

MINISTRY

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JOURNEY:

The role of faith organizations in youth behavior

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OUR READERS RESPOND...

Harmful hierarchy of leadership?

The article by Mark J. Mollidrem, "Ten commandments for the senior pastor," in the July 2006 issue of *Ministry* prompts this response. In it the excesses of the clergy/laity system so accepted, and apparently carried over from Roman Catholicism itself, ring too loudly in my ears to be ignored. He speaks of staff as "your staff" several times. Whose staff? The head clergyman's, of course. I thought all of us were one in Christ Jesus. But the pecking order seems fixed in the author's mind-set. He also speaks of "pulling rank" as the top dog among clerical staff and members.

I see little servanthood or humility in such thinking. Too many churches are suffering from staff infection (pun intended) as it is. I see no clergy/laity distinctions in the infant church. Neither Paul nor Peter wore titles as such. They were not called "rabbi" or "father" or any other such names, apparently remembering Jesus' instruction not to use such terms.

Thus I challenge Pastor Mollidrem to rethink what has become so comfortable among us that we no longer question it.

—Steven Clark Goad, Blythe, California, United States

Ministry publishing advisory committee

In the May 2006 issue you reported the convening for the first time of an advisory committee. This may be the first time for this committee, but *Ministry* magazine was founded in January 1928, and by May 1928 there was an advisory council to "provide valuable input to the editors."

—Wilton H. Bunch, email

Editor's note: We thank Wilton H. Bunch for correctly pointing out an important detail from the history of Ministry.

Refreshing vulnerability

I was just online and read your follow-up article, "How would I know?" (July 2006), to the earlier one on seeing a psychiatrist ("What my psychiatrist didn't tell me," December 2005). I am so pleased that you have found a trustworthy, insightful person to be with you in the long shadows of your brother's death. I am even more pleased that you were willing to share a glimpse of this journey with your readers.

Although you have opened yourself to sharp criticism from some, you have opened windows of fresh air to others who have been suffocating in their own problems, unable or unwilling to speak up for what they need. Your follow-up article, including the seven signs for which to be watchful, puts some helpful tools within reach of those who are feeling great needs. I commend you!

Blessings, friend.

—Kit Watts, Riverside, California, United States

God's judgment is good news

The excellent exegesis by John Baldwin in his May 2006 article, "Creation and Flood implications of the first angel's message in Revelation 14:7," on the "fountains of waters" in Revelation 14:7c demands continued research.

His application makes (rightly so) reference to both the Old Testament Creation and the Old Testament Flood.

Contextually, in Revelation 14, I see a more direct reference to the judgmental act of God in the Flood and as such the waters are (1) a saving act for the believers and (2) a destroying act for the unbelievers. In other words, the

Revelation 14:7 message is one of hope and salvation for the believers and of a deadly punishment for those who do not accept the Creator Christ.

The very context of the three angels' messages confirms that the judgment is against the wicked and NOT the saints. Note that the second angel reveals that Babylon is the recipient of God's judgment just as the little horn of Daniel 7 (and not the saints) is the one being judged in that court scene.

The gospel and the judgment from God are both good news to those who are in Christ Jesus. Our people need this assurance.

—Eric Winter, email

A new creation

That split face, divided by a magnifying glass, on the cover of the July 2005 *Ministry*, perfectly portrays the spiritually divided state of the apostle Paul. In Romans 7:25–8:1 he says of himself, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (KJV). Paul saw his only hope of being a new creature not in himself but solely in Christ, his Substitute and Surety.

Paul's flesh, like ours, keeps us imperfectly divided beings until our true "new creation" that takes place when Christ returns. It is at that time when "the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54, RSV). Until then, "As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, 340).

Keep that magnifying glass right where it is until glorification day.

—Norman L. Meager, Dayton, Ohio, United States

Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all clergy of other denominations. To receive your complimentary subscription, please write to us at our Editorial Office, visit us at www.ministrymagazine.org, or email us at ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

Six opportunities for ministry to young people

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



They are the future of the church, the focus of the church, and they . . . They are the challenge of the church, the ones who always expect change, the ones who are often dissatisfied, and they . . .

Who are *they*? They are the youth of the church and the community. How we view them has more to do with our attitudes than who *they* are.

In some parts of the world the church has few young people, while in other parts they form the majority of the congregation. Whatever their numbers, the church has a responsibility to minister to them.

My intention in writing this editorial is not to make specific program recommendations; rather, my intention is to offer suggestions so that each reader may determine what can and should be done.

Make our churches places of safety. Some readers may be insulted at the suggestion that some churches are not safe. While the vast majority of churches are safe for our youth, some churches tolerate predators because, as I have heard, “even they need salvation.” Indeed they need salvation, but not at the expense of our youth. As one predator told me, “I can’t help it if young girls are attracted to me.” What a self-serving statement that not only was untrue but was an attempt to provide an excuse for his sinful behavior. (In this particular instance, the congregation dealt appropriately with this predator.) Youth were safe with Jesus, and they should be safe in our congregations.

Recognize the beauty of young people. “Look at that beautiful child,” my wife often says, for she sees beauty in each child. I have no doubt that’s one reason she has spent a significant portion of her adult life educating young people. What do you see when you look at a child? What does your congregation see when it sees a child? In a number of congregations that I pastored, we made it a practice to elect two or three of the key leaders of the congregation, and then we focused on selecting leaders for the children. These congregations

saw both the beauty and the needs of the youth.

Give them the gift of time. Over the years I have encountered individuals who were at one time young people in churches that I had pastored. What they remember most from those years are the times we spent together.

In one city we prepared the lower level of our house so that the youth could come and do things there. A large group came, and my wife and I had a list of activities planned for them. “How about we sing some songs?” we suggested. No interest in the suggestion. “How about we read something from a book?” But the response was the same. At the end of the evening we concluded that the gathering was a failure and that they would not return. But they did return—week after week. Eventually we did sing some songs, and we did discuss spiritual matters. But it seems that the time we spent together was the most important thing.

Focus on each one. All too often we focus on groups but forget the individual. Jesus, our Model, managed to find time for individuals. Do you have only one or two youth in your congregation? What an opportunity to make a real difference in their lives!

When my parents and I emigrated from Germany to the United States, I did not know English. The schoolteachers worked hard to help me, but I had begun school near the end of the school year. Just the thought of school vacation brings joy to young people, but for me it would have meant forgetting much of what I learned. The elderly lady who lived

in the downstairs apartment offered to help me every day with my reading.

The house where we lived no longer exists, and the elderly lady is no longer alive, but one person helped one young person—me—to become an avid reader.

Walk with them. Some years ago I visited a country that at one time was under the strong influence of the former Soviet Union. This country had gained its independence only several years before. As I was walking down one of the main streets in the capital, I was startled because I almost fell into a hole in the sidewalk. Wires and waterlines run in tunnels under sidewalks, and usually the access holes have cast-iron covers. But in this city the covers were missing, and I, a visitor, was not aware of the danger. Had I been walking that street with a resident from that city, I am certain that I would have been told to be careful because the covers were missing. (They were missing because during the uprising against the former dictator, the citizens used them to shield themselves from the gunfire of the dictator’s military.)

As clergy we can walk with our young people and share with them the locations of life’s “uncovered holes.” Our words will not save them from falling into those holes; rather, our actions will help them.

Give them good memories. Good memories will help them develop into strong spiritual adults. Whether you have one or one hundred youth in your church, God gives you the opportunity to help them to develop in a world so often hostile to spiritual life.

The lead article in this issue, “Journey: the role of faith organizations in youth behavior,” challenges us to once again look at some important needs of our youth. But more than that, the writers open doors for us. Beyond those open doors you’ll find opportunities to minister to youth.

You can’t do it all; but what *can* you do for the youth whom God has placed in *your* congregation and *your* community? ■

Journey: the role of faith organizations in youth behavior

**Gary Hopkins,
Duane McBride,
Joyce Hopp,
Ella Simmons, and
Peter Landless**

Gary Hopkins, Dr.PH., is an associate director for the Institute for Prevention of Addictions, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Duane McBride, Ph.D., is the chair of the behavioral sciences department, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Joyce Hopp, Ph.D., is professor emeritus, School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States.



Ella Simmons, Ed.D., is a vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Peter Landless, M.Med., is associate director for health ministries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



The adolescent years can no longer be categorized as “the age of romance.” Today, youth live in a zone of unprecedented warfare—

physically, mentally, and spiritually. From drugs to high-risk sexual behavior to the emergence of the vilest porn at the click of a mouse, youth are constantly under attack. Temptation of the worst kind opens wide its doors to entice the young and trap whom it will. Community agencies, social organizations, and governmental authorities scramble to find resources to save the youth from what may be labeled as the worst threat to their physical, moral, and spiritual well-being. Financial resources are not always easy to come by; human resources and support systems are insufficient to tackle the problems.

In the face of such despair and hopelessness, one question needs to be raised most urgently. What can faith organizations do to stem the rot and win the battle against the most notorious attacks against our youth that history has ever known? How can faith organizations make the saving of the youth a part of their vision and mission?

We suggest eight elements that may contribute to a workable preventative strategy in which faith organizations can get involved.

Element 1: information

Traditionally, faith organizations have relied on message dissemination (preaching, teaching) as a principal method of indoctrinating church attendees into a particular belief system. People assume that once individuals are armed with information from sermons or the study of doctrine, they will be transformed by the “Word” and move into a closer and more spiritual relationship with God and thus be less likely to engage in health-damaging behaviors.

This belief that preaching influences behavior has moved churches or faith organizations to design community-based efforts targeted at preventing high-risk behaviors among youth. Such information-based prevention efforts are driven by the assumption that once young people know the specific dangers involved in drugs or sex, they are less likely to indulge in behavior risks of drugs or sex. However, little scientific evidence exists to suggest that information alone is a successful strategy in preventing high-risk behaviors among adolescents.¹

Element 2: self-esteem

One of the most significant developmental tasks facing youth, particularly adolescents, revolves around their identity and self-worth. Research has demonstrated the protective effect of self-esteem in regard to prevention or reduction of high-risk behaviors.² By self-esteem, we do not advocate a meaningless egocentric praise, but a self-recognition that youth have the highest value to God and His church, and that they have important talents that make them significant contributors to society.

But how do we instill in our children this concept of genuine, positive self-esteem? One way would be to provide unconditional positive acceptance while encouraging an accurate appreciation of their special abilities and worth.³ To do this, we need to focus on showing our love and regard for them, reflecting God’s love, rather than merely judging them based on their behaviors. This involves loved ones spending quality time with the youth fairly often—not smothering them with undeserved

adulation, but taking a few minutes a day, several times each week to talk, listen, and share about what seems most important to them. Young people should see our spending time with them, not as a mechanical routine, but rather as a genuine expression on our part of interest in their welfare. Showering kids with gifts in no way communicates to them that they are valued; rather, it shows them that “things” are a replacement for our time and attention. The quality, as well as

presence of factors that place them at risk for a variety of ills, develop skills that enable them to succeed in life.⁴ Researchers explain resilience in terms of hardiness and suggest that resilient individuals have a strong commitment to self and others and are willing to take action to deal with problems. They also have a positive attitude toward their social environment, hold a strong sense of purpose, and develop the internal strength that enables them to see life’s

persons are teachers, adult mentors, and parents of friends.

Element 5: after-school activities

After-school hours while parents are still at work is the time when youth are at highest risk for engaging in risky behaviors. Hanging out with other youth and participating in unsupervised social activities are positively associated with delinquency.⁹ Youth who spend time in

PEOPLE ASSUME THAT ONCE INDIVIDUALS ARE ARMED WITH INFORMATION FROM SERMONS OR THE STUDY OF DOCTRINE, THEY WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY THE “WORD” AND MOVE INTO A CLOSER AND MORE SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD...

the quantity, of time we spend with them is extremely important. Young people need to know that we care about them and about what they are doing.

Genuine self-esteem can be an *asset* in preventing high-risk behaviors. However, self-esteem cannot be considered as the all-in-all in developing a proper and effective strategy for preventing risky behaviors. It’s only a part.

Elements 3 and 4: resilience and “caring others”

Research over the past decade has shown that resilience plays an important part in overcoming a high-risk environment. Resilience can be described as the capacity to maintain competent functioning in spite of adversity or life stressors. Resiliency appears to develop over time as a result of environmental support. Resilient individuals are those who, despite severe hardships and the

obstacles as challenges that can be overcome.⁵ Research findings that youth can overcome a high-risk environment have inspired hope among researchers and educators alike.

What fosters resilience among young people? Research shows one important factor: the presence of valuable, sincere, and enduring relationships with successful adults in the youth’s environment. Supportive older adults, or mentors, ranging from teachers to clergy or youth leaders, contribute significantly to resilience among youth.⁶ Brooks states that “resilient youngsters all had at least one person in their lives that accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperamental idiosyncrasies, physical attractiveness, or intelligence.”⁷ While parents hold the most potential to influence their children, grandparents can also have a powerful, positive influence.⁸ Others described as key

unsupervised settings are more likely to use alcohol and other drugs.¹⁰ Studies show that often the largest proportion of drug use, sexual activity, and delinquency among youth occurs between 3:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.¹¹

Research also shows substance use to be lower among students engaged in after-school activities under adult supervision.¹² Students who spent no time in extracurricular activities (after-school programs such as sports, clubs, or music) were 49 percent more likely to have used illicit drugs and 35 percent more likely to have smoked than students who spent one to four hours per week in nonrisky extracurricular activities.¹³ Thus, finding ways to engage children during the after-school hours in adult-supervised activities should be a key part of any successful prevention effort.

Members of faith communities can be a significant resource in providing

after-school activities for youth and keeping them engaged in positive, meaningful pursuits during the hours between the end of the school day and the arrival of their parents at home. This might include involving youth in existing programs and sponsoring social activities at church and other suitable venues with the supervision and involvement of adults.

While we recognize the positive role of caring adults in the lives of at-risk youth, we must also note that faith communities have had tragic experiences with sexual exploitation of vulnerable youth. It is necessary, therefore, to conduct background checks for sexual crimes or criminal histories of adults who are considered for interaction with young people.

Elements 6 and 7: service learning and service activities

Research has also shown that service-learning programs among youth are effective in reducing adolescent pregnancy and childbearing.¹⁴ The definition of service learning includes school-required service activities, such as voluntary community service (working as a teacher's aide, working in retirement homes or nursing homes, helping out in day-care centers, or helping fix up parks or recreation areas), with structured time for preparation and reflection before, during, and after service.¹⁵ These activities are often accompanied by specifics in class curriculum that include a philosophical base for community involvement and service activity.

Faith community members should take the lead in identifying places and activities to involve youth in service activities. Physicians and business owners might consider inviting youth to their offices or clinics to answer phones and greet patients or clients. Stores might help young people engage in activities that include supervised customer-related activities. Within the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White strongly emphasized the value of service for others. She says, "The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christ-like loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. The aspirations

What are you doing for the youth?

Editor's Note: Here is an example of how the needs of youth are being addressed. Gilbert R. Cangy, director of youth ministries for the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, based in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia, shares with the readers of Ministry some examples of what is being done in his territory.

Self-esteem and caring for others

A large part of our youth program, particularly our outdoor activities, is geared towards building self-esteem in youth.

We conduct Pathfinder expeditions, where young people are taught skills that enhance their sense of personal worth. In those environments, significant relationships are developed between adults and youths that are pivotal for the fostering of their sense of value—demonstrating that significant adults care for them.

The summer camping program is core to the youth ministry program. These are weeks of fun-filled and relationship-building activities that are designed to build healthy and balanced youths.

Service

Service is at the heart of contemporary youth ministry. Church leadership set the pace in arranging for the first conference on youth and community services in Thailand a few years ago. Service finds all kinds of expressions in our field. STORM Co. is our flagship for service in our Division. It is a ministry where teens regularly take one week of their holidays to serve a needy community. This same spirit of service is extended to most of our regular church- and conference-based activities throughout the year.

Resilience

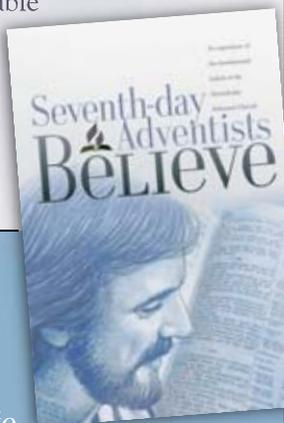
The Circle of Courage was an initiative of the health department. It consisted of a bike ride across Australia, stopping at each community along the road to create awareness of the need to build resilience in young people as a way to address prevalent trends of at-risk behavior in country areas of Australia.

There is a significant project being piloted at the moment in two of our public schools—that has the potential of being extended to the entire education system. It is an initiative of ADRA, in conjunction with the health and youth departments. ■

What do Adventists believe?

It's the question every Adventist prays to be asked. Do you have an answer? How well do you know your faith? How would you best present the teachings of your church?

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"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

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are elevated. . . . Those who thus exercise the Christian graces will grow and will become strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual perceptions, a steady, growing faith, and an increased power in prayer."¹⁶

Element 8: parent communication

Parent-child communication has been shown to be an important element in strategies to prevent high-risk behaviors in youth. Research has demonstrated that

Conclusion

A review of research on the prevention of high-risk behaviors among adolescents shows clearly that faith communities can have a positive effect on youth behaviors. Prevention strategies can be provided with little financial cost if members of the faith community work to provide and strengthen each of the elements discussed above. No one element can solve the problems, but a combination of many or all can certainly provide an effective strategy.

PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION MATTERS AND CONTINUES AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN PREVENTING HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUTH.

when parents talk to their kids about sex and drugs, a positive impact results. Good parent-child relationship has a positive impact on effective communication, and this, in turn, minimizes at-risk behaviors among children.¹⁷

Positive parent-child relationship is associated with lower incidences of risky behaviors, including those related to HIV infection.¹⁸ Positive family communication is also associated with lower rates of sexual intercourse among young people.¹⁹ Young people who are close to their parents are less likely to indulge in premarital sex than those who are not as close.²⁰

Parent-child communication matters and continues as an important element in preventing high-risk behaviors among youth. While research on the effectiveness of nonfamily adult-youth communication is lacking, we can imply from the research on resilience that nonfamily adult communication has the potential for effective prevention of high-risk behavior.

A close look at each of the elements reveals that our responsibility in providing these elements matches our need to reflect the character of Christ. He was a Helper and a Healer, and He engaged with people in a very positive way. By reflecting His character, we can provide youth with a sense of self-esteem, engage them in after-school activities, communicate with them in loving ways, and involve them in activities that serve others. When a faith community gets so involved in the life of its youth, we can indeed stem the rot and win the battle that our young people face today. ■

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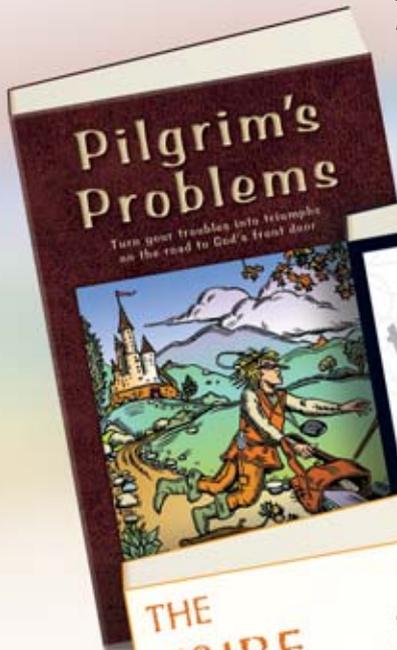
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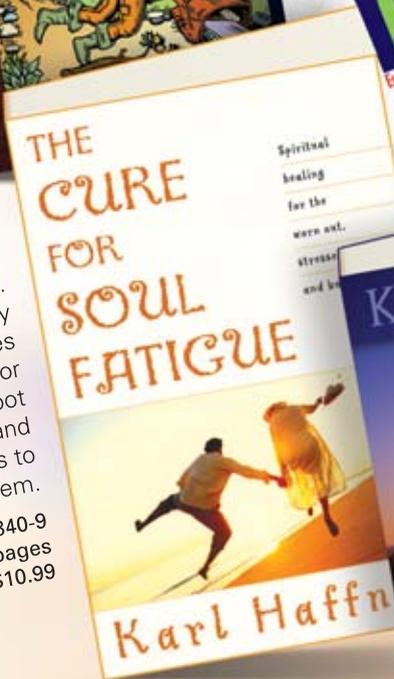
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Three steps to setting healthy relationship boundaries. Or: How far from the cliff?

Dan Serns



Dan Serns, B.A., is the ministerial secretary of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Vancouver, Washington, United States.

Centuries ago a king was interviewing potential carriage drivers for his special carriage. His question to each candidate was: "If you were driving me in my carriage on a mountain road, how close could you come to the cliff without going over?" Candidate #1 said, "Ten feet," Candidate #2 said, "Five feet," and Candidate #3 said, "I would stay as far away from the cliff as possible." Candidate #3, of course, got the job.

The question: How do you go about setting healthy relationship boundaries with the opposite sex that allow for ministry to happen but protect against a moral fall?

Recognize the danger

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12, NIV). All of us are more susceptible to moral failure than we think.

I had been a pastor only a few months when the phone rang and a woman said to me: "I desperately need to talk with a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Can I meet you at your church in thirty minutes?"

In most cases I would have said, "Sure" and hopped in the car. But I had just finished reading an interview with Chuck Swindoll¹ where he talked about the importance of boundaries for spiritual leaders. He said we often want to respond to needs and, as a result, we don't use good judgment. He mentioned that sometimes when he was talking with women they would say

"You seem distant," to which he would reply, "If you would like to feel closer to someone, we have ladies who are spiritual leaders in our church that we can arrange for you to talk with."

Back to the phone conversation. "Just a minute," I said. "Let me see if my wife can come with me so we can meet at the church."

"O—K," was the reply.

My wife and I drove to the church. She sat on the back pew in the sanctuary reading, while I sat on the front pew with the attractive lady and listened to her story. Raised in an Adventist home, but feeling rejected, she had run away during her teen years. Later she returned, but as soon as her dad met her at the door he said, "You've been smoking again, haven't you?" She turned around and never came back.

Now in her late twenties, she had a daughter who was enrolled in a local Christian school, and she wanted her to have a better life. "The only way I can keep her there is to be a strip dancer at a night club," she told me.

How glad I was that I had made sure my wife was with me!

I did a lot of listening, then shared with her that God had a better plan for her life, and He would serve as Father of her daughter if she would accept His leadership in her life and home. Hesitant at first, she finally decided she needed a new start. We explored options, then had prayer. She left with hope and purpose; that was the first and last time I ever saw her.

I had no plans that day of being unfaithful to my wife, but if I had not read the interview with Chuck Swindoll I might have set myself up for some serious misunderstanding and potential failures down the road.

Set clear and wide boundaries

As pastors we want to be available to everyone when they need us. Yet there are crucial relationship boundaries that we must insist on. Any of us who have been in ministry for a few years have at least one friend (and maybe a dozen) who is no longer in ministry because of fuzzy relationship boundaries. Insisting on these boundaries may seem unreasonable at times, yet this could mean the difference between whether we remain employed or shut that door for the rest of our lives. Healthy boundaries will not hinder our ministries but rather enhance and multiply them.

Some of the clearest boundaries I have ever seen were put together by Saddleback Community Church in southern California. Called Saddleback Staff Standards, they are

INSISTING ON THESE BOUNDARIES MAY SEEM UNREASONABLE AT TIMES, YET THIS COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHETHER WE REMAIN EMPLOYED OR SHUT THAT DOOR FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WILL NOT HINDER OUR MINISTRIES BUT RATHER ENHANCE AND MULTIPLY THEM.

listed as ten “Thou Shalt Nots” below. (See more at <http://pastors.com/RWMT/?id=6&artid=206&expand=1>.)

1. Thou shalt not go to lunch alone with the opposite sex.²

2. Thou shalt not have the opposite sex pick you up or drive you places when it is just the two of you.

3. Thou shalt not kiss any attender of the opposite sex or show affection that could be questioned.

4. Thou shalt not visit the opposite sex alone at home.

5. Thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex alone at the office, and thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex more than once without that person’s mate. Refer them.

6. Thou shalt not discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex in counseling. Refer them.

7. Thou shalt not discuss your marriage problems with an attender of the opposite sex.

8. Thou shalt be careful in answering emails, instant messages, chatrooms, cards, or letters from the opposite sex.

9. Thou shalt make your secretary your protective ally.

10. Thou shalt pray for the integrity of other staff members.

I have adopted them as my own personal relationship boundaries. They are a very practical, specific expression of this counsel: “When *one who claims*

to be teaching the truth is inclined to be much in the company of young or even married women, when he familiarly lays his hand upon them, or is often conversing with them in a familiar manner, be afraid of him; the pure principles of truth are not inwrought in his soul. Such are not in Christ, and Christ is not abiding in them. They need a thorough conversion before God can accept their labors. . . .

“This is a subject to which we must give heed. We must guard against the sins of this degenerate age. We must stand aloof from everything that savors of undue familiarity. God condemns it.”³

Discuss these issues with your church and school boards and leaders

I recommend you make copies of the Saddleback Staff Standards above and talk these over with your church, school staff, and board members. Let them know that you have adopted them for yourself, and that you encourage every church and school leader to do the same. You might find a few who think that one or more of the standards are unreasonable. But if the discussion saved even one person’s marriage and/or ministry, it would be well worth the time. In addition, this discussion allows church leaders to know your boundaries and assists you to live within them. It helps the church body follow this inspired counsel: “But among

you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Eph. 5:3, NIV).

“Do not see how close you can walk upon the brink of a precipice, and be safe. Avoid the first approach to danger. The soul’s interests cannot be trifled with. Your capital is your character. Cherish it as you would a golden treasure. Moral purity, self-respect, a strong power of resistance, must be firmly and constantly cherished. There should not be one departure from reserve; one act of familiarity, one indiscretion, may jeopardize the soul, in opening the door to temptation, and the power of resistance becomes weakened.”⁴

As God’s last-day ministers, we’ve been given clear, pointed counsel that can save our homes, families, reputations, and ministries. Let’s recognize the danger, set clear boundaries for ourselves, and encourage our leadership teams to do the same. In short, drive the carriage as far as you can from the precipice. ■

1 A well-known protestant minister.

2 The first three do not apply to unmarried staff.

3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1948), 5:593; emphasis supplied.

4 ———, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1963), 143. Emphasis supplied.

Hospital visitation 101

Kathy McMillan

A church member of yours has just been admitted to the hospital, having suffered a heart attack. You discover this at three-thirty on a Friday afternoon when his wife calls to inform you—and she, with desperation in her voice, pleads with you to visit him.

You haven't finished your sermon, and you promised your wife that you would help clean the house. Nevertheless, duty calls, and you leave for the hospital.

While driving to the hospital, you remember your last hospital visit with displeasure. A nurse told you to leave because it wasn't visiting hours. You ended up being pushier than you would have liked in order to have a chance to visit your church member.

Many clergy feel out of place in the hospital. The environment can seem rather harsh and uninviting; the staff sometimes seems too hurried to be helpful; and the patients are often so sick that you aren't sure if your visit mattered.

Hospital etiquette

You can do several things to make hospital visitation more beneficial for all who are impacted by it, including yourself.

Identify yourself. Once you arrive at the nurses' station, identify yourself as a pastor and ask the nurses on call if this is a good time to visit. For many reasons, clergy often arrive outside of visiting hours. Most hospitals will allow pastors to visit at any time—especially if the patient

or their family has requested your presence. Pastors should always carry their ministerial license or credentials. This proof of ministry is recognized by hospital staffs as a legitimate form of identification that allows pastoral access to patients who need to be visited—even outside of normal visiting hours.

Don't be intrusive. Do not ask the attending nurse for a report on the patient's condition. Due to privacy laws (often referred to as HIPAA¹ by medical personnel), staff members cannot provide any information unless the patient has specifically given them permission to talk with you.

Be aware of sanitary rules. If the patient is in isolation, you may still visit, but make sure you understand what precautions need to be taken. Patients who are in respiratory isolation may need you to don only a mask, while other visits may require a gown, gloves, and a mask. These precautions are for your safety as well as that of the patient.

Before entering the room or touching the patient, wash your hands well. Germs are often passed by hand contact, and you can help prevent further infections. Wash again as you leave.

Don't overstay your welcome. Even if you were invited to visit, remember that when someone is ill or in pain, their attention span is very short. If the patient wants you to stay longer, he or she will let you know. But even if the patient wants you to stay longer, it may not be best to do so. In such situations, you might wish to tactfully say, "I really do want to spend more time here with you; but I think it will be better if you focus your energies on getting healthy right now. I promise you that I will stay in touch with you."

Spiritual care

While spiritual care-giving may seem like a pastor's specialty, for some reason it often seems harder in a medical setting. In unfamiliar surroundings, the pastor can feel out of place. There are several things to keep in mind.

Hospital ministry is a journey. Spiritual care does not come in a neatly wrapped package provided by a person who has "arrived" and given to a poor soul in distress. It may be more helpful to think in terms of a spiritual journey. You are on a journey, as is the person you are visiting. In the way that you listen—and through words you share—you will provide something that will help the patient on their spiritual journey. And they, in turn, will likely say something that will help you on yours. By viewing it as a mutual experience, it takes the



Kathy McMillan, M.A., has worked as a registered nurse and is now the director of Employee Spiritual Care at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California, United States.

pressure off trying to find the perfect thing to say.

Assess the situation. Try to determine how the patient feels, both physically and emotionally. One cannot assume that people waiting for biopsy results are frightened. They may be full of anger or guilt, or they may be very sad.

Listen. Western society tends to be uncomfortable with silence. Stop and absorb what the patient is saying without feeling the need to respond. In Chinese Mandarin language, the character for *listen* is a combination of the characters for *eye*, *ear*, and *heart*. What a powerful illustration of the multifaceted concept of listening! Anyone can hear words and repeat them. It takes discernment to read between the lines, to interpret the body language and discover the real message. Don't feel that you have to respond verbally to everything. Sometimes the most powerful response is, "I'm really sad to hear your story. I don't have any words that seem appropriate, but I want you to know that I care."

Reassurance is usually not helpful. Can you recall school days when you took a very difficult exam? Was there a time when you wondered if you might have actually failed? Imagine coming home to your family and telling them the bad news. What would be the most likely response that you got from them? "Oh, don't be silly. Of course you passed!" Did you feel any better? Probably not. In the same way, if a patient voices fear concerning the future, it won't likely be helpful to say, "Everything will turn out for the best."

Acknowledge the pain. Several years ago while I was preparing supper one evening, my children were in the backyard playing. My daughter fell and skinned her knee. She came crying to me, asking for a Band-Aid.

Being rather task-oriented by nature, and not seeing any blood, I assured her that I thought she would be OK and sent her on her way. Several minutes later, my mother's heart was pierced by a sobbing girl on the sofa. I dried my hands, got a Band-Aid, and went and sat beside her. "I'm so sorry!" I said. "I've had scrapes before and I know they can

DON'T FEEL THAT YOU HAVE TO RESPOND VERBALLY TO EVERYTHING.

hurt really badly—even when they aren't bleeding." With that, I put the Band-Aid on, and she was immediately *healed!* That Band-Aid was a powerful symbol of the fact that I had acknowledged her pain. It's no different with people's hearts. They need someone to come beside them and say, "Wow! This must be so difficult."

Don't try to fix it. Let's face it. Pastors like to fix things. It makes us feel good to know that we were able to help. We sometimes need to be needed. But too often we jump ahead of ourselves and get into trouble by not allowing others to find their own solutions.

I arrived home from work one evening about five-thirty and saw my neighbor's son out by the mailbox. I greeted him and asked how he was doing. "We just got back from the emergency room," he replied. His youngest sister had been jumping in the yard that morning and had fallen, breaking her arm. They spent nearly eight hours in the emergency room of a local hospital. Hearing about the situation, and knowing that my neighbor had five children and it was dinner time, I figured I could fix a problem. I told Donald to go tell his mom that I would make dinner. He said I didn't need to do that, but I insisted. He again refused. Finally, realizing I was going to need to assert my adult power, I told him firmly, "Donald, your mom is always doing nice things for me and I want to do this. Please go tell her that I will make dinner." His legs started to shake as he stammered, "Mrs. McMillan, my grandparents are coming and they are bringing dinner!" This was a powerful lesson in not getting ahead of the issue. When we allow patients to problem-solve on their own, the solutions will be much more appropriate to the problem and will more likely be carried out.

Be aware of your nonverbal communication. Glancing at your watch while you stand next to the bed sends a powerful message. Even if your time is short, you can give the patient all of your attention while you are there. By sitting down, making eye contact, and speaking slowly, you can convey your care.

Use prayer carefully. Prayer should not be used to end an uncomfortable situation. Early in my nursing career while working on an oncology unit, there was a pastor who often came to visit his parishioners. It seemed that whenever a patient started to voice doubts or anger or fear, the pastor's response was "Let's pray." While his intent was good, he effectively cut off any further conversation. Because of his own discomfort with exploring negative feelings, he never allowed his ailing church members to voice them. Prayer became the end point that snuffed out further conversation.

Never assume that someone wants to pray. While most people expect a pastor to pray with them, sometimes they are not ready for it. A simple statement and question like the following can assess the situation. "When I'm feeling afraid, one of the things that really helps me is to pray. Would you like me to pray with you?" Also, ask the patient for what you should pray. It's easy to assume that someone who has just received a terminal diagnosis wants healing. But they may ask you to pray for acceptance, for peace, or for forgiveness.

Conclusion

By five o'clock—ninety minutes later—you leave the hospital parking lot. Surprisingly, your sermon became a bit further along than expected—due to some wonderful insights you gained from your hospital ministry that afternoon. ❏

1 HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which was established by the United States Congress in 1996 for the purposes of guaranteeing a seamless transition of insurance coverage for employees from one job to the next (portability) and maintaining privacy and security of health records (accountability).

Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians

Last of a three-part series

Daniel I. Block

In the first part of this series, featured in May, the author reviewed the relevance of the Old Testament Law to all time, including the New Testament era. In the second part, featured in July, the author showed the significance of the Old Testament Law in the life of Old Testament saints. In this concluding part of the serial, the author argues for the relevance and the importance of the Old Testament Law for Christians today. —Editors.

By now we should have grasped the Old Testament understanding of the relationship between law and grace within the divine plan of salvation and sanctification. The Scriptures are consistent in asserting that sinfulness is a universal plight. In the words of Isaiah, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isa. 64:6, NIV).¹ Paul echoes the same thought: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). The Scriptures also maintain that salvation results from God's grace to those who believe in Him, and that no one in either Old or New Testament time is saved by their works of righteousness.

However, within the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, Yahweh graciously reveals the standard of righteousness by which His redeemed people may live and be confident of His approval. There is no conflict here

between law and grace. The Torah is a gracious gift. It provided His people with an ever-present reminder of Yahweh's deliverance, His power, His covenant faithfulness, and the way of life and prosperity.

Affirming this truth, however, raises a problem to some Christians. After all, we have Paul's outspoken statements regarding the death-dealing effect of the Law in contrast to the life that comes by the Spirit (Rom. 2:12, 13; 4:13–15; 7:8, 9; 8:2–4; 10:4, 5; 1 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:12, 13, 21–24; 5:18). Is there not a divergence of views between Moses and Paul, with one standing for the Law and the other for grace?

We now turn to this apparent problem and propose a solution that shows Scriptures are always consistent and never contradictory.

The problem: Paul versus Moses

In our approach, we need to keep in mind a couple of important considerations.

First, Moses' statement concerning the life-giving/sustaining effects of the Law is consistent with his teaching in Deuteronomy 30:15–20, and with the teaching of the Old Testament elsewhere. In Leviticus 18:5, Yahweh declares, " ' "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am [Yahweh]" ' ' " (NIV). Similar statements are found in Ezekiel 20:11, 13 and Nehemiah 9:29. The psalter begins with an ode to the life-giving nature of the Law (1:1–6). Psalm 119 is devoted entirely to the positive nature of the Law. References to the relationship between keeping the Law and its life-giving nature are common (vv. 17, 40, 77, 93, 97, 116, 144, 156, 159, 175). The basic Old Testament stance is summarized in Habakkuk 2:4, which in context is best interpreted, "As for the proud one, his person [*nephesh*] is not right on the inside; but the righteous in his faithfulness shall live." Ezekiel offers an extended exposition of this notion in 18:1–23. After describing the ethical behavior of a man, on behalf of Yahweh, he declares, " '[He] is righteous; he shall surely live' " (v. 9, RSV). After describing the unethical behavior of his son he declares, " 'He has committed all these abominations, he will surely be put to death' " (v. 13, NAS). Later he declares that if a wicked man turns from his wickedness and observes all of Yahweh's decrees, and practices righteousness and justice, " 'he shall surely live' " (vv. 21–23, NAS).² The assumption in each case is that the outward actions reflect the inner spirit of the person,³ on the basis of which a judgment concerning the spiritual status of the person may be made and the sentence of life or death rendered.



Daniel I. Block, D.Phil., is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, United States.

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Second, from a hermeneutical and theological perspective, later revelation cannot correct earlier revelation, as if there were some defect in it. Later revelation may be more precise and more nuanced, but it cannot be more true. Accordingly, Paul cannot be interpreted as correcting Moses, as if Moses was wrong or there was some kind of error in his teaching. If Paul appears to declare something different from Moses, who celebrates the life-giving/sustaining function of the Law (cf. Lev. 18:5), then we need to ask whether or not he addresses the same issues as Moses. His statements must be interpreted both in the light of Moses and in the context of particular arguments. In both Romans and Galatians, Paul was responding to those who insist that salvation comes by the works of the Law, as represented by circumcision. To those who represent this view he replies that if one looks to the Law as a way of salvation, it will lead to death. On the other hand, if one looks to the Law as a guide for those already saved, it yields life (cf. Gal. 5:13–25). On this matter Moses and Paul are in perfect agreement. In fact, Paul himself says, “It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom. 2:13, RSV). The notion of “the obedience of faith,” that is, a faith that is demonstrated through acts of obedience, is common to Old and New Testaments.⁴ Both Testaments attest to the same paradigm:

—Yahweh’s gracious (i.e., unmerited) saving actions yield the fruit of a redeemed people.

—A redeemed people yield the fruit of righteous deeds.

—Righteous deeds yield the fruit of divine blessing.

It is evident from the New Testament that in the light of Christ, Christians do indeed have a new disposition toward the Law. Not only do they see Him as its fulfillment and through their union with Him delight in its fulfillment themselves, but the Law of God is written on Christian’s hearts even as it was written on the hearts of true believers in the Old Testament times. But we should not imagine that the Law written on

our hearts is different from the Law revealed in the Old Testament. Jesus said, “ ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ ” (John 14:15, RSV), and “ ‘He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him’ ” (v. 21, RSV). In lifting these statements right out of Deuteronomy Jesus identifies Himself with Yahweh in the Old Testament. Furthermore, His use of the plural “my commandments” (*tas entolas mou*) presupposes a specific body of laws with which the disciples are familiar. Here Jesus does not say generically and vaguely, “If you love me you will do as I say,” as if this refers to marching orders for the future.

Accordingly, when we reflect on whether or not we need to keep any or all of the Old Testament laws, perhaps we have been asking the wrong question all along. When confronted with a specific commandment from the Pentateuch, instead of asking, “Do I as a Christian have to keep this commandment?” perhaps we should be asking, “How can I as a Christian keep this commandment?” Of course, when we read the commands concerning the sacrifices, we recognize that the blood of bulls and goats could never by itself take away sin (Heb. 10:4), but we keep these laws by celebrating the fact that when the Old Testament rituals were performed in faith by those who walked with God, the sacrifice of Christ, slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18–20),⁵ was applied to them, and that this sacrifice has been offered for us, once and for all. When we approach the laws concerning the civil administration of Israel we analyze the functions and objectives of those laws and translate them into equivalent goals for the people of God in our context. When we encounter criminal laws, we interpret the drastic responses required as reflective of the heinousness of the crimes in the eyes of God. When we read the family laws, we hear the voice of God affirming the sanctity of this institution and the responsibilities of all members for the maintenance of the household. And when we hear the

pleas for compassion to the poor and the marginalized members of society, we remember the words of the Old Testament sage: “He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors him” (Prov. 14:31, RSV).

The solution

How, then, are New Testament Christians to apply the Old Testament Law to their own lives? It is evident from

calls for exclusive allegiance to Yahweh/Christ, scrupulous ethical purity, and the respect for the sanctity of all life, including that of animals.

How, then, should Christians approach the Old Testament laws? Let me offer a few suggestions.

First, Christians must take 2 Timothy 3:15–17 as the starting point, recognizing that this statement affirms not only the reliability of the Old Testament as divinely breathed Scripture, but that

have been rendered obsolete in Christ. Most evangelical Christians assume that unless the New Testament expressly affirms the continued relevance of an Old Testament ordinance, we may assume it has been abrogated in Christ. One should probably rather adopt the opposite stance: Unless the New Testament expressly declares the end of an Old Testament ordinance (e.g., the sacrifices), we assume its authority continues for believers today.

THE SABBATH DAY DOES NOT POINT TO OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. INSTEAD, IT POINTS TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE. EVERY WEEK WE ARE TO BE REMINDED OF GOD’S WILLINGNESS TO BE PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH OUR STRUGGLES AND OUR SALVATION.

the deliberations and the decisions of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1–21 that in the light of the Cross and the redemptive work of Christ, Gentile Christians are not subject to the laws of the Old Testament in the same way that Old Testament saints were; particularly that conformity to the ritual laws (specifically circumcision) was not to be viewed as a precondition to salvation (v. 1). On the other hand, the Council did not absolve Gentile Christians of any and all accountability to God as outlined in previous revelation. On the contrary, the demand that Gentile believers “ ‘abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood’ ” (v. 20, NKJV; cf. v. 29) assumes not only familiarity with the Old Testament laws but also a continued relevance of some of those laws for New Testament believers. These prohibitions may be viewed as shorthand for Deuteronomic

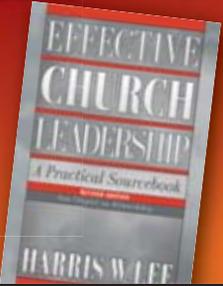
it is ethically relevant and through its application God creates a transformed people. This means also that before we impose the Old Testament laws on others, we must adopt the commitments of Ezra as our own, setting our hearts to study, to apply, and to teach it to God’s people (Ezra 7:10).

Second, while we recognize that with the sacrifice of Christ all the Old Testament sacrifices have been terminated, we also recognize the essential theological and ethical unity of the two Testaments, a unity summarized in Jesus’ call for covenantal commitment (love) to God and to one’s fellow human beings. This means that the redeemed scrupulously seek to please God in all areas of life (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23; cf. Lev. 19), and they compassionately always put the welfare of others ahead of their own (Phil. 2:3, 4). At the same time we look to the New Testament for guidance on which Old Testament laws

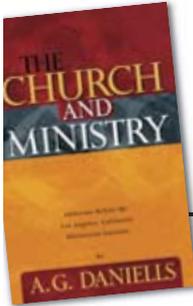
Third, we recognize that without the background of Old Testament Law, Paul’s call for obedience to the “law of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21, RSV; Gal. 6:2), and Jesus’ call for adherence to the “commandments” remain vague and empty, subject to anybody’s personal and subjective interpretation. Familiarity with the Old Testament laws is indispensable for an understanding of Jesus’ and Paul’s ethical exhortations.

Fourth, even as we accept the fundamental theological and ethical unity of the Testaments, we must respect the distinctions among different categories of Old Testament Law.⁶ By “categories” I do not mean the classical distinctions of moral, ceremonial, and civil laws—which in any case are not biblical categories—but the laws governing criminal, civic, family, cultic, and social affairs. In some of these the relevance for New Testament believers is on the surface (Deut. 6:4, 5), but in others it

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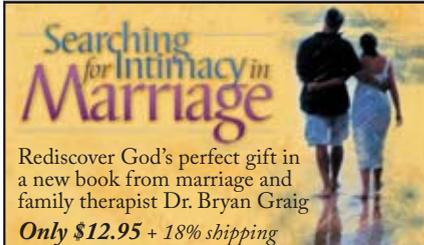


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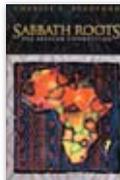
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may be couched in culturally specific terms. This is the case, for example, in the law concerning houses with parapets (Deut. 22:8). In arguing for the ongoing relevance of this commandment we obviously do not mean that Christians must build houses with parapets. Rather, we recognize and live by the theological principle illustrated by this law: Heads of households must ensure the well-being of all who enter their homes. In the context of a modern city like Chicago, this translates into an appeal to keep the sidewalk leading up to the house clear of ice and snow in the winter.

Fifth, we need to investigate carefully not only the features of Old Testament laws but their social function and theological underpinnings as well. Many of the specific regulations (e.g. haircuts, tattoos, and gashing the body [Lev. 19:27, 28]) represent responses to specific pagan customs, whose nature can be determined only by careful consideration of the cultural context out of which these ordinances arose and which they seek to address. Particularly in Deuteronomy, we observe a fundamental concern to protect the weak and vulnerable from abuse and exploitation at the hands of those with economic and political power. The principles obviously have permanent relevance.⁴

Sixth, seize the underlying principles of those that are culturally and contextually specific and apply those principles to the contexts in which we live. It is impossible to establish the particular kind of haircut Leviticus 19:27 seeks to ban, but it is not difficult to identify parallel contemporary practices that need to be reined in. While hairstyles change from generation to generation, and even from year to year, surely the principle applies to all forms of dress that represent ungodly values.

The problem of applying Old Testament laws to contemporary contexts is much more complex than these few summary statements would imply. However, the time has come for us to re-examine the fundamental assumptions that we bring to the matter. Follow me carefully. I am not hereby advocating any kind of works salvation. No one has ever been saved by works.

Salvation is made possible only through the unmerited grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift to be received by faith, not earned by human effort. But we are concerned about a salvation that works; that is, a salvation that results in a life that conforms to the will of God. At issue is the believer's sanctification. While obedience is not a prerequisite to salvation, it is the key to the blessing of the redeemed. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself declares the relationship between obedience to the law and the believer's well-being: "Then the King will say to those on his right "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" ' " (Matt. 25:34–40, ESV). ❏

- 1 Compare the repeated assertions of the psalmist that (apart from relationship with Yahweh) there is none who does good: 14:1, 4; 53:1, 3.
- 2 For a detailed discussion of this chapter, see Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 554–90.
- 3 This principle is operative also in Jesus' teaching: Matt. 7:15–23.
- 4 For a helpful discussion of these and related issues from the New Testament perspective, see S. J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (WUNT 81; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995).
- 5 Cf. Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.
- 6 In the following comments I am heavily indebted to Christopher Wright. See especially his four methodological principles outlined in *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 114–6.

The openness that lies before us

Jan Paulsen

Editor's note: On Sabbath, July 8, 2006, Seventh-day Adventist world church president Jan Paulsen, Th.D., addressed an international gathering of some 250 theologians and church leaders in Izmir, Turkey, meeting under the theme "The Nature, Mission and Unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." The following is the text of Pastor Paulsen's address, adapted for print.

Four years ago, at a conference similar to this one, I sought to outline what I saw as "the theological landscape" ahead for our church. Without redoing that presentation, the following parallels what was said at that time.

Consider with me all that we have and are as a church—our faith, our theology, our values, our identity, our history. This wall we have placed our backs against—it's what we lean against. We feel its solidity and support. It does not crumble, it is not fluid. And from this position we look out to what lies ahead, remembering the classical injunction that, in my paraphrase, says "we have nothing to fear for what we see ahead unless we forget what we have backed up against."

Sometimes I wonder whether we may be more inclined to attend to the wall behind us, examining it and fixing cracks in it, than we are on focusing on what lies ahead. With that in mind, I need to remind us all: The only life we have to live is that which lies ahead. All the assignments in mission we must complete lie ahead of us. All the policies we adopt, all of the adjustments we

make to structures, the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, and fundamental beliefs are made with an eye to the future. Our future beckons and challenges us. And we must walk into that future without distancing ourselves from the wall at our backs. We must feel its support constantly.

Before us lies an undefined openness—a potentially huge future—whose challenge must not be underestimated. What are the forces that should shape us, or contain us, as we move into this future?

There are forces within the church that are shaping Adventism around the world, and there are forces external to the church that will impact us. The big question is, "How do we determine the boundaries that will define the openness we are moving into? What are the markers that will guide us into the future and keep the journey safe?"

We cannot say, "Well, I don't like the scenario, so I'm not going to go there." The future, with all its challenges of globalization, diversity, and openness, is the only place we can go. We must go there—clearly knowing who we are and what our mission is. We must walk into the future creatively and without fear, knowing that every human being we encounter on the way is the object of God's saving love. At that time, we must admit that we don't know precisely what God requires in every culture and every situation in order to lift that human being from "lostness" into salvation.

What is clear, however, is that we cannot do mission if we are content only with reinforcing the wall at our backs. Then, as we move into the future, we must also ensure that we have markers in place that we can see and can trust.

And so, with these introductory comments, I would like to look at this matter in two sections. First, the forces, or realities, within and outside the church that will in some way impact and shape us as a global community. And second, the markers that are necessary for the way ahead, which will function as boundaries to keep us safe.

Forces that impact and shape us

Our own rapid growth. Rapid growth means that the church becomes more localized, and thus more decentralized, in how it is managed and served. While not necessarily a deliberate decision or process, it is simply a fact—something that happens.

Expansion, numerically and territorially, means that the kind of control and guidance that may have come from one central headquarters, such as the General Conference or division, is neither sustainable nor effective. There may be technical



Jan Paulsen, Th.D., is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

reasons, such as limited communication logistics or language barriers. Or there may be political reasons or government regulations that severely limit the involvement of an international headquarters. But, in most instances, it is simply the growth in membership and the development of local leadership that leads to this shift.

Are we ready for this? Rapid growth and expansion may not only shift the “weight” of the organization, it may also, by default, impact the unity of the global church.

Contextualization of Adventism. Our beliefs are constantly being filtered through cultural prisms, which could result in an Adventism that may look and feel somewhat different from one part of the globe to another. How good are we at making sure that, in this process, the heart and mind of Adventism has not changed?

Contextualization, by which I simply mean making the message culturally appropriate, is an inevitable process. None of us is asked to step out of our own culture to become an Adventist. Through our culture and our history we experience life, and this cannot, and should not, be shed. So, within proper limits, contextualization must happen.

The counsel is clear: “People of every culture have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, and so introduce the truth that may do them good. They must be able to understand and meet their wants.”¹

And: “In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach. Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain

their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines. Let the heart be won, the soil prepared, and then sow the seed, presenting in love the truth as it is in Jesus.”²

In other words, share the message gently and at a pace that will carry the people with you—for there can be no doubt that a person’s capacity to receive and understand truth is shaped and conditioned by his or her own history and

are so critical. As I have said on many occasions: “Unity does not take care of itself.” It does not follow naturally. It has to be pursued very deliberately, and the elements that preserve unity have to be cultured and nurtured. In this setting, the need to have love and understanding for one another is of greatest importance.

The younger, newer, quite conservative Seventh-day Adventist Church lies

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT AFFIRMING THE LEGITIMACY OF THE “YOUNGER” AND “NEWER” AND LETTING THEM ALSO TAKE HOLD OF THE REINS OF THE CHURCH?

culture. The noblest and most exquisite values can be grasped only as they connect with our own experiences.

Changing demographics within the church. Our church is becoming “younger” and “newer,” and in these areas of rapid growth it is also becoming increasingly flavored by “southern Christianity.” This means that in the 80 to 90 percent of our global church that is experiencing this growth, the church is distinctly conservative, affirming historical Christian values in faith and conduct—a factor that is probably a significant contributor to its growth.

The older church (“northern Christianity”) is increasingly impacted by secularism, “spiritual relativism,” modernism, and a range of other “isms,” which will, in many observers’ views, move the church further to the left and make it increasingly liberal. How do we resolve the inevitable tension this creates?

This is where honesty, humility, understanding, cultural tolerance, and love

immediately before us. This is what we are looking at. We cannot walk around it or ignore it. How do we go about affirming the legitimacy of the “younger” and “newer” and letting them also take hold of the reins of the church?

To my understanding the answer is found in two simple steps: First, you do your best to train and equip them so they may share the values and identity of historic Adventism. And second, you trust them and the Lord of the church. Those are steps in respect to which we have no choice; we *must* take them.

Globalization. While it is true that the church is becoming increasingly more local and decentralized, there is an opposite force at work. The so-called “flatness” of the world means a rapid spread of ideas, experiences, and expectations; the Internet and international media see to that.

We welcome the potential of global communication systems—Internet, television, radio—as instruments for the mis-

sion of the church. Yet these same systems flood the same market, in virtually limitless ways, with alternative values and beliefs. Web sites are set up to market values and teachings directly hostile to core values of our church. Once you step into the global communication market, no one is sheltered.

Globalization has also led to an extensive movement of people, whether prompted by war with its resulting flood of refugees, or by the search for a way out of poverty. Multiple millions are on the move, often carrying more “in” their person than “on” their person.

The process of the world becoming one village is in some places quite advanced. Unprecedented numbers of ethnic churches are part of our global family. Although they are a long way from their traditional home, who can fault them for wanting a voice and fair presence in the life of the church where they are now located? This part of the reality challenges us as a global church and must be addressed fairly and without prejudice.

Also, as a church everything we are and do is based on free and voluntary choices. Into this setting come some individuals and organizations, focused on mission, who seem more “independent” than “supportive.” The nature of their initiatives, as well as their norms of accountability, can present a challenge to the church organization. How do we relate? Freedom is fine, but when a group considers itself free-standing, in the sense of answering only to God and themselves, it does not work well within the church. A community can function only when the rules of community living are respected and adhered to.

These are some of the realities immediately before us. They should not be seen as threats but as challenges that must be faced openly and creatively.

We are a mission organization; we have a clear mission mandate. It is our faithfulness to mission that will largely determine our faithfulness to God. We go forward with strength and conviction into the open space of the future, for that is where we do mission. If we do not do mission, we have lost our reason for being and our usefulness to God. We

will stay *global*; we will stay *united*; and we will *do mission*.

As we attempt to do all of this, the second major question we ask is:

What markers or boundaries will take us safely into the future and keep us from losing our way?

Scripture. Our first marker is God’s Word itself. Whatever faith values we hold and affirm must be biblical. God’s Word, the Scripture, is the unique and authoritative source of Truth as saving knowledge. Our values are shaped by Scripture. Our spiritual directions are set by Scripture. Absolutely reliable markers, which will keep us safely on course, must therefore have Scripture as their constant point of reference.

The moment we step outside the boundaries of Scripture, our struggle with the challenges of contextualization and “staying current” becomes treacherous. We are either in the territory of syncretism or in a haze where spiritual values are unclear. Without God’s Word as a marker, the church will be confronted with demands to be “flexible,” “reasonable,” less dogmatic, less authoritative and absolute, ready to compromise, and, yes, more open—but in a sort of undefined way.

The future is open, but God’s markers for a safe way into the future are not. There are hazardous ditches on either side of the road. Beware! For adrift from Scripture we will surely land in one of them. We hold, furthermore, that the writings of Ellen White constantly and comprehensively inform us about Scripture (the lesser light leading to the greater light).

And that, in a way, may cover it all. But I would like to highlight a few additional markers which, although rooted in Scripture, warrant special attention.

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ must be unequivocally identified and acknowledged as our Guide into the future. He who said of Himself, “I am the way. . . . No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)³; and who brought Peter to confess “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), must be proclaimed as the unique One singularly

equipped to take us through this world into the next.

This must be very pronounced. Just as Scripture leads one, inevitably, to the person of Jesus Christ, so must every manifestation of Seventh-day Adventism be focused on drawing individuals to a knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. This must be a clear marker in non-Christian global settings as well as in the historic Christian parts of the world. Any “brand” of Adventism that does not have Jesus Christ at its center, recognizable and affirmed, should not be allowed space within our community.

Open minds. As a people, we must have the humility to acknowledge that we do not know it all. And therefore, we must have minds open to discovery as we search for a better and clearer understanding of truth. This may seem risky, but I know of no other way we can be true to ourselves and to what we have always held about the pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

We have been counseled repeatedly that we are to engage in this search. For instance: “God requires of them [God’s true people] continual advancement in the knowledge of the truth, and in the way of holiness.”⁴ And speaking of the search for truth, which has been the hallmark of the church in all ages, Ellen White writes, “As real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God’s Word and discourage any further investigation of Scripture.”⁵

With honesty and humility we must grant that the openness before us—the space of time and opportunities just ahead—must find a corresponding openness in our own minds as, led by the Spirit, we search for where He wants to take us. This has to be acknowledged as a basic stance, notwithstanding the risks. The alternative is to shut down discovery and search.

Scripture, accompanied by the enlightenment that comes from the inspired pen of Ellen White, will keep us safe in this process of discovery. The search must keep us close to God’s Word but must be void of the attitude that says, “I have

discovered it all!" What I am talking about is primarily an attitude, reliant on the Holy Spirit. Are we good at projecting this attitude? I believe that this mind-set must be a marker in the road ahead for the Adventist people.

Rejection of relativism. An "open mind" must be accompanied by an equally clear stance that refuses to compromise Scriptural values. Postmodern relativism will relentlessly push us towards being more accommodating and presenting a message that appeals to the majority. According to this relativism, the legitimacy of our faith-values is defined, to a considerable extent, by what "comfort level" they offer. ("Whatever works for you is fine!")

We must be very clear that faith-values are not born from within and are not authenticated by our personal experiences. Faith-values come to us, brought to our minds by the Holy Spirit, and they, in turn, authenticate our experience. Jesus Christ said of the Holy Spirit, "[He] will teach you all things and [he] will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

Prioritization of mission. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said to His people then, "I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). Christ said to His followers, "You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Ours is a mission movement—God's people have always been focused on mission—and this must also be a clear marker on our road into the future. Mission must clearly drive decisions at all levels of church administration, in the board meetings of our institutions, and in the local church. Mission should be at the top of the agenda in planning and use of resources. The language of mission must be the chosen "dialect" of the church. If mission is not the primary objective, then all our councils and meetings at every administrative level are simply a waste of time.

Sensitivity to suffering. Another important marker for the church is our engagement with the plight of the poor, the ill, the refugees, and the disenfranchised. This must be a clearly visible value on

our mission agenda, because without this engagement it is reasonably certain that we have lost our way. The Lord's comment that "the poor you will always have with you" (Matt. 26:11) may have sounded like an aside about a sad reality, but Christ made it clear He will hold us accountable for how we deal with those whose needs are greater than they can handle themselves (Matt. 25:31–46).

Through service the church demonstrates that mission is more than the spoken word, that there is continuity between making life better for people here and now and preparing them for eternity. The rich meanings of the Hebrew word *shalom* should tell us something about how comprehensively God is committed to seeking our good.

Acceptance of diversity. As our church grows rapidly and spreads across the globe, into every culture, race, and nationality, we must do better at working with the diversity of humanity. Those who share faith in Christ discover that He is the Great Equalizer of all believers (Gal. 3:26–29). Therefore, this will be a very visible global marker, for it has to do with the value of human beings, fairness, behavior, participation, and representation. The internationality and ethnic mix of our church, as well as the fact that we are male and female, must be reflected in the trust we have for each other and the room we make for all to participate. This will not happen of itself. It requires right decisions.

Commitment to unity. I have often spoken of the unity of our church, and I cannot complete my list without returning to it. The unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, spiritually and structurally, locally and globally, remains as an unqualified marker. This was one of the elements that Jesus Christ reflected on during the final few hours He had with His disciples before Gethsemane. In some mystical way, the unity of faith that binds believers together is anchored in the unity Christ has with the Father (John 17:20–23). It is a unity that is ministered to by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4).

A spiritual community, whether a local congregation or an international spiritual family, which affirms a shared faith on the one hand but is divided by internal strife

on the other is a community in denial. Should we choose to walk away from each other rather than face differences, we will have lost our way. As a global family of faith, we cannot relent on our commitment to unity.

Anticipation of Christ's coming. As a community we live in anticipation of the Second Coming of our Lord, and our values reflect this reality. This is a marker embedded in our identity. The transitory nature of this world, the certainty of Christ's return, the task we have been given of sharing this message, all these things must be central to our preaching and teaching.

But this marker must be profiled with more than words. Living in anticipation of Christ's return implies more than just an intellectual assent to a doctrinal position. This marker finds its best expression in the way we live. Our confidence that Christ is indeed "preparing a place" for us flavors our everyday activities and shapes our choices. Or as the apostle Peter puts it, our knowledge of what is to come helps us know how we should live (2 Pet. 3:11–17).

As a church, our identity, values, and mission are inextricably linked with this marker. We lose sight of this at our peril.

This is who we are and how we shall go into the future. As we do, I pray we will trust, not only the Lord, but each other. As we hold fast to the essentials of our identity, we need to accord each other the courtesy of trust, believing that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can move forward into a more open future, united in faith and mission. ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1923) 213.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1915), 119.
- 3 All Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1948), 345.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1948), 706, 707.

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Sabbath: a memorial of freedom

Larry H. Evans



Larry H. Evans,
D.Min., is the
undersecretary of the
General Conference
of Seventh-day
Adventists, Silver
Spring, Maryland,
United States.

Memorials of great persons and great events fill the Washington, DC area. On a recent tour, one monument gripped my attention: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a long black granite wall artistically curving over a large piece of land with flowering bushes and rivulets of water. Etched on the wall are some 58,349 names of the American dead and the missing. Thousands walk by this monument each day, in solemn silence, with heads bowed. Some stop and cry. On my visit, I looked for the names of my cousin and college classmates who lost their lives.

Some time later, when I visited northern Vietnam, my guide showed me little monuments in various hamlets recognizing those of that country who also died in the same war.

Erecting memorials seems to be a universal practice to honor the sacrifice people make for their country, and also possibly a reminder of lessons to be learned. Memorials are important. Without them, we would soon forget the significance of our roots, the meaning of the present, the flow of history—and perhaps, even the hope for the future.

God has memorials

God also has set memorials for us: to remind us of His love, to let us know that He never forsakes us, to authenticate that there is a future filled with certainty and hope. He tells us through Jeremiah, “For I know the plans

I have for you, . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11, 12, NIV). Some of God’s memorials are familiar to us: the Cross, baptism, Communion service. But in this article I want us to consider an almost forgotten memorial that has cosmic significance.

Go back to the story of Exodus. God’s people were in bondage for over four hundred years. At last God raised Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt. This was to be a great redemptive experience. Confrontation after confrontation, plague after plague. Egypt’s Pharaoh finally yields to God’s will and lets His people go. They were now free, marching toward the Promised Land, but the march was not easy. As Israel approached the Red Sea, with hills and mountains on either side, with Pharaoh’s army in hot pursuit, Israel seemed heading toward disaster. There seemed no hope. But God intervened, the sea parted, and the road to freedom lay wide open. Children of Israel once again experienced God’s salvation. That “saving” was not by their works, but by God’s grace.

But what did God do after this mighty act of salvation? He led His people to Mount Sinai, and there He gave them the Ten Commandments. If law implies bondage, as some Christians seem to think, one logical question needs to be raised: Why would God save the children of Israel from one kind of bondage (that of Pharaoh) and place them in another kind of bondage (that of the law)? Makes no sense, does it?

Perhaps we should raise another question: Does *law* mean “bondage”? Observe the preface to the Ten Commandments that the Lord Himself gives: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Exod. 20:2, NIV). God gave His law to a people whom He has saved. A people freed from the bondage of Egypt, thanks to God’s intervening grace, are given a law that will define their future relations with Him. Therefore, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). Having another god would mean forgetting or forsaking the God who saved, and that would be equivalent to a return to bondage. Hence, the reason God gave the law to a saved people is to keep them saved as His children. Begotten of love and grace, God wanted them to stay in close relationship with Him. The “thou shalt not’s” of the Ten Commandments are in the negative because God has already saved His people. They now live in a saved relationship with Him, and to break any of the commandments would place them

in a negative relationship with Him—a return to bondage!

While the law has no power to keep someone from being lost, it does help prevent the person from heading back into bondage. God knows that Satan can coax and force, if possible, God's people into alienation from their Deliverer. The law was and is a hedge set up to help God's people remember the miracle involved in setting them

the direction of the One who breaks the cycle of sin and bondage. The law stands as a memorial to the declaration that God, and God alone, saves!

Unfortunately, human nature characteristically forgets how God has led in the past. We become preoccupied with present difficulties and tend to forget how God's grace has saved. This comes as no surprise to God, for He who created us knows us well and has

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free from bondage. The "thou shalt not's" are built on the premise that they have already been "saved"—not something that must be done in order to be saved!

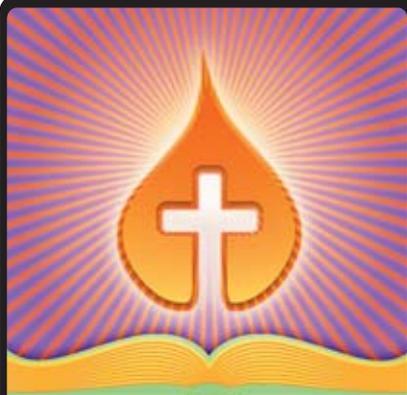
Two characteristics

Two very important characteristics of God's law need to be borne in mind. As good as the law is, it can be abused. It can be used in such a way as to convey a teaching about God that is not true. Thus God's law stands as a memorial. A memorial, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, can be used to promote war or to teach the high cost of war.

As a memorial, God's law does two things. First, while it does not have power in itself to save, it reminds us of the bondage that we can slip into when we disregard the law and lead a life outside of a relationship with God. Second, the law, while reminding us of our powerlessness, also points us in

given us a perpetual reminder of His love and continual care. This perpetual reminder of His grace is within the law itself—the seventh-day Sabbath. It is like a memorial within a memorial—a sign of God's intervention and deliverance. With this in mind, note Deuteronomy 5:6, 12–15 (NIV): "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. . . . Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest as you do."

That is the commandment to keep the Sabbath. What rationale does God



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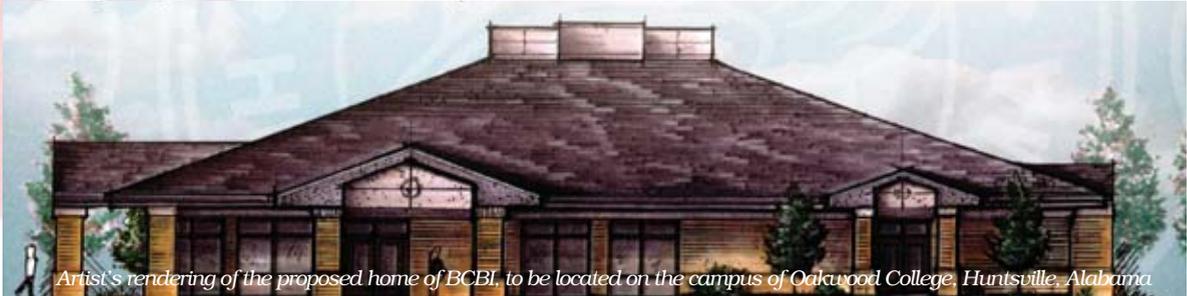
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—Don Pucil, *Lifeway Christian Resources*

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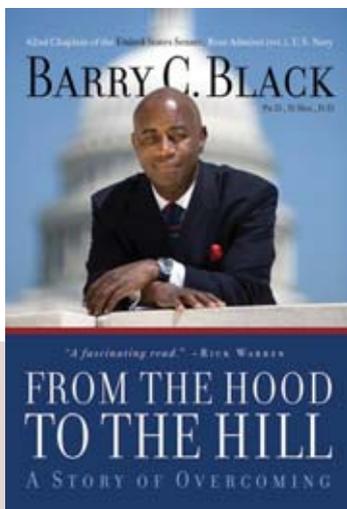
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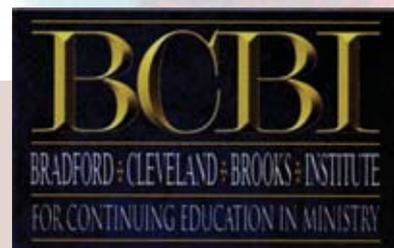


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give for that commandment? Look at verse 15: **“Remember** that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. **Therefore** the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.”

Remember. Therefore. An act of remembrance and an act of obedience are linked in this commandment, with the second flowing from the first. First of all, remember the saving act of God’s deliverance from sin and bondage. Second, keep the Sabbath, which God has given as a memorial of His saving act.

The seventh-day Sabbath portrays God as the Great Deliverer, the Liberator, the Redeemer of those facing temptation and sin. The Sabbath day does not point to our accomplishments. Instead, it points to what God has done. Every week we are to be reminded of God’s willingness to be personally involved with our struggles and our salvation. Every week He wishes us to recall His promises of strength and friendship. Every week we are reminded we are not alone. Every week we are not only reminded that God is alive but that God takes personal interest and acts for us. Thus, Sabbath is not a day of bondage, but a day of joy and jubilation that we worship a God who saves, who frees, and who fellowships with mortals such as we are. That is the message of the Sabbath. He is not only alive, He is willing to set us free.

Memorial of Creation

While the Deuteronomic portrayal points to Sabbath as a memorial of the deliverance and redemption that God accomplished for His people in bondage, the Exodus rendition of the law points to Sabbath as a memorial of another great event of God: Creation. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor

your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod. 20:8–11, NIV).

HE IS NOT ONLY ALIVE, HE IS WILLING TO SET US FREE.

Thus inspiration links Sabbath not only with deliverance and redemption (Deut. 5:12–15; Exod. 20:8–11; Ezek. 20:12) but also with Creation. The Sabbath, thus, is a memorial of God’s mighty creative power and His redeeming grace. It is a memorial of the past, the present, and the future: creation, salvation, and restoration. The Sabbath reminds us of our real roots—of being created in the image of God, of our fall, but also of a promised restoration. The Sabbath then contains the Advent hope. Inherent within the Sabbath is the anticipation of the personal coming of our Creator and Redeemer to set the world back on its intended course. Everything about the Sabbath represents what God has done, is doing, and will do. In every respect our salvation centers in what He has done for us. Our hopelessness becomes restored to hope, and our brokenness, into wholeness. Hence the prayer of the psalmist takes on additional meaning. “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. . . . Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Ps. 119:92–97, NIV).

A memorial of rest and hope

Does the world need to hear this message? Are there cries for understanding? Are there lonely people? Are there people who feel caught in vicious habits, addictions, and temptations? Are there people groups searching for their roots because of a feeling of estrangement? Is there a

sense of meaninglessness, doom, and despair?

Undoubtedly yes. And the good news says that we are not left without an answer, for Someone cares. His invitation is to all: “ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and

I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light’ ” (Matt. 11:28–30).

To take the yoke of Jesus is to be a responsible follower of Him. To abide in Him. To love Him. To obey Him. To take the memorials He has given us seriously. Among the many memorials He has given to us are the law and the Sabbath. To accept them frees us from bondage, and we can celebrate in joy and freedom.

The formula is rather simple. “Come to me” is the first command of Jesus. Come to His cross. Accept His forgiveness. Accept Him as your Redeemer. Once that is done, Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you.” Be My follower. Do what I have outlined for your life. In the words of the Exodus and Deuteronomy passages we have seen earlier, “Remember. . . therefore.” Remember how God has delivered you from bondage. Therefore, keep the Sabbath, obey the law of God.

God’s memorials express His love, His care, and His action. God’s law promises freedom, not bondage. The Sabbath rest means, not a time of inactivity, but a time of reconnection, a time of fulfillment. It is a special moment when the created walk with the Creator, when the tired and worn find peace in the Sustainer, and when the despairing sinner finds comfort in the Redeemer. Hebrews calls this a “Sabbath-rest” (Heb. 4:9). ■

Dateline

Reaching Finland for Christ

Nearly a half-million copies of a special edition of *Steps to Christ* have been printed in Finland for nationwide distribution as part of the overall strategy of reaching every individual with the good news of salvation. This ambitious project will

provide Adventist members an opportunity to give a gift of this classic introduction to the basics of discipleship to their neighbors, co-workers, friends, and others—with the expectation that one

home in four throughout the country will receive a copy. The unique cover design by **Heikki O. Jokinen** depicts an individual set free from a heavy load through encountering Jesus' plan for their life.



Assistant editor receives terminal degree

Willie E. Hucks II, assistant editor of *Ministry*, recently received a doctor of ministry degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

We congratulate Dr. Hucks for this achievement. Prior to joining *Ministry*, Dr. Hucks was associate professor of religion at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, United States. Earlier he was a pastor in the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, serving churches in Texas and Louisiana.

We congratulate our assistant editor as well as others who have completed



Willie E. Hucks II

advanced studies in order to enhance their ministry.

Theological Conference in Turkey

About 250 theologians and church leaders held a theological conference near Izmir, Turkey, on July 7–17, 2006.

Jan Paulsen, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, addressed the participants on July 8, the first Sabbath of the conference. During the event, more than 70 papers were presented.

"We chose the doctrine of the Church as the general theme. This theme has been studied by the Biblical Research Committee, and we thought it would be profitable to have presentations by theologians from various parts of the world," stated conference coordinator **Dr. Ángel Rodríguez**, who is director of the Biblical Research Institute.

Conference participants also toured important biblical sites, including the seven churches of Revelation and the Isle of Patmos. ❏



Ángel Rodríguez

BOOK REVIEW

Read New Testament Greek in 30 Days [or less]

by *W. Larry Richards*,
Breakthrough Books Company
(www.breakthrubooks.com), 2006

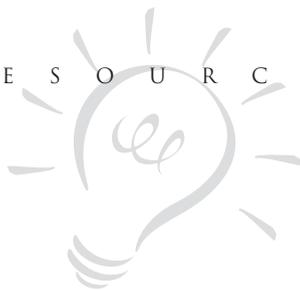
Having studied Greek for three years, and tutored it during both my undergraduate and graduate studies, I was a bit skeptical about a textbook that could teach a person to read Greek in 30 days or less. But W. Larry Richards states in his preface that his book "is not designed to cover beginning Greek in the traditional sense." He further states on the same page that his target audiences are beginning students, pastors who want to refresh their skills, and laypersons who want the basics.

The book contains ten lessons, followed by twelve appendices. The ten lessons are built upon what Dr. Richards calls the "eight minimums." (See appendix K.) Only when the students master those eight minimums will true Greek learning occur.

The lessons, or chapters, start with the alphabet and basics of grammar. His inclusions of the history of Koine Greek and comparisons with the English alphabet are particularly beneficial. At the start of each lesson, Dr. Richards includes a summary of key issues that will be addressed in that lesson. For pastors who are refreshing their skills, these terms will be instant prompts that open doors long believed closed.

Throughout each lesson, gray-shaded boxes bear the caption, "Remember This." These boxes share basic information that needs to be incorporated into the learning process.

In addressing the noun declensions, Dr. Richards utilizes a two-color



BOOK REVIEW

device that I have not seen in other Greek texts—using red as a marker for declension endings. But there is still no secret way to learning these endings—learning them still requires rote memorization.

In dealing with the four basic verb forms (lesson five), I felt that there was too much information about verb tenses packed into one lesson. However, if properly studied and applied, the primary and secondary tense endings chart (p. 50) would clear up any confusion.

The tense identifiers (lesson six), along with minimums four and five, provide bridges both for understanding the indicative mode (previously discussed) and the participles and subjunctive mode (minimums six and seven—to follow). The hope for a pastor who studied Greek previously would be that the information perhaps long thought lost would be recalled. For the new student or layperson, the information serves as an adequate introduction to the language.

The lessons being discussed conclude with more complicated issues of syntax that appeared to be added as an afterthought. Studied in conjunction with appendix G, the lessons made more sense.

The key to the exercises throughout the book was the use of actual passages of Scripture to illustrate the lessons. It was best that the author used passages from the easier-to-read Greek of Matthew and John. This approach shows the students that they can learn the language more quickly than they think is possible.

I recommend *Read New Testament Greek*—especially to those who have asked for the name(s) of good textbooks that they could use to brush up on their Greek.

—Reviewed by Willie E. Hucks II, assistant editor, *Ministry magazine* ■

O Shepherd, Where Art Thou?

by Calvin Miller, *Broadman & Holman: Nashville, TN, 2006, 119 pages.*

Calvin Miller, the creative savant of Christian literature, produced *The Singer* in 1976. That book-length poem on the life of Christ and the cosmic conflict between good and evil delighted its readers with fresh imagery and potent insight.

Miller followed *The Singer* with two less-inspiring, but still poetic, sequels; then came a number of prose books that were thoughtful, valuable, and spiritually significant.

In *O Shepherd, Where Art Thou?* Miller returns to pushing the literary envelope. *Shepherd* is thoughtful, but deeply sarcastic; the book is valuable, and a lot of fun to read.

Miller's fable takes us inside the head of Pastor Sam, who wants to grow his church into a mega-church. Through the fictional story, printed entirely on the right-hand pages of the book, Miller lets us see Sam recognize the value of visitation and pastoral care for hurting people.

Those are the right-hand pages. The left-hand pages are like the director's commentary on a DVD of a popular movie. Miller explains why Sam, or the other characters, are doing what they do. And in these commentaries Miller delivers his critiques of the church-growth movement—and the passion of pastors to produce churches larger than are "ministerable." (I know that's not a word, but it's just the kind of word that Miller would love to coin!)

For example: "Sam's mistake may be in thinking one can be committee-driven and mechanical about pastoral

care. To care for others in need is more mystical and inward" (p. 18).

Another example: "Pastoral care is a world of unbearable pain. However high we lift our spirits in personal or public worship, it is good to remember that many in our congregations come and go from our worship with broken hearts" (p. 88).

Final example: "The question is, does Will Willington [the church-growth guru in Miller's fable] minister to sixty thousand, or does he just preach to sixty thousand. . . . The size of a church does not indicate how well it is doing in ministry" (p. 96).

Miller isn't adverse to evangelism, but he does challenge us to remember that much of Jesus' ministry was focused on individual people who hurt—and the stories of His exploits with them have inspired Christians for two thousand years. Miller would advocate that pastors today create similar stories of healing the hurting and comforting the grieving.

It's good advice, wrapped in a fun 119 pages.

—Reviewed by Kermit Netteburg, assistant pastor, *Sligo Church, Takoma Park, Maryland, United States.* ■

Maybe you agree . . . or maybe you disagree

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Lessons from my bank

JAMES A. CRESS



Simple mathematics illustrate why we must prioritize children. When we lead an adult to Christ, we add a soul, but when we bring a child to Jesus, we introduce a multiplier for decades to come.

Too often we hear the adage that our children are the church's future. I disagree. I believe that our children are the present church and that we dare not await the future to plan, emphasize, budget, and implement age-appropriate ministry.

Of course, in some areas of the world we invest a great percentage of resources in Christian education; and we recognize this as essential. However, many areas offer no Adventist education below college level, and even where primary education opportunities abound, only a relatively small percentage enrolls.

To reconsider how we approach ministering to and with our children, think like a banker. When I enter my bank, I am inundated with placards and slogans describing the various services the institution provides.

Compound dividends. When the church provides children's ministries, we build for the future. This should not be considered a short-term, short-sighted view.

Savings account. We should view every child as a potential candidate for the kingdom. Perhaps this sounds too simplistic. But remember, Satan targets the very youngest. Surely, we can do our best to save those whom he aims to destroy.

Investment, not expense. Attract youngsters to your church and the adults will follow. Parents want to go where their children want to go. If you plan age-appropriate ministries and activities, parents will vote their support of your

leadership with both their feet and their funds!

Mission, not money. My financial institution speaks much more about service to their customers than about holding my money. Of course they want my money, but they emphasize the benefits they provide. If we provide quality benefits for children, the necessary funds will be provided.

Safe depository. We must guarantee the security of precious assets. Volunteers and caregivers must be recruited, screened, and paired with other leaders to ensure that no little one is abused or molested. Training, supervision, and accountability must be hallmarks of all we do for children.

Needs-based service. In our last congregation, my wife, Sharon, an associate pastor of the church, listened to the needs of the parents in our church. She began offering weekly children's worship services plus qualified child care that permitted parents to participate in the worship services. She secured qualified nursery leaders and coordinated those who conducted the weekly children's worship. One bonus came when the nursery attendants asked to become members.

Long-term amortization. Every church has families who need tuition assistance to enable their children's school attendance. Rather than aid grants, we provided age-appropriate work-study for students in grades five through eight. Students could empty trash, clean chalk boards, grade papers,

or perform simple tasks to assist teachers. Others volunteered at the church office to fold bulletins, answer phones, or prepare for special events. One mother recently reported that her now-adult daughter had become a manager in a government office and credited her church office tasks for providing the first basic skills of interaction, planning, and implementation.

Community involvement. Whatever we do, we should include the whole church community. In our congregation, every service includes youth who provide scripture, music, or even the occasional sermon.

One-stop service. My bank provides a myriad of services at one convenient location. Surely we can demonstrate closer cooperation between school, Sabbath services, Adventurers, children's mission and outreach activities, Pathfinders, Vacation Bible School, and social functions to attract and involve all members of our families.

Start small. A new associate on our staff opened a bank account with just one dollar. All the benefits the bank offered came his way because of that small beginning. You can do the same thing. Do something right now with children's ministry even if you cannot do everything. Begin today and watch your results grow.

Fees and charges. The bank made it clear that there is a cost attached to the benefits they provide. Invest in your church's children. Provide the most attractive rooms and materials. Affirm your teachers and volunteers. Add opportunities beyond the routine events. Spend in order to save.

If you invest in your children, you will reap great dividends. You can count on it! ■

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