leadership of His church.

Talk about failure! Jesus had come to the end of His ministry, and it doesn't appear that any of His disciples had actually heard Him. Three years of intensive teaching, with no converts in the inner circle. Three years of preaching, and His audience had failed to respond.

How would you have felt in such a situation? Would you die for such people? And yet the unconverted disciples were just the tip of Jesus' failure iceberg. As He hung on the cross, passersby "derided him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'" In a similar fashion the leaders of the Jews "mocked him,

saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, "I am the Son of God." ' Even "the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way" (Matt. 27:39-44, RSV).

Would you have died for such people? I wouldn't. Had I been Jesus, I'd have come down from my cross and shown them exactly who I was. With a flick of my finger I would have obliterated such a wayward "church" in a nuclear conflagration, but maybe that would have been too quick for them! I think roasting them at a slow sizzle would have been more effective in getting my message across. None of them would have forgotten that object lesson.

In short, I don't think I would have died for either the deaf disciples or the wayward crowds. But Jesus did.

And yet He went to His grave an apparent failure. If His leadership and ministry had been judged simply by what meets the human eye and is valued by typical human standards, Jesus should have folded up His sermon notes and turned in His credentials.

#### I don't want to be like Jesus

Christians hear repeatedly that they ought to be like Jesus. But in this arena I really find it difficult to want to be like Jesus. I don't want to be a Christian leader who fails. I don't do well with discouraging days and unruly, thickheaded people. I get depressed all too quickly and begin to wonder if the world (or at least the ministry) wouldn't be better off without me.

To put it mildly, I like success. In fact, I thrive on it. And I don't mean success in the by-and-by. I mean success today, where I can see it, smell it, savor it, grasp it, touch it, and best of all, count it and report it to the conference office or any broader audience I can find. "Look at me!" I want to shout as I put my accomplishments on exhibit.

I don't want to be like Jesus. I don't want to be like the leader who failed. I want to be greater than Jesus. I want everything I touch to be a shining success. The only problem with that desire is that it hasn't come true. I

have had to face the same problems and the same kinds of people that Jesus faced. And the sad truth is that too often I have had the same kind of results. I haven't been greater than Jesus. I also have failed.

#### Success beyond failure

Yet I have discovered that apparent failure and ultimate failure are not the same thing. I still remember my first evangelistic series. It took place in Corsicana, Texas, a town of 26,000 people with an Adventist church of 12 members. And of those 12, nearly all were in their 70s, and only one was a male. I was 26 at the time. Now, I have nothing against females. After all, my mother is one. And I have nothing against

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older people. In fact, I am becoming one. But I desperately desired to have young Adventists of both sexes in my meetings to serve as contact points for my hoped-for converts.

To my joy, there was a young Adventist man attending the local community college. I visited him in his room, prayed with him, and pleaded with him to attend my meetings. He never did. I failed, and for some reason this was a failure that really stung.

In fact, by that time I had managed to fail at quite a few things. As a result of those failures, in the spring of 1969 I turned in my ministerial credentials. Unlike Jesus, I

quit. I had even decided to give up Adventism and Christianity.

A couple years later I was driving across north Texas and detoured off the interstate to buy something for my wife at the grocery store in Keene, the location of an Adventist college. As I was going through the front door I was stopped by a young man.

"Aren't you George Knight?" he queried. I admitted to that fact.

"Do you remember me?" he shot back.

Now, at that point I usually try to fake it, but I was so discouraged that I just told him the truth.

"You visited me in my dorm room in Corsicana. That visit was the turning point in my life. I am now studying to be a Seventh-day Adventist minister."

I didn't tell him what I was doing.

The point is obvious. I had been successful but had not known it. I had planted seeds that had germinated underground where I couldn't see them.

My problem was (and still is) that I not only wanted to plant but also to cultivate, water, and harvest, all in three weeks. I can't tolerate failure or even delay that appears to be failure. I want immediate success. I don't want to be like Jesus. I want to be greater than Jesus.

What I had to learn is that even though one may plant, it is others who water, and still others who harvest. It seems I have to learn again and again that it is the Holy Spirit who is quietly working in hearts at each stage of development, and it is always the Spirit's work to do the really important work within the souls of the people to whom I minister.

It was the same way in Christ's ministry, and this is why by all outward standards, He appeared to be a failure. Even though He had planted and watered, it wasn't until after His resurrection and Pentecost that fruit came to maturity on every side. This kind of experience in ministry is also to be ours.

#### A special promise for pastors and other Christian leaders

One of the most meaningful promises in Ellen White's writings is on this very topic. Speaking of the resurrection morning, she notes that the angel who watched over us in life will then inform us on the "history of

divine interposition" in our "individual life, of heavenly cooperation in every work for humanity!

"All the perplexities of life's experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony.

"There all who have wrought with unselfish spirit will behold the fruit of their labors. . . . Something of this we see here. But how little of the result of the world's noblest work is in this life manifest to the doer! How many toil unselfishly and unweariedly for those who pass beyond their reach and knowledge!" Parents and other Christian leaders "lie down in their last sleep, their lifework seeming to have been wrought in vain; they know not that their faithfulness has unsealed springs of blessing that can never cease to flow; only by faith they see" those they have worked with "become a benediction and an inspiration to their fellow men, and the influence repeat itself a thousandfold. Many a worker sends out into the world messages of strength and hope and courage, words that carry blessing to hearts in every land; but of the results he, toiling in loneliness and obscurity, knows little. So gifts are bestowed, burdens are borne, labor is done. Men sow the seed from which, above their graves, others reap blessed harvests. They plant trees, that others may eat the fruit. They are content here to know that they have set in motion agencies for good. In the hereafter the action and reaction of all these will be seen."<sup>1</sup>

What a promise! What a reality!

We need to see that as a preacher and as a leader, Jesus was only an apparent failure. He was also the world's greatest success. He was able to persevere in the face of discouragement because He saw beyond the mere physical evidence.

#### An inside view of a day with Jesus

We need to do our ministry with the same view of things. We need to look at our own leadership and ministry in much the way the Holy Spirit, in the gospel record, looked at the life and ministry of Jesus. Given the purposes of the Gospels, it often seems to us that the three years Jesus spent

with the disciples were packed with miracles and great teachings and amazing successes.

However, I have a sneaking suspicion that the daily ministry of Jesus looked quite different from inside a disciple's sandals. To them, many a day with Jesus was merely another day of heat, dust, and sweat. Does Jesus have to walk so far? Doesn't He know we are hungry? And do I have to walk with that loud and boisterous Peter, with James and John, who had the gall to bring their mother (probably Jesus' aunt<sup>2</sup>) to try to get them the right-and-left-hand places in the kingdom, with pushy Judas and the rest of the gripers and whiners?

From the inside their days may not have looked much different from ours. Similarly, we—like Jesus—need to look beyond the daily perspective that contains the discouragements and problems we find in the church and in our lives, to the God who is working behind the scenes in spite of human failings and weaknesses.

#### Our responsibility

Our responsibility is not to worry about ultimate victory, but to do our part today. I remember more than 20 years back when I was just beginning as a young professor at Andrews University. As a rosy-eyed young educational philosopher with revolutionary views, it had been my hope to get

the whole place reformed and straightened out in short order. But the reformation wasn't progressing as rapidly as I had hoped. In fact, not much had changed since my arrival. I was ready to resign and do "something useful."

But by that time I had learned a few things from the "failures" of Jesus. I finally went to God on my knees and committed myself to staying "in the work" if He would just let me touch one soul a year with His gospel of truth and love.

He has kept His end of the bargain. In fact, in some years I have been able to touch more than one through God's grace. Over the years the greatest inspiration in my ministry has been the example of Jesus, the leader who failed but who succeeded so amazingly. ■

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 305, 306.

<sup>2</sup>George R. Knight, *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Boise: Pacific Press Pub. Assn.), p. 280.

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# GETTING PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER

**H**ave you ever wondered why it is so difficult to get people to work together? Even in the church? Paul told us that not all can be an eye or a hand or an ear in the body; if that were the case, what would the body be (see 1 Cor. 12:14ff.)? Apparently the apostle struggled with getting people to work together.



*Doug Burrell, a Baptist pastor from Rome, Georgia, is the director of Discovery Resources.*

He wrote to the Corinthian Christians about the importance of honoring each part of the body. He emphasized that although every organ and part of the body is different, each part plays an important role in helping the body to function and flourish.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions to help you experience greater cooperation from people of your congregation, even if they are different from you.

#### **Recognize that every person is motivated**

Paul knew something that every pastor would do well to consider. He knew that *everyone is motivated*. However, we are not all motivated by the same needs. With a little reflection you can call to mind someone who is motivated by needs that are different from yours. One church member may be motivated by the need for being with people and planning a class fellowship while another gets really excited over a 10-week study of "tent stakes." One person is moved by accomplish-

ing tasks, while another is moved by keeping the peace. This is so because we all tend to operate from one of four primary motivating needs: results, social recognition, stability, or accuracy. These basic needs express themselves in a DISC model. DISC is an acronym for *four clearly identifiable styles of behavior*: dominant (need for results), influencing (need for social recognition), steadiness (need for stability), and conscientiousness (need for accuracy).\*

#### **Be aware that people do things for their reasons, not yours**

It might be nice if everyone wanted to do things just like you. But that's not the case! We all have our own specific motivators. These are based on how we perceive the world around us, what lifelong strategy we have devised to cope with the world, and what kind of people we meet in specific situations. Many times pastors are unsuccessful in leading because we appeal to people

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in the wrong way. We may be asking people to do things for our reasons and not theirs. There is an alternative way.

### Consider people's needs

Hebrews 10:24 (RSV) directs us to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." There is a temptation toward trying to manipulate people to our way of doing things. However, that results in resistance (and resentment). A more effective way to get folks to join you is to appeal to their preference for results, social recognition, stability, or accuracy. If you will "consider" their needs and preferences before you seek to "stir them up," you will gain so much more cooperation.

### Lead to meet people's needs

Ministry offers opportunities every day to apply this DISC model of behavioral styles. If you are a pastor whose primary need is for results, you may have difficulty with the chairperson of your board whose primary need is for stability. You want results and thrive on change. The chairper-

son wants to make sure everyone is happy and the waters are not stirred up. If you are going to lead this person, you must appeal to him or her on the basis of his or her needs. You will need to slow down, be flexible, and show concern. As you do, you will appeal to his or her needs and be more likely to gain cooperation. At the least you will have respect, even if you do not win the chairperson over on the particular issue at hand. After all, there will be other issues to consider at another time. You will have built trust and goodwill. He or she will be more likely to see your consideration and be willing to trust your leadership in the future. Meanwhile, you will have proved yourself to be a worthy leader.

Of course, we could also consider the case in which the styles are reversed. The pastor might display the steadiness style and the chairperson might express the dominant style. In this case the chairperson may be impatient for action or results, whereas the pastor sees the wisdom of not forcing issues until the congregation is less likely to experience upset and conflict. Again, you will be more effective by

recognizing your church members' needs and appealing to them with that in mind.

### Reap the positive benefits

Learning more about the needs of your people and how you can appeal to them based on their needs has so many positive benefits. Doing this can help you gain greater cooperation in the congregation you serve. It will also help you to avoid unnecessary conflict, gain the respect and appreciation of those you pastor, and advance the cause of Christ more effectively. In short, you will be a more credible and effective pastor. ■

\*The DISC model of behavior is based on the work of William M. Marston and John G. Geier. It helps people understand their behavioral tendencies in particular situations so they can adapt their behavior to be more effective. As such, it is a great tool for enhancing ministry effectiveness and helping people in relationships to understand each other and meet each other's needs more effectively.

*This article is the first in a five-part series.*

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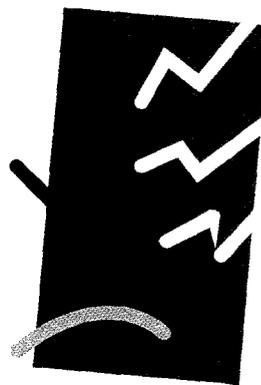
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# YOUR PASTORAL VISIONING PROCESS

**T**he farther we motored west, the more intense the pain in my stomach grew. Such fire in the belly was not supposed to be part of our family's "vacation of a lifetime." The idea of traveling 6,000 miles on a grand tour of five national parks had come to me months earlier in a flash of inspiration, something akin to a vision. Our family had never attempted any getaway like it before.



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Now I was suffering from this midjourney gastrointestinal earthquake. As we entered Nebraska I finally caved in and sought a physician. After poking and listening, the wise old physician admonished me, "It's nothing but stress. This vacation is going to set you back months if you don't ease up and relax." As I walked out of his office with 10 pounds of free Maalox and Mylanta samples, I wondered if this vacation vision was really worth it after all. Making it a reality had become one hassle after another.

Three days later I stood atop the Rocky Mountains, peering out upon herds of elk, natural carpets of multicolored tundra, and an endless chain of snowcapped peaks. The vision had come true. Back home after three weeks, I opened the car glove compartment, and out tumbled a half-used bottle of stomach medicine. I didn't throw it away, but I knew I would gladly revisit this vision all over again.

Visioning is a hot topic today, and rightly so. Over the past several years I have seen too many Adventist pastors try to develop a church vision only to wind up discouraged with the results. They enter the visioning process with great expectations, then eventually see it get bogged down, derailed, or tossed on the trash heap with other aborted efforts to bring change. The visioning process is often hindered by overlooked factors that can be as distracting as a 70-mile-per-hour crosswind. Identifying those hindrances and dealing with them effectively is a vital role at all levels of church leadership. Here is a partial list of visioning hurdles that I have found significant in my pastoral work.

#### **Lack of leadership**

Visioning requires leadership. However, many good pastors are far better "doers" than

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they are visionaries. They are effective at preaching, teaching, and visitation, but do not possess the organizational skills needed to lead a church through change.

Never mind. Leadership is effective when it is team leadership. It is the Jesus strategy revisited. Christ built a nucleus of people who gave their hearts to the vision. They then became the foundation and catalyst for change. Whatever the local pastor's own organizational capabilities, the one leadership role he or she cannot delegate is to identify and build a team that can both launch the visioning process and shepherd its implementation over the long haul. That team can supplement and complement the pastor's strengths and weaknesses. Pastors and their team can outline the new vision to their congregations for effective collaboration at various levels.

Team effort requires a high degree of trust from pastors and a candid willingness to admit their own limitations. Teamwork also involves ministering through others, which is often much more difficult than doing it yourself. Team building takes time and does not show up on statistical reports, but without it the visioning process is usually a house of cards.

#### Lack of follow-through

Imagine the American president, let us say, in the early 1800s giving his stirring challenge to put a man on the moon. Suppose he announced that gripping vision long before the invention of airplanes, radios, rocket engines, a national space organization, and the hundreds of other things that were necessary for the Apollo spacecraft to blast off into space. That vision may have created interest and enthusiasm among a few for a while, and then it would have faded quickly as people saw little progress toward implementation. The president could have talked indefinitely about the importance of going to the moon, but that wouldn't have gotten anyone there.

Similarly, great church visions require realistic, detailed plans and effective structures to carry them out, or they simply end up on the religious dumpheap of nifty slogans. Many churches put enormous effort into creating captivating vision statements that gather dust in someone's desk drawer for years. The problem is that our traditional

strength of teaching and proclaiming truth can become our nemesis if we rely on that as our primary strategy for making the new vision a reality. A pastor cannot simply preach visions into existence. Implementing a vision requires ongoing, painstaking attention to the practical, step-by-step details of how actually to get from here to there.

#### Exhaustion

Another leadership role that is crucial to the pastor's visioning ability is modeling commitment to the vision by consistently giving it high priority on the pastoral schedule. This endeavor is too central to church life to be squeezed in between other appointments. This kind of commitment can, however, be the source of some pain for the pastor. If through the visioning pro-

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cess and its implementation a pastor simply adds other weighty responsibilities to what he or she is already doing, it can be a recipe for ulcers and migraine headaches. Many pastors give up on change because of exhaustion.

Central to God's vision for the church is balanced, wholistic living. Burning the candle at both ends, not having enough time to make sand castles with your children or to go jogging with your spouse, contradicts the very vision the Spirit wants us to implement. One pastor had what I call "odometer-itis." He was very proud of how many miles he put on his weary car each month, as if that somehow proved his worth. As I think of the work of ministry,

I must say that I have come to the place where I am more impressed with a pastor who works 40 hours a week building and staffing a spiritual health-care system than one who works nonstop racing all over town, personally administering biblical first-aid. Five hours pursuing a great vision is worth a hundred maintaining the status quo. A few more hours spent organizing and specifically delegating the implementation of the vision process, along with other tasks and roles, are worth even more.

Ministers are kept on a treadmill of reactive ministry mainly because of the epidemic of pastor dependence that infects so many of our churches. In such a rat race, pastors can never "find" time for visioning; they'll have to make it. The initial aspects of the visioning process should therefore be focused on helping pastors offload and delegate certain portions of their ministry to other members. It will require educating members, particularly leaders, on the biblical role of pastors and the priesthood of all believers.

#### Getting fresh ideas

Periodically I gather the members together to glean their ideas for a better future for our church. No matter how frequently we meet, everything distills down to the same old familiar list of programs: 5-day plans, stress-control meetings, cooking schools, Revelation seminars, etc. These are all excellent programs. The problem arises when local churches come to depend on higher organizations to do their dreaming, thinking, and planning. In our eagerness to provide prepackaged materials and resources for the local church, we must be careful that we are not creating an unhealthy dependence that saps local responsibility, creativity, and initiative.

Creativity is vital to the visioning process. Coloring outside the lines is essential in the search for new solutions to nagging old problems. Simply working harder at implementing ineffective, mediocre programs will not produce better, more lasting results. Getting the congregation involved in the whole process of visioning and planning enables us to tune in to the unique ministries God has in mind for our own local community.

### Unbalanced measures of success

Another hindrance to the visioning process can be an imbalanced emphasis on *quantitative* measures of success. Defining effectiveness primarily in terms of "how much" and "how many" inevitably circumscribes and constricts people's thinking.

To illustrate, imagine a society that defines "successful parenting" primarily by how many babies couples produce. Parents who have 10 children are deemed far more "successful" than those who give birth to a mere two or three. In such a system, people would logically put great emphasis on baby showers and care far less about how well the children ultimately turn out. Suppose instead that they redefine "successful parenting" to include a *major qualitative* emphasis on growing those babies into mature adults who function well in society and have outstanding families of their own. All of a sudden our minds are open to a host of

new issues, challenges, and opportunities.

Likewise, congregations need to find the proper balance between quantity and quality, numbers and nurture. Christ structured His entire ministry on the principle that quality produces quantity rather than the other way around. Jesus built His church by growing a few followers in depth who could then multiply themselves by growing and equipping still others. Sadly, His ingenious multiplication strategy now lies in mothballs, even though it was a method that gave qualitative issues their rightful place in the scheme of things. Unless we espouse a broader, more wholistic view of success, the visioning process will operate within too narrow a playing field and yield limited, less-than-satisfying results.

### Hidden fear

Many pastors choose not to give themselves fully to implementing a new vision

for fear of negative fallout. They fear stirring up a potential hornet's nest among certain members. They also fear losing the confidence of conference leadership if the new vision causes some disgruntled members to stop attending or results in a temporary dip in baptisms. They may also simply fear failure in such a venture.

Conference leaders can provide invaluable help by fostering training, setting up a pastoral support network, and making an open, unequivocal commitment to the principles on which a new local vision is based. They also must create an environment in which visioning is highly valued and regularly commended.

So having an interest in visioning is common; making visions come true is not. Progress depends not so much on how fast we travel, but on how well we deal with difficulties and keep journeying faithfully toward a great purpose. ■

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# LESSONS FROM EVANGELISM IN PAKISTAN

**A**fter holding evangelistic meetings in a number of places in Pakistan in February, we returned last May to see how those who had been baptized were doing. We also wanted to find out if the “seed” sown in the hearts of those who had shown interest but had not been baptized was bearing fruit.



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*Pat Boyle is a pastor from England.*

The visit was encouraging. In each place the number who had gone back to their previous way of living was small. Of more than 400 persons baptized, about 7 percent had problems. Almost all of those who found it difficult to attend worship regularly on Sabbaths were in close contact with either the local pastor or some local church members. Not one was hostile to us or to the church.

In each place we visited we were warmly welcomed. In one village we were overwhelmed by the people. In this village the ADRA team had helped get a very sick woman with a heart condition hospitalized. This action had saved her life. There was great respect for the Seventh-day Adventists, who gave help to everyone irrespective of their faith or background. We were told, “No one else is so unselfish.” This service without partiality greatly helped us in our ministry. ADRA can bring a valuable plus to evangelism.

As in February, so in May—the emphasis in our work was on leading men and

women, boys and girls, to saving faith in Jesus, to obedience to God’s commandments, to baptism, church membership, service, and witness.

The local pastors gathered for a special workers’ meeting. We visited their churches and examined those who wished to be baptized. We explained to the prospective candidates what the nonnegotiable requirements for baptism are. Arrangements were then made for baptismal services at three locations.

## Reaping after sowing

The work was greater than the time available to complete it. Requests to visit them came from more places than time and energy allowed. Operating under constraints requires the concentration of resources and flexibility in order to be productive. One particular incident illustrates some of the difficulties we encountered.

On the last Wednesday before returning to the United Kingdom, we were to visit a specific area. We could not do so. The next

BORGE SCHANTZ AND PAT BOYLE

day, early in the morning, the leader of the group we were unable to visit came to see us. He was visibly disturbed at our failure to be with his people. He had gathered a large group for us to speak with, and we had failed to come. We explained our problem to him. Then in detail we told him the message of salvation and what was involved in baptism. We commissioned him in Christ's name to return and tell his people what we had told him. He was moved to tears and embraced us, and we prayed with him. We then went on with the visiting planned for that day.

God's ways are strange but purposeful. Because of a death in a village we visited, it proved impossible to complete our work there. As a direct consequence we were able to visit the village of the leading man who had come to us that morning. We arrived around 8:30 p.m. and found our brother. He was very happy to see us. In a short time he had gathered 40 people in the "courtyard" of his house, and we spoke to them.

The situation presented quite a picture. The people sat down, women on one side, and men on the other. The ubiquitous dogs were present, along with a couple goats, a buffalo, and the hens scratching in the yard. An electric light bulb gave off minimal illumination. The moon overhead was bright in a star-filled sky. Eager faces looked up at us, waiting to hear what we had to say.

In such a setting we told the gospel story. We explained the way of salvation and what is required for baptism and church membership. Before concluding and telling of the heaven God has prepared for the redeemed, we asked, "Are there any questions?" There were several. One came from a lady: "Some people offer sacrifices of sheep and goats. Should we eat these?" It was a strange question. Very simply we explained the central idea of sacrifices, pointing the people to the one and only Sacrifice who can do for them what no other could: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, RSV). Then the lady said, "In all my life nobody has ever told me such beautiful things."

We were aware that here amid the poverty God's Holy Spirit was present. The offer of Jesus as the loving Saviour has power

to melt and move human hearts to faith. We realized the graciousness of God. At that moment we felt that we would not change places with an angel in heaven. This was gospel ministry. Here was the converting force of Christ. Here was the wonderful power of Christ and His cross. Here was salvation.

Returning to the hotel we shared the experience with our brethren. They shared with us similar experiences. We felt blessed beyond measure. In some small way we knew that God had used us in making Christ known.

**A**n elderly  
*blind lady made her way to the  
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#### The baptismal joy

The last Friday came. Baptisms were to be held in three different locations. People who had not been baptized in February had now decided for baptism. Three in particular stood out. From the group we had studied with the previous night, the leader we originally spoke to stepped forward for baptism. He embraced us, and as he confessed his faith in Jesus as his Saviour we baptized him. Later we learned that most of the people he gathered together were neglected Christians of another denomination and that they had come to observe and learn more about the Seventh-day Adventist faith.

A middle-aged man came forward. He had serious injuries to his limbs. During the February meetings, he had come forward asking for prayer. Now he could walk quite well. He climbed into the baptismal tank, and we immersed him. He came out of the

water, shouting "Hallelujah, hallelujah." His rejoicing was infectious.

An elderly blind lady made her way to the pool. She was helped into the water. Looking at her sightless eyes, we sensed her need, her hope in coming to Jesus. She confessed Jesus as her Saviour. We told her, "When Jesus returns He will give you a new pair of eyes. The first thing you will see is His beautiful face." We baptized her and realized afresh how precious and wonderful is Jesus and His salvation.

#### Overcoming difficulties

We received information that the next day, Sabbath, a national strike was going to be called. It would paralyze the whole nation. It became imperative that we return to Karachi that night. A baptism was planned for the Sabbath afternoon at a central location, and we had to be there. This news required us to rearrange our program. With some inconvenience we made our way back to Karachi and arrived late Friday night.

On Sabbath morning it became clear that the strike had been effective. Nothing moved on the roads, and no one came for the baptism. This was disappointing. After a great deal of effort in February and the intervening months and now in May, the work appeared to have been frustrated. What could be done?

It has been observed that "difficulties do not disappear before a halting spirit." However, there is a difference between leadership and administration. In this particular instance it would not have been considered unreasonable simply to accept the fact that because of circumstances beyond our control, the baptism had to be postponed. The field president was not going to be defeated. Nor would he accept that nothing could be done. After sundown, when it became possible to drive, he borrowed the field minibus and drove us into the city, where we visited pastors and elders and told them that the baptism would take place the next day, Sunday, at 5:00 p.m. They should bring their candidates into the central location. After hours of nightmare driving we finally got to bed early Sunday morning.

Would anyone come for the baptism? We had agreed to meet at 5:00 p.m. for the baptism. At 2:30 p.m. a group arrived. It was

agreed that they should be examined and baptized rather than wait until 5:00 p.m., when the others were expected. What happened that Sunday afternoon was spectacular. Groups of candidates arrived at irregular intervals, and after examination they were baptized.

It was unlike anything we might do in the West. There was no formal procedure. No sermon. No hymns. No voting into fellowship. No presentation of certificates, etc. What happened was a manifestation of the true "communion of saints." Men and women under the direction of the Holy Spirit presented themselves for baptism in order to follow Christ. It was a wonderful scene. The newly baptized, their families, and the church members were spread across the field. At the same time more people were coming to be baptized. There was a marvelous sense of freedom, spontaneity, and joy that blessed all who were present.

Formalism in religious life and worship can lock out the presence, power, and joy of the Holy Spirit. In this respect, there is much the West can learn from the East. We must be open and sensitive to the freedom the Holy Spirit can bring. Sharing as we did in the fellowship of the newly baptized, the regular church members, and the pastors was a taste of what the apostolic witness and experience must have been.

The manner in which a great difficulty had been overcome and how it was turned into a great joy was a sharp reminder that faith can always find a way forward, whatever the difficulties. A strong faith with decisive action is an essential component of a progressive evangelistic work.

#### Planning for the future

Now, what about the future? We selected seven young men, one from each of the areas where we labored. These men were to be helped, through a scholarship plan, to attend the Pakistan Adventist Seminary for one year to train for gospel work. Funds for the scholarships came from those involved in the evangelistic outreach, with double commitment coming from a group of Danish ladies who were involved. The seven young men from each area were required to make personal contributions to their fees, which for them was not an insubstantial amount. The college and union are also contributing.

The plan sends a message—we want the work to continue. The work will not end because we are no longer there. It encourages young men from the communities to commit themselves to the work of spreading the gospel.

#### Simple means for doing the work

In such settings the real work of evangelism comes to life. Four activities consume and energize the workers—prayer, preaching, visitation, and baptism. Nothing else has a claim upon their time and interest. The Lord blesses. Men and women find salvation and join the church. They go out and witness and prepare for a soon coming Saviour. The work advances.

Perhaps the most important lesson we in the West can learn from the East is the simplicity of the Christian mission. Our work is not complicated and difficult. It is simple though profound. It does not require

large sums of money. It is not essential to have modern technology, sophisticated methods, extensive levels of higher education, and tightly ordered levels of administration. Though each and all of them have a proper place, none of them are essential.

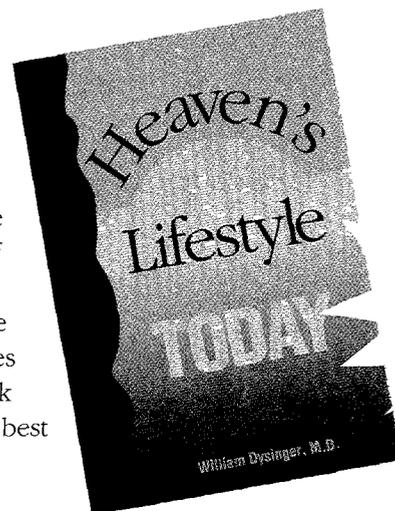
Living Christians who know, love, serve, and are faithful witnesses for Christ are the essential component that is most effective in the hands of the Holy Spirit. "When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life."\*

\*Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 77.

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My ex-husband is in prison on a 50-year conviction for murder. Since he's been in prison, he has come to know Jesus as his Savior. He began to talk to me about the Bible and Jesus, and he just wouldn't quit! I began to pay attention and I started to read the Bible. Thank you for sending me the DISCOVER Guides. They have helped me a lot.

— Indiana

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## Spiritual Leadership

Continued from page 9

to be good enough. It was many years into my ministry that I had a revelation of Jesus in which He showed me that my salvation was based on who He was and what He had done and not on anything I did.

It took years of struggle to replace the old ways of thinking and ministering with the new gospel orientation. As that process was taking place, I began to yearn to know Jesus intimately, but had little guidance as to how that might happen. With a great deal of apprehension, I registered for a retreat offered by a local ecumenical retreat center. During that retreat intimacy began to develop, and I was helped to understand how to create rhythms in my life that would allow that intimacy to grow.

Now, several years later, I am beginning to understand how Paul could have a passion to know Jesus. But I can also say that I haven't already obtained all that I want, but that "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Phil. 3:12).

At age 25 Thomas Wolfe fell madly in love with Aline Bernstein, almost 10 years his senior. On one occasion he wrote her, "I will love you all the days of my life, and when I die if they cut me open they will find one name written on my brain and in my heart. It will be yours." It would be the same for those of us who aspire for really spiritual leadership. The name Jesus would be imprinted there so deeply that even death could not erase it.

It's the Jesus model that is needed in the church of the nineties, a leadership that isn't modeled on the power games of the world, but on the Servant Leader, Jesus. We must each of us hear that question "Do you love Me?" as being central to all our ministry, because it's only when we're seriously committed to Jesus that we can begin to relate to hurting and desperately needy people. ■

\*All Scripture passages in this article are quoted from the New International Version.

\*See Ben Campbell Johnson, *Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).

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**N**o doubt he would have gone far if he had not gone bad. He had unlimited potential, except for the tragedy he

inflicted upon himself.

Humble origins were betrayed by high-octane ambitions. He grew up in a humid little backwater, a couple of hours' drive from the tropical coastal city where every aspiring fellow hoped his ship would come in. Townspeople back home considered him the local success story—until he went astray.

Of course his career didn't start out bad. He was somewhat different than the usual but on the fast track to success. He eagerly grasped the fame and wealth that one can expect with outstanding talent. After all, when he evaluated the lethargy of lesser competitors, it was easy to reason that he was worth all the extra money he paid himself beyond reasonable wages. He was unique, and others would soon discover his importance. As for those who failed to affirm his valuable labors, he would curse them or resort to force to obtain his objectives.

As a son of prominence in his small hometown, the embarrassment was keen when he turned away from his family's tradition of selfless service. It was particularly painful when he criticized those who remained within the framework of traditional experience as being indolent, self-content, and self-satisfied. He damned them as gluttons even as he robbed them. His arrogance was exceeded only by his greed.

But what's this? Now he seeks restoration. Now he says he wants again the faith of his father, parading across the same bridge he had tried to burn down. Now he wants to feel the warm embrace of the group he has so viciously attacked and robbed. He seeks acceptance and eagerly seeks reinstatement into the

society whose doors he had shut against himself.

This is not his first time to demand reestablishment in his former spiritual community. In fact, on several occasions his rituals of self-reform have sparked skepticism; time after time he has proved his critics correct. Again and again he has disappointed those who hoped his conversion might be kosher. In fact, these repeated failures have confirmed their concept of him as being—incurable.

So what would make the difference this time? How can anyone certify this change as the real thing? What sets this

## Restoration requires reformation

JAMES A. CRESS

latest episode apart from the opportunistic ventures that have grown out of his previous crusades to make things right with his family, his church, and his community?

He still resides in the luxurious house bought with funds stolen from those who trusted him most. He still operates his business as the same entrepreneurial genius he has prided himself to be. He still plies his trade and seeks to renovate his own kingdom even as he pursues restoration to the kingdom of grace.

So how could anyone trust this time to be different than all the others? The answer lies in that cryptic statement of Jesus, the teacher from Nazareth: "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20). To which Ellen White comments:

"There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, confess his sins, . . . such were the effects that in former years followed seasons of religious awakening. Judged by their fruits, they were known to be blessed of God in the salvation of men and the uplifting of humanity."\*

Interesting statement. Penetrating insight. Conversion will be evidenced by fruit. The result of new life in Christ is a new life in the community. Lip service is real if and only if words are backed up with action. To talk the talk, you must walk the walk. Restoration follows reformation.

No wonder the converted thief Zacchaeus publicly announces: "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8, NIV).

No excuses.

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No papering over past misbehavior with protests of good intentions.

Plain and simple, restoration means restoration—four times over for Zacchaeus.

So it is that genuine conversion is confirmed by genuine restoration. If this means impoverishing himself or divesting himself of all he possesses, the reformed thief will recompense his victims.

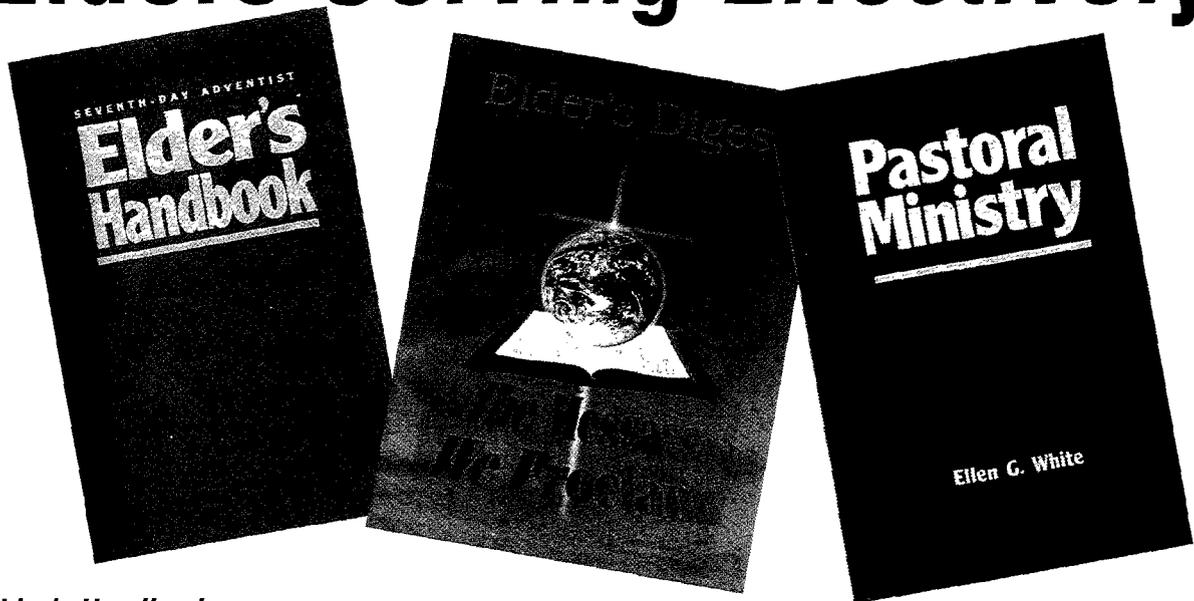
Perhaps he cannot reclaim malicious words spoken, but he can surely repay looted lucre. Jesus works the miracle of salvation, and Zacchaeus responds with the miracle of restoration times four.

Christ was right! By their fruits you shall know them. The fruits of the Spirit are evidenced by Spirit-filled responses.

Not a bad example for those seeking restoration today! ■

\* Ellen G. White, . *The Great Controversy* (Boise: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888), pp. 462, 463.

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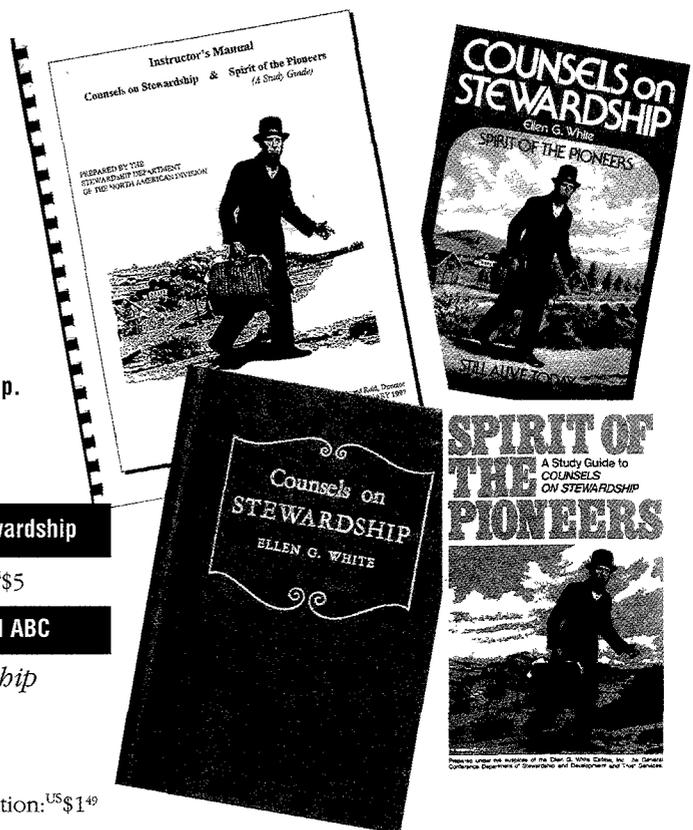
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