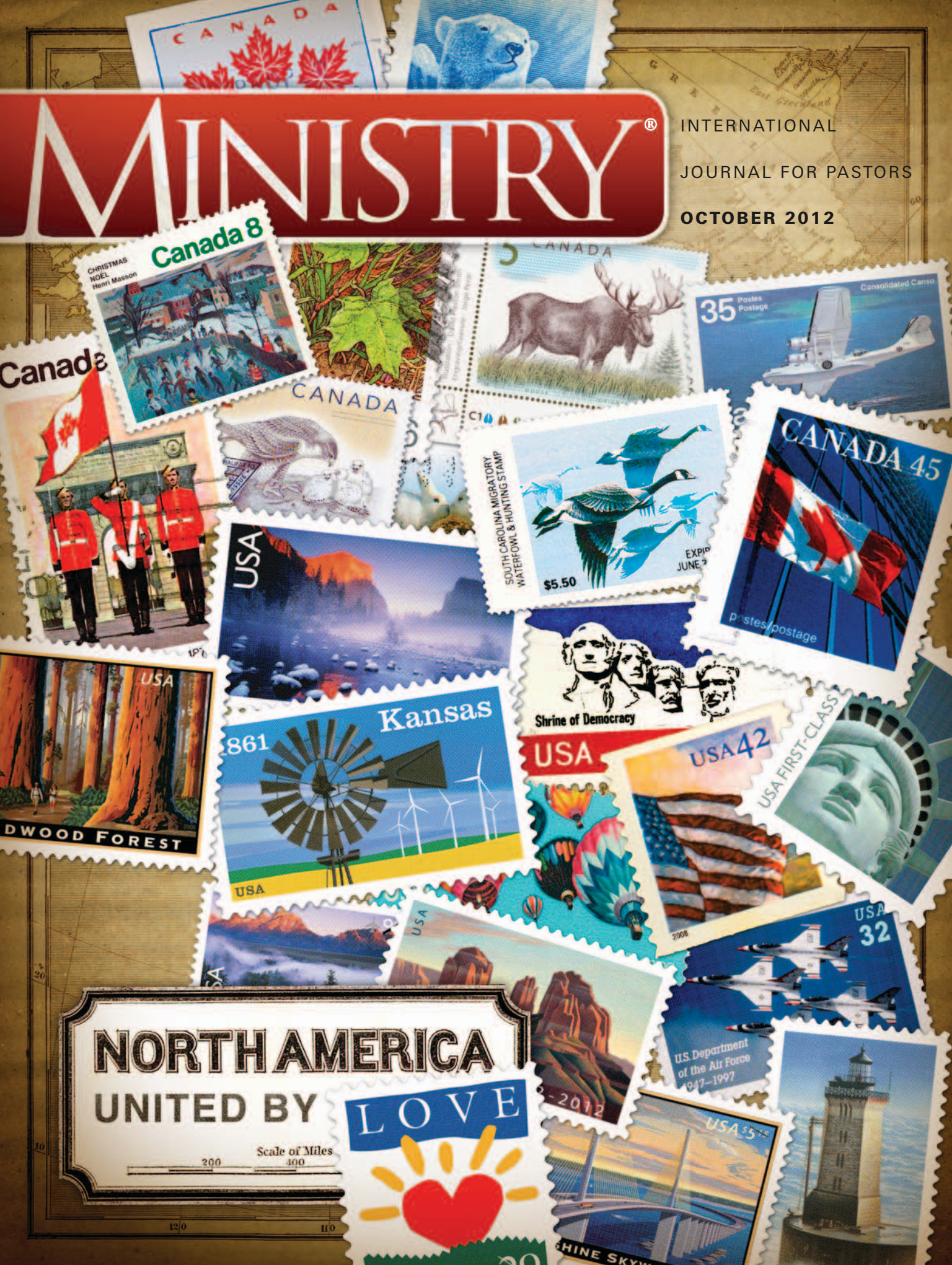


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Contemplate this statement regarding biblical anthropology, produced by the Biblical Research Institute, from the Third International Bible Conference.

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THIS CONVERSATION, I BELIEVE, CALLS FOR MORE CAREFUL DIALOGUE AND LISTENING AND LESS LABELING AND PIGEONHOLING, IF WE ARE GOING TO BOTH APPRECIATE GENUINELY HELPFUL CONTRIBUTIONS AND DISCERN ERRORS WE WISH TO AVOID.

I don't always read *Ministry* when it comes. This month I decided to read before it got buried under the pile of mail that never quite ends. What a timely issue on biblical spirituality (August 2012). So refreshing, helpful, and practical.

—David Glenn, email

In regard to the special issue on biblical spirituality (August 2012), I appreciate Derek Morris's admonition to examine everything carefully as he reflects on his early experience of becoming acquainted with the rising interest in spiritual formation, reminding us to be discerning. We all should continue to grow in our understanding of this. I am looking forward to the time when that encouragement to do so will also include dialogue with people in Christian traditions that are solidly biblical but contain Eastern ways of thinking that are not so much at variance with Scripture as they are with Western culture. One of the persistent blind spots

in this conversation that causes much misunderstanding, and for some, needless pain, is our failure to do this.

In this same vein, Mark Finley continues to reject all things Eastern without regard to how elements of Eastern thinking were not only a part of the biblical world, but also contain insights that may help balance our tendency to squeeze the Bible into purely "Western" modes of thinking (see "Biblical Spirituality: Rediscovering Our Biblical Roots or Embracing the East?"). There are nuances in the writings of Keating and Pennington on centering prayer that clearly differentiate it from Eastern prayer forms that Finley does not mention. They are very helpful in identifying contributions that thinking about prayer this way can make while avoiding things that would make it problematic, or even seem sinister, from a Christian perspective; but unfortunately these are not acknowledged or discussed.

Further, understanding the idea of a "god within" from the perspective of Hinduism or Buddhism is very different from what it might mean if we are thinking about it in terms of Christ dwelling in us through His Spirit, which is certainly a biblical concept. This conversation, I believe, calls for more careful dialogue and listening and less labeling and pigeonholing, if we are going to both appreciate genuinely helpful contributions and discern errors we wish to avoid.

The seminary statement ("A Statement on Biblical Spirituality") is helpful in its affirmations and most all of its denials in helping articulate an Adventist perspective, although there is more room for conversation and clarifying than the statement initially implies—which is allowed for towards the end in making "no claim to finality."

But perhaps most helpful were the articles on spirituality in leadership ("My Quest for Biblical

Continued on page 30 ►



The more we differ, the more we are alike

In 2007, *Ministry* began focusing its October issues on the resources, strengths, opportunities, and challenges of various geographic regions of the Adventist Church. Five years later, we now take a look at the sixth and final territory, North America—a vast area with 346,670,000 residents and 1,135,000 Adventists.*

While recognizing that there is no monolithic culture that defines North America, I do still understand the mind-sets that govern those who live in the United States and Canada more than those from other parts of the world. I admit I knew very little about other parts of the world as recently as seven years ago. However, since 2006, I have interacted with many pastors and ministers from various parts of the world; and they all have educated me and enriched my life in more ways than I could ever explain.

In many ways, we differ in our worldviews and how we process life. But I have discovered one very important thing: the more we differ, the more we are exactly alike! I speak both personally and as a North American, a Christian, and a minister of the gospel.

Distinct, yet similar

In this issue, the writers are North American in their background and understanding; yet what they write applies to the worldwide *Ministry* readership audience. Many of the challenges pastors face in Ukraine or India mirror those that ministers also face in Canada or the United States.

We also practice our faith in different ways while upholding biblical principles. For example, on a recent visit to Thailand, I noticed countless

pairs of shoes outside the entrance to the church where pastors were holding a workers' meeting. Those church leaders would never think to wear their shoes into the sanctuary. I have never thought to remove my shoes in my North American context; but deep within our hearts, we all strive for the same effect—to

that does not morph into uniformity within North America.

Also in this issue, Dan Day indicates that a strong desire exists within the hearts of many to participate and be affirmed in ministry and service. Whether evangelistic success comes as the result of small group efforts in territories such as


EVEN WITHIN NORTH AMERICA,
THERE IS GREAT DIVERSITY—
DIFFERENCES AMID SIMILARITIES.

show reverence when we enter into the presence of God. I have come to learn that pastors, whether North American or from elsewhere, possess a deep love in their hearts for God, His church, and the people they serve.

Even within North America, there is great diversity—differences amid similarities. I have preached in churches that have long worship services, and in others they have been short; some whose members enjoy more contemporary music, and others whose members prefer traditional hymns. Regardless of the length of the service or style of worship, the heartfelt aim of the worshipers remains to uplift the holiness and goodness of God. In this issue, you will enjoy our interview with the president of the Adventist Church in North America, Daniel Jackson, who discusses the matter of unity

South America or due to large-scale evangelistic meetings such as in parts of Africa, we must all work together to advance the kingdom of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In various parts of the world, some pastors can have more than 30 congregations. In North America, that number can range, as a rule, from one to five. Yet the challenges of multichurch district (MCD) ministry are the same regardless of where one labors. You can also read Tom Glatts's article as he accentuates the advantages of MCD service.

As always, the *Ministry* editorial staff prays you will be blessed, edified, and enriched as a result of reading this month's issue. 

* In this editorial I distinguish North America from the North American Division (NAD), in that the NAD comprises territories outside North America. There is, however, an interview in this edition with the NAD president, Daniel Jackson, who oversees North America as well as other parts of the world.

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United in love: An interview with Daniel R. Jackson

Derek Morris (DM): When you were elected president of the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2010, many people within the division had never heard of Dan Jackson. So perhaps it would be helpful if we could begin by knowing a little about your life and ministry.

Dan Jackson (DJ): I was born in a “mixed” family. My mother was a very committed Seventh-day Adventist; my father was an atheist. For the first 14 years of my life, I did not show much interest in religion and Christianity, although I went to church every Sabbath with my mother. At 14, while involved in a lot of drinking and a lot of home break-ins to steal alcohol, the Lord spoke to me. In a two-week window of sobriety, I told my mother, “If I do not attend a Christian school, I will not be a Christian.” My father was absolutely hostile to the idea, and sternly refused. I woke up one morning in the summer of 1963, and my mother said, “We’re leaving home.” We left home and hid with a Seventh-day Adventist who had a farm on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, until the time came for school, and there I went to school.

I still didn’t have a strong commitment to God, but I got baptized when I was about 16. I did that because I believed it was the right thing to do, and I knew my mother was praying for me. But when I met Donna, the woman I eventually married, and who has been a wonderful and supportive wife, she led me to Christ. It was from that time that I really felt that the Lord was calling me to ministry. So I’ve served as a congregational pastor for 26 years. Part of that time was spent in Asia, teaching religion at Spicer Memorial College in India, while also pastoring the college church. I then returned to Canada and pastored for another ten years. Then, in 1996, I was called to serve as president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference. From there I went to British Columbia, as conference president, and then to the Canadian Union as president. Now I am in this current assignment.

Willie Hucks (WH): What are the most important lessons you have learned since becoming president of the NAD?

DJ: I have discovered that the more deeply you become involved in the organizational work of the church,

the more you need to be on your knees, and the more you need to sense your own dependence upon God. The issues we face in each successive area of administrative work become more intense. And we get into the area of God-size problems. That does not mean that the simplest problem at the local church isn’t a God-sized problem. But I think the more you become involved in administrative work, the more you realize that it is fool’s play to think that one’s experience or ingenuity can deal with the issues you face. That’s a very difficult lesson to learn because, on the one hand, you realize you have been asked to do God’s task; and, on the other, you carry around in your head a knowledge of who you are. And that carnal man would very easily rise and have the ascendancy if you didn’t realize your need for constant connection with God. I will be honest with you; my wife is so important here because she knows me better than anyone else, and so she knows those intersections where she comes and assists and reminds and prays with me.

WH: What special contribution do you believe NAD members can make to assist the world church in its mission?

DJ: There's not one division in the world church that does not experience the level of faithfulness of the members of the North American Division. I'm not talking about money. The bulk of the mission group still comes from North America. Last year, the NAD processed requests for 8,000 volunteers from North America, fanned out all over the

the world, another factor comes to my mind: I say this with great humility that NAD is probably the most faithful and cooperative division in the world. Yes, when it comes to certain issues, NAD members have some strong feelings, and they will continue to mediate those feelings in godly ways, until they come to the fruition that they deserve.

in the church, about half of them don't attend church regularly. So, do we just say, "Oh, those people who have left, they've just been drawn away by the world, and they've lost their way spiritually"? That's a glib answer, but it also has a big excuse in it for the church. I don't think we ought to duck those issues. We need to be more intentional in our



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world in volunteer ministries. So both in the organized work and the volunteer ministry of the church, every day every division in the world church experiences the faithfulness of NAD.

Consider the faithfulness and generosity of our people. We are moving toward that faithfulness reaching a peak of one billion dollars in tithe alone by the end of the year. Is that not inspiring? In addition, when I think of the question as to what contributions NAD makes to

DM: We're told that we're losing the majority of our young adults in NAD. What is the cause for that hemorrhage, and what can be done to retain and engage young leaders in our church?

DJ: Again, that's a question with a complex set of answers. It is true we are losing significant numbers of our youth. I'm not exactly sure how much, but I heard what the percentage is. A recent statistic concerned me even more: of those who stay

work with our young people. We have a number of activities, a number of programs that are designed for young people. One such is "Just Claim It," an annual convention for youth that is coming soon and we're expecting 6,000–7,000 of our young people there. Last summer a youth congress in Orlando, Florida, drew 12,000 youth. We have groups like GYC (Generation of Youth for Christ), an independent ministry that has attracted and energized a great following—between 6,000–7,000

young people. This is a growing movement in the church, which the young people are actually initiating, and I think it's great. And they're trying to focus on the all-sufficiency of Christ.

But how do we incorporate them into the actual work of the church? Volunteerism has emerged as a strong avenue of witness and service; last year nearly 8,000 young people from all over NAD volunteered to serve and witness worldwide.

Another area we are exploring is campus ministry. We have some 100,000 Adventist students on secular campuses, and what a blessing it will be if we can plant several of our committed young people on every college campus in America. Well-chosen and prayerfully administered, these volunteers, while pursuing their studies, can be ambassadors of the Word.

WH: In light of the call for revival and reformation, and *The Great Controversy* project, what initiatives has the NAD implemented to promote these endeavors?

DJ: The North American Division has been very involved in the whole discussion of revival and reformation—not just discussion but implementation of the program in a practical way across our division. We have a number of things that we have really strongly advocated and promoted. We have developed a North American Division prayer card where we have asked our people

across North America to pray for every conference every day. We have also advocated the Global Rain and the 7-7-7 project (see www.revivalandreformation.org/). Earlier this year, January 13–15, we had a very powerful prayer conference in Orlando, with about 500 people attending from all across the division. Most of our conferences have responded to the whole idea of



revival and reformation. In North America, we're calling it "transformation." The idea is to change life, as God would have us live.

WH: The NAD, like so many other world divisions, has this great diversity in terms of its membership. How does the church maintain unity in the light of such diversity?


DJ: I believe that unity has many faces. There is a unity that is synonymous with conformity. We conform to the teachings of Scripture, the 28

fundamental beliefs of the church, and our understanding of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. There is no softness in the North American Division on that position; we fully support them. We will not compromise on our doctrines of faith. So in that sense unity expresses conformity. But there is also a unity that is not uniformity, and we do not expect all of our people in North

America to dress the same, to look the same, to worship the same. We have so many cultures. I have said it over and over again. The world church talks about the 10/40 initiative. In North America, the 10/40 Window just moved next door. And we have every right, every determination, to attempt to understand the cultures that are coming into the context of the North American Division. That means respect for the actual diversity and talents of the ethnic and racial groups that are in our midst. I dream of a North American Division membership that

does not see gender, age, color, race, or any of those things that harm church unity.

DM: If you were to send a Tweet to the world church, from the North American Division, a short, simple message that really comes from your heart as the president of this division of our world church, what would it be?

DJ: Quite simply this: we love you, we are brothers and sisters, and we always want to be that way. 



Dare to Be a Jonah?

Do we dare read the story of Jonah as anything but a cautionary tale against disobeying God?

For nearly 3,000 years, Jonah has been seen as a disobedient servant of God. And even when he did obey, he was surly, sulky, and bitter to the point of death. That of all the prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus chose to compare His ministry with that of Jonah, has always bothered me. “And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, ‘This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation’ ” (Luke 11:29, 30).¹ Jesus could have picked virtually any other prophet. But Jonah?

When the Word of the Lord came to Jonah, commanding him to go to Nineveh, he jumped up, rushed out of his house, turned down the street, ran out of town, down to the coast to Philistine country, into Joppa, and got onboard a ship bound for Spain.

Some days that is me. I often know what I should do, but I do not do it. I know I should forgive, I know I should offer grace; I know I should speak up when someone is wrong or is being wronged. I am a pastor, I need to speak. But it’s the last thing I want to do. Sometimes I look for the nearest ship to Tarshish. Why?

Maybe I want to run for the same reason Jonah ran away. This brings us to *the* question of this story—why did Jonah run?

Fear

If I were Jonah, I would run to Tarshish out of fear for my personal safety. Fear is often why I run. As I consider the players in this story, I would not fault Jonah for being afraid.

We know a lot concerning what the people of Nineveh did to their enemies. They mutilated their captives; abused the most vulnerable—the children, elderly, pregnant, and nursing mothers; slaughtered enemy princes; drove their chariots over roads paved with people; created forests of gallows around a conquered city; and chopped enemy soldiers into pieces. We know what they did to their enemies because they boasted of it and even created reliefs depicting every gruesome act, reliefs that survive to this day.²

Mercy was not a virtue in Nineveh. Can you imagine walking into that city and saying, “My God, a foreign God, has decided to destroy you and your city”? Can you picture the unpleasant ways they could kill you if you said that? I bet Jonah could. I would have been afraid. And when we are afraid, we run.

But we miss Jonah’s motives if we say he ran for fear—though he had every right to fear. In fact, there

is a fearlessness in Jonah that I envy. Watch him on the heaving deck of that ship as the sailors cry, “What have you done to bring this on us?” See the resolve in his eyes as he says, “I ran away from the God of heaven. If you want to live, pick me up and throw me into the sea.” He offered his life to save theirs. He was fearless in the face of death.

No. Jonah did not run to save his own skin. I would understand him if he had run from fear, but a fearless Jonah faced that storm. So why did he run?

Hate

Read between the lines of Jonah, chapter 4; he hated the Assyrians. Not disliked, not annoyed by, he hated them.

Jonah knew God well enough to know the Assyrians might not be destroyed if he preached to them. Sure enough, God saw their repentance and relented from the promised punishment. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry” (Jon. 4:1). It seems to me that you would have to hate someone to be angry that they are alive.

If I were preaching this story, I would probably quote verse 9: “Then God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry . . . ?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’ ” And I would point out how petty Jonah really was.

Jonah was not going to get his way because God shows mercy even if His prophets do not. I think of the words of Anne Lamott, “You can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”³ And I would conclude that God loves even Ninevites. Then I would tell you not to be like Jonah,

But you say, he hated them because they were foreigners; and as we all know, sometimes the Israelites could be a bit xenophobic. But xenophobia applies equally. Jonah did not hate the Philistines in Joppa or the foreign sailors on the boat to Tarshish (he offered his life for theirs) or even the people of Tarshish. If he hated foreigners, he would have stayed in

revealed at a surprising point in the book.

I like the book of Jonah. This book is not long and has a great plot. It is like an action story. Jonah runs from God; God sends a violent storm; the sailors throw Jonah in the sea to stop the storm; a giant fish swallows Jonah. But I must confess that when I read the book, I sometimes skip chapter 2. There is an entire chapter of poetry. What is that doing there? To paraphrase the prayer of Jonah:

You cast me down into the deep
To the very belly of the sea
Wave after wave covered me
The water smothered me
The deep closed around me
Seaweed wrapped around my head
Away from the land of life
I went down, down to the roots
of the mountains

Poetic, but it is hard to believe that Jonah was quoting poetry inside that fish. Why is this even part of the story? But it ends well.

“When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
And my prayer went up to You,
Into Your holy temple” (Jon. 2:7).

OK, that is beautiful! Quotable! God had finally broken through to Jonah; he was ready to give in.

“Those who regard worthless idols
Forsake their own Mercy.
But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay what I have vowed.
Salvation is of the LORD” (vv. 8, 9).

In verse 9, you can almost hear Jonah’s voice echoing through the sea. I am so distracted by the beauty of verses 7 and 9, but verse 8 is so awkward and vague that even when I do read chapter 2, I skip verse 8—and I completely misunderstand Jonah’s motive.

LIKE JONAH, IN THE DEEPEST PAIN AND DARKNESS, JESUS STAYED THE COURSE.



or else bad things will happen to you.

Yet, I confess I am still confused. Yes, the Assyrians had seized large territories from Israel and had probably done horrible things to the Israelites. This was not the first run-in Jonah had with the Assyrians. He prophesied to Jeroboam, son of Joash, that he would defeat Assyria and restore the northern territory of Israel (2 Kings 14:25–28). And Israel did defeat them in battle and pushed them out of Israelite lands. I would understand if Jonah hated the Assyrians while they occupied Israel, but the Assyrians had lost—he had won. Victory should dissipate anger.

Israel. In fact, the words *hate* and *hatred* do not appear anywhere in Jonah.

Why did Jonah run away? Why not hide in his house and tie himself to his bed so God could not force him to go? Why run away? He did not fear death, and, though he might have hated the Assyrians, that hardly explains why he ran. Why did Jonah run?

When all else fails, poetry

The answer to that question takes us deeper into Jonah’s motives and perhaps our own; motives that are

Jonah was not angry because God was merciful. He knew God's mercy often leads to renewed violence, suffering, and evil. Jonah knew what would happen if Nineveh survived—even if they repented, they would forsake the mercy shown them and come attack Israel again.

Hosea had already told Israel the Assyrians would take them into exile (see Hos. 9:3). And that is exactly what happened in 721 B.C., just as Jonah knew it would.⁴

Jonah loved Israel! He wanted the people of Nineveh destroyed, not because of what they had done, but because of what they would do. He raged against God's mercy that would let it happen. Yes, he ran so he would not have to preach but also to protect Israel. He knew God was merciful, but he also knew what God could do to a disobedient prophet. So instead of risking his friends and family, he risked the lives of foreign sailors on the way to Tarshish. Jonah was not surprised by the storm, I think he expected it. And he loved Israel too much to let that storm break over them.

And when God spared Nineveh, Jonah was angry, not with a petty anger, but a strong indignation: the hopeless fury of a doctor trying to save a nation from an incurable disease; the outrage of the assaulted when their attacker goes free; the helpless rage a parent feels by his or her child's bed on a cancer ward. "God, You could stop this. Why won't You stop this?"

Jonah loved.⁵ And those he loved most were put at risk by God's mercy. I understand that motive. I would be angry too. But he obeyed. No wonder Jesus told the Israelites of His day to look for the sign of Jonah.

In the bowels of a fish, in the depths of the sea, while facing the destruction of his people, Jonah turned to God. Even when he knew what it would cost, Jonah still said, "I will pay what I have vowed."

One brief, frequently overlooked verse changes the whole picture. It changes everything!

The sign of Jonah

Another Prophet was surrounded by a storm, no natural tempest—a storm of demons; drenched not with seawater but with His own sweat, blood, and tears.

Jesus was cast down into the deep
To the very belly of hell
Wave after wave of our sins covered Him
The weight smothered Him, even His soul
Evil closed around Him
Satanic lies wrapped around His head
Away from His best friends
He went down, down to the depths of the abyss.⁶

Jesus did have much in common with Jonah:⁷ three days of darkness, the suffocating experiences of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and a confirmed vow. On the cross, Jesus cried, "Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matt. 27:46). He was quoting what I consider the definitive poetic picture of the Crucifixion from Psalm 22.


My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? . . .
All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
"He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" . . .
I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me. . . .
For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet; . . .
They look and stare at Me.

They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots
(Ps. 22:1, 7, 8, 14, 16–18).

This is no hymn of discouragement but an affirmation of faith and mission. The psalmist continues, "My praise shall be of You in the great assembly" (v. 25a).

And like Jonah, in the deepest pain and darkness, Jesus stayed the course. "I will pay My vows before those who fear Him" (v. 25b). Jesus paid what He had vowed, even though He, too, knew that God's mercy often results in renewed violence, suffering, and evil.

Into the mystery

Every time I abuse His grace, every time He forgives and I relapse, He knew. He knew I would forsake the mercy He showed me. Every time I break my vow to proclaim the gospel, He proves to be the God who shows me love and calls me to love like Him. Jonah counted the cost and went to Nineveh. Jesus counted the cost and went to the cross. What on earth am I afraid of losing? But if I go, if I speak, the curtain will be pulled back and, like Jonah, I will glimpse the very mystery of God "that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). 

1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the NKJV.

2 See Erika Bleibtreu, "Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17, no. 1, (January/February 1991): 52–61.

3 Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 22, quoted in Susan Blau and Kathryn Burak, *Writing in the Works* (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2010), 16.

4 See Ephraim Stern, "Israel at the Close of the Period of the Monarchy: An Archaeological Survey," *Biblical Archaeologist* 38, no. 2 (1975): 26–54.

5 This is not to say that Jonah was right about the situation. He still had a narrow view of God's love and justice. The book ends with God reminding him that all people, and even animals, are precious in His sight. Though we do not know who wrote the book, it is reasonable that Jonah himself related the details of the story. This suggests he probably took the message to heart. Otherwise why recount it? The point of the book is not Jonah's anger but rather God's mercy.

6 Author's paraphrase of Jonah 2.

7 Though unlike Jonah, Jesus was not bitter about the sacrifice.

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Discovering stability in the **pastorate**

As popular as the story of Elijah's prophetic showdown on Mount Carmel may be, another dramatic event comes at the end of Elijah's life: his chariot ride to the realms of glory. As Elijah and Elisha "were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven" (2 Kings 2:11, NASB). The Hebrew here can also be translated as "in a gust, in a windy moment." In other words, Elijah was whisked off this earth in one sweeping movement into God's presence.¹

For those of us still in "Beersheba"—like Elijah, wrestling with our own struggles in ministry—we long for a similar transition. And like Elijah's successor, the word of a new post of service in a distant church district falls upon receptive ears like a mantle of possibility. It would appear that the closest we will get to a fiery chariot is a tightly packed truck on its way to new pastures.

Woe is me

There comes a point in every pastor's tenure where one begins to contemplate, perhaps even fantasize,

about moving on. In a 2010 *Ministry* article, Ivan Charles Blake shares his concern for struggling congregations and the apparent dearth of experienced pastors to shepherd them. Instead of leaving the pastorate for another form of ministry, his burden is "for more pastors to stay in pastoral work exclusively, giving themselves to quality preaching, teaching, leading, and training."²

While agreeing with Blake's assessment, I would like to address this issue by exploring the *spiritual underpinnings* of what is going on when pastors are deciding whether to move on. My proposal? Although there are legitimate reasons for changing posts of service, stability—the practice of persevering in a particular place or vocation—is a much-needed discipline that opens up an entirely different conversation.³

In all honesty, this article is really more of a confession of my need than a testimony to my spiritual triumphs. To those who know me, it may seem odd that I am writing about stability. My last tally yielded more moves than I am willing to admit. As a pastor, each move and each church may have brought new and exciting opportunities; but in a few years' time, I found myself

becoming discontented with the present and dreaming of the future.

So why write? The short answer—I have grown weary of moving. I am tired of being entrenched in a lifelong pattern of escape, hoping God will find me just over the next hill or the next church. Upon reflection, it seems that my sojourns have instilled a degree of restlessness and even discontent common to a contemporary Western culture of life on the go. This has produced a precedent whereby putting down roots has been discouraged. Approaching the middle years of my life, I am finally beginning to realize, as one author put it, "it is not important to get by unscathed but it is important to not run away."⁴

Making haste in the pastorate

What motivations lie underneath a pastor's move? We will never plumb the depths of a pastor's heart in its entirety, but I think I have been able to identify at least one undercurrent: speed. For many pastors, speed and busyness are the litmus tests for ministerial success. Speed is almost worn as a badge of honor. Why? David Whyte insightfully observes, "Speed gets noticed. Speed is praised by others. Speed is

self-important. Speed absolves us. . . . When it becomes all-consuming, speed is the ultimate defense, the antidote to stopping and really looking.”⁵ The great disadvantage of speed, however, is that we begin to lose sight of the fact that everyone does not travel as fast as we do, including our colleagues, family members, and children.

For many of us, the only thing that slows us down is when we are humbled. Humility is a virtue that counteracts our perceived need for speed. The root of the word *humility* is the Latin word *humus*, meaning soil or ground. Thus, when we are humbled, “we are in effect returned to the ground of our being. Any fancy ideas we have about ourselves are shriven away by the reality of the moment.”⁶ For the pastor, “being humbled” occurs whenever our breakneck quest for attainment has been impeded. At precisely these moments, we are forced to face ourselves and reevaluate the direction we are headed.

Humbling experiences are generally something we try to avoid, but in hindsight these experiences often serve as a call to go deeper and grow spiritually. My most recent transition serves as a fitting example. This particular move was not precipitated by my need to move on, but rather by my wife’s career. Nevertheless, I thought with advanced theological degrees, a number of “successful” pastorates under my belt, and favorable recommendations from respected administrators, it would not be long before I would be unpacking my books in the office of a new church. But God seemed to have other plans for the next 18 months of my life. In a matter of a few short weeks, I went from preaching, counseling, and leading a congregation to changing diapers full time. Going from respected pastor to an unnoticed stay-at-home dad challenged my identity and place in ministry to the very core.

In retrospect, I can see how it was all for the best. In an attempt to steadily climb the ladder of success,

I learned that my real need was to fall down and pay close attention to where the ladder stands. In the words of the Irish poet W. B. Yeats: “Now that my ladder’s gone, I must lie down where all the ladders start, in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.”⁷ Stopping, paying attention, and becoming rooted in a particular place—these are the elements of stability, the rich soil of humility. Throughout this experience I have begun to learn that stability’s call to stop and stay put for a while is really the best way to get somewhere.⁸

Discovering stability

Historically speaking, the concept of stability emerged out of a very real spiritual problem during the Middle Ages. Certain Christians known as *gyrovagues*, meaning “to run around in circles,” never stayed longer than a few days at any one Christian community. By seeking to avoid interpersonal conflicts, as well as the tedious and mundane aspects of everyday routine, they lost the experience of *conversatio*—continual conversion of life.⁹ To counteract this bewildering and exhausting rush from one thing to another, the practice of stability challenged these followers of God to root themselves in a particular place with a particular people, come what may.¹⁰

Likewise, when accepting a call to pastor a specific church, the call means to serve as if we were planning on spending the rest of our lives there—preaching, baptizing, counseling, marrying, and burying generations of God’s people. The problem is that sometimes it seems downright dreary to consider that God has given us *this* church congregation. We may think to ourselves, *Surely we are meant for more important things, and our talents will be better appreciated by a more sophisticated crowd.*¹¹ Yet, this composes the wisdom of stability—real growth comes in the context of community, not in isolation or perpetual movement. “Only when we stay in relationships long enough can we be known in such

a way that we are confronted with the reality of ourselves and are challenged to convert.”¹² The sobering truth? Pastors are probably shaped more by their congregation than the other way around.

Thus, when thoughts about moving on begin to surface, for whatever reason, “It is critical that we stop and take a long, prayerful look.”¹³ We need to probe deeper. Why? Why now? After examining our hearts and the options available to us, we just might conclude that the best alternative involves staying put. Benefits of ministry longevity are numerous: developing deeper relationships, learning to love one another through difficulties, a sense of belonging to a larger community outside the church, and the “adoption” of a pastor’s children by surrogate grandparents, aunts, and uncles.¹⁴

“Even though leaving our current church might be our *first* thought, it should not be our *only* thought. In fact, it may not be our best thought.”¹⁵ James M. Antal suggests numerous options for persevering. For example, some long-term pastors find refreshment in taking a sabbatical, which affords the opportunity to read, talk to friends, and attend a workshop. Other pastors, like myself, experience renewal by furthering their education. Another way to bring fresh perspective would be to identify one’s personal passion and channel it into launching a new church ministry. Stability is not the easy way out; all of these options can create additional stress and attract criticism. However, “no price is too great to pay if a minister who is lost rediscovers his or her call.”¹⁶


Conclusion

Ultimately, stability is much more profound than drawing a line in the sand. Perhaps this is one of the great lessons we learn from Elijah’s life. In the cave, God was not in the violent wind but the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11, 12, KJV). On the other hand, when Elijah was taken up from this earth, evidently

God was in the whirlwind (1 Kings 19:11; cf. 2 Kings 2:11).¹⁷ In other words, God's faithfulness was seen regardless of the circumstance or where Elijah planted his feet.

Stability begins by accepting the gift of God's presence where we are, viewing it as holy ground. We know this first and foremost because God's Son took on human flesh and refused to abandon His call to " 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' " (Matt. 15:24, NASB), despite continual opposition and, in the end, crucifixion. This is the definitive testimony to the revolutionary power of stability and, by implication, entails a way of life for the disciple of Christ.¹⁸

In situations where sticking it out in a congregation may not be an option, internal stability of heart is always within reach. Stability is a continuous process of holding on against all odds, involving us in the

mystery of the Cross. In the end, "The one thing that we can hold on to is the certainty of God. Our stability is a response to that promise which reassures us that he is faithful and steadfast and that we should 'never lose hope in God's mercy.' "¹⁹ 

- 1 The prophet's grand exit was not in the chariot itself, but rather on the wings of the wind. However, it is important to note, "These chariots and horsemen symbolized strong protection as well as the forces of God's spiritual presence." Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 195, 196.
- 2 Ivan Charles Blake, "Pastor for Life," *Ministry* 82, no. 7/8 (July/August 2010): 7.
- 3 Legitimate promptings to transition to a different church are numerous, such as a change in personal circumstances (spouse's career needs, a child's schooling, death in the family, medical concerns), or church circumstances (an impasse of church and pastoral leadership and vision). Additionally, one can never rule out the occasional times when, despite contentment in a congregation, God clearly (read also, miraculously) intervenes and indicates it is time to go. See James M. Antal, *Considering a New Call: Ethical and Spiritual Challenges for Clergy* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 2000), 11–17; Michael J. Anthony and Mick Boersma, *Moving On—Moving Forward: A Guide for Pastors in Transition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 85–99.
- 4 Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 64.

- 5 David Whyte, *Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity* (New York: Riverhead, 2001), 117.
- 6 Ibid., 125.
- 7 W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 297.
- 8 This phrasing is taken from the title of chapter 8 in Dennis Okholm's introductory text, *Monk Habits for Everyday People: Benedictine Spirituality for Protestants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 89.
- 9 See Timothy Fry, ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981), prologue 49; 58.1, 17; 73.1. According to Terrence G. Kardong, *conversatio* means "a lifestyle, a 'turning-around' in a given milieu." *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 24.
- 10 De Waal, *Seeking God*, 57.
- 11 Kathleen Norris, foreword to *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture*, by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010), ix.
- 12 Okholm, *Monk Habits for Everyday People*, 95.
- 13 Antal, *Considering a New Call*, 19.
- 14 Anthony and Boersma, *Moving On—Moving Forward*, 88.
- 15 Antal, *Considering a New Call*, 19.
- 16 Ibid., 21.
- 17 Though the Hebrew words used in both of these passages for "wind" are different (*ruah* and *se'ara*), biblical scholars of diverse schools attest to the manifestation of physical phenomena as connected with theophany. See Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 236, 294; Marvin A. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 232, 271.
- 18 Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Wisdom of Stability*, 136.
- 19 De Waal, *Seeking God*, 64.

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Advantages of a multichurch district

The head elder of the first church I pastored was angry when the conference assigned me a second church. “The pastor has been here only for six months,” he complained to the president, “and we are just beginning to see some growth. This will kill the progress we have made.”

“We are experiencing a financial exigency,” the president retorted, “and we have to make cuts.” (I had never heard the word *exigency* before, but I learned that it meant that I was now going to be driving 80 miles round trip twice a week!)

This incident leads to some bigger and more important questions: Are multichurch districts God’s plan for successful growth or just the result of budgetary restraints? Would growth be greater if we employed one pastor per church?

From what I have seen, the answer is not what most of us would expect.

Unexpected results

First, after I was assigned my second church, over the next four years, the Santa Clarita church in California (my original church), though now part of this new district, shot up from an attendance of 70 to 200. Giving quadrupled, and the membership

was growing. The Palmdale church (my new one) also grew dramatically, especially because of the addition of a Spanish language worship service. What happened next surprised me even more. Because of the church’s growth, I was released from the second church, leaving me to focus all of my energies on growing the first one. After three and a half years of hard work, the attendance dwindled from 200 to 180. Our growth turned negative.

What happened?

I had become, I realized, what has been termed a *hovering* pastor.¹ When the second church was added, I had to develop better my delegation skills. Elders were given preaching assignments, members did follow up, and Bible workers were trained. The churches were buzzing with activity. When I went back to only one church, much of the activity stopped—not that the people were not willing to preach—but they now had me full time. Also, I found that in many cases, it just seemed easier to do things myself. If a work bee was needed, I did all the planning; if a lightbulb burned out, I replaced it. At my goodbye party, the head deacon said, “I hate to lose you, pastor; you’re the best deacon I ever had.”

Actually, these results should not be surprising. History shows us that they are exactly what we should expect.

Precedents

For instance, during Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13; 14), he planted churches in Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23, NKJV). Paul came back to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in both his second and third missionary journeys, this time inviting young Timothy along. Timothy was well recommended by the “brethren” (Acts 16:2, NKJV). Who were these brethren? Possibly the elders Paul had ordained on his return visit, for they were caring for the church while Paul went forth to break new ground.

Early Adventists copied Paul’s church planting tactics. Ordained ministers would go forth into new territories and raise up churches. James White wrote, “It does not appear to have been the design of Christ that His ministers should become stationed, salaried preachers. Of His first ministers it is said, immediately after receiving their high

commission, that 'they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following' " (Mark 16:15–20).²

James White considered the work of Seventh-day Adventist ministers similar to that of the early Christian ministers who entered a town, began preaching and teaching the Word, until they had formed a group of believers whom they organized into a church. "Then these ministers would pass on to a new field of labor. These churches were not carried upon the shoulders of their ministers, but were left to sustain the worship of God among themselves. Occasionally would they pass through and visit the brethren, to exhort, confirm, and comfort them."³

The Adventist system of sending tithe to the local conference seemed to reflect a New Testament strategy also. Paul explained to the Corinthians that "I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you" (2 Cor. 11:8, NIV). Paul's effort in Corinth was supported by the church in Macedonia (v. 9). Ellen White urged the same concept on churches that were keeping ministers to themselves: "Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to these laborers: 'Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us, and we will send our prayers and our gifts to sustain the laborers in more needy and destitute fields.'⁴

Note the statement "more needy and destitute fields." The criterion for pastoral placement, according to James and Ellen White, seems to be the lack of an Adventist presence. Today's pastoral distribution

formulas are the opposite: the more members and tithe, the more pastoral support is expected. Large churches are rewarded with greater staffing; the smaller ones are placed in districts with other churches. Early Adventists sent their tithe to the conference so they could use it to send ministers to new fields, and thus continual church planting was sustained. As the churches multiplied, so did the funds for new church planters. The potential for

replied, " ' "I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle, and you doing the work of but one. Your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six how to be idle." ' ' "6

Russell Burrill explains the danger of today's pastoral distribution system. "If the first-century church had attempted to plant churches as we do today, by appointing a

WHEN THE PASTOR SPENDS THE MAJORITY OF HIS OR HER TIME DEVELOPING THE MEMBERS' MINISTRY SKILLS, MINISTRY EXPANDS.

supporting new church plants was exponential. This mind-set was to be instilled in the very DNA of each new congregation.

"God holds these ministers responsible for the souls of those who are in darkness. He does not call you to go into fields that need no physician. Establish your churches with the understanding that they need not expect the minister to wait upon them and to be continually feeding them."⁵

Multichurch districts

What, then, are the advantages of multichurch districts?

1. *Workers are strengthened and multiplied.* Ellen G. White tells the story of a business owner whose foreman was doing some simple repairs while six workers watched. The foreman was summoned to the owner's office and fired. When the foreman asked why, the owner

pastor to watch over each new congregation, the result would have been weak churches composed of immature Christians who were not disciples."⁷ He goes on to quote Roland Allen, "Where churches are helped most, there they are weak, lifeless and helpless."⁸

During my later years in a church district in Montana, we planted two new churches; this left me time to speak in each church only once a month. The main church really did not need me that much for the elders could speak just as well or better than I could. They were even willing to go to the smaller churches and help with the speaking schedule. Talent was developed that would normally have been idle had I felt a need to be present more often.

This is the method being utilized today in South America. For my sabbatical, I spent three months in Peru, seeking to learn the principles behind

the rapid growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there. One pastor of 25 churches invited me to come to a training session for his small group leaders. At 5:00 A.M. Sabbath morning, we took a small taxi to one of his churches. When we arrived at 6:00 A.M., there were more than 20 people worshiping in the church building, waiting for their morning training session. Development of leadership is the main activity of the pastors of this rapidly growing movement.

2. *More time, less friction.* " 'If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting, and also avoid many causes of friction.' " ⁹

What causes friction? In the case of Moses, it was taking too much responsibility on himself. " 'Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself' " (Exod. 18:18, NKJV). When the pastor spends the majority of his or her time developing the members' ministry skills, ministry expands and many problems can be well handled by trained believers.

When I had a multichurch district, as opposed to just one church, I had to spend more time developing leadership among my church members. The result was that I had more time on my hands for the things I would like to do such as public evangelism and pioneering new work.

In one district, we hired a young college student to run a Magabook literature program for our youth. Wanting to make sure this was successful, I told my elders that they would not see much of me that summer. They blessed me and sent me forth. These competent leaders took care of prayer meeting, board meetings, and follow-up visitation. (They sent emails letting me know that the board meetings were running better without me!)

In my experience, the pastor of five churches and 500 members has more time and less problems than the pastor hovering over a single church of 200 members.

3. *It forces the issue.* When I accepted a call to the Westminster church in British Columbia, I informed the president and the congregation that I would do this only if they would allow me to have a second church. Westminster is a church of 350 members, with an attendance of 275, and tithe of more than \$400,000. While this church would not normally be districted, I knew that if I became a single church pastor again, I would regress into the hovering mode, which is bad for the church and the pastor. A second church forces the local leadership to take on more of the work of ministry.

At a meeting in April to discuss the addition of the 55-member White Rock church to our district, I was asked who would preach when I was gone for two Sabbaths a month. My head elder quickly responded, "We have enough speakers to cover until Christmas." The larger churches have talent that needs to be exercised, but they tend to exercise that talent *only* when the pastor is absent.

Adding churches to pastors, not pastors to churches

How do you add additional churches?

The first step is to teach the biblical and historical Adventist approach to pastoral care to your leadership. Gerard Damsteegt has written a helpful, comprehensive article on this subject.¹⁰

Second, find someone to replace you for everything you do. Preaching, visitation, Bible studies, chairing board meetings, even premarital counseling: these can all be done by well-trained members. Explain to your members that they are ministers, too, and, thus, they need to be prepared for the day you start or are given another congregation. If the

elders buy into this new approach, the congregation generally follows.

Finally, the ratio of Sabbaths spent at the smaller churches should be weighted in their favor. I know this sounds strange, but the smaller church with less talent needs you more, and the larger church with more talent needs more exercise. Both congregations will grow and neither will feel neglected. Kalispell, my largest church when I pastored in Montana, was gracious enough to have me only one Sabbath a month. During that time, it was the fastest growing church in the conference.

By giving me a second church, my local conference saves half a salary. What could that money do if it was sent to other divisions, to "more needy and destitute fields"? I believe that both North and South American pastors would be less burdened and more productive for God's kingdom if a larger portion of the tithe was sent where it is needed most. Multiple-church districting can focus North American pastors on the essentials, while saving more of the tithe to further develop the work in other places. Both the biblical and historical Adventist strategy for growing churches has been *adding churches to pastors*, not pastors to churches. A revival of this strategy should benefit the work the world over. ☑

1 *Hovering* is a term Ellen G. White used for ministers who devoted their energies solely to the local congregation, while neglecting the work of opening new fields. For example, "The ministers are hovering over churches, which know the truth, while thousands are perishing out of Christ." *General Conference Bulletin*, April 12, 1901, 204.

2 P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Have Adventists Abandoned the Biblical Model of Leadership for the Local Church?" in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2005), 654.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 382.

5 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 100.

6 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 197.

7 Russell Burrill, *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996), 60.

8 *Ibid.*

9 White, *Gospel Workers*, 198.

10 See note 2. This article can be downloaded from his Web site at www.andrews.edu/~damsteeg/Herewestand_sec_6.pdf.

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Working side by side

When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”¹

With these words, Ellen G. White sets out a clear principle for how God’s work should be carried out in these final days: it is to be accomplished by men and women working side by side, with their energies and gifts combined. Ellen G. White had, actually, much to say on the role of women in ministry.² She charged the church to find new ways in allowing the talents and gifts of women to serve the Lord’s needs, including women being unbound and allowed to grow, so that they could become effective agents in the hand of the Lord. She wrote,

We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.³

In preparing this article, I was soon immersed in dozens of Web sites, blogs, printed articles, position papers, and even entire books on Adventist women in ministry.⁴ It is clear that the church—while somewhat divided on women’s ordination—has a fairly clear sense of the broad path we should be following in order to minister at full capacity in today’s complex world.

The ongoing “biblical” debate

Change is difficult for all of us, even when we claim openness to it. When we see it coming, we dodge and weave back and forth. It is OK for others to change (they probably need it), but we are convinced *our* ways are just fine. We struggle to welcome change as a friend and enabler, rather than a threat.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was formed at a time when women were seen as occupying a particular role in society, and not one with great potential. As Kit Watts put it in a *Ministry* article:

At the dawn of the nineteenth century in the United States, women held approximately the same legal status as children and slaves. Married women generally could not own property independent of their husbands. If they were employed, their

wages could be appropriated by their husbands. Legal say about children resided entirely in the father’s hands.⁵

That was the soil in which Adventist women began laboring. The church was formed in a cultural context that defined the role of women in narrow, restricted terms. In 1889, Ellen G. White recalled that her own brother had begged her not to go public in ministry. He wrote to her, “I beg of you do not disgrace the family. I will do anything for you if you will not go out as a preacher.”⁶ For many women of her day, this would have been an obstacle too large to overcome. But Ellen wrote back, “Can it disgrace the family for me to preach Christ and Him crucified! If you would give me all the gold your house could hold, I would not cease giving my testimony for God.”⁷

That position took courage and boldness. The church itself would need to show courage and boldness and come to grips with a female prophet among us, who was unwilling to hide her candle under a bushel or fail to deliver a clear and compelling witness to Jesus.

The theology behind the theology

Not all arguments can be resolved most successfully by pursuing a straight line. While playing

miniature golf, I found that no hole can be successfully approached in a straight line. You have to go around a corner, bounce off a wall, or go through a windmill. In the same way, you have to approach some aspects of church life by applying a few broader principles than you might otherwise be inclined to do.

For example, the apostle Paul provides three fundamental principles for addressing complex issues.

First, always go from the general to the specific. We must ask, What does God's larger plan look like, and how are the specific issues we face informed by the broader principles? For example, whether it's women in leadership, speaking in tongues, or race relations, Paul wants us to understand God's broad relationship with us, that in Christ "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female" (Gal. 3:28, NLT). That's the big idea that undergirds everything else. You cannot get to an understanding on complex and

contentious issues simplistically or in a linear fashion; you have to start with the central issues and then see how these shape the specifics.

Second, be willing to be in spiritual submission. Whether wives being in submission to their husbands, all Christians being in submission to Christ, or Jesus being in submission to His Father, the core value that shapes our understanding of things is that *we have to be willing to prioritize.* We have to understand that not everything is of equal significance or application, and we have to put our own interests up against what God attempts to do in the world. We are not only individuals; we are part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Third, make sharing the good news of Jesus central in our communities. The church is here to be a welcoming environment where God can bring into fellowship those He is saving. Nothing else that we want to debate or disagree about—whether

it is drums in church, methods for evangelism, or women's ordination—can be allowed to dominate the conversation. The question shaping the debate is, Does it enable us to share Jesus or does it get in the way?

Those opposed to women in leadership justify their arguments by passages from the apostle Paul, such as, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak" (1 Cor. 14:34, KJV). If we do not use Paul's three principles, going from the general to the specific, considering time and place, this passage alone would end the conversation.

But it does not. A literalist approach to Scripture is one Adventists formally rejected long ago. Adventist theologians and historians, over and over, have integrated these words with other passages of Scripture—including stories that show women leading out in significant ways, both in the Old and New Testaments—that reveal

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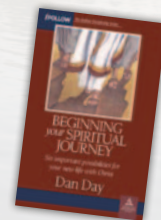
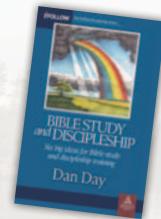
Beginning Your Spiritual Journey is designed to support the entire discipleship process. This book is primarily for those just starting out on the path to discipleship, but it also for those encountering difficulties who may need to rebuild some of the elements of a vital spiritual life.

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God's eagerness to break down all social barriers. Some of us in the church today still divide ourselves into "literalists," who would apply Scripture with no reflection on time and place, and those who would apply the "principle" behind the words. And then, of course, we castigate one another for failing to be "sufficiently biblical" (by which we mean that "you do not interpret things as I do"). It is not really the theology of the thing (the specific interpretations), so much as the theology *behind* the theology.

Reaching today's world for Jesus

We live in distinctive cultures, with many contrasting or even competing values. If our views and beliefs are to be seen as relevant and meaningful, we must speak in ways that make sense to our listeners. The apostle Paul put it most urgently when he wrote, "Let your conversation be always gracious,

and never insipid; study how best to talk with each person you meet" (Col. 4:6, NEB). *The Message* Bible paraphrase puts it in even more dramatic form: "Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out" (vv. 5, 6).

Clearly, we need to find ways to communicate with others in *their* terms, using language that makes sense to *them*, in *their* cultural setting.

The elephant in the room

The conversation about women in ministry, about which some consensus exists, is often squashed by "the elephant in the room." You may find it ironic that in a denomination whose history was hugely shaped by a woman, the church finds itself struggling internally over the role

of women in leadership.⁸ This is, of course, part of a larger conversation that touches on women's ordination—a battle that has been going on in the church for generations. This is part of an even more fundamental conversation about the priesthood of all believers, touching on the core issue of what ordination *means* to us as a denomination (which is not precisely what it means to some other groups).

Currently, the debate about women's ordination lies in a waiting period due to contrasting views in various parts of the world. There can be no escaping the heat on both sides of the issue, with passionate advocates and opponents. Each side feels they are not only right, but that they stand on the high moral ground.

The current status of women's ordination was presented with some clarity by our former General Conference president, Jan Paulsen. He stated that the issue was not theological or biblical but a function



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of maintaining unity in the world church. In communicating with young people, he said, "For Seventh-day Adventists, ordination to the gospel ministry means ordination to serve the entire world church anywhere the minister is called. Within many countries and cultures, women are excluded from exercising leadership, whether political,

The role of women in leadership

Our focus in this article is not the debate over the ordination of women but enabling women and men to work side by side. There was a fairly rapid expansion of Adventist women in leadership positions during the years leading up to the death of Ellen G. White, and then a sharp

characteristic of the early Adventist believers.

Early Adventists understood Paul's prophetic words in Galatians 3:28 that there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (NKJV) as the seed of many reforms that led to the abolition of social evils like slavery, class distinctions based on birth rights, and gender exclusion in society and church. Early Adventists were thus abolitionists, social democrats, and republicans in government.¹³

Adventists have never been mere reflectors of social trends. We have always brought our social awareness to the conversation, along with a desire to dig into the deeper teachings of Scripture. For example, in resisting the traditional view that the Bible prohibits women from speaking in church, there were four articles in church publications between the 1860s and 1870s on the theme of women in ministry, including some by J. H. Waggoner and J. N. Andrews.

Interestingly enough, none of these articles attempted to make the case that Ellen G. White should be allowed a distinctive pass or dispensation from traditional thinking because she was a prophet. These articles, as we saw that Paul suggests, went from the general to the specific.

The debate on the role of women in ministry has been a continuing part of our internal dialogue. In the 1881 General Conference Session, a resolution was offered to ordain women: "*Resolved*, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry."¹⁴ The resolution was referred to a three man General Conference committee, where it died,¹⁵ but even then it was part of the larger conversation about women in ministry.

Virtually the entire church acknowledges that the topic of

WHAT DOES GOD'S LARGER PLAN LOOK LIKE, AND HOW ARE THE SPECIFIC ISSUES WE FACE INFORMED BY THE BROADER PRINCIPLES?

religious, or social."⁹

He went on to add,

The Adventist Church has placed a high value on unity and worldwide consensus on this issue, and at the 1990 General Conference in Session it voted that women would not be ordained to the gospel ministry in our denomination. The issue was revisited at the 1995 General Conference session and this approach was confirmed. Again, it was a matter of the global Adventist Church saying, in the interest of unity, "No—at least not now."¹⁰


Paulsen knows of no biblical reason why women cannot be ordained and given leadership in ministry.¹¹ The issue is keeping a state of balance among constituencies, waiting for a more receptive environment.

decline afterwards.¹² There were many reasons for this change, most of which are sociological. One factor was the desire to protect jobs for men during the Great Depression, which was accelerated at the end of World War II when the men came back from war. Today, the process of welcoming women into ministry is once again reversing itself. In North America, in particular, an increasing number of women are again serving as pastors and conference leaders. This includes the significant shift of women studying at the seminary to become pastors.

Thus, with a full awareness of these historical patterns, we turn to the broader issue of the women in leadership today. Adventists have always struggled to find a casual middle ground on the issue, given our passion for people. Indeed, it is part of a larger concept of social engagement that was dramatically

women in leadership is a complex, demanding ongoing study. The larger issue, though, is not political or even sociological. Instead, it is pragmatic, based on Paul's third principle. It is about what we need to do to facilitate God's work with the greatest likelihood of success—in each place where the gospel is carried out. In some cultures, the concept of men and women working side by side is not only acceptable but *expected*, and even required (sometimes by law). A desire for *uniform* practices in all parts of the world should never be allowed to impede the work in one place in order to avoid challenges in another. Instead, a line of logic that supports the application of differing congregational practices based on differing cultural realities has to be stated clearly and boldly—and then defended vigorously. In other words, we have to assert Paul's three principles with vigor and tenacity.

Finally, as we discuss the role of women in leadership, we must see that Paul's call to open wide the

doors of ministry is shaped by the driving value of love. Jesus told His disciples that the world will inevitably evaluate us on the basis of whether or not what we do is driven by love (John 13:35). Any other value gets in the way. We all need to be celebrating the contributions of Adventist women in leadership and working to expand opportunities for women everywhere. 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 469.
- 2 I would recommend, as a convenient place to access this, the appendix on what Ellen White had to say on the topic, found in Patricia Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds., *The Welcome Table* (Langley Park, MD: TEAM Press, 1995), beginning on page 301.
- 3 Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895.
- 4 For example, Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998) is a comprehensive scholarly book put out by the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and written by an impressive list of theologians and historians.
- 5 Lorna Tobler, "A More Faithful Witness" (paper, West Coast Religion Teacher's Conference, n.p., May 2–4, 1985), 2–6, quoted in Kitt Watts, "The Rise and Fall of Adventist Women in Leadership," *Ministry*, April 1995, 6.
- 6 Ellen G. White, "Looking for That Blessed Hope," *Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1889. (Ellen G. White preached this sermon in Washington, DC, on January 26, 1889.)
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 The recent 2011 Annual Council decision by the General Conference not to approve the request from the North American Division to accommodate the cultural realities in North America by allowing women and others on nonordained tracks (such as treasurers) to serve as conference presidents, serves to illustrate this divergence of opinion: 41.9 percent of the Annual Council delegates supported the NAD request; 58.1 percent did not approve the request. Thus, at the present time, a woman can serve as a conference secretary (the next highest office), but cannot—by policy—advance into the presidency.
- 9 This quote from Jan Paulsen was from written material in a Q & A section on the *Let's Talk* Web site, a forum for Adventist youth. However the original source no longer exists as this Web site was retired in 2010.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Per correspondence with Jan Paulsen, August 22, 2012.
- 12 Watts, "The Rise and Fall of Adventist Women," 6–10. "In 1905, for example, women held 20 out of 60 conference treasurer positions. The number of women heading conference departments was even more remarkable. In 1915 approximately two thirds of the 60 educational department leaders and more than 50 of the 60 Sabbath school department leaders were women." Ibid., 8.
- 13 Denis Fortin, "What Did Early Adventist Pioneers Think About Women in Ministry?" *Memory, Meaning & Faith* (blog), April 8, 2012, accessed August 20, 2012, www.memorymeaningfaith.org/blog/2010/04/adventist-pioneers-women-ministry.html#more.
- 14 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Business Proceedings: Fifth Meeting, Dec. 5, 10 A.M.," *Review and Herald*, December 20, 1881, 392. See also Helen Ward Thompson, "Questions and Answers About Women's Ordination and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," quoted in Habada and Brillhart, eds., *The Welcome Table*. Also discussed in Bert Haloviak, "Ellen White and the Ordination of Women" (sermon, Sligo, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist Church, October 15, 1988), www.camelbackchurch.net/assets/391782.
- 15 Stephen Haskell, George Butler, and Uriah Smith.

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"I Am Your Portion"

In an increasingly more complex world, ministers carry immense burdens. They are to be great preachers, engaging teachers, empathetic counselors, visionary administrators, wise board chairs, and so on—the proverbial spiritual Superman or Superwoman.

As our time is limited to the same 24 hours the nonministerial population enjoys, we often struggle to keep first things first. The urgent displaces the important. The necessary outpaces the central. The pressing usurps the essential.

Revival and reformation is not only another good initiative, but God's way of reminding us daily in

whose business we are and describes our role in the greater scheme of things.

Numbers 18 outlines an important chapter regarding the role of priests and Levites in the Old Testament. Sure, we all understand that twenty-first century ministers are not priests or Levites. But somehow, when we consider the big picture, verse 20 should be the verse that guides and informs everything we do in ministry, including revival and reformation. As God speaks to Aaron and his sons, listen carefully, "I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel" (ESV). Priests did not own land in Israel as God was

their inheritance. Every morning, as they faced another busy day in the temple or teaching God's people, they were reminded of that foundational truth: "I am His—and don't want to be distracted!" It is a statement of ownership that rings down through the ages—right into our hearts.

—GERALD A. KLINGBEIL, DLITT, SERVES AS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST WORLD MAGAZINES, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.



Third International Bible Conference Breaks New Ground



Some 330 theologians, Bible teachers, and administrators of the Seventh-day Adventist Church gathered beside the Sea of Galilee for the opening session of the Third International Bible Conference held from June 11 to 21, 2012. Organized by the Biblical Research Institute and sponsored together with the General Conference and the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, delegates from nearly 70 countries listened to and made presentations on the theme of Biblical Anthropology. Included during the ten days of the conference were visits to important sites of biblical history, including Bethlehem, Caesarea, Megiddo, Nazareth, Capernaum, Tel Dan, Masada, and many sites in and near Jerusalem. Partnering with us in making presentations and selecting sites of geological interest were scientists from the Geoscience Research Institute.


Besides being the largest international Bible conference ever held

by the Adventist Church, this event was groundbreaking in several other respects:

- it is the first time presentations have been streamed live on the Internet;
- it is the first time video podcasts are being made available from the conference;
- it is the first time a scholarly book comprised of papers presented at the conference will be produced;
- it is the first time leaders of the world church have met with officials from the state of Israel;
- for the vast majority of the delegates, it was also their first visit to Israel.

Particularly noteworthy were events on Sabbath that included the morning sermon by our world president, Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, and, in the afternoon, a season of prayer for important theological issues facing the Adventist Church:

recent challenges to the biblical account of Creation, to Scripture's affirmation of marriage between a man and a woman and its condemnation of a homosexual lifestyle, and to the study currently being done on the theology of ordination. Sabbath afternoon also included a time for spontaneous questions and answers by Pastor Wilson and his wife, Nancy. A special, festive program on Wednesday evening closed the conference. At this meeting, a statement of theological consensus on the theme of the conference was read, discussed, revisions suggested, and then approved unanimously by a show of hands. This statement, which begins with sections detailing the theological and historical contexts surrounding the conference, contains seven affirmations and four denials in connection with Biblical Anthropology, and sets forth some missiological implications and a number of recommendations.



Consensus Statement

Third International Bible Conference

Jerusalem, Israel – June 20, 2012

Theological prologue

An emphasis on the biblical understanding of humanity has been characteristic of the Seventh-day Adventist movement from its beginning. According to the Bible's foundational anthropological descriptions, male and female human beings are "creatures" in the "image of God" (Gen. 1:26, 27)—expressions which point, respectively, to what human beings have in common with other forms of life and to what distinguishes them within the natural world. As creatures, human beings are physical beings in a physical world, dependent for life on God, who alone possesses immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). Even though dependent and finite, human beings have great value to God. God's pronouncement that what He had made was "very good" (Gen. 1:31) thus affirms the goodness of the body, refuting dualism. It affirms the value of material reality, and therefore of physical, corporeal existence, and excludes the notion that human beings could exist in any sort of nonphysical or disembodied state.

As creatures in the "image of God," fashioned by God on the sixth day of His creative work, human beings are distinguished from other forms of life on earth in a number of significant ways (Gen. 1:26–29). Though variously interpreted, the expression connotes that human beings are distinguished by unique relationships to God, to other creatures, and to each other, and endowed by God with special qualities and privileges, among which is the capacity to freely embrace God's sovereign love and will for them. God also places responsibilities on human beings, including care for His world and living in harmony with God and other human beings.

Created in the image of God, Adam and Eve and their descendants were placed at the center of the great controversy between cosmic forces of good and evil. Their willful rebellion against God's love adversely affected everything about them (Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:11–13). Sin in its essence points to the tragic discrepancy between what human beings are meant to be and the condition in which they actually

exist. Sin placed them in conflict with God, with one another, and with creation, and subjects them to pain, suffering, physical and mental decline, and eventually to death.

Just as a wholistic view of humanity affirms all the dimensions that make us human—including physical, mental, emotional, sexual, social, and spiritual dimensions—a wholistic view of sin acknowledges that every aspect of our humanity is unfulfilled and damaged. Similarly, a wholistic view of salvation envisions the restoration of our humanity—in all of its essential aspects.

The theme of human restoration appears throughout the Bible. Sinners are offered the opportunity for a restored relationship with God as they place their faith in Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, whose death reconciles them to the Father (Rom. 5:6–15; 2 Cor. 5:17–19). The presence of the Spirit in the life of believers continually renews and restores their fellowship with God and each other. The doctrine of the resurrection promises restoration on a personal scale—an immortal, glorified body. Jesus'

preaching of the kingdom promises restoration of a perfect social order. And biblical apocalyptic literature promises restoration on a cosmic level—new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21:1–5). These various forms appeared proleptically in the ministry of Jesus, who forgave sin, healed the sick, challenged injustice, and, when necessary, defied oppressive powers, cast out demons, restored human relationships, and raised the dead. As evidenced in its evangelistic, educational, community service, and medical work, it is the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to extend the multifaceted restorative ministry of Jesus to the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and social needs of human beings, whom God still regards as children, created in the divine image and designed for fellowship with God and each other.

The context

Seventh-day Adventist scholars, educators, pastors, members, and leaders minister in a world in which the challenges to the biblical concept of human nature are profound and pervasive. Hundreds of millions of persons accept and practice traditional religions which allow for or encourage animism, ancestor worship, communication with the spirits of the dead, or the use of occult powers. Millions more blend one or more of these false doctrines of end-time spiritualism with monotheistic faiths, including Christianity, resulting in a syncretism that robs the good news of Jesus' death and bodily resurrection of its life-giving power. Seventh-day Adventists have emphasized the Bible's teaching about the nature of man from their earliest mission endeavors: Ellen G. White referred to belief in the natural nonimmortality of human beings as one of the "landmarks" of the Seventh-day Adventist message. The urgency of addressing the challenges of dualism in all its forms on faith and practice is underlined by the reality of confusion among some Seventh-day Adventists who

have a background in other faith systems.

The Third International Bible Conference took place in Israel, June 11–20, 2012, at sites in Galilee and Jerusalem. The theme of the Conference was "Issues in Biblical Anthropology From an Adventist Perspective." Committed to a biblical worldview, more than 300 Adventist theologians and administrators from around the world gathered together to explore biblical, theological, historical, missiological, and scientific perspectives on anthropology, to foster fellowship and unity among theologians and among theologians and administrators, and to be better equipped to serve the Lord and His church. Through the study, discussion, and fellowship this Conference provided, it was hoped that participants would experience a renewed sense of belonging and be stimulated to make further valuable contributions to the world church through their teaching and ministry.

As the meetings came to an end, we, the participants, acknowledge that we were spiritually and intellectually enriched through Bible study, the devotionals, the seasons of prayer, the lectures, the discussions, and the educational visits to important biblical and archaeological sites. We also proclaim that the Adventist understanding of human nature and its denial of anthropological dualism is deeply rooted in and nurtured by biblical anthropology.

Affirmations

Committed to the principles of *sola scriptura* and *tota scriptura*, and because we accept the Bible's teaching about the origin, nature, and destiny of human life:

- We affirm that human beings are creatures of God, fashioned indivisibly from the dust of the earth, into whom God breathed the breath of life (Gen. 2:7).
- We affirm the goodness of material reality and bodily existence,

according to the divine word which declared "It is good" (Gen. 1:31).

- We affirm that God created human beings in the image and likeness of God. Therefore all human life is endowed with unique dignity, value, and responsibilities (Ps. 8:3–8).
- We affirm that sin has profoundly damaged human nature in all its dimensions, separating human beings from fellowship with God and each other (Rom. 3:23; Gen. 3:7, 8).
- We affirm that death is the inevitable consequence of sin, and is both a cessation of personal consciousness and an end to human life in all its dimensions until the resurrection. The breath returns to God who gave it, and the dust returns to the ground (Gen. 3:19; Eccles. 12:7).
- We affirm that it is the saving activity of God through the death and bodily resurrection of Christ and through the continuous work of the Spirit to reverse the effects of sin and restore in humanity the image of God (1 Cor. 3:16–18).
- We affirm that at Christ's return, those in Christ, both living and the resurrected dead, will receive the gift of immortality, accept glorified bodies, and enter the life everlasting (1 Cor. 15:51–54).

Denials

- We deny natural immortality in its various forms, including the concept of the immaterial soul, eternal punishment, and reincarnation in any life form.
- We deny naturalism as an explanation for the origin of human life, or any form of life.
- We deny the continuation of any consciousness after death, and thus the use of practices to commune with the dead, worship ancestors, or gain occult powers.
- We deny all forms of anthropological dualism, especially the

belief that “soul” and body are different orders of being.

Missiological implications

It is a vital part of the mission of the church to proclaim Christ's victory over death, and deliverance from the fear of death and spiritual powers through faith in Him (Heb. 2:15). We recognize that the fear of death and evil spiritual powers pervades human experience, and takes form in a variety of religious beliefs and practices. We accept the responsibility of teaching the biblical truth about the nature of human beings in every culture and context so that all who hear will find lives of freedom and joy in the gospel and be prepared to meet the Savior in peace. We confidently expect the literal second coming of Jesus at which God will restore the wholeness of all who put their faith in Jesus. We preach and teach the Word of God, inviting persons of every race, ethnicity, and language into fellowship with God and His

end-time people. Recognizing the dignity and value of every human being, we engage in education, health care, and humanitarian aid, combatting poverty, injustice, and involvement in the occult. We do these things as expressions of Christ's goal to restore in human beings the image of God and full fellowship with God and each other.


Recommendations

Instructed by the teaching of Scripture and by Ellen G. White's conviction that the biblical doctrines of the Sabbath and the state of the dead will be of vital importance in the end time (Rev. 12:17; 14:7; 13:13, 14), we recommend that church administration encourage and sponsor major scholarly work on biblical anthropology, and that ample funding for this important scholarly and educational work be made available. Missiological challenges unique to special regions of the world church should be addressed by dedicated funding.

Church administrators should encourage Seventh-day Adventist scholars, educators, and leaders to place special emphasis on the biblical teaching about the nature of human beings in curriculum and strategic planning for Adventist tertiary education.

Seventh-day Adventist scholars should be encouraged to give additional attention to these important topics to provide resources to frontline pastors, teachers, literature evangelists, and church members.

Sabbath School curricula, ministerial training, and continuing education opportunities should be designed to equip pastors, Sabbath School teachers, and chaplains to educate church members about the biblical teaching on the nature of human beings.

Additional and concentrated study should be directed by the Office of Adventist Mission to address the implications of the biblical doctrine of humanity to the church's mission, evangelism, and witness. 

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What's your desire?

The Bible's message comes through very clearly: Humans, as they are here and now, cannot see God. Seeing God in His glory, majesty, and purity would kill them. Nevertheless, one day Moses asked God to see His unveiled glory, to experience His presence in an unprecedented way (Exod. 33:18). This is a good yet dangerous prayer. The issue is that Moses' relationship with the Lord had grown so much that he desired the last barrier to fall. He had identified with the Lord so much and become transformed into God's character to such an extent that he wished to see his Creator and Savior.

While the Israelites begged the Lord no longer to speak to them directly (Exod. 20:19) because they could not endure it, Moses did not request less, rather, more. True believers desire to see God; and Jesus and the New Testament promise that one day they, indeed, will see God (Matt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:3–5). This is our glorious hope.

However, for this to happen, we live our lives with God today and develop constantly deepening relationships with Him. While being exceedingly grateful for our salvation, we are committed to living His

will, allowing the Lord to transform us. We may call this, among other things, revival and reformation. One day by His grace, when the dead will be raised, we will be completely transformed, able to experience fully God's marvelous holiness and unequalled love.

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Revival
and
REFORMATION



A Woman's Guide to Fasting

by Lisa E. Nelson,
Minneapolis, MN:
Bethany House, 2011.

I approached this book with a little skepticism. The title, *A Woman's Guide to Fasting*, seemed like an arbitrary focus on gender. I could not imagine why women would need a special book on a biblical discipline intended for all Christians. But Lisa Nelson hooked me on page 1 with her personal testimony, and I remained riveted through all eight practical, idea-provoking chapters.

A Woman's Guide to Fasting is as much about prayer as it is about fasting, thus making an important contribution to our denomination's current emphasis on seeking the Spirit for personal and corporate revival and reformation. Though Nelson does not share Adventist understanding on certain biblical teachings, such as the state of the dead, her teachings on fasting are definitely Scripture driven. She does not see fasting as a way to obtain favor with God or as duty or ritual but as a way to hear the voice of God more clearly and enter into a deeper relationship with Him.

Though Nelson acknowledges that there can be fasts from television, the Internet, or shopping, her book focuses on fasting from food. Spiritual fasting from food is not to diet, lose weight, or look better but to seek after God through the physical act of abstaining from food.

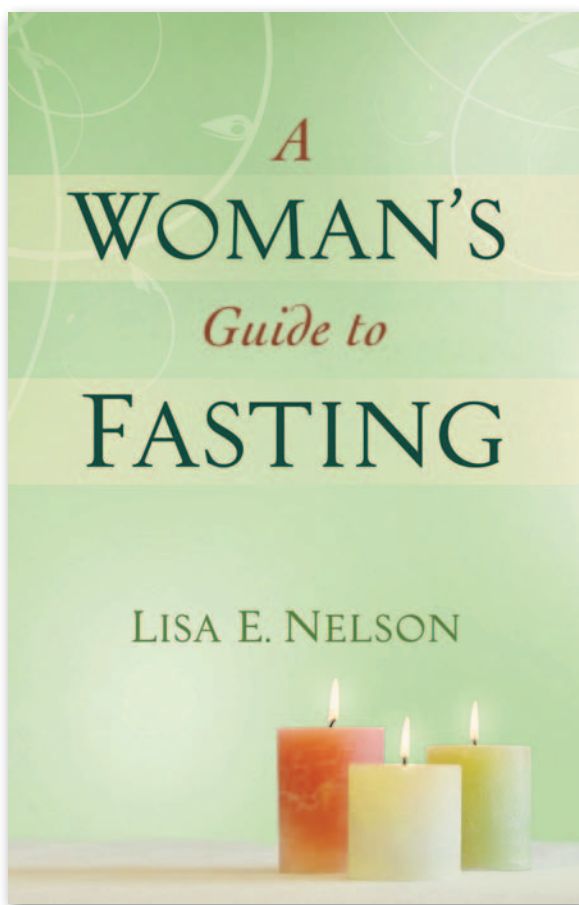
she does not recommend a total fast of no food or water whatsoever. Repeatedly, she emphasizes the danger of becoming self-righteous when fasting; we do not become more holy through the act of fasting itself or become more virtuous the longer we fast. Instead, the purpose

of fasting is to have more time to spend with God in prayer and worship and a clearer mind to yield to His will. Fasting should not be done to manipulate God to acquiesce to our will and way but to help bring us into harmony with His will. Other objectives of our petitions during fasting could include intercession for the salvation of a loved one, for guidance or comfort during a personal crisis, for divine help in overcoming sin, or for the gift of repentance or forgiveness.

The book contains many suggestions about prayer during fasting, such as praying God's Word aloud, meditating on a passage, memorizing Scripture, and speaking Scripture promises audibly. I appreciated Nelson's emphasis that fasting and prayer should not center on achieving a "mountain-top" experience but rather

provide an opportunity to praise and petition God through living sacrifice and submission. ☒

—Reviewed by Cindy Tutsch, DMin, associate director, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



The reward for true fasting is the transformational work of God on the heart.

Nelson describes several different kinds of food fasts, including liquids, or liquids and certain foods only, with varying durations. For health reasons,



Museum exhibit focuses on new evidence for King David

Collegedale, Tennessee, United States—King David—a poet, warrior, hero, the founder of a dynasty—is at the heart of Israel’s history and is mentioned more frequently than any other Bible figure. But did he exist and was his kingdom real? These questions have fueled a new debate in the last two decades among Bible scholars who question not only the existence of David but the extent of his kingdom in the tenth century B.C.

Recent archaeological discoveries in the Elah Valley have produced new evidence for David’s kingdom. The site of Khirbet Qeiyafa, identified as the city of Sha’arayim in the David and Goliath story, has been excavated since 2007. Over the last five years, the massively fortified garrison city has revealed new clues about the extent and power of the early kingdom of Judah, including the oldest Hebrew inscription ever found, which made the cover stories of the *New York Times* and *National Geographic*.

Southern Adventist University’s Institute of Archaeology, a senior partner in the project, invites you to the first museum exhibit focusing on these amazing discoveries dating back 3,000 years to the founding of the early kingdom of Judah. Witness firsthand *The Battle Over David: Excavating the Fortress of Elah*, featuring artifacts from the National Treasures Department of Israel and this important site for the first time.

Visit Southern Adventist University’s Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum and experience firsthand the world of David’s time. The exhibit will be open November 7, 2012, through April 2014. For more information, see <http://southern.edu/archaeology> or email museum@southern.edu. [Michael Hasel]

Interim ADRA chief optimistic about agency’s future

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—**Robert Rawson**, whose years of active service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church concluded with his retirement as General Conference treasurer in 2002, recently exchanged that idyllic image for a stint as interim president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International, and a return to the church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Rawson was called in following the June 24 removal of then-president Rudi Maier and the initiation of a search for a new, permanent ADRA International leader.

Rawson, 75, expressed confidence in ADRA’s mission and noted a recent letter sent to the ADRA network of employees and cooperative agencies around the world: “We are absolutely confident about the ways in which God is leading ADRA International and our network. I can state with certainty my conviction that the ministry of ADRA is an important aspect of the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and

that God’s providence is guiding our footsteps in greater effectiveness.”

He also had high praise for the current headquarters workforce, and said he spends time speaking with each of ADRA International’s employees to get a sense of their backgrounds, interests, and concerns. “We have a tremendously talented staff,” Rawson said, acknowledging that there had been substantial staff reductions at the ADRA International headquarters in the past 18 months. Meeting with one staffer every half hour, he said, is designed to open a channel of communication. He said, “Our employees are our greatest asset, and that needs to be realized. Confidence is what I’m trying to reestablish, and let everyone understand that I believe sincerely in that personal commitment.”

What comes through in these one-on-one interviews is the sense of commitment to ADRA that all these employees still have, he added. “There is so much good potential here,” Rawson said of the headquarters staff. “I mean, we have outstanding talent and young, committed people who want to learn and want to be mentored, and appreciate the openness and frankness to express that, and that they’re able to communicate and talk.”

Though not charged with creating a new vision for ADRA International (Rawson said he would leave that for the incoming, permanent president), he said his task was to prepare the staff for that transition. “I saw my role, and was affirmed in that through the board chairman and through everyone I visited in administration, that what I feel my role here is, if I can prepare this staff,



get them through the challenges that they are experiencing. And [second] become a positive force ready to [go] when a new [leader] comes on board, then I will have felt I will have succeeded in my task," he said.

Rawson said a key challenge is not only to keep the grants "pipeline" filled with aid projects but also to be able to fulfill the requirements of those grants. ADRA International,

like many overseas charitable agencies, often works with the U.S. Agency for International Development and other funders to equip its field offices to help those in need. "If we write grants and don't have the capacity to administer them, that's the other issue," Rawson said. "So we have to have the capacity to write [grant applications], we have to have the capacity

to manage it out of our offices, and we have to have the capacity on the other end to actually do the hands-on [work]. This is very complex. But the biggest issue with this organization is not theory. The biggest issue is management, keeping all the parts working together in unity. We're making great progress in that regard." [Adventist Review/Mark Kellner] 

LETTERS



Continued from page 4 ►

Spirituality") by Stanley E. Patterson and finding time with God ("Where Does the Time Go? Finding Time for God") by Abraham Guerrero. These articles address how we interact with others, which, in reality, is what the heart of real spiritual formation is all about anyway—and where most of those who I know that have been involved in spiritual formation over the years have been concentrating their energy—and I suspect, may be where the best and most helpful conversations happen!

—Ken Curtis, Yucaipa, California, United States

Thank you for Mark Finley's article on biblical spirituality. Many authors do a thorough job of revealing the dangers of centering prayer, mysticism, and so on. Unfortunately, their books and articles often lump anything to do with meditation or the terminology *spiritual formation* all together, inflicting the fear of demons behind every bush, but not

addressing true biblical meditation. Mark Finley did an excellent job of showing not only what Eastern, mystical elements to avoid, but also what true biblical meditation is, how Ellen G. White strongly promoted it, and how important it is for our spiritual lives. Yes, let's meditate! But rather than emptying our minds with centering and mantras, let's fill them with Scripture and the Messiah.

—Gary Moyer, email

Helping children connect with God

I must tell you how I was excited to read Troy Fitzgerald's article about steeping ourselves in God's Word and engaging our children in the study of Scripture ("Steeped in God's Word: Engaging Children in the Study of Scripture"—August 2012). I have been praying about how I could work with my to-be 12-year-old grandson in this respect.

—Ruth Ann Mathison, email

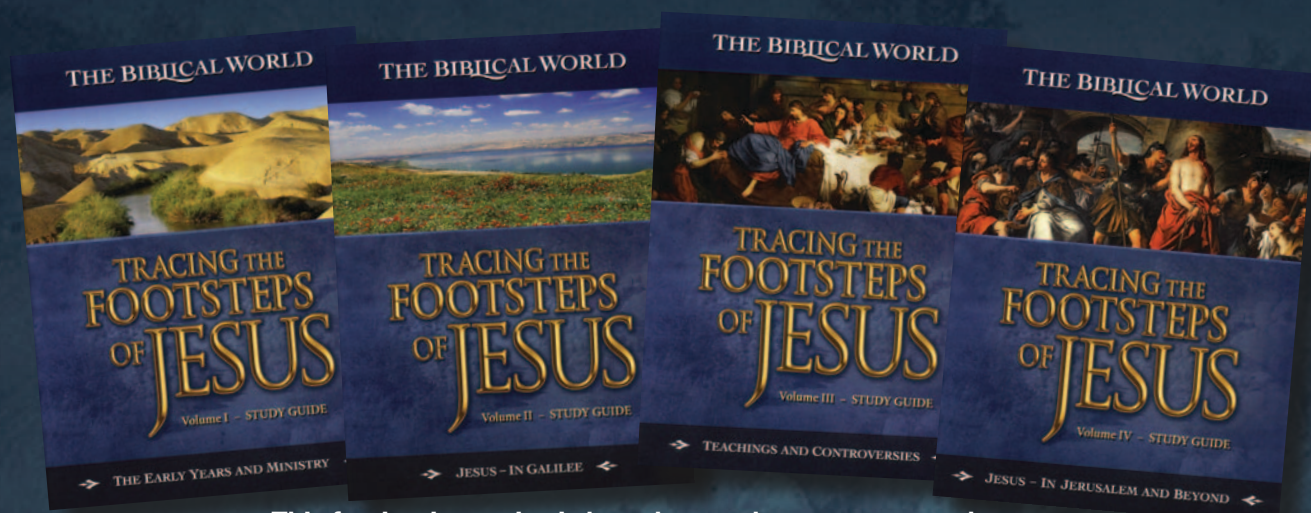
The beauty of the Ten Commandments

Vara Prasad Deepati has presented convincingly in his article ("The Ten Commandments: A Law to Be Obeyed or Promises to Be Celebrated?"—June 2012) that the Ten Commandments should not be understood as a legalistic code given by God to Israel; rather, a vehicle of a loving relationship between God and His redeemed people. The evidences presented based on the literary context both immediate and larger contexts and lexical analysis are really very well grounded and exegetically sound.

Furthermore, this article should be appreciated for enlightening Christian believers that the Ten Commandments, or "ten words," produce positive outcomes of a loving, happy, and vibrant relationship with God in the context of the salvific covenant after a salvation experience in Christ.

—Alfredo Agustín, email 

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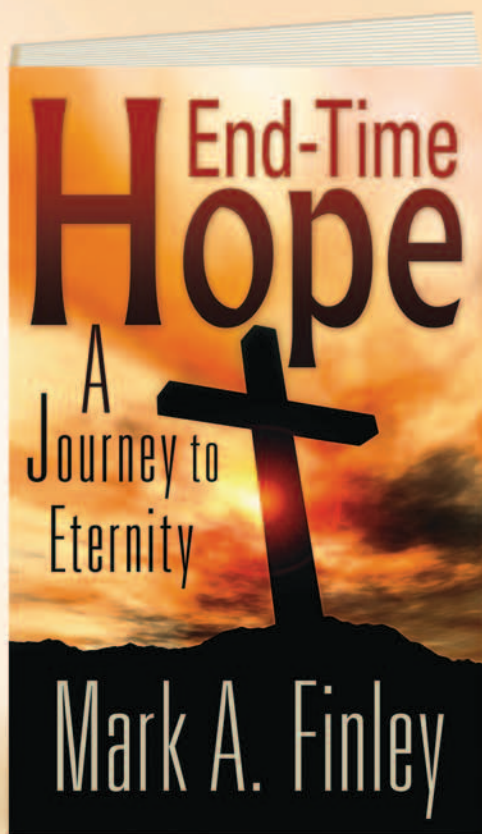
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