

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

April 1998



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Ministry

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The pastor after a moral crisis

Commendation to Roger Nixon (August 1997) for the courage to confront head-on a complex and challenging issue. How tragic indeed when a pastor flaunts clearly established ethical norms, gives in to Satan's allurements, and in a fleeting moment of madness, forgets his wife, children, and his congregation for a few scraps of forbidden pleasure.

Equally tragic is the uncaring and black-and-white, legalistic way such pastors are frequently dealt with by church administration. To be bold enough to proclaim that "there is life after adultery" through an appropriate ministry of restoration is highly commendable.

It would certainly be minimizing God's grace to assert that: "Once an adulterer, always an adulterer," and let's get rid of the fallen pastor for good. If God could use fallen leaders until their dying day although their whole life was a series of broken moral promises (e.g., Samson), then why can't the church do the same? Do we have the audacity to be holier than God in this respect? Doesn't Scripture condemn polygamy as much as it does adultery? How come God allowed Solomon, with 1,000 women, to even write a few books in the Bible?
—C. Lobart, D.Min., via e-mail.

Pastor persecutors

Rediger (August 1997) covered many aspects of Christian persecution of pastors. Contributing factors to this phenomenon are time and money.

While conference presidents or other administrative specialists may decline the distasteful task of dealing with this issue for the variety of reasons listed in Rediger's article, they are so loaded down with time demands that this complicated problem just doesn't get fitted in. The problem gets buried among others for which time doesn't allow.

If a small group of persons want power and control and are persons of high income, they can collectively lever administrative silence or generate a mentality to just move the pastor. For example: Tithe flow from seven high incomes being halted (either temporarily while the money is left in their checking accounts; or worse, permanently while the tithe is diverted elsewhere, or just stopped) can cause a conference budget to be impacted. An \$85,000 to \$100,000 shortage could easily cancel a large city-wide evangelist series or cause two pastors to be dropped.

The recent Annual Council reports carry a fresh breeze of transparency. Monthly progress reports generated by local conference presidents and/or ministerial secretaries along with progress reports from the persecuted pastors to conference committee members might start practical resolutions. Is it possible for that fresh breeze also to blow through the ministerial associations at each level of administration and *Ministry* magazine to generate some other practical solutions? Adventism should be transparent as sunlight and generate more cures than names for disease symptoms.—J. Fred Hughes, Lincoln City, Oregon.

● The apostolic church had a question that engendered much debate. We, also, have problems, except the subject is different. They solved their problem by referring it to a General Assembly (the first General Conference). "Its decision was to put an end to all controversy: for it was the voice of the highest authority on the earth." The decision was "generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. . . . From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet,

and ever will have till the close of time" (Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 196, 197).—C. B. Harris, Yuma, Arizona.

Receiving the Word

George R. Knight and George W. Reid have reviewed Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's book *Receiving the Word* (December 1997). Knight sounds like someone who just got caught with his hand in the cookie jar and now decides to lash out against the one who caught him in the act. Reid's review, on the other hand, comes across in a far more objective, kind, and Christian manner with a desire to understand both sides of the question.—Harold Bohr, Amarillo, Texas.

● Anyone who has carefully read the book, and then the two reviews, must pause to realize that something tragic has happened among our theologians and Bible teachers. When it is concluded that one view on a subject of such critical importance to the church is "responsible" and the other "irresponsible," the door to dialogue has been effectively closed. What can be done about the situation now? To ignore it in the desperate hope that it will simply go away would be counter-productive. Having witnessed a similar situation earlier in my ministry in another denomination, I never thought such a thing could or would occur in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
—Raymond C. Holmes, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The risk of Christmas

Fowler (December 1997) argues that the meaning of Christmas is to be found in the "incarnational ministry" whereby a Christian takes the risk of identifying with the suffering, and he cites the example of Mother Teresa who took this challenge wholeheartedly by fully identifying herself with the poor.

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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.



To be disillusioned is a positive experience. It is! Although the experience is usually seen as a negative one, nobody would claim that living

under an illusion is beneficial. True, illusions may be temporarily helpful to our peace of mind, but in the end they are not. To be disillusioned, that is, to be released from the deception of one's actual illusions, may be quite serendipitous, let alone downright helpful. Looking at it this way, I think most of us would rather be "disillusioned" than be victims of some muddled illusion.

But with what are we to be disillusioned? With the churches and the people we pastor and with the church in general!

With penetrating truthfulness and wisdom, one of the great Christian sages of this century has observed: "Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate with ourselves."¹ Here no bones are made about the necessity of experiencing constructive disillusionment with Christian people and Christian fellowship. That is, recognizing and accepting the fact that Christian people are flawed and foolish. We are challenged to be "overwhelmed" by this disillusionment, to embrace it as pivotal, providential, and imperative to achieving "genuine Christian fellowship."

If this thinking is legitimate, and I believe it is, the disillusionment we are calling for is something God initiates in order to bring us to mature togetherness in Him. Without this quality of disillusionment we cannot achieve the authentic fellowship we long for. Nor can we be effective ministers or find any meaningful degree of contentment in the work of pastoring. Without being

Take a dose of disillusionment

W I L L E V A

disillusioned with our people we may be ever disgruntled, wondering consciously or unconsciously why "the saints" are so obtuse, so unspiritual, unresponsive, cruel, and just plain ungodly! We will tend to be in a perpetual state of dissatisfaction and will probably be continually struggling to swallow the reflex to scuttle ministry altogether.

"The man who fashions [an exaggerated] visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. . . . He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. . . . When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he

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becomes first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself."²

It is not uncommon for pastors to "adamantly" insist (sometimes only within themselves) on their ideal of what constitutes genuine Christian fellowship and then reel under the constant violation of their ideal picture, as the foolishness of the flock again and again manifests itself.

Obviously having a vision and an ideal for Christian fellowship is vital, but it cannot function effectively without regular doses of "disillusionment." Without it a pastor is only a step from becoming a "living reproach" to the church community, an angry, ineffective leader who is literally a pain to parishioners and probably particularly to himself or herself.

Eugene Peterson deals with this issue in his excellent book, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*. He says, "I had to revise my imagination: these were the people to whom I was pastor. They were not the ones I would have chosen, but they were what I had been given. What was I to do? 'Master, someone sowed tares in the night.' I wanted to weed the field." "Parish glamorization is ecclesiastical pornography—taking photographs (skillfully airbrushed) or drawing pictures of congregations that are [faultless]." "They [some pastors] abhor the scandal of both the cross and the church. . . . But it is the very nature of pastoral work to embrace this scandal, accept this humiliation, and daily work in it. Not despising the shame, and not denying it either."³

There is a great relief that arrives as one exercises this kind of forthcoming honesty, and thus embraces the kind of disillusionment we are talking about. A weight is lifted from pastoral shoulders as we come to consciously acknowledge to ourselves the ever present foibles of the saints. Thus we cease to be surprised or alarmed by them and instead accept them as a fact of life in the church. No longer does a pastor need to explain or criticize but simply deal forthrightly with the numerous challenges that arise out of these deficiencies.

It is when ministry has subtly become more of a career for us than a divine calling that we begin combing the field for the perfect congregation. Like some of our congregations searching for the perfect pastor, we begin ceaselessly scanning the horizon, hoping for a "good call." After not finding it, over time we become increasingly discontented and cynical—

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SALVATION PILGRIMAGE

The Adventist Journey into Justification by Faith and Trinitarianism



Woodrow W. Whidden is a professor in the Religion Department at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the Minneapolis General Conference and 1888 have become synonymous with the primacy of justification by faith. In the doctrinal teaching of the church, this event marks a revival of genuine interest in the question of "righteousness by faith." The key advocates of this remarkable revival were Ellen G. White and two young Adventist editors based in California: E. J. Waggoner (1855–1916) and A. T. Jones (1850–1923).

Opposing them was an established "old guard" at the church headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan: Uriah Smith (1832–1903), the editor of the church's official magazine, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, and George I. Butler (1834–1918), the president of the General Conference. Though no action was taken at Minneapolis, the opposition to Waggoner and Jones was so severe that Ellen White teamed up with Jones and Waggoner, mounting an intense campaign of revivals across North America. During the next three years they toured widely, emphasizing the primacy of justification by faith alone as the bedrock of any vibrant Christian experience.

One indicator of such an emphasis is that roughly 40 percent of all that Ellen White ever said about justification by faith and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, she said and wrote during the four years that followed Minneapolis. What is significant is not just the amount of material that flowed from her lips and pen but

the quality and remarkable clarity of the material.¹ This period is distinctive because of Mrs. White's emphasis on Paul's and Luther's expressions of justification by faith.

Corresponding Christological and Trinitarian developments

Prior to this time, Arianism had been quite pervasive in the writings of early Seventh-day Adventism. Interestingly, Arianism (which owes its origin to Arius [d. 336], who denied the divinity of Christ and held that Christ was a created being), has had a natural attraction for religious movements that concentrate on personal obedience while neglecting the importance of justification by faith in the Christian salvation experience. By the time of the Minneapolis revivals, Jones was forthrightly Trinitarian, emphasizing the full deity of Christ. However, E. J. Waggoner, like many Adventists of his day, had moved from a predominant Arianism to a semi-Arian position.² By the late 1880s Ellen White was unequivocally Trinitarian in the expression of her convictions regarding the full deity of Christ. This is truly remarkable, given the strongly Arian and semi-Arian views that were so dominant in the Adventism of that time, and given the fact that even her strong-minded, forthright husband, James White, held such views until relatively late in his life.

Furthermore, Uriah Smith, the main opposer of the soteriological initiatives of Waggoner, Jones, and Ellen White, had been

decidedly Arian. He then developed a semi-Arian view which he maintained until death. Smith never fully embraced a clear doctrine of objective justification by faith alone. Thus, the main opponent of the soteriological healing within Adventism was clearly semi-Arian and never gave evidence of being fully convinced of the new soteriology.

Early emergence from legalism and Arianism

What then is to be made of Adventism's simultaneous emergence from both unwitting legalism and a rather strongly held Arian stance? What, if any, causal relationships existed between emerging Trinitarian impulses and the healing of legalistic soteriological trends in the church? Clear-cut answers aren't easy, but the following factors seem to have affected this shift in early Adventism:

1. *The obvious spiritual needs of the membership.* Here both James and Ellen White, later supported by Jones and Waggoner, took the lead. We have no evidence of a sudden discovery by them that Arianism was destroying the Seventh-day Adventist people with legalistic attitudes that were leading to a destructive spiritual condition in the churches. Instead, it seems that they, sensing the severe dangers inherent in the obviously legalistic trends within the movement, began to study the causes of the condition and then saw the need for a more Trinitarian soteriology.

This basic phenomenon is especially evident in Ellen White. There do not seem to be any instances where she consciously set out to reflect on the soteriological implications of the full deity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. She was, however, able to draw not only from Scripture but also from her Methodist roots, which were clearly the baseline of her ministry from the start. This is especially true of her attempts to keep a balance between justification by faith and holiness of heart and life. The same might be said for the Trinitarian consciousness-raising power of her Wesleyan/Methodist background.

2. *The church's worship, especially its hymns.* As the "Advent movement" began to take on the trappings of a denomination, it had to develop the resources for ecclesi-

astical order, such as formal organization, a statement of belief, ministerial credentials, and a hymnal. Even though Arianism was widespread, when the early Adventists began to plan for worship, they included Trinitarian hymns in their early hymnals. The first hymnal of 1849, compiled by James White, contains the doxology and its closing words, "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

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3. *A reaching out.* When early Adventism emerged from its "shut door" phase, the movement began to reach out to other Christians. This audience, at first, was mainly defined as North American churchgoers. This new outreach, which began in the early 1850s, resulted in a growing influx of Trinitarians from other evangelical bodies into Adventism. These converts were attracted to the prophetic teachings and other strongly biblical doctrines and practices of Adventism; they, however, were not prepared to give up their Trinitarian beliefs.

However widespread, Arianism was never formally or officially adopted by the church, something that can be best understood as one remembers the early movement's strong anti-creedal stance. Because of their vivid memories of the ill-treatment they received

from the creedal churches of "Babylon" in the heated last stages of Millerism, many early Adventists developed an intense "live and let live" attitude on a number of doctrinal issues. In other words, there was strong resistance to any creed. Thus any new convert could be a Seventh-day Adventist and Trinitarian. Perhaps this growing number of Trinitarians were simply making their presence felt.

4. *The intercessory ministry of Jesus.* Another factor was the continuing emphasis by Ellen White on Christ as the believer's constantly interceding mediator. This emphasis in her unfolding soteriology was accompanied by careful reflections on the substitutionary meaning of Christ's death and its implications for justification by faith alone. The more she reflected on Christ's death as a sacrificial atonement and His closely related office of High Priest, the more Mrs. White sensed the necessity of a sacrifice and intercession given by One fully divine—ministries a semi- or demi-god could not do.

This appreciation of Christ's full deity in early Adventism seems to replicate the Christological developments that had occurred in the early Christian church. It was no mere historical happenstance that Athanasius (d. 373) opposed Arius. "In his anti-Arian treatises," wrote J. N. D. Kelley, "Athanasius was to deploy a triple onslaught based on the Church's living faith and experience. First, he argued that Arianism undermined the Christian doctrine of God by presupposing that the divine Triad is not eternal and by virtually reintroducing polytheism. Secondly it made nonsense of the established liturgical customs of baptizing in the Son's name as well as the Father's, and of addressing prayers to the Son. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it undermined the Christian idea of redemption in Christ, since only if the Mediator was Himself divine could humanity hope to re-establish fellowship with God."³ Similar understandings began to influence early Adventism.

Dynamics of theology, evangelism, and worship

While it is difficult to be dogmatic about the cause/effect relationships between the Adventist shift from Arian and anti-

Trinitarian expressions and the accompanying soteriological emphasis, there are a number of factors that seem to come into play.

First, it doesn't seem that a lot of conscious theological reflection transpired in any systematic way but rather that these developments were *ad hoc* and definitely "providential." The Whites took the lead and drew their theological cues from concern over the low spiritual experience of the members. Seeing that legalism had obscured the primacy of Christ as atoning sacrifice and justifying Saviour, they sought to bring the movement back into a greater emphasis on the centrality of Christ and His sacrifice. In other words, it was practical/theological concern, primarily regarding an out-of-balance theology, that seemed to draw them to a more critical reflection of the full deity of Christ.

This trend became especially evident in the thought of Ellen White, who gave more sustained attention to justification by faith alone and the office of Christ as High Priest. Such a priestly Intercessor not only reckons the faithful as forgiven for the sins of the past but ministers that reckoning moment by moment before a righteous and holy God. Again, such a justifying accomplishment could be made effectual only by One who was fully divine. Here, Mrs. White definitely paralleled the classic opposition of Athanasius to Arius: Not only was the theology similar, but so was the method of arriving at it. Both were dealing with the practical impact of heresy in the setting of worship and the personal experience of salvation.

Finally, the acts of worship, especially in the hymnody mentioned above, seemed to provide an interesting theological tutorial for a somewhat unwitting company of worshippers.

From the perspective of more than a hundred years later, this period feels very much like the unfolding of theology hammered out in the ebb and flow of a burgeoning evangelistic movement that badly needed both its soteriological and Trinitarian perspectives brought into a more classic and evangelical balance. It is in the setting of revival, outreach, sustained study of biblical themes and worship that the movement was drawn toward a Nicene

orthodoxy in the theological integration of these great verities of the faith. Whatever the ultimate causes, this revival, spearheaded by the Whites, Waggoner, and Jones after the 1888 Minneapolis conference, changed the face of Adventism, a change whose impact is definitely felt today.

Divinity of Christ and salvation experience

While we have briefly hinted at some of the implications for the experience of salvation that seem to inhere in a Trinitarian recovery from Arian influences, I would like to close this article with some further reflections on how grasping the full deity of Christ can aid the healing of our understanding and experiencing of salvation.

First, I would suggest that it was no accident that Ellen White, as the chief theological influence for the full deity of Christ, seems to have put the emphasis on the full deity of Christ as she reflected directly on the theme of Christ as the sinners' constantly available and effectually justifying intercessor. As Athanasius argued against Arius, Ellen White held out that an Arian Jesus would prove to be a weak and ineffectual intercessor.

Second, there can be no power failure in One who is fully divine. Indeed, such a power deficiency is only possible in a Christ with a derived deity, not in the fully divine Christ of the Trinity who is the justifying Saviour and the transforming Lord. When we come to Christ in any time of need, only a fully divine Christ has the power to make us more than conquerors. If, however, we perceive some deficiency in Him, we are tempted to think that He needs assistance from us via some good works on our part!

Third, only One who is wholly divine in nature could make a complete atonement to meet the claims of the broken law. Only the Creator who gave the law could offer a sacrifice of sufficient value to satisfy the justice of divinity.⁴

Fourth, only One who has life original, unborrowed, and underived could impart life to the believing, trusting soul. Someone who had life in some derived sense would only be able to impart some kind of spiritual "half-life!"

Last, I would suggest that the theme of divine love provides a powerful evidence for

the need for a fully divine Christ. "Christ was with God. He was one with God, equal with Him . . . He alone, the Creator of man, could be his Saviour. No angel of heaven could reveal the Father to the sinner, and win him back to allegiance to God. But Christ could manifest the Father's love."⁵ If love was to be effectively manifest, it could only be manifest by One who was, by divine nature, infinite in love. Only divine love could creatively beget a loving response, as opposed to a work response that seeks to purchase love. When the infinite love of God is freely given to us through Christ, it becomes apparent that there is only one response—surrender and acceptance. There can be no purchase bargain through which we contribute either a pitiful two cents or all that we have. ■

¹ These somewhat startling (at least to the Adventist ears of that period) and marked expressions of objective justification can be most readily found in the books *Faith and Works* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assoc., 1979) and *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1958), 300-400. Probably the most forceful expression of this more Pauline/Lutheran understanding of justification by faith alone came in her Manuscript 36, 1890 (here cited from *Faith and Works*, 19, 20): "Let the subject be made distinct and plain that it is not possible to effect anything in our standing before God or in the gift of God to us through creature merit. Should faith and works purchase the gift of salvation for anyone, then the Creator is under obligation to the creature. Here is an opportunity for falsehood to be accepted as truth. If any man can merit salvation by anything he may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then, is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages. If man cannot, by any of his good works, merit salvation, then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift. Justification by faith is placed beyond controversy."

² Waggoner came to the very borders of a more Trinitarian Christology. There is, however, no compelling evidence that he ever fully abandoned his semi-Arian position. He came close enough that he should be called a semi-Arian, with a small "s."

³ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 233.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1877), 9, 10.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn.), 18.

SMALL GROUPS IN EVANGELISM

For the first time I have found real meaning and purpose in life. I now have a new life. I've discovered something more. A group of people who genuinely care about me.



John W. Fowler, D.Min., is an associate for evangelism with It Is Written, Thousand Oaks, California.

From the acceptance and support I experienced, I have learned what it means to be loved and valued as a person. I know God has led me to the Adventist Church."

That was the testimony of Brian Effington. Brian was one of the 60 baptized at the end of a 1993 evangelistic series. The meetings were coordinated by Frank Cordona, a chaplain at Tennessee Christian Medical Center in Nashville. But Frank had a different burden, a new strategy. The meetings began as usual. But on the second night, Frank's strategy came into play. For some time I had felt the need of small-group ministry in public evangelism, and that was Frank's strategy too. To those attending, we offered the opportunity of studying in small groups.

One hundred fifty indicated in writing their need and desire to participate in the small-group program. We asked them to join in one of six need-oriented groups: depression, addiction, family differences, youth conflicts, health problems, and spiritual needs. The response was poor. After a "camp council" we concluded that fear was the reason. Consequently, we decided to have general group ministries without labels. That worked!

The groups met each evening at 7:15 in the dressing rooms of the building in which the meetings were being conducted. Thirty minutes were allocated for the

groups each night. While the small groups endeavored to meet the requested needs of the participants, our strategy was to make the groups an integral part of the evangelistic meeting proper. At 7:50 the small groups moved from the dressing rooms to the main auditorium for the musical program and the presentation of the evening message.

Of the total baptisms we had at the end of the crusade, 80 percent had attended the small-group ministries. Brian Effington was one of those.

Small groups: John Wesley's success

Small group ministry is not new. It has been part of the church from the beginning. In relatively recent history John Wesley used the small-group approach successfully in his evangelistic work. After Wesley preached and an interest was awakened, he placed the respondents in small groups where lay pastors could deal with the individual questions and problems of those attending.

Wesley's small-group meeting or "class meeting" is "the keystone of the entire Methodist edifice."¹

For Wesley, these small groups became the place where an individual could find the key ingredients to a successful Christian life. Wesley trained each group as a means of ministering to the individual members of

that group. The groups formed the center for devotional life, Bible study, and prayer. They were also the basis of pastoral care. The group members shared with each other their bereavement and grief; failure and success; sickness and health; problems of sex, marriage, and parenting; the agony of poverty and economic injustice, and even in some places, political oppression. Encouragement and help was given as needed. Wesley's groups even helped members find jobs. Thus the groups became the centers of Bible study, prayer, Christian service, moral and social reform.²

The class meetings formed the cornerstone of Methodist discipline—a prime secret of the success of the Methodist revival movement. The classes normally met once every week for an hour or so. Each person reported on their spiritual experience and any particular needs or problems they had. Help was given as needed, with prayers for all. Wesley writes that “advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels were made up, misunderstandings removed; and after an hour or two spent in

this labor of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.”³

Small groups: areas of ministry

Learning from Wesley, we seek to make our evangelistic series a genuine ministry to the attendees and their special needs. Small-group ministries is an important means of accomplishing that goal. How many areas of ministry can small groups address during a public evangelistic crusade? The answer depends on the available talents in the church or churches associated with the evangelistic meeting and the needs of the people. But there are some key needs that can be met in small groups, such as the following.

Spiritual problems. We believe that most problems have a spiritual source. Hence the best remedy is the teaching and application of the principles of the Bible. Bringing people into a relationship with Jesus and other Christians is our goal. We work to help people claim Christ's victory, Christ's wisdom, Christ's peace and Christ's joy as their own. This is the best help the small groups can provide.

Fellowship. Small-group discussions may also address a wide variety of problems found among those who attend the evangelistic meetings. The problems may vary: addiction, discouragement, family stresses, anxiety, and loneliness. However, the overriding purpose of a small group should be to provide fellowship, encouragement, and support for the individuals. A genuine friendship and fellowship can be a source of strength to group members.

Depression. Depression is a major problem in today's society. In the United States at least 25 percent or more of the population suffer from some form of depression. Also, many are dependent on some form of chemical to cope with their circumstances. Usually however, a better treatment for depression is cognitive therapy, since most depression is caused by negative habits of thought. Research shows that the cognitive approach that seeks to heal by building positive thought patterns in the mind is helpful in dealing with depression.⁴ Small-group support systems can be a po-

Continued on p. 30

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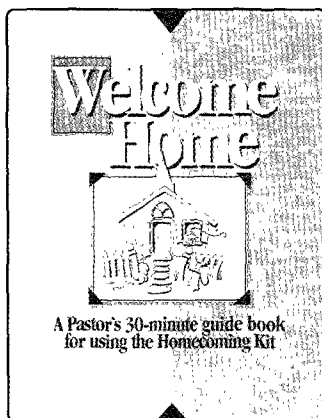
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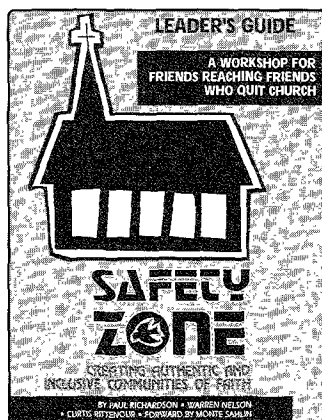


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WHEN CHILDREN ARE GRIEVING

Jerry's* mom was sick—in serious condition and hospitalized. Jerry prayed. Jerry's third-grade classmates prayed. They believed God would answer their prayers and heal Jerry's mom.



Norma Osborn is associate pastor for children's ministries and Christian education, Sligo Church, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Their faith was strong. Their prayers were earnest. But Jerry's mom died, leaving a husband and three young children devastated. The third-grade children wanted to know why. Why did God allow Jerry's mother to die?

That happened ten years ago. I had just begun my ministry. I had so much to learn. I felt inadequate and unprepared to help the children through their grief. There were no reasonable explanations. Even if someone could come up with one, it would not have been understood, because the pain and loss were so great. Perhaps adults can talk about their feelings, express their anger and frustration, share their loss and grief. But what about children? How do the four-year-old, the seven-year-old, and the ten-year-old mourn their loss? I look back on that experience and wish I had known then what I know now.

Children are often the forgotten mourners. In the aftermath of death or divorce, adults are so caught up in their own grief that they are unable to care for their children. Perhaps they are even unaware of signals to look for in order to understand the suffering their children are experiencing. As pastors we tend to care for adults and assume that children are an extension of

that care. But that's not necessarily so. Children need special attention and support based on their age and the circumstances surrounding their situation, so that they, too, can begin the healing process.

Myths about children's grief

Most of us know little about children and grief. A recent seminar by the Grief Resource Foundation presented three myths about grief, children, and the reality.

Myth 1: Children don't grieve.

Reality: Children grieve all losses in spurts, several times a day; they re-grieve throughout all developmental stages; they don't know they're grieving, and they don't understand their feelings.

Myth 2: Children experience few losses.

Reality: Children experience losses on a daily basis: at school (sports, grades, competitions, self-esteem, relationships) and at home (control, understanding, dysfunctional family losses—one of seven loses a parent to death before age ten).

Myth 3: Childhood is the happiest time of life.

Reality: "A child goes through six developmental stages between birth and age 21. Each stage is marked by a period of

N O R M A O S B O R N

continuous change in cognition, feelings, and physical development. Almost every area of life through each developmental stage is totally controlled by circumstances outside of the influence of the child."¹

Pastoring children in grief

As pastors we have the opportunity to minister to bereaved children as we do as adults. We must take seriously the calling to do so. Here are some suggestions.

1. *Begin with the Sabbath School.* Sabbath School is a good place for both teachers and children to learn about loss and coping with it. Sabbath School teachers have a wonderful opportunity to share with children matters relating to loss and grief as they study the Bible. The stories of Isaac, Daniel, Esther, Joseph, and others tell of traumatic events that young people experience. God helped His suffering children in the past, and He can do so today.

It is important to talk about loss before it comes, before the person is too emotionally involved in grief. The church should have an ongoing educational process that

will help not only the bereaved but also those who want to help the bereaved.

2. *Sponsor programs to help the healing process in children.* Rainbows^{TM2} is an example of such programs. It is used worldwide to help children go through the grieving process in times of death, divorce, separation, or abandonment in the family. The 14-week program provides materials that include stories, games, drawings, and crafts that help children discuss with, and learn from, one another. Trained facilitators meet with children in small groups to understand their feelings, help them express themselves, give peer support, and learn that a crisis doesn't have to hurt forever.

RainbowsTM is intended to help children experience normal childhood responses to death and divorce. There may be instances when a child is not coping well and needs more than a peer support group. Facilitators are trained to listen for danger signals that might indicate the need for a child to have professional help.

Parents of children who have gone through the program have found that chil-

dren have learned that they can show their feelings openly and freely. The comments we receive most often indicate parents' happiness that their children talk with them and express themselves more openly than before. Parents also meet in a discussion group while their children are in a small group. They discuss the same issues as their children and find it a major source of encouragement and support.

Too often we are shortsighted. We visit before the funeral and during the time of the funeral and then the family's grief is forgotten. The fact is that it takes time to get over a loss. Both adults and children need time and encouragement to do their grief work.³ Unless we have a long-term plan for help such as RainbowsTM we lose the opportunity to help children when they are most in need and their families most vulnerable.

The advantage of having such a program in your church is obvious. But you may say that you are already stretched to the limit and that you can't personally find time to become an expert in this area. Then delegate responsibility. Support your children's min-

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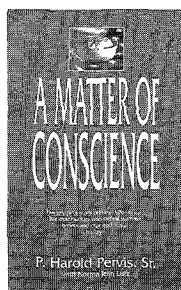
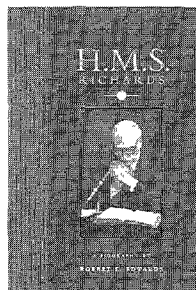
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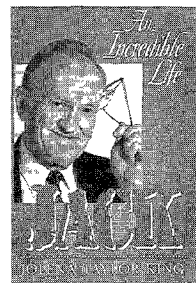
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3. Build a library of resource materials. Published materials are available to help members learn how to minister to children going through a crisis. Recently a mother asked me to help her seven-year-old daughter, Sara. The grandmother who had lived with them for many years was about to die, and the mother wanted to know what to do. She felt it would be hard to let Sara witness death. Fortunately, there was time for her to read a section of a book called *How Do We Tell the Children?* The book explains what children aged two and up already know about death and their capacity to understand the issues involved. It suggests what words to use when explaining death and how to help a child deal with grief in various situations such as the death of a grandparent, a parent or sibling, and deaths

caused by an accident, suicide, or murder, and so on. The book also provides advice on how to help children be involved with the funeral planning and the funeral services, an important part of the grief process. It helps the parent understand how important it is to be open and honest with children when a crisis has occurred in the family.

I met with Sara as her pastor, and we spent time together reading and discussing the book *It Must Hurt A Lot: A Child's Book About Death*.⁴ The author tells a story about Joshua's puppy that died. Joshua feels very lonely; it seems like no one understands. Over time Joshua learns some "secrets" such as: When I love lots I hurt lots; my friends want to help but they just don't know how; everybody handles feelings in their own way; I can help my friends when they hurt. When Joshua's friend's grandmother died, Joshua was able to sit on the bed and cry with him because he understood what it meant to lose someone you love. As we read, Sara interjected her own feelings. Sometimes she felt the same way Joshua did, and sometimes she didn't. But the experience of reading the story was good for her, and I was glad to be of help.

Does your church library have books and videos that parents can use with their children? Sources for information include the Internet, your local library, a person who works for a hospice, a funeral home, and centers around the country that help people recover from loss.

4. Affirm Christian faith and assurance. The faith that we hold and the assurances we have as Christians can comfort and nurture children. As Sara and I were talking, she looked at me and said, "I'm going to see my Grandma again." I wondered if perhaps she was not accepting the finality of death. So I asked her when she would see her again. Her reply? "I'm going to see her in heaven!" We can share the faith that reminds us of our relationship with God, a relationship that is not broken by death or any crisis that enters our lives. "It is important to offer the resources of faith not as a definition or explanation but as reassurance and nurturing to sustain us in our sorrow. It is important that we help bereaved children understand the promises of relationship (which children can understand), even when it is impossible to understand the reason some things happen the way they do."⁵

Children and adults begin to heal when they move beyond blame or explanation and begin to claim memories and stories of their loved one. Yet they need to express themselves, and we must not crush that spirit. Mourners need us simply to listen. They don't want us to give answers. Children need empathy—the ability to recognize the child's inner feelings from the child's point of view, which is the key to a helping-healing relationship. As they sense acceptance and love, and as they begin the healing process, they will turn to memories, stories, and promises of a relationship with God that will last for eternity. ■

*The names in this article have been changed.

¹ "Three Myths of Children's Grief," presented in a seminar for the Grief Resource Foundation, 1978. World Wide Web, TLC Group.

² Contact Rainbows™ by writing to 1111 Tower Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173. Phone 1-800-266-3206 or 847-310-1880. Fax 847-310-0120. E-mail: rainbowshdqttrs@worldnet.att.net or visit their Web site at www.rainbows.org.

³ See Judith Allen Shelly, *The Spiritual Needs of Children* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 113.

⁴ Doris Sanford, *It Must Hurt A Lot* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1985).

⁵ Richard B. Gilbert, "Protestant Perspectives on Grief and Children," in *Bereaved Children and Teens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 117.

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GROWING CHURCHES IS LIKE GROWING TREES

Though Scripture warns that fruitless churches will be cut down like bad trees (Matt. 3:10), it also compares healthy believers to trees planted by waters, with deepening roots, green leaves, and much fruit (Ps. 1:1-3; Jer. 17:8).



Ricardo Norton, D.Min., is an associate professor of church growth at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In fact, the growth of trees and the growth of churches have much in common.

To begin, trees grow upward, reaching toward sunlight, which they need to live. Quality, intensity, and duration of exposure affect their health and growth. Insufficient light hampers photosynthesis and interferes with the tree's production of oxygen and other important organic compounds. Without light, trees die. In dense forests, only those trees that stick their necks out over others can get sufficient light. In their quest for light, branches covered by shadows reach out in desperation, at times making incredible twists and turns. Light is so important for trees that some botanists have classified them according to the light they receive.

Jesus Christ is to the church what sunlight is to trees. He came to the world to give light and life to those who were in the shadows of darkness and death (Luke 1:79). He is the Sun and illumination of the church and of all who wish to be bathed by

His saving rays (Mal. 4:2; John 8:12; 12:46).

Growing churches look up to Christ for their sustenance. They are Christocentric. Christ's light shines in their proclamation, relations, and actions. They know Christ as the only one who can melt human hearts. A church without Christ is lifeless. He is the source of real life (John 3:36; 5:24; 14:6; 1 John 5:13,14).

This Christocentricity, attested by the Scriptures (John 5:39; Luke 24:27) is what makes the church truly Christian. The biblical centrality of Jesus not only challenges us to develop a Christocentric approach to ministry but also mandates a Christocentric dogma and kerygma. As growing trees continuously strive for new heights in the quest for sunlight, growing churches also reach upward to the Sun of Righteousness, the Source of power and life.

Next, trees grow internally by the multiplication and accumulation of new cells. These cells form the tree's structure, the leaves, stems, and roots. These different or-

R I C A R D O N O R T O N

gans work in synergy, giving the tree support and all the other ingredients needed for subsistence. The roots dig voraciously for nitrogenous compounds, water, and other nutrients. Roots often spread beyond the width of the crown anchoring the tree solidly to the ground, securing it from winds and other forces that may topple it. The different stems, with their hollow cones firmly joined, give the tree mechanical support and serve as food storage. The leaves absorb light energy and through photosynthesis provide oxygen, hormones, and other life-giving organic compounds. No organ in a growing tree is idle. Each performs a particular task, but all work in unison.

Like a tree, growing churches also need the synergetic participation of all members. No church can subsist on the efforts of the pastor alone. "The ministers can do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do."¹ Unfortunately, in a lot of churches, one person is doing the work of many.

In trees, different organs perform distinct activities for the benefit of the whole. Likewise, in the church different members with diverse gifts accomplish different functions for the whole. Not all members can do the same thing in the same manner; all have different personalities, inclinations, interests, and gifts. But all work in unison with dedication and unselfishness to make a perfect whole.

Further, the pattern of growth differs in trees as well as in churches. In some trees the terminal leader branch grows more each year than the lateral branches below it, giving the tree a conical shape. In other trees, the lateral branches grow almost as fast or faster than the terminal leader, resulting in more rounded or ovate tree crowns. The growth of trees is also influenced by light, shade, climate, and soil quality.

Church growth is also influenced by geographical location, leadership, human and financial resources, and the climate around the church. Most people prefer warm churches with friendly members, located not too far from their homes.

In the Old Testament, Lebanon was famous for its vast forests (see 2 Chron. 2:8; 9:16), especially of cedar trees. The psalmist sees in the health and grandeur of cedar the majestic handiwork of the Creator (Ps.

104:16). Churches will grow "like cedars of Lebanon," when they are planted in the Lord (see Ps. 92:12, 13). God provides the church with the nutrients and light to live. He protects the church from enemies, as the bark tissues of woody plants shield them from bacteria, chemicals, and unfriendly insects.

Fascinatingly, trees have reproductive organs—flowers, fruits, and seeds. The seed, of course, is the most important, but its existence depends on the fruit and the flower. How tiny seeds come to life and grow into the largest living things on earth is a wonder of God's design and power.

The perpetuation and survival of trees depends on the preservation of seeds and how they are planted in other places. Trees use in-

Like a tree,
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genious methods to reach far away places in order to give rise to offspring. Some trees cover their small seeds with light fibers that stick out like hairs so they can be carried by the wind many miles from their dissemination point. In the case of some plants, birds and animals eat their fruit and deposit the seeds in distant places. Some animals like squirrels bury for winter more seeds than they can eat during a given winter, thus collaborating with the tree's efforts to multiply.

Likewise, growing churches need to use different methods in order to reach different people in different places. The church must study the most appropriate method for a particular region.² Growing churches must also multiply and expand. They must plant the gospel seed, confident that the Lord will make their efforts fruitful (see Ps. 126:6; Isa. 55:11; Eccl. 11:1; Prov. 11:30). The growth

of the seed in the soil of the human heart will be progressive and *automate*. The Greek word *automate* (NIV translates it as "all by itself" in Mark 4:28) infers a natural by-product of divine intervention. Lasting church growth is the result of divine power, not human schemes, even though God works through human instruments. The apostolic church experienced enormous growth because divine power was at work (see Acts 2:38-41, 47; John 15:16; 16:8).

God's plan for the church has always been global—to reach every corner of the world, to radiate His light among those in darkness. The church exists to absorb the light of Jesus and reflect it. It has no light of its own. Once the light of Jesus is in the human heart, shining becomes automatic. Believers would not be able to conceal it. Shining for Jesus becomes part of their lifestyle. "If Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence."³

God created trees to be a blessing to humankind. We are dependent on them in many ways—from food to wood, from soil conservation to ecological balance, from medicine to air. Likewise, God has planted his church to be a blessing to humanity. The blessing includes more than the spiritual: The church is the only hands God has on this earth, to reach out and touch the sick, the poor, the needy, and the destitute of this earth.

Yet the church is composed of its individual members, who, if faithful, can fill the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:7, 8). Much rather those words be fulfilled in us than the words of John the Baptist: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 4:69.

² See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 106, 125, 126.

³ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1956), 41.

WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT

In August 1996, the *Associated Press* reported that “Roman Catholics and some Protestants are denouncing a book published by a major Protestant denomination that claims the pope is in league with the devil.”¹



Darryl Comstock is a religion and history teacher at Hawaiian Mission Academy, Lawai, Hawaii.

The denomination? The Seventh-day Adventist Church. The book? *God's Answer to Your Questions*, an abridgement of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, an Adventist standby since 1888.

Do we need this kind of publicity? No, we don't! Some may think such press is a mark of faithful prophetic proclamation. That is not so.

Today many see Adventists in a favorable light. If the media should continue to focus attention on our indictment of other denominations, the situation could change. Given the distinctive message and character of Adventism, many are bound to misunderstand us. But if we arouse unnecessary prejudice against ourselves, we may preclude many from giving God's crucial, end-time message a fair hearing.

Why is this suddenly a problem? The answer is that a hundred years ago interdenominational hostility was taken for granted. Adventists were not alone in faulting the teachings of others; we were but one in a crowd. As we approach a new century, however—we look around and, except for a few groups, such criticalness is no longer the norm. The major denominations are models of tolerance when it comes to other faiths, including Roman Catholicism.

The problem is serious. Reaching people in a predominantly secular culture is daunting enough without having to overcome deep barriers of resentment toward our church. Yet, to be realistic, we should anticipate more damaging publicity. In the AP story, Sibley Towner, professor of biblical interpretation at Union Theological Seminary, said: “Anti-Catholic language these days usually comes from small sectarian groups affiliated with right-wing political causes such as the Ku Klux Klan.”² Association with the KKK is not the kind of publicity we need, however right or wrong we may consider men like Towner to be.

No muffling of the message

On the other hand, truth is truth, and the church has been entrusted with a warning message for this world, soon to be deceived by the antichrist. Ellen White has said, “Satan has devised a state of things whereby the proclamation of the third angel's message shall be bound about. . . . There must be no toning down of the truth, no muffling of the message for this time.”³

“In the very time in which we live the Lord has called His people . . . to expose the wickedness of the man of sin who has made the Sunday law a distinctive power, who has

DARRYL COMSTOCK

thought to change times and laws, and to oppress the people of God who stand firmly to honor Him by keeping the only true Sabbath.”⁴

Ellen White also gives the following perspective, however: “Avoid running down the churches; do not let the people receive the idea that your work is to tear down, but to build up, and present the truth as it is in Jesus.”⁵

“[We are] not to provoke those who have accepted this spurious sabbath, an institution of the Papacy in the place of God’s holy Sabbath. . . . The force of persecution follows the steps of the dragon. Therefore great care should be exercised to give no provocation.”⁶ At this time we should not publicly label anyone, either on billboards, subway placards, radio, television, or in public meetings, as the antichrist.

Fortunately, in the same book, Ellen White provides practical counsel on resolving the dilemma, at least partially, by proposing a strategy that will minimize public prejudice without “toning down the truth” or “muffling of the message.” The key is judicious timing.

Waiting for the right moment

“Do not *at the outset* press before the people the most objectionable features of our faith, lest you close their ears to which these things come as a new revelation. . . . If truth were presented in so large a measure that they could not receive it, some would go away, and never come again.”⁷

“Make great allowance for others who have had no knowledge of the Scriptures except through the interpretations given by ministers and church members, and who have received traditions and fables as Bible truth. They are surprised by the presentation of truth; it is as a new revelation to them, and they cannot bear to have all the truth, in its most striking character, presented to them *at the outset*.”⁸

“Do not make prominent those features of the message which are a condemnation of the customs and practices of the people, *until* they have opportunity to know that we are believers in Christ.”⁹

“I have been shown that our ministers go too rapidly through their subjects and bring the most objectionable features of our faith *too early* into their effort.”¹⁰

When Jesus sent the twelve on their first evangelistic tour, He was concerned that their campaign be effective, not confrontational. “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16, NIV). Our evangelistic methods should be no less shrewd and innocent.

An appealing strategy

Here is how Ellen White describes Paul’s strategy on timing: “Paul’s habit was to dwell upon the prophecies when with the Jewish people, and bring them down *step by step* and then *after some time* open the subject of Christ as the true Messiah.”¹¹

To a different audience the apostle changed the message but still gave careful consideration to timing: “To the Gentiles, he [Paul] preached Christ as their only hope of salvation, but did not *at first* have anything definite to say upon the law. . . . Thus *when, melted and subdued, they gave themselves to the Lord*, he presented the law of God as the test of their obedience. This was the manner of his working—adapting his methods to win souls.”¹²

Sequential evangelism

The three angels’ messages are sequential. The first one is positive. It trumpets the good news that Jesus has made salvation available to the world. It appeals to all to worship the Creator God and lays the foundation for the Sabbath and the pre-Advent judgment. Only when exposed to these wonderful truths is the hearer confronted by the messages of the other two angels, which have a more “negative” spin. Here certainly is an effective order after which we may model our evangelism.

What specific steps should we take in adopting this “sequential evangelism”? *First*, our initial contacts with the public through literature, evangelistic meetings, and media ministries should emphasize positive truth in its most favorable light. The best way to identify a counterfeit is to study the genuine. During this first phase, prospects would be encouraged to read books like *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages*.

In this phase, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation could still be presented, but the names of existing denominations would not be used. The little horn power,

for example, could be referred to as “the *medieval* Roman church,” with no mention of modern Roman Catholicism. The end-time persecutors of the remnant may simply be described as a combination of church and state that enforces false religious precepts.

Second, the fuller truth, concerning apostate religions, could be given to prospective converts only after they have shown some understanding and acceptance of our basic doctrines. This may be done through personal or small-group Bible studies or baptismal classes. During this phase they could be introduced to books like *The Great Controversy* and *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*.

Despite our best efforts, accusations of church-bashing will no doubt be leveled against us. It is extremely important that our official response be honest. In this age of political coverups, the public and the press are quick to dissonant double talk. If we deny our published teachings or attribute them to Adventist fringe groups, we will be perceived as not only bigots but dishonest bigots.¹³

Though sequential evangelism will not stop the inevitable persecution depicted in Scripture, by being both shrewd and innocent, we may decrease negative personal and media reactions (such as the AP story) and increase the number who will be a part of the kingdom of God. ■

¹ Jan Cienki, as reported in *Spectrum*, September 1996, 56, 57.

² *Ibid.*, 57.

³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 230.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 235, 236.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 230, 231.

¹³ According to the AP article, George Reid, head of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference, in explaining the Adventist position, responded candidly to the interviewer’s question. After citing the views of Martin Luther and John Calvin, he stated, “We still believe that it’s the reasonable way to understand these prophecies, arising from the text itself and not political correctness” (*Spectrum*, 56).

PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE FEARLESSLY

On January 4, 1995, about 70 Republican members of the freshman class of the U.S. Congress, under the direction of their leader Newt Gingrich, began focusing on the Contract With America, a bold plan to change the course of the United States as a nation.



Jac Colon is field secretary and personal ministries director, Washington Conference, Auburn, Washington.

Unified, determined, zealous, these men and women were prepared to stage a “revolution” in American government.

Yet today the Republican party is divided, the freshman class seems hardly a factor, the revolution never was, and almost no one talks about the Contract With America.

What happened?

The answer is easy: As long as they were united, these politicians were effective, but the moment they began arguing about the essence of their message, they fragmented and their enterprise collapsed.

Seventh-day Adventists, of course, have a mandate more explicit and universal than the Contract With America, and we certainly have a more effective Leader than Newt Gingrich. However, unless we remain united in our message, we can become as fragmented, divided, and ineffective as that fateful freshman class of the U.S. Congress.

The three angels' messages

As a church, we have been called to herald the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-10. The first angel's message begins, “Then I saw another angel flying in midair,

and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation. . . . He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ (Rev. 14:6, 7, NIV).

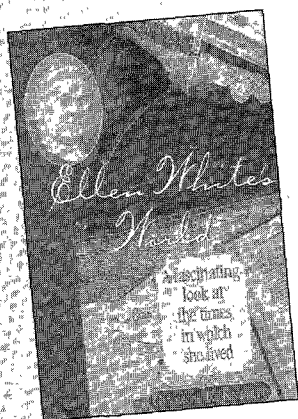
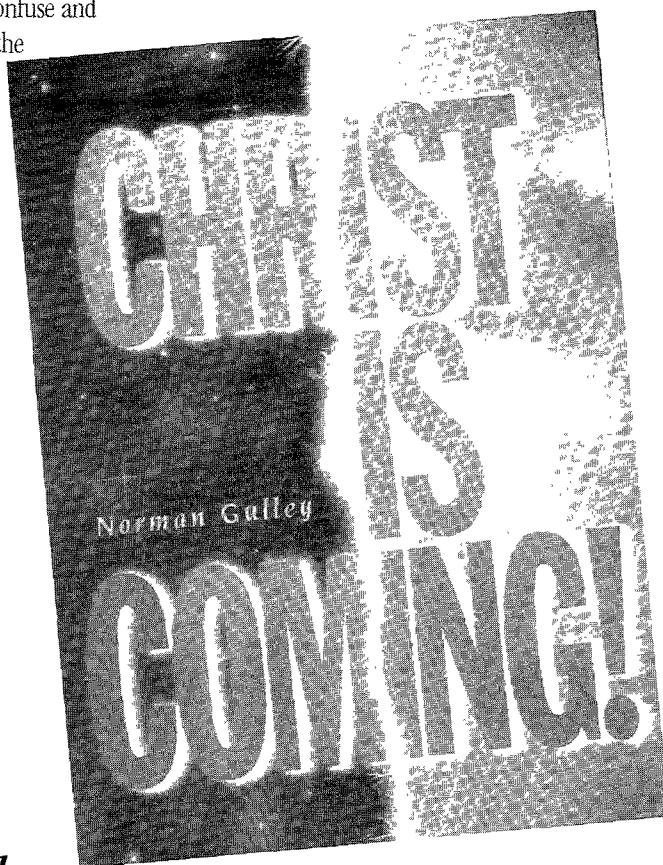
At this point the task seems easy: The church should proclaim the good news of the eternal gospel, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. However, more is involved. In the middle of the next verse this line appears: “The hour of his judgment has come.”

Who is being judged, why is there a judgment, and does that harmonize with the gospel? And if those questions aren't complicated enough, the second and third angels come as well. “A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great.’” “A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury.’” On top of this, all these messages are presented amid the context of an unholy alliance between the Dragon, the Beast, and

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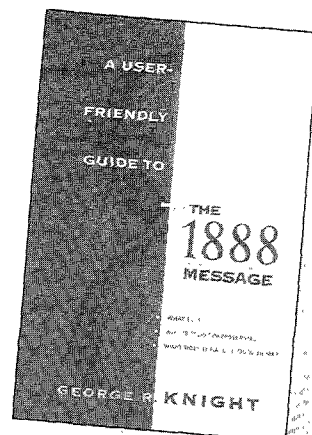
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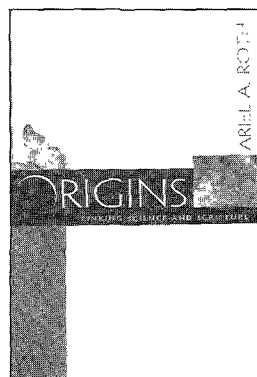
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the False Prophet (called Babylon), which seeks to prevent anyone from receiving salvation and responding by worshiping God.

Thus, Scripture is clear: Our message can't be just one of warm fuzzies, a feel-good mixture of pop psychology, sprinkled with a little old-time religion. Instead, if there are, in fact, forces opposing the true worship of God, then people need to be warned. Merely announcing truth is not sufficient; warning against error must be included in what we say, especially because Scripture teaches that deception will be rampant in the last days.

Deviations

Naturally, obstacles exist. Few things, for instance, can divert us from our path more quickly than legalism. We must guard against the natural human tendency to try to merit eternal life. We must always keep the light of the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ burning brightly and must ever lift up the assurance of salvation before the church and the world.

At the same time, we must avoid antinomianism. As Jesus said: "If you hold to My teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31, 32, NIV). If we forget this admonition to obedience, we have no reason for existing as a unique, distinct church.

Then there are the cultural dangers, such as the question of relevancy. If the message is true but not relevant, then no one will listen. How do we find what is contemporary and integrate it with our message without diluting it? Do we rely on market analysis and opinion polls? If we focus too much on what people say they want, we will be more likely to yield to the temptation to water down the message.

Look at Christ. Was His message relevant? Of course. Was it popular? Only in certain circles. What kind of results would we have discovered had we taken a survey of the vast majority who rejected it? Had Christ merely relied on such surveys He would have changed His message.

Our attempt to be relevant has brought us to a needs-driven ministry. If we can discover the needs of the people in the community and minister to those needs, people should be more receptive to the mes-

sage. This is the model that Jesus gave. We reach the mind through the heart. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"¹

The felt-needs approach is biblical and effective; however, it has pitfalls, such as the danger of focusing more on meeting felt needs than proclaiming the message. Our

Our stop-smoking classes, community services, health emphasis, and any other services we offer are to be open doors for proclaiming the three angels' messages. They must not become ends in themselves.

stop-smoking classes, community services, health emphasis, and any other services we offer are to be open doors for proclaiming the three angels' messages. They must not become ends in themselves.

The desire to avoid confrontation

Why can't we just preach the love of Jesus? Why do we have to talk about the beast, the judgment, and the destruction of the wicked? Isn't the love of Jesus enough?

These questions assume that the love of Jesus is one-sided and that God is only merciful and not also just. The three angels' messages show the deceptive forces at work trying to make ineffective the message of God's love. Sometimes it is necessary to jolt people out of complacency in order to prepare them to hear truth.

The first angel has the everlasting gos-

pel to proclaim to the world. The message is that God loves them and wants all to have abundant eternal life. The cross of Christ is the center of God's final warning message. It calls the world to worship the Creator, who made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. The Sabbath becomes the symbol of the everlasting gospel and the true worship of the Creator. This message is to be preached in the setting of the final judgment hour.

But that's only one angel. There are two more, and together they warn about the dire consequences of false worship. We didn't write these messages, but we are called to proclaim them, and if we consider the fearful consequences which come to those who make the wrong choice regarding whom they worship, then the only *loving* thing to do is to present with clarity and boldness these heaven-sent truths.

Back to the Bible

Recently many have questioned Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*, saying its nineteenth-century interpretation is antiquated. The important question is "What does the Bible say?" Revelation 13 depicts the major powers that will be involved in last-day events. "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. . . . The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. . . . The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. . . . He was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast" (Rev. 13:1-3, 7, 8, NIV).

The central points are clear. First, the dragon is Satan (12:9) and Satan gives his political power and authority to the beast from the sea. Next, this beast will be a worldwide power with authority over every nation (including the authority to make war [13:7]). This beast is a religious power that demands worship (verse 8). Everyone, with the exception of God's faithful, will pay him homage.

Verses 11-15 say that John saw "another beast, coming out of the earth" who "made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast." He "set up an image in honor of the beast," and caused "all who refused to worship the image to be killed."

Whatever anyone's interpretation of the second beast, this first worldwide religious power will be joined by a second power who, by means of a death penalty, forces every person to worship according to the dictates of the first beast. However it happens, all the world will be subject to this same coercive power.

Scripture also shows that some distinctive act of worship will set apart those who follow the beast from those who worship God. The entire world will unite in supporting the beast against those who refuse this distinctive worship. In recent years, trends are indeed affirming this prophetic scenario.

For example, in 1852 Pope Pius IX sent a block of granite to be included in the Washington monument, then under construction. So intense was the Protestant reaction that the masons did not dare hoist the stone into place; instead, it was eventually tossed into the nearby Potomac River. Today, about a century and a half later, Catholics and Protestants in America are heralding their "unity in Christ." On March

29, 1994, a group of prominent Evangelical and Catholic scholars signed "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: the Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," a document which says essentially that whatever their theological differences, Catholics and Evangelicals have a sufficiently common faith that allows them to unite and bring about constructive political change in America.

The following words of Ellen White are increasingly relevant: "The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."²

Patience and courage needed

Today we may feel small, feeble, and helpless when confronted with the task of reaching every living person with the everlasting gospel in the context of present

truth. After all, our baptism rate is not even keeping pace with the birth rate. We often feel we are moving backward instead of forward.

Yet, according to prophetic evidence, great changes will take place, and the final movements will be rapid ones. The angels flying through the air symbolize speed and power. Our task is to keep moving forward, seeking the power of God's Spirit as we do so. We must let the light shine brighter and brighter until the whole earth is illuminated by the splendor of Christ.

Unlike the 1994 freshman class of Congress, we have the assurance that God will ultimately bring success. However, let's not deceive ourselves: Disunity and fragmentation can threaten that success and make it longer and harder in coming. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 143.

² ———, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1888), 588.

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PREACH CHRIST!

If you had one sermon to preach, what would it be? For me, the answer is easy: I'd preach Christ!



James C. Otores is a district pastor in Nyamira Conference in Kenya, East Africa

No matter the congregation, no matter the specific needs, no matter the tenor or the tone; in the end, as the preacher, we must preach Christ and Him crucified. If we fail to do that, no matter our eloquence, erudition, and demeanor—our pulpit ministry will be a failure.

But good preaching, even of Christ, doesn't happen by chance. It takes work, planning, and dedication. Good preaching must come in phases. We must prioritize. Martyn D. Lloyd-Jones summarizes these phases into two main sections: the *kerygma*, the message of salvation for humanity as perfectly wrought by Jesus—and the *didache*, the message that edifies those who have believed Jesus as their personal Saviour.¹ At the center, as always, must be Christ and Him crucified.

Jesus always preached to the primary needs of people before He took the step of rebuking the stiffnecked Pharisees and Sadducees. Having been touched with the people's deep need of salvation, Christ preached the message of the kingdom of God (Mark 6:34; Luke 9:11). Ellen White describes the response: "The people listened to the words of mercy flowing so freely from the lips of the Son of God. They heard the gracious words, so simple and so plain that they were as the balm of Gilead to their souls."² She said, "There should not a sermon be given unless a portion of that discourse is to especially make plain the way that sinners may come to Christ and

be saved."³ She warns that many preachers have misconstrued the real way that leads to salvation: "When the free gift of Christ's righteousness is not presented, the discourses are dry and Spiritless; the sheep and the lambs are not fed."⁴ Indeed, without Christ, truth about the law, the Sabbath, and prophecy bring a person little profit. If you fail to lift up Christ and the Cross, you have not brought salvation to your congregation.

It is axiomatic that most of the listeners to our sermons are overburdened by diverse problems and that many attend church with hopes of getting divine help. However, instead of providing them with what they need, "we [too often] carry some inadequate homily about textual matters or ecclesiastical etiquette before a congregation of people who are battling with loneliness and fear, worrying about jobs and education, trying to hold on to crumbling marriages, and facing death." We do not stop here. "We stand before degenerate people and offer them pious platitudes about religious symbolism and the history of the faith." Thus, "it is no wonder the church in our day often seems to lack power. When the gospel is not heard from the pulpit, there is nothing to unify the hearts of people. They go away confused and forlorn as they came."⁵ Time and again, in every discourse, on every occasion in one way or another, the preacher must exalt the Cross and what Christ has accomplished for each

JAMES C. OTORES

one of us there, not only as the answer to our most heartfelt needs, but also as the source of strength to bring our people through whatever crisis they are facing.

Christ should be the foundation of every sermon preached, no matter the topic, for what topic can have any lasting meaning or importance apart from Christ?⁶ If we are to make Christ central in our preaching, we have to make His saving grace the motivating factor for whatever we ask the congregation to do. Whether obedience to the law, faithfulness in tithing, adherence to health principles, love of our neighbors and enemies, whatever—we must make the Cross, and Christ's love for us manifested there, the basis of all that we seek to get our congregation to do. Anything apart from that will sooner or later flounder.

Especially in evangelistic crusades, everything should be laid on the structure of the Cross and God's forgiveness. Doctrines should be presented only in the light of the saving grace of our Lord. They should never be preached in a manner that makes them seem independent of the gospel. Apart from the Cross, they can't be properly understood. Imagine teaching the Sabbath, the judgment, or the law apart from the saving grace of Christ? It should be understood, from the first night of any series of meetings, that the preacher is a Christian preacher and that, more than anything else, he is there to preach Christ and Him crucified. Thus, if we want to evangelize the world, we have to make those who come to our meetings believe in Christ before they believe in anything else we teach, because nothing we teach is of any lasting value apart from Him.

As Adventists, we must be especially careful of legalism, which has been, and in some cases still continues to be, a problem for a church that rightly upholds the perpetuity of God's law. Legalism is never from the Lord. The cure, again, is to uplift Christ and the Cross: nothing will drive legalism from the heart faster than the great truths, so powerfully expressed in the writings of Paul, that surety and hope of salvation cannot come by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ . . . for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). These are truths that must be proclaimed in every sermon.

We may preach eloquent and erudite messages but, like the offering of Cain, they may be empty. "The offering of Cain was an offense to God because it was a Christless offering. The burden of our message is not only the commandments of God but the faith of Jesus."⁷

In short, the Holy Spirit does not give life to any message that is not the good news about the saving grace of our Lord. The Holy Spirit is not part of any preaching that isn't gospel oriented. If what is preached is truly the gospel, it will be attended by divine power. It was only when the apostles lifted up Jesus as the Saviour of men, crucified for their sins, that the Holy Spirit witnessed to their message. Thus, before delivering our sermons, we

have to weigh them in the balances of the gospel to see whether they contain something of endurance and permanence, something that will feed the flock or allow them to leave hungrier for truth than when they first came.

As Adventists, we have a great message to give the world, a message of hope, of power, of promise. But we must always make the Cross of Christ the center of all that we believe, because in Him alone rests the hope, power, and promise that makes this message what it is. ■

¹ Martyn D. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1971), 61, 62.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵ Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching* (Fortress Press, 1985), 164.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 158.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

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IS YOUR CHURCH SENIOR-SENSITIVE?

Most churches are following a course that will miss one of the greatest social challenges and greatest opportunities in history: the coming age wave. Like beach residents unaware of the approaching tornado, most congregations still seem to assume that “the future of the church is its youth.”



Win Arn is president of LIFE International and the New Senior Study Center, Arcadia, California.



Charles Arn is president of Church Growth, Inc., Arcadia, California.

As we approach the twenty-first century, the more accurate description may well be: “The future belongs to the old.”

Of course, most churches have a token senior adult class, perhaps a monthly potluck or field trip for older adults. But such approaches are woefully inadequate, if not entirely irrelevant, to the task of reaching and ministering to the rapidly growing community of persons over 50.

Why are many churches so “senior-insensitive”? Perhaps because of an attitude that discriminates against the elderly. Or maybe because few church leaders are trained to understand the unique needs, opportunities, and outreach strategies required for the elderly.

The hidden treasure

But the fact the church cannot afford to ignore is the “hidden treasure” senior adults constitute for the completion of the mission of the church. Consider, for example, some of the problems the church faces and how the senior adults can aid the church.

Problem 1. We recently conducted a survey

of pastors on the problems they face. Their most common frustration is a lack of dedicated laypeople to do the work of the church. Senior adults can help. One study found that on average senior adults have two to three times as many available hours for church-related activities as any other age group.

Problem 2. Financial shortfalls are the most common reason for not adding buildings, programs, and/or staff in local churches. Again, a study found that in a given year one senior adult member will give seven times the amount of money that a “baby boomer” member will give in the same church.

Problem 3. Members transferring jobs and/or moving to another community account for 3 to 5 percent membership loss in a congregation each year. Low institutional loyalty is a common characteristic of baby boomers. But senior adults tend to stay in one church and support its ministry. They seldom like to move from church to church. In the United States senior adults change address on an average once every

12 years, compared to the national average of once every seven years.

Problem 4. Biblical "illiteracy" is common among laity in many churches. As a result, pastoral teaching often remains at the "elementary" level. Most senior adult members have been Christians for years. Having experienced life's mountains as well as its valleys, they can share their maturity and wisdom with others.

Approach to senior adults

Thus the aging population provides an unprecedented opportunity for churches to increase their ministerial effectiveness. Here are some things that can be done.

1. *Recognize that all seniors aren't seniors.*

A new generational grouping has emerged in our times, known as "middle adults," and includes those between 50 and 70 years of age. They are, says *U. S. News & World Report*, "different not only in size, but in vitality and outlook." Older adults are living healthier, more active, more productive, and longer lives. A person of 50 or 60 can expect to live 15 to 30 more years. It is, in-

MATURE ADULTS	YOUNG ADULTS
Declining influence by peers	Heavy influence by peers
Declining materialistic values	Highly materialistic values
More subjective	More objective
More introspective	More extrospective
High sensitivity to context	Low sensitivity to context
Perceptions in shades of gray	Perceptions in black/white
More flexible	More rigid
More individualistic	More subordinated to others
More discretionary behavior	More predictable behavior
Less price-sensitive	More price-sensitive
Complex ways of determining values	Simple ways of determining values
Whole picture-oriented	Detail-oriented

deed, their middle years. They are not, certainly in their minds, "senior adults."

2. *Recognize that age does make a difference.* People 30 years old are different from people 60 years old, not only in the hair on their head but the mind inside. Older adults think differently from younger adults. David

Wolfe, a knowledgeable researcher and marketer, draws some significant contrasts (see above).¹

Implications for the church

What does this changing demographic landscape mean for the church? It means

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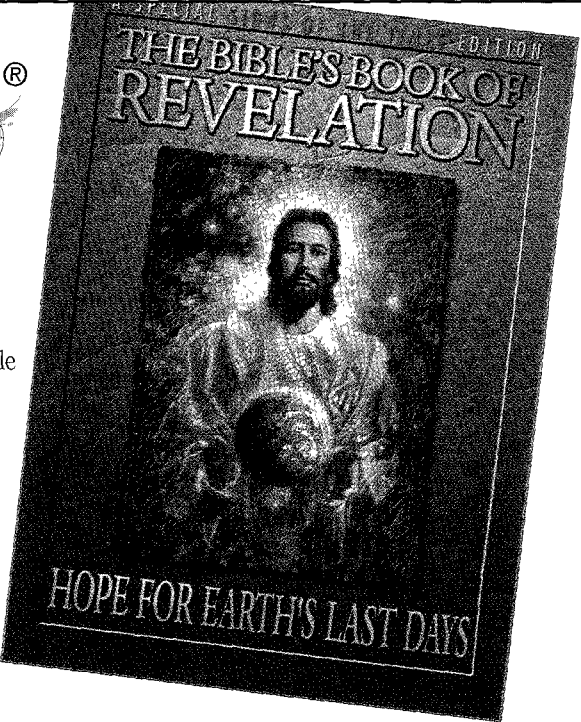
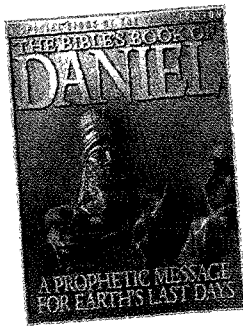
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that the old ways of doing senior adult ministry must be reevaluated. In time even the phrase "senior adult" will become politically incorrect. As more and more baby boomers inch toward that age category (the first boomers will turn 50 next year), the stigma attached to the word *senior* will make it a liability to effective ministry.

Even now we find that when churches offer a "senior adult" program, at most, only 15 percent of church members who qualify to be there actually are. Our research has shown that most do not want to be lumped into the category of senior citizens.

The new and still-emerging strategies that will be necessary for effective ministry to "middle adults" have many implications for programming, evangelism, and scheduling of church activities. The church that is "age-sensitive" will provide a variety of programs to appeal to the diversity of interests, needs, and activities of each age group.

Getting started right

If you were to develop an age-sensitive adult ministry, how would you begin? Here are five components:

1. *Find, select, and train leaders.* The success of your adult ministry will be directly related to the quality of your leaders. Someone needs to own the goal of ministry/outreach to young, middle, and senior adults. The leaders who will be most successful in each group will have a genuine love for people in that group. It's not a job; it's a ministry.

Our research with 500 churches that had full- or part-time senior adult staff members showed that the leaders who had specific training in this area were far more effective—and their adult ministries were more likely to be growing—than were leaders who had received no training. We also found that retired pastors are generally ineffective as middle and senior adult leaders unless they had been retrained in the unique issues and challenges of senior adult ministry.

2. *Get the facts.* Here is a proven principle: "Abundant, accurate information, properly interpreted and applied, enables churches to be good stewards of the grace of God and effective communicators of the gospel of Christ."

Find out how many members in your

church are over age 50, 55, 60, 65. What are the age groupings in your community? How many are homebound? What percentage are males, females? What are the various needs and interests represented in your prospective constituency? Your findings will lead you to organize effective programs and activities.

3. *Begin with an adult ministry, not a senior adult group.* The distinction is important. If you have a "senior adult group," you limit the potential involvement to those individuals who see themselves as "senior adults." Many other senior adults in your

Even now we find that when churches offer a "senior adult" program, at most only 15 percent of church members who qualify to be there actually are. Our research has shown that most do not want to be lumped into the category of senior citizens.

congregation and in your community will not identify with "those old people." In contrast, if your paradigm is an adult ministry, all kinds of groups can develop, many of which would not even be identified as "senior adult." A church of 300 members could have 10 to 15 various adult groups responding to a variety of needs and touching the lives of many more people.

4. *Develop a purpose statement.* A clearly written purpose statement will be the guiding light for a successful older adult ministry. This purpose statement should be "owned" by the members and be a yardstick to measure regularly the progress. If a clear

purpose statement is not established and used early in the ministry, the activities will become increasingly self-serving and self-centered.

Here is one purpose statement developed by an age-sensitive adult ministry. Use or adapt it if it describes the purpose you desire for your adult ministry. If not, create your own.

The adult ministry of _____ church has as its purpose to communicate and share God's love to those in the church family and to those outside the church. The assumption behind the adult ministry, the groups, and the activities sponsored by this ministry is that they exist for the purpose of serving, not being served; of giving, not receiving.

5. *Build your adult ministry on adult motivators.* Marketing researchers have sought to identify the reasons today's older adults buy or don't buy certain products. Their findings are of value to church leaders seeking to reach this group. According to these studies, older adults are motivated by one of the five values that form the foundation of most of their meaningful activity:

- Autonomy—they desire to be or remain self-sufficient.
- Social and spiritual connectedness—they respond to people more than programs.
- Altruism—they desire to give something back to the world.
- Personal growth—they desire to continue developing as human beings.
- Revitalization—they respond to activities that bring fresh and new experiences.²

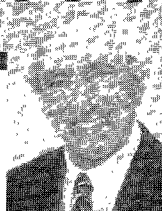
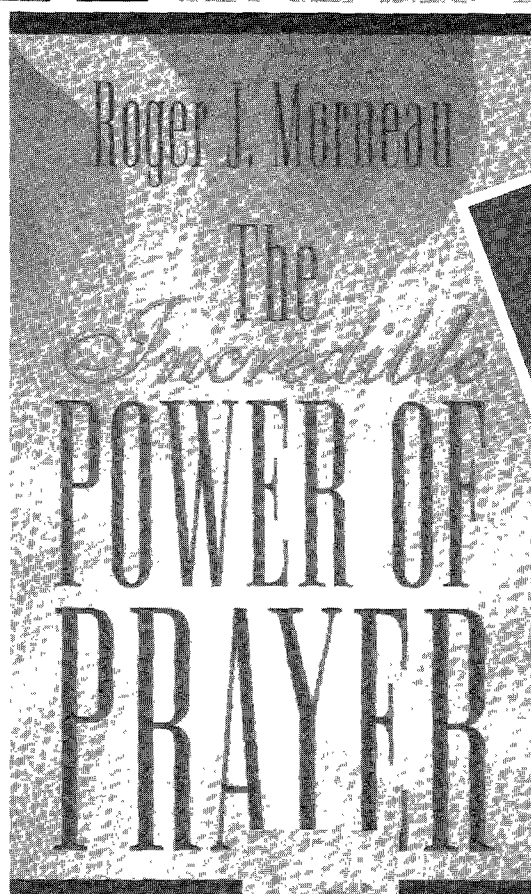
Effective older adult ministries in the twenty-first century will be those that integrate these values and motivators into a creative variety of activities and experiences.

The "age wave" is swelling! The 60-plus age group is growing three times more rapidly than the population at large. Those churches that are not prepared will be swamped by the sheer numbers, diversity, and impact of these older adults. If they are prepared, they will get out their surfboards and catch the ride of a lifetime! ■

¹ David Wolfe, "Targeting the Mature Mind," *American Demographics*, March 1994, 32-36.

² Ibid.

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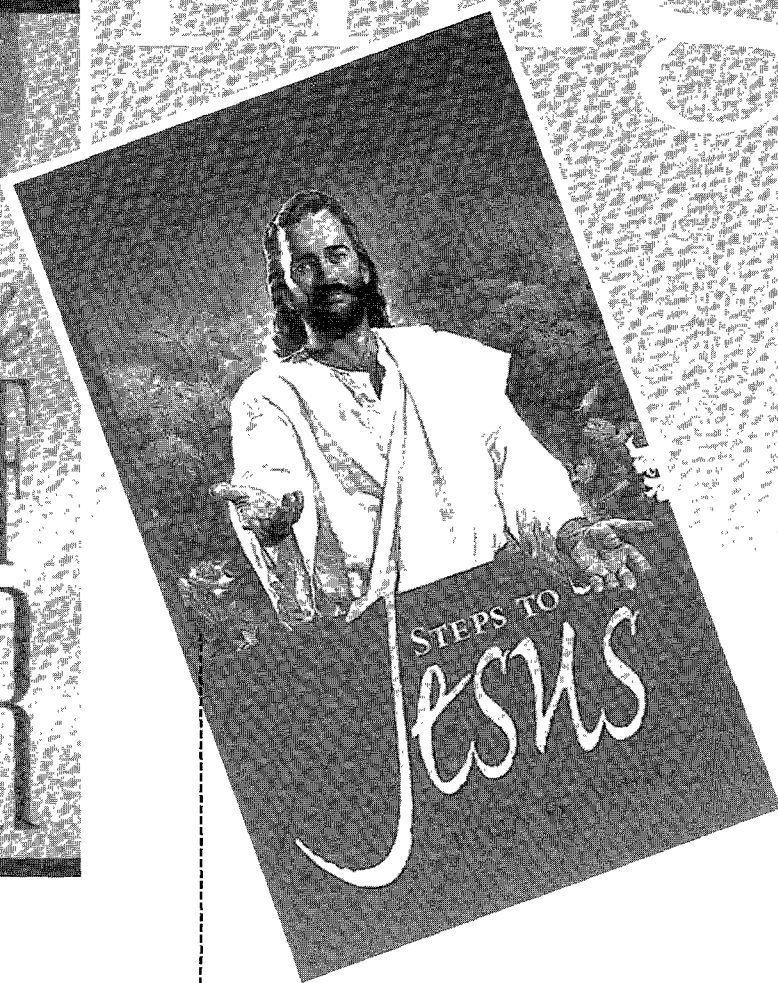
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When the Fredrick, Maryland, Adventist Church suffered a tragic electrical fire and their building burned to the ground, a

neighboring congregation, the Church of the Brethren, graciously offered the use of their facility to the newly-homeless Adventists. Likewise, the Denver First Seventh-day Adventist Church made the same gracious gesture to a Presbyterian congregation who lost their building to fire.

During times of tragedy, it is easy to see how Sabbath and Sunday worshiping churches can serve each other's crisis needs by making facilities available to those who have been deprived of their buildings.

Recently, however, I was asked whether the Adventist Church has a policy regarding renting our facilities to other groups who request such use for their regular Sunday services. As I began to research the issue, I discovered that a policy exists at the General Conference which addresses insurance issues. However, in consultation with some colleagues, we came up with other issues that should be considered when contemplating such a step.

The issue at hand, therefore, is whether or not to rent our facilities to other Christian organizations. It seems that if these congregations are Christian, we should at least be open to considering their request to rent our facilities. After all, in many places throughout the world we depend on the generosity of other denominations renting their facilities to us as we attempt to plant new congregations or await the time when sufficient funds allow us to purchase or construct our own buildings.

While it is clear that the "other Christian congregation" will not worship exactly as Adventists, it is equally clear

Renting our churches to others

JAMES A. CRESS

that a benefit may result from such close interaction between two church families. For example, a Methodist church would not immerse; a Baptist church would teach eternal torment; and all such potential renters would worship on Sunday—which is surely why they seek the use of our facilities, since they could not rent other "Sunday-keeping" churches.

If you have been approached with such a request or are thinking about renting your church to another group, I suggest you consider these conditions for any rental process:

1. Concurrence of the local union and/or conference leadership. I always encourage pastors and churches to seek the guidance of leadership in their specific area.
2. This issue must not become one that splits the congregation into opposing factions. A substantial majority of the local membership (not just a simple or bare majority vote) should be in eager agreement before you rent your facilities.
3. Any lease should include specific agreement that the other church will not publically attack Adventist doctrines or practices even as they are dependent upon our good will in renting our facilities to them.
4. A firm rental agreement/contract with a substantial damage deposit (refundable) plus at least three months rent paid in advance should be negotiated. Then, the renting group should, for the duration of the contract, remain paid for three months in advance. Such contracts should also include a 90-day escape clause for either group, should the rental situation not work out.

5. A small committee (perhaps only three or four individuals) should be appointed and empowered by the Adventist church board to negotiate and enact all agreements and contracts. The other group should expect to have negotiating contact with only that group rather than attempting to work with an entire board.

6. Appropriate liability insurance protection for the renting congregation which also indemnifies the Adventist congregation should be purchased and maintained at all times. Such insurance policies should be structured so that the Adventist Church is notified if the policy lapses for any reason. Furthermore, the representatives of Adventist Risk Management should be consulted and their advice followed regarding all insurance regulations and contract provisions.

7. Any lease agreement should clearly stipulate what facilities are available to the other congregation. For example, are you renting only your sanctuary or does the other group have access to fellowship halls, Sabbath School classrooms, etc. Likewise, your own department leaders should be consulted as to what guidelines are to be followed for use of resources in their classrooms or facilities.

8. The lease contract should also stipulate what days and hours the renting group has access to the church and whether or not they are allowed a portable sign during the times of their services. Rarely would I encourage erection of a permanent sign that stays up all through the week.

9. The charges for renting a church facility should be sufficient to cover all utilities, janitorial, supervision, and security services plus provide a profit to the Adventist church. One clear exception to renting for profit is when another church has faced a crisis—i.e., their church has been destroyed by fire, vandalized, or suffered a tragic loss. Then we should provide our facilities gratis or as economically as possible to the other church for the short-term interim while they rehabilitate or rebuild their structure.

10. Any funds that come from the

rental of our facilities should never be used for general church budget or local expenses. Rather, use rental income for capital improvements, evangelism, special projects, etc. Do not let the Adventist Church become dependent upon rental income for its day-to-day operations. I know of one congregation that rents various parts of its facilities to three or four different groups each week and could not survive financially if they lost even one of the renters. We should never place our church in such jeopardy.

11. The Adventist pastor, along with the small committee, should attend the

first worship service of the renting congregation and welcome them to the Adventist facilities and express joy and delight in their presence. A small welcoming ceremony might be appropriate.

12. An annual review of the lease, of the ongoing interaction between the two congregations, and of any other pertinent matters should occur between the small committee from the Adventist Church (which would report to the church board) and the operating committee of the other congregation. Such a process will insure continuing good relationships.

13. I strongly counsel against renting our churches to non-Christian, cultic groups. On the other hand, if we rent our facilities to another Christian group, we should make them feel welcome regardless of the reality that their worship, polity, or practices may well be different than ours. For example, we could hardly expect to mandate only vegetarian meals in our fellowship halls.

15. If the other group eventually builds or buys its own facilities, it is a generous gesture to farewell the departing renters with a contribution from our profits toward their new venture. ■

Take a dose of disillusionment

continued from p. 4

characteristics destined to further curtail our effectiveness and our personal satisfaction in ministry and driving us further into despair.

"The poor you have with you always," said Jesus. The truth is, we will also always have the abusive and the heartless, too, even in the fellowship of the Christian congregation. And the truth also is that we ourselves are often enough a part of such destructiveness.

I must add that taking a dose of the kind of the disillusionment prescribed here is also a fine tonic for the pain and anger we sometimes feel as we observe the mistakes and failings of "the brethren"—those placed in leadership over us. Such disillusionment will ease us up so that we will relate more effectively and constructively with them and in the bargain, come to feel much better about the church we love and in which we serve.

So here's to overhauling our imaginations and the perceptions we have of our people and the church by taking deep, regular drafts of pure, uninhibited disillusionment! ■

Letters

continued from p. 3

How exactly are we to identify effectively with the suffering and the poor? Critics of Mother Teresa charge that her ministry was a ministry of solace but not healing. In other words, she set up hospices but no modern hospitals; she soothed, but started no empowerment program. Could it be that her "compassion without empowerment" helped to perpetuate the misery she tried to soothe?

This oversight might stem from a misunderstanding of the gospel. Mother Teresa believed that poverty was a higher calling, the gateway to a more spiritual existence. Why should she try to alleviate the causes of poverty given this mindset?

Shouldn't we have two identities? Shouldn't we put ourselves in the place of suffering victims yet be pulling them toward a life above and beyond their helplessness? Mother Teresa received a lot of attention because she was a kind of religious superwoman. Could it be possible that there are those who are doing a more effective, yet less media oriented, work to help those in need?—Will McCall, pastor, New Orleans First SDA Church.

● *Fowler responds: For years before anyone recognized her or wrote about her in a newspaper (one was not far from her place of labor), Mother Teresa quietly carried on her ministry: to see in every*

suffering face the reflection of the face of her Saviour. She did not seek publicity, nor did she believe that poverty was a higher calling. Her higher calling was to see every human being as a child of God, created in His image, and give to that person the dignity he or she deserves. Her motivation and her ministry can be understood fully only against the background of a culture that defines human dignity in terms of caste and human worth in terms of what one has rather than what one is. Her ministry in no way negates the great work of preaching, teaching, and healing carried out in the name of Jesus by so many valiant unknown ones. Mother Teresa would be the first to acknowledge the importance of the latter without forsaking the former. ■

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¹ Dietrich Bohnoeff, *Life Together* (Harper and Row, Pub., Inc.), 26, 27.

² *Ibid.*, 27, 28.

³ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Company), 22, 25, 26.

Small groups in evangelism Continued from page 9

tent agency in developing such positive thoughts as courage, faith, hope, and joy.

If problems are too serious to be dealt with in the small group, referrals to professionals will be needed. However, these individuals can still continue to be part of the evangelistic small groups.

Illness. An area that needs special attention is physical illness. Where it is possible, we should run a medical health-screening program in conjunction with an evangelistic meeting. Literature and programs in simple health remedies and sickness prevention should be provided.

Ministry to the poor. Christ constantly focused on ministry to the poor. "Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity."³ And so should we. Many churches have community service organizations that can provide help during the meetings.

When small groups get involved in such relationship-building ministries, evangelism becomes attractive to those who attend. Meaningful friendships are established, practical help is received, and the people develop a sense of belonging and loyalty to the group and ultimately to the church. Both the preaching and the small-group ministries work together to lead the respondents to a full surrender of their lives to Christ, to a meaningful and purposeful life, and ultimately to baptism and union with the church.

Small groups: a continuing ministry

Small groups formed during an evangelistic campaign do not end with the campaign. They continue after the meetings. They become an integral part of the ongoing life of the church. They continue to provide support for those who are baptized and for those not quite ready to be baptized. Following this plan will result in greater numbers being baptized, more converts remaining in the church, and more involvement of the members in the church's ministry. ■

¹ Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1980), 38.

Suggestions for starting a small group

1. Determine the purpose of small-group ministries in your evangelistic series. In public meetings the purpose of small-group ministries is to provide fellowship, encouragement, and support for those who are struggling with specific problems.
2. Select and train small-group leaders. If the local churches have functioning small groups, the leaders of those groups can, with additional training, be used in the public evangelistic meetings.
3. Determine the needs of the audience. This can be done early in the evangelistic series, preferably the second night. A simple form can be used to encourage the audience to share the specific needs they have. The forms should allow attendees to do this anonymously. The night the form is used, share with the audience the small-group plan to provide ongoing encouragement and support to those who are struggling with difficult problems.
4. At the next meeting, announce the time and place for the meeting of the small groups. The time of year will dictate whether the meetings are conducted before or after the evangelistic meetings proper.
5. Begin the small-group ministries immediately. The earlier you begin, the more quickly you can provide help, establish meaningful relationships, and win audience confidence.
6. Clarify the goals of the small-group ministries: to provide a support system that assures acceptance, understanding, encouragement, and prayer. Coupled with this can be practical suggestions on how to cope with difficult situations that the group members may face.
7. Encourage group members to continue attending the evangelistic series and to recognize that it is Christ who in fact helps resolve their problems. However, the purpose of the small groups is not to discuss or rehash the evangelistic sermon.
8. Encourage the group leaders to make the groups a genuine ministry to the members and a source of strength to the evangelist in bringing souls to Christ.
9. Plan regular meetings of the group leaders with the evangelist to ensure coordination and cooperation in taking care of emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of people during the evangelistic series.
10. Continue the small-group ministries after the evangelistic series to ensure continuing support and encouragement for the new members and for those who have not yet made decisions to join the church. The groups can also provide ongoing training and coordination for some form of ministry by each of the group members.

² Blaine Taylor, *John Wesley: A Blueprint for Church Renewal* (Champaign, Ill.: Steven E. Clapp Pub., Crouse Printing, 1984), 24, 25.

³ Wesley's Works, Vol. VIII, 253, 254.

⁴ See David B. Burns, *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* (New York: Wm. Murrill Co., Inc., 1980); Aaron Beck, *Cognitive Therapy*

and the Emotional Disorders (New York: International University Press, Inc., 1976), 123; Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1942).

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 41.

SHOPTALK

Guess who's coming to dinner

The Brinklow, Maryland, church family life department put their unique spin on hospitality. They gave members chances to be mystery guests or hosts one Sabbath. Participants signed up ahead of time and the department mixed and matched names. The guests were given directions (with no names) to the home of the host. The host knew only the number of guests who would be coming. Identities were revealed when the host opened the door. Mystery guests offer church members and visitors alike a chance to establish or renew old friendships.

New vegetarian nutrition and health letter

Loma Linda University recently published the first edition of *Vegetarian Nutrition and Health Letter*. It is the only university-based publication to focus on vegetarian information for the public. Written in a language everyone can understand, the publication includes the latest information about eating a plant-based diet. Each issue of the colorful, eight-page publication includes usable research news, advice and how-to columns, and new product information. For more information, call 888-558-8703 or write to 1707 Nichol Hall, School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA 92350; or e-mail: vegletter@sph.llu.edu.

Missing Members Kit

The SafetyZone Kit is an eight-part workshop to help members build safe "places" for the missing as they return to church. It includes a Leader's Guide, Participant's Guide, Overhead Transparency Masters and Training Videos. To order, contact *AdventSource* at 800-328-0525.

Project: Steps to Christ

Project: *Steps to Christ* is a layman's ministry instituted and designed to provide the opportunity for every home in the United States to have the gospel message delivered to their door. To get

involved, write to Project: *Steps to Christ*, P. O. Box 361, Brushton, NY 12916; phone: 800-728-6872 or 518-358-2541; fax: 518-358-3028.

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