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ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org

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“Spiritualism has invaded every fabric of human society with the intent to deceive and destroy.”

The weaker brother

Loren Seibold’s article, “The Tyranny of the Weaker Brother” (November 2012), was a brilliant analysis of an issue that has plagued Seventh-day Adventist churches for generations. As a pastor in that denomination for more than 32 years, I have dealt with this issue time and time again. Conservative believers are a great blessing to our church; however, ultraconservative extremists are self-appointed critics who often drive away prospective new members and cripple the church and make growth or any real spirituality impossible.

As Seibold mentioned, we end up with a joyless, legalistic religion that prevents evangelism, music, fellowship, and community interaction because these individuals are more interested in pushing their extreme agendas about what you wear, what you eat, how you worship, than in reaching the world for Christ and ministering to sinners by getting to know them, meeting their needs, gaining their confidence, and *then* bidding them to follow Christ. Loren laid out the issue in a masterful way that perfectly reflects the culture we have had to deal with as pastors for generations.

—Tom Hughes, email

The reality of the spirit world

I thank Kwabena Donkor for his shared insights through an interview (“The Reality of Spiritualistic Manifestations: An Interview With Kwabena Donkor,” July 2012). Spiritualism has invaded every fabric of human society with the intent to deceive and destroy. Here in Africa, we see it manifest itself in the home, religion, educational institutions, language, and culture.

Most people in Africa today hardly believe that one can be a truly born-again Christian, except ones who speak in tongues. And, as noted by Pastor Donkor, most deliverance ministries in Africa and beyond have spiritualistic connotations. On a daily basis, we see demon-possessed young men and women roaming the streets of major cities of Nigeria. The sight is very pathetic to behold. I myself have had some real-life experiences with these spiritualistic manifestations; but time and space prevent me from sharing them all at present.

—Herbert E. N. Odinkemere, pastor, Nigeria

In vitro fertilization

Thank you for the thoughtful article on in vitro fertilization by Cristina S. Richie, “A Christian Understanding of In Vitro Fertilization,” July 2012). I do, however, believe the article

perpetuates a misreading and misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching about our body. It cites 1 Corinthians 6:19 in the New International Version as saying that our “bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.” This is an inaccurate citation; the verse reads “your [plural] body is a temple [singular] of the Holy Spirit.” Similarly 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you [plural]? . . . For God’s temple is sacred, and you [plural] are that temple [singular].”

The article correctly cites 2 Corinthians 6:16 as “we are the temple of the living God” but fails to note the point that Paul is making. We (plural, and *not* each of us individually) are the temple (singular) of the Living God. God only has one temple in which He dwells upon earth—the church, the body of Christ. The concept is corporate. Christians together comprise the temple of the Holy Spirit. Peter further clarifies this concept in 1 Peter 2:5, where he explains “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.” All Christians are living stones in the one spiritual house, the temple of the Living God.

This biblical teaching indeed means that we are to live responsibly in our bodies, wherein dwells the Holy Spirit. But we are to recognize that we are joined to all other Christians as part of the unitary temple of God—which means that how we behave in our body is not a matter for ourselves alone but has repercussions and consequences that affect the wider body of Christ. We must not overlook this dimension of biblical teaching about our body and God’s temple.

—B. Ward Powers, Tyndale College, Sydney, Australia 



The effects of biblical spirituality

In light of nonbiblical approaches to nurturing the spiritual life, such as centering or contemplative prayer, it does Christians everywhere well to understand true concepts of biblical spirituality. But as my Sabbath School teacher is fond of saying, “What does _____ look like?” In this case, if I experience true biblical spirituality, how does it manifest itself within my life? Does it merely have vertical dimensions (how I understand and grow in Christ)? Or does it also have horizontal dimensions (how I relate to others)? I suggest four effects that grow out of true biblical spirituality—especially as it relates to ministers of the gospel:

1. *Love for the God of the Word.* As important as it is to study the Bible on a daily basis, a clear danger exists that one can turn Bible study into a form of salvation by works—another item on a to-do list that has to be accomplished. Furthermore, studying Scriptures without fully submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit can also lead to a person merely confirming his or her presuppositions about a given topic or idea.

Reading the Word does indeed reveal information about God; but reading it does not necessarily lead one to fall in love with Jesus—although it should. While rarely, if ever, discussed, the possibility exists that one can love the Word of God without loving the God of the Word. Paul speaks of the possibility of spiritual loss because individuals fail to “love the truth and so be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10).¹ Biblical spirituality compels me to love the God of the Word with my whole heart.

2. *Total surrender to God’s will.* If the love of self lay at the foundation of Adam’s first sin, then it is understandable why selfishness is our greatest internal foe. We, as pastors and preachers, face similar temptations—for example, comparing the size of our congregation(s) to those of others, or focusing on our titles or academic degrees. As a church member of mine from years ago said, “Grow where you’re planted!”

During Jesus’ last night on earth before His arrest and crucifixion, He poured out His heart’s desire to His Father in prayer; yet He closed His prayer by saying “Yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). He willingly surrendered His way, His life, to God’s ultimate plan for Him. Biblical spirituality motivates me to not seek the path of least resistance but rather, to tread the path that God chooses for me to travel—regardless of how it might seem to inconvenience me.

3. *Treatment of others as we wish to be treated.* From childhood I was taught the golden rule of Matthew 7:12. This meant that I had to put myself in the other person’s position and ask myself how I would want the outcome of a given situation to turn out. Doing so requires self-sacrifice. It also requires that I open my eyes to see others—that their needs may well be greater and more pressing than my own. It requires that I not focus on myself and my professional interests—my career aspirations, as it were.

Jesus established the model of true servanthood in dealing with His disciples, articulated with these words: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,

and to give his life as a ransom for many’ ” (Matt. 20:28). Biblical spirituality requires me to live the words of Paul: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3).

4. *Obedience.* This comprehensive concept covers everything from complete fidelity to God’s will, born out of love for Him (John 14:15), to going out with the goal of making disciples worldwide. The first word of Matthew 28:19 in the Greek New Testament is an aorist passive participle best translated as “When you have gone.” In other words, there are some who wish to focus on the Acts 6 model that emphasizes the pastoral necessity of spending time in prayer and the ministry of the Word. But they can fail to properly accentuate the Jesus model of the Gospels—a Pastor who spent time with the people who were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Biblical spirituality drives me to follow Christ’s method alone, which gives true success, and that involves mingling with the lost, desiring the best for them, and winning their confidence before bidding them to follow Jesus.²

As we begin 2013, my prayer is that my personal and professional lives align with the will of God—as I see within so many pastors I have had the honor of meeting and knowing over the years. I desire true biblical spirituality. May that be the hope and prayer for all ministers of the gospel. !✕

¹ All Bible references are from the New International Version.

² Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 143.

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Don MacLafferty, MDiv, serves as pastor of the Clovis Seventh-day Adventist Church, Clovis, California, United States, and president of In Discipleship, a ministry uniting children, youth, and adults as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Personal spiritual retreat: *24 hours with God*

What would happen if you took 24 hours away from your routine sometime within the next month to be alone with God? What might be the results? I have put this question to many pastors and administrators over the past few years. Here are some of the common responses:

- God would refresh me.
- I would experience more of God.
- I wouldn't be so stressed.
- God would probably tell me things I do not want to hear.
- God would give me more peace and rest.
- I would probably discover more of God's agenda for my life.
- I would lead with more of God's vision for my family and ministry.
- I would rethink what was really important.

So why do we not do it?

We give many excuses. We say we are too busy. We say what we are doing is too important to quit. We are too tired. We are worried that people will not wait for us. We feel like we just cannot slow down. Our excuses go on and on.

Scripture says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). Not just people in our churches perish without vision, but we perish ourselves.

Without God's vision for our lives, we dry up. We often get into ruts that leave us living without new life in Christ.

Nearly 13 years ago, I realized that as a pastor I was going so fast with doing what I thought God wanted me to do in the ministry that I was too busy to hear His vision. God was blessing my ministry outside our home, but I was in need of vision for ministry with our family. God had to give me a wake-up call, and so He spoke through my two young children. Their voices cried out to me one night as I was hurrying out the door to a meeting at the church, "Daddy! Stay home tonight and play with us. You are always gone!"

Now I did not like to hear that message. I felt like I was doing all that God had called me to do. At the time, I was often working six nights a week: Bible studies with people in the community who were just inches away from making a decision for Christ; counseling sessions with couples close to divorce; hospital visits with those whose lives hung in the balance. I loved my family, but they got whatever was left of me.

So on that night, I gave each of my children a quick hug. I closed the door on my two crying children so that I could run to the church meeting. I knew something was wrong. Something was out of place.

As I walked through the snow on that cold night to get to my meeting,

God gave me a second wake-up call. His still, small voice spoke to my heart, "*Don, when I come again, I will not ask you first about the new church you are building for Me or the number of baptisms you have had this past year. I will ask you, 'Where are your children?'*"

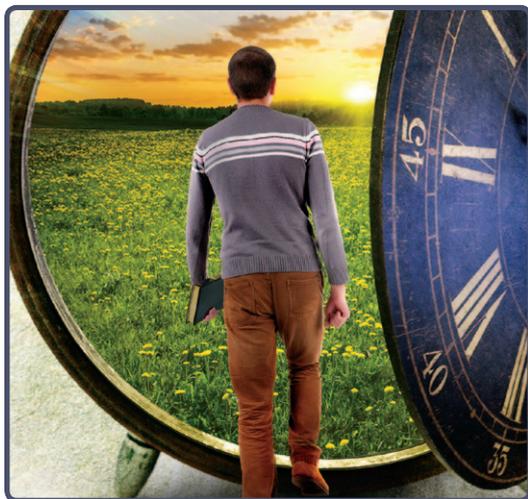
I realized I was going so fast in my ministry that I was minimizing a huge part of my life, the children God had given to my wife and me. That was the beginning for God to begin calling me back to our precious children. But as He called me back to our children, I realized I would need some kind of tool God could use to help me be in tune with His vision for my relationship with Him, our family, and ministry.

So about 12 years ago, I began to take a 24-hour retreat alone with God, usually at the end of the year in December. It became a time to review my life with God and seek His vision for the next year. Every year, it has become a time for God to provide me with encouragement as well as needed course correction. It has become a time for renewal in my friendship with God. It has become a time to receive fresh vision from God that will impact every part of my life.

Years ago, the prophet Elijah desperately needed to slow down and just be with God alone. Mount Carmel was the peak of his ministry thus far, but

one threatening letter from an angry woman sent him running the wrong way. Elijah needed to be refueled. He was tired out, discouraged, and depressed.

On Mount Horeb, God gave him a personal retreat with the One who loved him most. After Elijah slowed down and got some rest, he was finally able to hear God. And God had a tough-love question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"



Elijah's time alone with God in the cave was not the problem. The problem was that Elijah was overwhelmed with the burdens of his ministry. He needed to be overwhelmed with God's presence, availability, and powerful vision and calling.

Once Elijah slowed down, God ministered to him. He took care of his personal needs and tenderly shepherded his heart. Then, and only then, did God confront him with challenging questions and gave him new vision.

So why do we not just stop? Do not wait for a perfect time to get away with Jesus for a day. You could wait a lifetime. So just stop. Set aside a day.

What can you do to prepare?

Here are six steps that I have found helpful in making this retreat have the greatest impact.

1. *Experience unrushed, daily time alone with God in His Word and prayer.* The time you spend with God leading up to your personal retreat and following it, will make a great difference in what happens between you and God during your retreat.

A 24-hour retreat with God will never take the place of what must happen between God and us on a daily basis. Experiencing God through His Word and prayer every day deepens our hunger to grow in our relationship with Him. It also increases our longing to live and serve in the center of God's will.

When you read and study the Bible daily for the purpose of knowing God and serving Him,

environment (for example, out in nature, a motel near a state park, a cabin in a park, etc.). Go overnight somewhere. Plan for parts of two days with a night in between. You may be wondering why you cannot just save your money and stay at home. You need to get away from all that speaks of your routine.

Pastors' spouses often ask if they can come along to enjoy their own spiritual retreat at the same time. Certainly! My wife and I have gone together several times. If you go together, ensure that the environment works for both of you; you need to feel safe, secure, and restful in the setting.

3. *Solicit the ministry of your prayer partners.* Ask several trusted people in your life to intercede for you during your retreat. Make sure that one of these prayer partners is one with whom

The practice of hearing God's voice through His Written Word and through prayer on a daily basis prepares us for increasing this kind of interaction with our best Friend during our retreat.

God breaks open your heart both to speak to Him and listen. When we practice being still and knowing that God is God, He will tune our hearts to hear His still, small voice. The practice of hearing God's voice through His Written Word and through prayer on a daily basis prepares us for increasing this kind of interaction with our best Friend during our retreat.

2. *Create the proper environment.* Choose a distraction-free

you can get together after the retreat to debrief your experience. Choose someone of your gender who is faithful to God and knows God's Word. Get the person's honest feedback on what happened.

4. *Provide your own meals.* Take your food and water with you. Do not go out to eat in a restaurant. Free yourself of distractions. Eat simply. Avoid excessive sweets and oils. Eat basic fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables.

Consider fasting. You want to have a clear mind.

In my younger years, fasting was a distraction during retreats. I got so hungry and weak that my ears were listening to the rumble of my appetite instead of God. Be practical about fasting. Over the years, fasting has become a blessing. But each time I go on a retreat, I now ask God if fasting would help me hear Him better or not. The Lord knows our bodies well, how hard we have been pushing ourselves in ministry, and whether this discipline helps or hinders at this time.

5. *Avoid media outlets.* Fast from the media. Our world is saturated with it. Turn it all off. Make a quiet retreat where you can be still, calm, and listen. My wife and I make a commitment that I will turn my phone on for a few minutes in the evening so we can connect together, pray together, and do the same with our three children.

I always leave my wife with an emergency phone number of someone nearby who can reach me in case of an emergency.

Turn your cell phone off. Leave your laptop behind, unless you are sure you will not be tempted to get your email, and so on. I always find that the world goes on quite nicely without me for 24 hours. We are never as indispensable as we think we are!

6. *Bring along spiritual materials.* You cannot be without your Bible. If you keep a prayer journal, bring it to reflect on what God is doing in your life. If you do not keep a journal, take one to record your reflections and ideas that God brings to your mind. You may be wondering about bringing your favorite devotional book. Just keep it simple.

There is nothing like coming to God's Word with just a notebook and a pen. Leave your briefcases brimming with the latest books. Focus on the

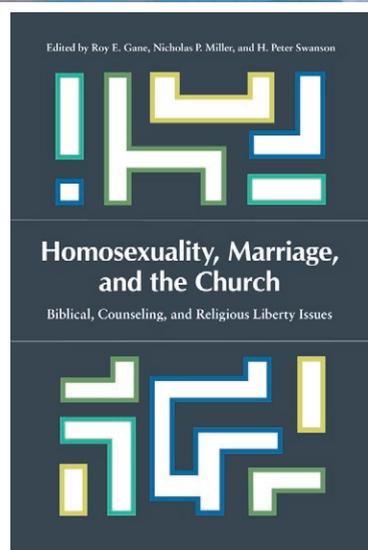
main Book. This book will continually be your reference to test all experiences and impressions you receive during the retreat.

How can you make this retreat meaningful?

1. *Be.* Take time to just be. Slow down from your busy pace. Hike. This may take an hour or two. (If you have a long drive to your destination, that may be your slow-down time.) Let go of business and pressures. Make yourself available to God. Be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10).

2. *Thank.* Sometimes the last to receive our thanksgiving is God. Vocalize the unspoken lists of things that He has done for you lately. Celebrate what He's presently doing in your life. Note the times over the past year that God has provided for you, blessed you, and encouraged you. You will find that in thanking Him, He will

Homosexuality?



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gently lift your thoughts to Him higher and still higher.

3. *Praise.* Spend time praising God for who He is. Tell Him what you love about His character. Voice to Him what makes you in awe of Him as your God and King.

4. *Confess.* Make things right with God. Surrender your attitude, desires, and heart to Him. You may need to make a call to someone you have wronged. Go into the rest of the retreat feeling at peace and restful in spirit.

Ask God to break open your heart to Him. Sometimes ministry can make our hearts hard toward people—and God. Give God your cynicism, criticism, lust, pride, and fears. Ask Him to give you a new heart by His Spirit.

5. *Feed your mind.* After confession, ask your heavenly Father to send the Holy Spirit to bring powerfully the Written Word of God to your heart. Spend time with the Bible. This is God's Word to you personally. Read His promises to you. Reflect on stories of Bible characters of great faith. Here are a few suggestions for promises and stories to study and reflect on in God's Word:

- Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 4:13, 19; James 1:5; 2 Corinthians 9:6–11;
- Noah—fearless antediluvian prophet who took God at His word;
- Joseph—fierce loyalty to God in the midst of darkness and injustice;
- Job—faith during adversity and loss;
- Ruth—devotion, invested in relationships, love story;
- Nehemiah—building what others said could not be built;
- Esther—one who seized the day for God;
- Daniel—integrity, strategic influence for God's purposes;
- Elijah—faced a showdown with God's strength;
- Paul—bold pioneer for the good news of Christ;

- Philip—followed the Holy Spirit to “barren” places.

6. *Dialogue.* List your life roles (for example, a disciple of Christ, spouse, parent, son, daughter, grandparent, neighbor, friend, pastor, administrator, leader, coach, etc.). Concentrate on your top four to eight roles. Review your roles with God and what is happening in these roles right now. Ask God what you can celebrate in what you are currently doing in each role. Write down the good things that God helped you to accomplish in each role over the past year.

Ask God what He thinks needs to change in each of your roles. Ask God which one or two things you need to do in each role to be faithful to what He has entrusted to you. God has vision for the roles He has entrusted to you, so ask Him.

7. *Listen, plan, and reflect.* Take breaks to hike, listen, and pray. Jot down reflections on what God brings to your mind. Sleep on them. Spread out your reflections and convictions before God. Ask God, “This is what I am seeing—am I understanding what You want me to see?” Review and add to what you have. Let God's wisdom on your life roles impact the way you accept or reject the opportunities before you. Will your life decisions help you be more or less faithful to the roles He has entrusted to you? Always test the insights you receive with the Written Word of God.

8. *Claim God's promises to accomplish His will.*

9. *Debrief.* Find one of the prayer partners who prayed for you while you were on your retreat. Share how God blessed you. Share what God is asking of you in your life roles for the coming year. Invite honest feedback. Ask him or her to pray that you will follow through with God's leading in your life.

When we practice being still and knowing that God is God, He will tune our hearts to hear His still, small voice.

If you are in doubt about any of the impressions you received during the retreat, invite your prayer partner to join you in testing your impressions with the Written Word of God.

Taking these extended retreats with God over the years has led me to a few conclusions: God is eager to meet with us in unrushed time. God is ready to refresh us. God longs to give us vision for our relationships with Him, our marriage, our relationships with our children, and the ministry that He has entrusted to us.

As we near the second coming of Christ, I find that God calls me to increase my retreats with Him. Let this annual 24-hour retreat whet your appetite for miniretreats of several hours, a half day, or an eight-hour day. Explore multiple day retreats as well. You may find that the Holy Spirit may impress you to spend this retreat in other ways than you have planned. Please take this article's process and outline as simply a place to begin. 🙏

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Eliezer Gonzalez, with masters' degrees in both theology and early Christian and Jewish studies, is a PhD candidate in Gold Coast, Australia.



Jesus and the temple: *Understanding the teaching of the New Testament*

The book of Hebrews makes it clear that a real sanctuary exists in heaven, and Jesus as High Priest ministers “in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (Heb. 8:2, NASB).¹ However, in recent years, scholars have also highlighted Jesus’ declaration, in the Gospels, of He Himself being the New Temple.

How can these two ideas be reconciled?

This is a key question within New Testament scholarship generally; however, for Seventh-day Adventists, it takes on special significance. The understanding that Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, presently ministers in a real heavenly temple is important to our understanding of salvation and eschatology. To have balanced perspectives as Christians, we find it important to have an appropriate response to the question of whether Jesus *is* the temple, or whether Jesus is *in* the temple.

The new temple

Years ago, R. J. McKelvey wrote that the idea of “the new temple is the central idea of Jewish eschatology from its very beginning.”² During the Second Temple period, Jews looked for the

coming of the new and glorious temple that would be filled with the glory of God. This eschatological temple came to be considered as “entirely new in character and supernatural in origin,”³ and in this period, Messianic expectations converged with hope for the coming of the eschatological temple.

This interpretation of the temple has been seen by some scholars as being reflected across all of the Gospels, particularly in John. The prologue to John’s Gospel sets the scene. In verses 14–16, the “dwelling” of the Word among us echoes the dwelling of God among His people in the wilderness tabernacle. Now, however, the presence of God no longer resides in a tabernacle or temple, but instead in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, who manifests the glory of the Father.

Jesus specifically identifies Himself as the True Temple, which takes priority over the Jerusalem temple. In John 2:19, He declares, “‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” Similarly, in John 4, Jesus geographically uproots worship from the earthly spatial dimension and announces the coming of a worship that is “‘in spirit and truth’” (v. 23). These passages point to a Christological interpretation of worship and to Jesus Christ as the

focal point of traffic between heaven and earth.

While this theme of Jesus as the New Temple is most prominent in the Gospel of John, evidence also resides in the rest of the New Testament. For example, in Matthew 12:6, Jesus refers to Himself as being “‘greater than the temple.’” The theme shows particular conspicuousness in Jesus’ final temple discourses.⁴ When we come to the Pauline epistles, we see that Paul firmly takes up the notion of the body of Christ as the temple. He extensively develops the idea of the community in Christ being the temple, as he discusses in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 and 2 Corinthians 6:16–7:1.

The heavenly sanctuary

Until we come to the book of Hebrews, we find no explicit indication in the New Testament that the earthly temple may be replaced by a heavenly sanctuary, nor is the concept of a heavenly sanctuary explicitly present.⁵ We find it entirely reasonable to maintain that the concept of the *miqdash*, with its inherent functions as the heavenly throne room of God and the place from which He dispenses His justice, is important throughout Scripture and implicit throughout the

New Testament. This concept is, for example, evident in Matthew 5:34, 35 in which Jesus says, “Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool.” However, the teaching of a heavenly sanctuary does not *explicitly* present itself throughout a significant portion of the New Testament.

We should also note that key scholars who advocate the perspective of Jesus as the New Temple have also raised significant questions themselves. While Scott Hahn, for example, notes the current scholarly consensus that “John is advancing what might be characterized as a ‘Temple christology,’” he also senses that something is amiss with this consensus: there must be more beyond because on this basis “since Christ is now ascended, our Temple must be gone.”⁶ Brant Pitre also senses that something is missing, noting that we should “move beyond the obvious visible, political, and national significance of the Temple to its deeper theological and liturgical significance.”⁷ If we see it *only* from the perspective of the national and cultural significance of the temple, then John’s Christology is indeed largely incomprehensible.

The key involves being able to reconcile the New Testament theme of Jesus as the New Temple with the understanding of a heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus ministers as our High Priest. In other words, can the perspectives of Hebrews and Revelation be reconciled with the rest of the New Testament on the question of the identity, nature, and location of the sanctuary? Is there real tension, or not?

Jesus and the temple in the book of Hebrews

The principle of the fundamental importance of the presence of

God appears throughout the New Testament. For this reason, the emphasis of the book of Hebrews is so clearly on the Son, from beginning to end (Heb. 1:2, 3; 13:20).⁸ The book of Hebrews



The temple, as the New Testament consistently teaches, means the Lamb Himself.

has multiple exhortations that we must focus on Jesus. One of the key themes of the book concerns seeing Jesus and considering Him (see Heb. 2:9; 3:1; 12:3). The author has “much to say” about Jesus since it is Jesus upon whom we must look (Heb. 5:11; 12:2).

Naturally, a difference in perspective between the Gospel of John and the book of Hebrews shows itself. The focus of the Gospel of John is on Jesus’ presence on earth; the focus of the book of Hebrews, since Jesus has ascended to heaven, centers on Jesus’ presence *in heaven*. The scene is clearly set in Hebrews 1, in which we are told that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (v. 3).⁹ After the prologue in the book of Hebrews, the emphasis throughout centers on the presence of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, into which He has entered.¹⁰

Indeed, in the following example from the book of Hebrews itself, the “physical” aspect of the heavenly sanctuary clearly refers to Christ: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us

through the veil, that is, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19, 20, NASB).

In this passage, the reference clearly centers on the heavenly sanctuary, specifically to the entrance through the veil. Here we see a physical aspect of the heavenly sanctuary that is, in effect, identified with the body of Christ Himself. This is entirely understandable within the discussion being pursued in the tenth chapter

(Heb. 10:5–10), with its Messianic focus on the body of Christ. The construction *tout estin* (“that is”) is a common construction in the New Testament to exegete the Old Testament Scriptures. This is used in the same way elsewhere in the book of Hebrews¹¹ and actually appears to be a strikingly Pauline phrase. We can see how Paul uses this phrase in passages such as Romans 9:7, 8; 10:6–8; and Galatians 3:16.

We tend to unfairly polarize our perspective when we insist either that because something appears to be real and literal it cannot be symbolic or that because something is symbolic it cannot be real. The heavenly sanctuary is therefore inappropriately spiritualized away by some, while others focus on its literality to the point of denying it any symbolic role.¹² An example that clearly illustrates the appropriateness of a more balanced stance includes the sanctuary in the wilderness, which was obviously both literal and symbolic. The heavenly sanctuary, even as the fulfillment of the earthly, should be similarly understood. The temple in Scripture always points us to Jesus and His ministry; the physical and structural

elements, real though they may be, are never an end in themselves.

A reasonable analogy is the way in which we understand a flag to be a symbol.¹³ Its meaning is grounded in, yet goes beyond, its physical aspects. In this sense, a flag is both tangibly real and has immediate meaning in itself, yet it also points to deeper meanings that go beyond its physical elements. Similarly, if we merely limit the heavenly sanctuary to spatial-temporal realities as we understand them, we may then miss the breadth of the biblical teaching on this topic.

The ultimate focus of the way in which the New Testament presents the temple is not on the physical and literal aspects of the building and structure of the heavenly sanctuary, but rather on the person and atoning ministry of Jesus Christ *within* the sanctuary. From this perspective, every aspect of the heavenly sanctuary *itself* should be understood as also pointing to and focusing on Christ and His ministry. This, in effect, leaves no room for denying the reality of the heavenly sanctuary; its very reality

directs us to focus on Christ and His ministry.

Conclusion

This discussion helps clarify a verse at the end of Revelation that has puzzled many. Referring to the New Jerusalem in the time after the 1,000 years, John writes in Revelation 21:22 that “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (NASB). John does not tell us here that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem. In fact, the force of the text stresses that there *is* a temple in the New Jerusalem, and the temple *is* the Lamb. In this way, Revelation 21:22 does not represent a radical break from what has existed before except in the clarity of its eschatological perspective and fulfillment. After sin has been eradicated, ultimate realities are manifested. The temple, as the New Testament consistently teaches, means the Lamb Himself.

No tension prevails within the New Testament with regard to the nature of the temple; the teaching of the New Testament remains

consistent throughout. That there is a real heavenly sanctuary in a heavenly spatial-temporal sense comes through clearly from Hebrews and Revelation. However, the emphasis and priority of the New Testament is always on Christ and His ministry. ▣

- 1 See also Heb. 9:24. Note that all biblical quotations are from the ESV unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 22.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 24. See also *ibid.*, 22, 40.
- 4 See Matt. 23; Mark 12; 13; and Luke 20:17, 18.
- 5 However, note Exod. 25:9, where God says to Moses, “According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it” (NASB). The fact that Moses was shown the pattern for the tabernacle in vision pointed him to the heavenly original. Therefore, the very existence of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later the temple, pointed the people to the reality of a heavenly sanctuary.
- 6 Scott W. Hahn, “Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John,” in *Temple and Contemplation: God’s Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*, eds. Scott Hahn and David Scott, vol. 4, *Letter and Spirit* (Steubenville, OH: St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, 2008), 107.
- 7 Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood,” in *Temple and Contemplation: God’s Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*, eds. Scott Hahn and David Scott, vol. 4, *Letter and Spirit* (Steubenville, OH: St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, 2008), 48.
- 8 See also Heb. 2:9; 3:1; 12:2, 3.
- 9 See also Heb. 10:12; 12:2.
- 10 See, e.g., Heb. 4:14; 6:19, 20; 8:1, 2; 9:11, 24.
- 11 See, e.g., Heb. 9:11.
- 12 In practice, the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ and the role of the heavenly sanctuary itself are also often ignored or minimized in Christian preaching and teaching.
- 13 My thanks to Tom Shepherd of Andrews University for this insight.

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Patience in affliction

As a new Christian, I confess that I felt the following verse, and others like it, were in the Bible for the weak: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12, NIV). Patient in affliction? My eyes would gloss past this pep talk. I felt it was encouragement for the weak when they are down. The rest of Paul’s illustration on how to live a Christian life I heartily absorbed—tangible things such as loving openly, living peaceably, being hospitable, and clinging to good.

I now read Romans 12 with new eyes. The afflictions of this life have

transformed the deepest parts of me. During times of deep affliction, I have seen His love, His face, and have come to know and understand His character. The sorrows and hardships peel away the superficial bits of my life and leave behind God’s deep abiding love.

When I am stripped of all earthly confidence, I am able to be fully joyful in hope. In the mire of affliction, my prayers are truest. Affliction has re-formed my darkest recesses—the crags that could never be touched no matter how hospitable or peaceable my life might be.

Romans 12:12 is not a canned pep talk message for the weak but a promise of a journey. A journey that God will take with us, if we are willing; a journey that will reform the heart and make us stronger than we ever imagined.

—JEAN BOONSTRA IS CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR FOR *IT IS WRITTEN* TELEVISION.



F. Donald Yost, PhD, is a retired pastor living in Martinez, Georgia, United States.



Nurturing *where* dementia has struck

Pastors are regularly called upon to comfort parishioners who have lost a loved one to death. But other catastrophes—the loss of a job, a son or daughter sent to prison, the loss of everything in a fire, the breakup of a home, or a terminal illness—also require the pastor’s nurturing skills.

In some situations, the person experiencing the catastrophe may not be the one in greatest need of comfort. Consider the anxiety of an unskilled wife whose husband has lost his job, of parents over a jailed son or daughter, or of the loved one of a person just diagnosed with a terminal illness. In some cases, the spouse of the afflicted one suffers the most.

Among the catastrophes our members face is dementia, whose emotional toll on a spouse can equal that of a terminal illness, divorce, or even death. How do we, as ministers, help the families of members who struggle with this unfortunate calamity?

Dementia

The onset of dementia can involve more work than one faces with other terminal illnesses, because, in this case, both body *and mind* are in an irreversible decline. The patient may not know what has struck, but the spouse certainly does. Little by little,

the dementia steals from both the sufferer and the spouse. As the comfortable patterns of daily life change, the little pleasures and expectations disappear. The spouse’s personal time shrinks. Friendships wither. Time for recreation, study, prayer, household duties, and relaxation are usurped by the needs of the sick one.

Christian ministers may have developed some skill in comforting the family when death strikes. They may have read about how to conduct hospital visitations. But do they know how to minister to a spouse for whom dementia has become a new and very unwelcome resident in the home?

Death, as horrible as it is, comes and goes. After a death, a pastor makes himself or herself available for comfort and prayer and for handling the funeral service. He or she inquires about future family needs. Following the funeral, he or she returns to duties for the congregation and may not minister to the family further except for a hug or warm handshake in the church. The funeral service has become history. Life goes on. The pastor may feel that the need for nurturing has ended.

A major similarity exists between a spouse’s distress at the death of a companion and a spouse’s sense of dislocation at the transfer of a dementia sufferer to a care facility. For both, the grief did not begin on the day of

parting. Except in the case of a sudden death, grief began weeks or months earlier. Nor does grief end with closing the casket or the transfer of a dementia sufferer to a care facility. It may linger, dangerously, for weeks or months. Depression threatens. Grief-recovery training provides excellent resources for ministering to a dementia-sufferer’s spouse who is suddenly “single,” just as it does for guiding in the emotional healing of a widow or widower.

A personal experience

I know whereof I speak. My wife developed dementia at 80 years of age. Though living near our daughter, we were independent in caring for ourselves. As the dementia increased, I assumed the household duties. There followed five years of increasingly heavy caregiving until our daughter insisted that my wife be moved to a care facility. I had not found it onerous to care for her, but the constancy of her growing needs had begun to dictate my entire daily schedule. Although it was a difficult decision, we agreed that this was the right time to make the change. Not many hours had passed after the move when I realized that I had now entered a bittersweet existence. It was certainly a relief to be able to come and go as I pleased, and I greatly enjoyed having time alone, yet I ached as I walked through our house

Spiritual Care Dos

- *Listen to me* without assuming, explaining, or imposing your beliefs. Accept my doubts. Talk only if necessary.
- *Validate my feelings.* Affirm the injustice of what has happened to me. Do not use platitudes, clichés, or sugarcoat the situation. Affirm that you are glad I am there and safe.
- *Accompany me.* It is not about having answers, telling me what to do, needing to provide solutions, or fix problems. Be patient with me.
- *Be present for me* even without words. Saying you are sorry is often enough. Use touch, as appropriate. (Read my cues.)
- *Honor my stories* and allow me to tell them over and over again if needed.
- *Remember me* when everyone else has gone back to their normal routines.
- *Allow* my appropriate, nondestructive expressions of anger toward God and others.
- *Remind me* that everyone has to find his or her own answers and way of understanding.
- *Help me* to find out how to put the basic needs of myself and my family first.
- *Affirm* my search for spiritual- and faith-based answers without imposing your own beliefs, faith, and agenda.
- *Support* my faith, spiritual beliefs, and practices.
- *Give me options,* not answers—but only when I ask you directly. Encourage me to work out my own plans as you listen.
- *Allow me to express all my emotions* without restriction (as long as doing so does not pose a danger to myself or others). Let me cry, scream, and yell if I need to, so that I can begin to move forward in the grieving process.

and realized that she would never see things like her beautifully designed kitchen again.

There is a significant difference between a separation or divorce and the creeping intrusion of dementia. Following a marital breakup, each former partner begins to build a new life. Time heals. But when dementia has struck and the ill spouse is separated permanently from the companion of a lifetime, the spouse's need for emotional support may be just beginning.

Crueler than death

A pastor is attentive to the physical needs of a congregant who has been in an automobile accident or house fire. He or she calls upon the church to supply a substitute car or to find furniture and clothing to replace what

was lost in the fire. He or she also visits the family to provide a time for burden sharing and prayer. But the emotional impact of these events can pale before the uninterrupted stress that accompanies caring for a dementia-stricken spouse, and then the emotions that sweep in when he or she is moved to a care facility.

Dementia cannot be evaluated as a kind of death. Dementia does not just come and go, although dementia certainly remains a close cousin to death. Dementia can be described as a death of life past, the death of joys present, and the death of future hopes. With a fatal disease, the body wastes;

with dementia, the final days begin long before they finally come. How can a pastor minister to the differing emotional needs of the spouse, son, daughter, sister, or brother? The task can be daunting because each of these



family members brings to the experience of dementia huge differences in attitudes about the disease, in belief about the character of God, and in personal traits and skills in handling disaster.

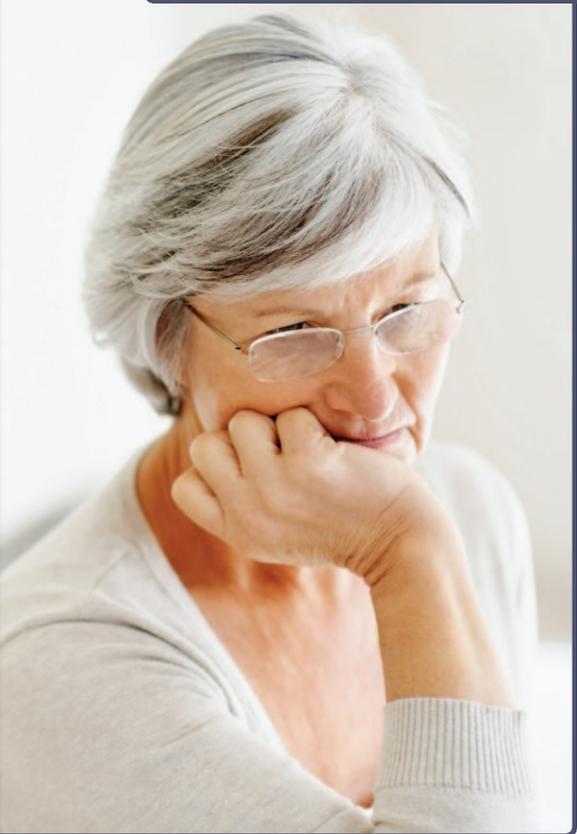
careful, I project on to them what I feel. But they are her children, not her spouse, and so their grief suggests a difference from mine.

Now that my wife is settled in her new place, I love to go visit her and

Conclusion

I am a minister. I just wanted to talk, not only once but several times over the two or three months following the separation. Perhaps I did not grieve as such, but I wanted to share the confusion of

*But when dementia has struck and the ill spouse is **separated permanently from the companion of a lifetime**, the spouse's need for emotional support may be just beginning.*



Family matters

Our son and daughter are experiencing this loss of their mother in a different way than I have. If I am not

continue to care for her in small ways, like taking care of her fingernails. I love to sit beside her on the bed and hug her and plant little kisses on her ear and cheek. Sometimes when I say, “I love you,” she will respond, “I love you too,” even though she may be hazy about who I am. But our children, with their own grown children, should feel free to remember her as she was. I have made it clear that they do not need to visit her if she does not ask for or need them. Great variations exist from family to family in the responses of relatives to dementia and other such life catastrophes.

The need for comfort and reassurance by the spouse of someone afflicted with dementia can vary a great deal depending on his or her philosophy of life and death, connection with the will of God, and tools for handling personal storms. A need for comfort also depends upon the nature of the marriage relationship that is now being slowly dissolved. A Christian counselor could be of great value at this time.

emotions that I felt at my wife's fading away from me into a dark tunnel. How I wanted to get my hands on Satan. How I fled to my Friend Jesus for comfort and embraced Him in gratitude for His victory over our enemy. I understood well that God does not remove the loss or emptiness that comes with dementia, but He stabilized me with the comfort of knowing that He is a very present help in time of trouble.

Of course, not every suffering dementia spouse understands. If a spouse does not understand the theology of suffering, a catastrophe such as dementia—with its aches, disappointment, grief, and, perhaps, guilt—might not sow seeds of growth in Christ but, rather, sow doubt and disbelief. Thus, the pastor's skill in supporting and nurturing the spouse may make an eternal difference.

As the conflict between Christ and Satan intensifies, the occurrence of life-warping catastrophes and critical incidents will increase. Each one provides an opportunity for the pastor to develop nurturing ministries that will demonstrate the Comforter's soothing strength for a tormented heart. ❖

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David R. Tasker, PhD, serves as ministerial secretary, South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia.



Ruach Elohim: *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*

What do the Hebrew Scriptures teach about the Holy Spirit?

R. A. Torrey once wrote, “Before one can correctly understand the work of the Holy Spirit, he must first of all know the Spirit himself.”¹ With this admonition in mind, my intention is to glean some insight from the Hebrew Scriptures to understand a little more of the Person of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, I will avoid imposing New Testament structures upon the Hebrew Scriptures, but let them speak for themselves.² The Holy Spirit is referred to more than 100 times in the Hebrew Scriptures in a number of ways: the Spirit of God (*Elohim*),³ the Spirit of the LORD (*YHWH*),⁴ and, simply, the Spirit.⁵ We find it interesting to note that they all pursue similar themes.

The Spirit of God (*Elohim*)

Associated with Creation. We first encounter the Hebrew word for Spirit, *ruach*, in the phrase *the Spirit of God* in Genesis 1:2. Here the Spirit of God hovers or flutters over the surface of the waters in the process of creation. Thus, the Holy Spirit is linked with Creation—the one event that separates God from all other gods worshiped in the ancient or modern world. In addition, the action of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters places the Holy Spirit not only in the context of

Creation but of salvation also. The verb *rachaf* is in the intensive (*Piel*) form of the root that means to flutter.⁶ The only other instance in Scripture that uses the verb in this way is as a metaphor of God redeeming His people from Egypt in the form of an eagle stirring up its nest and hovering over its young (Deut. 32:11). This picture of nurture, and ultimately of salvation in the Exodus story, introduces the Holy Spirit in the context of two main functions of divinity—creation and salvation.

Empowering leaders. Other uses of the expression *Spirit of God (Elohim)* are in the context of empowering leaders: eight references to Saul, the first Israelite king; twice to Bezaleel, the craftsman chosen to execute the fabrication of the sacred objects of the tabernacle in the wilderness; and once each to Joseph, Balaam, Azariah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.

Saul’s connection with the Holy Spirit is quite interesting, maybe even bizarre. Soon after the prophet Samuel anoints Saul as Israel’s first king (1 Sam. 10:1), Saul meets up with a group of prophets and starts prophesying with them (v. 10), just as Samuel had predicted (v. 6). This experience at the beginning of Saul’s reign is parallel to another near its end. After David’s wife Michal (Saul’s daughter) lets David escape Saul’s murderous intent (1 Sam. 19:11–17), Saul sends out a group of

soldiers to arrest David, but in meeting a group of prophets who are prophesying, the Spirit of God “came upon” the soldiers and they start prophesying too (v. 20).⁷ Evidently this prophetic activity neuters their aggressive plans, and on hearing this, Saul commissions another group to capture David—with the same outcome (v. 21). After a third attempt with the same results, Saul sets out in person; but he, too, is overpowered by the Spirit of God, and, instead of murdering his nemesis, he prophesies with the other prophets (vv. 21–23).

However, Saul does not stop at mere prophecy; he strips naked, continues prophesying in Samuel’s presence, and ends up laying prostrate on the ground for the rest of that day and all night (v. 24). Again, the Holy Spirit neutralizes a man’s murderous intent, endowing him with an overtly religious experience. This seems in character with Saul. He swings from an insane desire to murder David to fervent devotion to God.⁸ That phenomenon may be better understood by noting that other mentions of the Spirit of God in association with Saul are in connection with a “distressing spirit”—literally a “bad spirit of God” (1 Sam. 16:15, 16, 23; 18:10).

Bezaleel is twice described as being “filled . . . with the Spirit of God”; on both occasions, this is specified as being manifest “in wisdom

and understanding, in knowledge, and all manner of workmanship' ” as he crafted the intricacies of the wilderness sanctuary (Exod. 31:3; 35:31). Similarly, Pharaoh extols Joseph for his meticulous care with details and chooses him as his prime minister (Gen. 41:38). Being filled with the Spirit in these instances has to do with being equipped with skills to lead out in creative leadership; in the case of Bezaleel, this leaves the legacy of a beautifully furnished and equipped sanctuary, and in the case of Joseph, Spirit-inspired leadership not only ensures the survival and continuity of his family but also ensures the coming of the future Messiah.

The remaining uses of the phrase *Spirit of God* are applied to various prophets who were “moved” by God. Ezekiel describes the way that the Spirit of God picks him up and takes him in vision to Chaldea to see the captives there (Ezek. 11:24). Balaam, the reluctant non-Israelite prophet, feels compelled to go against the wishes of the king who pays him to prophesy doom to the Exodus wanderers and, instead, blesses them when the Spirit of God “came upon him” (Num. 24:2). Azariah spoke words of hope to the discouraged King Asa, urging him to be strong and rid the land of idolatry (2 Chron. 15:1–7). Zechariah (the son of Jehoiada the priest, not the author of the book) also spoke bravely to the people during a dark part of their history when the Spirit of God came upon him (2 Chron. 24:20).

The Spirit of the LORD (YHWH)

Empowering leaders. Another expression that is used, the Spirit of the LORD (YHWH), is more common. The first few occurrences describe God’s empowerment of the judges to deliver God’s people. When the Spirit of YHWH comes upon them, Othniel prevails against the Mesopotamian king Cushan-Rishathaim (Judg. 3:10); Gideon, son of an apostate people,

summons a large army from among them, but uses only 300 to defeat the Midianites (Judg. 6:27–30, 34; 7; 8); Jephthah defeats the Ammonites convincingly (Judg. 11:29–32); and Samson receives great strength to defeat the purposes of the Philistines (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

The prophets also speak of the Spirit of YHWH empowering people. Isaiah speaks of the Spirit of YHWH empowering the “Rod from the stem of Jesse” (the Messianic “Servant of YHWH”) with the sevenfold spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might,

under threat (1 Sam. 10:6; 2 Chron. 20:14–17). And after Samuel anoints the insignificant shepherd boy David to be king, the Spirit of YHWH comes upon him from that moment forward (1 Sam. 16:13). For the rest of his life, David recognizes that “ ‘The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue’ ” (2 Sam. 23:2).

The Spirit

The word *ruach* (“Spirit”) just by itself—or prefixed with “my,” “his,” “your,” or simply “the”—occurs 378 times in 348 verses. When used this

This picture of nurture, and ultimately of salvation in the Exodus story, introduces the Holy Spirit in the context of two main functions of divinity—creation and salvation.

knowledge, the fear of the Lord, and of righteous judgment (Isa. 11:1–5). Micah parallels this when he asserts that he is empowered by the Spirit of YHWH with “justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Mic. 3:8). The whole point of the action of the Spirit of YHWH in these contexts assures the people of deliverance, and of rest and security in the face of what threatens them (Isa. 59:19; 63:14).

We also observe that the Spirit of YHWH moves upon people, giving them a prophetic voice (e.g., Ezek. 11:5). Even the young King Saul prophesies, and an otherwise unknown Levite, Jahaziel, is chosen and empowered by the Spirit of YHWH to give an oracle of encouragement and victory to a nation

way, the word follows the pattern of the other biblical uses of *ruach*, describing divine attributes, defining what God does, and outlining ways that people are empowered to serve Him.

Divine attributes. *Ruach* may sometimes be described as having divine attributes, for example, “good” (Ps. 143:10), “generous” (Ps. 51:12), facilitating what “ ‘might’ ” and “ ‘power’ ” cannot (Zech. 4:6), is everywhere (Ps. 139:7), is grieved by human rebellion (Isa. 63:10), and remaining among God’s people as He promised at the Exodus (Hag. 2:5). Foremost in all this is God’s role as Creator. Psalm 104 describes God’s activity in Creation and His role in upholding creation: “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;

and You renew the face of the earth” (v. 30). Job recognizes this instrumental role of the Holy Spirit when he says, “By His Spirit He adorned the heavens” (Job 26:13).

What God does. The *ruach* references to God’s activity include the Holy Spirit striving with people before judgment, then in judgment, then in restoration. The first reference to the Holy Spirit’s striving is in the context of the Flood—“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever” (Gen. 6:3). The divine concern for human rebellion can also be seen in the prophetic oracles: “For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples” (Neh. 9:30, NIV; see also Zech. 7:12).

David reinforces the connection between the Holy Spirit and judgment in Psalm 106—the people “rebelled

against the Spirit of God,” resulting in God handing “them over to the nations” (vv. 33, 41, NIV). When judgment finally came as an act of cleansing (as described by Isaiah), it was “by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire” (Isa. 4:4, NIV)—a poignant description of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.⁹

Consistent with the pattern observed in the Hebrew Scriptures is the restoration that God promises after judgment. We find it significant that the Holy Spirit is linked to that process as well. Isaiah champions this aspect of divine action. He states that there would be limits to the judgments to come; judgment would continue “till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest” (Isa. 32:15, NIV).

The Spirit demarcates the limits of divine judgment by being instrumental

in restoring the land. Isaiah continues in a later chapter, repeating the assurance of a restored land, “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground,” and adds “I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (Isa. 44:3, ESV). This Spirit, placed upon His people, “shall not depart” from the mouths of the people and their descendants “from this time and forevermore” (Isa. 59:21). Restoration after judgment, therefore, becomes a divine action of re-creating and restoring God’s people by God putting His Holy Spirit within them again.

We find this same idea repeated in the biblical wisdom literature. Wisdom calls to the young with the assurance “Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you” (Prov. 1:23). The hint suggests that a life of foolishness

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can be turned around and become a life of success from the moment the Spirit is poured out on someone. The same principle is at work in the later prophetic statements that speak of judgment and restoration.

People empowered. The third way biblical writers use *ruach* is in connection with the empowerment of leaders—both political and prophetic. The 70 elders that were to assist Moses were given of the same Spirit, enabling them to “bear the burden of the people” along with Moses (Num. 11:17). When this was done, the elders “prophesied,” but only on this one occasion (v. 25). Reports came to Moses that two of the elders who were not able to attend the special ceremony also prophesied because “the Spirit rested on them” as well (v. 26). Commenting on this, Moses declared that he wished God would put His Spirit upon all of His people (v. 29). Later, the prophet Joel prophesies that God would, in fact, do just that—He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28). In the context of the Exodus, this universal gift of the Spirit was to instruct and nurture His people (Neh. 9:20).

In the same way that the elders are empowered by the Spirit that had rested on Moses, Joshua, too, is empowered by that same Spirit (Num. 27:18). Similarly, Elisha is empowered by the Spirit that enabled Elijah (2 Kings 2:9, 15). Isaiah develops that concept further with the Servant of YHWH motif—the One who would both free His people from the Babylonians and bring justice to the Gentiles because of God’s Spirit on Him (Isa. 42:1; 48:20).

Ezekiel adds interesting dimensions to this discussion. In his vision of the moving throne of God, the Spirit directs where the wheels should go (Ezek. 1:20). And the Spirit physically directs Ezekiel in his movements as well. The Spirit sets Ezekiel on his feet

(Ezek. 2:2; 3:24) and lifts him up (Ezek. 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5). In another of his visions, the Spirit of YHWH took him and set him down in a valley filled with dry bones (Ezek. 37:1).¹⁰

A similar physical manifestation of the Spirit may be observed in the account of the God-fearing servant of the idolatrous King Ahab. He was afraid that Elijah would be spirited away from him before he had a chance to return with the king (1 Kings 18:12), and later the sons (i.e., students) of the prophets went looking for Elijah after the Spirit of YHWH took him from them (2 Kings 2:16).

Conclusion

The Hebrew Scriptures are very rich in descriptions of the Holy Spirit. We see Him associated with Creation, and active in redemption—described in terms of an eagle nurturing its young. Along with these divine attributes we are told that the Spirit is “good” and “generous,” achieving what “might” and “power” cannot. One unique example of this is the rendering harmless of hired assassins who prophesy under the influence of the Spirit, rather than carrying out their murderous intentions.

When the Hebrew Scriptures describe the Spirit’s activity, they cover the themes of teaching, warning, pleading, and striving in order to prevent the dire consequences of human rebellion. When those warnings are ignored, the writers also picture the Spirit as being present during judgment; but, in the same breath, descriptions are given of the restoration that comes. It seems that the Spirit actually limits the effects of judgment, metaphorically raining upon the dry ground, bringing judgment to an end, and nourishment and restoration to the land and the soul of the people.

Finally, the Spirit is heavily involved in empowering people to

do the impossible: shy people are enabled to be fearless leaders (e.g., Moses, Joshua, Saul, and David), and artisans are given extra ability in building and designing (e.g., the sanctuary). In addition, when times become tough and political or religious leaders are not giving clear enough leadership, then God empowers men and women to become His mouthpieces in giving an otherwise bewitched population a healthy dose of reality (e.g., the 70 elders, Elisha, Ezekiel, and Isaiah), wooing a disenchanted people back to the only One who can save them. What could be more relevant to the twenty-first century than that? 

- 1 R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 9.
- 2 For a helpful summary of various traditional approaches, see Gary Fredricks, “Rethinking the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Old Testament Believers,” *Trinity Journal* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 1988): 81–104.
- 3 Gen. 1:2; 41:38; Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; Job 33:4; Ezek. 11:24; 2 Chron. 15:1; 24:20.
- 4 Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13, 14; 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kings 2:16; Isa. 11:2; 40:13; 59:19; 63:14; Ezek. 11:5; 37:1; Mic. 2:7; 3:8; 2 Chron. 18:23; 20:14.
- 5 Gen. 6:3; Num. 11:17, 25, 26, 29; 27:18; 2 Kings 2:9, 15; Isa. 4:4; 30:1; 32:15; 34:16; 37:7; 42:1, 3; 48:16; 59:21; 63:10, 11; Ezek. 1:20, 21; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5; Joel 2:28, 29; Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6; 6:8; 7:12; 12:10; Mal. 2:15; Pss. 51:11, 12; 104:30; 106:33; 139:7; 143:10; Job 26:13; 33:4; Prov. 1:23; Neh. 9:20, 30; 1 Chron. 28:12.
- 6 The description of the Spirit of God in this account is not to be confused with other accounts where the context clearly shows a powerful ripping wind. For example, when Elijah was at the mountain of God, hiding from Jezebel, and saw the Lord passing by, not in the strong wind (literally “the Spirit of YHWH,” 1 Kings 19:11) breaking rocks in pieces, nor the earthquake, nor fire, but in the “thin sound of silence.” The theme of spirit paralleling wind is not surprising as *ruach* means spirit, wind, or breath. Elijah sees the mountain of God torn apart by the Spirit of YHWH flinging rocks in all directions (1 Kings 19:11). Isaiah contrasts the transience of human existence, paralleling it with grass that withers when the *ruach* of YHWH blows on it (Isa. 40:7). Similarly, Hosea, in delivering a judgment oracle, warns of the *ruach* of YHWH that would blow as the east wind to dry up springs and fountains (Hos. 13:15). In contrast, the context of Genesis seems to indicate a gentle, nurturing fluttering or hovering—hardly the thing to expect in the midst of a mighty tearing wind.
- 7 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.
- 8 Mowinckel suggests that the reason the classical prophets did not mention the Spirit much was in reaction to the “embarrassment about the excesses or abuses experienced” by these earlier manifestations. S. Mowinckel, “The Spirit and the Word in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53, no. 3 (1934): 199–227. See also Richard J. Skiba, “‘Until the Spirit From on High Is Poured out on Us’ (Isa 32:15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (January 1984): 10.
- 9 Richard J. Skiba observes that the people of Israel lost their land when they violated the covenant that originally made possible the gift of that land. Skiba then outlines a number of exiles in the post-Babylonian era, each contributing to an understanding of the Spirit. Skiba, “‘Until the Spirit From on High Is Poured out on Us’” 3–9.
- 10 The New Testament describes something similar in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. After Philip finished conversing with the Ethiopian, the “Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” and he “was found at Azotus” (Acts 8:39, 40).

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Frank M. Hasel, PhD, is director of the Ellen G. White Study Center and professor of systematic theology and dean of the Department of Theology, Bogenhofen Seminary, St. Peter am Hart, Austria.



Are there **mistakes** in the **Bible**?

Bible students throughout the centuries have accepted Holy Scripture as God's Written Word of truth. Critics of the Christian faith have perceived the Bible as a thoroughly human book and have challenged the truthfulness of Scripture, claiming that the Bible contains numerous mistakes. Before we deal with these claims, we briefly need to look at the nature of Scripture.

How did Jesus and the apostles see Scripture?

For committed Christians, we need to recognize the importance of asking how Christ and the apostles saw and treated Scripture. With regard to the Old Testament, Jesus believed that what Moses taught was the Word of God (Mark 7:10ff.). What David wrote, he wrote under inspiration (Mark 12:36). For Jesus, the inspired writings of the Old Testament were inviolable (John 10:35; Luke 16:17). In a similar manner, the apostles affirmed that in the Old Testament God spoke through the mouths of His prophets (Acts 3:21). What the Holy Scriptures say is inspired by God (Acts 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 3:7). What Scripture says—God says (Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8). Hence, Christians accept Scripture as truth (Pss. 12:6; 19:7ff.; 119:160). Paul declared that he served the God of his fathers, “believing all

things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).

The New Testament writers affirm that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:21, NASB). The messages of the apostles were regarded as given by divine authority. Paul believed that the things he spoke were “not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13, NASB). That is why the early church received the apostles’ message “not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13, NASB). We can clearly say that the words of Scripture were “regarded as trustworthy, accurately representing the divine message.”¹

Paul also acknowledged the inspiration of other parts of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18, he quotes from both Testaments as Scripture, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages’ ” (ESV). The first part is a quote from Deuteronomy 25:4 and the second from Luke 10:7. Similarly, Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16).

The divine origin of Scripture is clearly attested; and yet the writers of the biblical books were not simply

God’s pens but His penmen; that is, they wrote in their own characteristic styles, languages, and thoughts from under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some books, such as Kings, Chronicles, and the Gospel of Luke provide evidence of careful historical research (1 Kings 22:39, 45; 1 Chron. 29:29; Luke 1:1–4). In all this “the Holy Spirit’s guidance did not overrule the thinking and the writing process of biblical writers but supervised the process of writing in order to maximize clarity of the ideas and to prevent, if necessary, the distortion of revelation, or changing divine truth into a lie.”² Nevertheless, biblical writers acknowledged that there “are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16, NASB).

Sometimes this human dimension of Scripture is charged with being responsible for mistakes in the Bible. After all, it is human to err, as the saying goes. We need to remember, however, that even sinful human beings are capable of telling the truth and do so regularly. How much more should the biblical God of truth help His chosen instruments to communicate His truth faithfully! Being human does not necessarily entail falsehood or error. Of course, all human language is limited

and the Bible was not written in a flawless heavenly Esperanto. Rather, the Bible writers used nontechnical, ordinary, everyday language to describe things that are subject to ordinary, not technical, standards of truth. For example, they spoke of sunrise (Num. 2:3; Josh. 19:12) and sunset (Deut. 11:30; Dan. 6:14); that is, they used the language of appearance rather than scientific precision. The need for technical precision varies according to the situation in which a statement is made. Therefore, imprecision cannot be equated with untruthfulness.³ The Bible is characterized by the simple beauty of the language, and it has the appeal of truthfulness. In recognizing this fact, we do not deify Scripture. God alone is infallible. But with the biblical writers, we believe that His Word is true and reliable.

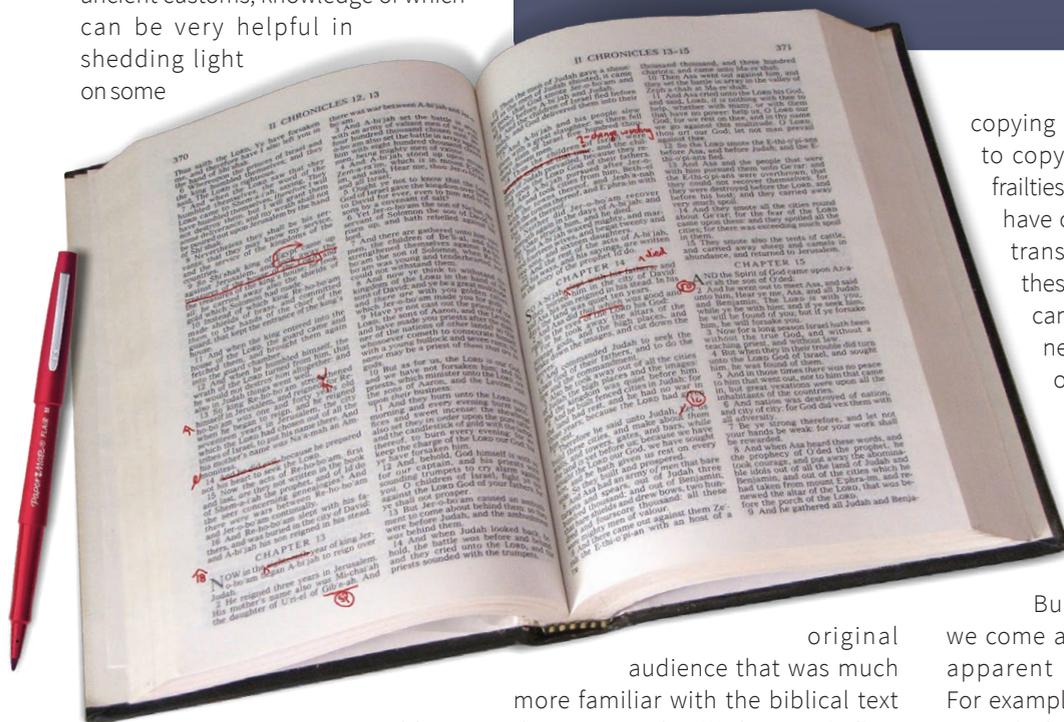
Many biblical passages reflect ancient customs, knowledge of which can be very helpful in shedding light on some

the reign of kings.⁴ We should be careful not to apply our current understanding of things to the Bible and come to hasty and wrong conclusions about its truthfulness.

Furthermore, we should keep in mind that so-called obvious mistakes would have easily been detected by the

The issue at hand also touches on the question of the transmission of the biblical autographs. We recognize, as a fact, that the original manuscripts have been lost.⁵ Although the Jews were very careful in faithfully copying biblical manuscripts, some minor mistakes have crept in while transmitting and

Part of perseverance is to be able to live with open questions, yet be faithful to God's Word, for God's Word has proved time and time again to be reliable and trustworthy.



copying them.⁶ They may be due to copyists' mistakes or human frailties. While some such mistakes have occurred in the process of transmission and translation, these mistakes are so insignificant that not one honest soul needs to stumble or get lost over them. How God has preserved the Bible in its present shape is amazing. Indeed, the Bible is the best transmitted and preserved document of antiquity.

But what do we do when we come across discrepancies and apparent mistakes in the Bible? For example, there are a number of numerical discrepancies, referring to the same events or items in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. In 2 Samuel 8:4, David is said to have taken 700 horsemen from Hadadezer; in 1 Chronicles 18:3, 4, the figure is given as 7,000.⁷ According to 1 Kings

problems of interpretation one encounters while studying the Bible. For example, in ancient times it was common to give the same person different names (Edom/Esau; Gideon/Jerubbaal), and different methods were used to count

original audience that was much more familiar with the biblical text than many today. We have no indication that Paul or other biblical writers were charged with making any such obvious mistakes. Perhaps the smaller discrepancies pose a greater challenge to the serious scholar than so-called obvious mistakes.

4:26, Solomon had 40,000 stalls for horses; in 2 Chronicles 9:25, he had only 4,000 stalls. In Matthew 27:54, the centurion says, "Truly, this was the Son of God"; in Luke 23:47, however, the author quotes the centurion as saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man."⁸

Matthew associates a quotation from Zechariah with the prophet Jeremiah. Was he suffering from a slip of the mind?⁹

In Hebrews 9:3, 4, the writer of Hebrews seems to locate the altar of incense in the Most Holy Place, whereas it is a well-known fact that it stood in the Holy Place. Was he mistaken?¹⁰

Can the Old Testament cosmology be reconciled with modern scientific cosmology?¹¹ Have the biblical writers erred and suffered from a loss of memory? Were they only children of their times and culture and thus mistaken in what they wrote? While

the books of the Bible were written in a particular time and culture, we have to remember that the Bible is not historically conditioned by immanent cause-and-effect relations and, thereby, rendered relative and divinely conditioned and historically constituted.¹² Therefore, we can assume the trustworthiness and reliability of the Bible and the truthfulness of the biblical message that surpasses the limitations of human culture.

The historical reliability of Scripture

The presence of some discrepancies in the Bible does not give license to call into question the historicity of the biblical account. The Christian faith is a historical faith in the sense that it essentially depends upon what did, in fact, happen (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12–22). Truth and historical reality belong together and cannot

be separated from their theological content. "To remove the historical from the concerns of Scripture is to remove what demonstrates the faithfulness of God"¹³ because God acts in history. From the New Testament, we know that Jesus and the apostles accepted as true the historical events recorded in the Old Testament (Matt. 19:4, 5; 24:37; Acts 24:14; Rom. 15:4) because historical events, such as Creation, the Flood, and the Exodus, are part of the salvation history revealed in Scripture.

While the New Testament writers were familiar with translations of the Old Testament (i.e., the LXX), we find it interesting that neither Jesus nor the apostles pointed out actual mistakes or errors in Scripture and never questioned the historicity of Old Testament reports. Not once did they criticize Scripture for being wrong or pointed out specific mistakes. Instead, they demonstrated unwavering faith



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in its trustworthiness and divine authority. When we deal with Scripture, we are not called to disseminate doubts by questioning the truthfulness of the Bible, but we are invited to follow the example of Jesus and the apostles.

How to deal with difficult texts

The challenges of difficult passages in the Bible have been recognized by serious students throughout history. Although many discrepancies and contradictions disappear under open-minded scrutiny, some problems remain. To frankly admit those difficulties as unanswered questions is something quite different, however, from claiming that Scripture has definitely erred. The latter is a value judgment on Scripture, while the former shows an awareness of the limitations of our human understanding and acknowledges that humans are not omniscient but dependent upon further information and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in understanding spiritual things (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–20; 2:12–14).

In dealing with difficulties in Scripture, we must remember that many so-called mistakes are not derived from God's revelation but the result of human misinterpretation and the interpreter's prejudice.

What, then, should we do when we come across apparent mistakes in the Bible?

Approach with integrity. When we deal with a difficult passage in Scripture, we would do well to approach it in perfect honesty. God is "pleased with integrity" (1 Chron. 29:17, NIV). This implies, first of all, that we acknowledge a difficulty and do not try to obscure or evade it. An honest person has an open mind-set, which is receptive toward the message and content of that being studied. Furthermore, honesty includes the willingness to use proper methods of

investigation. To explain and understand the Word of God correctly, we cannot use methods with naturalistic presuppositions based on atheistic premises that run counter to God's Word.

Prayerfully deal with difficulties. Prayer is no substitute for hard work and thorough study. However, in prayer we confess that we are dependent upon God to understand His Word. The Bible writers express a humility that acknowledges that God and His Word are greater than human reason. On our knees, we can ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit and gain a new insight to the biblical text that we would not have if we placed ourselves above the Word of God.

Explain Scripture with Scripture. With God as the ultimate Author of Scripture, we can assume a fundamental unity among its various parts. That is to say, when we deal with challenging aspects of Scripture, we need to deal with all difficulties scripturally. The best solution to Bible difficulties is still found in the Bible itself. There is no better explanation than explaining Scripture with Scripture. This means that we have to take into consideration the biblical context and carefully move from the clear statements of the Bible to those that are less clear.

Be patient. For some questions, there are no easy answers. We need determination to patiently work on finding a solution. And if some problems persistently defy even our hardest efforts to solve them, we should not get discouraged. Part of perseverance is to be able to live with open questions, yet be faithful to God's Word, for God's Word has proved time and again to be reliable and trustworthy.

Conclusion

Are there mistakes in the Bible? If by mistake we mean that Scripture teaches error or is fallible and historically unreliable, the answer

is No. The Bible is God's infallible revelation of His will.¹⁴ The suggestion that the Bible contains mistakes can easily be misunderstood to mean that God makes mistakes or that He has a responsibility for them, but this is not the case. The discrepancies and imperfections in Scripture are due to human frailties. But none of these discrepancies negatively affect the teaching or historical reliability of Scripture. We can have full confidence that the Bible we have today remains trustworthy and true and makes every willing man and woman wise unto salvation. 

- 1 Richard M. Davidson, "Who Is the Author of the Bible?" in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. G. Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 3.
- 2 Fernando L. Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. G. W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 65.
- 3 Cf. Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1988), 32; and more recently John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Theology of Lordship series (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 2010), 170–176.
- 4 For a solution on the vexing problem of the Hebrew chronology, see Edwin R. Thiele in his widely recognized book *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983).
- 5 No one has seen inerrant autographs, and no one has seen autographs full of errors either.
- 6 Cf. Paul D. Wenger, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible: Its History, Methods and Results* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).
- 7 For an explanation of this problem, see Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 184.
- 8 On this question, see Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 346, 347.
- 9 There is evidence that the Jews in their arrangement of the books of the prophets placed Jeremiah first. Often a collection of writings is designated by the name of the first one, in which case it is one of importance. Perhaps Matthew was aware of this custom. For other possible solutions to this question, see Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 345.
- 10 After a careful study, Camacho comes to the conclusion that "these seemingly problematical verses do not reveal either a textual corruption or any inconsistency or error on the part of an uninformed author, but suggest instead a precise theological interpretation of the function of the altar of incense in the sanctuary services." Harold S. Camacho, "The Altar of Incense in Hebrews 9:3–4," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 12.
- 11 On this question, see the recent study by Randall W. Younker, "Crucial Questions of Interpretation in Genesis 1," *Biblical Research Institute*, accessed November 30, 2011, <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/Crucial%20Questions%20of%20Interpretation%20in%20Genesis%201.pdf>. Cf. also the discussion in G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 161–218.
- 12 See Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, eds. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 208, 209.
- 13 Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*, 50.
- 14 Seventh-day Adventists affirm that "the Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history," *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 11.

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Ray W. McAllister, PhD, is southwest Michigan representative for Christian Record Services for the Blind, and faculty professor for Griggs University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

From disability awareness to perfect unity

If someone with a disability entered your church, would you know how to make that person feel at home? None of us intends to be mean, but well-meaning people often do things that trouble the disabled. The pastor, as a leader in the church, should be made aware and guide the flock on the importance of recognizing the needs of those with disabilities.

Share

In my work representing Christian Record Services for the Blind,* I have been speaking about this issue to churches and business groups. I use Jesus' interaction with blind Bartimaeus, in Mark 10:46–52, and humorous stories from my own experience as a blind person to show the simple things that can be done to best serve these precious souls. This article shows how the method Jesus used in first-century Judea can be applied to any location today.

In short, this method is based on the acronym SHARE, which stands for Slow down, Hear, Adapt, Relate, Empower. These techniques can strengthen our relationships with the disabled and guide us through difficulties in all social interactions, as we are all different in our own ways.

Slow down

When Bartimaeus first called out to Jesus for help, the crowd wanted

Jesus to ignore him. Jesus, though, stopped to minister to this person. Jesus slowed down in order to meet this man's needs. Often, the disabled person takes longer to accomplish tasks that most other people can do quickly. We find it imperative to allow time for these people to do what they need to do and, in some cases, slow down to offer assistance. People, at times, try to rush my wife and me through line at potluck. She has to get food for two, and occasionally three when her disabled mother is present.

Hear

Not only did Jesus slow down, but He also heard Bartimaeus. He asked Bartimaeus what he wanted. Jesus, who knew beforehand what the man needed, wanted to give him the dignity to make his own decisions. The disabled often feel left out of the decision-making process, with others deciding how and when they should receive help.

Once, during college, I was returning from church when a gentleman suddenly threw his arms around me. Surprised, I asked what he was doing. He said that he was helping me to cross the street. Not only was that the wrong way to help a blind person cross the street, but I was not going to cross the street in the first place. Before someone gives assistance, I usually encourage the person to first ask, "May I help you?"

Jesus also asked Bartimaeus, not the people next to him, what he wanted. I was going into a hospital once, and a lady there kept asking the person with me if I needed a wheelchair. My eyes do not work—my legs are fine. I often wonder how much time could be saved if people would talk to me instead of having someone else relay messages to me through what I call "an English-to-English interpreter."

Listening is an important skill in any situation. As a child, I was visiting a church before I had completely lost my vision (though my eyesight was never very good). A teacher set a songbook in my lap and kept insisting that I try to read it. I would explain that I did not see well, but she kept insisting that I try. The point is that people with disabilities know their limits and when they need help.

Adapt

While the disabled pride themselves on independence, some adaptations still must be made for them. Jesus adapted to Bartimaeus by having him come to Him, which would have involved the blind man following His voice. Proper adaptation, though, can require forethought. On another occasion, I was carrying a laundry basket of clean clothes up the stairs. I wedged the basket between my body and the door so I could reach around and open the door. The plan worked

perfectly until a well-meaning gentleman opened the door for me without telling me, thus releasing the laundry basket. I saved the basket with the quick reflexes that the blind acquire just for these situations. I still had to ask the man to let me know the next time he would do something like that.

There are different ways to adapt in order to help someone who is disabled. For instance, when leading a blind person, have the person hold your arm at the elbow and walk a step behind. Just remember that benches and pillars will not move out of the person's way. When seating a blind person, place the person's hand on the back of the chair. Everything else follows logically.

When you are done talking with a blind person, let the person know you are finishing and leaving the room. I have had conversations end when I suddenly realize I have been talking to the wall for the last two minutes. Do not touch a blind person without giving some sort of warning or greeting for we do not know what to expect.

When directing a blind person, do not point or refer to an object by its color. My eyes do not work, so the "blue box that is over there" is just as impossible to find for me as if it were halfway around the world. Do not play "guess who," either—this may be cute with a child, but it gets tiresome for adults.

Finally, do not pet a seeing-eye dog on a harness. Animals easily confuse work with play, and the harness is a symbol of work.

As far as the deaf go, *do not yell*. Yelling just makes badly enunciated speech become loud, badly enunciated speech. Just use good, clear diction with solid lip movement in good lighting, assuming the person reads lips. Otherwise, there is always text messaging and email. Finally, when speaking through a deaf interpreter, speak as if you are talking to the one who is deaf. Do not say, "What does he/she want?" I joke that if you say that, the interpreter will sign, "What does he/she want?" and then the deaf person will sign back, "I don't know what he/she wants; I know what I want."

With people in wheelchairs, do not lean on a wheelchair. I usually say, "Get your own!" A wheelchair is thought of as part of someone's body, part of the zone of personal space. Finally, try to maintain eye contact with someone in a wheelchair. Do not make the person get a neck ache from tipping the head back to look up toward where you are facing.

A few things should be said here concerning building accessibility. Braille on restroom doors can be helpful as well as wheelchair ramps and automatic doors. Churches often forget to have a ramp to the platform. Someone in a wheelchair may wish to lead a prayer or preach and would wish to do so in the same manner as everyone else does.

A good example of adaptation occurred when I was at Christian Record Services for the Blind's winter camp. While there, I downhill skied for the first time. The trainer patiently showed me the positions and motions, adapting to my slower speed of learning this type of skill. While I skied

What do we really mean by *revival*?

Religious "awakenings," or revivals, have punctuated the history of the Christian church. Fired with renewed fervor, believers yearn for purity of conviction and purpose—for a return to the experiences and blessings of the founders of their faith.

So, today, what do we really mean when we call for revival in our church? We are saying that we are not content with the status quo, that we need a clearer understanding of God's true purpose for both the church and our own lives. We are saying, "Lord, please equip us fully so we can be more effective instruments for Your mission."

For me, the idea of revival is inextricably linked with mission, action, and community. Consider the aftermath of Pentecost (Acts 2). In the days following this archetypal

religious awakening, the followers of Christ were transformed from a motley group of somewhat fearful, uncertain individuals, into a unified, mission-focused, and selfless community, which devoted itself to fellowship, prayer, and caring, in practical ways, for the needs of others (Acts 2:42–45).

True revival cannot be self-focused or inward looking. True revival may start within the four walls of our church, but it will always prompt us to walk outside into a world waiting for the loving touch of the Master.

When we experience true revival within our church, society itself will become the canvas on which we paint the values of Christ—justice, service, honesty, generosity, and compassion for the poor, sick, and orphans. We will become champions

of religious freedom, health care, and education.

The revival for which we pray includes nothing less than this: that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the values of the kingdom of God will permeate our lives and relationships. That, in everything we do, we will more clearly reflect the love, practical compassion, and mission of our Lord.

—JOHN GRAZ, PHD, IS DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY DEPARTMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST WORLD CHURCH, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES, AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION.

Revival
and
REFORMATION

the usual way, he skied backwards, holding on to my hands so I could be steadied and safe. He heard me when I wanted to try to ski without any direct assistance from him. I had fun and learned, at least, the basics of a new skill because of his kindness.

Relate

Jesus did not just help Bartimaeus and then forget about him. Jesus started a relationship that even involved Bartimaeus becoming a follower.

The disabled do not want to simply be assisted and then be left alone. We want friends just as everyone else does. You may wish to say Hello and then ask questions. I encourage people to ask me questions about my

all learn to laugh at ourselves, we will have fun and be more relaxed; and, maybe, from being calm, we will make fewer mistakes.

Empower

Jesus did not just adapt to Bartimaeus; He empowered him. Empowerment means helping a disabled person be as if there was no disability. While healing like Jesus did may not be our path at present, there are other things we can do to empower people.

First, we can avoid words and actions that hinder empowerment. Saying someone cannot do something only keeps that person from trying. In addition, do not use a disability

the blind astray. God is a forgiving God, but He does care for those who may seem weaker.

What, then, can we do to empower others? Helping a disabled person learn an independent skill is a very good activity. Someone who has helped me learn a new song at church will hear me sing the song and feel as though he or she really made a difference. At blind camp for Christian Record Services for the Blind, I taught other blind people origami and how to grow sprouts, empowering them with new skills and empowering me with teaching experience. The leadership of a church should visit every person with a disability to see how each person might be able to contribute. Someone may have a gift that does not fit into the usual gifts we seek. Maybe there is a blind poet or a deaf painter. These people could use their arts to illustrate sermons or provide encouragement. Maybe there is a child with attention deficit disorder who would make an excellent greeter.

Conclusion

First Corinthians 12 discusses the body of Christ. Paul says that even the members that seem less important have great importance. Then he said that when one member suffers, the whole body suffers. The disabled, as part of Christ's body, still have great importance. We are all one body, and so, I must ask, if one member of the church is disabled, are we not all disabled?

Finally, we can look at how Jesus used this model with every one of us: He slowed down to take note of the reality of sin, He heard our cries when we pled for mercy, He adapted by coming down and dying for us, He related to us by inviting us to pray to Him, and He empowered us with the Holy Spirit and eternal life in a new heaven and new earth where there will be no disabilities. ♣

* Your members have an opportunity to directly help reach out to the disabled by taking part in the special offering on Sabbath, April 13, 2013, for Christian Record Services for the Blind. Please visit www.christianrecord.org for more details.

The leadership of a church should visit every person with a disability to see how each person might be able to contribute.

blindness as blindness seems rather obvious anyway.

I also remind people not to stare at the disabled.

You may wish to use visual metaphors around the blind and that is perfectly acceptable. I use them regularly as I see fit.

Finally, learn to laugh. I recall an occasion when I was boarding an airplane and the flight attendant introduced me as follows, "Hello, this is Ray. He'll be with you on this flight, and he's blind, today."

"Today?" I replied. "I'm actually blind every day."

Even someone who could be considered an expert on interacting with the disabled will make mistakes. If we

as a handle or identifier. I entered a hair salon one day to hear someone say, "The blind guy is here." My usual response is, "Hi, yes, this is the blind guy." When asked my name, I will say, "I'm Ray, but just call me 'the blind guy.'" We would not say, "The Mexican man is here," or "The black lady is here." We have learned that these statements echo prejudice. We should not use a disability the same way.

Finally, we must be watchful in schools, and even in churches, concerning the issue of bullying, or what I call "peer abuse." Children do things to each other that an adult would be sued or arrested for doing. The Bible states clearly in Deuteronomy 27:18 that there are curses that fall on those who lead

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Resources concerning disability

Web sites

- ▶ eHow. “About Reasonably Accommodating Disability and Religion.” www.ehow.com/info_8379618_reasonably-accommodating-disability-religion.html.

This Webpage “About Reasonably Accommodating Disability and Religion” contains general information about ways a church can meet the needs of the disabled. There are numerous links to other relevant Web sites. This site does contain a number of advertisements for products and services relevant to the disabled.

- ▶ **Disabilities and Faith.org.** “Disabilities and Faith.” www.disabilitiesandfaith.org/.

This Disabilities and Faith Web site gives practical tips on how a church can include the disabled. A great deal of the focus here is on attitudes, how nondisabled church members can treat the disabled with respect and dignity.

- ▶ **Assistive Technologies for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.** “Induction Loops.” <https://sites.google.com/site/accessibilityforthe deaf/induction-loops>.

This site, Assistive Technologies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, discusses a new technology for those with hearing loss. With this technology, sound sent through a public address system can be beamed right to the assistive devices the hard of hearing use. This technology would be useful in churches so those with hearing difficulties could follow church programming in spite of the noisy distractions in the room. This site contains an in-depth bibliography.

- ▶ **NAMI FaithNet.** “Nami’s Outreach to Faith Communities.” faithnet.nami.org/.

The NAMI FaithNet Web site contains information about a branch of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), devoted to issues of faith and spirituality. Along with physical disabilities, mental illness is a disability that the church must also address. This Web site has many articles and links one can follow to explore this issue thoroughly.

- ▶ **Christian Record Services for the Blind.** “Christian Record Services for the Blind.” www.christianrecord.org.

This is the Web site for Christian Record Services for the Blind. This organization offers free faith-based materials, including Bibles, in Braille, large print, audio, and electronic formats accessible to the blind. Christian Record also has summer and winter camps that allow the blind to enjoy many fun activities in a safe, faith-building environment.

- ▶ **Optasia Ministry.** “Contact Us.” www.optasiaministry.org/contact.htm.
- ▶ **Bartimaeus Alliance of the Blind.** “Homepage.” bartimaeus.us/index.html.
- ▶ **Night Light.** “The Study of Biblical Languages.” biblang.night-light.org/.

These three Web sites contain material for a blind or visually impaired individual on a path toward professional ministry. There are a number of tools for spiritual growth as well as learning biblical languages. A number of Greek and Hebrew texts and helps are available from these sites that open up the world of biblical scholarship to one with a visual disability.

Books and Journals

- ▶ Bishop, Virginia “Blindness and Visual Impairment and the Religious Community.” In *Diversity and Visual Impairment: The Influence of Race, Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity on the Individual*, edited by Madeline Milian and Jane N. Erin, 223–249. New York: American Foundation for the Blind Press, 2001.
- ▶ Creamer, Deborah B. “Including All Bodies in the Body of God: Disability and the Theology of Sallie McFague.” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 9, no. 4 (2005): 55–70.
- ▶ Reynolds, Thomas E. *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008.
- ▶ Ruconich, Sandra and Katherine Standish Schneider. “Religions and Their Views of Blindness and Visual Impairment.” In *Diversity and Visual Impairment: The Influence of Race, Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity on the Individual*, edited by Madeline Milian and Jane N. Erin, 193–222. New York: American Foundation for the Blind Press, 2001.
- ▶ Wynn, Kerry H. “The Normative Hermeneutic and Interpretations of Disability Within the Yahwistic Narratives.” In *This Able Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, edited by Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, 91–101. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

Dissertations

- ▶ McAllister, Ray W. “Theology of Blindness in the Hebrew Scriptures.” PhD diss., Andrews University Theological Seminary, 2010.
- ▶ Shroud Jr., William B. “A Strategy for Educating the Church Concerning Those With Special Needs.” PhD diss., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2007.



The Road I Travel: My Journey Along the Narrow Way

by C. Raymond Holmes, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011.

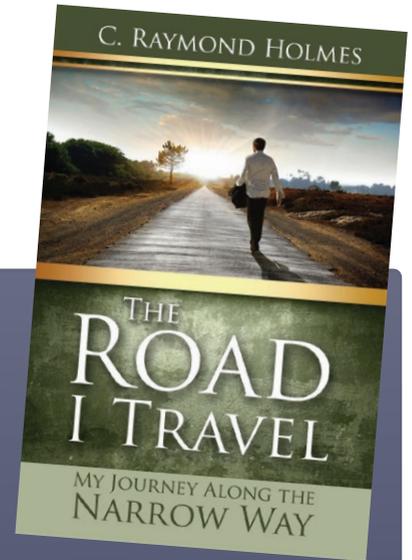
Pastors who wish for an authentically biblical view of spirituality will resonate with this recent work by Dr. Holmes. In 16 chapters, the author fulfills his stated intention to express the Seventh-day Adventist understanding and meaning of spiritual formation. From a discussion of left- and right-brain consciousness to discerning the will of God in retirement, he covers a wide scope of subjects essential to spiritual growth and maturity, with each one presented with depth and insight.

Refreshingly faithful to the Bible, the phrase *sola Scriptura* appears often. Revelation is the only safe guide to spiritual renewal, not subjective experience or the teachings and methods of great mystics. With clarity and simplicity, he bases his concepts on many quoted Bible passages, employing sensitive exegesis and practical applications. After reading a few chapters, one gets the sense of the Bible as a mighty, towering oak in a grassy meadow, offering shade, solace, and fruits of wisdom.

Not dry theory, the work is the fruitage of the author's many decades of grappling with the joys and challenges of Christian living. Because the faith walk is primarily experiential, Holmes prefers description over definition. The volume reads like a fireside chat with a pastor who feels deeply, thinks intelligently, and shares humbly and honestly.

The author steers a straight course on the hot topic of connecting with the Divine, warning of the pitfalls of

With clarity and simplicity, he bases his concepts on many quoted Bible passages, employing sensitive exegesis and practical applications.



legalism, ritualism, easy “believeism,” pantheism, functional atheism, and intellectualism. He points out the similarities between Eastern mysticism and the emerging church and suggests why the latter has become so appealing to many. In that context, he questions whether our approach to biblical faith has been too abstract and cognitive without enough appreciation for the affective dimension of faith. The cure for all our spiritual and theological problems, he says, is found in a prayerful reading of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White.

Of particular use to clergy is the chapter on Communion. Holmes confidently believes in the “real Presence,” not in the emblems, but in the atmosphere of humble service, renewed faith, and spiritual healing that Christ

mediates through the Last Supper. He suggests that believers need transforming—not the bread and wine.

Theology teachers will find cogent counsel in the chapter discussing training of spiritual leaders. Ministerial authority is related more to personal authenticity than to academic training or ordination. Ministers in training need teachers who are not only orthodox but living examples of a “believing faith.” Spirituality is caught, not taught.

If you are looking for a book with vitamin-rich concepts to chew on and digest, read this one. You will be rewarded. ❖

—Barry Kimbrough, MDiv, serves as pastor of the Worcester and Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the Southern New England Conference.



► Adventist Church president calls for renewed medical mission in cities

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Speaking to a packed auditorium at the General Conference headquarters during the Sabbath morning worship of the 2012 Annual Council, October 13, 2012, President **Ted N. C. Wilson** implored world church leaders to focus their evangelism efforts on health ministry, while also urging them to help the denomination remain united during difficult times.

Wilson called for the congregation to consider the health and unity messages as “two important interrelated burdens of Christ and burdens of mine, and I hope yours.” He quoted from the

book of Matthew as well as the writings of church cofounder Ellen G. White and stated that medical missionary work and health reform are an “integral part of mission to the cities,” and that there is a “great need for selfless unity in Christ” to proclaim the three angels’ messages.

The renewed focus on health ministry, which launches in metropolitan New York beginning in 2013, is a major effort to evangelize in mostly large communities. “In every city, Seventh-day Adventists should minister to people not only from their local churches but also from such centers

of influence such as health clinics, vegetarian restaurants, reading rooms, counseling centers, and community service centers,” Wilson said.

That work, he continued, will require the involvement of lay membership as well as an organized effort by established denominational ministries such as Adventist Community Services, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Adventist World Radio, Hope Channel, and Adventist Book Centers. The evangelistic outreach is expected to reach 650 of the world’s largest cities by 2015. [*Edwin Manuel Garcia, ANN*]

► Stewardship sermon contest winners

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Twelve individuals from North America were chosen as the winners of the Stewardship Sermon Contest, sponsored by the North American Division (NAD) Stewardship Department, NAD Ministerial Department, and *Ministry*. The contest was open to active or retired ministers and graduate ministerial students. Some 100 sermons were submitted.

Eight of the winners are currently or recently retired congregational pastors. Three of the winners are conference or union conference departmental directors, and one is a graduate student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. The 12 sermons will be published in a book and made available to pastors and church leaders.

The winners are the following:

- **C. Adelina Alexe**, graduate student, Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, Andrews University
- **David L. Bissell**, former pastor, Cedar Rapids Seventh-day Adventist Church, Iowa-Missouri Conference
- **G. Tom Carter**, director, Planned Giving and Trust Services, Southern Union Conference
- **Gerry Christman**, pastor, Aiea Seventh-day Adventist Church, Hawaii Conference
- **Ernest Dobkins**, former director, Trust Services, Northern California Conference
- **Daniel B. Martella**, pastor, Healdsburg and Cloverdale Seventh-day Adventist Churches, North California Conference
- **Jeff Metherell**, director, Planned Giving & Trust Services,

Stewardship and Religious Liberty, Wisconsin Conference

- **Domingo Paulino**, pastor, Durham, Raleigh, Henderson, Samford, and Scarborough Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Carolina Conference
- **Orlando Rosales**, pastor, Baltimore Spanish and Dundalk Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Chesapeake Conference
- **Robin Song**, pastor, Living Vine Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington Conference
- **Patrick Vincent**, pastor, Mount Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church, Southeastern Conference
- **Harold O. White**, administrative pastor, Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, Northern California Conference. [*Nikolaus Satelmajer*]



Fred Hardinge, DrPH, RD, is associate director, Health Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

The missing ingredient

Armed with a strong conviction that medical ministry—combined with a freshly minted graduate degree in health promotion—was a wonderfully effective method of reaching the community for Christ, I believed if I shared a better way with people, based on the latest evidence, they would readily leave their harmful habits. In doing so, they would become “new creatures,” enjoying life to the fullest.

Over the years, I have been forced to recognize that facts alone, even incontrovertible ones, are not sufficient in bringing about long-term changes in the way individuals choose to live. I will never forget a man who had come to a smoking-cessation program. He seemed highly motivated, had a wonderful attitude, and responded well to all the information and motivation we provided. From all we knew, he had successfully kicked the habit.

Almost a year later, I received a phone call from a chaplain at a local hospital telling me they had a patient who had requested me to visit. The name was familiar, but I wondered why he was hospitalized. He was recovering from throat cancer surgery and now had to breathe through a hole in his throat. To my utter shock, after a few minutes of visiting together, using gestures and some guttural sounds, he indicated he wanted me to wheel him outside where smoking was allowed. He smoked a cigarette through that hole!

Over the years, I have observed many such “failures” of education. And even more difficult, I have had to recognize that knowledge alone has also failed to change some parts of my lifestyle. While accurate and timely information and facts are very important, they rarely succeed, by

themselves, as agents of change. Consider the following:

- Cigarette smoking is known to cause lung cancer and emphysema. Yet millions of people start smoking each year, or continue, with this extremely dangerous habit.
- Breast, colorectal, and prostate cancer survivors experience a significantly lowered risk of recurrence if they lose weight and exercise regularly. How many women and men actually put that knowledge into practice?
- Physicians know the evidence behind the statistics. Even they, too, often have difficulty in altering their lifestyles.
- Solid research has shown that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Sadly, thousands of infants are born each year who struggle with fetal alcohol disorders.

Knowledge alone does not motivate most of us to change our behaviors. As a health educator, I have often been tempted to give up in despair when I see so many who enthusiastically attend program after program, then continue to struggle with the same old health-destroying habits.

Paul described this condition well when he wrote, “Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse

to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature” (Eph. 2:1–3, NLT).

We can educate the smoker about the very real dangers of tobacco. We can instruct the overweight person on portion control and healthier food choices. We can coach the unfit couch potato in the huge value of physical activity in combating mild depression, lowering the risk of heart disease and

The real answer to permanent behavior change—the only answer—is Jesus.

cancer, and helping him or her to feel better and have more energy. Yet that is usually not enough to bring about permanent change.

Paul describes the missing ingredient, “But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead” (Eph. 2:4, 5, NLT).

The real answer to permanent behavior change—the only answer—is Jesus. To create new tastes, new motives, and new behaviors requires the same amount of power as to raise a person from the dead. Only Jesus can do this. Jesus is the center and core of the gospel, and He must, likewise, be the center and core of all our health ministry activities. ❧

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