

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

January 2000



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Ministry

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Still the world's greatest job

Wow . . . ! Vernon Grounds, Ph.D., who authored the article "Still the World's Greatest Job" (September 1999) created a masterpiece in describing the purpose, honor, and work of our pastors. It should be recommended reading for all seminaries. Such knowledge, wisdom, and insight to identify what really is important and worthwhile. This article will support and re-enthuse every pastor regarding his or her choice of vocation and effort. Doctor Vern: I too, want to "stay on the wall" with Brother Nehemiah. . . . Don't come down, but please, send a few more articles to *Ministry* for publication and appreciation of its many readers from all faiths.—Richard Lane, first elder, Metropolitan Detroit Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Editorials on the Sabbath

I really appreciated your two-part article on "Why the Seventh Day?" I totally agree with your analysis and conclusions regarding the Sabbath. Our Lord Jesus Christ never abrogated this day, and as you say, the early church continued to practice it with passion and consistency. We know that Sunday as the day of worship came about through political maneuvering on the part of the Roman government and the religious institution of the time. Keep up the good work. —Anglican priest.

● Will Eva's recent two-part article "Why the Seventh Day?" is simply the most thorough, scholarly, and sensible explanation I have ever read on this topic during my many years as an

Adventist. Thank you. I just hope that pastors will preach this message rather than the confused "doing away with the sacrificial law but not the moral law" expositions, omitting the essential truth of the written code being translated by a living Saviour into life itself, including the blessing of the Sabbath.

Because of articles like this, *Ministry* is an essential part of my household. Thanks again.—Helen Thompson, via Internet: helenth@bmi.net

● I have read with interest the editorial "Why the Seventh-day?" in the July issue of *Ministry*. I'm looking forward to the follow-up in September. In light of the Ratzliff documents and the totally unfortunate video tape being shown, I would like to suggest that you print in "long-john" format a slightly edited version of the two articles put together.

Short, unapologetic, biblical, and to-the-point material is much needed to meet the situation in which many of our people find themselves, not knowing exactly how to explain Ratzliff's outdated and time-worn arguments. —William Loveless, pastor, Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, California.

Note: A pamphlet version of the two articles will be available at nominal cost through Ministry later this year.

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drapers@gc.adventist.org. Please include your name, mailing address, and telephone number.

Thank you for *Ministry*

● Thank you very much for *Ministry*. It has surely been a blessing to me. It brings up subjects that are relevant in almost every church, and the experiences and insights that are shared have been of great importance to a lot of us. A big thank you! And may the Lord continue to bless you in the work you do for Him.—Monica R. Halvorsen, Drammen, Norway.

September 1999 Letters

Pastor Hopps detects a fallacy in my article because he fails to make an important distinction and because he puts the wrong words into my mouth.

When I said that Mrs. White's writings afford insight into "it," the "it" refers to inspiration, not "the formation of the canon" (words that Hopps wrongly ascribes to me). He fails to distinguish between inspiration and canonicity, which are two different things, just as inspiration and inerrancy are two different things. There have been many inspired writings and other utterances that are not in the canon (some of them mentioned in the Bible). A canon is an agreed-upon list or corpus by which other writings and doctrines are tested. We test Ellen White's writings by the Bible, not the other way around, and that is what makes the Bible canonical, while Ellen White's writings are not. But both are inspired.—Robert M. Johnston, via Internet: bobjohn@andrews.edu ■

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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.



We have finally come to that point in time which for decades we thought of as a distant mystical location in our

future: the year 2000.

No one from the human race has ever surveyed the hinterland of this barely entered epoch. Thus we are naturally apprehensive as, standing on the shores of the third millennium, we fancy all kinds of monsters and mammoths lurking beyond this pivot of the calendar. Some of these we will doubtless encounter, though not exactly in the form we now imagine them.

Alongside the march of time toward this date, there has been the parallel advance of genuinely disquieting mega-movements. At this point I am reflecting especially on our shifting spiritual and moral presuppositions. Some of these have in fact altered the superstructure of the way human beings view themselves, their world and the whole creation. This has, in turn, caused expansive realignments in the ways we think, feel, and live, and also in the kinds of humans we have become versus the humans of 200 or even 50 years ago.

In contrast with the humanity of the past, contemporary men and women, despite the unprecedented panoramas now open, have come to think in limited, monodimensional terms. That is, the "scientific" answer has tended to become the only respectable, politically correct answer. We have come to assign to reason and science capacities that by their nature they do not and cannot possess. Reason and science have been accorded an obeisance and authority that is ill placed. This has caused the neglected spiritual side of our God-given humanity to cry out to be recognized and employed. These

Remembering from whence we came

W I L L E V A

spiritual aspects of our being are, on the whole, increasingly atrophied by disuse or misuse. This is so even in many of our religious communities and institutions, which in some significant cases have all but become collaborators with and champions of

Anyone who allows himself or herself to think at all must wonder where a world, stripped of adequate spiritual and moral verity will turn and what kind of self destructive conduct might be forthcoming, as more and more we are faced with mass extinction and universal cataclysm.

many of these "brave new world" views.

On the heels of this, and in a kind of reaction to it, people now increasingly find expressions for the spiritual side of their nature in an array of improbable, irrational, seductive, and even demonic channels. And so in

many cultures and in many people, the rationalistic and the irrational lie side by side as uneasy, yet consorting, bed-fellows. The projected long-term offspring of such an ongoing liaison is disquieting to contemplate.

Modern rationalism and science jump-started our vehicles to travel the road on which we came to incessantly question anything that could not be physically observed or scientifically tested; such as the existence of God and our origin in Him. From there we moved, still traveling down the same road, to challenge many spiritual and moral stanchions that could not stand up to our rationalistic scrutiny.

The next step is well on the way to being taken: that of depreciating and devaluing the gift of our own humanity. Our humanistic yet disrespectful and brazen views of sexuality and our wholesale, invasive aborting of human life in the womb, along with the kinds of arguments we use to justify such behavior are sobering examples of this degenerative megatrend. Increasingly we are like sheep without a shepherd, left to the dictates of a merely temporal rationalism. For "in those days there was no king in Israel [no recognized transcendent authority and] every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25, RSV).

We have literally forgotten from whence we came and are, thus increasingly confused about who we are, where we are, and where we really want to go. It is not only the prophetically initiated Christian who urgently wonders where our humanity is heading. Anyone who allows himself or herself to think at all must wonder where a world, stripped of adequate spiritual and moral verity will turn and what kind of self-destructive conduct might be forthcoming, as more and more we are faced with mass extinction and universal cataclysm.

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BEING HEALTHY AMID PASTORAL STRESSES

John Smith is a young and dynamic pastor. He loves his work. He adores his family and is committed to its health and to the growth of his church. But right now he finds himself in a dilemma.



Larry Yeagley is a pastor in Charlotte, Michigan.

Recently his conference assigned him to a new church-planting program. In addition to his present duties, the plan involves training lay persons in several churches, some distance away from home. This additional assignment will keep him away from his family almost every weekend.

"The plan is not family-friendly," John said. "My wife and children would have to spend weekends without me—an unfair burden on their emotional health and my own."

John approached his president but quickly sensed that he should not press the matter further. What should he do?

Here are some of the approaches we discussed as we sought ways to handle the problem.

Family first

The wisest among us put the family first. "Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside."¹

When I was a chaplain in psychiatric units, I met young patients under treatment for clinical depression. Some of them were pastors' children. In talk-

ing with them, I found out that their pastor-parents were gone most of the time, returning home occasionally to enforce the rules. These children seemed to have a hatred for such parents and for their church.

My job was to show the minister-parents that they were painfully bumping their emotionally starved children in their mad dash to save the world for God. I, too, have been guilty of this. In my early ministry I would spend the entire Sabbath working for the church while my wife had the full responsibility for our small boys. After some time it dawned on me that I was robbing my family and depriving myself of all kinds of blessings. My boys used to beg me not to accept weekend dinner invitations so that we could enjoy Sabbath as a family. I decided that pastoral visitation is important, but it must not rob my family of my love and companionship. The day of worship is designed to heal and nurture families—including the pastor's.

Your spouse is important

My wife and I once conducted a seminar for pastors on how to minister

to people in crisis without destroying their own health through stress. We explained that much of our stress results from living in spaces that are sick. If the work space puts unrealistic demands on a person, and there are few rewards, affirmations, or words of gratitude, the emotional space becomes sick and the ill effects spill over into the home. We appealed to the ministers to check the health of their work environment to make sure the home remained healthy.

A young minister responded privately: "I'm so happy you challenged me to examine my work space. I have been placing all my energies into my work. As a result my wife and I have been arguing and growing apart. For the past few months we have discussed divorce. Today I've discovered that my marriage and family take priority over the church. Thank you for giving me permission to balance my life. Starting tonight, I am going to begin working on my very sick marriage."

Set aside plenty of private time for you and your spouse. Enjoy walks together. Attend musical concerts. Play games together. Sit facing each other and reflect about the highlights of your marriage. Have dinner at a special restaurant. Build mini-honeymoons into every month. Give your spouse surprises for no special reason. Love needs no reason.

These little extras will keep your pastures greener than the proverbial ones on the other side of the fence. Your children will feel secure and loved when they see their parents in love.

Set your own agenda

Set your own agenda. If you don't, someone will set it for you. Their agenda may not be healthy. When I was an intern, my churches set my agenda. For three months of each year I was visiting police departments to gain permission to solicit for mission funds. I was touring the streets where church members were giving yellow silk flowers to pedestrians and asking for donations. I was picking up the money and replenishing their supply of flowers. During those months I struggled to finish my Sabbath sermon, usually completing it

late Friday night. After delivering the sermon, I was often embarrassed to face the parishioners. Finally, I gathered the courage to set my own agenda. I was able to live through that church program without depression. My wife and family were privileged to have a husband and father who wasn't grouchy and moody. We all experienced better health.

Setting your own agenda requires a clearly developed theology of ministry. Examine the concept of ministry

Set aside

plenty of private time for you and your spouse. Build mini-honeymoons into every month. Enjoy walks together. Attend musical concerts. Play games together. Sit facing each other and reflect about the highlights of your marriage. Have dinner at a special restaurant. Give your spouse surprises for no special reason. Love needs no reason.

throughout the Bible. Be attentive to the contexts in which ministry is discussed. Apply those principles to your situation.

Eugene Peterson in *The Contemplative Pastor* argues that sermon preparation is easy when you drench yourself in Scripture. There has to be water in the well if you intend to give the worshipers a drink. Since I see my role to be that of proclaimer, nurturer,

teacher, and counselor, I enjoy spending my entire mornings filling the well and soaking myself in the *Water of Life*. When I am in the pulpit I am relaxed and quietly confident that what God helped me develop in manuscript or notes is what the people need.

Jesus spent much time in quiet places with the Father. He left the quiet place and strolled into the marketplace and poured His love and compassion into the lives of people. Then He went back to the quiet place to be filled once more. I like to call this the rhythm of the ministry. Linger in the quiet place so that you can meet God's children in the marketplace.

Have a plan

It is pointless to be running in proverbial circles. This only leads to exhaustion and frustration. You need to have a plan. A plan is different from an agenda. Your theology of ministry must lead you to plan for the whole year. How do you do this? Certainly not by running around. I set aside one or two weeks every six months to adjust my goals for the six months just ahead and develop goals for six months beyond that. This keeps my one-year plan current and realistic. And I build my vacations into my goals. Spending regular time with my family is a part of my goals.

Be not anxious

God is constantly in the process of touching and impacting people's lives. When I visit a person, I need to remember that before me the Holy Spirit was already ministering to the needy one. While I am visiting, the Holy Spirit is present to give me words to speak. When I leave, the Holy Spirit stays with the person to take what I have left behind—my words, my smile, my tears, my silence, and my touch—and turns them into a ministry that I could never perform by staying. All I need to do is allow God to use me as a small tool, then trust that He will build a mansion of holiness in the place of a shanty of sinfulness.

Henri J. M. Nouwen speaks about worried ministers as people who have their hearts in the wrong place. He de-

scribes them as overstuffed suitcases with no room for the Spirit. They have an address, but they are never home long enough to be addressed by the Spirit. Rather than hurrying and scurrying about, ministers would be healthier knowing that they can't initiate. That is the work of God. We are His tools.

Have a sense of humor

A merry heart is like good medicine. Humor and laughter must be a part of the pastor's life and the pastor's home. Twice a week I used to visit a rancher who was slowly losing his battle against cancer. Each day we'd play a game of dominoes. Each day he won. Each day he made up the rules as the game proceeded. As we played the game, George told the funniest jokes I have ever heard. One day we were laughing until the tears ran down our faces. George threw back his head and cried, "Oh, if I couldn't laugh, I'd die."

The late Norman Cousins taught

us the value of laughter when he overcame a rare disease by engaging in body-shaking laughter. He instilled the idea in the minds of healthcare providers to build laughter rooms in their hospitals. It's true. A merry heart does good like a medicine. Pastors need regular, good doses of that medicine.

Set aside a day for family

I know a pastor who told his new congregation, "You should know that Tuesday is our family day. I do not wish to receive any phone calls on Tuesday unless there is a genuine emergency. In turn, if you tell me which day is your family day, I promise I'll not call you on that day." These words may sound a bit abrupt, but they do tell the congregation what to expect, and they say something about the importance of family.

Next to the day of worship, our family day was the most therapeutic day of the week. I left my work behind and focused strictly on the health of the family.

Develop good health habits

Ministers and their families need to follow good health principles. They need to live in a healthy manner. Good health of body most certainly influences emotional and spiritual health. When the stresses of church life strike, we are able to handle them better if we have good health. Read again Ellen White's *Counsels on Health* and see what you've been missing.

Set boundaries

A pastor returned home after a day of visitation. "How was your day?" he asked his wife.

"I might have finished the laundry, but instead I spent all morning listening to the woes of your church members. Why do they trouble me? I'm not their pastor."

This spouse and others in similar situations needed to devise ways of quickly referring calls to the pastor. The pastor handles complaints, problems, and a variety of church matters. Such

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Lord!

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calls need not infringe on other family members. It is appropriate for them to say, "This is not something I can help you with. Let me take your phone number and have the pastor call you."

I visited a pastor's home during meal time. Twice the pastor answered the phone and twice his food had to be reheated. Handling church problems and eating a meal don't go together. The pastor would be wise to install a telephone answering device. Or learn to courteously postpone calls until the meal is finished. If calls are allowed to interrupt meals, family worship, and important family discussions, the whole family may feel frustrated and resent not only the phone intrusions but the work of pastoring and the church itself.

Be creative

We are made to be creative. When we fail to use our creativity we lose interest in ministry. We tend to be bored and become ineffective in our work. We are wide open to discouragement and even depression.

Sitting on the floor of my study, my son was writing the pros and cons of

several lifework choices. He looked up and said, "Daddy, what would you think if I told you I wanted to be a minister?"

"Well, Jeff," I replied, "if you plan to be an unimaginative minister, I wouldn't be too happy. We have enough of such ministers—boring people. But if you plan to be a creative, innovative minister who is not afraid to try new ideas, I'd be very happy."

You can't be effective in ministry unless you put your personal imprint on everything you do. Uncreative ministers lose enthusiasm and are not productive. They develop attitudes that harm their own emotional health and that of their families.

Creativity in ministry promotes success and good health.

Play

My sons and I conducted a father-and-son retreat a few years ago. Most of our activities were fun and games. We made a remarkable discovery. Fathers didn't feel comfortable playing. Their sons instantly played with vigor, but fathers were awkward. They had forgotten how to play. With some coaxing, the fathers gradually allowed

themselves to be children again.

Adult children are a delight to God. He doesn't want us to become dull and stodgy. I often tell people that Jesus must have enjoyed playing because children were drawn to Him. I can't prove that theologically, but it seems logical to me.

When I worked as a chaplain I would sometimes be tense after a serious emergency. That's when I headed for the pediatrics area of the hospital. I made paper airplanes for the children and taught them how to glide them across the room. If the child could walk, we went into the hall and pretended that we were landing big jets at Heathrow Airport. The nurses sometimes scolded me for cluttering the hall, but my game-playing made me a healthier chaplain. I hope it did wonders for the children also.

Playing sharpens our minds. The exercise stirs the endorphins that fight off discouragement.

Slow down

Slow down. Work slower. Preach slower and more conversationally. Hurry destroys creativity. You'll accomplish just as much when you work at a slower pace. It keeps you from stress-related diseases and avoids addiction to your own adrenaline.

Remember for whom you are working

If God called you to ministry, you are working for and with God. You may be receiving a paycheck from the institutional church, but you take your orders from the Chief Pastor. Study the methods of Jesus. Learn His attitudes toward people. Watch Him take time for weary sinners. See Him caring for people who were forgotten long ago. Hear the shouts of joy from those who were cured. Then pray that God will help you perform the ministry of TLC—tender loving care. Take *time* to be with people. Listen to their pain. Care for them genuinely and cure them with the gospel.

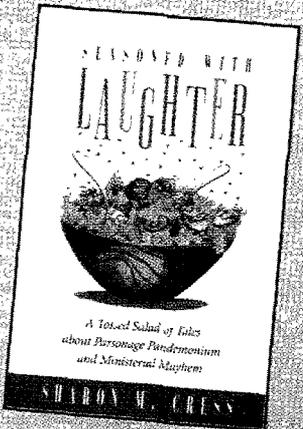
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¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 204.

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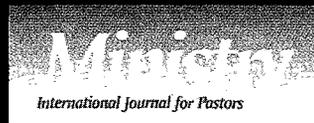
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BALANCE IN THE BUDGET

I grew up in a home where money was limited. There were nine of us—my parents and seven children. Although Dad and Mom did their best to meet our needs, we never really had a sense of financial security.



Claire Eva is an educator and freelance writer from Clarksville, Maryland.

We never went hungry, but I recall Mom's creative breakfasts and her lectures on the frugal use of bathroom tissue. I also remember not having anything to wear my first day of junior high school and my mother resourcefully finding a white cotton blouse and hunter green skirt among the older-sister castaways in our basement. I recall how she lovingly washed, starched, and ironed them for me. My mother also helped me secure a part time job at a local department store. She understood my need to wear more than hand-me-downs. So, I learned to "handle" money early. I was 13 when I began that first job.

Maybe it was different for you. Your parents may have taken care of everything. Perhaps money was not something you thought much about because it was there when you needed it and so you didn't feel the constant pinch of poverty.

Even though our early financial status may affect our later spending habits

and attitudes, neither "plenty" nor "poverty" teaches us how to plan financially. How, then, can we learn to do this planning successfully? How can we find ways of putting bits of joyful celebration into our lives without having to "hock" our souls? We need to have balance in our personal fiscal dealings. We need to be our own best friends as we move toward a more secure future.

That nasty six letter word—budget

I don't know about you, but especially in our early years of marriage, the mere mention of the word "budget" set off an alarm in me. I saw it as a negative restraint designed to tighten the strings already drawn too taut in what often felt like an over-ordered life. And so I avoided the word budget and what it called for.

When it came to a financial budget—we *thought* we had one. After I chose to quit work and take care of our new daughter, my husband Will and I agreed that I would manage our fi-

C L A I R E E V A

nances. I remember getting little ledgers that helped me keep records of our spending. On each monthly page I listed our expenses, our income, and, if we were fortunate that month, the record of a small remaining balance. But this was not really a budget.

"They hardly have anything to live on, and they just eat cereal!" was a comment one of my aunts circulated within the family. I laugh when I remember her perception of our vegetarianism. But now that we were on one income, some months were painfully tight, so Aunt Irene was at least partially correct. I remember having about \$40 for food one month, after our bills had all been paid. That was about half of our no-frills food allowance. And so it was that we continued to live stringently from paycheck to paycheck for over a decade of marriage. As I look back at it now, we could have done more and felt less emotional strain, had we actually budgeted during the early years when we both worked.

Don't get me wrong. We did learn to handle our money more economically through those years. God blessed us with Will's pay increases, which kept pace with inflation, and we had excellent medical coverage. Our parents were able to help us with an old Ford for me to drive and, later, a down payment for our first home.

I'm not disdaining our financial state so much as saying that our life then was not all it could have been had we understood what we know today about the value of having a full and effective budget—something we learned to design and implement in 1983.

Looking through new glasses

In 1981, Will received a call to pastor in the Washington, D.C. area. At this time, since both our son and daughter were in school, I decided to find some part-time employment. One of the positions I had was at the world headquarters of our church. A highlight of my employment there was the availability of brief seminars offered for the enrichment of the employees. I attended one course that changed our financial life—

a seminar on family budgeting.

By this time I had gained the nerve to face not only the word but also the reality of having a "budget." I knew that even though I was still keeping my ledgers, something was missing. I am forever indebted to our seminar instructor. He showed us how a true budget is both an emotional and financial investment.

He stressed the need to eliminate credit card debt. We had a couple of credit cards, and it took us over a year to pay them down. Since that time, we have not charged anything on our cards that we could not pay for when the bill arrived. In that sense, we have made the credit card system work for us so that we can keep our money until the next due date.

Our seminar presenter talked about "rewards" in a budget and how vital they are. They create much of the balance a solid and successful budget needs. The class was given a "his and her" budget—a plan where husband and wife each share in managing their budget categories, basically dividing them in half. This budget generated a friendly competition as to who was better at meeting the budget for that month. But regardless of who "won," it still created a win-win situation. When the budget was met and we spent under the allotted amount, we rewarded ourselves—perhaps an evening out and, in some cases, a weekend away.

Percentages were suggested to give us a basic idea of how to divide our monthly income/s into budget categories (see sidebar). They served as a guideline for us, even though we couldn't always use the exact percentages suggested.

We adapted the "his and her" budget to fit our needs. We were both committed to the program, but I continued the actual bookkeeping. No matter who actually keeps the accounts in your family, it is vital that both husband and wife review the monthly budget so that you can work unitedly toward your goals. This sharing demonstrates mutual respect and doesn't leave one spouse carrying all the emotional weight and responsibility.

General Budget Categories

Income

- ◆ Salaries
- ◆ Misc. Income
- ◆ Interest Income

Expenses

- ◆ Tithe and Offerings
- ◆ Allowances: Business/Personal
- ◆ Annuity/Savings
- ◆ Auto
 - ◆ Depreciation
 - ◆ Fuel
 - ◆ Repairs and Maintenance
- ◆ Christmas Fund
- ◆ Clothing Accounts
- ◆ Dining and Entertainment
- ◆ Dry Cleaning
- ◆ Education Expenses
- ◆ Food
- ◆ Gifts
- ◆ Haircare
- ◆ Home Furnishings
- ◆ Home Repairs/Maintenance
- ◆ Insurance:
 - ◆ Home Owners
 - ◆ Life
 - ◆ Auto
- ◆ Interest Expense
- ◆ Loans:
 - ◆ Auto
 - ◆ Miscellaneous
- ◆ Medical
- ◆ Medical Reserve
- ◆ Miscellaneous Expenses
- ◆ Mortgage:
 - ◆ Loan
 - ◆ Taxes
- ◆ Taxes:
 - ◆ Federal
 - ◆ State
 - ◆ FICA
 - ◆ Other
 - ◆ Quarterly Fund
- ◆ Telephone
- ◆ Utilities:
 - ◆ Electricity
 - ◆ Gas
 - ◆ Water
- ◆ Vacation Fund

A crucial element

It is very important to note what could be described as the most important element of true budgeting: that of expanding all monthly budgetary categories into a yearly or long-term expression. In other words, each pay period (i.e., each month) we began to put aside a proportionate amount toward such annual or long term expenses as auto insurance and auto repairs, so that when the insurance came due or when a repair was needed, we had the money to pay for it. We established small personal allowances and clothing accounts for each family member. Christmas and vacation funds, education and savings account categories are a few examples of the long-term, major expense funds we established.

I can't tell you what a blessing this was! Now the money was there to meet our needs as they arose. Yes, occasionally a financial crisis came, but we found that we were much more able to meet it, especially after we had been on the program for a while and our budget pool increased. When this was established, we learned to look at our *budget* balances to determine what funds we had available rather than looking at our *bank* balance. We found that we could get a false sense of our financial status by simply looking at the bank balance. A real sense of security eventually developed in us as we saw how our monthly budget funds were there and working for us.

Along with the seminar, we also discovered another invaluable tool—a software program for computer budgeting. It took me a while to work out all of the snags, but since learning the program, I see it as a veritable long-term godsend. It took care of mathematical operations and allowed me to call up and print reports on our financial status. Checkbook balancing was beautifully simplified. One year, when we were audited by the Internal Revenue Service, I was able to promptly call up specific categories, such as contributions or Will's business and auto expenses, and print them out for the audit. I think these kinds of records impressed the

agent, and our audit went smoothly and quickly.

A special reward we gave ourselves two years after we began our "true" budget was a three-week trip to Europe with our children. We made so many wonderful memories, and I can honestly say we were able to save for that trip because of the new insights we had gained from the plan we were following.

As I view it today, I must say that the term "financial planning" is better than that terse little word, "budget."

I *f you plan wisely, allowing appropriately for personal and emotional needs, this destructive pattern will lessen dramatically. With an adjusted attitude and with planning, you will come to live life with more contentment and less impulsive spending.*

That is what a budget is—financial planning over the short term, with the long term in mind.

The spiritual dimension

It can be quite revealing to look at our basic attitudes toward money and the emotional needs we feed by the use of our capital. "Balance in the Budget" purposely suggests that we have emotional as well as physical needs, and it is necessary for us to understand our needs and those of our partners, in order to help meet them and live rewardingly within our means.

Have you ever decided to put a

moratorium on spending? Perhaps you are in debt or you have gone out of bounds in your spending for a couple of months. Now you know you must get things under control! What usually happens after a month or so of this well intentioned regulation? If you are like most, you break loose from it. You've been too rigid, and so you snap your carefully installed bands of constraint.

If you plan wisely, allowing appropriately for personal and emotional needs, this destructive pattern will lessen dramatically. With an adjusted attitude and with planning, you will come to live life with more contentment and less impulsive spending.

The apostle Paul demonstrates a Christian maturity I admire and stretch for: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:11-13, NIV).

How can this be? How can Paul's reality be our reality? Generally I have a fairly even emotional response to the temptation to spend. I usually feel quite content with my situation. But sometimes I descend into a valley where I am more inclined to buy impulsively. I believe when we are in these valleys, we are experiencing some kind of lack or unfulfilled need, the source of which runs deeper than just the need we feel to spend. Something is creating a feeling of dissatisfaction and powerlessness. We think that the temporary "rush" of spending will give us a sense of satisfaction and power.

The reality is that we are not powerless. I know that nothing can separate me from God and all the truly good gifts that spring from such an unbelievable love, yet when I put everyday living first, I sometimes forget who it is that fills me and makes me content. I forget Paul's secret. Paul talks of us being "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19, NIV).

The truth is that we need never be afraid, even of financial dearth. This confidence can be our experience. Even if we were to lose it all, He would rescue us.

There is *nothing* wrong with our desire for that new car or those new furnishings. But when we are in a compulsive mode we may be sure that the new couch is not the primary need. Probably our real need is to experience newness, beauty, or contentment.

We can look first at what we can actually do. Perhaps an inexpensive shampooing of the couch would perk it up. A good general scrubbing and shining of the room or my home makes me feel new. Then, it's time to sit down and determine when our home furniture budget will be ready for that new davenport. More often than not there is a simpler, less expensive way to meet our needs while planning for the long term. Amazingly, too much of even smaller items can deter us from our goal. The more we feel in charge of our lives, accepting our circumstances, the less compulsive we will tend to be.

Celebrate!

There are less expensive ways of putting the bits of joy into our lives that we may feel are lacking, and which we may therefore try to compensate for by overspending. Here are a few that have worked for us: Spend time together. As husbands and wives, we have deep legitimate needs for this. It's amazing what we're able to get by on when we get creative about showing our love.

We may want to go out to eat but know we can't afford it. Then we can make a date for dessert at a special restaurant and later take a quiet walk around the lake, or plan a picnic at a scenic spot, using a nice table setting and stemware or have a sandwich at a favorite deli or grab a blanket and go to the evening concert at the park.

Be resourceful and imaginative. You can't afford the florist? Buy flowers at the market! Some of my favorite bouquets have come from there. Read a good book together or view a special film. We can set aside 30 minutes at the end of the day

for a warm drink around which we may share the joys and concerns of each other's day. And we must remember to go the "full menu" when we more than meet our monthly budget and celebrate one another by practicing the reward system we have created.

When all is said and done, we must make sure that we feast regularly on God's Word and His love for us. I know that it is when I'm doubting myself and am out of touch with the sources of love, first from God and then from those I value, that I am most compelled to

spend impulsively. We need to know and *feel* that love, experiencing how precious we are to God and others.

As a result of full spiritual and emotional cups, high on our list of priorities will be a desire to share what we have with others. Ministering to the needs of someone who has less will cause us to enter our homes without the former sense of nagging dissatisfaction and with the sense that this home of ours is in fact a palace. I may or may not feel wealthy, but I know I am in fact rich and content. ■

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CAN THESE BONES LIVE AGAIN?

Would you be open to a move?" asked the district superintendent. I asked a few questions about the church and then politely declined.



Stephen Grunlan, D.Min., is a Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor of the Balboa Community Church, San Diego, California.

However, the superintendent wanted me to know about the church in San Diego. It was a church in a good location with excellent facilities. Once its membership had been 200, but it had begun to decline. Now there were only about 50. Yet the more the superintendent talked, the more interested I became. I told him I would pray about it, talk to my wife, and get back to him.

I thought of my own church. It had also declined from 200 to about 100. Nine years after I became the pastor, the weekly worship attendance had risen to almost 800. Similarly, the church I had pastored before experienced very significant growth.

When I accepted the calls to my first two churches, I was not looking for declining churches nor was I interested in a turnaround ministry. These were the churches that had been available and the call had come to me. Now with this "feeler" from California, I was in a position to choose a turnaround ministry. As my wife and I prayed, gathered information, and visited San Diego, we came to believe that this was where God could use us. We felt uniquely prepared.

We have now been in San Diego for

almost four years and we have seen attendance triple in this transient, multicultural setting. As I have sought to turn the church around, I have reflected on what worked in my previous ministries and what is working here. All three churches have been quite different from one another. One was a suburban church, one in a large town, and one in an urban setting. In all three situations I have noticed or identified ten keys common to turning the churches around.

1. Build hope

When a church is in decline, people begin to lose confidence. They wonder what will happen to them and their church. Often key people leave and those who remain feel abandoned. They begin to ask quietly, "Will the church ever again be what it once was?" "What's going to happen to us?"

In all three of my churches I realized that *the people needed hope*. Building hope requires three approaches.

First, God. I reminded the congregation of who God is and what He had done and what He could do. I pointed

STEPHEN GRUNLAN

to the promise of Jesus, "I will build my church." I told them that the church is where Jesus is working and that working together with Jesus and one another the church can be built.

Second, I pointed to the assets and strengths of the church. All three churches had good people, good facilities, and good locations. One church had a strong, dynamic missions program. Another church had a strong children's ministry. And the third had a good education program and a school with real potential. I reminded them of the tremendous resources they had. I held up each of their strong ministries as an example of what they could do.

Third, I built hope with stories and examples of other churches and ministries that had turned around and come back. As hope was rekindled, churches were able to move ahead.

2. Develop a vision

Growth requires vision. When I took up my first church, nobody was

talking about vision. I did not know what it was. But I did know the church needed a direction and a goal, and I did know where I wanted the church to go. Unfortunately, I thought I could impose my view on the church. While that church did grow, and when I left it was larger than it had ever been, I nevertheless felt a sense of failure because I did not develop a collectively owned vision.

I took up my second church a little wiser. Soon after I settled in, I scheduled a Board retreat. Our primary agenda was vision and direction for the church. The church leadership became part of the process. With the leadership sharing the vision, we moved ahead quite well. However, we also lost some people who did not understand where we were going or how we would get there.

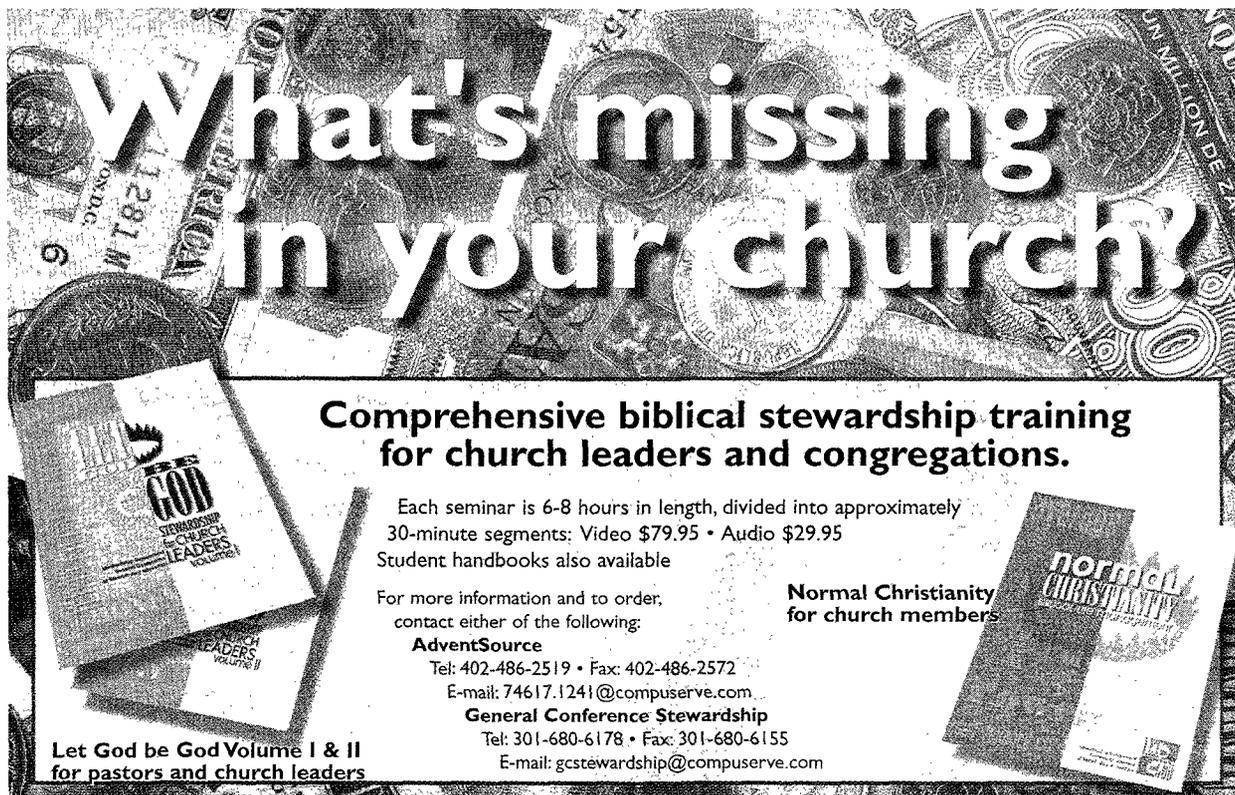
When I came to my current church, I first worked through the vision with the leadership and then went to the congregation. So I was able to get everyone on board, and everyone knew where we

were going and how we would get there. Vision is critical for focusing limited resources and personnel.

3. Look forward publicly, look backward privately

Problems plagued my last two churches, where both my predecessors had been forced out, with members supporting them and opposing them. There were misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and tension. These needed to be addressed, but not from the pulpit. The pulpit is a place to look ahead. I never discussed the past publicly. Rather I pointed to a future that we could all share together.

However, I did spend significant time looking back privately. I let people talk through their hurts and frustrations. I listened to their stories of what had taken place. While I tried not to take sides, defend, or blame, I did acknowledge hurts and grievances. It was important that I not ignore the past. But I dealt with it one-on-one or in small



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groups, while I devoted the pulpit to looking ahead.

4. Fix up the facility

The first thing that struck me with all three churches was the disrepair of the facilities. I suspect this is true of most declining churches. Budgets are tight, and incentive is dwindling. Unfortunately, peeling paint and scruffy grounds send a message to the community: the church is dying.

Within weeks of arriving at each church I began to concentrate on the most urgent repairs. We were able to do quite a bit with a few gallons of paint—and some volunteers. We also adjusted budgets so we could bring in professionals to handle improvements that the volunteers could not.

Most of these initial efforts had to do with the outside of the facilities. We wanted to send a message to the community that we were alive and well and open for business. The message went not only to the community but also to the congregation. Pride and confidence in the church returned. The more we fixed up, the more people wanted to fix up. They were seeing progress and wanted more of it.

5. Build on strengths

Declining churches often think they need more programs to attract more people: singles' ministry, youth ministry, ministry for the homeless, etc. However, a declining church with diminishing resources cannot be all things to all people. And when we want to turn things around, we need to be something to somebody. We found that the best way to do this was to build on our strengths. In the first church, we had an excellent Bible study class with great teachers. We also had a good preschool and an adequate children's club program. So we decided to focus on young families because that was the group to which we were best equipped to minister.

In the next church, we also had strong children's programming, and once again we focused on young families. That church also had a number of gifted musicians and vocalists, so we

focused on music and worship ministries. With a dynamic music program, we attracted musically inclined people. We also had a retired pastor in the congregation who worked with seniors, and so we focused on that ministry. The congregation was a caring group of people, and we began to minister to military families in the community.

In each church we had to decide purposely not to do some things. In the

A declining church with diminishing resources cannot be all things to all people. And when we want to turn things around, we need to be something to somebody. We found that the best way to do this was to build on our strengths.

second church we put few resources into youth ministry while focusing on young families with children. We lost a couple of families with teenagers to a larger church with a dynamic youth ministry. However, we gained more families with our children's ministry. Then, as those children approached the teen years, we hired a youth pastor and developed an effective youth ministry.

When we focus on strengths, we may have to treat some ministries with benign neglect. We need to guard against allowing ourselves to be spread too thin. We need to say "no" to the good so we can say "yes" to the best.

6. Preach with dynamism

In each of my churches, I realized some changes had to be made quickly. That meant killing a few sacred cows, upsetting a few applecarts, and stepping on some toes. Where was I going to get the authority to do this? What could I give the people in exchange for what I would need to take from them?

One thing I could give was dynamic preaching. I put a lot of effort into my sermons. I listened to professional storytellers, which helped me to tell better stories. I listened to the tapes of the most popular preachers—not to imitate them, but to learn from them. I made a commitment never to bore anyone with a sermon. I learned to use good humor. I made sure my applications were practical and relevant, that I was answering the questions people were asking.

A strong pulpit ministry gives the pastor authority to make necessary changes.

7. Emphasize prayer

Ministry is a spiritual endeavor and requires spiritual power. Not just the prayer of the pastor, but the prayer of the people. While that should be obvious, it was not so to me when I entered the pastorate. Of course, I believed in prayer. I even fasted one day a week. And we had a weekly church prayer meeting. However, in my first church I did not put a strong emphasis on prayer.

In the second church, I began to recognize the need for prayer as a church family. I preached on prayer and fasting. We set aside days for prayer and fasting. We began a number of prayer groups and prayer chains. I was learning.

When I received the call to the present church, I said I would come only if they agreed to hold an all-church prayer meeting every Sunday evening and if the leadership would commit to attending it regularly. They did, and we did. We also started a Pastor's Prayer Partners' ministry. We recruited a Sunday morning prayer team to pray for the services. We also had days of fasting and prayer, and we began prayer teams for each of our ministries.

8. Go for quick wins

When I first entered the sanctuary, I could not believe my eyes. The padded pews were covered in a bright orange velvet material. The carpet was brown with orange speckles that matched the pews. The walls were covered with a gold, textured wallpaper. It was a 70s decor. Unfortunately, we were in the 90s.

However, I should not have been surprised, since my first church had been graced by an indescribable green carpet with drab olive walls. My second church had pea green walls and padded pews covered with gold vinyl material and more green carpeting.

This gave me opportunities for quick wins. People who are losing hope need to see progress to encourage them. Redecorating the sanctuaries was under my control. It did not depend on visitors, growth, programs, or anything else.

In one case all I was able to do was repaint the walls, but it made a dramatic difference. The walls were dark, and we painted them white. It made the sanctuary look larger and brighter. It had a dramatic effect on the congregation. In the present church, we reupholstered those bright orange pews. In each case redecorating had an immediate impact. As people see progress, any progress, especially after a period of decline and decay, they will respond positively.

9. Move "church fathers" in or out

Being naive, I did not realize what church politics could be like. I thought people would want to follow the pastor and move ahead in God's work. I soon learned every church has people with significant influence or control in the congregation. These people can make or break a ministry. In my first church, three families had a great deal of influence. In my youth and naiveté I thought I could control them. Even though attendance was growing and budgets were being met, I never really became the leader of the church. I only led the new people who came in under my ministry. I tried to out-power the controlling families and did not succeed. I realized my ministry could only go so far.

In my second church, two older men all but ran the church. I spent quite a bit of time with them, listening to them and sharing my vision with them. These two men lined up behind me and supported me the whole time I was there. They were the key to a million-dollar building program that went amazingly smoothly.

At my current church, one man had considerable influence. I tried to make him an ally. Things were moving in the right direction until a decision was made to change something that was very important to him. At that point he began to oppose me publicly. My wife and I took him and his wife out for lunch. We kindly and politely explained to them why we were making the decisions we were. We acknowledged that this was an emotional issue for him but explained that, given the process it had gone through and the support it had in the congregation, he could not oppose it. In essence we told him he had either to leave the matter alone or leave the church. As it turned out, the change was quite successful and the man still attends the church.

10. Develop new leadership

In my present church, a steering committee was appointed to run the church for the first two years I was pastor. The committee was made up of people who had not been active in any of the factions related to the previous pastor. Because they were perceived as neutral, the congregation supported them. After two years we elected a governing board with a third of its membership drawn from those who had joined the church during my first two years there. With my first two churches, I had sought to move people who came into the church under my ministry into leadership as soon as possible. There were at least two advantages to this. First, they tended to buy into my vision and leadership. Second, they were not part of any church traditions or factions.

How do you move new people to leadership? As a pastor, you can work through the nominating committee.

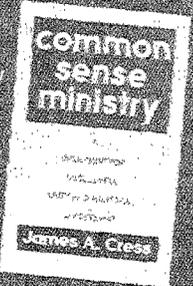
Declining churches often have factions, and new people are seen to be neutral and so tend to be acceptable to all factions. In my present situation, most of the previous leadership had left before I came, so there was a leadership vacuum. People recognized we needed new people to form a leadership team.

Conclusion

Some believe it is easier to plant a new church than to turn around a dying church. There may be occasions when this is true. But think about Ezekiel the prophet. He comes to the valley of dry bones, and the Lord tells him to prophesy to the bones. As he does, the bones come together. Flesh and muscle and skin cover the bones, but they are still dead bodies. God asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" The prophet responds, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know." "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army" (Ezek. 27:3, 10). I believe God is still in the business of drawing together, breathing into, and raising up dead bones. I believe He is looking for people to raise up the dead bones of dying churches. I know it can be done. ■

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CELEBRATING OUR DIFFERENCES

A healthy marriage is really a blending of two foreign cultures—even if the couple belong to the same ethnic group or have grown up on the same street. So says noted family therapist Carl Whitaker.



Ron and Karen Flowers are director and associate director respectively of Family Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



Nations, tribes, cities, villages, churches, and families have often learned the hard way that the manner in which we deal with our differences determines the quality—the peace, prosperity, and progress—of life in community. This is especially true of the intimate relationship of marriage.

Personal differences loomed large in our relationship from the start. I (Karen) admired Ron's organizational ability. I hadn't counted on his having such great difficulty understanding how I can lose things—my keys, glasses, or my car in a parking lot. I was also duly impressed by how much this man could get done. However, I had no idea in the beginning that I would be caught up in his whirlwind.

I (Ron) admired the care Karen takes in her personal appearance, but I had no idea how long it would take every day for her to look so beautiful! I appreciated her creativity and her continuing quest for information. What I didn't realize was that we'd be con-

stantly buying more books than we can read and, worse, revising presentation notes just minutes before we stood up together to preach or teach! I was attracted to her communicativeness and openness, but I didn't know that she would knock so incessantly on the closed doors of a past that I wanted to forget and really hadn't planned on opening to anyone.

We can readily admit to, even laugh at, some of our differences. But these few sit atop a vast iceberg of diversity. According to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator research, only about five percent of all married couples exhibit differences as extensive as ours. Facing our differences and working through the issues they create have been among our most significant marital challenges.

Major sources of differences

Gender. John Gray, author of the popular book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*,¹ has accurately described male-female differences.

RON AND KAREN FLOWERS

While we're not sure how traceable all the characteristics he spotlights are to gender alone, tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator do give credence to the idea that some differences seem to be primarily gender-related. Among a large sample tested in several cultural groups, more men reached conclusions through logical analysis, while more women made decisions based on their internalized values. More women were concerned about how an action or decision will affect people, while more men focused on the objective reasons why such an action must be taken or decision made. More men found satisfaction in a job well done; more women expressed satisfaction in meeting the needs of people. Understanding that there are some gender-based differences highlights the importance of dialogue between husband and wife.

Temperament. Opposites frequently attract. A quiet introvert may be enamored with an effervescent extrovert, while an extrovert may be intrigued by the unagitated tranquility of the introvert. The two may clash, however, over how to spend an evening. While the introvert finds refuge from a hectic day in a quiet evening at home, the extrovert may want to party. Learning about temperaments can often help those who differ in this area to be more understanding of themselves and others.

Family background. My (Karen's) dad was a wonderful cook. Often, while my mother did other chores, he was busy in the kitchen, setting meals on the table whenever everybody could be rounded up. I (Ron) grew up in a home where my mother cared for all housework, including meals, which she rhythmically set out at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. My dad expected to sit down to the table on time and to find portions to his liking already served up on his plate. It's not hard to imagine the scenario that was waiting in the wings when we got married!

On our first full day at home after our honeymoon, I (Karen) was preoccupied with some project. About noon, Ron cleared his throat and reminded me what time it was. I thanked him for the

time-check but had no idea what was actually on his mind. As 12:30 approached, he cleared his throat more forcefully and pointedly asked, "Isn't it time for lunch?" Unaware that it would create any stir, I indicated that I needed to finish what I was doing and that if he was hungry, there was plenty of food in the refrigerator. Well, I (Ron) survived—even learned to cook. It took

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time and energy, however, to forge out the new realities of ourselves as a couple, learn new skills and develop habits and routines that incorporated our individual interests and talents.

The challenge of differences

During that earlier period of marriage, which David Augsburger in *Sustaining Love*² calls the "dream" phase, couples tend to deny and attempt to ignore their differences. However, as time

passes, differences often begin to create friction and irritation. It is not unusual for one partner to try to change the other in an attempt to eliminate or minimize the discomfort. Without a way to manage differentness, disagreements arise. These disagreements can heat up into conflict and quite suddenly the couple becomes aware that the "dream" has given way to "disillusionment."

Unresolved conflict usually leads to resentment, bitterness, and alienation. Sometimes one partner capitulates to the other in a desperate gesture to secure peace. She or he may surrender his or her personality and will to the more dominant spouse. Many simply withdraw from each other's lives. Still others escape the relationship through separation or divorce. Many search for someone else who they dream will be more compatible. To a lesser or greater extent, in every marriage "dream" eventually gives way to "disillusionment." But there is a path through "disillusionment" that leads to the delights of discovery, growth, and deeper intimacy in marriage.

A Christian approach to differences

At the heart of the matter is the fact that Christ has already dealt with differences. The gospel expressly attends to the gulfs which have separated God from human beings and human beings from each other. In Christ, God has reconciled the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18). In Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 2:13-22, Paul catalogs differences in the macrospheres that have divided the human race over time: religious, ethnic, cultural, tribal, and national differences; political, societal, and economic differences; as well as gender differences. Had Paul chosen to do so, he might have extended his list to include differences in the microspheres of family origin, health, habits, age, education, temperament, birth order, physical stature, and appearance. The point is that God, through Christ, has reconciled all kinds of people to one another.

Paul's argument in Ephesians 2:13-22 can be extended beyond the Jew-Gentile differences he cites, to address

the divergence that threatens every friendship and intimate relationship. Notice that the bringing together is, first of all, God's work. He has put us into Christ by His own divine act (1 Cor. 1:30). We have been reconciled in His "one body." The hostility between us died when He died. That is the objective spiritual fact upon which the apostle can say that there is now "one" where once there were "two." There is now "peace" where there was "hostility." By virtue of His cross, barriers which separate people from each other have been removed (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:16). Paul goes so far as to say that Christ is our peace.

In Alfred Wallace's classic film, *The Toymaker*, two hand puppets are playing happily. Unable to see their own faces, they think they look alike. They do not realize that one's face is spotted, the other's striped. In time the truth comes out. They confirm it with a mirror, and then distance themselves from each other, eventually becoming distrustful and violent toward each other because they are "different." In turn, they each climb the arm of the puppeteer to seek an alliance with him against the one who used to be their friend. The Toymaker explains, "I made you both, and I love you both. I couldn't take sides against either of you. After all, you are both the same thing." When they disagree with the toymaker's view of their situation, he moves first one, then the other up his arm, across his chest and down his other arm to discover the other puppet. Despite this demonstration, they continue their warfare but become increasingly anguished within themselves. At the climactic moment of the film they lay down their weapons. Stripe says, "Hey, Spot! We're all one thing! You, me, and the Toymaker!" To which Spot starts to reply, "Then, when you hit me it hurts you, because . . ." Stripe finishes the sentence, "because I'm really hurting part of myself." Their sense of connection through the Toymaker's body has brought peace at last.

Steps in dealing with differences

Whitaker describes the healthy

process of dealing with differences in day-to-day living: "The capacity to deal with differences is one development that greatly stabilizes and enhances the quality of the marriage. When differences are viewed as inherently bad or as something to be eliminated, they cause schism, evoke defensiveness, and lead to estrangement. However, when differences can be viewed as representing opportunities to grow, they become valuable. Our differences are what allow us to expand. The capacity to really engage in a bilateral process of mutual contamination is central to a dynamic, rather than static relationship. As we rub off on each other, we are enriched. The steps involved in getting to the point of using differences productively go from *acknowledging* to *accepting* to *respecting* to *enjoying* and, finally, to *treasuring* them."³

Acknowledgment and acceptance. It was helpful to us to stumble upon Ellen White's comment: "We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular. The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light are to another most difficult and perplexing."⁴

Differences exist. While some of us would like to make all the rest of the world into our image, a more mature approach to healthy relationships will acknowledge and accept differences.

We should note here that the differences of which we speak are within the normal range of a given population. Attitudes and behaviors that threaten the health and well-being of family members and of the family as a unit are outside of this range and require consultation with professionals with specialized training. Persons who abuse, or in other ways put the family at risk, are most likely to change their behavior when spouses and family members are helped to establish protective boundaries that prevent themselves being further mistreated.

Respect for the rights of others

Acknowledgment and acceptance must give way to respect. Differences provide opportunities for us to stretch and grow. In Paul's words, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4), Ellen White writes: "Marked diversities of disposition and character frequently exist in the same family, for it is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case, each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the right of the others. By this means mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each."⁵

Healing hurts. Sometimes we will be able to simply overlook differences. At other times verbalizing our concerns will be sufficient to secure needed changes by our partner. But there will be times when the hurt runs deep, and the only healing balm is forgiveness. It is then that we can rejoice in the good news that God has forgiven us beyond measure. The gospel calls us to offer that same gift to one another. Forgiveness is painful, costly, and hard. Scars may remain. Memories may arise from time to time to plague us both, but in the strength of God's love and our covenantal commitment to each other, we can plunge further into the process. As we enter into one another's pain and seek to understand the hurt we have inflicted, as we seek to make restitution in every way we can, we will gradually work our way through the hurt and hate toward the release which forgiveness alone brings in.

Focusing on complementarity

The character and personality traits of one, more often than not, complement those of the other. It is a measure of growth in marriage to sense that God has brought us together in a marriage partnership and that the characteristics

Simplicity for the bitter

SUSAN MARKS

Don't whine about it. Just get on with your life." That was the moment my colleague turned his back on the church and all it stood for.

Could I succeed where that anonymous minister had failed 30 years before? God gave me the chance. The old soldier didn't expect any magic words of wisdom from me. He didn't expect me to wave a prayer at him and make it all better. That was fortunate, because there are no words that are adequate to face such a soul-wound. All I could do was listen closely as the story unfolded. When it was over, all I could say was, "I don't have the words for this. I can't express the agony I hear from you. There's nothing I can do to make it better. But I am your friend, and I'm here for you. Would it be OK if we pray?"

The prayer wasn't much different from what I'd already said. It was short. I sensed this was not the time to quote scripture. It was the time to be brief and in the simplest terms ask God to love and care for my friend. Often, the greater the wound, the

shorter and simpler the prayer needs to be. Anything else goes beyond the endurance of a weary soul.

Really, that was all my friend wanted—someone who represented Christ, especially a woman who represented Christ, to hear the story of his offense against women without being horrified or rejecting him or pushing him away. He wanted someone to practice simple, honest, low-key caring in the name of Christ. That was all he could bear. That was what he got.

After a few moments of silence, he got up to leave. At the door, he turned and grinned at me. "You know, Chaplain, the longer I know you, the less I hate the church." Now I'm the one who is haunted. Those words won't let me go. There isn't any way to comprehend the horror of what happened between him and God's church. There isn't any way to get my mind around the fact that these bitter words were the highest compliment I ever heard in the ministry God entrusted to me. There is, however, one thing I can get my mind around. In the face of great horror and tragedy, it can be the simplest things—simple compassionate listening, simple acceptance, simple words, simple love—that make an eternal difference. ■

Susan Marks is a pseudonym.

As a veterans' chaplain, I was accustomed to hearing the painful stories that haunted combat veterans. Now, I was hearing the story of a long-time colleague. It was no secret that he hated the church. For 30 years he had not gone near church people, wouldn't hear spiritual things, spoke bitterly about everything to do with church. Today, I was hearing why.

In the terror of an enemy attack on a position that was about to be overrun, a deeply spiritual young man had to do something unspeakable in order to save many lives. He frantically tried to avoid the deaths of people he had never expected to have to kill—wasn't psychologically prepared to kill—women. The soldiers he faced from behind a machine gun were all female. Even wounded, they kept pressing their attack, even when they could barely crawl. Every one died—killed by my colleague and a handful of other soldiers.

Returning home, he sought healing in the only place he knew—the church. Tearfully, he confided the story to his minister. Whether the minister was too shocked to deal with such a horror story or whether it was because of some streak of consummate insensitivity, I don't know. But the minister replied, "What you did was a soldier's duty in the service of his country. There is no sin involved.

each brings are the tools He has provided to successfully engage our marriages in some grand mission for Him. Our common love for Him helps us work through day-to-day difficulties that our differences will undoubtedly continue to spawn in our relationships. The love and value He has placed on each one adjusts the lenses through which we view each other. When we remain open to what Whitaker calls "mutual contamination," differentness may

even broaden our appreciation for a spectrum of traits and interests well beyond our own narrow sphere. And across a lifetime of togetherness, in the strength of the growth the Holy Spirit engenders, we can affirm, "Out of all the others I have chosen you, and I would do it again." ■

¹ John Gray, *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

² D. Augsburg, *Sustaining Love* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1988).

³ Carl A. Whitaker and W. M. Bum-berry, *Dancing With the Family: A Symbolic Experiential Approach* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1988), 204, emphasis supplied.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 473.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), 205.

SCHOLARSHIP AND THE CALL TO MINISTRY

Kevin was hired as a pastor by a local conference. He had many good qualities—he was outgoing, loved people, and enjoyed studying the Bible.



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But he had no theological training. His college degree was in business, and even after serving several years as a pastor, he showed no interest in pursuing formal seminary training. Any suggestion that such a training may be helpful to him brought out the same response: “It was God who called me to ministry, and that’s all I need.”

● Mary, a local church member, visited her pastor about a recently released book. Published by one of her own denomination’s presses, its theological perspective had created quite a stir. Many pastors and church members were reading and discussing the book, and Mary wanted to discuss it with her pastor. But there was a problem. While the pastor had heard of the book, he had not read it, nor was he inclined to do so. He told her not to bother with it. “This whole controversy will blow over soon enough,” he said.

● Pastor Smith had recently arrived at a new church district. An elder at his former church passed on some information to relatives in the new church: “The church Pastor Smith pastored before coming to ours told us that he moves every two to three years,

when he runs out of sermons. He preached the same sermons here that he had preached there, and he’ll probably do the same in your church. So plan on a two to three year run.”

These cases emphasize two points. First, scholastic preparation is necessary in order to function effectively as a pastor. Second, the need for scholarship is a continuous one.

Ministry and training

Kevin represents individuals who function in the pastorate with little or no training for the profession of which they have become a part. Clearly, God is able to call, commission, and enable any person to function as His emissary, regardless of the presence of formal training or its lack. Christ Himself chose uneducated fishermen to be His disciples and witnesses.

Furthermore, we must not minimize the fundamental importance of the divine call to ministry. God’s call does not wait for college or seminary graduation. God chooses whom He will, at times to the consternation of religious governing bodies.

However, should the call of God to

RANDALL L. ROBERTS

pastoral ministry negate the need for preparation and education for such work? Does God's call *in and of itself* contain all that is needed to function effectively in a pastoral role?

The New Testament doctrine of spiritual gifts affirms that "every believer has been called to be Jesus' disciple and to serve in the kingdom of God."¹ If God's call to serve includes vocations of medicine, law, or architecture, and if such a call is as divine and real as His call to pastoral ministry, it must be noted that while *based* on God's call, the practice of these vocations must also include appropriate and necessary education. The idea of a dentist, pilot, or contractor functioning in a professional realm without adequate preparation is both absurd and dangerous. In our day, such education is seminal to the scholarly ability needed by the pastor.

Ministry and reading

Mary's pastor illustrates a different but related concern. Most pastors despair of keeping up with all the important literature being written. However, it is not good pastoring to be unfamiliar with—or even *uninterested* in—the concepts of an important book published by one's own denominational press on a topic of interest to the church as a whole.

Pastors recognize the importance of knowing their congregations. This enables them to preach sermons relevant to their struggles and stories. But each individual congregation is situated within a world larger than itself. Such a world contains larger issues of faith. Not understanding *that* world impairs the pastor's ability to speak appropriately to the individual congregation's world. The scholarly capacity to exegete not only the biblical text but one's own culture is vital to the task of pastoral ministry. One obvious way to maintain such contact is through the printed page. If reading is a lost art in our society, it is of even greater concern if *pastors* aren't readers!

Our colleagues in other professions, (medicine and law, for example), are held to fairly high standards when it comes to

the amount of professional material—current research and recent rulings—with which they are expected to be familiar. The pastor-as-scholar ought to cultivate the discipline of reading—broadly enough to remain cognizant of current developments in theology, biblical studies, Christian ministry, and culture. These trends impact the practice of ministry and ultimately affect the views of those in the pews.

Ministry and continual study

Pastor Smith illustrates the same issue from another angle. Most pastors preach some sermons more than once and certain sermons many times. But when previously-preached sermons become the weekly staple of a congregation on an ongoing basis, worshipers are shortchanged. The pastor's continuing spiritual development is a gift the congregation deserves, and hence weekly sermons need to reflect the ways in which a pastor is growing and developing. Therefore, the exercise of continuing to read, study, exegete, and write is a discipline the pastor cannot treat lightly.

What, then, ought we to do? "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV). The essence of the Greek word used here, *spoudazon*, translated "do your best" may best be captured by a combination of terms: "to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence."² Clearly, mental exertion and thoughtful effort are essential to the process of preparing oneself for and capably carrying out the work to which God calls us. This includes both educational preparation for the work of pastoral ministry and ongoing scholarship to remain consistently equipped for such labor.

Not only is such thoughtful work vital to pastors' own spiritual lives, it is also crucial to the life of the church. Pastors help to form and inform the church's theology. Like it or not, their theology undergirds their preaching. Though this theology may not have been intentionally studied and carefully thought through, it is nonetheless present. How

important, then, that such a theological underpinning be sound and intentional. This is even more vital now as pastors serve in churches that are becoming increasingly biblically illiterate.

Suggestions for a more literate ministry

Three suggestions are in order. First, those who hire pastors need to either hire those with appropriate and adequate ministerial education, or be willing to assist and support pastors in the process of acquiring such education. Regardless of how experienced one may be, "study is not an alternative to experience but is itself a form of experience that grants understanding, even expertise, on a range of subjects."³ The people to whom these pastors will minister hunger for biblical and theological expertise. They desire pastors who have "been instructed about the kingdom of heaven" and are like landowners who bring out of the storehouse "new treasures as well as old" (Matt. 13:52, NIV).

For such an ideal to become reality, pastors need focused education. "We [leaders of the church] have lost time in neglecting to bring young men [and women] to the front and *give them a higher, more solid education. The most earnest and continued efforts to acquire qualifications for usefulness are necessary; . . . but unless God works with the human efforts, nothing can be accomplished.*"⁴ Educational expectations should be evident and the means to achieve them, implemented.

Second, a consistent plan of personal study cannot be overemphasized. Shortly after having been hired as a pastor, my father, himself a minister, said something I still remember: "Make it a habit to study in the mornings on a consistent basis. Make it a habit *early* in your ministry. Then it will be easier to maintain as the years pass. If you wait until later to try to develop it, it will be harder to do so." I have been grateful over and again for that sound advice.

This process—which takes place in the privacy of the study, on a consistent basis, through the reading and study of Scripture and significant biblical and

As a seminary president, I spend a good deal of my time extolling the virtues of seminary education. I wouldn't be giving so much of my life to it if I didn't believe in its crucial importance. Nevertheless, in the interests of telling the whole story, I want to mention some things seminary education *cannot* do.

First, seminary cannot totally transform personalities. Three or four years of school cannot reverse the effects of 30 years of socialization. A happy person who enters seminary will likely be a happy one who leaves; an angry person who enters seminary will likely be an angry one who leaves, only with an arsenal of theology to justify the anger. Someone with the relational skills of a cactus will graduate just as prickly; on the other hand, a warm teddy bear won't have much fur rubbed off.

What the seminary *can* do is help some people start on the road toward greater wholeness. Many students have reported that the study, prayer, worship, dialogue with professors and students, and sometimes even psychological counseling during their seminary years, have led to significant spiritual and emotional growth in their lives.

Second, seminary education cannot turn those with no gifts for leadership into great leaders. A person you wouldn't want to teach a class or serve as an elder

Seminary education: Its limits

DONALD W. McCULLOUGH

in your local church won't be changed into someone you'd want to be your pastor.

What we *can* do is knock off rough edges and polish the gifts a student brings. An agate can be turned into a beautiful stone, but a piece of pumice cannot be made into an agate.

Third, seminary education cannot fully train people for ministry. The role of a pastor is enormously complex these days, with seasoned veterans feeling more confused than ever. There is no way we can teach all that needs to be learned in three or four years.

What we *can* do is provide a necessary foundation of knowledge and skills, upon which the best students will continue to build throughout their lives. A few years ago I told our graduates at commencement, "If you think you're ready for ministry, we've failed you. At most, you're more able to learn what you'll need to know in the coming years."

Fourth, seminary education cannot do everything that is asked of it. In an era of shrinking budgets, many turn to seminaries to provide more and more services. Well-meaning people have asked me to get my seminary to develop programs specifically for urban ministry, rural ministry, Hispanic ministry, African-American ministry, health care ministry, executive training, stewardship education, and church growth—not to mention requests to start new campuses in half a dozen cities! We're already doing some of these things, but there are limits.

What we *can* do is be a center that helps students develop their gifts for more effective ministry. We can introduce them to a deeper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, help them develop basic disciplines of spirituality, and sharpen their tools for day-to-day tasks in ministry.

This may not be all some people would like us to do, but it's enough, I think. And worth supporting. ■



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Scholarship and the call to ministry

continued from previous page

theological writings—is foundational to the entire pastoral task. "Time spent in study is never *getting away* from daily work but *getting into* daily work. . . . Study will protect the parishioners from the excessive influence of the minister's own opinions, prejudices, and feelings. Study is getting a second and third opinion before diagnosis and treatment."⁵

Third, take advantage of the many options available for continuing education. If one lacks the educational

requirements for pastoral ministry, extension and distance-learning programs are increasingly available. Pastors need to take advantage of them! Such opportunities are more readily available now than they ever have been before. Reasons for not furthering professional knowledge and ministry skills need to be rigorously questioned.

Doubtless, "all [God's] biddings are enablings."⁶ He who calls us to ministry is able by His grace to prepare us to meet its challenges. Still, pastors need to avail themselves of the various ways through which He may accomplish that very thing. It is time that a divinely called, attentively equipped, and thoughtfully

ministering pastorate be thoroughly prepared to lead an increasingly educated church into the new millennium. ■

¹ R. Paul Stevens, *Liberating the Laity: Equipping All the Saints for Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 29.

² Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 584.

³ Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 74.

⁴ White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 5:582, 583. Emphasis supplied.

⁵ Craddock, 70.

⁶ White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 333.

Remembering from whence we came

continued from p. 4

But what does this have to do with our here and now?

While recently perusing old *Ministry* magazines, my 86-year-old mother pointed me to a striking Carl Sandburg quote that appeared on our August 1973 cover: "For we know that when a nation goes down and never comes back, when a society or a civilization perishes, one condition can always be found. They forgot from whence they came. They lost sight of what brought them along."

Where indeed have we come from and what has brought here? In other words, in the light of Sandberg's discerning insight, what verities must the Christian (and Adventist) Church profoundly affirm and embrace, lest we die? Here are four:

1. It seems to me that the one seminal shift that has most desolated our humanity over the last 150 years, causing what seems to be our eschatological crumbling, has been the questioning or denying of the alpha verity, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I suppose Carl Sandberg had more immediate historical and political matters in mind when he penned his statement. Nevertheless, allowing his "whence they came" statement to justly encompass the very beginnings of our existence certainly makes it all the more suggestive and true for us and our times. This is particularly so if it is contrasted with the "whence they came" offered by evolutionary theory and its dubious offspring. I believe it is imperative that we stand strong and true to our "whence" as it is expressed in Genesis 1-3.

2. Another closely related actuality that is crucial for us to affirm now with heart and soul is the one that says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV). We may argue the finer points

of what this means as we try to decipher the relationship between biblical inspiration and inerrancy. But let us by God's grace wrestle our doubts to the canvas when it comes to the supernatural underpinnings of the Bible. Let us bow to the ultimate authority of the One who inspired it, making the Bible our one reliable guide for life. Let us actually make it the paramount, one-of-a-kind enlightener "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV) and above all our singular "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1).

3. A third indispensable verity is the Gospel. The fabulous news is that "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV). It is that Christ "has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness [sanctification] and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). It is that "now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known" (Rom. 3:21, NIV). An ongoing grasp of this magnificent reality opens the way for the work of the Spirit upon and within our souls, bringing us to maturity in the way we live and move and have our being. Ironically, no truth has been more threatened by our Judeo-Christian heritage than has this one.

We must be sure we are standing for it though the heavens fall.

4. A fourth essential is that Jesus is coming again. This certainty becomes a matter of increasing meaning for us as we move toward its fulfillment. The more chaotic our post-modern societies become, and the more the eschatological dust swirls in the myriad winds of opinion, the more precious and indispensable is the actuality of Jesus' promise to come again. The four words, "I will come again" (John 14:1-3) are superbly crucial for our time. They have been designed for this moment in this kind of world. They were spoken at a time when Jesus' disciples felt their faith, their being and their whole world literally collapsing around them (see John 13:33-38).

There are, of course other equally worthy verities that cry out for attention and affirmation. Let us take all of them up with prayer and thought, as we face what this millennial moment portends for our lives, our churches and our future. Let us live out and proclaim these verities wisely yet unashamedly. Let us celebrate and live in the light of our truest origins, not forgetting from whence we came nor losing sight of Who actually brought us to this hour, and thus Who will take us through and beyond it to Himself. ■

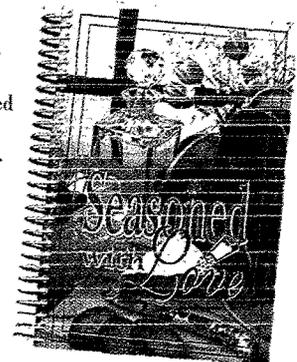
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SEX AND THE PARSONAGE

When I mentioned to a friend that I was writing an article on sexuality and the parsonage, she responded: "Sex and the parsonage! Is nothing sacred?"

Alberta Mazat is a marriage and family therapist in Loma Linda, California.

"Does this mean," I replied, "that you don't think sexuality is something that can be sanctified?"

"Well . . . yes, I mean, well, I just don't think of it in those terms!"

That's the problem. For too long churches have withheld the "seal of approval" on sexuality. The Bible has treated sexuality forthrightly, giving an amazing amount of coverage to its delights. Even when we have accepted its place in marriage, we have often done it quite grudgingly.

This article will explore the concept of sexuality in the parsonage, but with these "givens": 1) sexuality is a gift of God that He instituted and blesses; 2) He has great expectations for its role in our lives; 3) sexuality was designed to bring unity as well as children within marriage; 4) sexuality has the potential of bringing about great pleasure and ecstasy; 5) sexuality provides an experience of bonding for husband and wife.

Sexuality and the pastor as a person

Long before her or his first pastoral assignment has been decided, the pastor will have been formulating a personal theology and philosophy of sexuality. If we could map out a background of positive circumstances that would prepare pastors to be most effec-

tive in this area of ministry, it would be something like this:

The pastor would be born into a home where delighted parents eagerly welcome the baby and consistently nourish a loving, respectful relationship that readily demonstrates affection, "tender regard," and wise discipline. Infancy would be characterized by soft, gentle handling, caressing and "conversations" through cooing, singing, and playing, along with communication that builds a basis for continuing child-parent interactions. Such a home would also lay a foundation for trust and intimacy in future relationships. There would be a spoken admiration of the child's beautiful body, attributed to a loving God who wisely tells us how to best care for it. In all of this, no body parts or their functions would be spoken of in either a derogatory or crude manner.

Age-appropriate sexual education would provide information even before childhood needed to hear it, so that during puberty and adolescence it would be comfortable and natural to continue talking about and answering questions regarding sexual changes and functioning. This would provide an accurate vocabulary helpful throughout life, preventing a reliance on peers and the

A L B E R T A M A Z A T

media for cheap, four-letter word “sex education” courses.

Sexuality would not be seen merely as a raging, hormone-driven urge to be blindly released, stoically endured, or inflexibly resisted, but as a God-planted desire to learn about, anticipate, and sublimate until God’s own time when it would unfold as one of His special gifts to marriage. The pastor’s parents would have maintained a watchfulness which sought to avoid coarse sexual expressions, double-entendres, anecdotes and stories, or television offerings that depict sexuality as cheaply humorous, trivial, or devoid of moral implications.

The pastor’s underlying attitude toward sexuality will have an effect on his or her personal values and how these affect feelings and decisions about behaviors involving sexuality, be they pre-marital, extra-marital, or post-marital. The pastor’s attitude will even influence his or her response to a request for counseling from married couples struggling with their sexual experience. It will even determine the degree of effectiveness a pastor possesses when speaking to a group of young people on questions of sex.

Sexuality and the pastor as a spouse

Though by no means perfect in this arena, Seventh-day Adventists have always been a church which holds sexuality in marriage as not only permissible but blessed. We often read in church literature that two institutions come to us from the Garden of Eden—the Sabbath and marriage. Recently we seem to have become more comfortable in reading the Song of Solomon as it was intended, a beautiful love song, a paean praising God for the profound romance and sensual delight that accompanies a committed sexual relationship between a man and a woman.

Even before marriage, pastors-to-be and their intended spouses should be exploring their own ideas about sexuality. It would be the best if both had been reared in homes where sexuality has been presented as a gift of God

to marriage and where each takes delight ministering to the happiness of the other. However, some pastoral spouses have felt it would be helpful to introduce explicit, pornographic sexual materials into the marriage bed, expecting them to improve the sex life. This voyeurism is most often resisted by the wife, who, among other things, sees it as a reflection on her own inadequacies. Yet pornography, clearly inappropriate and immoral, never belongs in the repertoire of Christian love-making, or in the experience of those who are living to represent the splendor of Christ to their fellow human beings.

Sexuality in the lives of a pastoral couple

Without the complete assurance that each is totally committed to the other, there can be no complete giving of oneself in the marriage embrace. One cannot risk the most intimate aspects of one’s personhood if concerned that it could be rejected, displaced, or exploited. Experiencing and partaking of one another’s deepest wells of love can be meaningful only if restricted, throughout a lifetime, to each other *alone*.

Knowledge of the physical act of intimacy is also important. When a couple realizes that sexual expression is an unfolding, growing process—God’s process—they will want to learn about all the aspects of sexuality—physical, emotional, and spiritual. This should help to release some inhibitions and create a desire to thank God for providing this awesome experience.

Intimacy, even sexual intimacy, is not only for physical expression. When it does not include the kind of closeness that encompasses the emotions, the intellect and the spirit, it cannot truthfully be called intimacy. When two lovers are within one another’s life boundaries, sharing thoughts, ideas, values, goals, delights, and sorrows, they are sharing at a level unique to the marital relationship—a space open to no other, and nonexistent in any other union. This ideal is not achieved during the honeymoon; it is a lifetime

growth process that *should never be taken for granted*.

Pastoring is an absorbing, emotional, and time-consuming ministry. It is vitally important to keep priorities balanced so that the career does not take over the time necessary to nurture the sexual/marriage relationship. It is absolutely crucial for the pastoral couple to talk one-on-one, to celebrate special occasions, to date, to make positive family memories. Board meetings, committees, and the needs of other people are important, but when they consistently replace “couple time,” schedules *must* be realigned.

Sexuality and the pastor as a parent

Probably at no time will the pastor be as aware of the awesome power of sexuality as when her or his newborn child is entrusted into waiting arms. Next to the child’s heart will be the parent’s heart beating with wonder, pride, and determination to meet the challenge of parenting. This child will depend on its parents to bring meaning to the whole concept of sexuality, and to set the stage that will, in a large way, determine its pattern throughout adulthood.

Each child should be told the beautiful story of life by parents who can provide a background to build upon throughout childhood and the teen years. When parents talk to their children about sexuality, there is less sexual experimentation on the part of the children. Usually fathers are less involved in sex education than are mothers. This should not be. Education should be a joint parental project, with each talk-

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ing to each child at times and with the whole family together on occasion. Parents must realize that in not making this a priority, they are giving messages such as: "This is not an important enough issue for us to talk about. . . . Sexuality is too hard for me to talk about . . . too complicated . . . too ugly . . . too embarrassing. . . . It is something you'll find out about along the way."

It is important to protect our children from seeking answers to sexual problems apart from their parents. People with bad motives are eager to fill in the gaps. In addition, we need to give our children information that is appropriately protective for their degree of maturity. They need to know the exact steps they must take (which should always involve parents as well as other trustworthy adult authority figures) when approached by inappropriate touches and/or dialogue—whether these come from a stranger, friend, or family member.

Sexuality and the minister of the gospel

In the ministerial role the pastor has several main categories of responsibility in which the cause of sexuality can be served: namely, sermon preparation, education, and counseling.

As I interact with Seventh-day Adventists at retreats, camp meetings, and seminars, I am told again and again that they wish their pastors would speak more often on family issues such as the qualities of strong families, pitfalls in family life, and issues that have to do with loyalty, respect, and purity. Church families need to hear messages that can counteract the exposure to sexuality that fills our culture and homes through the media. Pulpit prayers can occasionally offer pleas for God to instill in us a longing for moral purity, for victory over temptations that threaten our family happiness, for the healing of painful memories, and for a restoration of God's beautiful plan for marriages and families.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church provides numerous workshops and seminars dedicated to family life.

The workroom shelves of the Family Life Department at the General Conference are filled with excellent, well-prepared materials. There is help for small churches that may not have professional resource people to lead out. Dedicated, willing, and suitably gifted lay leaders can also be trained in these things.

Will people attend seminars on family life? I heard of one church that announced a Sabbath afternoon mar-

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riage seminar devoted to the topic of "Building Relationships." Though they expected 30-40 to come, 150 attended. The need is there.

Pastors in churches with a church school may also work with educators to design and implement ways through which our children can be taught relationship skills.

In addition to consistently providing pre-marital counseling classes, marriage enrichment opportunities can be presented for married couples at all marital stages, including those in retirement. With deplorable divorce rates in our church and ceaseless stories of af-

fairs that bring separation and unfathomable unhappiness to so many families, we must do more to help strengthen and enrich our homes.

A qualified pastor can open the way to spiritual resources for persons wishing to have help with such concerns as their selfishness, lack of joy, immoral thoughts, impatience, and anger. If, however, the pastor doesn't have the requisite training, he or she needs a list of those who do. A wise pastor has a qualified mentor or supervisor in consultation or in conjunction with individual counseling, especially in cases involving sexuality. This is not only in the best interests of the person being served, but of the pastor as well.

A pastor's work with parishioners will include not only counseling, but also visitation and working together in committees and church projects. Each pastor will often face close contact with opposite-sex persons who are attractive and winsome. If the pastor's mood is sometimes one of discouragement over church progress, concern over a personal marital relationship, or worry about his standing with church members, the potential for trouble grows. It is the pastor's responsibility to stay focused and keep the lines drawn between personal and church concerns.

A careful study of Jesus' ministry will be helpful. His work for His Father was constantly before Him; He possessed dignity and a winsomeness that did not become familiarity. His ministry was never exercised for His own benefit, but He always held the other person's best and eternal interests as an overarching priority.

Conclusion

Jesus' prayer to His Father as He faced His crucifixion seems particularly fitting here, "I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:26).

May He indeed be in every part of our ministry, particularly the part dealing with something so potentially wonderful (or destructive) as sexuality. ■



We could do nothing more appropriate for the new year, or any new venture for that matter, than to call our

congregations together in prayer.

In our last pastorate, we launched each new year with a Call to Prayer service. Typically we began our hour-long vigil sufficiently early on new year's eve that those who had later plans with family or friends could start the evening's festivities in God's sanctuary.

What are the benefits of a coordinated prayer effort? Your members come together with the specific intent of seeking God's will and hearing God's voice.

Our congregation discovered that a core of our own members formed the basic group of attendees, but that when the event was well publicized we welcomed a surprising number of individuals—even guests who otherwise did not attend our church. Those who needed prayer or who sought a spiritual entry to the new year came along with those who were seeking spiritual refuge at the conclusion of hectic, overcrowded schedules.

We organized our Call to Prayer service around various local church elders, each assigned a specific topic for which they came prepared to pray. During the fellowship gathering which preceded our prayer service, attendees were given a printed listing of the various topics and an opportunity to add their personal petitions and needs.

Our service was solemn and informal. Attendees gathered in our nearly darkened sanctuary, with light focused only on an open Bible, a painting of Jesus, or a banner which might show the theme for our new year. Prayers were interspersed with hymns carefully selected to reflect the various categories of prayer. Each

Call to Prayer 2000

JAMES A. CRESS

elder was responsible for keeping his or her portion of the service within the allotted time.

Our list of prayer topics changed from year to year, depending upon felt needs or world circumstances. During the Gulf War, for example, we prayed earnestly for peace. Among our international membership we had those who prayed for the safety of military troops and relatives on both sides of the conflict. Another year, the war for which we prayed was Satan's continuing barrage against our church and school.

You might consider several of the following categories to initiate such a prayer service with your localized challenges added to these topics.

Pray in praise. Give quality time to express adoration of God, gratefulness for His mercy, thankfulness for His saving grace through Jesus, and expectation of the Holy Spirit's enabling power for obedience to His will.

Pray for the lost. Affirm God's good news that even the most unlovable individuals are candidates for His kingdom. When we pray for the lost, it is not to change God's attitude toward the lost; He still loves the world. When we pray for the lost God will change our mind toward the lost so that we see their potential through heaven's eyes.

Pray for leaders. It is appropriate to include world and local government leaders, but even more essential to pray for denominational and local church leaders. As pastors, we might be amazed at the earnestness with which our congregates lift up our names and pray for our challenges.

Pray for our families so desperately in need of divine grace. Pray that Jesus might become the center of every marriage and that bitterness and strife might be replaced by freshly experienced renewal and restoration.

Pray for our younger members— both those who are youth and those who are new to faith. Pray that our families will become places of refuge for their children and sources of light for their neighbors. That our schools and teachers will reflect Jesus' love and that our congregations will extend Jesus' acceptance and forgiveness.

Pray for those who feel left out or who are disenfranchised from the church. Include those who long for connection but are unable to participate because of distance, illness, or age, and for those who should long for restoration but are disconnected by backsliding, grudges, or unresolved pain.

Pray for forgiveness and then act upon God's answer. Remember the Biblical admonition to forgive in order to receive forgiveness. The beauty of choosing to forgive another individual is that it liberates your soul at the same time it obligates the other individual to deal seriously with their own contribution to conflict.

Pray for the problem solvers and the problem makers. Even while we rejoice in committed members who lift the load and carry the weight, much more good would be accomplished if problem-laden and problem-maker individuals (often the same) would find healing and purpose in God's presence.

Pray for the coming of Jesus. We are Adventists because of the Advent. The Blessed Hope sustains us and Blessed Assurance enables us to joyfully anticipate and share the consummation of all our hopes.

Pray for me. I need your prayers and you need mine. Let's build up each other as pastoral colleagues and as sinners in daily need of fresh grace. ■

August 1994. Suddenly it dawned on us. Pastors receive *Ministry*. Pastors' wives have *Shepherdess*. But pastor's children have nothing. It didn't seem fair.

We decided to do something about it. "Why not," we asked ourselves, "create a magazine for pastors' kids? It would affirm PKs everywhere and show them that we are a special and unique group. We, too, have a mission and a purpose. The magazine would let PKs in our conference realize that they do count."

We shared the idea with our father, then President of our Conference (now President of the Caribbean Union). He loved it. "Why don't you put it into action now?" he encouraged.

Naturally, the challenge overwhelmed us. We knew nothing about magazines, but we were convinced that this was an assignment from God. We got to work.

First we held a PK meeting. We brainstormed. We shared ideas and plans. We appointed a staff with Shawna as the first editor-in-chief. Mrs. Claudette Andrews, a pastor's wife and certified counselor, and Pastor Cleaver Callender were selected as sponsors. The North Caribbean Conference became our organizational sponsor.

The first issue of *The PK* was released in December 1994. PKs throughout the conference enjoyed it, and we encouraged readers to respond.

Now *The PK* is a quarterly magazine. It caters to all ages. Some of the features of our magazine include: a Color Me page; Tiny Tots' Tale; News Flash; a cartoon page; a story for the older PKs; Fashion Police; Jokes and

Something new for PKs

SHAWNA AND
NELITA TROTMAN

Riddles; Nature Nook; and Ask Aunt Claudette—an advice column. The magazine goes to the PKs in the 14 islands that make up our conference. The conference comes under the Caribbean

We decided

to do something about it.

"Why not," we asked ourselves, "create a magazine for pastors' kids? It would affirm PKs everywhere and show them that we are a special and unique group."

Union in the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Motivated by a common bond, the PKs in St. Croix organized for Christmas 1996 a "toy drive" to solicit new toys for the playroom of the island

hospital's pediatric ward. The response was so overwhelming that we were able to present a box of new toys to the local orphanage as well. Both agencies were extremely grateful and expressed how impressed they were by our community involvement. For Christmas 1997 we sponsored a drive to help the residents of the home for the elderly.

As for *The PK*, our plans this year are ambitious and exciting. The magazine will have a new color design for its cover, and its contents will be even more appealing.

The PKs of the North Caribbean Conference have a lot to be thankful for. We thank God that our magazine has been in circulation for more than five years. It has been a blessing to us. We are especially appreciative of the support of our parents, sponsors, and the conference administration. In addition we are grateful for the encouragement given by Waveney Martinborough, division women's ministries director; Jaime Castrejon, division ministerial secretary; and Sharon Cress, *Shepherdess* coordinator of the General Conference. By the grace of God we hope that this project will continue to be a blessing to the PKs of our conference and will eventually spread, conference by conference, throughout the world. ■

Shawna Trotman, the first editor-in-chief of The PK, recently graduated from West Indies College in nursing.

Nelita, the current editor-in-chief, is a senior at St. Croix Seventh-day Adventist School.

Moving?

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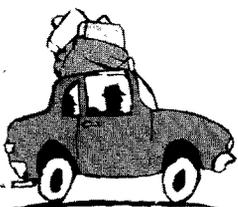
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Seminar Update



NOTE: If you have already pre-registered for a cancelled seminar and/or want to change to a newly-added seminar, we will guarantee your choice at Toronto. If you have not already pre-registered, please keep the following information in mind as you select your choices among the seminars.

The following seminars have been cancelled:

- 283/484 Memorizing Scripture
- 409 Radio/TV/Internet
- 399 Pastoring: Information Process (Spanish)
- 297 The Role of the Holy Spirit Baptism (French)

The following seminars have been added or additional information has been provided:

- 116/316 Literature Evangelists Generate Interests
—Ron Appenzeller
Learn how to increase baptisms in your district by utilizing Literature Evangelists.
- 115 Recapitulation in the Book of Revelation
—George Reid
Do the trumpets follow the seals chronologically. Accepting or rejecting recapitulation dramatically affects the interpretation of the Apocalypse.
- 346/448 Pastors Meeting the Secular Mind (English)
—Johann Gerhardt
- 148 Pastors Meeting the Secular Mind (German)
—Johann Gerhardt
What is the secular mind and how do Adventist truths impact secular thinking. What are the challenges and opportunities and the role of the local church and pastor.
- 247/347 The Time Before the End (English)—Udo Worschech
- 499 The Time Before the End (German)—Udo Worschech
The first written prophetic records within an eschatological climate of wealth and self-destruction in a nation originally called by God.



- 114 Spiritual Growth in Lordship—Ben Maxson
- 214 Contemporary Issues in Finance/Stewardship
—Ben Maxson
- 217 Personal Money Management for Pastor's Family
—Pardon Mwansa
Four basic steps to financial management and a clear system of managing personal funds plus a plan to pay off debts and remain debt-free. Ten methods of how to increase home income.
- 314 Lordship and the Pastor's Home
—Ben and Mary Maxson
- 414 Real Problems, Real Lord—Fylvia Fowler Kline
- 106/216/315/415 A Faith that Works in Each Cycle of Life
—Tom Carter and Morris Venden
- 245/446 Spreading His Fame—Michael Cafferky
Word-of-mouth networks are considered to be the most powerful form of advertising and a most effective medium for spreading the gospel. Note the impact when human effort is combined with Divine power.
- 248/447 Successful Leadership in Multicultural Ministry
—Delbert Baker
Dynamic, Christ-centered principles for leading diverse groups of people.

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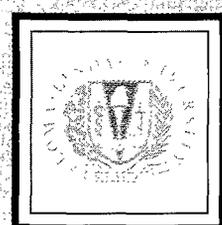
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