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DIAMOND LEADERS

When circumstances,
character, and
commitment combine

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IN EVERY ISSUE

Letters 3

Editorial 4

Dateline 27

Book Review 28

Pastor's Pastor 30

5 **Diamond leaders: When circumstances, character, and commitment combine**

What lessons in leadership can we learn from precious gems?
Branimir Schubert

9 **2009: The "Year of Evangelism"**

Two pastors share their hopes for this evangelistic initiative.
Willie E. Hucks II

12 **Why do You permit this, oh Lord? The problem of evil and pastoral practice**

It is one of the oldest questions humans have asked, and one of the hardest answers to understand.
Aleksandar S. Santrac

17 **Sequence preaching: How to design and prepare an effective sermon series**

The author shares a five-step process that will assist in crafting an effective sermon series.
Derek J. Morris

20 **The Communion service and the issue of unworthiness**

Partaking of the Communion service can be an intense and emotional experience. But what do we say by our nonparticipation in the Communion service?
Roberto Iannò

22 **Eight strategies to survive problematic parishioners**

Every pastor has them. What can you do about them?
Judi Bailey

25 **Seven years in Karlsruhe: Memories of a church planter**

Birthing a new church is challenging. But watching God perform miracles is exciting.
Abraham Rangel Flores

I ONLY HOPE THAT MY WITNESS TO THESE “SHEPHERDS OF THE LORD’S FLOCK” WAS AS EFFECTIVE AS THEIRS WAS TO ME.

Ministerial alliances

I was pleased to read the article by Jeff Scoggins (“The Local Ministerial Alliance: Strengthened by Differences,” August 2008) concerning membership in the local ministerial alliance. I have always found the ministers of other denominations to be sincere individuals.

When I moved to one city, the ministerial group changed their constitution in order to allow me to join. We sat together and discussed what we had in common (we found we could all say “Yes” to the Apostles’ Creed) and made that the test of membership. When I was ill at one time, the minister of one of the churches was quick to offer financial assistance. I only hope that my witness to these “shepherds of the Lord’s flock” was as effective as theirs was to me.

—Maurice Woods, retired minister, Gympie, Australia

Multichurch districts

I am thankful for the many articles on pastoring multichurch districts in the August 2008 issue. I wish that all our pastors and churches could reach the status of a multichurch district. As soon as a church becomes large enough to be a single church district, it would be good if it planted another congregation and again attained the distinction of being a multichurch district.

—Jeff Zaremsky, email

Is evangelistic success transferable?

I thoroughly enjoyed Jolivê Chaves’s article titled “Small Groups in the Adventist Church in South America” (October 2008).

The statement “Throughout these years of experience with small groups, we have learned that traditional methods of doctrinal Bible studies and preparation for baptism did not bring the desired effect” raised a question in my mind. Is there a special set of studies used by small groups that—rather than focusing on more “cognitive” studies—emphasizes the application of these topics to their lives?

It would be most helpful if there were a set of English language lessons for use in small groups, such as was discussed in the article. Also, with such incredible success of small groups in South America, it begs the obvious question: Why is there such limited success in North America? Is it cultural? A social disconnect from non-Adventists? A lack of the Holy Spirit? Materialism? All of the above? Or more?

—John Indermuehle, Springfield, Oregon, United States

Stem cell research

I appreciate Allan Handysides’s informative and thought-provoking article regarding embryonic stem cell research (“Stem Cell Research: What is a Christian

to Do?” June 2008). The idea that an unused original embryo could be donated to another couple and/or considered a restricted “tissue donor” appeals to me. God has provided us with the ability and the science to do amazing things. Is God perhaps providing us an opportunity to procreate and help overcome many of the physical ravages of sin at the same time? Does this lead us to the dilemma of needing to determine a couple’s true motivation for in vitro fertilization in the first place?

I agree that in vitro fertilization strictly for research or commercial gain would be abhorrent and violating human dignity. The seven Christian principles put forth regarding embryonic stem cell research are excellent guidelines for the individual.

—Marc M. Dyke, email

Caring for the flock

Your article titled “Visitation Expectation” (“Pastor’s Pastor,” October 2008) was very much appreciated! It not only gave the biblical model of how and who is to care for our flock, but it also gave a very tangible outline to follow. I plan to share this with my churches and especially the leaders, in hopes of improving our visitation efforts.

Thank you for addressing this topic.

—Chester Hitchcock, pastor, Medina/Barberton, Ohio, United States

Twelve Questions for December

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



I don't know how you plan your daily schedule—I assume that you do plan—but I have a simple system. I keep a list that I update on a regular basis. Actually, I need to update the list several times each day, for if that doesn't happen, I easily get distracted from focusing on those things that I need to accomplish. I also remove things that I *have* accomplished—removing items gives me a sense of accomplishment. That, briefly, is how I do my daily schedule.

Just as my daily list guides my daily activities, I find it helpful to make another list of important items. That list contains my study plans, reading goals, and relationships with individuals important in my life. This list also changes—items are added or deleted. December may be a good time of the year to review such a list. If you make a list, what would you include on it? How long would it be? I don't know the answers to either question, but I will share the kinds of items I find essential and those that you may wish to consider placing on your list. Such a list will assist you in your ministry, and help you decide how to spend your time.

Reading the Word for my benefit. Obviously, as ministers, we use the Bible when we prepare sermons or Bible studies. But I find that I need to spend time reading the Bible for my personal benefit and growth. I choose passages that I believe will bring me a blessing. From experience, we know that such reading of the Bible has to compete with busy schedules, but this reading is vital for our spiritual well-being.

Devotional life. In addition to reading the Bible, I find that reading what other Christians have written encourages me. There are many good books, but for a number of years I have found the rather

small book, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*,* to be a wonderful companion. I find this book encouraging and faith building. Its worn covers are a testimony to its value to me.

Continuing education. Most ministers spend a number of years studying, so why is it necessary to be involved in continuing education? It is because additional study is done in a disciplined situation. In that setting, we are expected to participate and respond and thus our minds are sharpened.

Planning. This involves taking a long look at what we do. What would you like to accomplish in the next month, six months, or a year? If you are a pastor, what plans do you have for your congregation(s)? If you are a teacher, should you update a particular class within the next year? The absence of planning almost guarantees that though we may be busy, we most likely will accomplish little. Planning is an important path to successful ministry.

Family. My parents, during their lifetime, and my extended family were a blessing to me. Now, the Lord has blessed me with a wonderful wife, children, and grandchildren, and they, too, have become such a blessing—they bring me joy. What about your family? Do you let them know how much you appreciate them, or do you assume they know that? I need to remind myself that my family needs to know how important they are to me.

Reading. What am I reading? I am reading a broad range of books. Recently, I read excellent books on leadership,

the Resurrection, biographies, biblical studies—and other topics. With reading that is too narrow, we will find ourselves out of touch with our members. Ask your colleagues what they are reading, and you may find that they may recommend to you a book that you need just at this moment.

Colleagues. I list colleagues because a number of them have been a blessing to me both personally and professionally. Some need encouragement and others encourage me, but to keep the relationship healthy, I need to focus on them as well.

Where are the other five? This includes my partial list of activities, actions, and people that are important to me. It's up to you to add five more to the list—or more if you wish. In fact, your list may be different, but I hope you will have a list. If you don't have one, you may be frustrated in your ministry. Just as a daily list helps us to have a more effective day, a long-term general list will be a blessing in our personal and professional life.

This December, or whenever you read this editorial, I hope you will start a list of people and activities that will enrich you. Whether you keep this document on paper, on your computer, or in your mind, visit it often. Revise this list regularly, but most importantly, focus on it. Such a list can function as a compass. It will not force you to do anything but will advise you so that you can make informed decisions about your personal and professional life. ■

* Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1955).

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Diamond leaders: When circumstances, character, and commitment combine

Branimir Schubert



Branimir Schubert, DMin, is vice-chancellor, Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

The closest I have ever been to real diamonds was during my days as a graduate student in France. No, my parents were not rich. They did not shower me with expensive jewelry.

On the contrary, to support my studies, I worked as a security guard in nearby Geneva, Switzerland, where I would spend the night patrolling various businesses that included world-famous banks, watch factories, and well-known jewelry shops. I always knew that “diamonds are forever,” and have known from the start that my wife will probably never own one. Thus, I accepted the fact that “diamonds are forever” out of my reach.

Recently, I was again exposed to diamonds. As I read an online article about them, it occurred to me that good leaders are much like diamonds—precious, rare, attracting attention, and impacting people’s lives. And so I thought, *Perhaps my wife will have a chance of owning a “diamond” after all; that is, if I can ever be what I call a “diamond leader.”*

Three aspects of a diamond

Some say leaders are born; other leaders are the product of circumstances. The debate continues, and much has been written arguing that leaders are “made” or developed.¹ My humble contribution to this dialogue brings no stunning new revelations. However, diamonds have taught me something significant that has helped me understand the qualities of a good leader.

First, diamonds are created under pressure. They are produced approximately 160 kilometers (100 miles) underground, where the pressure registers five times greater than on the surface, and where the temperature becomes hot enough to melt iron. With carbon exposed to such conditions, the circumstances are perfect to transform carbon into a diamond.

Similarly, I believe that leaders “emerge” under pressure. Circumstances “push” true leaders to the surface. Just like diamonds, they “erupt” when circumstances demand strong leadership.

As I reflect on my life as a pastor leading a church, the president of an educational institution, and now a vice-chancellor of a university, I can clearly see that I “emerged” as a leader when circumstances forced me to address and confront challenges and to chart a path for the future. No question, circumstances play a vital role in the creation of a “diamond leader.” The more severe the circumstances, the higher the chances of an ordinary person becoming an extraordinary leader.

However, circumstances are not enough. The second major element is the readiness of the individual to respond to challenges. I call this “character.”

A diamond contains nothing but carbon, but a big difference exists between “ordinary” carbon, which is transformed into graphite or charcoal (all very useful, but not precious), and a diamond. You can buy a pencil worth 50 cents, containing graphite, or you can buy a diamond, such as the Star of the Season, a 100-carat diamond, worth more than \$16.5 million.

Colorless diamonds are the most precious, and the rarest. Most diamonds are “contaminated” by yellow or brown tinting due to nitrogen or other unwanted substances. It is similar with people. When circumstances and character combine, the potential for something extraordinary emerges. The more “flawless” the character, the purer the motives, the higher the likelihood of ordinary people emerging as extraordinary.

Rough diamonds are not as valuable as those that have been polished and cut to reveal all their beauty and potential. Similarly, leaders that have the right character and have been exposed to conducive circumstances, will be of limited value unless they commit to further growth. All leaders are people who have a passion to continue developing their skills, to improve their leadership tools, and to maximize their potential influence.

Thus, all three elements, when harmoniously overlapping and working in unison, can potentially produce a “diamond leader.” However, in reality, leaders are rare, just like diamonds. Carbon is everywhere, charcoal and graphite abound, but diamonds are few.

Borts

Encarta describes the rarity of diamonds like this: “Totally colorless diamonds are very scarce; most contain varying traces of yellow or brown.”² Even so, less than 1 percent of all diamonds produced result in polished diamonds of over one carat in size. About 85,000 tons of rock are blasted and crushed in order to produce a handful of gems.

Leadership literature³ sounds alarm bells indicating a severe “leadership vacuum” in all vital areas—government, church, and business. Most potential leaders never make it to the diamond stage because of character flaws. This is not the time, nor the place, to start listing all the church leaders (nor to mention politicians and business leaders) who lost their positions because of character flaws. However, the vast army of unknown fallen leaders becomes even scarier—those pastors, chaplains, priests, local government leaders, corrupt politicians, and so forth, whose falls never make the front pages.

The “almost” leaders are those who have some aspects of leadership potential, but who do not allow themselves to grow or who do not become leaders of character and integrity. Instead, they often become disruptive to the organization. We’ve heard the saying, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” The “almost” leaders are unable to lead; they are not willing to follow; nor do they want to get out of the way. And so they “grind” in an abrasive manner, becoming “organizational bort.” They frustrate the vision; they become critics and morale killers. Their “almost” ability has an influence, but it is negative, draining enthusiasm and the positive attitude any organization needs to achieve its goals. And once they have succeeded in their efforts

to frustrate the victory of others, they point out how right they were to criticize in the first place!

The gift

In contrast, “diamond leaders” are extraordinary. They have the ability to go beyond simple usefulness to the organization and become shapers of the organization’s destiny. Through their positive sparkle and sharp vision, they chart the course, determine the way, and catch the imagination of the masses. Nobody marvels at the beauty of the sandpaper which is made of inferior diamond material, but everyone is stunned by the beauty of a stone that

spiritual gift of faith, all of us should have faith but some are especially gifted with extraordinary faith, able to move mountains. Similarly, extraordinary leaders are unique because they are gifted with the ability to move the most difficult mountains on this planet: people and organizations. They see what the future could be like; they articulate it, motivate people towards that future, and then outline the way to make the future a reality.

Scratch resistant

Diamonds have another quality: “Its scratch hardness is beyond that of all other materials. On the Mohs’ scale⁵

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has become precious, sparkling reflected light in amazing colors, and adding value to their owners.

There’s more. Encarta says, “Like graphite and charcoal, which is non-crystalline, diamond is an allotrope of carbon. It is the structure of its crystal lattice and the uniform bonding of the atoms within that together produce its exceptional optical and physical properties.”⁴

This is the secret—the internal structure and the uniform bonding of the atoms. Some individuals are “wired” for leadership. The Scriptures would call this the spiritual gift of leadership. Some are uniquely called to step up to the level of exceptional leadership. All of us have leadership abilities and potential, but some are especially gifted, called, and entrusted with the gift to influence others. Just like the

of hardness, diamond measures 10. Measured on a sclerometer,⁶ which moves a diamond across a surface under pressure until a scratch is produced, diamond is shown to be 140 times more scratch resistant than corundum (ruby and sapphire), regarded as the next hardest gemstone. In fact, only diamond will scratch diamond.”⁷

Diamond leaders can withstand pressure and will influence the environment rather than being influenced by it. By definition, leaders function in high pressure settings. Because leaders can identify problems and suggest needed changes, they create an environment of stress. Human nature prefers the status quo rather than change, and so leaders need to be “scratch resistant.” Harsh words will be spoken, criticism will be whispered, and confrontations and conflict will be a reality. How a leader

handles these pressures will determine their ability to make a difference.

To be “scratch resistant” is not, however, the same as being tough. We learn from Encarta: “Another important physical property different from hardness, although often confused with it, is toughness. This is the ability to resist disruption under pressure. A diamond in a vice will withstand extreme pressure and puncture the steel jaws.”⁸

Adversity and challenges tend to demonstrate the true leaders. X-rays and heat are used to differentiate between real diamonds and fakes. Adversity, setbacks, apparently hopeless situations, the desire to give up or let

skills, attitudes, and character needed to lead effectively.

Another quality comes through: “Important optical properties of a polished diamond—other than its color—are seen in its high refractive index (2.4175), high degree of clarity, color dispersion, reflectivity, adamantine luster, and scintillation.”⁹

Leaders are masters of reflecting reality: they capture the present and reflect it back to their followers, thus providing reasons for change and motivating followers to something better. No individual or organization will want to change unless there is not only a clear understanding of the present but a vision of a better, preferable future.

“Many diamonds exhibit fluorescence when exposed to sunlight or ultraviolet light. The color is usually light blue, but yellow, orange, green, milky-white, and red fluorescence may occur in some gems.”¹⁰

Materials that fluoresce are those that give off light after absorbing energy. Similarly, leaders absorb reality and reflect it back, but they do so in such a way so as to provide a more “fluorescent” future, a future of a different “color”—something that will excite followers into positive action.

Conclusion

Who are you? A “pencil leader”—soft, brittle, insignificant, half used, and discarded, or a “diamond leader”—strong, unique, rare, and making a difference?

Diamonds have always created controversy; they have never left those who see them unaffected. Some diamonds have created political upheavals; other diamonds have a reputation of being “cursed.” Most diamonds, though, add value to their owners, make this world a better place, and point to something eternal, something better than what we call the present.

Our church today needs “diamond leaders,” those who are committed,

who have impeccable characters, and able to withstand any pressure for the greater good. It’s a calling, one requiring commitment and, indeed, the utmost humility. ❏

- 1 The six main theories of leadership can be (chronologically) summarized as (1) *Great Man Theory*, a leader, typically male, is born with the necessary qualities for leadership; (2) *Trait Theory*, an attempt to identify traits such as physical build, intelligence, etc., as instrumental to someone becoming a leader; (3) *Behavior Theory*, an attempt to define what a leader does rather than who they are; (4) *Contingency Theory*, explores the context and other situational variables contributing to the development of a leader; (5) *Influence Theory*, focuses on the charismatic abilities of the person to influence others; and (6) *Relational Theory*, leadership is viewed as a relational process. Emerging leadership theories focus on facilitating change in the context of an unpredictable environment. Perhaps the best summary of various theories can be found in Richard L. Daft’s *The Leadership Experience* (Mason, OH: Thomson; n.p.: South-Western, 2005). The most compelling argument for the concept of leaders being developed rather than born has been articulated by J. Robert Clinton in his book *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988).
- 2 All quotes relating to diamonds are from Microsoft® Encarta® 2007. © 1993–2006 Microsoft Corporation.
- 3 The June 2007 issue of *Christian Management Report* focuses on the “leadership deficit” and articles such as “Short Supply, Expanding Demand” by Thomas J. Tierney and “In Search of Leaders” by Barry Swanson explore this reality. See *Christian Management Report* 31, no. 3, (June 2007).
- 4 Microsoft® Encarta® 2007.
- 5 *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines *Mohs’ scale* as “a scale of hardness for minerals that ranges from a value of 1 for talc to 10 for diamond.” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, s.v. “Mohs’ scale,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Mohs%20scale> (accessed 2008).
- 6 An instrument used by mineralogists to measure the scratch hardness of materials. *www.About.com* defines it as “an instrument for the determination of hardness by means of a scratch with a diamond pyramid.” “Composites/Plastics,” *About.com*, <http://composite.about.com/library/glossary/s/bldef-s4722.htm>.
- 7 Microsoft® Encarta® 2007.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*



go—these are the challenges Christian leaders need to confront. To be tough is not the same as being heartless, just as being “scratch resistant” is not the same as being emotionally untouchable and unavailable. In this environment, Christian leaders can set the standard and demonstrate an alternative to the “survival of the fittest” marketplace mentality.

Top of the game

Another significant point is that leaders need other leaders in order to stay sharp. Only other leaders can help hone the skills needed and provide the coaching and mentoring necessary to stay “on top of the game.” Therefore, it is vital that there is constant exposure to what others are doing, thinking, writing, and saying. This becomes an integral part of growing and developing the

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International Journal for Pastors

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 - d. Ministry (preaching, leadership, counseling, evangelism, etc.)
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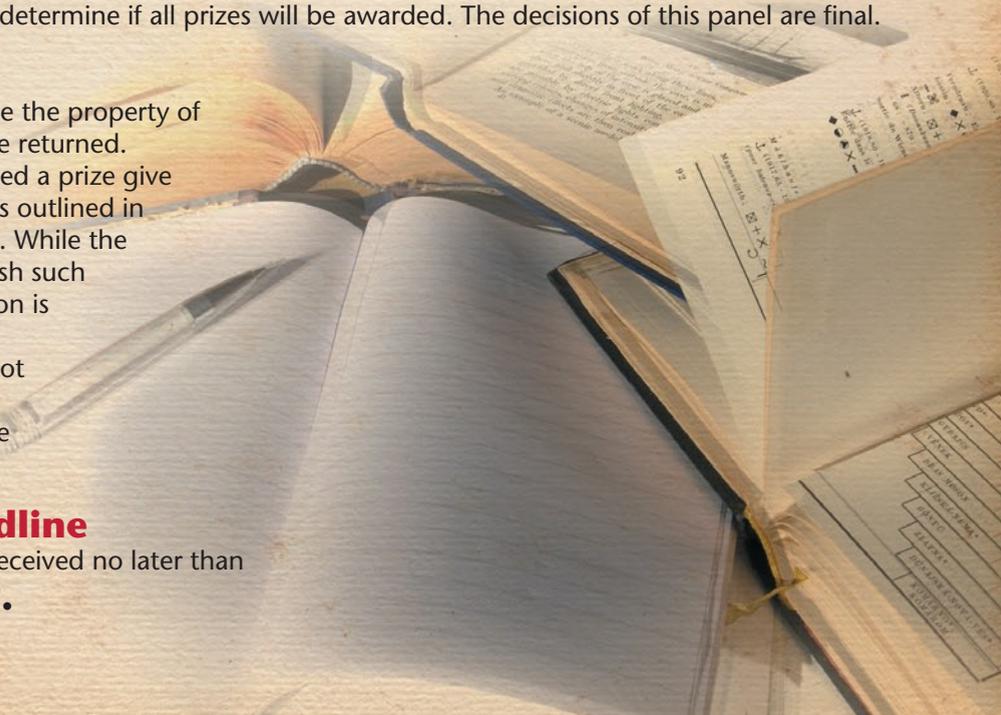
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Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than

JUNE 30, 2009.



2009: The “Year of Evangelism”

Willie E. Hucks II



Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, is the associate editor of *Ministry* magazine.

Editor's note: The 2008 Spring Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to designate 2009 as the Year of Evangelism and that this special evangelistic reaping emphasis continues until the General Conference Session in Atlanta in June 2010. The North American Division of the church in November 2007 voted a similar designation. The interview with Ron Clouzet, ministerial secretary for North America and Bill McClendon, a pastor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States, shows how one part of the world church focuses on evangelism.

Willie Hucks (WH): What is the origin of this “Year of Evangelism” initiative?

Ron Clouzet (RC): This began at an annual North American Division (NAD) Ministerial Secretary Advisory Committee held at Andrews University in January 2007. In April 2007, the Year of Pastoral Evangelism Committee met, and that’s where the initiative took shape that led to the personal pastoral goals of two meetings a year and the NAD goal of 100,000 baptisms. In November 2007, the initiative was voted at the year-end meeting. This began as a pastoral initiative that was later revised as a general evangelism initiative.

WH: What do you wish to accomplish as a result of this emphasis?

RC: Revival in the Adventist Church in North America. We can’t just wish for things to happen,

for 100,000 people to be baptized. We can’t simply work hard for that to happen. Many pastors, church members, and other church leaders are working hard already for what we are getting—which is a third of that number. This is really an impossible objective that will call for us to first go to our knees, secondly to work together, and thirdly to make personal commitment. If those things happen, there’s going to be a revival in the Adventist Church in North America and that revival will lead to church growth.

Bill McClendon (BMcC): We talk about what we hope to accomplish. I don’t sense it’s just the 100,000 baptisms. What we really hope to accomplish is that pastors, church leaders, and church members re-engage in the work that Jesus has asked us to do: share the gospel. In a very intentional way, we need to again reconnect with the mission that Jesus asked us to do, and that is to share the gospel with our friends, our neighbors, and our communities.

WH: Is this thrust limited to just church pastors?

RC: No, lay members are very much a part of this. But we encourage pastors and other church leaders to take the lead in reaching out to others, to be bold and unapologetic about making our faith the first thing.

BMcC: I agree. It started out with this idea of re-engaging pastors, but as we began to develop the ideas and what would happen, we saw every church being involved in intentional evangelism twice during 2009. Thinking about that, there is no way that pastors and church leaders could be able to do that without the support of lay people. Everybody ought to be engaged in evangelism. Pastors and other church leaders should take the lead not only in conducting public evangelism, but also to invite church members to be a part of that process by mentoring and training them. Then we hope that in 2010, we will have a focus on lay evangelism where everybody, not only pastors continuing their cycle but laypersons as well, is engaged in evangelism.

WH: What are your roles? Are you coordinating this? Are you involved in other ways in this, such as satellite evangelism? Do you have any additional roles to play?

BMcC: I am part of the pastor’s advisory committee where this originally initiated. I’ve been invited to be a part of the evangelism committee,

and I'm now part of a steering committee that is currently meeting. In addition to that, I'm a pastor and my role is to be engaged in public evangelism at my local church.

RC: This initial idea preceded my becoming ministerial secretary for the Adventist Church in North America by a number of months. I was, at the time, the associate ministerial secretary for North America.

I was chair of the initial committee that developed the initial basic goals. We have put together a steering committee that has been working for about six months now.

WH: *What do you hope will transpire after this initiative concludes?*

RC: A new way of doing business. That we as a church realize that what we're about is accomplishing the mission of the church: leading people to Jesus. My hope is that it will cause us to think about new priorities—new emphasis on spiritual fervor and growth because we recognize that unless we ourselves are converted, we will not truly love others, nor can we introduce others to Jesus. So I hope that it will help the church recognize that we're not about the business of maintenance, about the business of institution building, or about the business of being just a respectable religious organization. I want our paradigm to shift from one of thinking that the mission of the church needs to be accomplished by

professionals and technology to that of believing that my mission is right outside my front door.

BMcC: I think many of us that have been involved in this initiative hope that in some sense it won't be over, but it will have such an effect on churches, pastors, and church members that in a real sense this initiative will never be over until Jesus comes. We hope that churches

WH: *I know there's an Adventist ministries convention in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in January 2009. Please tell our readers what will take place there. I'm assuming also that a part of this meeting focuses on falling in love with Jesus. How do we go about doing this? Will all of this be addressed in the meeting there?*

RC: The theme is "Come and See: Renewing the Urgent Call to New

Testament Evangelism." So that comes right out of Matthew 28:6, 7, where the women were invited to come and see for themselves that Jesus had been resurrected before they could go and tell. So, that is one of the objectives. We can't help others stand up unless we have a personal, vibrant, and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. But in a practical

venue, the Myrtle Beach meeting is being offered to the pastors for the first time. Historically that meeting is for conference directors. They bring in conference and division directors and departmental directors. Rarely do they have any pastors. Now it is open for pastors to come. We've been encouraging pastors to come. A committee has

worked on designing dozens of workshops that have pastors in mind to help them gain resources for church-based evangelism. I fully agree with Bill that we hope this doesn't end and that this will be something that is ongoing. My hope is that North America will not see this as a one-time thing. I would hate to see us have an emphasis one year



Ron Clouzet



Bill McClendon



will be transformed and become mission focused, that people will become connected with sharing the gospel in such a way that evangelism will cease to be an activity or a program that a church does once a year or once every few years. In addition, that such a lifestyle will become a part of the fabric of what we are and what we do as a church.

on evangelism and then after that say, "Well, that was interesting." My hope is that we continue to plan, based on this in 2009 and for the future. How do we make this—the next quinquennium, for the next ten years, and so forth and so on—a lifestyle for our pastors and church members?

WH: *What do you want the readers of Ministry to do about all that we have discussed during this interview?*

simply an event. That's why the suggestion is to have two meetings a year. Go out on a limb for God, go beyond anything you've been comfortable in doing thus far. Learn to really trust God, to put Him to the test. When it comes to evangelism, God loves to be put to the test. He can be trusted because it is His expressed will that we reach the world. So, let's do it and not be afraid of failure, and not be afraid of small results, and not be afraid of lack of support. Let's just do

to a church. We need to understand that our first work is to pray.

RC: I have been hearing some very encouraging things from throughout North America—stories about courageous decisions made by leaders and pastors in conferences. For instance, the Georgia-Cumberland Conference is putting two million dollars extra into evangelism this year. They're raising that money, and they have voted a goal that is

MY HOPE IS THAT IT [YEAR OF EVANGELISM] WOULD
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BMcC: I would say *to get involved, to be a part of what we believe will be the beginning of the most ambitious, aggressive movement in the church here in North America, to get serious about taking the gospel to our friends and neighbors, to be involved at a local church level.* We're asking every church to do two evangelistic meetings in 2009. There are specific dates that we have set: April 17 and September 11, with the idea that every church in North America on those same weekends will open their doors and harmoniously work to preach the gospel. Every person being involved in sharing the gospel through a local church and through preaching; that is really what we're hoping the members will do. Not just go to some training, not just go to a meeting and get inspired, but will actually find a way to, in their own communities, re-engage in evangelism.

RC: I agree. My answer is *engage.* Just *engage.* Evangelism is a process, not

it and keep doing it. We'll get better at it, and God will find that we are serious about it, and He will keep blessing. Just engage. Go to the Web site, www.yearofevangelism.org, register, and move forward. Don't wait for anybody else to move. You move.

WH: *Do you have any closing thoughts for our readers?*

BMcC: This initiative, these goals, as Ron has said, are not just about spending more money, it's not about a better brochure, it's not about the technical side of it; rather, it is really a call to get on our knees. On January 3, the first Sabbath of 2009, we're looking at having a division-wide prayer event, so that before we even engage in the work of evangelism, we will begin, as churches, to pray and ask God to lead us through this process. We'll have various prayer events throughout the year, as well as resources and other materials that can be available

three times larger than what they usually have. The Minnesota Conference is doing the same thing. The Texas Conference, for instance, is already 30 percent ahead of last year in terms of church growth because they're already engaged. The Southern Union has a goal of a 10 percent increase in their membership. They typically have 3 percent growth. They are providing resources for their pastors. They're not waiting for North America to do this or that. It's those kinds of stories that are being repeated all throughout this country. That's encouraging.

WH: *I thank you all so very much. I know our readers are going to be blessed, and we're going to encourage pastors and others to pray for this initiative, for revival, for reformation, for growth, for every blessing that the Holy Spirit has for all of us. M*

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Why do You permit this, oh Lord?

The problem of evil and pastoral practice¹

Aleksandar S. Santrac



Aleksandar S. Santrac, DPhil, at the time of this writing, was pastor of Ivry sur Seine and Neuilly sur Seine churches in Paris, France.

Several years ago, I went through a time of intense suffering. My sister who was only 25 years old was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She was not a Christian believer at the time she was diagnosed, but she was living according to the health principles in the hope that her disease would pass somehow. She went through totally innocent sufferings. When I visited her in the hospital the last time before her death (as her brother, but also as her pastor), I still saw in her an extraordinary desire to live. When I had to tell her that I came to prepare her for death and to call her to commit her life totally to Christ, she still did not believe that it was the end. However, although the doctors said that she would live 15 more days at the most, she lived almost three times as long. During the time she was bedridden, she watched several evangelistic meetings on DVD, committed her life to her Savior and Lord, and was baptized on her deathbed in December 2003, exactly 40 days before she died.

Thank God for this final decision and the obvious revelation of His powerful grace. I am sure that the epitaph on her grave, from John 11:25, indeed reflects her and our faith in the resurrection of the righteous. But still, every time Christmas and New Year approach (times when both my sister and my father died), although God *did* reveal something of His explanation of this suffering, the same question returns to my mind again and again: *Why did You permit this, oh Lord?*

I do not know whether the death of my sister could even partially be called *horrendous evil*, but truly there are many other examples of human beings who suffered much more than my sister or my family. The history of humanity is full of horrendous evil. If we just pondered upon the specific cases in history, we would be overwhelmed by the intensity and duration of suffering that God has permitted: the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Vietnam War, Russian gulags, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Iraq, to name a few. In all these extreme cases of suffering, human dignity and personality were degraded, which explains why philosophers and theologians partly see in them a real threat to the theistic explanation of this world, namely, that the world has been created and sustained by the omnipotent and benevolent Creator.

Furthermore, behind each of these general evils lies particular horrendous evil or suffering. Marilyn McCord Adams, in her book *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God*, makes a point that many particularly horrendous forms of evil make it difficult to explain the goodness of God and are “dysteleological horrors.” In other words, these evils could not be explained through general theodicy (or defense of God) because they do not have any *telos* (purpose) for the participants in these horrors.² Adams just confirms the fact that horrendous evils could not be explained in general theories or theodicies (theoretical abstractions about the relation between evil and a benevolent and omnipotent God). Naturally, in order to solve this problem of contradiction between horrendous evil and the goodness of God, one has to “prove” that this goodness of God exists and works in the case of the particulars, namely, that God is good to individuals who participate in this radical form of evil.³ This, of course, poses the problem, both theoretically and then practically, in our own human experience.

In this article, I would first like to explore some contemporary, controversial issues within the philosophical discussion of the problem of evil and then try to offer some practical guidelines as to how to approach those who go through intense suffering, especially in the context of pastoral ministry.

Philosophical and theological discussion

Throughout the history of the philosophical problem of evil, there were many who offered relevant solutions or theodicies. Of all of them, it seems that Alvin Plantinga offered the closest solution faithful to the general Christian

worldview. He stated that God had to allow the exercise of the free will of His creatures because a world

containing creatures who are sometimes significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but he cannot cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if he does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, he must create creatures capable of moral evil; and he cannot leave these creatures free to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. God did in fact create significantly free creatures; but some of them went wrong in the exercise of their freedom: this is the source of moral evil. The fact that these free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against his goodness; for he could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by excising the possibility of moral good.⁴

To sum up this argument of Plantinga, he affirms that God could not create free creatures (in the very meaning of freedom as nondetermined by God) and at the same time prevent all evil in the world. That is why God had to create persons capable of moral evil. There are many different approaches and even limitations of free will defense or free will theodicy,⁵ but two of them are significant. The first, we already have seen in Adams's critique of the problem of the general presentation of the issue. Plantinga's theory never answers the problem of particular horrendous evil to the particular individual who needs to believe in the goodness of God. It is too general. The second critique comes from the evaluation of the free will. As D. Z. Phillips commented, "Hasn't God given us too much freedom? Why couldn't he curtail it from time to time when there is an obvious need to do

so? Such curtailment would show no lack of respect for human freedom. We may have the greatest respect for the freedom and independence of others, but we would not hesitate to intervene to save a person from impending disaster. Often, it is the least we could do. Why doesn't God do the same?"⁶ Here, Phillips had in mind cases such as the real situation of multiple raping, torturing and killing of a small innocent girl by a group of young men. This horrendous evil per se could never be explained by the respect of free will in order to prove the goodness of God.

Therefore, although free will theodicy offers the crucial insight into the problem of God's permission of horrendous evils, it still does not solve the problem of the goodness of God to individuals and the problem of too much value of freedom in the face of extreme suffering.

The solution lies elsewhere. Philosophically and theologically speaking, there might be the closest solution to the problem of evil in the great controversy theory. Speaking about the causes of sin and suffering in this world, Ellen G. White says,

The inhabitants of heaven and of the other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature of the consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question. . . . Thus, the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy

intelligences to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments.⁷

Ellen White clearly states that the solution does not lie only in the permission of the exercise of our freedom but in God's permission of exercise of Satan's primitive plans in order to secure the eternal good of the universe. This position, therefore, is founded on two pillars. The first is eternal purpose in God's mind and the second is the mysterious unleashing of Satan's intentions. Let us briefly discuss both of these points.

In the broader discussion of the "eternal purpose," valuable is the citation by John R. Schneider, who comments on the book of Job in the context of horrendous evils that God allows. "It is very hard to see how what God permitted to happen to Job was necessary to bring about some indispensable great good. The only candidate I can see for this is the kind of wisdom that Job acquired—not in spite of his experiences, but directly because of them. . . . Perhaps it is the kind of wisdom that human beings must acquire and possess in order to have a mature relationship with God forever in heaven. I do not see why this scenario is implausible."⁸ Schneider made a very insightful comment here. When God permits evil, He has some specific goal in mind. Even in horrendous forms of evil, His intent (general, but also particular) is to have a perfect and mature relationship with His creatures. This is a perpetual safeguard against future rebellion. While it is true that it is extremely difficult to fit the scene of the raped and tortured girl into this perhaps general picture, there still might be a possibility that God's goodness becomes somehow justified in the face of His eternal purpose, although we must humbly admit that we do not always know how.

Speaking about the second pillar of the great controversy, or Satan's role in the problem of evil, in the context of the book of Job the Lord never said to Job and his friends that there was a being such as Satan, but He affirms the

fact that He does not rule the universe arbitrarily and that He is always in conflict with “Leviathan and Behemoth,” forces of evil sometimes totally out of control.⁹ Therefore, in the atmosphere of the so-called grudging domestication, God has to allow the development of evils caused by Satan and his cohorts just because the war has not ended. The sovereignty of God is not questioned in Job, but is severely challenged by the freedom of true agents of evil. Job admits his ignorance in regard to this mysterious reality of the cosmos. Grudging domestication reflects the reality that God does not like the permitting of Satan’s freedom, but still something seemingly mysterious exists in that God has to allow this evil being to almost fully develop its plans. God is sovereign, but because of His eternal love and eternal wisdom and purpose (perspectives we very often lose), He enters into this conflict with a limited but still relevant being of the evil one.

To sum up, not only the free will but the mysterious relationship between God’s eternal purposes and unleashed activities of agents of evil provide formal framework for better insight into the problem of intense suffering.

After this discussion on the problem of evil,¹⁰ I offer some practical suggestions for pastoral ministry.

Guidelines for pastoral ministry

French philosopher Simone Weil, who dealt much with the problem of evil, once said, “To those who live in this world, everything can happen without any rule.” It seems that the philosopher Van Inwagen is also correct when he states that

much of the evil in the world is due to chance. There is generally no explanation of why this evil happened to that person. What there is—is an explanation of why evils happen to people without any reason. And the explanation is: that is the part of what being separated from God means: it means being the playthings of chance. It means living

in a world in which innocent children die horribly for no reason at all, and it means something worse than that: it means living in a world in which the wicked, through sheer luck, often prosper. Anyone who does not want to live in such a world, a world in which we are the playthings of chance, had better accept God’s offer of a way out of that world.¹¹

What else could we say to Christian believers except this valuable insight? This is the objective reality of the problem and no one can deny it. It calls for reflection upon our reality of suffering but also for the final “exit” provided by the grace of God.

In our practical application of this principle and in the face of philosophical-theological discussion above, there are a few guidelines I think we should follow in our work with those who went through horrendous forms of evil, or any evil that subjectively seems horrendous to particular persons.

Do not defend God. If we try intellectually and rationally to defend God’s benevolence or love to the person in the particular circumstances of horrendous sufferings, we will always forget something of the whole picture. The explanation is beyond human understanding and comprehension—beyond our grasp of the whole because we are limited. Free will theodicy might be closest to the general solution, but still how do we explain God’s silence in the case of particular innocent suffering (like the suffering by the genetic disease as in my sister’s case)? Some kinds of sufferings are not caused by the wrong exercise of anyone’s free will and no one is really guilty, they are caused by mysterious and unexplained chance. They just happen. We do not know why particular sufferings happen to particular persons. Let us be cautious not to play God’s role. Victor Hugo once said that if we could explain God (in the context of the problem of evil), we would be God.

Allow the person to question and lament. Without questioning God and the reality of suffering, there is no true faith. Allow the member of your congregation to ask. As the victim, they

need to be completely free in expressing intellectual doubts, emotions, fears, laments, and even accusations of God.¹² This is the only way to possible healing because after this purification process or catharsis, comes the “vision” of God (like in the book of Job). God Himself will permit this person to express their feelings and doubts and if they are honest and their life is going not *from* but *toward* God, God will first reveal Himself as the true Comforter and, second, He might even explain reasons for permission of the suffering, if necessary. We, as pastors, very often do not like expressions of faith through doubt and lament. Sincerity, however, includes these expressions and we should praise this sincerity in our members.

Be compassionate. Compassion remains as the only secure attitude toward the sufferers because it is Christ-like. It seems that without compassion it would not be possible for anyone to transcend the intense suffering. Show compassion to the particular person by specific actions and words. Compassion also includes forgiveness of sins if the person is guilty for the suffering they experience. Compassion is always the key to complete understanding. Be sympathetic and considerate.

Emphasize the great controversy. Although we do not have final solutions, we might emphasize the eternal purpose of God. Persons who are going through intense suffering still need to keep their faith in God, who is at the same time sovereign and benevolent. They also need to understand that we are at war and it is not over yet. The mysterious unleashing of Satan could be felt by anyone, anywhere. This mysterious whole theory or great controversy theme might trigger the sense of divinity within the heart and bring some comfort or correction of a wrong accusation of God for a particular evil.

Direct the sufferer to participate in Christ’s suffering. Finally, even when we’ve used all our silence, compassion, and true theological and spiritual insights to help those who go through intense forms of suffering, there is one more thing to do: guide the person to Christ. This seems simple, but it is not.

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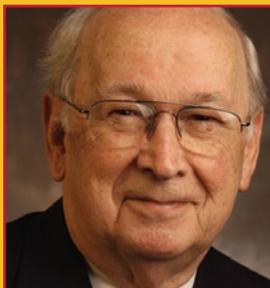


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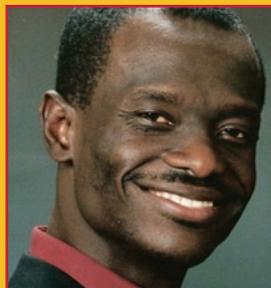


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Chris Oberg currently serves as senior pastor of the 1200-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in Calimesa, California. She describes her assignment as "life's grandest blessings: to be among colleagues for whom church matters, and to be with a congregation seriously seeking to follow Jesus in a complex world. Well, it doesn't get more rewarding." Weekly, Chris opens the scriptures — which are both inspiring and troubling, comforting and challenging, simple and yet profound — always ancient words relevant for today. Chris Oberg is an alumna of La Sierra University, School of Religion in California, completing both a BA and an MA in Religion, with emphasis in New Testament Studies and Theology.



Michael Quicke is professor of preaching at Northern Seminary in Illinois. Educated at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, he spent 21 years in pastoral ministry in Blackburn, Lancashire, England and at the historical city-center church of St. Andrew's Street in Cambridge, where a mission center was developed and opened serving 4000 people weekly. Since 1993 he has served in seminaries, first as Principal of Spurgeon's College, the largest Baptist seminary in Europe, and since 2000 by teaching preaching in the United States. His reputation as a Christian communicator has grown through television and radio appearances and at conferences throughout Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Author of many articles, his main books include *360-Degree Preaching* and *360-Degree Leadership*. He was recently named as "one of the premier thinkers and writers on preaching today" by *Preaching* (July 2007).



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Through intense suffering, people are inclined to blame Christ and not to love Him. For this reason, we need to direct them to Christ by telling them about the participation in Christ's sufferings. The apostle Paul considered this participation a special call and an honor¹³ and we know how intensely Paul was suffering. Through the power of Christ's grace, we may love and honor Him even in a horrendous form of suffering, but only if we voluntarily accept participation in His sufferings as a special call of God. This is something to be grasped or to be rejected. Every disciple decides whether they will follow Christ through the suffering or not. In this participation, it seems, lies the ultimate theoretical, practical, and pastoral solution to the problem of radical suffering that will be very soon erased from the face of the earth once and for all.

Until that final point of history, it might be useful to have in mind C. S. Lewis's remark: "If tribulation is a necessary element in redemption, we

must anticipate that it will never cease till God sees the world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable."¹⁴



- 1 This article is partially the summary of recently published work of Aleksandar S. Santrac, *An Evaluation of Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense: Whether Our Power To Do Bad is Something Good*, with Interview and Comments of Alvin Plantinga (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 2008). <https://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=7353&pc=9>.
- 2 Marylin McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evil and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 4 Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 93, 94.
- 5 See Santrac, *An Evaluation of Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense: Whether Our Power To Do Bad is Something Good*, 19–36.
- 6 D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 106.
- 7 Ellen G. White, "Why Were Sin and Suffering Permitted?" in *The Great Conflict Between Christ and Satan* (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990), 279, 280.
- 8 John R. Schneider, "Seeing God Where the Wild Things Are," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of*

Evil, Peter Van Inwagen, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 256.

- 9 Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 223–226.
- 10 For further philosophical-theological investigations of the problem of evil, see two compilations of the articles by famous philosophers of religion and theologians: William L. Rowe, ed. *God and the Problem of Evil* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), or Peter Van Inwagen, ed. *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).
- 11 Peter Van Inwagen, 72.
- 12 See the excellent reference book for pastoral ministry and the problem of evil by John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 104. Swinton says that the lament is very often overlooked by pastors, and that this repeated sorrow mixed with rage is a prayer not only for the purpose of purification but also to prove to the whole universe that the person is the victim (*ibid.*, 104).
- 13 Colossians 1:24 or Philippians 2:5–11.
- 14 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000), 114.

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Sequence preaching: How to design and prepare an effective sermon series

Derek J. Morris



Derek J. Morris, DMin, is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apopka, Florida, United States.

Have you ever found yourself staring at a blank sheet of paper or at a blank computer screen wondering what you'll preach next week? If so, then consider sequence preaching. Preaching a *series* of sermons has advantages for everyone. The preacher isn't starting from ground zero every week, and the listeners have a sense of direction and purpose.

It is not difficult to convince most preachers and listeners that sequence preaching consists of a good idea. What may be more challenging is to know where to begin.

A simple five-step process follows, field tested in a local church, that will help you craft an effective sermon series.

Step 1: Select a sermon series theme

Sequence preaching can be expository or topical. One option includes picking a book from the Bible and preaching either the whole thing or a portion. A second option would be to choose a topic or theme and then select a series of messages that develop your theme.

Your listeners can help you with the selection process. Each year I organize a sermon planning group. This group of 12 to 15 individuals (you can use a smaller number, if needed) commits to a 30-day assignment of talking to family, friends, and neighbors about topics for a possible sermon series. Many excellent ideas for expository and topical series emerge from this audience analysis.

You will invariably end up with more suggestions for sermon series than you can accomplish in one calendar year. Then you can ask for feedback from your leadership team in order to select the best options.¹

Soliciting feedback from your listeners regarding a possible sermon series creates a sense of excitement and anticipation. One couple went online and purchased a book for me that they thought would be helpful for a sermon series. They were not even members of our congregation!

Step 2: Determine the number of sermons in the series

Once you have decided on a particular book or theme, determine the number of sermons that should be included. In determining the number of sermons for an expository series, thought units are more helpful guides than chapter divisions.² I listened to one pastor preach a series of 21 sermons on the book of John. He decided to take one chapter each week. That works reasonably well with certain books, such as Daniel, but not for the Gospel of John. Look at John 2. How many thought units can you find in that one chapter? At least two. John 2:1–11 records the miracle at Cana. John 2:12–25 records the first cleansing of the temple. Similarly, there are multiple thought units in John 3 and John 4.

As a young preacher, I spent two years preaching through the Gospel of Luke. It was a welcome change from the panic of staring at a blank sheet of paper each week. My preaching passage was preselected—the next thought unit in the Gospel of Luke. The text was rich and varied, and both the preacher and the listeners enjoyed the journey through the Word of God.

Just be aware that you need to choose your text carefully if you intend to preach an extended sermon series. You also need to think about the attention span of your listeners. If you spent the whole year preaching through Ecclesiastes, everyone would be soon crying out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

As a rule, I limit each series from four to six sermons.³ We live in an era when people have short attention spans. You might need to preach on a portion of a book rather than the entire text. I have preached a six-part series on an entire book of the Bible, and I've also preached a four-part series on four verses.

An example of an expository series from Paul's letter to the Philippians follows. This series was entitled "Rejoicing in the Lord" and covered the entire epistle:

- “Two Reasons to Rejoice,” based on Phil. 1:1–11
- “Rejoicing in the Midst of Adversity,” based on Phil. 1:12–30
- “Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory,” based on Phil. 2:1–11
- “Rejoicing Together,” based on Phil. 2:12–30
- “Rejoicing in Jesus Alone,” based on Phil. 3:1–4:1
- “Always Rejoicing,” based on Phil. 4:2–23

An example of a series on a portion of a book follows. This four-part series on James 5:13–16 was entitled “Prayer, Praise, and Healing”:

- “Is Anyone Among You Suffering?” based on James 5:13a
- “Is Anyone Cheerful?” based on James 5:13b
- “Is Anyone Sick?” based on James 5:14
- “Heal Me, O Lord” based on James 5:14–16

If I had given such careful attention to the entire epistle, we could have spent several years in James. That might have been educational, but I’m sure that most listeners would welcome more variety.

For an expository and topical series, I preached a four-part series based on Luke 24:13–45.

The series was entitled “The Emmaus Road”:

- “The Testimony of Cleopas”
- “The Testimony of Moses”
- “The Testimony of the Prophets”
- “The Testimony of the Psalmists”



Step 3: Develop a reading list

Once you have decided on a series and the number of sermons in it, you are ready to develop a reading list. For both an expository and a topical series of sermons, your primary source of information should always be the inspired text. When preaching through a book or portion of Scripture, the thought unit determines the parameters of your study. For a

can be purchased at a great discount. I generally purchase good quality, used books online, saving time and energy.

Step 4: Create a visual motif for the sermon series

One of the advantages of sequence preaching includes focusing on a particular passage or theme for an extended period. This provides the opportunity for



topical series, you will look for a passage or passages of Scripture that address the subject under consideration.

As you develop your reading list, consult with at least one resource person who has expertise related to the content of the sermon series. For example, when preparing for a series of 12 messages on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, I consulted a New Testament scholar whose Matthew library is larger than my entire New Testament library. After we had a stimulating discussion, this New Testament scholar recommended five books that became the primary volumes on my reading list.

If you plan your preaching calendar well in advance, you can solicit the assistance of individuals from far and near. With some advance planning on your part, the books on your reading list

your worship team (if your church has one) to create a visual motif for the entire series. For example, in preparation for a six-part sermon series on Philippians, we printed several thousand parchment scrolls of the Philippian letter, which could be given to listeners. Students from the church school helped to roll the scrolls, creating some anticipation and a sense of active involvement in the upcoming series. This Philippian scroll became the dominant visual motif for the series. Listeners were encouraged to actively participate during each message by reading portions of the epistle from their scroll. They were also encouraged to take their scrolls home for further study. To see worshipers coming to church each week with their copies of the Philippian scroll in their hands was a beautiful sight.

For a topical sermon series on healthy Christians, we acquired a balance beam from a local gymnastics school.⁴ Members of our worship team purchased and painted large styrofoam letters that spelled out the words *Healthy Christians* (see photo on previous page). These letters were placed on the balance beam, along with the silhouette of a gymnast. The nonverbal message was

concise, and memorable. Your preaching idea is the single dominant thought that you want your listeners to remember. As your series unfolds, you might wish to take a few moments to review the preaching idea from each preceding sermon in the series.⁶ This will heighten a sense of unity and progress as you lead your listeners on a journey through the Word of God.

implementing this simple five-step process, or any variation thereof, for the design and preparation of an effective sermon series. ■

DEVELOPING A POWERFUL VISUAL MOTIF BECOMES DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, IF THE PASSAGE OR THEME SHIFTS DRASTICALLY EVERY WEEK. SEQUENCE PREACHING PROVIDES TIME TO DEVELOP AND UTILIZE A POWERFUL VISUAL MOTIF THAT WILL BE REMEMBERED LONG AFTER THE SERIES HAS ENDED.

clear: this sermon series on healthy Christians is all about balance.

Developing a powerful visual motif becomes difficult, if not impossible, if the passage or theme shifts drastically every week. Sequence preaching provides time to develop and utilize a powerful visual motif that will be remembered long after the series has ended.

Step 5: Craft a powerful preaching idea for each sermon in the series

When preaching a series, remember the basics: each message should be the communication of a single powerful idea.⁵ For both expository and topical preaching, that single dominant thought may be derived from the text. That big idea from the text usually needs to be restated in order to make it contemporary,

Once you have completed the series, you have a resource that members can share. At the conclusion of a ten-part expository series on the book of Daniel, we gave away more than ten thousand CDs. Doing so extends the impact of your preaching ministry. Your sermon series could also be made available on your church Web site or podcast on iTunes.⁷

Conclusion

Of course, not all churches have all the resources I have mentioned here. That's fine. Take what you can and apply it the best you can to your own situation. You won't be sorry. Sequence preaching has been practiced for centuries and for good reason. The next time that you find yourself staring at a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen, consider

- 1 For more information about a sermon planning group, see the article "From Panic to Purpose" in the September 2004 issue of *Ministry*, or chapter 18 of *Powerful Biblical Preaching* by Derek J. Morris, General Conference Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005.
- 2 There are rare occasions when chapter divisions and thought units run parallel to each other. When preparing a series of messages on the book of Daniel, I discovered that the first nine chapters of the book of Daniel are distinct thought units. Daniel 10–12, on the other hand, is a single thought unit. With this in mind, I developed a ten-part sermon series on the book of Daniel. This series can be viewed online at www.forestlakechurch.org. Manuscripts of this ten-part expository sermon series are available at www.preachwithpower.com.
- 3 My longest sermon series in recent years was a 13-part series on the Ten Commandments, entitled, "Words of Blessing: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments." When planning the series, I sensed that I would need at least ten sermons, one for each commandment. I chose to add a first-person narrative at the beginning of the series to set some historical background and to conclude the series with two additional sermons: one on "The Two Great Commandments" according to the teachings of Jesus, and a final sermon called "Disposable?" which addressed the issue of the perpetuity of the moral law. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the listeners maintained interest and focus for the entire 13-part series.
- 4 The Healthy Christians series was comprised of six messages: "Healthy Lifestyles," "Healthy Families," "Healthy Finances," "Healthy Relationships," "Healthy Bodies," and "Healthy Minds." The Healthy Christians sermon series is available as part of the Adventist Preaching DVD series, volume 11, at www.acn.info or call 1-800-ACN-1119.
- 5 Jesus modeled the importance of communicating a single dominant idea. See "Lord, Teach Us to Preach!" in the October 2001 issue of *Ministry*, or chapter 1 of *Powerful Biblical Preaching* by Derek J. Morris, General Conference Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005.
- 6 For an illustration of this teaching method, see the sermon series on "Prayer, Praise, and Healing" at www.forestlakechurch.org. Manuscripts of this four-part expository sermon series are available at www.preachwithpower.com.
- 7 For more information about extending the impact of your preaching ministry, see "Preaching to the World" in the July 2007 issue of *Ministry*. If you would like to learn how to podcast your sermons on iTunes, contact dfinch@forestlakechurch.org.

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The Communion service and the issue of unworthiness

Roberto Iannò



Roberto Iannò, MA, is the executive secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Italy.

Partaking of the Communion service can be an intense and emotional experience. Whether footwashing or the Lord's Supper, the service presents an opportunity to meld the theological and emotional aspects of our faith. Our participation in these occasions can communicate many things: our acceptance of the love of Jesus; the remembrance of His death on the cross—the moment of victory against evil; the anticipation of “that day” when we will do this rite together with the Lord Himself; and, finally, our love for each other.

What, though, do we say by our *nonparticipation* in the Communion service? Usually, there are various reasons for our self-exclusion, often stemming from the discomfort of unresolved interpersonal conflicts and the sense that we are unworthy before God. After all, 1 Corinthians 11:27 reads, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord” (RSV). If we truly and sincerely sense our unworthiness, should we abstain from “profaning the body and blood of the Lord”?

No. Excluding oneself from Communion because one feels “unworthy” is, really, to misread Paul's point in that text.

To be worthy of Communion: A mistaken understanding

First of all, what does the apostle Paul affirm when he uses the word *unworthy*? The word

unworthy comes from (*àxios*) meaning “balance the two scale pans of the scales,”¹ which means that an item put on a scale pan is worthy when it can be balanced or it equals the weight on the other scale pan.

In such a context, when do we appear *worthy* in comparison with Christ? The answer's obvious. It's one thing to “bear fruit that befits repentance” (Matt. 3:8, RSV), but anyone who follows the Bible sees themselves as *unworthy*, especially in contrast to Jesus. In fact, this awareness allows him to receive the gift of grace as did the prodigal son, who, though considering himself unworthy, was forgiven by his father (Luke 15:22–24). And the centurion of Capernaum, who, after expressing his lack of merit in receiving Jesus in his home (Luke 7:6), received praise from Jesus for his faith (Luke 7:9).

Only Jesus is worthy: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12, RSV). In Jesus Christ's virtue—the only worthy One—we receive His grace and forgiveness, and definitely not from anything in ourselves. “I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength for my work. I thank him for considering me *worthy*, and appointing me to serve him” (1 Tim. 1:12, TEV, emphasis added). From this perspective, therefore, Bible authors describe the impossibility of any of us arriving at church on a Saturday morning and being “worthy” of Communion.

To be worthy of Communion: Paul's message

What did Paul, the apostle, mean, then, by this verse? The answer can be found in the context of the passage and in its grammatical construction.

Like other Christians in the New Testament period, the Corinthians were accustomed to celebrating Communion every time they had supper. Many, though, ended up forgetting the meaning of what they were doing—consuming the emblems as if they were ordinary food.

Paul wrote, “When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not” (1 Cor. 11:20–22, RSV).

The apostle Paul needed to re-explain the importance of this ordinance because its real

significance had been lost. After Paul clarified the meaning of the service, he warned them not to make the same mistake again. Instead, he tells them to consume these emblems, all the while remembering Jesus' sacrifice as they do.

The problem he's dealing with includes just *how* they are celebrating the service, not the moral quality of those that do. Wrote J. Pöhler, "Unworthiness does not consist in the moral quality, that is, the character of the participants of the Holy Supper, but is the result of the wrong way of considering the Holy meal, with which we contradict the solemnity of the service."² Along these lines, we read in the *Minister's Manual*: "(Paul) is not speaking of unworthy people who participate, but of an unworthy manner in which they participate."³

Paul tries to correct their misunderstanding. He's not dealing with their moral behavior. This point becomes even clearer from what follows: "For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor. 11:29, RSV). Comparing verses 27 and 29, we understand that Paul expresses the idea of unworthiness as he who consumes these emblems without distinguishing the Lord's body—without understanding what he is doing. Again, the issue isn't the moral quality of the participants themselves but their immediate attitude regarding the ordinance itself.

The first Lord's Supper

Look at the first Communion service, the one that was established by Jesus. The Bible says that after Satan took possession of Judas, Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper with His people (Luke 22:3, 14–20), which included Judas, who at that time was already preparing to betray his Lord. Why did Jesus not stop Judas from taking part in the ceremony? Why did He not consider him unworthy?

Ellen White wrote, "Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. . . . A long-suffering Saviour held out every inducement for the sinner to receive Him, to repent, and to be cleansed from the defilement of sin. . . . It was because the disciples were erring and faulty that He washed their feet, and all but one of the twelve were thus brought to repentance."⁴

Jesus not only received Judas at His Communion, He also invited Peter, who was conceited and not yet fully converted (Luke 22:32). The other disciples weren't all exactly moral paragons of conversion and virtue either, and yet Jesus celebrated the supper with them,

THE OTHER DISCIPLES WEREN'T ALL EXACTLY MORAL PARAGONS OF CONVERSION AND VIRTUE EITHER, AND YET JESUS CELEBRATED THE SUPPER WITH THEM, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THEY WOULD ALL SOON ABANDON HIM.

knowing full well that they would all soon abandon Him.

Conclusion

Our theology and understanding of Communion should help us to communicate its significance to our members. The Communion service reminds us that at Calvary we discover and understand Jesus' love for us: " 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' " (John 12:32, RSV). No wonder Ellen White wrote that "Christ has instituted this service that it may speak to our senses of the love of God that has been expressed in our behalf. There can be no union between our souls and God except through Christ. . . . And nothing less than the death of Christ could make His love efficacious for us."⁵

Before we are served His emblems, our hearts have an extra reason to be won over by His love, such as what happened to the centurion before the cross (Mark

15:39). We do not have to think about ourselves, about our unworthiness, but about Jesus and His righteousness. Our own sense of unworthiness should draw us to the Communion service, not push us away.

"The Communion service was not to be a season of sorrowing. . . . As the Lord's disciples gather about His table, they are not to remember and lament their shortcomings. They are not to dwell upon their past religious experience, whether that experience has been elevating or depressing. . . . Now they come to meet with Christ."⁶

We need to help our congregational participants understand that Communion does not constitute a conclusion but a beginning. The best week should not be the one that precedes Communion but the one that follows. Reconciliation with God, with ourselves, and with others should not be prerequisites in order to participate but should be the result that flows from that participation. Thus, "Communion should always end on a high note. Wrongs have been righted. Sins have been forgiven. Hope has been restored. It's a time for rejoicing."⁷ ■

- 1 W. Foerster, "Axios, Anaxios," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, eds. G. Kittel and F. Gerhard, Italian ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 1:1013.
- 2 Rolf J. Pöhler, "Qui est digne de participer à la cène," ("Who Is Worthy of Partaking of the Lord's Supper"), in *Cène et ablution des pieds*, ed. Comité de Recherche Biblique (Dammariè-lès-Lys, France: Editions Vie et Santé, 1991), 1:251.
- 3 *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1992), 212.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 655, 656.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 660.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 659.
- 7 *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual*, 216.

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Eight strategies to survive problematic parishioners

Judi Bailey



Judi Bailey, MEd, is a freelance writer who lives in Lakewood, Ohio, United States.

It's almost a cliché to say that church leaders are overloaded, overwhelmed, and overcommitted. You give and care so much that your proverbial pot becomes empty. You may be experiencing a spiritual sluggishness from the ongoing stresses and flurry of activity in your ministry.

"Not seeing a lot of fruit from your labor," says John Kelly, minister of education at First Methodist Church in New Philadelphia, Ohio, "causes leaders to feel all used up."¹

Kelly adds, "Leaders and volunteers are prone to put too much responsibility on themselves."² It's easy for many of us to become overly accountable to others, often blaming ourselves for our members' attitudes, foul-ups, and inappropriate behavior.

Sometimes we become hooked on helping. It's natural to think about someone who's struggling and to add that person to our prayer list. But constantly worrying indicates that you're trying to give yourself power that only God can supply.

Melody Beattie, an author and leader in the codependency field, describes a codependent as an individual who has allowed someone's actions to affect them to the point of being consumed with that person.³

Our solution lies in changing the focus from helping too much to helping humbly. Make sure you take Jesus along the road with you—you know you'll surely need Him. Here are some points to help you deal with the problem people on your staff—or in your congregation.

1. *Remember the value of each person.* Whether it's a gossipy parishioner or the incessant complainer, stay aware of the value of the person underneath the undesirable behavior. Practice the unconditional love Jesus demonstrated.

2. *Give others the right to be wrong.* Even if you believe that the church community would be better off without this attitude or behavior, accepting others' choices to be the way they are, frees up both of you to move into new solutions. Acceptance doesn't mean you condone their behavior; you have a responsibility to lead and guide, but if you *demand* they come along, you create the perfect setting for rebellion.

3. *Give others the right to be right.* For example, your youth director confronts you about being too "heady" at the pulpit, but it's hard to listen to the feedback when you're being called on the carpet. Don't ignore the comments of others; they just might be right.

4. *Listen to the message in your emotions.* Learn from your reactions. You may be sensing something about yourself, or you might be receiving an indication about what the member is going through. When I ministered to adolescents in a chemical dependency unit, I experienced a great deal of anger, anxiety, and fear. A colleague helped me see that, although my feelings were real, I was likely experiencing the teens' feelings—most of which were anger, anxiety, and fear. Whenever you have

OUR SOLUTION LIES IN CHANGING THE FOCUS FROM HELPING TOO MUCH TO HELPING HUMBLY.

an emotional reaction to the people you are helping, your emotions just might be speaking to you. Begin listening to them.

5. *Be responsible to others, not for others.* The only person you can change is yourself, which is easy to believe from the head, but hard to accept from the heart. The first three times I read this in a book, I threw the book across the room. I was working with abused children and responded to this idea with the following: "What do you mean I can't change others? I *have* to, it's what I do!" It was a difficult and tedious job to learn how wrong—and egotistical—that

belief was. Although it seems that our mission encompasses the carrying of others to Christ, all we can really do is lead them, guide them, and discuss His good news.

6. *Listen to the unspoken messages.* When you are faced with someone's character flaws, try listening with your eyes, your ears, and especially your heart. Those with poor socialization skills or unceasing willfulness generally don't want to do many of the things they do. Listen to the genuine message woven through their actions. Perhaps backbiting means abuse is or has been occurring somewhere in their present or past. Use attention-seeking behavior to stir yourself to provide positive ways to gain recognition. Or even invite a difficult parishioner to help you in some small way, or ask the person to assist another member struggling with the same troublesome trait.

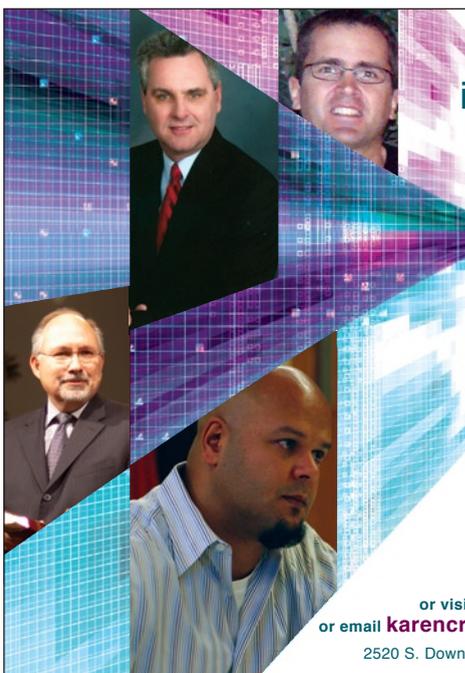
7. *Get yourself some backup.* Grab on to others' perspective of the situation. "Work as a team," says Kelly. "Get other people's input. Not just one, but a number of people's opinions. You might learn that the parishioner is suffering from a medical condition or from personal problems like an impending divorce."⁴ Accept help from your colleagues, volunteers, and staff members. Use the minds of your people.

8. *Pray for the difficult individuals in your care.* Through sermons and example, Jesus taught us to pray. Here are some suggestions Kelly uses, which may be helpful to tap into your own solutions: identify a situation that has been worrying you. Then meditate on a Bible story by visualizing yourself as one of the characters in the story. Afterwards ask yourself, "How do I feel now? Did the character I chose give me any insight into my problem? Does the story put things into a clearer perspective?"⁵

You were created by God to express His goodness and light, and to love all of His creatures. He knows that some of them are tough. Perhaps some of your spiritual growth will evolve from your experience with them. That will certainly fire your desire to help others awaken to the abundant life that Jesus so lovingly promised. **M**

- 1 John Kelly (minister at First United Methodist Church, New Philadelphia, Ohio, United States), interviewed by the author on March 3, 2005.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More* (City Center, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1987), 31.
- 4 Kelly, interview.
- 5 Ibid.

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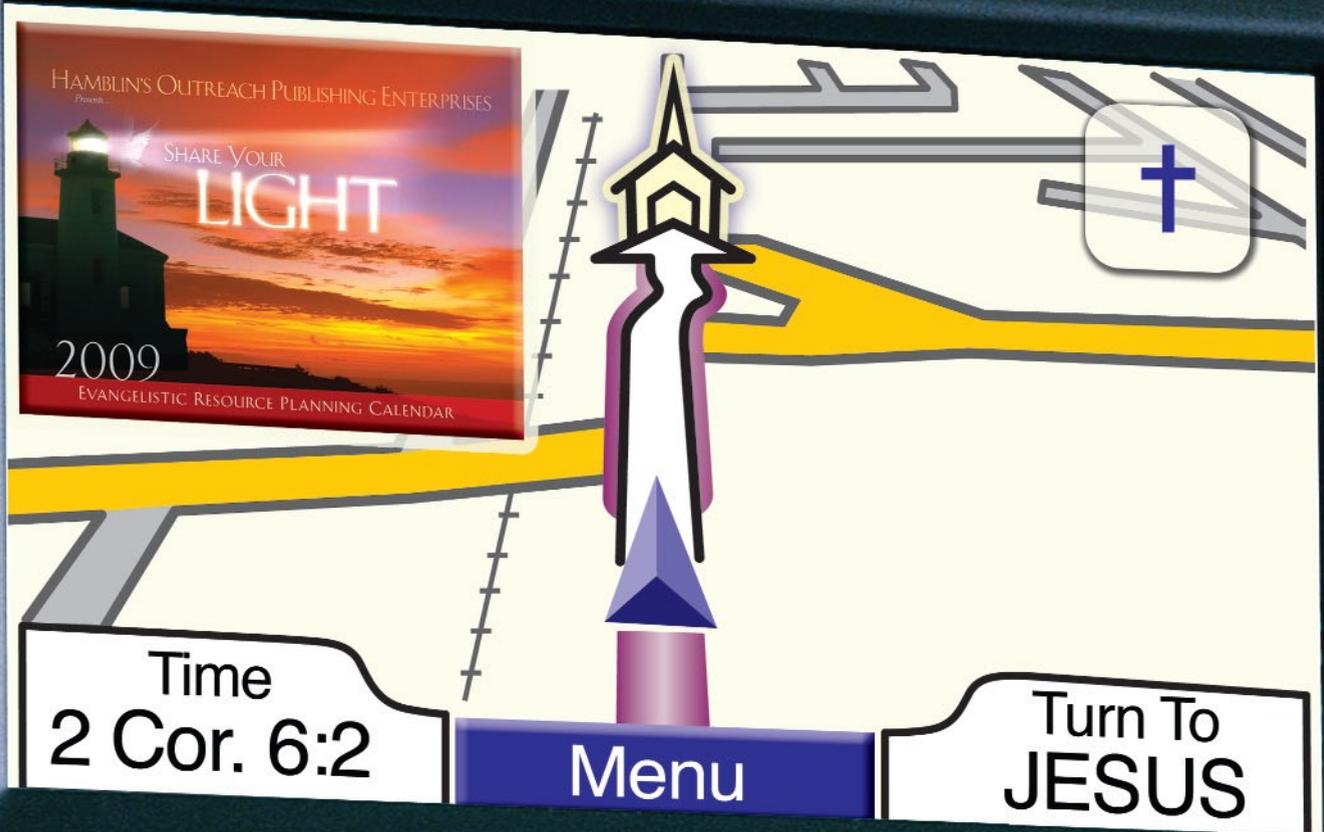
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Seven years in Karlsruhe: Memories of a church planter

**Abraham
Rangel Flores**



Abraham Rangel Flores pastors the Karlsruhe Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church, Karlsruhe, Germany.

In September 2007, I completed my seventh year as a Global Mission church planter pastor among the Spanish community of Karlsruhe, Germany. In spite of the support we received from the Baden-Württemberg Conference, those first two years were very difficult for my newlywed wife and me: different culture, different language, and different food.

During my journey, I have learned some lessons that would help if I could move back time and begin again. I hope they will help others.

Beginnings can be difficult

Although the group was working well together, there were many personal problems among the members beneath the surface that sometimes arose publicly during Sabbath School study time. You can imagine that with that kind of spectacle, guests would just visit us one Sabbath and then politely decline any further contact. Due to my inexperience, I thought that my work was to say who was wrong and who was right. The problems reached their climax in a church business meeting where all of us (including myself) expressed our feelings regarding one another. Clearly, I should have been bigger than the circumstances. I'm just grateful my church forgave me.

Pruning precedes blooming

After that business meeting, there were several weeks of high tension. Some members didn't come to the church services, others attended

the German church, and others attended every Sabbath but couldn't look one another in the eye. Little by little, there were personal appointments, exchanges of letters, some tears of repentance, and finally hugs of forgiveness. The great Gardener was using His pruning shears to cut everything that was preventing His church from growing.

After that pruning process, all of a sudden a group of guests began to attend our church on a regular basis. We had to go through God's process in order to grow.

Your call is the cornerstone of your mission, nothing else

Many of my friends and family members never thought I would study theology. Neither did I. When someone asked me why I had done so, I would answer, "Because I liked it." I later earned a master's degree in psychology. And there, I had a vocational problem. What should I become, a pastor or a psychologist? I decided the best was letting God decide, instead of me.

Due to the absence of evidence from God, I was projecting to follow on my PhD in psychology. But one month before the final exams, I received an email with the subject: "Invitation to pastor the Spanish speaking church of Karlsruhe." Since I had already made my plans, my first reaction was to ignore the email, but that lasted only three seconds because suddenly I realized that in front of me was the miraculous and crystal clear answer that I had requested. Suddenly, right there, in the university's computer room, I felt that I was in God's presence. I asked for a phone call or a letter, and God sent me a phone call—letter.

Don't be afraid to preach Jesus

Two years ago, when the time came to give a name to our brand-new church, our church committee decided to display the name Seventh-day Adventist Christian Church (the official name of the church in Spain), for in that way, people could identify us as Christians. At the beginning, following this spirit of a mixed sense of fear and shame, all our evangelistic work was an attempt to hide that we were Adventist. We conducted wonderful seminars on health and family, garnering precious contacts. But we were not sure how to reveal to them our true identity.

Then came the moment when we decided to step out in faith and prepare an evangelistic week with biblical preaching and introduce ourselves as what we really were: Christians, and preaching nothing else but Jesus. Results? Unbelievable! People came! From that point on, we changed our methods, our style, and our mind. God

Global Mission at work

1. Each year, Global Mission helps fund thousands of church-planting projects in new geographical areas or among new people groups around the world. More information can be found at www.AdventistMission.org and www.Global-Mission.org
2. The application of the principles of contextualization obviously differs in different areas. In some places, “Don’t be Afraid, Preach Jesus” is not a sufficient motto. See, for example, the classic story of Don and Carol Richardson, told in the book *Peace Child* (Regal Books, 4th edition, 2005). As missionaries to the Sawi people of Irian Jaya, they found “preaching Jesus” didn’t work. The Sawi people elevated treachery to a virtue. So in the story of Jesus, Judas emerges as the hero. The book details the contextualization “key” they found to make the gospel story meaningful to the people.
3. The issue of contextualization from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective has been addressed over many years in the Global Mission Issues Committee, which meets annually to discuss issues faced at the cutting edge of mission. Many of the papers presented are found in *Adventist Responses to Cross-Cultural Mission: Global Mission Issues Committee Papers (Volume 1, 1998–2001 and Volume 2, 2002–2005)*, Bruce Bauer, ed., Department of World Mission, Andrews University 2006, 2007.

WE HAVE SPENT A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF FUNDS IN ADVERTISING, WITH MEAGER RESULTS; BUT THE SILENT, CONSTANT WORK WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS HAS BROUGHT MORE VISITORS TO OUR CHURCH.

showed us that we could, with no fear, preach the gospel. Presently, our annual program revolves around two core activities: an evangelistic week the first half of the year and a Week of Prayer the second half.

The core of our evangelistic work: friendship

Our situation is challenging: we are to evangelize all the Spanish speaking people in Karlsruhe, Germany. That is not easy because immigrants experience a natural process of transculturation and so our people don’t think like Hispanics; but neither do they think solely like Germans. We need creativity in order to know how to reach them. For seven years, we tried all the programs that came to our minds, but in the last two years, we have confirmed that the best method to win souls for Jesus begins and ends with friendship. We have spent a significant amount of funds in advertising, with meager results; but the silent, constant work with family and friends has brought more visitors to our church. During this process, our target audience discovered that we don’t want anything from them other than friendship. The person eventually felt free to ask about our faith, plus many other things. Our silent and impossible-to-hide lifestyle has become our most powerful sermon.

Adapt to your setting

In Mexico, for example, pastoral image is important. In the Spanish language, we have two ways of addressing people, one is *usted*, used to show respect and deference, and *tu* (both translated in English as “you”), used when speaking in familiar terms with someone. In Mexico, it is unthinkable

to address a pastor with *tu*, but that was the first thing that my little congregation did with me. Later, I discovered that German church members use the *du* (*tu*) form instead of the *Sie* (*usted*) form to address all ministers. (In German, even God is referred to with the more personal *du*.) German thinking avoids the *Sie* form with pastors because that means distancing, and it may build a relational barrier.

At the beginning of my ministry here, I had problems because I interpreted many behaviors of my church members as defiance to my authority, and therefore, I tried to impose it. That brought me to a stressful, vicious circle. Luckily, in a casual conversation with a colleague, he told me that church members don’t want a boss; they want a friend, a helper. That changed my mind and my leadership style 180 degrees.

Conclusion

Sometimes, when I read the reports of my fellow Global Mission colleagues in Africa or Asia, I feel uncomfortable because some of them ask for bicycles to do their job, or they live in difficult environments, while I live in the richest country in Europe, in a beautiful house with a beautiful garden, and have a German-engineered car. Is that the life of an overseas missionary?

What makes a missionary? Their mission. Our objective is no different from other missionaries: preach the gospel everywhere. Our humble work fulfills a small part of our world church mission. ■

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.



A jubilee in Belgrade

Belgrade, Serbia—On July 26, 2008, the Adventist Church in Serbia celebrated two jubilees: the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Adventist churches in the Belgrade region, and the seventieth anniversary of the main Adventist chapel in Belgrade.

More than 1,000 church members and guests from Europe and beyond assembled for the celebration of the jubilee. For the first time, journalists from an established TV station and local newspaper, *Politika*, were among the guests, along with representatives from other media units.

The main speaker of the day was **David Blanch**, president of the Greater Sydney Conference of the Adventist Church in Australia. Included in the program was the posthumous recognition of those who founded the work in Belgrade. In addition, awards were given to the representative of the bishop of the Orthodox Church for his contribution to promote tolerance and religious freedom, and to the representative of the minister of religion. [*Miodrag Zivanovic/TED News Staff/TED News*]

Religious accommodation in the workplace

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—On July 22, 2008, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued a compliance manual on workplace discrimination on the basis of religion. These regulations, for example, will assist individuals whose work

responsibilities conflict with their day of worship.

According to an EEOC announcement, the document reviews the relevant provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the EEOC's policies regarding religious discrimination, harassment, and accommodation. The EEOC also issued a companion question-and-answer fact sheet and "best practices" booklet.

In the statement, the current head of the commission said that the information is designed to help employers accommodate the needs of workers. "Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 seeks to ensure that applicants and employees enjoy the freedom to compete, advance, and succeed in the workplace, irrespective of their religious beliefs," EEOC chair **Naomi C. Earp** said.

The commission said it issued the new guidelines "in response to an increase in charges of religious discrimination,

increased religious diversity in the United States, and requests for guidance from stakeholders and agency personnel investigating and litigating claims of religious discrimination."

According to the commission, "religious discrimination charge filings with the EEOC nationwide have risen substantially over the past 15 years, doubling from 1,388 in Fiscal Year 1992 to a record level of 2,880 in FY 2007."

The "best practices" document includes this advice: "Employers should work with employees who need an adjustment to their work schedule to accommodate their religious practices." [*Adapted from Adventist News Network, Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review*]

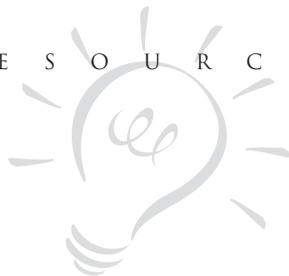
Evangelism in India

Mumbai, India—From July 10–20, 2008, the publishing director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in India, **A. J. Tito**, with the assistance of **Howard Faigao** and **Wilmar Hirle**, publishing director and associate publishing director, respectively, for the world church of Seventh-day Adventists, conducted a series of evangelistic meetings in Mumbai. For the three months leading up to the series, a dedicated team of pastors, literature evangelists, and others laid the groundwork throughout various communities in the city.

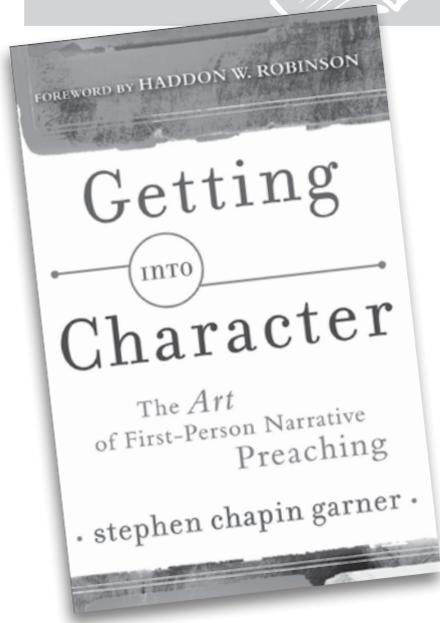
As a result of this outreach, a significant number were baptized—each of them being given a Bible as a gift designed to strengthen their walk with God. [*A.J. Tito*] ❏



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BOOK REVIEW



Getting Into Character: The Art of First-person Narrative Preaching, by Stephen Chapin Garner, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008.

Sermons are a lot like meals: the intent is to be nourishing, palatable, and interesting. But like some meals, some sermons can be blandly uninteresting, uninspiring, and just plain flat. Stephen Garner's book, *Getting Into Character*, can definitely add spice and variety to your preaching menu.

Garner unpacks, amply illustrates, and gives cogent examples of narrative first-person preaching and how to do it. Using both his pastoral training and background as a playwright and actor, he skillfully creates a how-to pattern for developing and delivering quality first-person narrative sermons.

He clearly reminds readers that "the act of worship should always be an act of praise more than an act of performance, to be believable, a

first-person narrative sermon needs to be performance-quality" (91). After all, he says, "We are . . . to praise, not to perform" (86). He repeatedly encourages us to use the actual words of a character as they are found in Scripture, because "the more Bible we get into our sermons, the more Bible we get into our people" (85).

A strong advocate of thorough exegetical study, Garner also invites us to look at the customs, cultures, time frames, feelings, living conditions, and myriads of other details in which a Bible character and their story is imbedded. This kind of study will bring authenticity and reality to the character and the biblical and textual truths shared. Be warned: narrative preaching is not a scholarly shortcut. It is as demanding and rewarding for the preacher as it is enjoyable and memorable for the congregant. Garner asserts, "At its best, first-person narrative preaching is a powerful, moving, memorable, and *highly enjoyable* homiletical experience for both preachers and parishioners" (24).

The only instance where I do not totally agree with the author is when he says, "Personally, I discourage the use of props and costumes when delivering a first-person narrative sermon. I do not believe worship should resemble your local community theatre, with tired costumes and questionable prop choices" (86). This is true when one becomes tempted to pass off "tired costumes" for well-researched and well-constructed ones. Poorly made costumes in worship would be akin to inviting guests to a gourmet meal and then serving thrice used leftovers. He does concede that, "Costumes and props hold tremendous visual power over audiences" (99).

I agree with the latter statement from my own personal experiences of having developed and delivered some 60 different biblical character stories. Well-designed and carefully

chosen props and costumes *do* add to the impact of first-person narratives *if* they are well crafted and well used. A magnificent costume, or suit for that matter, will not save a poorly researched and ill-prepared sermon. The combination of a good costume and a well-researched, solidly prepared, and professionally presented first-person narrative sermon blends powerfully to rivet biblical truth tightly to the mind and heart of the listener.

The author points out, and my own experience validates this, that dynamic first-person narrative preaching has multiple advantages. Among them is the fact that they are done totally without notes, thus giving continuous eye contact with the people, which helps draw them into the story, the character, and the biblical realities presented.

Another benefit is that this style of presentation can be described as very "forgiving." If you miss a point in the story you may easily—even naturally—double back and pick up that point. "Oh, that reminds me, you also need to know . . ." That's the way we talk and tell stories with no one alarmed or offended. On the other hand, if in a regular sermon we go down an outline or manuscript and drop a page or omit point C, it would be nearly impossible to go back, recoup the omission, and then insert it with graceful élan.

Whether you are a very seasoned first-person narrative preacher or someone just beginning to develop skills in this unique area of preaching, Garner's book is an exceptionally well written road map into the vast potentials of first-person preaching.

Like any sermon, or style of sermon, it's not about the preacher. It's not even about the biblical character. It is about the matchless grace of God meeting real people where they really are with their real needs and struggles.

—Reviewed by Dick Stenbakken, EdD. ■



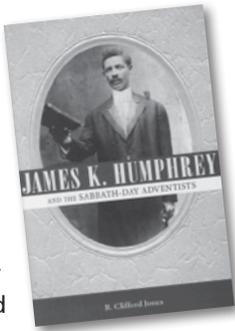
BOOK REVIEW

James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath-day Adventists, by R. Clifford Jones, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008.

“I have determined, my friends, that like the apostle Paul, I shall allow nothing to separate me from the love of God—nothing! . . . In 1905, a brother came to my house and urged me to cut loose from this denomination. . . . I refused then to do it, and I refuse now to do it” (3).

James Kemuel Humphrey, pastor of the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York, uttered those words at the fortieth session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, during the evening sermon on May 23, 1922. What made him change his conviction ten years later and leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to establish his own religious organization the United Sabbath-day Adventists?

Humphrey was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, on March 7, 1877. “He attended elementary school in the parish and graduated from Colbar College where he distinguished himself as an exceptional student and eloquent speaker. On December 19, 1900, he married Viola (Roseanne) Anderson of Kingston, Jamaica, embarking shortly thereafter on a career as a Baptist minister” (4). With profound concern for the care of people of African ancestry in the New World, “Humphrey left Jamaica in 1901 to visit Africa. On his way there he stopped off in New York City, where he was converted to Adventism by a Seventh-day Adventist layman named J. H. Carroll” (4).



I believe the author, R. Clifford Jones, had the following objectives in mind for writing the book:

- to inform people about Humphrey and his role in Seventh-day Adventist history, his departure from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the development of the Sabbath-day Adventists and United Sabbath-day Adventists;
- to show the role that Humphrey may have played in the 1930s in the development of what are now known as regional conferences;
- and to show how this early Seventh-day Adventist minister compared to the other black, religious “charismatic” leaders of his era, otherwise known as the “black gods of the metropolis”—George Baker, “Father Divine”; Charles Manuel Grace, “Sweet Daddy”; and James Francis Marion Jones, “Prophet Jones.”

The comparisons between these leaders and J. K. Humphrey are very informative. Using insights from that era may inform readers about current charismatic leaders and their impact on the church. The incorporation of the socioeconomic, political, and psychological issues of Humphrey’s era, gives Jones’s book a richer depth.

Jones also sheds lights on some of the influential leaders who both preceded and succeeded Humphrey’s era: Richard Allen, who left the Methodist Church and formed the African Methodist Episcopal denomination; Henry McNeal Turner, a celebrated leader between the Civil War and the First World War; Francis J. Grimké, a graduate of Lincoln University, who studied religion at Princeton University and had an illustrious career as a Presbyterian minister; Adam Clayton Powell Sr. and Adam Clayton Powell Jr., both were pastors of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York City; and Marcus Garvey Jr., who founded the

Universal Negro Improvement Association. Humphrey’s Utopia Park Project, Jones maintains, should be viewed in the light of the movement of Garvey. Understanding the influential leaders during the era of Humphrey helps us to better understand Humphrey. Jones does a remarkable job in showing the contrasts of these influential and “charismatic” leaders.

This book is excellent for ministers and others who have a historical interest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

—Reviewed by Ivan Leigh Warden, DMin, associate secretary, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. ■

RESOURCES

Freedom begins here

It is no secret that the high rate of pornography consumption in our postmodern society has made tremendous inroads in the Christian church. This phenomenon has been enhanced by the proliferation of Internet usage worldwide—destroying people and families in its wake.

The Family Ministries Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has recently partnered with Drs. Gary Smalley and Mark Laaser to produce *Freedom Begins Here*. This DVD will fill a void that has long existed within our ranks—bringing healing and strength to marriages, families, and others who have been affected by pornography.

It is hoped that many churches will purchase several of these DVDs and make them available on a confidential basis to members who are interested in effecting healing. Fax your order to (402) 486-8819, call AdventSource at (800) 328-0525, or order online at www.adventsource.org. ■

You need an FCN

JAMES A. CRESS



Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'¹

When Jesus commissioned His apostles to ministry, He sent them two-by-two to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2). Today, these paired priorities remain central to what ministers should accomplish.

Despite Jesus placing equal weight on both preaching and healing, we often focus just on proclamation with very little, if any, time left over for healing. We even suspect the term *healing* as only the province of sensational, overly emotional public display rather than empathetic sharing of Holy Spirit power.

Limited knowledge about health and medical issues may also deter integrating a healing ministry into our pastoral and evangelistic endeavors. Over extended physicians may interact with their too-busy pastors at church functions, but neither expects the other to intrude on their specialized work. So how can we combine expertise in preaching and healing for nurture and evangelism?

Over the past few months, I have begun conversation with several colleagues on the role of the parish nurse, better termed Faith Community Nurse

(FCN). In fact, I am indebted for much of this content to family nurse practitioner, Katia Reinert (MSN, FNP-BC, FCN), who serves as coordinator for Maryland-based

Adventist HealthCare's Faith Community Nursing, a specialty recognized by the American Nurses Association for which registered nurses must receive additional preparation and study.

Reinert says, "There must be other ways to minister to the sick in a wholesome way without overwhelming the pastor or compromising the preaching of the Word. One powerful and effective solution is to

add an FCN to the ministerial team. Many churches have experienced the blessing of having paid or volunteer FCNs on their staff who work effectively alongside the ministers to provide healing of body, mind, and spirit, as well as lead in health evangelism and wellness promotion for the congregation and community."

In order to understand their role, it helps to understand what FCNs are *not* to do. The FCN is not a physician and will not diagnose or treat illness. The FCN is not a home or public health nurse and will not dispense medications or provide treatments prescribed by a physician. The FCN is not a therapist and will not perform physical, occupational, or psychotherapy. Neither is the FCN a clergy person, but comes to the ministry team with a deep spiritual commitment.

Rather, the FCN provides health and spiritual coaching whose major functions include being an integrator of faith and health, health educator, counselor, and advocate, referral advisor, developer and facilitator of support groups, provider of spiritual care, and trainer of volunteers.

Consider various options how your church could afford additional staff: ask busy professionals who understand the value of FCNs to sponsor this ministry, retired nurses might willingly obtain the necessary training and volunteer full or part-time service, cooperatively share expenses with other congregations, schools could share costs for a combined FCN/school nurse, several volunteers might divide FCN responsibilities to provide various services just as any member volunteers some time each month, administrators might consider sponsoring this effective ministry in a community where a number of churches would benefit from coordinated health ministry.

Issues and benefits to consider include:

- Much of a pastor's work is health-related. The parish nurse may assist in visiting the sick, counseling, and advising members on whole-person issues.
- Volunteers are not as available as they were in the past and an FCN facilitates effectively meeting many needs.
- Clergy and congregations often must interact with community facilities and bureaucracies. FCNs can contribute knowledge and skills to bridge the gap.
- FCNs help improve member and clergy health, as well as lead in health evangelistic efforts in conjunction with the ministry team. Such activities include, but are not limited to, holistic lifestyle classes, twelve-step groups, birthing preparation, family and parenting support, stress reduction, home and hospital visitation, exercise promotion, retirement coaching, inter-generational guidance, wholesome cooking demonstration, sexuality education, smoking cessation, divorce, loss, and grief recovery support, plus volunteer training.

To better facilitate development of FCN programs, Candace Huber of Florida Hospital's Parish Nurse Institute has prepared a variety of materials and information including a helpful DVD, *Beyond Four Walls*, which you can view online at www.parnursing.net.

Although not a new concept, Faith Community Nursing is rapidly expanding as both denominational and health professionals recognize the enhanced effectiveness that result from ministers who are also medical missionaries, who can cure physical ailments and, thus, are much more efficient workers than those who cannot do this. Their work as ministers of the gospel is much more complete (see *Medical Ministry*, 245). ■

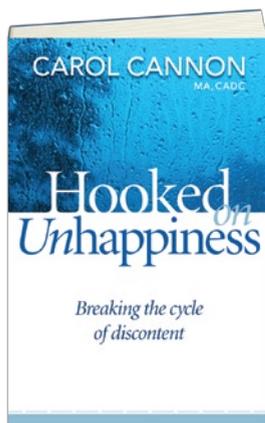
1 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

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Katia Reinert

Hooked on Unhappiness



Hooked on Unhappiness—Carol Cannon, MA, CADC

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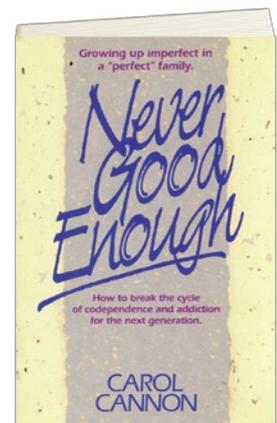
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Never Good Enough—Carol Cannon MA, CADC

“I’ve watched the most precious young people, including my own sons, weep as they described feeling that they could never live up to the expectations of the church, that they could never measure up to God’s ideals. I found their sorrow and shame painful to behold because I knew I had contributed to it.” —p. 7.

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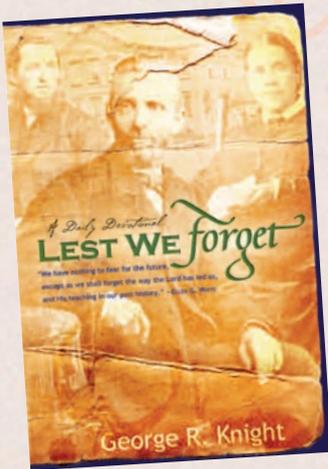
Why Should ADVENTISM



The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism

George R. Knight

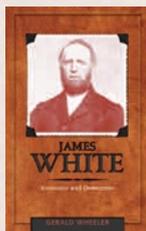
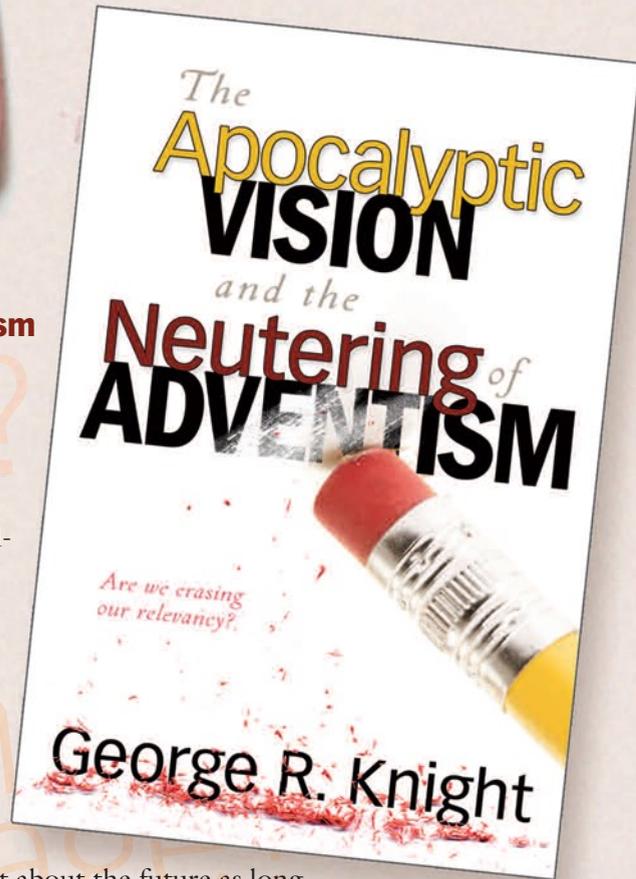
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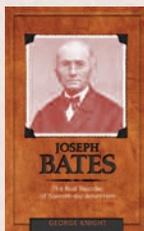
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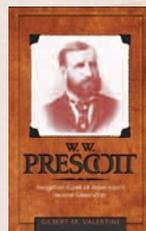
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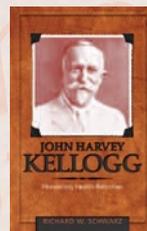
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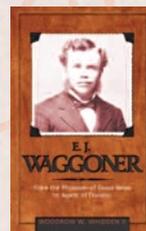
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