

# MINISTRY

*International Journal for Pastors*

*June 2003*



Celebrating 75 Years of  
Ministry Magazine



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## The right tool for the right job

*Legitimate, constructive approaches to issues of faith versus science*

Timothy G. Standish

## The nature of Christ: Four measures of a mystery

*A review of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ*

Roy C. Naden

## Cry from a wounded heart

*The plea of a church member for more conscientious pastoral care*

Estelle Owenson

## SMALL church growth

*Principles that contribute to small-church growth*

Rod Long

## Can the church be relevant and survive? (part 2)

*Final of a two-part series on how the church may blur its identity in a search for relevancy*

Jay Gallimore

## Fellowship: Its meaning and its demand

*A closer look at the meaning and dynamics of fellowship in a Christian congregation*

Bryson M. Katele

IN EVERY ISSUE

Letters

3

Editorial

4

Pastor's Pastor

28

Resources

30

## I DISAGREE SOMEWHAT WITH THE AUTHOR'S ASSERTION THAT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CLERGY ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO NO ONE.

I read with interest the "Seminary and Local Church" article (Carlos Camarena, August 2002) from the perspective of fifty-odd years of local church leadership relating to pastors with and without seminary training, and at all levels of experience. I know the problems that are addressed in the article firsthand. However, the article addresses the wrong problem!

I agree that "the time to implement changes is now!" But we need to look at the broader picture and replace our "present aims" with aims that address that broader picture. To begin with, as a church, we are commissioned to bear the three angels' messages both at home and abroad. It is from our seminary that the Seventh-day Adventist Church expects the leadership to come for bearing the three angels' messages to the world. One does not need to be too bright to observe where this is being accomplished most successfully.

I realize that there are more than one Seventh-day Adventist seminary serving our worldwide church and that the pastor in the Philippines or India, with their 15-20 churches to serve, and with the primitive transportation available, face vastly different challenges than any pastor in America. They both work for the same God: They both need the same inspiration; they both need to draw upon each other and yes, perhaps share experiences to some degree so that congregations in Smugtown, U.S.A.,

may at least be singed, if not catch the fire of the message being proclaimed abroad. To me, this is where any change in the seminary should begin. Local church, U.S.A., does not seem to qualify as a study model for changing what ails it.

—Robert H. Allen, Ontario, New York.

The October 2002 issue of *Ministry* was one of the most interesting issues I've read over the last 20 years.

Richard Coffen's article, "The Enigma of 'Unanswered' Prayer," was thought-provoking, and I agree there are times when God does not answer prayer.

Tim Crosby's article on church discipline was excellent and timely. I do feel his use of the word "myths" was a little misleading, because all the examples he mentioned have clear elements of truth to them and are "myths" only when misapplied, as in church discipline. But, hey, it got and kept my attention, and his points are well taken.

"Mavericks on the Payroll?" confronts a subject desperately needing attention. It should be noted that mavericks exist at all levels of church leadership, not just at the pastoral level or even on the payroll. Mavericks have creative gifts that can bless the church, and they should be allowed to flourish within guidelines. Problems arise when they are unwilling to be constrained by "reins" such as budgets, calendars, and policy. If they possess a humble, teach-

able, cooperative attitude when confronted, they will show true leadership potential; if not, they may need to be disciplined.

I disagree somewhat with the author's assertion that Seventh-day Adventist clergy are accountable to no one. I find it appalling when mavericks are fired yet nothing is said to those on the other side of the "checks and balances" system that is in place specifically to handle situations like that; namely, their superiors, boards, constituents, etc. These all have the power to say No to the maverick, as well as the responsibility to train the maverick how to minister effectively and responsibly. They must be wise, open minded, and flexible to discern (aside from personal preference) what is legitimate leeway and what is truly intolerable. Often, giving them assistance in their areas of weakness and making them accountable will make a huge difference.

The article on GraceLink is the most clear and concise summary and explanation of the curriculum and its philosophy that I have seen yet, and I have copied it for every person who works in the children's divisions of our church. Having said that, I do feel it was far too heavy on the accolades. Two or three testimonies would have been sufficient . . . I feel it was not balanced reporting to include an avalanche of solely positive comments, making it look

*continued on page 29*

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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.*

# What kind of respect are you looking for?

These days, being a leader is complex. One of the greatest challenges is achieving a balance between being a friend and confidant to those we lead while also maintaining our role as effective leaders.

For a quick fix, when no one seems to be listening and life appears overwhelming, we can, of course, go to the dogs! Seriously. A dog will give us all the love, attention, and respect we need. It's usually quite easy to be "top dog" to a dog! But the question is, Do we as leaders inspire respect—in dogs or in people—by making an *admirable impression* on them, by *inspiring fear*, or through *winning their trust*?

Teachers must inspire respect. One of my daughters is an English teacher. She recently started working with inner city, public school teenagers. This is a much tougher group to handle than the students at the Christian school at which she had been teaching. Some of these teenagers were in gangs or were aspiring to gang life. They challenged her constantly, even using profanity to her face. However, she told me that what seemed to help her the most in bonding with this group of "God's other children," as she calls them, was looking directly into each set of eyes and talking to each individual by name.

Many of the kids in this particular group feel like a mere number, valueless in themselves. They are used to obeying authority—if and when they do—out of the fear of punishment rather than out of true respect, because they are used to adults who focus on trying to *make* them into what these adults believe these young people should be, rather than guiding them while respecting them as individuals. They have been *overpowered*, rather than *empowered*, by the authority figures of their lives.

It is the privilege and the duty of

JULIA W. NORCOTT



ministers to look to God to find the ultimate patterns for leadership, and for inspiring respect in those they lead. Though a complete understanding of God is unfathomable to us as humans, the Bible does give us two correlating portrayals of God through the Old and the New Testaments.

In the Old Testament God is pictured more in terms of power. His awesomeness is emphasized and it inspires a respect growing out of awe for God. When it comes to this side of God, we cannot come near to equaling the God of the Old Testament, and I would suggest that attempting to do so is, to say the least, improper.

Significantly, in the New Testament, Jesus was the One who came as "the Second Adam." It was Jesus who lived the life of a man. Yet there was unequalled power in Him. He gave us the ultimate pattern for leading people. The way He treated people inspired both love and respect in them.

How did Jesus deal with people?

- ◆ He fed them (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9).
- ◆ He healed them (Matt. 8:1-4; 9:18-22; Mark 10:46-56).
- ◆ He comforted them (Matt. 6:25-34; 11:28-30; John 11:25; 14:1-4).
- ◆ He cared about them unselfishly (Matt. 5:43-48; Mark 12:28-31).
- ◆ Jesus didn't become frustrated or aggravated with them, even the most difficult; He didn't try to anxiously con-

trol them. They made their own daily choices; they made their own mistakes (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:66-72).

And it was in multitudes that people came to *Him* (Matt. 4:25-30; Mark 4:1, 2; Luke 9:10, 11). They asked His advice, and the wisdom of Jesus' advice had a profound effect on them because they came seeking, and He focused on them and *answered* their questions.

Furthermore, though Jesus was commanding and authoritative, He was not merely kind; He was tender. His touch saved lives because in it was the ultimate strength of an underlying integrity. He was "for real," and people could feel it. They trusted Him, and so they respected Him.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus told His disciples (John 14:6). As way, truth, and life, the power of God in Jesus captivated people. However, they became *followers* because Jesus felt—not acted "as if," but *felt*—esteem for other people. He regarded them as individuals created with choice by God, and in turn they became devoted to Him.

It seems to me that as leaders we need to think of Jesus and learn to "let go." Incessant, meticulous, control of how other people feel and think and act can only exhaust us and them. As it dawns on us that the God who came as the paradigm for humans, holds *us* in high esteem, we come to esteem *ourselves* as children of God, and then in turn we feel true esteem (respect) for others. With the power and pattern of God as our source of strength, we can relax, we can be calm, and, never compromising our integrity, treat those around us with esteem. Rather than trying to demand respect or merely acting like leaders, we can then *be* leaders.

How do we gain people's respect: by making a good impression, through kindling fear, or by inspiring trust? ■

# The right tool for the right job

## Approaches to faith and science

Timothy G. Standish



Timothy G. Standish, Ph.D., is a research scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda, California.

**T**he right tool can make a major difference in getting a job done. On the other hand, the wrong tool may be useless, even damaging. For example, screwdrivers are good for working with screws, but almost useless for hammering nails or cutting wood. That's on the physical level.

When it comes to the world of ideas, we need a sharp, skilled, and developed mind; one that can reason logically, analyze and synthesize perceptively, and be able to communicate complex ideas into easily understandable forms.

Of the many tools the human mind employs to decipher surrounding reality, the scientific method is a significant one. Science may in fact be considered a superb tool for dealing with issues that have to do with how natural or physical phenomena work. This includes fields of endeavor as varied as medicine and agriculture.

Yet even this exceptional tool can be misused. For example, if we attempt to employ the approaches of science to "prove" that Scripture is inspired, or that there is such a thing as "inspiration," or to decipher how divine inspiration works, we are likely to come to strange conclusions that end up disappointing and confusing us. Science is simply not the right tool for demonstrating or establishing the nature or authenticity of the Bible, even though portions of what Scripture

says may have elements that are scientifically verifiable.

The assertions of science are always tentative, while the basic declarations of Scripture are not. Science encompasses our best understanding of nature at the moment, but does not claim to be ultimately definitive in its claims. As science progresses, its current tentative claims will no doubt be modified, perhaps significantly.

If we assert that Scripture is inspired and that being inspired means the Bible's basic claims are inherently correct, then for us the tentative claims of science cannot be used as a measure of Scripture's inspiration. Attempting to use science to establish the authenticity of Scripture is something like trying to use a hammer to drive home the belief that William Shakespeare was a great writer.

It may seem that this incongruity could be overcome if we gave up the contention that essential factual accuracy is included in the reach of inspiration. But if we did that, it would only mean that the nature of the problem would be shifted: Biblical claims dealing with the material world would then be as tentative as those of science. In that case both Scripture and science would be rendered impotent to throw light upon one another, and the inspiration of Scripture itself would become a merely subjective question.

### Why study science?

Why, then, should Christians who believe in the accuracy and authority of the biblical message study science? What should motivate them to take on such an enterprise? I suggest at least four good reasons:

*First*, if the Bible is viewed as entirely reliable, the comparison of scientific claims with the Bible might provide a measure of the success of science.

*Second*, disagreements between the Bible and science encourage reexamination of how the Bible and scientific data are interpreted. Carefully considered scientific approaches can provide a lens for better understandings of the Bible.

*Third*, some who question the validity of their faith may find some reassurance as they discover the degree to which science and the Bible agree.

*Fourth*, and perhaps most important, the study of nature reveals something to us about the mind of the Creator-God that is empiri-

cally understandable and may not be revealed in Scripture. The great physicist Johannes Kepler put this elegantly when he said: "To God there are, in the whole material world, material laws, figures and relations of special excellency and of the most appropriate order. . . . Those

For example, consider 1 Kings 7:23: "And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about."

This passage seems to have an apparent conflict between science and

## Questions about claims

If certain things that the Bible seems to be claiming are to be compared with findings of science, at least two questions need to be addressed: Is the Bible in fact making a claim at all? and, Is the claim one that science can address?

Four examples illustrate how the apparent claims made in Scripture may be viewed in a way that is consistent with faith in the inspiration of Scripture:

1. *The four corners of the earth*: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree" (Rev. 7:1).

This passage has led some to argue that the Bible claims (consistent with the prevailing popular views of the time in which it was written) that the earth is square or cubical in shape.<sup>2</sup> If the text is indeed making such a claim about the shape of the earth, it could be scientifically tested. But the Bible is not in fact making any such claim. The only claim made in this text is that God is patient and forbearing, and is in control of what occurs on earth. Strained exegesis is necessary to turn the "four corners of the earth" from a figure of speech into a claim about the shape of the earth.

2. *The death of Uzzah*: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:7).

Here a nonscientific claim is being made. The Bible contains the only known account of Uzzah's death. Even if an independent record of his death were to be found, at most it would show that people associated with Uzzah attributed his death to an act of God. Experimentation cannot be done to test the theory that it was God who was active in the death of Uzzah. Alternative explanations—a sudden stroke, lightning, or a heart attack—may explain the immediate cause of Uzzah's death, but it could

# ATTEMPTING TO USE SCIENCE TO ESTABLISH THE AUTHENTICITY OF SCRIPTURE IS SOMETHING LIKE TRYING TO USE A HAMMER TO DRIVE HOME THE BELIEF THAT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WAS A GREAT WRITER.

laws are within the grasp of the human mind; God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share his own thoughts."<sup>1</sup>

For many Christians it is enough to know that Scripture records God's interaction with the material world and with humanity. However, many struggle with apparent contradictions between the claims of Scripture and those of the material world as interpreted by science. In addressing this concern, it is useful to have a clear picture of what science is, what the claims of Scripture are and how the two might reasonably be expected to interact.

In addition, Scripture, like science, must be interpreted. As mentioned above, correlation between the claims of science and Scripture may hint that the interpretations employed in both have merit, while disagreement between the two encourages reexamination of the assumptions underlying our interpretations along with the logic employed.

When doing this, it is necessary to ensure that the conflict between science and the Bible is real and substantial, and that examination of the quality of the claims being made are valid.

Scripture, and it stems from the fact that a circle's circumference divided by its diameter equals a value called *pi*, which is approximately 3.14. Our text states the circumference of the molten sea was 30 cubits while the diameter was 10 cubits, and 30 divided by 10 equals 3.00, and not 3.14.

Quibbling over 14 hundredths in the quotient is ridiculous, and any thinking person can quickly generate reasons why the numbers may be accurate to however many digits after the decimal point they want.

While such exacting arguments may have some validity, the real point must be seen elsewhere. The text makes no claim about the value of *pi*; it describes the dimensions of the molten sea in Solomon's temple. Skeptics who argue that the text shows an error in the biblical understanding of *pi* expect that if Scripture is inspired its narrative of dimensions must be accurate to several positions after the decimal point. But any practicing scientist would understand that numbers are routinely rounded, ignoring any need to record small fractions of cubits, particularly when the issue is historical narrative and not mathematical verification. Thus a close examination of 1 Kings 7:23 reveals a frivolous base.

not actually gainsay the possibility of God's direct role in the demise of Uzzah. A scientific claim should, at least in theory, be falsifiable. In this case, even if Uzzah's death appeared to be completely natural, it could still be interpreted as an act of God.

3. *Hezekiah's tunnel*: "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works" (2 Chron. 32:30).

It is possible to accumulate data consistent with the Bible's claim that Hezekiah was involved in the construction of waterworks delivering water to the west side of Jerusalem. The Gihon spring is well-known, and a tunnel exhibiting marks of human construction has been discovered leading from the spring to within the city walls. An inscription dating to the time of Hezekiah and describing the work has also been unearthed. The claim, however, is open to refutation, a vital characteristic of science. Active discussion of the relationship between this tunnel and the biblical claim of Hezekiah's activities continues as new evidence is brought to light.<sup>3</sup>

4. *The destruction of Babylon*: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there" (Isa. 13:19, 20).

Assuming this text makes an unambiguous claim about the permanent end of literal Babylon, testable hypotheses can be drawn from it. One such hypothesis is: Building a large tent city among the ruins of Babylon and filling it with Arab tents should prove impossible.

Biblical prophecies which are currently being fulfilled are as reliable as predictions made by volcanologists about the imminent eruption of volcanoes or by chemists about the vio-

lent reaction of elemental sodium with water. Perhaps this is why evangelists have discovered that explaining prophecy is an effective method for convincing skeptics of the reliability and inspiration of Scripture.

### **Science, Scripture, and the promotion of faith**

Science is generally restricted to the study of the material world. In very broad terms, science can be defined as logical interpretation of data collected from the material world. This kind of science is capable of addressing questions such as how fast the speed of sound is, or what the pyramids are made of. It may therefore be able to infer how the pyramids were built, but theories are intrinsically more tentative when looking at the pyramids' history than when looking at their composition. This is because no experiments can be done in the present to definitively answer questions about the past.

At best experiments may show how pyramids can be built now. From these we can infer that similar methods were used in the past. On the other hand, samples of the stone from pyramids can be experimented with. As long as samples of stone are available, any scientist can experiment with them and draw conclusions consistent with their experimentation.

For this reason, Hezekiah's tunnel—a historical claim—is likely to remain more tentative than the experimentally testable claim about Babylon's destruction.

Because immediate observation and experimentation is possible in the present, science can be less tentative about what pyramids are made of than about the exact way in which they were built. In other words, science must be more tentative about historical claims than about claims experimentally testable in the present.

Many of the claims of Scripture that are tested using science, are historical claims, like the dimensions of the molten sea. Historical science operates at a disadvantage compared

to experimental science which tests in the present. However, whether one is working with experimental or historical science, neither is a good tool for proving the inspiration of Scripture. However, both may be powerful faith-promoting tools.

Scripture reveals the wonderful interaction of the Creator with the creation, while science reveals the magnificent creative power of God. In the words of Paul: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). ■

- 1 J. Kepler, "Letter to Herwart von Hohenburg," 1599. In Carola Baumgardt, *Johannes Kepler: Life and Letters* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 50.
- 2 Rex Dalton, "'FLAT Earthers' in Battle with Creationism," *Nature* 398 (1999):453.
- 3 See H. Shanks, "Everything You Never Knew about Jerusalem is Wrong," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 25 (1999) 6:20-30; J. A. Hackett, "Spelling Differences and Letter Shapes are Telltale Signs," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 23(1997) 2:42-44; and J. Rogerson and P. R. Davies, "Was the Siloam Tunnel Built by Hezekiah?" *Biblical Archaeologist*, 59 (1996) 3:138-150.

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# The nature of Christ: Four measures of a mystery

## **Seventh-day Adventist Statement of**

**Faith #7:** "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for the environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15).

Thanks to the Romans, life flourished during the second century in the city of Arles, in Gaul, today's southern France. When they arrived from Italy, the Roman soldiers brought their taste for fierce amusement and erected a 20,000-seat amphitheater to display and experience it. Among other so-called "sports," they introduced bull fighting, which still flourishes in the same well-preserved amphitheater.

A five-minute walk away is the town square. As I walked into that square in 2001, my focus went immediately to St. Trophime's Church, named after a third-century bishop of the city. Above the twin entrance doors, divided by a slender red-marble pillar, I saw what brought me to Arles. Carved from stone in the tympanum above the doors is depicted John the revelator's vision of

ROY C. NADEN



Jesus surrounded by a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man. The Church Father Augustine understood these four creatures to represent the four portraits of Jesus presented in the four Gospels. He wrote:

"We concur . . . [that] the Four Living Creatures in the Apocalypse . . . represent the Four Gospels, . . . Lion, the King of Beasts . . . St Matthew; . . . Ox, the Sacrificial Victim . . . St Luke . . . [And] St Mark . . . relates what Christ did in His Human Nature. . . . These three Living Creatures—the Lion, the Calf, the Man—walk on the *earth*. The first three Evangelists describe specially those things which Christ did in our flesh. . . . But St John soars to *heaven* as an Eagle, above the clouds of human infirmity, and reveals to us the mysteries of Christ's Godhead."<sup>1</sup>

### **How can we understand?**

How can we understand Jesus' divine nature and His intimate connection with us in His human nature? The reality is we can't. The apostle puts it accurately when he declares it a mystery (1 Tim. 3:16). Theologians have traditionally sought to understand Jesus' nature by searching the Scriptures, finding a phrase or verse here and another there. This is because Scripture simply does not address the theme comprehensively in any one place.

Canvassing the Scriptures we

deduce that Jesus has all the characteristics of God, for He is God (Luke 1:35; Mark 1:24). First is His unfailing love (John 3:16), then omnipotence (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2), omniscience (Col. 2:3), omnipresence (Matt. 18:20; 28:20), and an eternal life preexisting Creation (Isa. 9:6; Col. 1:17). We also learn that He is rightly worshipped as God (Heb. 1:6; Phil 2:10, 11), for He and the Father are One (John 14:9), and He is the great "I AM" of the Old Testament (John 8:58).

On the reverse side of the coin, we know something of the human nature of Jesus, which He took at His incarnation and will retain for all eternity (Luke 22:18; Acts 11). More than 80 times in the New Testament we read the title, *Son of Man*. And just as He is perfect in His divine nature, He is perfect also in His human nature so He could be our Savior. He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22), "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). So there is no reason for us ever to have the slightest question about "the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ,"<sup>2</sup> for He was unquestionably without "a taint of corruption."<sup>3</sup> And unlike us in our sinful state, Jesus had not the slightest inclination or desire to sin.<sup>4</sup> But vicariously He took upon Himself our sins and atoned for those sins in which He had no part just as we enjoy His righteousness in which we have no part.<sup>5</sup>

### **Jesus becoming human; what does it mean?**

But what does it mean that Jesus became a human being, as fully human as we are, and still remained as fully God as before the Incarnation? Again it is no ordinary mystery, it is a "great" mystery beyond our understanding (1 Tim. 3:16)!

The disciples had no reason to doubt the humanity of their Master. Some of

them first met His human mother Mary at the wedding celebration in Cana. So they knew the person that carried Him to term to begin His human life on earth. There's nothing more thoroughly human than that!

They observed Him during His short public ministry when He got hungry, tired, and thirsty like the rest of them. They saw Him cry in His sadness at the tomb of Lazarus. They knew of His intense prayer life, revealing His complete dependence on the Father. And in the Garden of Gethsemane three of them heard Him beg for human support in the intensity of beginning to take upon Himself the sins of the world. It was soon painfully observed that He bled when whipped, and staggered under the weight of a load too heavy for His weakened body.

So His intimates knew that He had accepted our humanity with the physical limitations which thousands of years of sinful disintegration had imposed, but He took human nature without in any way inheriting the sinfulness of being human.<sup>6</sup> Mystery!

### The four creatures and the four Gospels

But perhaps there are other ways for us to "discover" the God-Man Jesus than assembling isolated Bible texts—as legitimate an approach as that is. Perhaps we can best bring Him to life in our hearts by looking at the four complementary portraits of Jesus in the Gospels, those images depicted in the carving above the doors of St. Trophime's Church in Arles.

Near the end of His public ministry, Philip spoke for the disciples when he asked Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus showed His anguish at this request when He exclaimed, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

But how revealing of our humanity is Philip's question! In our humanity we seek not so much a cognitive response to our questions about the nature of our Lord as an experiential one. And that

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quest is wonderfully satisfied by exploring the experiences described by the four Gospel writers that "show" Him to us in the fullness of both His deity and His humanity.

*Matthew's Jesus is like a lion*, the king of the animal kingdom. Reading Matthew's Gospel we see a portrait of Jesus as the promised King of the Old Testament prophets. This is the New Testament's first portrait of Jesus. It is a very human role, a very human metaphor.

One readily deduces Matthew's primary goal in writing his Gospel. He wished to persuade his fellow Jews that their Messiah had come in the person of Jesus. So he begins his book with a genealogy. As you read the names, you are powerfully reminded of what a sinful line it is. But Matthew shows Jesus as a descendent of King David from whom the prophets predicted the Messiah would come. In the great poet-king we see a key person with a key foundational role in the genealogical line of Jesus' humanity.

David's life story reveals the vastness of self-deception, the very worst form of deception. But under King David's leadership, the Jewish nation saw some of its most memorable times, years to which

the Jews constantly looked nostalgically. Matthew wants us to know that in Jesus we have our King—the Son of King David. Yes, He inherited our human nature, but not the sinfulness of this exceedingly sinful human heritage. Mystery!

In Matthew's account of the three temptations we see Jesus fresh from His immersion in Jordan's waters confronting Satan over the "kingship" of the world. When Jesus asked John to baptize Him, He threw down the gauntlet to Satan.

Through baptism He said in effect, "Satan, I'm challenging you. You won a battle in Eden with the first Adam. You'll lose the same battle with the Second Adam. I stand here like the first Adam before you tempted him. I, too, have never sinned. And I have a sinless nature like the first Adam at his creation. And I'll demonstrate God's power to sustain Me through all your temptations. . . .

"Where Adam failed, I will succeed. And in my success I'll redeem his failure and lay the foundation stone for the rebuilding of a perfect world. All that was lost in Eden I will regain. And it starts now!" And immediately the Spirit led Him into the wilderness and the great battles began.

In the Bethlehem story Mathew reminds us that King Jesus was born in the place predicted by the prophet Micah. There He was visited by princes from the East with "treasures" fit for a king. And at the end of His earthly ministry, Mathew reminds us, the people took up the refrain sung by angels at His birth, and sang "Hosanna to the Son of David."

According to Matthew's account, Jesus is the ultimate "Royal," Lion of the tribe of Judah, who invites us to find the fulfillment of our greatest hopes and dreams as princesses and princes of the King.

*Mark's Jesus is a man*, and he portrays the human nature of Jesus by showing His complete understanding of the human nature Jesus shares with us. One of the stories that shows it convincingly is his account of Simon's feast.

Mary took her life savings to a perfume dealer. After some haggling, she walked away with an alabaster bottle of the most expensive spikenard. The night of the party, she knelt before Jesus and poured the beautiful aromatic perfume over His feet. Rivulets poured to the floor, so Mary dropped her head to let her long hair fall so she could wipe His feet with her hair.

As the rare scent filled the room, Mary suddenly became the focus of everyone's attention. Judas castigated her for what he called "a waste!" But Jesus' human nature completely understood what was going on, and He instantly came to her defense. He protected her, honored her, affirmed her, and predicted that wherever the gospel would be preached, her story would be told.

The Scriptures note that in conversation with Simon, Jesus emphasized that at His arrival, no one had washed His feet, and no one had given Him the traditional greeting of a kiss. In His humanity, Jesus missed these human touches! How thoroughly human He is! He feels as we do, understands our thoughts, can empathize and nurture us through the most dire of human predicaments, because He's been there.

*Luke's Jesus is a sacrificial ox*, revealing

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Jesus as our Burden-Bearer. Luke illustrates this aspect of Jesus' nature in numerous stories including the account of His return to Nazareth.

One Sabbath morning Joseph's and Mary's family went to synagogue. As the service got underway, Jesus stood, walked to the front, took a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:16-19, NIV).

As Jesus sat down the congregation fell silent, intrigued. Then He spoke again, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NIV). He was telling the home crowd that no matter what their burden, He would bear it for them.

The burden of any physical disability like blindness, the burden of poverty, the burden of incarceration, sometimes of the innocent, the burden of relational or emotional oppression, whatever the burden, He bears it for us! Everything He had just read in Isaiah. That's the nature of Jesus, and the reason He invites all that are heavy laden with personal problems and sins to come to Him so He can lift them off our shoulders and carry them on His. Our very human Jesus bears all our human burdens.

*John's Jesus is an eagle*, whose far-seeing sight, and heavenly flight are metaphors of His divine nature. As Augustine observed, three Gospels accent the human nature, one, the divine.

There's something mysterious and awe-inspiring about John's opening words. He writes that in the beginning of our world was the Word, Jesus, and the Word was with God the Father, and the Word was God. Nothing came into existence without the Word (see John 1:1-3). Like an eagle flying far out of sight in the heights of the heavens, Jesus lived and lives in full deity.

John continues in the opening chapter of his Gospel that all who believe in Him He gives the right to become His

children, part of His family (see John 1:12). And after Jesus became a human being with human flesh, we were able to see the glory of the Father in Him, full of grace, the amazing grace that saves each one of us (see John 1:14). From the beginning John emphasizes the divinity of our Lord.

And in a story recorded only in John's Gospel<sup>7</sup> we see a sublime illustration of Him as our divine Savior who does not condemn us but who alone can forgive our sins!

It is very early in the morning; cool, but sunny. Jesus has spent the night outside Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives in prayer. Another man had spent the night inside Jerusalem involved with illicit lovemaking. Long shadows from the rising sun stretch across the temple courtyard making contrasting blocks of darkness and light. It was still too early for the large crowds that would come as the day proceeded.

In the midst of this tranquil scene came a disturbance from a group of religious leaders, Pharisees and rabbis. They didn't come alone. They were herding a frightened, disheveled young woman. Her tresses had not been combed. Her robe had been hastily drawn around her shoulders. The dark shadows under her eyes reflected her lack of sleep. They shoved her in front of Jesus and commanded her to stand there.

She kept her head lowered in humiliation in front of the finely robed men that ruled her society. The spokesman described the problem. "This woman has been discovered while in the act of adultery. Under these circumstances, the Law of Moses demands that we stone her to death. Do You agree?" (see John 8:4, 5). She began to count her last moments on earth, sorrowful for her many failures at such a young age. She only hoped the first stone would knock her unconscious.

Then she hears Someone say, "Whoever is without sin, you throw the first stone." Then all she "heard" is silence.

Jesus bends low over the flagstones of the courtyard. The sweepers had not

yet begun their work. The dust blown in overnight still lies undisturbed, so He begins to write in that dust. Then sound is heard—of sandals on sand, the sound of someone disappearing from sight. Then another, and another.

Some time later Jesus stands and looks at the woman. *Mercy looks intently into the eyes of Misery*. "Where are your accusers?" He asks. She looks around to discover that not one of the arrogant gang that had grabbed her in a bedroom and herded her to the temple court is still there. "There are none, Lord!" she replies in amazement. And then she hears inspiring words from the divine Word of God: "I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more."

Her soul feels a relief and restoration she can't put into words. Her eyes fill with tears as she drops to the ground at Jesus' feet. She confesses her sins to Him, receives forgiveness, and is born again to become one of the most trusted and loyal followers of Jesus for the rest of her life.<sup>8</sup> John's Jesus, the eagle, in His divinity made her a new person.

So what is the nature of our Jesus? The pictures painted in the four Gospels show Him to be fully, truly man, but without sin, and fully, truly God, who ransomed us and gave us everlasting life. Mystery!

It is the wonderful mystery of His dual natures, fully God and fully man, on which our personal fulfillment on earth, and our hopes of heaven are firmly based. ■

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1 Quoted in *The New Testament: A Commentary*, Bishop Christopher Wordsworth (London: Rivingtons, 1874), xlii.

2 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1131.

3 *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 9, 1897.

4 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1128, 1129.

5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 25.

6 *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901.

7 It is well-known that this story appears in only one of the early uncial manuscripts and that none of the early Church Fathers comments on it. But there is a high level of affirmation that it is nonetheless a true story.

8 *The Desire of Ages*, 462.

# Cry from a wounded heart

Estelle Owenson

**A**ugust 18, 2002. 5:30 a.m. I awaken with a sense of darkness pressing upon me. Anxious thoughts whirl in my head. Sadness envelops me. I grieve. I think back to January. I relive the pain that brought me to this place.

January 7, 2002. P.E.T. scan shows brain cell loss in my 81-year-old husband. Memory and cognitive ability are deteriorating.

These days, this 81-year-old retired Marine Corps Paymaster, once responsible for millions of dollars at Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., doesn't even carry a credit card. When we travel, he watches the scenery pass from the passenger side of the car. I pay the bills and purchase the food.

No longer do those soft, uncallused hands, once so swift in military service, create the joy of accomplishment for this proud man—a man so often commended by his superiors. Now those hands labor to write only simple reminders to himself and to me.

No longer does that detailed, meticulous, mathematical mind—sharpened by years of financial challenge—hasten to do his bidding. Once a week, a friend comes by to take him to the American Legion meeting. I make sure he has enough money to take care of dinner.

February 5. Diagnosed with vascular dementia. It might as well be Alzheimer's. The diagnosis doesn't ease my pain and fear. I have watched this insidious disease sneak its

way into our lives. Why couldn't I get a doctor to listen to me?

Is it with the genuine comprehension my husband still retains, that he surprises me by indicating an interest in joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church? He has been attending with me for six years. His admiration for the pastor grows as he accompanies me to worship services.

The beautiful people in our Sabbath School class surround him with sincere love and concern. They know his comments in class will reveal how little he understands of the depth of God's love, and the working out of His plan in our lives, but they delight in drawing him into their circle and love him for who he is.

My husband's announcement to join the Church leaves me with mixed emotions. Through the years I've prayed for him to be impressed by the Holy Spirit. I've heard him tell people that he'd never be a Seventh-day Adventist. I've earnestly prayed that someone he admires and respects would take an interest in his salvation. I guess they felt it was up to me, but I knew I wasn't the one.

Yes, he had questioned me at various times regarding my convictions, but his argumentative attitude showed me that my part was to ask God to help me live my faith and uphold my way of life without any pressure on him regarding his personal choices.

Why, I ask God. Why now, when he has mentally deteriorated and is hardly able to understand the step he is considering? Why did it not happen when he could have been more able to listen, to understand, to accept?

Not knowing the answer to the "why" question, and knowing it is not up to me to make a decision as to the validity of his interest, I lay it out before the pastor who has become so loved and respected by my husband. I pray that God will give him the wisdom he needs to know how to deal with the man I love.

A few days later, the pastor comes to our home and at the right moment, sensitively brings up the subject. Yes, my husband is interested, but has some "loose ends" to tie up at his Methodist church. Then he will be ready to have his membership "transferred." A few weeks later there's another visit from the pastor, with more spiritual talk and interaction.

## Delay and frustration

Weeks go by. I look forward to further vis-

*Estelle Owenson is a pseudonym.*

its by the pastor while my husband's mind is still functioning, though it continues to deteriorate. Every day I see him losing ground. I pray for the pastor to spend time in fellowship with him, leading, guiding, praying so that when the day arrives that my husband is ready to release himself from his church, he will be ready for the next step.

I am keenly aware that this candidate cannot be handled in the usual way. My husband is unable to understand the 27 fundamental beliefs in any depth, and living them out is even more in question.

"It's Your project, God." I cry. "You know his heart, You know how much cognitive ability he has left. You also know that I cannot be the one to bring him to an ultimate commitment; he'd feel I was policing him. He's in Your charge. You know his background. You also know that because his mind is going downhill with each passing day, there's an urgency about these things. Please, God, send the help he needs to surround him while he can still respond to the most vital matter of salvation—a relationship with Jesus Christ his Savior."

April becomes May. I am dealing with growing feelings against the pastor. Is my husband not important enough to work into his busy schedule? Is the dementia a factor that discourages the pastor? I find myself increasingly frustrated and hurt. When I kneel to pray, the anger and pain become a growing wall between my heart and the throne room of heaven.

On my knees, with negative emotions arising from my heart, I hear a voice: "If thy brother have ought against thee . . . go . . ." A day or two later, I appear at the door of the pastor's study and lay my heart open to him, admitting that I am feeling angry and telling him I can't understand his apparent lack of urgency regarding my husband, particularly considering my husband's increasing dementia.

He kindly apologizes; he's been very busy. He appreciates my personal visit in this matter. He will deal with it. We pray together. I rejoice once again; we're back on our way.

### More delay, frustration, and indignation

Soon, we have another visit from the pastor. His parting words: "Let me know when your project at the Methodist church is completed."

Yet, I still continue to hope and pray that although we are in a waiting period, preparation can be going on simultaneously while there is still some cognitive ability left.

Third week in June. Father's Day. We go to the Methodist church and check on the finalized project (a new plaque for the ornately carved lectern given to the church after the death of his first wife by cancer). He wants his name on it also, so the church won't forget he left his mark as their beloved administrator for many years. My husband is very pleased with the plaque. I take his picture. We leave the majestic gothic sanctuary for the last time.

The time has come. He now feels free to reach out for new church

membership. He will leave the church which he chose so long ago as a young man.

It's not an easy or sudden decision. In addition to a very successful Marine Corps profession, my husband has been the business administrator of another prestigious Methodist church in the large leading city in which we live. He has carried the title of "diaconal minister" for many years, an honor bestowed upon administrators and nonpastoral leaders in the Methodist Church. The title has been very important to him. It is not easy to turn his back and embark on a new journey.

June 16, 2002. I call the pastor and inform him my husband's project is in place, his membership at the Methodist church can now end. He is ready to make the big step, to go forward with a new life in the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Another disappointment. I find out that there is only one week until the pastor is to be out of the country for three weeks. He will come by our home for a quick visit, if possible. When he returns, he will need a few days to catch up, then he will be attending to the subject of prepara-





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tion for baptism for my husband. Another four weeks' delay!

Why, Lord? What will be the state of my husband's mind by then?

June 15, the last Sabbath our pastor will be in church before his vacation. My husband does not attend, but sends this message by me. "Tell Pastor, he's not to preach again in the church until I am a member!" A rather child-like request, but then in our need, we have become childlike! I relate this message to the pastor. He smiles.

**YES, HE IS AN EXCEPTIONAL PREACHER. HE HAS A WAY WITH WORDS. . . HIS PERSONALITY IS MAGNETIC. BUT MY DISAPPOINTMENT AND PAIN TEND TO OBSCURE HIS WORDS. MY HEART IS BLEEDING.**

"Do you think your husband will be willing to go through baptism?" The question is asked of me there in the hallway where the pastor and I have crossed paths that last Sabbath. We both know immersion would be a big hurdle since my husband always referred to the process as "changing his membership."

I share with the pastor my husband's reaction to that question as he and I had discussed it a week earlier. "I don't like the idea of being shoved under the water, but I'm willing."

July. My husband calls the Methodist church and asks for a letter of membership transfer. He requests that one copy go to our pastor. I am deeply moved at the responding letter and the kindly manner in which they release his membership, and the way they wish him the best in his new church home.

Three weeks go by. I pray for safety for the pastor and his family. I count the days when we can finally reach the destination in this long journey.

### **My heart is bleeding**

Finally the day is here. Today, the

pastor will be back. Patience, I tell myself, give him a few days. He'll be in touch.

One, then two weeks go by, and a bit more. The pastor calls regarding another project he is helping me with. During that conversation, he tells me he will be going to workers' meeting for the first part of the next week, then has some other pressing responsibilities. But after that, he will be in touch. That will take us to mid-August.

The third week of August. On the last Sabbath, I hear that the pastor is going to be gone for another week. He will be back Friday night. My heart drops once again.

It's been over five months since this process started. Once again, I'm feeling anger, frustration, and pain. I would like to ask someone else to pick up and carry this to fruition. I can't. Our local pastor holds the key to my husband's heart and to his membership in the Church. Yes, he is an exceptional preacher. He has a way with words—beautiful, impressive words. His delivery is impeccable and attention riveting. His personality is magnetic, but my disappointment and pain tend to obscure his words. My heart is bleeding.

### **An awful conversation**

I decide it's time for me to gently and sensitively ask my husband some vital questions. I never intended to be the one to ask these, but I feel that by default, at this point, it is important that I ask. I must find out to what degree the deterioration from his dementia has invaded and destroyed

his cognitive ability during the past five months since we embarked upon this important journey.

I choose our quiet time together, when he is the most receptive.

I open the conversation. "I've been thinking about your desire to become a member of our church. Perhaps you have some questions I could help answer. Is there anything you are concerned about regarding any differences between Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and what you do or don't understand?"

*Answer: "Evolution."* (There was no hesitation in his answer. In the past, he has vacillated on this subject, mostly weighted toward the side of evolution.)

Q. "Do you believe in the Bible as the Word of God—that it is the essential guide for our lives?"

A. "*Men wrote the Bible. We don't know how many changes there have been to it.*"

Q. "Do you understand the Sabbath? What it really means?"

A. "*I don't think it matters what day you keep. You could keep Sabbath on Wednesday if you wanted to.*" (Yet, he had unfortunately "reprimanded" our guest when he felt she was not respecting my beliefs about Sabbath hours!)

Q. "Do you understand what happens when someone dies?" (In previous discussions, I had been under the impression that he felt our stand was correct.)

A. "*I don't know. I think the body deteriorates, but there is something else that I don't understand . . . what happens to the spirit?*"

Q. "Does it bother you that you will not be a diaconal minister anymore?"

A. "*No.*" (This really surprises me! This has been so important to him.)

Q. "Are you still interested in being baptized?"

A. "*I don't think it's necessary. It's like belonging to a club anyway.*"

Q. "Are you saying you have changed your mind and you don't wish to be baptized?"

A. "That's right, I don't want to be baptized."

Q. "Do you still want to come with me to our church and be a part of it even if you are not a baptized member, or do you want to go back to your church?"

A. "I want to come with you to your church. I don't have to be baptized to do that."

Then, I ask him the most important question.

Q. "Do you believe Jesus came from heaven; became a man to live with us and for us here?"

A. "It's possible."

Q. "Do you understand and believe that He died for you and your sins, so you can live with Him in heaven?"

A. "I don't know . . . it's possible."

Q. "Do you believe Jesus is coming back to take His people to be with Him forever?"

A. "It's possible. . . ."

There it is—the true story. My pain is deep. I grieve. I keep asking myself, Why? How could this happen? We had a window of time but it seems to me that it has slowly closed, and now it's shut, like the decayed mind of my husband.

I know God isn't held back by arbitrary rules of conversion or the 27 fundamentals. Neither is He bound by our sometimes-fumbling ways in the saving of souls. I know Jesus promised to take the thief to heaven. I know His love is boundless and timeless.

For years I have looked forward to the day when my husband would give his life to Christ and be buried in baptism. Now I'm terribly sad. Now, I shed tears filled with the inner sense that it is too late.

Yes, it's possible we could talk him into being baptized. But at this point, he doesn't know what it means to "die," nor would he know what "resurrection" implies. At this point, my

breaking heart would experience baptism as a "hollow victory."

Yet I know that having a relationship with Jesus is the saving factor. But, he does not have this. Or does he? I don't know. I can't say. I am not the Judge.

"O Lord, Your Holy Spirit once gave us a window of opportunity when You placed that original desire in my husband's heart. That in itself was a miracle. You are a God of miracles. You can reach down with another miracle—a gleam from Your throne.

"Precious Abba, I trust my husband's eternity to an all-knowing, all-loving God. You and Your Son know if, when, or where there was enough of an honest spark in my husband's heart that in spite of all else, You can choose to say to him: 'My dear son, you will be with Me in paradise.'"

Please hear my heart's cry! ■

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# SMALL church growth

Rod Long



Rod Long pastors four church districts and lives in Chadron, Nebraska.

"It can't be done!" is a phrase that resounds with darkness, hopelessness, and defeat. Throughout the Christian world we hear increasingly that revitalizing small churches just can't be done. Where did this thinking come from? Have we forgotten that we are an extension of the New Testament church—that small, courageous assembly of souls who would have been understood for saying "It can't be done!" But they didn't even seem to know the meaning of those words. They didn't because they were too busy believing such things as "With God all things are possible."

I believe that God is still working, just as He did with those first-century Christians. However, the way we approach things today is significantly different from that of our New Testament predecessors. As leaders and laity, we seem to be easily quieted on the journey, almost as if the "fire" is gone. We become comfortable with the way things are and sometimes don't see the need to step out in faith, to keep trying new things.

Smaller churches seem especially vulnerable to this kind of inertia.

## Finding a vision, discovering a mission

Churches in this new millennium, especially small ones, face barriers to growth, most of them having to do with two often expressed yet vital arenas: (1) Do we really feel

and do we actually have a sense of deep concern for the struggling humanity around us? and (2) Are we willing to search for God's vision and mission for us and our congregation, and do we have the faith and courage to follow that vision?

Past experience tells me that churches which focus on reaching and befriending lost souls in their communities will be the churches that grow! Churches that actually go through a visioning and mission-building process will be unique among most churches in their community. Why? Because they are wrestling to find a vision or a mission from God for their ministry, and therefore God can work among them and in their community, helping them to discover the roles they are to play.

We often make plans and create strategies for our churches and our ministries, and then ask God to bless them and make them fruitful. But most of the success in any program or church comes from not asking God to bless *our* work, but listening for His invitation to join *Him* in the work He is doing where we are. The visioning and mission-building process for a church does exactly that.

This process should begin with 40 days of fasting and prayer. Everyone in the church—or at least most of the congregation's leaders—should participate in this highly rewarding step. Participants ask God to show them the role that the congregation needs to play in the community. It is probably best for each congregation to work out their way of actually carrying out this important aspect of the visioning process.

The vision speaks of where a congregation is going, and the mission tells how it is going to happen. The vision inspires people to scale the summit of the mission.

## Key ingredients for small-church growth

How often have you heard someone say of their church, "We can't do this because we are too *small*"? People make the word *small* seem so negative. How can we take the negative away from *small* so that we encourage and vitalize our people? Could it be that in the word *small* is the solution to growth in today's church? The word *small* has become an acronym that sums up my ministry and reveals a way through which all churches can grow:

- S** Specific vision and mission
- M** Members in ministry
- A** Attractive to the community
- L** Linking to the power of Heaven through prayer
- L** Loving unconditionally

Every church that I have been blessed to be a part of, has taken the time to actually develop these qualities. I believe that any church that will make it a point to follow this acronym is destined for growth and positive community awareness and impact!

Let me touch on SMALL and what it entails. Because we have already covered much of the first aspect—specific vision and mission—we will move on to a space-limited expression of the other four qualities necessary for small-church growth.

*If a church is to succeed the members must be active!* Many church members believe that it is the pastor's responsibility to build the church. Actually, it's everyone's calling. It is the pastor's

responsibility to train members to reach out to the community in a meaningful way.

The pastor is to build up the saints through the Word of God, and to encourage them in the face of rejection. The pastor is to be the leader who is clearest on the vision and mission of God for himself, so that he or she knows where God wants the congregation to go. Then the pastor leads the church. He doesn't do their work for them.

The members must keenly feel the needs and longings of the souls around them, having a deep desire to bring them to Christ, or they will never feel the need to do service for Christ. The pastor should keep before the people the burden that Christ has laid on them for others.

Jesus' mission statement is the essential mission statement of every congregation: The Son of man has come to seek and save the lost (Luke

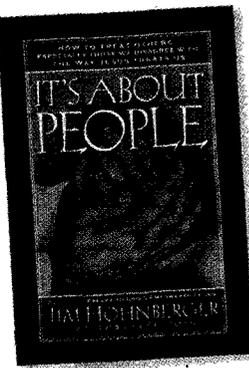
19:10). Jesus was clear and focused when it came to this. Following someone means that we go the same way and do the same things.

*The next key ingredient is being attractive to our communities.* For too long many of our churches have felt that if people are looking for Jesus, our doors are open. Just let them come in. It would be nice if that were all we had to do—just unlock the door, turn on the light, sit in the pew, and motion for folks to "come on in."

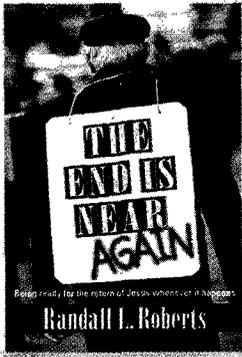
Part of the revitalization journey of a church is becoming involved in the community and getting that community involved with the church. When I say the church needs to be attractive to the community, I don't mean just the beauty or functionality of the physical plant. Although that is important, there's more. People need to have positive memories and thoughts about our churches.

One way to achieve this is by doing

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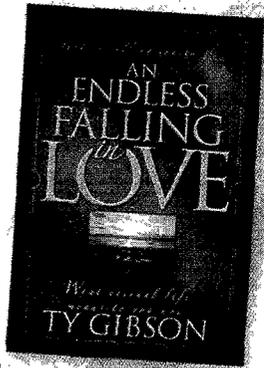


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community appreciation days. Twice a year the churches in my district recognize and thank a community action group for what they do in our neighborhoods. We have invited the volunteer fire department, the police, state patrol, and sheriff. Other churches I have served have honored nurses, ambulance personnel, emergency room staff, and others.

In my community appreciation sermons, I focus on the qualities these community leaders exhibit, especially highlighting those that are directly a part of Christian faith and which Jesus also modeled. We then serve them a meal during which we honor them by giving them a plaque and voicing our appreciation for their contributions to our community.

Many people have come into our churches whose first contact was an Appreciation Day service. We must not use these days as a way of "hooking" members or influencing them with the doctrines of our church. We need to have appreciation days simply to say thank you and show our friends that God loves and protects them. Memberships will come as a natural result of this!

*Next in the SMALL acronym is linking to the power of Heaven through prayer.* No church grows healthfully without prayer. The power of the universe is unleashed only when we are on our knees. (Earlier in the article we noted that 40 days of fasting and prayer are crucial to the vision and mission building of any church.) Prayer is our help line, our connection to the solution center of the world. There is no mountain too high. Fervent prayer can scale impossible-looking summits. Prayer can lift us from the lowest valley. Prayer from even the weakest soul can bridge the deepest, widest river.

If we want to turn our churches around, and keep them headed in the right direction, we need to build a team of prayer warriors! Fasting with prayer has become almost obsolete in today's Christian world. More time needs to be spent in fasting. It is a

time when we give up something important and desirable, replacing it with time spent in earnest prayer.

Jesus began His ministry with a 40-day fast. Fasting is a great opportunity to come close to God, and for Him to come close to us. It is during these times that my members have shared with me how God has opened their eyes in new and surprising ways. They come so close to Him that many continue this deep form of worship past the 40 days. Prayer accompanied with fasting provides time and special concentration so we may commune with God and search His will for ourselves and our church.

*Finally, and very importantly, there is the matter of loving unconditionally.* We cannot grow a church in which we and our leaders and members are so busy pointing out faults and correcting people that we forget that we are called to love as we are loved by God. We have particular difficulty understanding and acknowledging the importance of this virtue.

The world we live in today offers very little in the way of acceptance and support for an individual. Our society is consistently so engrossed in the pursuit of all kinds of self-interest, that others are left out and left alone to struggle through their storms. Our churches should be a haven, a place of ultimate safety, acceptance and love.

People should feel that they can come to our churches regardless of what they wear, how many or what kind of burdens they are carrying. They should feel free to come with their guards down, defenseless and in need. They should find love and open arms. After all, we are to treat others as Christ has treated us. If the Christian world today would more fully reflect the wholehearted, unquestioning love that has been given to us, our churches would be full!

We need to be about lifting up Jesus to heartbroken people. It all too often seems, however, that we are too busy playing the convicting role of the Holy Spirit to actually spend time uplifting and living out the love of

Jesus. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict others of sin, not ours. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to reprove righteousness, not ours.

Of course, God sometimes uses us to help each other in situations that require an honest word of correction, but even this is to be done in calm, noncondemnatory love. Anyone who has been in ministry for any length of time knows that when we continually look to and point people to Jesus in our talk and walk, people begin to wonder and move in His direction, and their lives begin to change into His likeness. When we've pointed people to Him, then we have an opportunity to share what He has done for us and with us. Notice I didn't say share with them what He can correct for them. We need to lift Him up and people will be drawn to Him.

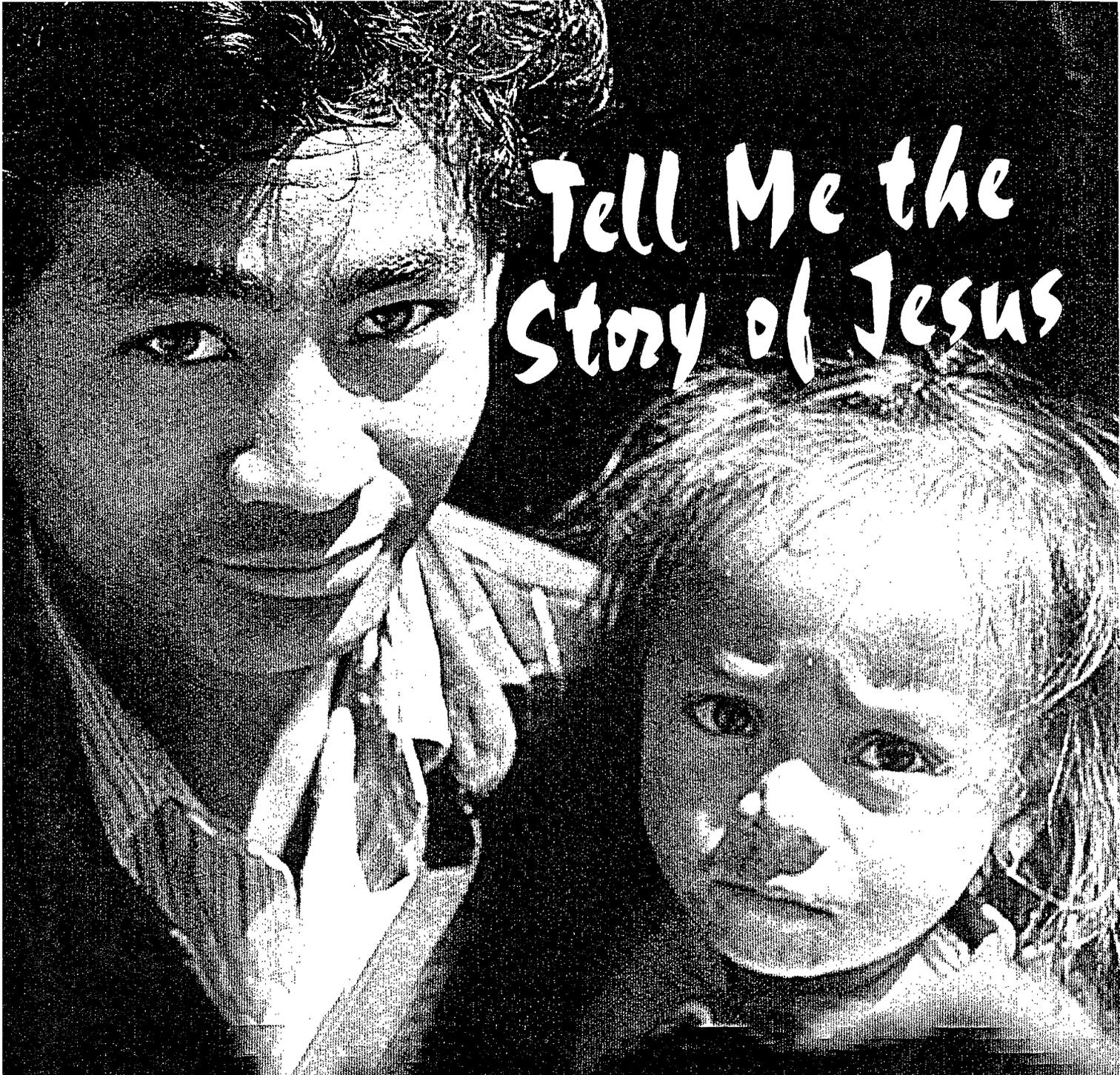
## Conclusion

The real secret of small-church growth lies in congregations and leaders having a willing spirit to do whatever it is that God would lead them to do, as together they search the heart of God for what that is. It means having a church that is not afraid to change some things if it means coming in line with God's mission for them.

Small-church growth doesn't just happen. We must be dedicated to it and purposeful in our actions as God leads us. This takes time and effort but is entirely worthwhile.

So we are longing for churches full of members in action. We are following what God is directing us to do, and not just something we think is a good idea. We want the community to feel attracted to our churches. So we are linking to the power of Heaven through prayer for our churches to grow. And, very importantly, we are loving people in tangible, unconditional ways.

As we step up, initiating and implementing these things, God will be with us, bringing growth of all kinds to churches that may have seemed beyond such progress. ■



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# Can the church be relevant and survive? (part 2)

Jay Gallimore

In part one of this series (*Ministry*, April 2003) we asked, Can the church be relevant and thrive? In this part we ask the same question with an important twist: Can the church be “relevant” and survive.

Considering the impact or influence that some megachurches are having within Adventism, at least in North America, we need to ask how such changes might in fact affect us. If Seventh-day Adventists, in an attempt merely to be “relevant” to the surrounding culture, adopt their approaches and methodologies, will we also tend to adopt some of their presuppositions about the church and, most significantly, their mission? If we adopt their mission, will we, in turn, adopt their ideas about the nature of the church, and their conception of why the church exists? If so, would such changes bless or curse us?

## The three angels’ messages

Most Seventh-day Adventists recognize that Revelation 14:6-12 represents the most succinct biblical source for our theology, identity, and particularly for our mission. All three of the messages of the angels of this passage are merged. A person cannot change or neglect one without changing the other, and thus the thrust of the message as a whole.

The everlasting gospel, in the setting of the three angels’ messages describes the heart of

our theology. We identify ourselves with the remnant who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony and faith of Jesus. Our mission is to give that everlasting gospel to every tribe, nation, language, and people.

It is because this is the particular commission of Seventh-day Adventists that we cannot look to the nature or mission of other ecclesiastical entities, making them our model. These churches don’t have the theology, identity, or mission that, through a unique, historic encounter of the three angels’ messages, has been given to Seventh-day Adventists.

This is not to say that we cannot learn from other churches and organizations. But it is to say that they cannot be our models. This is so because, without the unique commission that has been divinely imparted to Seventh-day Adventists, that particular message cannot be carried into all the world as God intended it to be carried. And to carry that particular message is in fact our mission.

Maybe, then, our early Adventist fathers and mothers were right after all about church organization. By spreading our human and financial resources over the entire world field, we are able to grow in many different cultures with an amazing degree of unity. Our organization is not rigid but elastic. It is adaptable, not pluralistic. Our organizational structure adapts well worldwide while providing high proportions of unity and oneness. It allows for significant cultural diversity without sacrificing the essence of what is uniquely ours to proclaim from the Bible.

Congregational churches, on the other hand, are limited by their local focus and culture. They may by all means be compelled by the gospel commission, but their organizational vehicle is simply too small and fragile to carry out a world mission. By their nature they cannot maintain any degree of unity and cooperation beyond a localized sphere of influence. They consume large proportions of their resources on the local level where many of them exclusively operate. They have difficulty acting upon the need for an *unselfish unity and sacrifice* that provides for an outreach to all languages and people groups.

## Mission and structure

There is a principle here. *Concepts of mission give birth to church government.* Some Seventh-



Jay Gallimore is president of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Lansing, Michigan.

day Adventist congregations which have recently left the sisterhood of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to follow a megachurch dream are an example of how this principle works. First they changed their mission, then their form of church government. They went from a passionate worldview to a passionate local view. Then they naturally moved from a representative to a congregational form of church government.

Does this mean that we Adventists are not passionate about our local work? No, not at all. Rather, it means that we are passionate about both. We believe that an investment in world missions returns to strengthen the local work. It should not surprise us that unselfish love unleashes more human and financial resources than any other power in the world. So instead of having fewer resources, we actually have far more. Adventist giving is astounding when compared to almost any other church. Our passion

for the whole leads us to cooperation. Our theology embraces the fact that the gospel work is not finished anywhere until it is finished everywhere.

During the crisis of the last presidential election in the United States, the citizens of the nation did not know who the president-elect was going to be. In all this, the nation could have lost its footing, but it kept going largely because of the stability of well-established structures that operated despite the serious uncertainties that arose when things at the head of the nation were in question.

Representative forms of government will not succeed well unless they have building blocks starting at the grass roots. This way, the power is both top-down and bottom-up. These layered structures provide stability throughout and steer the whole. Certainly, such structures can be cumbersome, but they provide necessary strength and stability. While it is appropriate for us to think about

alternative forms of church government, as a church we have a biblical die cast, and its not a corporate or political one, but one where authority is shared and balanced among the levels of a representative form of church governance.

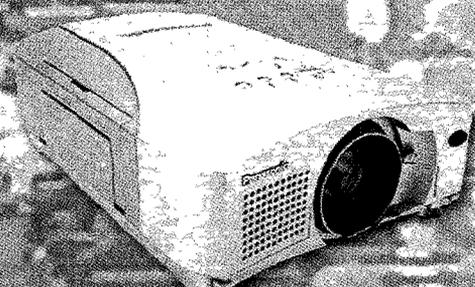
As an example of the sharing of government among the levels of church organization, take the role of the conference. The decision of where the church schools of a given conference should be located is not one made at central headquarters. Here the local decision is primary. Even the conference is given life by local church delegates at a constituency meeting. Those *combined* delegate votes give the conference authority to oversee and guide the operation and expansion of churches, schools, and other ministries within its jurisdiction. It exists to choose pastoral and educational leadership and to shepherd unity, local initiative, and self-determination within the whole.

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These local conferences form the union conferences, which in turn make up the world divisions of the church. Unlike some organizations, the Adventist Church is not held together merely by charismatic personalities. Policy, carefully crafted through a process involving all the levels of the church keep the organization working concertedly. The

tive committee, we are not politicians or CEOs, but servants seeking the will of God. There is always the temptation for members and workers to try to manipulate local church business meetings or conference and union constituencies or, for that matter, the General Conference. We must remember these represent not just what we sometimes thoughtlessly call

ership will educate the body so that it may carry out its functions well as it looks to its Head.

### Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventist theology and mission is unique. It is not found anywhere else. We believe God has brought us into being for a particular eschatological purpose. The programs, organizations, and worship styles reflected in the mission and governance of other bodies is not ours. Trying to embrace these wholesale without embracing their theology is causing a great deal of stress in many of our congregations. Trying to merge their methods with our mission will not give us a super hybrid. At stake in all of this is nothing less than the survival of the Adventist Church itself.

We do not simply want to survive but to thrive. Thriving means we must realize that human leadership is not enough. We need in our assemblies the conscious presence of our real, unseen Leader. We need a great awakening. We need a spiritual renewal that grows in power and scope until Jesus comes. We need spiritual power from the sanctuary above. We need the glory that shines from between the cherubim to enlighten a darkened world. We need the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat to carry us through the close of human probation. We need the celestial glory of Jesus Himself, directing His church through the maze of tempting options, persecution, and attack.

In the final analysis we do not succeed because of church government, as important as that is; we do not succeed because of human ingenuity and brilliance, as much as that is needed. We succeed when, by faith, we individually and collectively surrender ourselves to Him who is our Head. It is then that He will use poor, feeble, and unworthy mortals like us to "lighten the world with His glory." ■

\* For a complete, unedited version of this article, email <[info@misda.org](mailto:info@misda.org)>

## OUR PROCESS IS SET UP FOR SPIRITUAL, NOT POLITICAL PURPOSES. WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED WHEN WE SEE PEOPLE TRYING TO WORK OUR SPIRITUAL PROCESS LIKE POLITICIANS.

ongoing life of the church is not dependent on a localized body, led by one or two, as it is in many of the megachurches of our time.

The union conferences represent their part of the world field to the General Conference. They are vital to the policy making process just as the bone marrow is vital to making blood. The General Conference develops resources and is the vision caster and final authority on the policy and planning that drives the world church. Each of these parts wield real power but in different spheres. We all depend on each other doing well. Like wheels within wheels, we need the Holy Spirit to constantly pour His oil into the machinery, His water into His living organism.

### Spiritual, not secular

We sometimes have difficulty realizing that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is also not to be run by a model adapted from secular politics. Our process is set up for spiritual, not political purposes. We should be concerned when we see people trying to work our spiritual process like politicians. The two don't mix.

Whether we are members of a local church board or a conference execu-

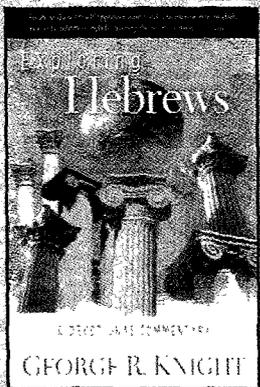
"the body," but they represent the body of *Christ*. Any part of the church, including any level of church administration, is not the head, but parts of the body. As such they do not lead out in self-government, (which is the common political view of a secular democracy) but they lead looking to the Head Himself for governance.

Our organization was set up with the concept that humble, godly believers would come together and make organized decisions. It never envisioned one person running for office against another. Neither was it meant to sustain well-orchestrated manipulative campaigns to force, trick, or manipulate the body into decisions. In the New Testament, the manipulative methods of Simon were immediately put down by Peter.

In Galatians, Paul challenged Peter's hypocritical politics publicly. In Acts, the early church called for the leadership and delegates from various places to come and settle disputable matters. Political maneuvering promotes division, pride, and competition, rather than unity, humility, and cooperation. To try to impose the secular processes on the church is to ruin it as a reflection of the humble Savior.

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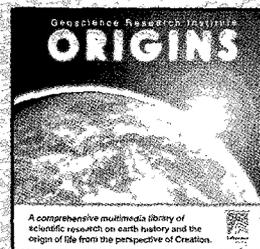
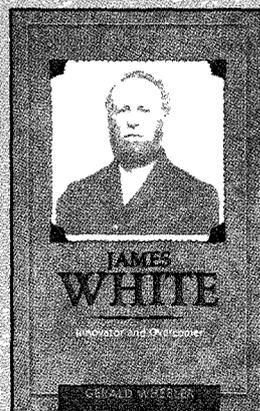
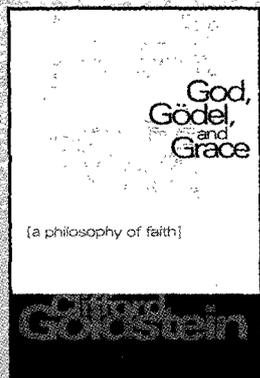
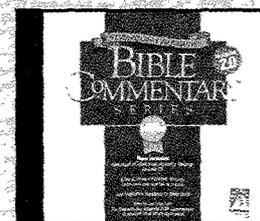
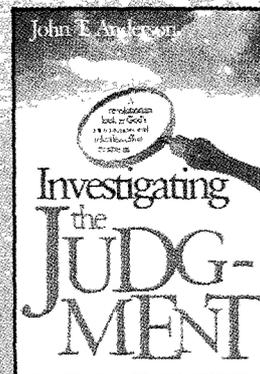
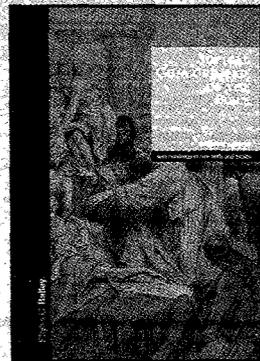
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# Fellowship: Its meaning and its demand

Bryson M. Katele



Bryson M. Katele is director of stewardship, global mission, and trust services in the Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Lusaka, Zambia.

**W**hat does Christian “fellowship” mean? Is it church members chatting outside after the church service? Is it young people hiking with one another in nature? Is it having that special sense of togetherness that comes during worship, or church friends getting together Saturday night at someone’s home?

The point is that we tend to equate fellowship with what we do, and such a tendency can trick us into thinking that we are thriving on fellowship, while all the time our souls are still starving for it.

Fellowship is a great New Testament concept. It denotes something vital to Christian spiritual health, and central to the church’s true life. We ministers need to have a clear sense of what Christian fellowship actually is, then we can help to bring it about in our churches.

The New Testament describes a fellowship that was central to the life of the young, first-century Christian church. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God

and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:42-47).\*

We must admit that this picture is one that is vibrant with a depth and breadth of fellowship that goes well beyond what we often think of as fellowship in today’s church. These days we tend to reduce the concept and practice of fellowship to terms and activities that diminish and even cheapen its true meaning, so that it involves only the matter of getting together in spiritual and social interaction, while it largely leaves out, for example, the pooling of our possessions in the way first-century Christians did.

## What is fellowship?

The Greek word for *fellowship* expresses the idea of sharing, of having something in common with somebody else. Common participation takes on a double form: giving and receiving. Christian fellowship seriously involves both aspects.

Moreover, Christian fellowship is vertical as well as horizontal. The horizontal plane presupposes the vertical for its very existence. John described the vertical dimension this way: “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). This fellowship is what makes a Christian, Christian. Indeed, John’s words provide a definition of what it is to be Christian. Those not in fellowship with the Father and the Son, however upright they may be, are not actually Christian in this Johannean sense.

The horizontal dimension of fellowship is the habitual sharing, the constant giving to and receiving from each other, which is the true, authentic pattern of life for God’s people. Fellowship with God, then, is the source from which fellowship among Christians springs; and again, fellowship with God is the end to which Christian fellowship leads.

Christian fellowship, then, is neither a luxury nor a devotional option, but a spiritual necessity. God intends that we have fellowship with Him and with each other. The former feeds the latter, and the latter requires constant feeding for its own deepening and enrichment. Fellowship between Christians cements our fellowship with God.

Our fellowship with God covers all our giving to Him, all our taking from Him, and expresses our faith in and love for Him. God gives Himself to us as our Father on the basis of redemption wrought for us by the gift of His

Son. We receive "childship" from God, and a title to all the blessings that childship entails.

"He who receives you receives me," said Jesus, "and he who receives me receives the one who sent me" (Matt. 10:40). And John adds: "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

This adoption (yet so much more than the concept of human adoption entails) is the foundation on which all our subsequent fellowship with God, and thus with one another, rests. Day by day, as God's children, we thankfully take the gifts that our heavenly Father presents to us. Daily He forgives our sins and reveals Himself to us through His written Word, and through nature and through one another. Such is the taking and giving, the sharing with God that constitutes this deeper fellowship.

Our fellowship on the human level is seeking to share what God has made known of Himself with others, as a means of finding strength, refreshment, and instruction for spiritual growth. In fellowship, one seeks to receive as well as to give. The apostle illustrates this when he tells the Romans, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Rom. 1:11, 12). Paul's understanding of fellowship is clear: it is a two-way channel whereby both he and the believers may find mutual encouragement in the bond of Christian fellowship.

In summary so far: *First*, fellowship comes from God's grace. Through fellowship, one's soul is refreshed, fed, and strengthened. *Second*, fellowship is a test of active spiritual life. It means opening one's heart to fellow believers. Fellowship cannot exist where there is pretense or concealment. We can be free from pretension and concealment in our relation with others only as we are open and honest in our dealings with God and with others.

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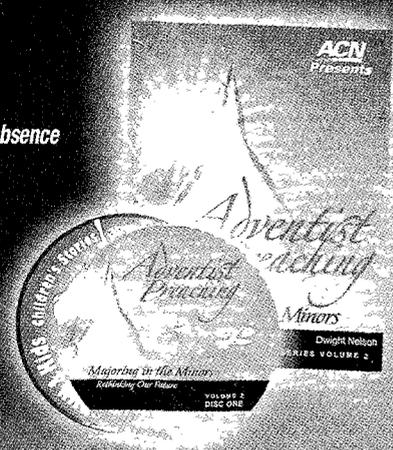
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If we prevent or obstruct God's light from shining fully on ourselves, we cannot have free fellowship with other believers; we will shrink from fellowship, and our reticence will not go undetected. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:4).

*Third*, fellowship is God's chosen plane for spiritual life. It is where the spirit of God is found, where we find spiritual life, and where we grow in grace and are ready to help others to do the same. When we fellowship together, we should do so in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit; otherwise, our "fellowship" will be partial and even empty, profiting little.

### **True and false fellowship**

Fellowship can be true or counterfeit, full or incomplete. Paul warns us of the perils of imitating Christian

love (Rom. 12:9). False or limited fellowship springs only from within us and only goes so far as to depend upon our natural human affinities, affections, and associations. Such fellowship remains superficial, and may differ very little from that which exists in a common social club. We must admit that this deficient or incomplete fellowship is all too common in contemporary Christian churches.

On the other hand, authentic Christian fellowship is alive and always growing in quality and depth. Increasingly it affects the deeper parts of our personalities and calls for continual self-sacrifice; it is always humble.

In false fellowship, members are often afraid of one another, which makes them secretive and suspicious. True fellowship has no fear or flattery, and it speaks with grace, seasoned with love.

### **The enemies of fellowship**

Genuine fellowship has two enemies: the merely human self and the sophism of Satan. James asks: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1). Overcoming self and its desires and temptations is our greatest battle.

We are like people who live in the world that has no mirrors. We are able to see other people's faults but not our own. We do not realize that the self we see in other people exists in us also. If I say that my brother is stubborn and only wants his own way, that is exactly how Brother John sees me.

"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things" (Rom. 2:1).

The few years I have served as a

This year's conference is a gathering of pilgrims who are learning to hear the music of the gospel and dance with God. We are a network of friends conspiring to change the church and the world around us by first changing ourselves. We'll offer practical teaching, stimulating conversation, and time to practice the presence of God in a breath-taking mountain setting. And you can always count on the laughter, joys, and surprises that are an integral part of sharing life together.

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Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor, I have discovered that of all the sins that destroy fellowship, the most common and the hardest to recognize is jealousy. It separates husband and wife, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, pastor and parish, and Christian partners and leaders on all levels of God's work.

Self, the enemy within us, is but the instrument of Satan. He is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), who not only accuses us day and night before God, but also accuses us through one another . . . one to one another. The example of how he accused Job, using Job's "friends" should raise our awareness that when we have misunderstandings among us, it is the devil who is at the root of it all.

### Reconciliation

When there is a breakdown in personal relationships, reconciliation is important and urgently needed. In fact, as Jesus said, reconciliation precedes worship: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24). Paul counseled his people that they should not let the sun go down on their wrath (Eph. 4:26). The sun should also not go down on our jealousy, or anything else that negatively affects our relationships and our fellowship.

In a world torn apart by so many differences, we need nothing more than fellowship and reconciliation—the kind brought about by God, "Who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). ■

## Guidelines for submitting articles to **MINISTRY**

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- ◆ Pastoral practices, such as preaching, evangelism, lay training, counseling, conflict resolution, time management, continuing education, congregational leadership and administration
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- ◆ Theological and biblical topics within the framework of Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice
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- ◆ Shoptalk items: ideas on how to better the work of the local church
- ◆ Brief reviews on books relevant to ministry
- ◆ Letters of comment on recent MINISTRY articles (no payment for these)

### INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR

When writing, it is important to keep the international pastoral audience in mind. The journal is enriched by references to each district setting; however, it is good to avoid as far as possible the use of any phraseology or allusion that may be mystifying or irrelevant to readers outside the writer's national culture.

### ARTICLE SUBMISSION

It is advisable to consult with the editor before writing and submitting an article for publication.

### ARTICLE LENGTH

An average printed page in MINISTRY contains approximately 750 words. Articles with no more than 1,500 words are preferred. Seldom are articles with more than 2,500 words accepted.

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

# Or should we look for another?

The followers of John the Baptist questioned Jesus, "Are you the One? Or should we look for another?"

Since I was a young pastor until today, denominational leaders have recurrently called the church to deeper spirituality, revival, reformation, and preparation for the coming of Jesus.

In fact, Adventists have become so culturally accustomed to revival slogans, position papers, urgent reform calls, and soul-winning goals that flow from administrative convocations, that we seem jaded to yet another program.

As one quipster put it, "Whether it's the caring church finishing the work in a thousand days of reaping to reach out for life with the real truth as we united in Christ through global mission to win the world in our generation with special emphasis on sowing a billion in the 10/40 window, the next great project will appear at upcoming sessions as consistently as the next bus will follow along its established route. It's going forth is as certain as the dawn!"

So what's different about the ACTS100 initiative which was introduced at the recent spring meeting of the General Conference committee?

Perhaps nothing! It is entirely possible that this excellent idea could become nothing more than the next program which fades from view as quickly as the slogan makers can devise a new catch phrase.

However, before I share with you what can be different this time, let me affirm the reality that whether or not "this is the one" depends much more upon my response—and yours.

You see, it is not the uniqueness of the call for renewal and spiritual growth, but the response of pastors and laity leaders that ultimately makes the difference. If I purpose to prioritize spiritual growth among my church members

JAMES A. CRESS



and begin by deepening my own relationship with Jesus, then results different than "we're still here" will come.

ACTS100 is encouragingly different because it grows out of tragic statistics from a world church survey conducted by Andrews University which showed that only about 50 percent of members regularly participate in Bible study or prayer, that less than 40 percent are involved in witnessing activities, and less than 30 percent are involved in activities which interact with their local community.

With statistics like this, we are delaying Christ's coming for generations. No wonder we must keep the slogan makers active!

ACTS100 (acronym for acknowledgment, communion, training, and service), must not rely on prescriptive "how to" implementation assignments with a "one-size-fits-all" mind set, but rather emphasizes 100 percent involvement with each congregation, pastor, and leader encouraged to develop effective methods for their area.

**Acknowledgment** of our great need for revival within the church. "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work."<sup>1</sup> This must begin with the leadership of the church while recognizing that revival is Spirit driven and cannot be programmed or orchestrated. However,

opportunities can be created where hearts and minds are open to the Holy Spirit and where He is specifically invited to accomplish His work.

**Communion with God** through Bible study and prayer. Hearing God's word and engaging in interactive fellowship with our Saviour will awaken our need for repentance and produce the fruits of revival. Our task: Devise attractive ways to encourage 100 percent of our members to regularly study and pray.

**Training and Witnessing.** Both aspects are necessary. Sometimes we have over trained and under utilized. The objective is that every member be equipped to witness, which Mark's gospel defines as "telling your friends what wonderful things God has done for you," and then deployed to share the good news they personally experience.

**Service to the Community.** The gospel commission tells us to go to the nations, not merely to await those who might seek us. We must intentionally seek them. We start by becoming involved in their lives and with meaningful activities that interest and benefit the communities in which our churches exist. Imagine the impact if 100 percent of our members become actively involved in their communities as a vital part of their church life.

Our president, Pastor Jan Paulsen, has encouraged every entity of the church to affirm and promote these concepts. The Ministerial Association is beginning a regular feature this month (see page 31) to emphasize Bible study and prayer, and to encourage every aspect of ACTS100.

At some point in time, some leader's call for spiritual renewal will blossom into the final revival before Jesus comes.

This could be the one! Or should we search for another? ■

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 1:121.

## Letters *continued from page 3*

like there are no negatives. As good as GraceLink is, it is not perfect . . . The Bible lessons revert randomly each month from the Old and New Testaments, while the previous curricula provided a more sequential connection of stories that children could follow and fit into the whole picture of Scripture. GraceLink does incorporate some improvements over previous curricula, and the article did a good job of presenting those.

Thank you for an issue that I couldn't put down!

—Carol Allred, San Antonio, Texas.

I thank profoundly the author, Jan Paulsen, who wrote the lead article, "Living It. That's What It's All About," in the October issue.

I was gratified for his powerful streams of message, which push me to express how it moved me and activate the gravity of my insufficiency . . .

There were two phrases in his message that I would like to reiterate over and over again. It says like this, "God needs individuals who are sensitive to His will and who are alive to each other's needs and struggles and whose focus is on Christians the quality of life that He wants us to live."

And the next passionate tidings proceed like this: "He who hated sin so intensely, at the same time felt the most tender compassionate sympathy for the beings that committed sin."

Yes, this is a touching message that I wish to always reflect and to echo in every motive of my soul . . .

We love our Redeemer, our Savior, and our King. Just only one step is to yield our will to Him completely.

Very soon, we will go home in that land where all is beautiful and perfect.

—Estrella Anacleto Jordan, Prilly, Switzerland.

The editorial "What Heaven Sees on the News" (Julia Norcott, October 2002) was very interesting and well-written!

—Ken Livesay, Paradise, California. ❏

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## BOOK REVIEW

***It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages***, by Haddon W. Robinson and Torrey W. Robinson (Baker Book House). ISBN 080109100, paperback, US\$12.99.

This well-rounded book is an excellent introduction to the preaching of first-person sermons. Especially preachers, who rely resolutely on "content" preaching, should take serious note of the contents. The authors demonstrated that expository preaching can indeed respond to the challenges of the listener's communication needs. We can enrich expository preaching, with its powerful emphasis on the biblical text, with first-person preaching, by developing a "sanctified imagination" without merely amusing listeners.

Although only an introduction, the authors discuss most of the prominent steps of first-person sermons. The title could be regarded as an overstatement, but it nevertheless illustrates that preachers can overcome the problem of preaching from the Bible as a mere theological textbook. Even if some are not persuaded to preach first-person sermons, this exposition may inspire them to preach with much needed imagination.

—A. Gerhard van Wyk, pastor,  
Thomasville Seventh-day Adventist Church,  
Thomasville, North Carolina.

***Organizing to Beat the Devil***, by George R. Knight (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001); ISBN 0828015961, 189 pages, paperback, US\$9.99.

George Knight has the gift to make the complex simple and to unravel the confusing to be understandable. In the third of a three-part series, the eminent

church historian at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary deals with the issue of church organization—from the time when it was denounced as equivalent to Babylon to the present when it is equally denounced as a behemoth gone beyond control. The two previous volumes dealt with *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists and the Adventist Search for Identity*.

The present work traces three stages with which the church had to struggle from no organization to some organization to over organization and the story is filled with humor, biography, serious ecclesiological and theological issues—and above all a deep and abiding commitment in the ultimate destiny of the Adventist Church.

The author sets the first stage against the common view of the founding fathers that organization is of the devil. The founding fathers preferred to call themselves a movement rather than a denomination. And yet, before long the church found itself in need of an organization because of the rapid growth of congregations which required a structure to protect themselves from impostors, to buy and hold property, to plan for the future, to be involved in a global mission. If that was the first struggle, the second one was not far away. The turn of the century shook the church with near financial bankruptcy and inadequate structures to deal with the growing problems of a global church. So the 1901 General Conference session, the prodding of Ellen White, and the fertile mind of A.G. Daniells coalesced to lay the foundation of a new church organization that created union conferences and missions, departments at all levels, and the General Conference executive committee which dispersed power and authority, union ownership of institutions, and even the abolition of a General Conference president, whose

place was to be taken by a chairman elected by and served at the pleasure of the executive committee. The last innovation was found impractical and did not last for long.

Knight sees the third stage as the continuing efforts since the 1970s to fine-tune and restructure the organization with great sensitivity and concern. While the process has led to recognition of ethnic and international diversity of the world church, will the structure be flexible enough to increase operational efficiency, deal with the increasing threat of congregationalism, maintain global unity, and preserve the worldwide mission of the church? The author provides a possible approach, which may upset some and challenge others.

Both a need to know our history and a demand to approach the future requires that Adventists be familiar with the issues raised in this book.

***The Cure for the Last Daze***, by Karl Haffner (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2003); ISBN 081631960X, 142 pages, paperback, US\$11.99.

It's not only a daze, but muddled, dizzying daze—this question of the last days. Particularly since September 11, the apocalyptic sword has been hanging over people everywhere, and preachers and writers have taken full advantage of the confusion. From the *Left Behind* phenomena to the horror of suicide bombs, from AIDS to SARS, every turn and twist of history in our time has been given an eschatological scare. Even some Seventh-day Adventists, to whom the issue should be crystal clear, are ready to throw up their hands in bewilderment.

Yet, to the diligent student of the Bible, willing to let the Bible speak for itself without any human interpretation or interference, the last-day events are a source of joy and not of fear or confu-

sion. Karl Haffner, senior pastor of the Walla Walla College Church, does just that. In a style that is readable, with a stress on clearing the confusion and paving the way for clarity, the author deals with last-day events. I read *The Cure for the Last Daze* in one sitting, and I was blessed by his healing touch to such baffling issues as secret rapture, the Harry Potter phenomenon, the antichrist, the millennium, the remnant (Adventists will get a fresh understanding here), and the new earth.

The book also has a study guide for each chapter, making it an absolute must for prayer meetings and group studies. Haffner certainly clears the fog and lets the sunshine of hope shine on, making the second coming of Christ truly the blessed hope of history.

**Come Boldly to the Throne**, by Ekkehardt Mueller (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2003); ISBN 081631974X, 128 pages, paperback, US\$9.99.

What is religion? To some, it sets the standards of life; to others, it provides inner satisfaction; to still others, it is an opium that dulls one's senses. But Ekkehardt Mueller sees an altogether different starting point—in the book of Hebrews. To him, religion, if it is to be relevant and meaningful at all, must provide open, free, and sufficient access to God. That access, according to Mueller's interpretation of Hebrews, is Jesus. A letter written to the Jews is so saturated with the all-sufficiency of Jesus that the epistle presents Him as the key to understand redemptive history. And so Mueller, a New Testament scholar and an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, presents to us a Christ-centered commentary on one of the most beautiful, eloquent, but difficult epistles of the New Testament, and invites us to come to Jesus and look to Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Mueller makes the symbolism of the Old Testament sanctuary system—sacrifice and blood, holy and most holy, priest and high priest, inner and

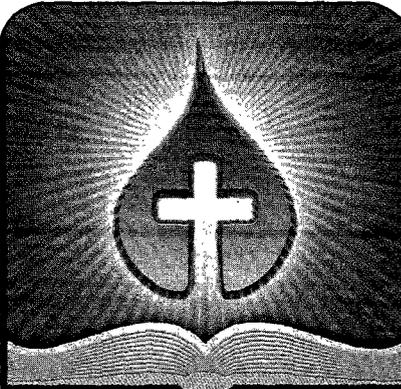
outer—leap to affirm and nurture our faith and assurance in Jesus, who remains “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” thus defining the contours and destiny of history. Mueller's presentation of 12 portraits of Jesus in 12 chapters, with one additional chapter dealing with sanctuary language is a treasure-trove in homiletics, Bible study, or just personal meditation. Read it and join the march of the saints of all ages toward that heavenly kingdom.

**Believing, Behaving, Belonging**, by Richard Rice (Roseville, California: The Association of Adventist Forums, 2002); 212 pages, paperback. <[www.spectrum-magazine.org/store](http://www.spectrum-magazine.org/store)>, US\$14.95.

The title is cute, and there ends cuteness. This is a serious study for serious people by a serious author on a serious subject: the church as a believing, behaving, and belonging community. The author, Richard Rice, is well-known around the world in Adventist colleges where his thought-provoking work *The Reign of God* (Andrews University Press, 1997) is used as a textbook for introduction to theology and Bible doctrine. The present work transcends theology and doctrine and approaches the nature, function, and mission of the church from the standpoint of a pastor who loves his church, considers belonging to it as a precious gift, and pleads for divine empowering to be worthy of being a part of that body.

Rice is at his best when he shows that biblical eschatology does not dichotomize the spiritual and the relational. The church is not just a community of faith in God and His Son, but it is also a community that must stand hand in hand in harmonious relationship with one another. The faith that does not reach out in relationship (both vertically and horizontally) is meaningless; and a believing community that does not behave is irrelevant and an insult to the One whose body the church is.

An important, enjoyable book. A must read for every pastor. Perhaps the best so far in Adventist understanding of ecclesiology. ■



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