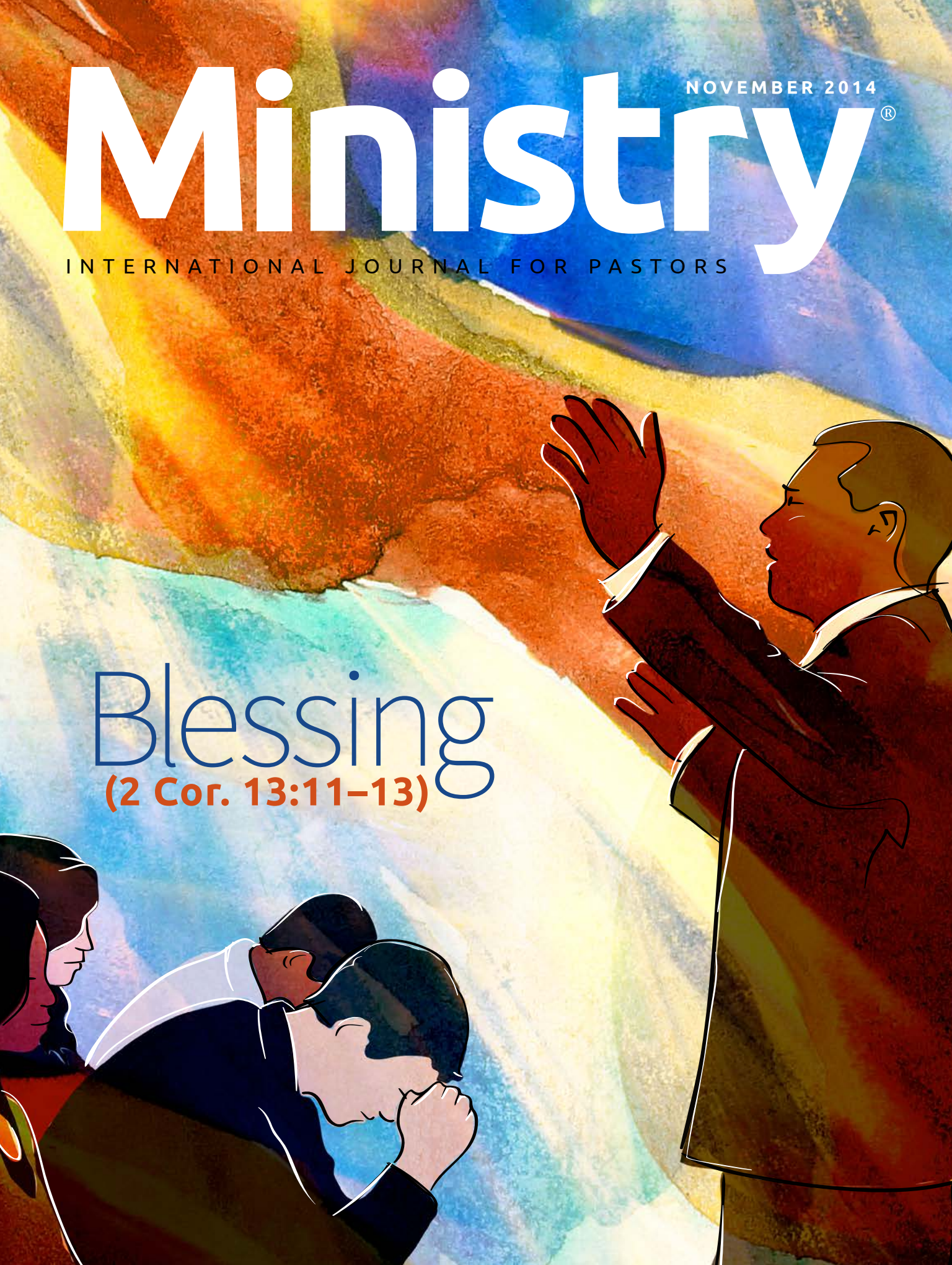


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Blessing (2 Cor. 13:11–13)





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Reflections on the September 2014 issue

Although I am not Seventh-day Adventist (I am United Methodist), I have a chance to read your magazine.

Your September 2014 edition was filled with a lot of good information. I particularly liked “Serving Your Community: Filling in the Cracks,” “Breaking Through: Christ’s Methods in the Twenty-First Century,” and “A Letter to a Young Minister.”

However, the article I liked the best was “All Things Work Together?” I also have had problems with the “God is in control” theory. I cannot say this to a victim of child abuse or murder—how do you say this to the parents of the children killed in school shootings?

Many years ago, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book called *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He had to write it after the death of his young son from progeria. In general, he says that if a person believes that God has put the universe in motion and it operates under certain laws and rules (e.g., gravity) and while He certainly has the power, He chooses not to override His own creation. I get more comfort from that belief than I do from a God pulling strings, saving some people from a plane crash by preventing them from boarding a plane but letting the rest of the people on the plane perish.

Philip Yancey also addresses this subject in his book *Disappointment With God*. But I think he takes more of the “God is in control” view.

After doing some research, I discovered that there is a version of the golden rule in almost every religion. I have often wondered what the world would be like if everyone made a determined effort to follow this rule. I also wonder how much less natural disasters would

impact us if we stubborn humans did not put our trust in things of this earth.

Again, thank you for these thought-provoking articles.

—Starr Weaver, email

Counsel to a young minister

I read with interest Jean Weber’s “A Letter to a Young Minister” (September 2014). The mother was understandably proud of her son’s accomplishments and the important work upon which he was about to embark. Her counsel was insightful and helpful. However, she omitted one essential area of counsel vital for the success of any professional, but even more so to those in the ministry.

Regardless of the professional degree, the accumulated successes enjoyed or the level of leadership attained in the ministry, every minister is beset by one powerful force the devil will bring upon God’s servants. No one is exempt from the wiles of the evil one. There is no sin so destructive and so far reaching as when a minister yields to sexual temptation. No sin brings more heartache to all involved. And it has happened to some of our most talented ministers. It happened to me.

Samson’s influence was cut short and God’s people humiliated when, under Delilah’s influence, Samson lost sight of his mission. King David’s moral authority vanished after his encounter with Bathsheba. The devil knows a man’s weaknesses and finds an accomplice who will bring to ruin a man of God. It is true that one whose connection with God is compromised can be an easy target for the devil. He sees to it that opportunity presents itself, and if God’s servant has not fortified his or her mind and heart with

the Word, he or she is no match for the great deceiver.

No mention of this possibility was made during my years in theology school. I’m wondering if our ministers in training are schooled in this area in preparation to enter the pastoral arena. Should there not be some instruction given to prepare the young pastors to defend themselves in this vital area of encounter with the evil one?

—Name withheld

This is one of the very best articles I can recall having read in *Ministry*. Oh, that all of our young ministers had such encouragement from their mothers, fathers, or educators.

—Walter Thompson, email

Serving your community

I am glad to see Jan Paulsen, in his article “Serving Your Community: Filling in the Cracks” (September 2014), venturing into the question of how the Christian church should act in what is sort of a post-Christian world. The gospel has been preached to every living creature in our world, but most do not seem to care—at least in their everyday lives. I’m going to think on his article, particularly as it applies to the Catholic world. We Catholics have perhaps not suffered quite the losses of the mainline Protestant world, but there have certainly been losses. The AIDS crisis filled the church for a while, etc., but . . . as a bishop, I can witness the inflowing and outflowing of the Holy Spirit every time I say the Words of Institution. But do others feel that power?

Apparently not too many feel it enough to show up Sunday after Sunday.

—The Most Rev. Dean Bekken, email 



Blessed to bless

Genesis reveals a startling account of Jacob's face-to-face encounter with the Pharaoh of Egypt: "Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (Gen. 47:7).^{*} It is quite remarkable, when you think about it—a humble herdsman blessing a powerful, self-proclaimed deity. Did Jacob bless the Pharaoh because of the Pharaoh's willingness to enable God's purposes to be accomplished? Or was it simply because passing on that blessing to others was the right thing to do by one who had been blessed by the Lord?

We are left with many questions regarding how the blessing was bestowed. Did the aged patriarch place his hands on this god-king? Did he bow before the Pharaoh, or lift his hands toward heaven? What words were spoken? We may learn from other stories in the book of beginnings where blessings were given. When Isaac blessed Jacob, he prayed, "May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you" (Gen. 28:3). Generations later, the Lord instructed Moses how Aaron and his sons should bless the children of Israel: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (Num. 6:24, 25).

In both of these examples, the individuals are not providing the blessing. Rather, they are calling upon the Lord to bless. So it would be reasonable to assume that when Jacob blessed Pharaoh, he cried out to the Lord God of heaven and earth and asked for a blessing upon this powerful world ruler.

Jacob not only blessed the Pharaoh—he blessed the sons of Joseph, and he also blessed his own sons (Gen. 49:28, 33). What a way to end his days—extending blessings to those around him! He told his son Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me" (Gen. 48:3). And Jacob chose not to keep that blessing to himself. He realized that he was blessed to

over my life. I was blessed beyond measure, and I continue to rejoice in God's blessing. But I realize that I cannot keep that blessing to myself. I have been blessed to bless.


Marguerite Shuster has been used by God to bring bountiful blessings to many within her circle of influence. It seems quite appropriate that her lead article in this issue is titled "Blessing." She explores the simple beauty and

Both individually and collectively, we have been blessed to bless.

bless. He had a blessing from God that he needed to share.

After studying the story of Jacob, I was impressed to ask my father to pray a blessing over my life. My father served for many years as a pastor, evangelist, and hospital chaplain. He has offered many prayers of blessing in Jesus' name. I have no doubt that he has also continued earnestly in prayer for me through the years. But this special prayer of blessing was different. We fasted and prayed in preparation for this sacred occasion. My heart was deeply moved when we knelt together in prayer and my father laid his hands upon my head. From the depths of his soul, he prayed a blessing

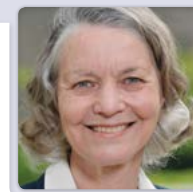
profound message in Paul's closing blessing to Christians in Corinth: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14).

Our prayer is that you will be blessed as you read her article as well as the other articles in this issue. We also want to challenge you to pass on God's blessing to those around you. Remember the words of Jesus: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). Both individually and collectively, we have been blessed to bless. 

* All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James version.

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Blessing (2 Cor. 13:11–13)

Editor's note: This article is an adaptation of a sermon preached on June 14, 2014.

Most of you, I am imagining, would not easily guess a part of the service of worship I especially anticipate. It is the benediction. No, not for the reason you think, because it marks the end of the service! I wait for it because I need it. I need God's blessing to deal with whatever might lie before me as I walk out the sanctuary doors. And because I need that blessing, I always feel cheated if the benediction is simply supplanted by a charge—instructions about something I am supposed to do. Charges are all right in themselves, but it really is not lack of information that keeps me from being what I should be; and more information, with or without accompanying motivational speeches, will not much help me make progress. What I need is power from beyond myself to do what I already know. That is what the raised hands of the minister pronouncing the benediction symbolize, a conveying of God's blessing, properly given and received with the eyes open, for the benediction is not a prayer but an act. It *does* something, at least insofar as it pleases God so to honor it.

Even our own words do, of course, accomplish things, whether trivially, as when our dogs come when we call, or terribly significantly, as when words spoken by a parent or a teacher stick with a child for a lifetime, echoing in his or her mind and carrying hope and purpose or anguish and rage with them. We see

the idea in Scripture when Isaac, by mistake and because of Jacob's deception, blesses his younger son, Jacob, instead of his older son, Esau. When Esau cried out in despair, the distressed Isaac said that he could not take back the blessing he had given (Gen. 27). It remains true: we cannot take back even human words once they have been spoken.

Words spoken by God do still more. In the beginning, they had power to create all that is (Gen. 1). The Word of God spoken by the preacher, says Paul in Romans 10:17, creates us anew, for "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (NRSV). Through *hearing*. In the same way, we need to *hear* the blessing, coming from God through another: we cannot bless ourselves any more than, in the most important sense, we can forgive ourselves. So the benediction is not a minor or dispensable part of the service of worship.

The Scripture Benediction

Of all the benedictions used in Christian worship, the one given in 2 Corinthians 13:13¹ is probably the most common: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (NRSV). This verse is striking for many reasons, not least because it comes at the close of a letter in which Paul has had a great deal to say about his disappointment with the Corinthian Christians. A

model church they emphatically were not. We get a sense of the preceding discussion from verse 11: "Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace." You do not need to say such things to folks exhibiting exemplary behavior.² It is to people who have been behaving badly, really *badly*, that Paul first gives the encouragement that "the God of love and peace" will be with them—the only way they are going to have strength to do any differently than they have been doing—and then offers this wonderful blessing. You do not shape up and then get the blessing; it is the blessing that will enable you to shape up. Never do you need blessing more than when you know you do not deserve it or when you are most afraid that maybe it is not for you. A little child, in a residential home for children, wrote to God, "Sometimes I worry about my self. What do you thik about me? mabe I will be ok. will you please help me to not be skaird."³ The child, like us adults, desperately needs blessing, confirmation that God is positively disposed to us and offers help. And if we are still scared, it may be because we do not rightly grasp the character of God. That possibility leads to consideration of the form and the content of the blessing itself.

Doctrine of Trinity in Scripture?

Form first. Most of us have probably been well instructed that there is no

“doctrine” of the Trinity in Scripture. The term never appears. But there are lots of data in Scripture that point in its direction, including this blessing, which is explicitly Trinitarian in its form. Paul speaks entirely naturally and unself-consciously of Father, Son, and Spirit, all in one breath. Interestingly enough,

the Spirit. While the Father is generally spoken of as Creator, John 1 speaks of the Son as the One through whom all things were made; and we also speak and sing of the Creator Spirit (e.g., Ps. 104:30). And so on. Although true that in our historical experience, the Three Persons have different roles—the Son,

grace—forgiveness and help that are in no way deserved—in Jesus. As a friend once insisted, we know what God is like not by looking at the world but by looking at Jesus. If we look at the world—at the suffering of so many in a way that seems wholly unrelated to their virtue or lack of virtue or to



*Never do you need
blessing more than
when you know you do
not deserve it or when
you are most afraid that
maybe it is not for you.*

though, he does not begin with the First Person of the Trinity, the Father, but with the Second Person, the Son, incarnate in Jesus. Probably that is because our deep knowledge of who God is begins with our encounter with Jesus Christ. It was encountering God in Jesus in a way that could not be denied that led—we might almost say *forced*—the church to the conviction that God must be triune, the Third Person having been encountered in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. This move to a Trinitarian understanding of God was not an easy one for those coming out of a Jewish conviction of strict monotheism. They made the move because their experience meant they could not avoid it. Language once rigorously reserved for the One whom we call “Father,” namely, “Lord,” came naturally to the lips of those speaking of Jesus and of

not the Father or the Spirit, died on the cross—it is not true that the essential attributes of the One God are differently distributed among the Persons. Any time you hear people speak as if God the Father is angry and judgmental but Jesus the Son is merciful and loving, you know for sure that they have made a mistake of the most serious kind in Trinitarian theology.

Here in this text, Paul switches language about grace and love. Perhaps most often we speak of the grace of God and the love of Jesus—for instance, the gracious act of the Father in sending the Son, and the love the Son manifests in freely giving Himself up for us. This time, the blessing begins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and then moves to the love of God. Again, the reason is probably experiential: we know God to be gracious because we encounter

anything else that makes any sense to us—our questions about what kind of God we are dealing with can quickly overwhelm us. When we look at the One who said, “ ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ ” (John 14:9, NRSV), our doubts are eased. They do not go away, any more than the evil of this present age goes away; but we may become willing to believe that there are mysteries in play that are beyond our ken. If Jesus shows us what God is like, that does not mean things will be easy, but it does mean we can trust Him.

Also worth noticing is that only a single word is used in speaking of the “communion” or “fellowship” of the Holy Spirit, while ministers pronouncing this benediction often use both words. Both translations are perfectly possible, and both terms may carry the connotation either of communion

with the Spirit in the sense of a real participation in the life of the Spirit or of fellowship with one another enabled by the Spirit. Well then, is the point *fellowship with God or with each other*? Which meaning one emphasizes depends on one's interpretation of the grammar, but the distinction may, in any case, be too finespun. Real communion with the Spirit *must* bear fruit in right rela-

which are and remain God's good gifts and not possessions of our own.

First, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." That is where it all starts. If we did not believe that Almighty God is gracious, we sinners would be fools even to think of approaching Him. But for Christians, grace is not just an abstract concept, with respect to which we close our eyes and hold our

Jesus Christ, the most wonderful thing in all the world, made known to us by the God who came into our world for our sakes, to do for us what we could never have imagined on our own. Just do not forget the surprise. It can sneak up on us, come from unexpected directions, even ambush us. We cannot control grace, or earn it, or understand it, or predict it. We can only receive

The love of God, like the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, comes precisely to the undeserving.



tionships with our neighbors, and the deepest fellowship with our neighbors is made possible in this broken world only by the Spirit.

The benefits of redemption

So much, then, for the unworthy objects and the Trinitarian form of this benediction. Now for what it offers us—"all the benefits of redemption," as one old commentator put it.⁴ But do we really see them? In a *Frank and Ernest* cartoon, Frank says to the pastor at the church door, "I'm tired of blessings in disguise. If it's all the same to you, I want one I can recognize immediately!" Blessings like the ones Frank wants, though, would be very much smaller than the ones God actually offers us,

breath and dare ourselves to believe the utterly implausible. No, we look at Jesus—at the life He lived, at the death He died, at the resurrection that confirms that the life and the death were not the noble but ultimately futile path of a starry-eyed, idealistic martyr, but rather revelation of the truth about all reality. It is a truth by which power is overcome by weakness, sin is met with transforming mercy, death is utterly defeated by life. Pause here. Do not swallow all this without tasting it! This grace is a huge surprise, as if you gathered up all your courage to bite into the hottest of chili peppers and, instead of gasping and weeping copious tears, tasted ice cream. In merely human terms, it is altogether impossible. It is the grace of our Lord

it. So receive it. Receive the freedom and power to live a whole new life, governed by altogether unlikely values. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

A God who loves

Then, the love of God ("God" here referring to the Father). The God who gives Himself to us in His Son can only be a God who loves us. God does not *need* us, as if He lacked anything. That is one reason we find it so hard to conceive of God's love, for we are in fact needy creatures, needing nothing more than we need love. But we get confused about it, since we use the word in so many ways. We "love" chocolate cake and kittens and particular movie stars and nice weather. Sometimes we do

get hints from human experience, though. Consider how a parent loves a child—perhaps an entirely ordinary child, for all anyone else can see, not especially beautiful or smart or agile—but still his own child, whom he would protect with his very life. He does not cherish the child to get something back or for any list of reasons he might try to enumerate, but simply because he loves her. Consider how a lover perceives her beloved—an altogether ordinary fellow, not well featured or rich or well born—but who seems to her the most handsome, splendid man in all the world. She sees him that way because she loves him, and good luck if you want to insert mere rationality into the discussion! And here is the thing: the child and the beloved, because they are loved, may be transformed into something far more than they ever were before. They may start to become what the one who loves them sees in them. That, of course, is the deeper meaning of the fairy tales where frogs that are kissed turn into princes. No one would say that the frog *deserved* to be kissed. That is the whole point. The love of God, like the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, comes precisely to the undeserving. If you feel deeply that you do not deserve God's love, you are quite right that you do not, but quite wrong if you think this love is not for you. Receive it. The love of God be with you.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit

And then the communion, or fellowship, of the Holy Spirit—that sharing in the very life of God that unites wildly different people into one body, not just in spite of their differences but in a way that makes precisely those differences an asset to the whole. Frederick Buechner said, “The best moments any of us have as human beings are those moments when for a little while it is possible to escape the squirrel-cage of being *me* into the landscape of being

us.”⁵ That, it seems to me, is a wonderful picture of the church (or any group!) functioning as it should. I attended a meeting recently in which discussion about a particular issue was dominated by the “what’s in it for me” refrain. This discussion was cramped and narrow and selfish and altogether unedifying. Yet apart from the life of the Spirit in us, we seem to get trapped in that squirrel cage, unable in our own strength to break the walls of self-interest. Even love and grace can be understood in a merely individualized way if it were not for the Holy Spirit who insists on binding us together. Still, whatever we say in theory, it can remain hard to recognize the desirability of operating any differently. An old Hasidic story tells of a fiddler who “played so sweetly that all who heard him began to dance, and whoever came near enough to hear, joined in the dance. Then a deaf man, who knew nothing of music, happened along, and to him all he saw seemed the action of madmen—senseless and in bad taste.”⁶ When we are trapped in ourselves, unable to hear, someone else—the Holy Spirit—must release us. Receive the possibility of new life in fellowship with one another. The communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Receive God's blessing, and as a result of His very own life within you, you will, individually and together, be a blessing. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” ☑

- 1 This verse in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is found in 13. Other versions of the Bible have it as verse 14.
- 2 Grammatical ambiguities in the text lead to many different translations of this passage. I quote here the NRSV.
- 3 Communication Arts Company, ed., *Worries, Wonders, Whys: From the Heart of a Child* (Columbus, MS: Rusty McIver for Palmer Home for Children, 1993), first entry. Spelling and punctuation as in the original.
- 4 Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, reprint 1980 [1859]), 313.
- 5 Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 21.
- 6 Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, trans. Olga Marx (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), 53.

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Blasphemy *against the sanctuary* in the context of the great controversy

In the book of Revelation, the concept of the sanctuary is made evident by the occurrence of two words in the book, *naos* and *skēnē*.¹ The two nouns occur together in 15:5 in the phrase, *ho naos tēs skēnēs tou martyriou en tō ouranō*, “the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven.” This verse indicates that *naos* and *skēnē* are in heaven, and that the two terms are closely connected. There are four possible connections indicated by the genitive construction: (1) the *naos* is part of the *skēnē*;² (2) the *naos* contains the *skēnē*;³ (3) the *naos* is made of the *skēnē*;⁴ (4) the *naos* is the *skēnē*.⁵ Whatever the connection, the *naos* cannot be disassociated from the *skēnē*.

In the central section of Revelation (11:19–15:4),⁶ both nouns appear: *naos* (11:19; 14:17); *skēnē* (13:6). *Naos* of Revelation 11:19 is clearly a heavenly one: “the temple [*naos*] of God that is in the heaven.” Because this text introduces the vision of Revelation 12–14, the vision is to be seen in the context of the heavenly sanctuary. The *skēnē*, “sanctuary, tabernacle,” in 13:6 is an object of the blasphemy by the sea beast, who appears in the same verse: “Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle [*skēnē*], and

those who dwell in heaven” (NKJV). Thus the word indicates a heavenly *skēnē*.

What is happening here? How are we to understand the meaning of this text, especially in the context of the great controversy?

The worship context

For starters, the blasphemy of the sea beast against the *skēnē* is a crucial and central component of the great controversy theme as it appears in the book of Revelation.⁷ The main issue of the conflict is related to worship. This truth is indicated by the ten occurrences of the word *proskyneō*, “to worship, bow down, kneel,” in this section of the book (13:3, 4 [2x], 8, 12, 15; 14:7, 9, 11; 15:4). The dragon puts forth all his efforts to become the object of worship. These efforts include war against Michael (12:7–9); war against the “male child” (vv. 4, 5); war against the woman (vv. 6, 13–16); and war against the remnant of the seed of the woman (v. 17). All this brings an expected result: with the exception of the woman and the remnant of her seed (vv. 6, 14–17), the entire world “worshiped the dragon” (13:4), “and they worshiped the beast” (vv. 3, 4), and “all who dwell on the earth will worship him [the sea beast]” (v. 8, NKJV).

Although Satan may seem to dominate the conflict on the earth, in Revelation 14:6–15:4 the scene changes. The three angels proclaim the eternal gospel (14:6–13), with worship as the theme, counterattacking the false worship campaign of the dragon and its agents.⁸ In the messages of the three angels, the word *proskyneō*, “to worship,” occurs often (vv. 7, 9, 11). While in 13:7, 8, people worship the beast, in 14:6, 7 all people are called to worship the God of heaven.⁹

The meaning of blasphemy

During his effort to be worshiped, the sea beast “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name [and] His tabernacle” (Rev. 13:6, NKJV). The objects of the verb *blasphēmēō*, “to blaspheme, slander,” include God Himself (16:11, 21), His name (13:6; 16:9), and His tabernacle (13:6). The grammatical construction of the text suggests that the target of the blasphemy is God.¹⁰ This verb could simply mean speaking evil against God, but in 13:6 the implication goes beyond this meaning. John at least knows the connotation of the word *blasphemy* as described in John 10:33—“ ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You,

being a man, make Yourself [out to be] God” (NKJV). This is a statement of the Jewish leaders, in whose mind-set blasphemy puts oneself in the place of God and claims the prerogative that belongs only to God (see also Matt. 26:65; 14:64)—exactly what the dragon and the sea beast seek to do for themselves.

Because the ultimate target of the blasphemy is God, everything directly associated with God is affected. This includes the power of God, the kingdom of God, the authority of God’s Anointed One (Rev. 12:10); the commandments of God (12:17; 14:12); the name of God; and the tabernacle of God—His temple (13:6).¹¹ All are targets of Satan’s attack. In 12:7–9, the cause and main issue of the war in heaven is not mentioned, but these verses simply say that Satan and his angels are hurled down to the earth. However, verse 10 clarifies that the power, kingdom, and authority of God are confirmed because (*hoti*) Satan has been cast down. This implies that the power and kingdom of God and the authority of Christ were actually the issues of the war in heaven—the target of Satan’s attack.

Blasphemy and Christ’s throne

Satan continues his battle on earth against God. To the sea beast he gives three things: his power, throne, and great authority (Rev. 13:2). This is reminiscent of how God gave Jesus the authority to sit on His *throne* (Rev. 3:21; Rev. 4, 5), and all the creatures praise Him saying: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive *power*, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (5:12, KJV; emphasis added). Jesus Himself says, “‘All *authority* has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ ” (Matt. 28:18, NKJV; emphasis added). The dragon elevates the status of the sea beast to be as Christ, who receives the throne, power, and authority from God the Father. This contrasting parallel confirms the fact that the sea beast plays the role of the antichrist; he is, indeed, the antichrist himself. Behind

this antichrist is the dragon that gave him power. This is blasphemy against God; in fact, on the head of the sea beast is “a blasphemous name” (Rev. 13:1, NKJV).

Jesus sat down with His Father in His throne (3:21) because He “had been slain” (5:6), and His followers will also overcome “by the blood of the Lamb” (12:11). They overcome because they are forgiven through the merit of the blood of the Lamb (7:14). By His death, Christ forgives sinners; and because He has overcome and sat on the throne, He is worthy to be worshiped (5:12). The blasphemy of the dragon and the sea beast is their claim that they have the throne, as if they also have the power and authority to forgive sins.

We see here one way how the issue of the sanctuary fits in with this attack on God’s authority. In the Old Testament, the sanctuary is the place where the priests minister for the forgiveness of sins; in the New Testament, Jesus is described as the High Priest who enters into the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood for the work of redemption (Heb. 9:12–22). Hence, the blasphemy against God’s sanctuary is seen by this attempt to usurp what belongs only to God.

Blasphemy and the Decalogue

The introduction to the vision of Revelation 12–14 is the only sanctuary scene in Revelation that mentions “the ark of the covenant” (11:19). Thus, the ark of the covenant has something to do with the controversy as revealed in Revelation 12–14. Of the three objects kept in the Old Testament ark of the covenant—the manna, Aaron’s rod, and the tables of stone (Heb. 9:4; cf. Deut. 10:3–5; 1 Kings 8:9), only one is referred to in Revelation 12–14: the Ten Commandments (12:17; cf. 14:12). This could mean that the Decalogue is the central issue of the controversy.¹² This is also indicated by the fact that the dragon makes war against the remnant people, those who “keep the commandments of God” (12:17). Therefore, the blasphemy against the tabernacle and

The proclamation of the three angels’ messages is the response of Heaven to this blasphemy against the heavenly sanctuary.

the name of God is also blasphemy against God’s Decalogue.

The activities of the dragon, sea beast, and earth beast confirm their transgression against God’s commandments. This includes, for example, claiming worship for themselves (13:4; cf. Exod. 20:3); making a statue or image to be worshiped (13:14, 15; cf. Exod. 20:4–6); and blaspheming God’s name (13:6; cf. Exod. 20:7). These are the first three commandments. The sea beast blasphemes the tabernacle of God here, too, because in it there is the ark of the covenant, and in the ark of the covenant is the Decalogue, which reveals the character of God Himself.

Blasphemy and the Sabbath

The attack of the sea beast against the Decalogue is also described in Daniel 7 in the works of the little horn.¹³ Daniel 7:25 highlights the activities of the little horn: (1) to speak out against the Most High, (2) to wear down the saints of the Most High, and (3) to change times and law. Because the target of the war is the Most High, this

certainly refers to the “times and law” of the Most High as well.

Daniel 7:25 refers here to the effort of the little horn (the sea beast of Revelation 13) to change times related to God’s law. Gerald A. Klingbeil points out that the fourth commandment is “the only commandment which is time oriented, i.e., ‘not every day, but only every seventh day.’”¹⁴ This being the case, the blasphemy against the heavenly sanctuary also has something to do with the attack on God’s commandments, particularly the Sabbath commandment.

This commandment contains three fundamental aspects of God. First, it presents God as the only object of worship. Second, it gives reason why God deserves worship—He is the Creator. Third, it highlights the universal territory of God’s reign: the heaven, sea, and earth.¹⁵


Heaven’s response to the blasphemy

The proclamation of the three angels’ messages is the response of Heaven to this blasphemy against the heavenly sanctuary. The messages begin with “the everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6). The world is reminded of the good news of Jesus Christ as the way of salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). No matter how great may be the throne, power, and authority given by the dragon to the sea beast, “ ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’ ” (Rev. 7:10, NKJV), and “ ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever’ ” (5:13, NIV). No human being or human’s entity may replace the power and authority that belong only to God.

Heaven also responds to the blasphemy by reaffirming the validity of God’s commandments: “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God” (14:12, NASB). The call of God is proclaimed (v. 7), and the worship of the sea beast and its image is condemned (vv. 9–11). Particularly, the call to the observance

of Sabbath is emphasized, indicated in the message of the first angel: “ ‘Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters’ ” (v. 7, NASB). Scholars have indicated the reference of this message to the Sabbath commandment.¹⁶

Conclusion

No question, the book of Revelation pulls back the curtain and gives readers a glimpse into the great controversy as it plays out in heaven and earth. In Revelation we can see that the dragon and its agents may put all their efforts into blaspheming God and His heavenly sanctuary. However, in the end, this attack will be defeated, the sanctuary will be cleansed (see Dan. 8:14), and the great controversy will be ended. 

central piece of the chiasmic structure of Revelation. Revelation 11:19 mentions the opening of the temple of God to introduce the vision that begins in 12:1. Revelation 15:1–4 presents the song of victory of those who conquer the beast (chap. 13) and is a celebration after the great harvest of the earth (14:14–20).

- 7 Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 105.
- 8 See also William G. Johnsson, “The Saint’s End-Time Victory Over the Forces of Evil,” in *Symposium on Revelation*, bk. 2, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 35. He says, “The first angel issues a call to worship God the Creator in the setting of the judgment hour; the second declares and exposes the system of false worship; the third issues a dire warning against the worship of the beast and its image.”
- 9 See also Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1993), 240, 41. He argues, “The inhabitants of the earth are viewed in 14:6 not merely as worshippers of the beast, but as hearers of the eternal Gospel which calls them to repent and to worship God. They are the same people as those to whom 13:8 refers, but viewed positively rather than negatively.”
- 10 The phrase *kai ênoïxen to stoma autou eis blasphemias pros ton Theon*, “And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God,” suggests that God is the single target of the blasphemies. The subsequent phrase presents the infinitive *blasphemēsai* followed by a series of accusative nouns including God’s name, His tabernacle, and those dwelling in heaven. This phrase elaborates how God is blasphemed.
- 11 William Shea, “The Controversy Over the Commandments in the Central Chiasm of Revelation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11/1–2 (2000): 217, says, “Rev 11:19 is the fourth sanctuary scene and introduces the prophecy of Rev 12:1–15:4, the main prophecy in the center of the book.”
- 12 For further study on the evidences that the Decalogue is the central issue of conflict in Revelation 12–14, see Shea, “The Controversy Over the Commandments,” 217–231.
- 13 Richard Lehmann sees the connection between the activities of the little horn of Daniel 7 with the sea beast of Revelation 13: “As in Daniel, the action of the little horn ends in the war that it wages against the saints (Dan 7:21–22, 25), so in Revelation it is the same for the sea beast that utters blasphemies and makes war against the saints (Rev 13:1–10).” Richard Lehmann, “Relationships Between Daniel and Revelation,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, bk. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 140, 141.
- 14 Gerald A. Klingbeil, “The Sabbath Law in the Decalogue(s): Creation and Liberation as a Paradigm for Community,” *Review Biblique* 117, no. 4 (2010): 508.
- 15 According to Johannes Kovar, Revelation 10:6 also contains a Sabbath element in the phrase “who created heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them” (cf. Exod. 20:11). It seems that heaven, earth, and sea are the three main natural elements representing the whole universe. Johannes Kovar, “The Remnants and God’s Commandments: Revelation 12:17,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 120.
- 16 Mathilde Frey, “Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, 127–137, sums up scholars’ discussion on Sabbath in the book of Revelation. In page 137 she highlights the statement of one of the scholars, Jon K. Paulien, who states that “there is no direct allusion to the Old Testament in the book of Revelation that is more certain than the allusion to the fourth commandment in Revelation 14:7” (Jon Paulien, “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS* 9 [1998]: 183).

- 1 The word *naos*, “temple,” in its various forms occurs 16 times (3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 2, 19 [2x]; 14:17; 15:5, 6, 8 [2x]; 16:1, 17; 21:22 [2x]). The word *skēnē*, “sanctuary, tabernacle,” appears 3 times (13:6; 15:5; 21:3).
- 2 The genitive could be considered as partitive genitive that suggests that *naos* is part of *skēnē*. See explanation about this function in Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 48. This is also called “Partitive Ablative” by James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 28.
- 3 Wallace calls it “Genitive of Content” (*The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 50). It means *skēnē* is in the *naos*. This, in a sense, is the opposite of partitive genitive.
- 4 This is called “Genitive of Material” (Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 50). In this sense, *skēnē* is the substance of *naos*; without *skēnē*, there is no *naos*.
- 5 The genitive of apposition makes this possible. *Ibid.*, 52.
- 6 Scholars have differences to determine the beginning and the end of the passage. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 37, for example, suggests that Revelation 11:19–13:18 is the center of the structure. This structure suggests that the two witnesses unit (11:1–13) is parallel with the end-time gospel (14:1–20). Another suggests 10:1–15:4 as the center of the structure (Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, “Composition and Structure of the Apocalypse,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 [1977]: 364, as alluded in Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 36). Some scholars, however, present the chiasmic structure of Revelation without a central unit. Some representatives of this are Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Chicago, IL: Covenant Press, 1955), 27, quoted in Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, With Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor, 1979), 76, 77; Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 51; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family*, vol. 2 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1985), 60, 61. I would agree with those who see Revelation 11:19–15:4 as the

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Disciple making:

Jesus' five invitations

Jesus spent three and a half years making disciples and then instructed them to do the same: “‘Go and make disciples’” (Matt. 28:19).¹ This is our commission: *to make disciples who make disciples for His kingdom movement*. Jesus followed a profoundly simple process, employing five invitations, each one followed by experiences and instructions. His invitations provide a frame for our task.

Come and see

John the Baptist was still at Bethany beyond the Jordan when Jesus approached. Just six weeks had gone by since Jesus had been baptized, and now He was back. Although He was exhausted² by His 40-day fast and Satan’s assault in the Judean desert, John recognized Him: “‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!’” He knew Jesus was this One, for he had seen “‘the Spirit come down and remain’” on Him. John declared that he had come baptizing to reveal Him, and went on to say, “‘I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God’” (John 1:29–34).

The next day John drew the attention of two of his disciples to Jesus, repeating, “‘Look, the Lamb of God!’” They followed Jesus, asking, “‘Where are you staying?’” (vv. 36–38). Then Jesus extended His first recorded invitation, “‘Come and see’”—a simple invite

that turned their lives upside down. Consistent with the culture of the time, this was an invitation to spend time, enjoy food and drink, stay, and talk. They went and spent the rest of the day with Him (v. 39).

What was the focus of their conversation into that evening? John’s introduction of Jesus as “‘the Lamb of God’” and “‘the Son of God’” had piqued the interest of His guests. At the end of their visit, Andrew went straight to his brother Simon Peter, telling him, “‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ)” (v. 41). The next day Philip told Nathanael, “‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote’” (v. 45).

While at that stage Jesus was unable to draw attention to His miracles or teachings, for He had not yet done either, He could point to the *preparation phase* of His life, “about thirty years” (Luke 3:23), comparing this with what the prophets had said about the promised Messiah. He could speak of His childhood, young adult years, baptism, and temptations; and for His guests this was entirely convincing. Those *preparation years* for the movement He had come to cultivate became the first phase of their preparation as disciples.

Those making disciples for Jesus Christ today can draw attention to the whole life and ministry of Jesus, not just the *preparation years*. But making

disciples still starts with the invitation “Come and see.” There is little gained in rushing over this experiential phase, for most of those with whom we engage have no background story of Jesus: who He is, where He lived, when He lived, the circumstances of His time, what He did, what He said, where He is, what He is doing now, or how He could possibly relate to them today. Before people can follow or obey Jesus, they will need to meet Him, spend time with Him, experience who He is. Further invitations do not make sense unless people have responded to the invitation to “come and see.”

Follow Me

Having spent the evening with Jesus, Andrew immediately went and brought his brother to Jesus (John 1:41, 42). The next day Jesus found Philip and said, “Follow Me.” This was His second invitation: first He had invited the two, “Come and see!” Now “Follow Me.”

Philip immediately went to Nathanael to tell him they had found the one foretold by the prophets, and He was “‘Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45). Nathanael was skeptical. He came from the rival village over the hill to the north (John 21:2). He knew Nazareth, and the family of Joseph who lived there. There was nothing extraordinary about either. Philip repeated the words of Jesus, “‘Come and see’” (John 1:46)—the first

invitation towards discipleship. That day Jesus left for Cana, with His first disciples obeying His second invitation, “Follow Me!”

The next 18 months—spent in Judea, with visits into Galilee—could be called the *foundation phase* of Jesus’ ministry. During this time He invited people to see and *follow*. Jesus took His first disciples to Cana to celebrate a family wedding, generously blessing the festivities with His first miracle. Then it was to Jerusalem for Passover, confronting corruption at the very heart of Israel’s kingdom and initiating the deconstruction of the temple system. Hardly the role of one who might deliver Israel from Roman bondage! Nor did His night interview with the Pharisee Nicodemus appear to establish these credentials. But by the time He headed back to see John the Baptist, this time at Aenon near Salim on the borders of Samaria (John 3:22, 23), Jesus was “gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although . . . it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples” (John 4:1, 2).

The foundations of a movement were being laid: His disciples did what disciples do, joining Jesus in making and baptizing disciples. This multiplying band of disciples was to learn that God’s kingdom encompasses cultural and national enemies: the woman of Samaria with her townspeople were welcome (vv. 1–42), along with Capernaum’s royal official (possibly a courtier of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea) and his household (vv. 43–54).

Following Jesus can prove confronting. Accepted paradigms are challenged. Preconceived ideas and prejudices are accosted. Again, Jesus did not rush this phase of His movement building, for time does not matter as much as do relationships. Answering His call, “Follow Me!” draws the believer into this relational *foundation phase* of discipleship. During this phase Jesus gave His disciples a range of experiences, unexpected and inspiring opportunities—some embarrassing, even audacious!—that deepened their relationship with Him and their understanding of His kingdom. In making

disciples who make disciples, we must do the same.

Come fishing

Some of Jesus’ first disciples were fishermen. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, came from the Galilean village of Bethsaida. James and John were also involved in the fishing industry. While following Jesus, those like Peter, who had a wife and no doubt a family, cared for their families and maintained their businesses. There were hired men to supervise, bills to pay, and households to manage. Following Jesus is never done in a vacuum but on the paths of life.

Following His cousin’s imprisonment and His rejection in Jerusalem (John 5), Jesus relocated to Galilee (Matt. 4:12, 13). This was a time of major transition. A new season had come, a new phase of movement building. He made Capernaum in “Galilee of the Gentiles” the base for this nine-month *expanded outreach phase* of discipleship. In this region on the edge of Israel, with a diverse population, the royal

Into the night

Someone once said that youth is wasted on the young. When I was young, we youth had a lot on our minds: foreign wars that might involve us, an active round of self-indulgence, and for some, worries about grades and the future.

Then we began to hear of a revival that was sweeping through Adventist college campuses—other colleges, not mine. It remained an abstraction till one Sabbath that I remember well to this day.

A group of the revived youth came to town that weekend and gave the Sabbath sermon at my college church. They were a little awkward and not too rehearsed. But the urgency of their experience had an almost mesmerizing effect on all of

us, particularly those of a similar age. They spoke of regrets at living life for the moment, for the thrill alone, and for themselves only. They spoke of regret at harm they had inflicted on themselves, parents, and peers. They cried a lot. They smiled a lot, and they praised God that He had begun to change them and gave them joy.

That service lasted all morning and till midafternoon. By then the stage area was a milling crowd of mostly young people confessing their sins, asking their fellows for forgiveness, and exulting that God was present to take away the sins.

I left in a sort of awe, but slightly troubled that it may have only been a flashback guilt trip for most and gone by the next day for another experience.

I was wrong. For months, groups of young people met to pray—many praying all night for guidance and praising the Lord.

But it was an overheard conversation between two young men in a bank foyer down the street from the college that I most remember. It was many months after the revival Sabbath, so I was surprised to overhear the word *Jesus* in conversation. “I have decided,” said the one to the other, “to model my life after the life of Jesus.”

—LINCOLN E. STEED SERVES AS EDITOR OF
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Revival
and
REFORMATION

official lived whose son was healed by Jesus (John 4:43–54). And there, key disciples were based as fishermen.

As Jesus took up the Baptist's call and "began to preach, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near'" (Matt. 4:17), Jesus moved to draw His disciples closer: to join Him as apprentices in the school of disciple making, teach them the process, and share in the multiplication of His movement. His third invitation, *come fishing* (vv. 18–22), was a call to *participate* in fishing expeditions and on-the-job training.

systems (vv. 33–39) and people are treated as of more value than regulations (Luke 6:1–11).

For Jesus, making disciples was life-style based, sometimes disappointingly ordinary, and common sense: *come and see, follow Me, come fishing!* Engaged with everyday concerns, His growing circle of disciples needed repeated encouragement to *come fishing* with Him (Matt. 4:18–22; cf. Luke 5:1–11). Understanding them and the nature of the movement He was cultivating, Jesus followed a path that was experi-

understanding the sacrificial nature of God and His kingdom. He explained in the Sermon on the Mount: " 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you' " (Luke 6:27) or, as Matthew recorded, " 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven*' " (Matt. 5:44, 45; emphasis added). In these words Jesus was inviting them to experience and reflect God's heart of *self-denial*.

While His fame was growing, Jesus' responses, ministry, and teachings were increasingly counterintuitive. He deliberately chose self-denial, status reversal, risk, and sacrifice—a road leading to crucifixion—inviting His disciples to travel with Him. They joined Him on His Galilean excursions into Gentile territories and later journeys through Judea and Perea. They listened to His kingdom parables, questioning religious systems while emphasizing organic processes (Matt. 13:1–52). Jews and Gentiles alike experienced His compassion for the sick and demon-possessed (Matt. 14:13–21; 15:21–39).

They traveled with Him into pagan regions—Phoenicia, the Decapolis, and Caesarea Philippi, where temples stood at the entrance to a grotto, the "gates of Hades." There Jesus used the word *ekklesia* (church or gathering) on the first of only two occasions recorded in the Gospels. There He asked His disciples, " 'Who do you say I am?' " Simon Peter answered, " 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' " (Matt. 16:15, 16). Jesus responded by declaring that upon this truth He would build His "church"—or His gathering of disciples—to whom He would give " 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven' " (vv. 17–19).

Matthew, the only Gospel writer to record Jesus' use of the word *church* (or gathering), observes, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (v. 21).

Three times before He again spoke of His gathered disciples as *church* (in

Following in the footsteps of Jesus means choosing a path of sacrifice and self-denial.

These fishing trips began small but expanded in size and frequency until fishing for people became a lifestyle of reaching out and calling people. There were two phases: training to fish and equipping to multiply. The fishing took place in a synagogue (Luke 4:31–37), in a home (vv. 38–44), or at the seaside where Jesus repeated His invitation to participate (Luke 5:1–11). He gathered lepers, paralytics, tax collectors (vv. 12–32), and "large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan" (Matt. 4:25).

Multiplication took place when disciples made disciples, illustrated by Levi Matthew responding to the invite to *follow* by organizing a feast for Jesus at his home, and inviting "a large crowd of tax collectors" so that he could introduce them to Jesus (Luke 5:27–32). Multiplication happens when "new wine" is offered in "new wineskins"—when Jesus' relational kingdom is unimpeded by religious

essential, relational, and participatory, not simply the dissemination of information in workshops and study guides sometimes described as discipleship training today.

Deny self

The fourth invitation defines the radical upside-down nature of the movement Jesus was developing. This phase of ministry expansion and movement development began with Him choosing 12 from His now "large crowd" of disciples. These He called *apostles* (Luke 6:12–16). They were not a select, exclusive religious order or hierarchy; nor were they called to employed clergy ministry. Rather, they were the first of a multiplying movement of men and women gifted by the Spirit and sent "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:11, 12).

Through a deepening experience, relationship, and participation in His life, Jesus was drawing His disciples into

Matt. 18:15–20), Jesus drew attention to His coming crucifixion (Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22, 23) and the life of sacrifice to which His disciples are called: “ ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’ ” (Matt. 16:24). He set the example of self-denial, serving as a slave in the upper room, making the ultimate sacrifice on Calvary’s cross.

This fourth invitation is radically countercultural in every culture. Following in the footsteps of Jesus means choosing a path of sacrifice and self-denial. For the apostle Paul, following Jesus meant opting for the rigors of tent making rather than sponsorship, the privation of *laos* (a people), *idiotes* (unlearned person) rather than the political status and prestige of the *kleros* (inheritance), and suffering and imprisonment as a slave for Christ rather than personal comfort and popular acclaim. His life of sacrifice and self-denial reflected the life of Jesus. He could say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1), and our “attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Both disciple makers and those they lead to discipleship walk the path of self-denial.

Receive the Spirit

Jesus’ fifth invitation, *receive the Spirit* (John 20:22), drew His disciples into replicating His mission. After washing His disciples’ feet, Jesus talked about betrayal, His impending death and departure, and their ministry. “ ‘I tell you the truth,’ ” He said, “ ‘anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing’ ” (John 14:12). He had been making disciples—inviting, modeling, equipping—since His anointing by the Spirit at His baptism. He now demonstrated surprising confidence in those disciples. Through the presence of the same Spirit, they were to multiply His work in a movement of disciple making.

On the Sunday evening of His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples to declare, “ ‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ” (John 20:21, 22). At the commencement of His ministry, Jesus was anointed to make disciples for the kingdom. Baptized by the Holy Spirit, we are to do the same. Doing “even greater things” for the greater number of those filled with the Spirit would multiply into a great movement (see John 14:12). Forty days later, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus declared,

“ ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8). On Pentecost, the Spirit came upon the waiting disciples as He had come upon Jesus at the Jordan three and a half years before, and the multiplication of disciple making for the kingdom of God had begun.

Conclusion: Our pattern

Jesus’ five invitations are entirely compatible with our ministry environments, including postmodern (see figure 1). (1) *Come and see* is an invitation to experience who Jesus is. (2) *Follow Me* invites us into a relationship with Him. (3) *Come fishing* draws us into participation. (4) *Deny self* challenges us to countercultural, sacrificial living. (5) *Receive the Spirit* is an invitation to receive empowerment for the authentic replication of His ministry. These invitations provide a frame for our tasks of *making disciples who multiply disciples* and of cultivating a movement! 🏡

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New International Version.
2 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), 131.

Figure 1: Jesus’ five invitations

1 SEE	2 FOLLOW	3 FISH	4 DENY SELF	5 RECEIVE the SPIRIT
(preparation) 30 years	(Judean ministry) 1 ½ years	(Galilean ministry)	Sermon on the Mount	John 20:21, 22 Acts 1:4–8
Experiential	Relational	Participatory	Sacrificial	Authentic presence

Jesus’ baptism

Capernaum move

12 apostles chosen

Death & resurrection
Pentecost

Make Disciples (Multiplication)
Matt. 28:18–20

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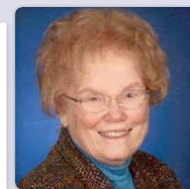
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The most important thing you need to know about parenting

The evening meal was the most important meal in Maria and Jorge's home; the only time they ate together as a family. Nothing was allowed to interfere with this cherished family time. Their kids, ages 4 to 13, eagerly anticipated this special time with their father. They knew he was very busy ministering to the people in the church and community, but at this special time of the day, Dad was theirs—no interruptions allowed.

Sometimes Dad even got home a little early, and they could play a quick game of catch or look at an interesting new Web site together before eating. Occasionally, a serious emergency came up and Dad did not make it home for the evening meal, but the kids understood. Their father, the minister, must respond to emergencies or be out of town sometimes on important business.

After mealtime, the family worshiped God before going about their evening activities. Jorge generally visited church families, studied the Bible with interested families, or attended committee meetings; Maria helped the kids with their homework assignments and tucked the younger ones into bed. Jorge tried to get home by nine-thirty, in time to have a quiet conversation

with the older kids and then with Maria after all of the kids were in bed.

Things were different in Elena and Eduardo's home. Elena served the evening meal, but she and the kids generally ate alone. Usually Eduardo felt he was too busy to come home to eat, so most evenings he grabbed fast food and continued working until long after the children had gone to sleep. When he did make it home for the evening meal, he answered the cell phone repeatedly and often ate hurriedly, running out the door for every "emergency." Rarely was there time to play ball with the kids or hear about their day; generally Elena had worship with the kids without him. Eduardo's kids barely knew him.

Elena yearned for support with the child rearing, but Eduardo thought he was too busy to be involved. Most of the time she had to deal with school assignments, misbehavior, family worship, and an endless list of daily decisions alone. Sometimes Eduardo would get involved if there was a serious discipline problem. He was very strict, not inclined to listen to the child's point of view, and favored severe punishment.

Fast-forward 15 years. What are the children from these two pastoral families doing? Do they love the Lord,

and are they serving Him? Or have they wandered away from God and want nothing to do with church?

Parenting style

Though we have no guarantee how our children, when adults, will relate to the Lord, the answers to the above questions should not be that hard to determine. The best predictor of the parenting outcome of these two families is their parenting behavior, generally called "parenting style." Hundreds of studies, beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the twenty-first century, have explored the relationship between different parenting behaviors and different outcomes in the lives of children.¹

Parenting style—the big picture of child rearing—is described by two main aspects of the parent-child relationship: support and control. Support is our responsiveness to the child's needs; control deals with how much power we wield over them. The way parents support and control their children affects the atmosphere of the home and the emotional tone of family interaction, which influences everything else that happens in the family.

Supportive parenting

Supportive parents are child centered and responsive to their children's

needs. They show much love, kindness, and tenderness to their children. They hug and cuddle, say “I love you” frequently, and express love in a way that children can understand. They also notice when their child has had a difficult day and needs an extra dose of love. These parents eat, play, work, and pray with their children every day.

In a supportive home, parents and children talk with each other a lot. Both know how the other feels, and the children understand the reasons for the family’s standards. Parents respect and listen to their child’s viewpoint and show patience with childish mistakes and inconsistencies. They are tactful, sympathetic, understanding, and merciful with their children. An atmosphere of respect for each family member pervades the home. Independence and individuality are encouraged. Supportive parents are messengers of God’s love to all their children.

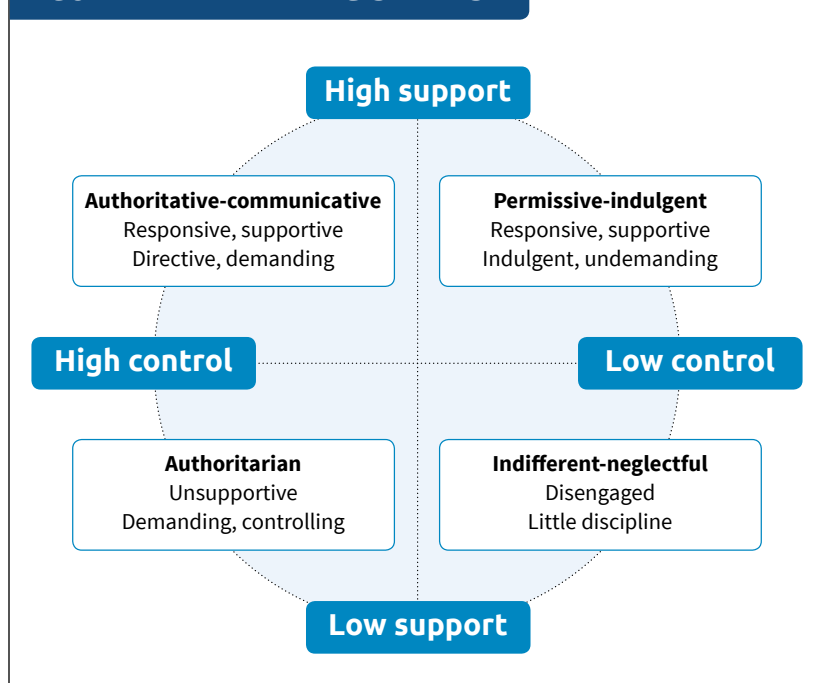
Nonsupportive parenting

Nonsupportive parents are generally centered on their own needs. Adult-centered parents give little consideration to the needs of the children; daily survival or parental power is what matters. The kids are rarely allowed to express an opinion because the parents are afraid of losing control or do not make time to listen. The parents do not show much sympathy and can be unpleasant, cold, and harsh with their children. They are not very interested or involved in their kids’ lives. Put-downs are common. Independence and individuality are taboo.

Emotional climate of the home

The support dimension of the parenting style used and how the parents get along with each other create the emotional climate of the home. This can be either a general atmosphere of warmth and caring or one of coldness and hostility. The emotional climate colors everything that happens in the home, giving family life an aura of joy and happiness or repression and sadness. It plays a significant role in

FIGURE 1 – PARENTING STYLES²



whether children will accept or reject the religion and values of their parents.

Control

Control describes who is in charge of the family—the parents or the children. Control can vary from demanding, directive, high-in-control parenting to undemanding, low-in-control, permissive parenting (see figure 1). Control also plays a role in acceptance or rejection of parental religion and values.

High-control parenting

Demanding parents establish limits for their children’s behavior, explain the limits clearly, and answer any questions the kids may have. Then they consistently enforce these limits. They teach their kids to reason and make age-appropriate decisions, and the kids get plenty of practice making decisions. While these parents are firm and teach clear values to their family, they are reasonable and do not expect their kids to be perfect, even if they are the pastor’s kids.

Self-control cuts both ways; parents must also be self-controlled. If they cannot calmly deal with the situation,

they simply say, “We will deal with this later.” Then they exit to pray for calmness and wisdom.

Who is in charge of the family? The parents.

Low-control parenting

Indulgent, undemanding parents think kids do not need limits and guidance. “The kids need to express themselves” is a favorite line. Generally, any behavior is OK, and the limits that they do try to establish are inconsistently enforced. The household has few rules and generally does not function on a schedule. Bedtimes and meal-times are whenever the children want them. The parents make only weak or unpredictable attempts to teach the kids self-control and decision-making or planning skills.

Who is in charge of the family? The kids.

Parenting styles

The intersecting support and control dimensions identify four quadrants that define the four parenting styles: authoritative-communicative, authoritarian, permissive-indulgent,

and indifferent-neglectful. Each style is described by the *quality* and *amount* of support and control in the parent-child relationship. We will begin with the best.

Authoritative-communicative parenting

Authoritative-communicative parents are seeking to follow God's model for parenting: unconditional love and grace, clear guidelines for moral values and behavior, and disciplinary action when needed.³

Authoritative-communicative parents have warm relationships with their children and are considerate of and attentive to their needs. Parents are

children have choices and independence, and individuality is encouraged.

Authoritative-communicative parents are interested in and involved in their children's lives. They know their kids' whereabouts, activities, and associates when away from home, and they keep up with what is happening at school. Parents and children converse daily. The children know that their parents will listen, consider, and value their opinions.

Children of authoritative-communicative parents tend to be more securely bonded to their parents. Their moral development is strong and firm. They are confident, friendly, happy, and cooperative, and they enjoy

noncommunicative. They tend to rely too much on force and physical punishment. Communication between parents and children is usually one way—parents to children, in stern commands that the children are expected to obey without questioning. Parents rarely explain the reasons for their commands or allow their children to make decisions for themselves. They do not teach decision-making skills. There is very little loving support of the children.

Unfortunately, the authoritarian style is quite common among conservative religious families who justify their own actions by hiding behind a misconception of God's authority. It is easy for the pastoral family to unintentionally

*The support dimension of the parenting style used
and how the parents get along with each other
create the emotional climate of the home.*

firm, patient, loving, and reasonable. They teach their children to reason and make decisions. The rights of both parents and children are respected.

For example, John, the pastor of a multichurch district, explained clearly to his children why the members of all his churches want to see his family at their church. It is important for the kids to sometimes go with him to each church. Most of the time they can stay at "their church" because the kids need to feel they belong and want to be with their friends.

The pastoral parents set clear standards and expect mature behavior. The limits are consistently enforced, so children know the boundaries. When punishment is needed, it is reasonable and well understood by the child. The

personal self-respect and self-esteem. Usually they do well academically and are achievement-oriented and successful. Responsible and independent, they often show leadership skills.

Usually they choose to embrace the values and the religion of the pastoral family they grew up in. A strong, reasonable conscience enables them generally to have the strength to resist peer pressure and do what they know is right. Their God is the perfect blend of mercy and justice, a God who continually loves them and draws them closer to Himself.

Authoritarian parenting

Authoritarian parents are adult-centered, power-assertive, demanding, controlling, unresponsive, and

fall into this way of parenting. After all, is not the minister the "voice of God" for the parishioners? It is quicker to command than to explain, teach, and dialog with the kids. In a too-busy life, it is easy to become self-centered and take out one's frustrations on the family.

The children of authoritarian parents usually react in one of two ways: either they rebel against the values of their parents and get out of the home as soon as possible, or they become weak-willed, indecisive individuals incapable of dealing with difficult moral decisions. They do not have a strong conscience and are apt to embrace the negative values around them, or they may try to be "perfect," hoping to earn God's favor through their good works. God, in their mind, focuses on justice;

mercy and grace are not part of their understanding of God.

Permissive parenting

Permissive-indulgent parents have warm relationships with their children and are very interested in their activities, but they are overly responsive to their children's needs. They are their children's friends not their parents, so the kids develop their own values without parental guidance. Because the kids usually can do what they want, when they want, they become impulsive and egocentric.

They have never learned self-control, so moral and conscience development are weak. They have difficulty facing problems and working through tough situations; they prefer to do their "own thing." Their God is an accepting, loving God who looks the other way when humans misbehave. Sin is not a major problem in the universe.

Indifferent-neglectful parenting

Indifferent-neglectful parents make few attempts to guide their children and, basically, ignore them. They are not committed to child rearing and have little interest in their child's needs. They may be physically abusive to their children and may not provide for their physical needs. Other parents in this category may provide well for the physical needs of their children but are too busy or disinterested to be involved emotionally with their children or guide them.

Busy families with two professional careers can easily fall into this style. Often their children are given excessive freedom and unsupervised time too soon (premature autonomy). Recent research shows parents who remain connected with their children through middle school, especially the father-youth connection, reduce substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, delinquency, and other problem behaviors during the adolescence of their children.⁴

The children of indifferent-neglectful parents are more likely to accept the negative values of society because their moral and spiritual development is weak. They tend to be delinquent and often have deep emotional problems related to the neglect they have experienced. Their God is a distant ruler of the universe who does not really care what happens on earth.

Successful parenting

What is the secret to successful parenting? *Demonstrate the maximum amount of love with the right balance of independence and control.* Authoritative-communicative parenting is the model most resembling God's parenting style and is the most successful, whatever the culture. The positive effects of authoritative, directive parenting are strong for every cultural group studied. Responsiveness or emotional closeness has cultural specific components. Children understand how their culture expresses closeness between parent and child. "Regardless of how specific cultural groups define and express responsiveness, the fundamental premise of the authoritative model that children need to feel loved, respected, and firmly guided while they are maturing into adults seems to be true for all children."⁵

The parenting style used by their parents tends to influence people throughout life. Remembering their parents as authoritative is associated with a positive adjustment even with middle-aged and older adults.⁶

Parenting is learned behavior; we tend to parent like we were parented. The good news is that, with God's help, parenting style can be changed.⁷ Many families are living proof that change is possible. The results of authoritative-communicative parenting are so superior to any other style that it is worth the effort. The future of your children and your grandchildren is at stake. ❏

1 From antiquity, God has described Himself as a Parent. God's

"parenting style," as described in Scripture, could be the model for the best of the parenting styles described in contemporary research. Long before parenting research began, Ellen White also described parenting styles, using different names, but identifying the same parenting behaviors and their results in children's character and spirituality. For starters, see Genesis 18:19; Psalm 103; Proverbs 3:11, 12; 13:1; 13:24; 15:1, 5; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17; Isaiah 49:13; 54:13; 66:12, 13; Luke 15:11–32; Ephesians 6:1–4; Colossians 3:20, 21; and Hebrews 12:5–11; Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 439, para. 4; Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), chaps. 41–49; Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), 155, para. 2; Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 283, 287–297; Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 384, para. 2, pp. 391, 392; Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), 130–134; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), chap. 56; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), chap. 74; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, 131–135, 531, 532; and Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 362, 363.

- 2 Adapted from Eleanor E. Maccoby and John A. Martin, "Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent-Child Interaction," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 4th ed., vol. 4, eds. E. Mavis Hetherington, Paul H. Mussen, and Ellen M. Markham (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1983); Ross D. Parke and Raymond Buriel, "Socialization in the Family: Ethnic and Ecological Perspectives," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 5th ed., vol. 3, eds. William Damon, Richard M. Lerner, and Nancy Eisenberg (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1998); and Ross D. Parke and Raymond Buriel, "Socialization in the Family: Ethnic and Ecological Perspectives," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 6th ed., vol. 3, eds. William Damon, Richard M. Lerner, and Nancy Eisenberg (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 429–504; and Robert E. Larzelere, Amanda Sheffield Morris, and Amanda W. Harrist, eds., *Authoritative Parenting: Synthesizing Nurture and Discipline for Optimal Child Development* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2013).
- 3 In the chapter by Holly Catherton Allen et al., "How Parents Nurture the Spiritual Development of Their Children: Insights From Recent Qualitative Research," in *Understanding Children's Spirituality: Theology, Research, and Practice*, ed. Kevin E. Lawson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 204, Sungwon Kim concludes from her meta-analysis of research on parenting styles from the last several decades that "the authoritative parenting style, one that combines a supportive, responsive approach with a directive, even demanding approach, is associated more frequently with healthy spiritual development than are other parenting styles. This style exhibits both loving support and strong boundaries and discipline for children."
- 4 G. M. Fosco, E. A. Stormshack, T. J. Dishion, and C. E. Winter, "Family Relationships and Parental Monitoring During Middle School as Predictors of Early Adolescent Problem Behavior," *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 41, 202–213.
- 5 Larzelere, Morris, and Harrist, *Authoritative Parenting*. Chapter 5 reviews the research on parenting styles in different cultures.
- 6 Carol A. Sigelman and Elizabeth A. Rider, *Life-Span Human Development*, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 491.
- 7 If you would like to know more about helping families change parenting style, feel free to contact me at donna@andrews.edu. Please use the word *Ministry* for the topic line.

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Sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifice, *and* covenant in the book of Hebrews

Any discussion of the heavenly sanctuary must include a discussion of Hebrews, the New Testament book that deals most extensively with the concept. Hebrews discusses the perfect high priestly ministry of Jesus in heaven and contrasts it with the inadequate, temporary ministry of human priests. In the process, it highlights the efficacy of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice in contrast to the inefficacy of the sacrifices of animals. Closely related is the theme of covenant. This study will discuss these concepts that form the axis on which the whole epistle operates.

The outline of Hebrews is fairly clearly delineated: (a) 1:1–4, Christ’s superiority to the prophets; (b) 1:5–2:18, Christ’s superiority to the angels; (c) 3:1–4:13, Christ’s superiority to Moses; (d) 4:14–7:28, Christ’s superiority to Aaron; 8:1–10:18, the superiority of the new covenant; (e) 10:19–12:29, exhortation; and (f) 13:1–25, conclusion.

The problem

Daniel Wallace observes that Hebrews was written in part “to warn Jewish Christians against apostasy to Judaism.”¹ Such an assertion confuses more than clarifies. Early Christians were often Jews or God fearers (Acts

13:16; 16:14; 17:17), who continued to worship in synagogues (Acts 13:5; 18:4, 26; 19:8; James 2:2; Rev. 2:9); used the Old Testament as their Scripture (1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 2:8); kept the Sabbath (Matt. 24:20; Luke 23:56; Acts 13:42–44), the Ten Commandments (1 Cor. 7:19; James 2:10, 11), and other Jewish laws (1 Cor. 9:9); met regularly in the temple (Acts 2:46); and were considered a sect of Judaism (Acts 24:5).²

The real danger was not apostasy to Judaism, but a return to the temple and its sacrificial ritual, as will be seen below. Such a danger is not difficult to understand. The sanctuary/temple had been a focus of Israel’s faith for 1,500 years, ever since Moses first built the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Yet, for the writer of Hebrews, any attraction to the earthly temple services now appeared inappropriate. The death and resurrection of Jesus had opened new realities. Shadow had met reality, and somehow, what had seemed so foundational had now become defunct.

The sanctuary context

The inadequacy of the earthly sanctuary and the superiority of Christ are most fully developed in the central part of the epistle. However, even in the introduction and exhortation/conclusion, sanctuary language abounds.³

For example, the author begins by declaring the superiority of the Son over the prophets. One thing that entitles Him to sit at the right hand of the Father is the fact that He has made “purification [*katharismos*] for sins” (1:3).⁴ The Greek term appears primarily in ceremonial purification contexts (e.g. Exod. 29:36; 30:10; Lev. 14:32; 15:13; 1 Chron. 23:28; Neh. 12:45; Job 7:21; Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 5:14; John 2:6).⁵

In his discussion of the superiority of Christ over the angels, the author again uses sanctuary language. In 1:14 he uses the adjective “ministering” (*leitourgika*) and in 1:7 the noun “ministers” (*leitourgos*) with reference to angels. Both words have strong sanctuary overtones (adjective: Exod. 31:10; 39:1; Num. 4:12, 26; 7:5; 2 Chron. 24:14; noun: Ezra 7:24; Neh. 10:39; Isa. 61:6; Heb. 8:2).⁶

The exhortation and conclusion sections also abound with sanctuary language. The exhortation section begins, “We have the confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus” (10:19). The “holy places” refer to the heavenly sanctuary and the blood of Jesus to His sacrificial offering on the cross.

Other sanctuary references include the “veil” (10:20, KJV); the “house of God” (10:21); maybe the heavenly city to which the patriarchs awaited (11:10,

16); and the contrast between the presence of God on Mount Sinai and Mount Zion on the one hand and the heavenly Jerusalem (12:18–24) on the other, which is the seat of the heavenly throne of God surrounded by innumerable angels (12:22), where the saints have been perfected (12:23) and which is the location for the ministration of a new and higher covenant based on the blood of Jesus (12:24).

Thus, sanctuary language not only forms the core argument of Hebrews but also appears in the introduction and exhortations/conclusion, enveloping the main argument into a sanctuary context. The problem Hebrews addresses is not a lapse into Judaism; rather, how Jewish Christians—once attached to the Jerusalem temple and its services—should instead look toward the heavenly sanctuary and the priestly ministration of Jesus.

Earthly sanctuary, heavenly sanctuary

The contrast between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary is developed mostly in Hebrews 8 and 9. The heavenly sanctuary was not built with human hands (9:11, *ou cheiropoiētou*), but by the Lord, and therefore is “not of this creation” (9:11). By contrast, the earthly was built by man (8:2; 9:24). As such, the heavenly is “greater and more perfect” (9:11).

The heavenly is called *tēs skēnēs tēs alēthinēs*, “the true tent” (8:2). When an articular noun is qualified by another articular genitive noun, as is the case here, the use is monadic, meaning only one true sanctuary exists, the one in heaven. This implies that the earthly was not true in the fullest sense of the word but rather a shadow and transient reality.

This thought is further emphasized by the use of five words to describe the earthly: *hypodeigma* (8:5), *skia* (8:5), *kosmikon* (9:1), *parabolē* (9:9), and *antitypa* (9:24).

Hypodeigma signifies a copy, type, or example. Most English translations prefer “copy” (e.g., ESV, NAB, NASB, NIV), in the sense that the sanctuary

was built according to the model shown to Moses (8:5). “Example” also serves well, indicating specific purpose and limited duration.

Skia means “shadow” and carries two meanings. The earthly was a shadow in that it replicated the heavenly original (8:5, “‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain’ ”); it was also a shadow in the sense that it was transient.

Kosmikon derives from the noun “kosmos,” “world,” and signifies that which is of this world and is therefore imperfect and limited as opposed to the perfect heavenly sanctuary.

Parabolē is a “parable,” “symbol” (e.g., NASB, NJB), “figure” (KJV), or “illustration” (NIV). *Parabolē* is a compound word and literally means “to place something next to something else”⁷ for example, as an illustration, or to explain something. In that sense, the heavenly sanctuary is the original and the earthly a parallel illustration to demonstrate on earth how God operates in heaven.

Antitypa means “a copy, counterpart, or figure pointing to something.”⁸

All five words highlight the earthly sanctuary’s shadowy and transient nature. The fact that the author uses five different words to indicate the transient nature of the earthly sanctuary seems to indicate that he wants to leave no doubt in the mind of the reader on this score.

Not only the sanctuary but its apartments and furnishings were modeled on the heavenly. Hebrews 8:5 says that Moses was told to “make everything according to the pattern shown” (cf. Exod. 25:8–27:21).

Given their transient nature, the whole earthly sanctuary and its services were to be of significance only “until the time of reformation [*diorthōseōs*]” (9:10). The word *diorthōseōs* signifies the establishment of a new order.⁹ The earthly sanctuary and its services were to be of significance until the new order, inaugurated by the sacrifice of Jesus, and the anointing of the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Dan. 9:24, where the anointing

of a “most holy place,” the sanctuary in heaven, is depicted towards the close of the 70 weeks).

Earthly priesthood, heavenly priesthood

The sanctuary requires a priestly ministry. In the earthly sanctuary priests served from the tribe of Levi (Heb. 5:4; 7:5, 9, 11). As humans, they were “beset with weakness” (5:2), since they were also sinful and required to offer sacrifices for their own sins just like they did for the rest of the people (5:3). Earthly priests ministered regularly in the Holy Place (9:6), and the high priest could minister in the Most Holy only once a year, and this not without blood (9:7), lest he die (Lev. 16:2).

By contrast, in the heavenly sanctuary the High Priest is Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:17). He is merciful and faithful, can provide true atonement, and attained this exalted position through His incarnation (2:17), during which He suffered and was tempted like other humans but remained without sin (4:15; 7:26). While human priests were sons of Aaron, Jesus is the Son of God (5:5). And while human high priests barely dared to go into the shadowy, typological, throne of God in the earthly sanctuary once a year, Jesus sat next to the real, heavenly throne of God (8:1).

Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17). This reference underscores two important facts. First, the Melchizedek priesthood was distinct from and higher than the Levitical priesthood in that Levi, through his ancestor, Abraham, paid tithe to Melchizedek, acknowledging his superiority (Heb. 7:9, 10). Second, the author declares that Melchizedek was “without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (7:3). This does not indicate that he had none, but rather that he is a symbol of the heavenly Son who had none.¹⁰

Earthly sacrifices and the sacrifice of Jesus

In the earthly sanctuary, sacrifices of animals (5:1) were offered on a daily

basis (5:3). Indeed, sacrifices were the main task to which priests were appointed (8:3). But like the sanctuary itself, the sacrifices were shadowy (10:1). The blood of animals cannot cleanse sin (10:4, 11), and the fact that they were constantly repeated indicated that the problem of sin had not found full resolution (10:1–3).

Compare such a situation with the sacrifice of Jesus, which is superior, was offered once, and is sufficient to deal with the problem of sin (9:12). “By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (10:14). In light of Jesus’ sacrifice, God promises not to remember human sin any longer (10:17). This assurance of forgiveness offers believers the privilege of approaching the throne of God boldly (4:16).

Old covenant, new covenant

We now come to a dimension of the sanctuary often not understood clearly—the concept of covenant. Most Christians understand the old and new covenants as a reference to law and grace: the old covenant was one of law whereby, to be saved, a person had to keep the Ten Commandments and other laws; the new covenant is one of grace, where salvation is offered freely through faith in the saving sacrifice of Jesus.

Such an outlook is unscriptural. The law did indeed play an important part in Old Testament times, just as the law plays now. The Ten Commandments defined for all time the moral framework of God’s governance, and other laws in the Pentateuch were a practical application of the principles of the Ten, in the historical context of Israel in the wilderness. But the Bible nowhere teaches that the means of salvation differs during Old Testament times and in the New. Salvation always comes by grace and never by works. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament pointed to the real sacrifice of Jesus. The lifestyle expected of the redeemed people of God, in both Old and New Testament times, is governed by the same moral law.

The sacrifice of Jesus does not make us immune to the need for obedience. We should hear the words of Hebrews about law and the new covenant: “I [God] will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts” (8:10). This was indeed the promise God had given to His people of old: “‘I [God] will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts’” (Jer. 31:33).

The new covenant does not envisage an abrogation, or even a change, of law but only a change of location from the tablets of stone to the heart.

The covenant was inaugurated with blood (9:18). The book of the covenant and the people of the covenant (9:19), as well as the sanctuary and its utensils (9:21), were sprinkled with it; purification was attained with blood (9:22).

Hebrews 8:7 declares the old covenant faulty or blameworthy (8:7), not because there was anything wrong with it, but because the people were sinful (8:8, 9). And since the blood of the animals on which the old covenant was established cannot cleanse sin (10:4, 11), the old covenant could not really

*Salvation always comes by grace
and never by works.*

Paul further informs this new covenant transition by making the parallel “tablets of stone,” “tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3), indicating that what is written in the heart under the new covenant is the Ten Commandments.

The notion of the Decalogue written on the heart is indeed found in the Old Testament (Pss. 37:31; 40:8; Isa. 51:7), and the writer of Hebrews anticipates that all who believe in Jesus can experience it in fullness.

The only change from the old to the new covenant is in terms of the handling of sin. Covenant is about relationships, with marriage being the most common type of covenant in the Bible and used as a symbol of God’s relationship to His people.

As such, a covenant between God and humanity is all about bringing a holy God into a close relationship with sinful humanity. But since God’s holiness and human sin cannot coexist (Isa. 59:2; Heb. 12:29), the covenant had to find a way to deal with human sinfulness. This was done in the old covenant using the blood of animals.

bring a holy God and sinful humanity into full covenant union. The problem was with human sin, not the covenant. But the old covenant could not resolve this problem adequately and therefore was inadequate, and therefore, shadowy and transient, just like its sanctuary and priesthood.

By contrast, as noted above, the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus does cleanse sin effectively, and as such can establish a union between God and humanity on a firm foundation. Because of this, the author makes the following, truly amazing statement: “Therefore he [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant . . . since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (9:15; emphasis added).

What the author says is that the sins committed during the Old Testament (OT) were forgiven not through animal sacrifices, but through the sacrifice of Jesus to which the OT sacrifices pointed. The forgiveness Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest of the saints of the OT received was only given in

anticipation of the sacrifice of Jesus. They, too, were forgiven under the blood of the new covenant. This is why part of the promise of the new covenant was that God would not remember the sins of His people any longer (8:12; 10:17). The new covenant has replaced the ineffective blood of animals with the purifying blood of Jesus.

The difference between the old and new covenants is not grace versus law but the grace of the shadows versus the grace of the heavenly realities. John 1:16 makes a similar point: “from his [Jesus’] fullness we have all received, grace upon grace,” literally, “grace in exchange for grace” (*charin anti charitos*). The shadowy grace of the animal sacrifices under the old covenant was set aside for the heavenly based sacrifice-of-Jesus reality of grace under the new covenant.

About to vanish away

The old covenant encapsulated all that was shadowy and insufficient: earthly sanctuary, earthly sinful priesthood, earthly inadequate sacrifices. These could not provide forgiveness and salvation. To those tempted to cling to these, Hebrews offers a twofold warning.

First, to cling to the shadows means to reject the reality. After highlighting the superiority of the high priesthood of Jesus over that of the Levitical in 5:1–14, Hebrews warns that those who “fall away” (6:6), presumably back to the shadows of old covenant ritual,¹¹ “are crucifying once again the Son of God” (6:6) since in practice they are declaring His sacrifice insufficient.

In 13:10, the author declares that believers “have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” The altar that believers have refers to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Of that altar, “those who serve in the tent,” meaning those who still cling to the earthly sanctuary ritual, “have no right to eat.” In other words, faith in the sacrifice of Jesus is incompatible with any participation in the rituals of the sanctuary of the old covenant.

Second, Hebrews declares that the old covenant with its earthly sanctuary/

temple, priesthood, and sacrifice, was “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (8:13). This is no doubt a prophecy about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the physical end to sacrifices and priestly ministry. The word translated “vanish away,” *aphanizomai*, suggests not just destruction as happened to the Jerusalem temple but something that disappears possibly never to appear again (e.g. Deut. 7:2; 1 Kings 13:34; Mic. 1:7).


Synopsis and synthesis

This study has developed the following points. First, Hebrews centers in the ministry of the sanctuary and was addressed to believers who were in danger of falling back to the temple and its services. Hebrews needs to be understood from a distinctly ritual perspective.

Second, Hebrews has a very clear conception of a heavenly sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifice, which are juxtaposed with the earthly sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifices. While the latter were shadowy, imperfect, unable to deal with the problem of human sin,

and only for a time, the former do so thoroughly and completely and are the only basis of salvation.

Third, for Hebrews, the contrast between the old and new covenants is not a contrast between grace and law but a contrast between grace and grace; the grace offered through the earthly sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifice of the old, and the grace that flows from the heavenly sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifice. The Ten Commandments remain constant throughout the transition and, if anything, receive a higher position of authority in the new, by being placed in the heart of believers.

Lastly, participation in the earthly sanctuary ritual is incompatible with faith in Jesus. The earthly sanctuary ritual disappeared at the cross. 

- 1 Daniel B. Wallace, “Hebrews: Introduction, Argument, and Outline,” Bible.org, accessed December 17, 2013, <https://bible.org/seriespage/hebrews-introduction-argument-and-outline>.
- 2 Gerd Theissen says, “I want to claim that in all that He said, Jesus remained within the framework of Judaism.” *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (London: SCM Press, 2003).
- 3 For a discussion of some of the ritual language, see the collection of papers in Gabriella Gerdini, ed., *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 13–130.

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4 All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.
 5 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), s.v. "katharismos."
 6 George Wesley Buchanan observes that "In biblical terms, however, the word is almost always employed in relationship to the service of the priests in the temple." *To the Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 36 (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 19.

7 Cf. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "parabolē"; Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2000) (BDAG), s.v. "parabolē."
 8 BDAG, s.v. "antitypa."
 9 Cf. *Ibid.*, s.v. "diorthōseōs."
 10 See Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament

Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 47.
 11 The word translated "fall away" is not the usual *apostasia*/ *apostasía* (from whence "apostasy") but the rare (only here) *parapiptō*. While the former means to "fall away," *parapiptō*—a compound word made of the verb *piptō*, "to fall" and the preposition *para*, "next to"—may have the slightly different nuance that the falling is not just a falling off a path or way but a falling into something parallel or cognate.

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DATELINE

► Adventist Church files amicus brief for workplace religious freedom case at top United States court

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—The Seventh-day Adventist Church filed an amicus brief August 27, 2014, urging the top court of the United States (U.S.) to accept the case of a Muslim girl who was denied a job because her *hijab*—a head covering—violated a company's policy.

The Adventist Church's "friend-of-the-court" brief is joined by seven other faith groups for the case *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission vs. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.*

The church's move follows a decision last year by a federal appeals court that ruled against the girl and created additional statutes that violate protections of the U.S. Civil Rights Act. That ruling, by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, said the religious observance or practice in question must be mandatory, not just encouraged by the employee's religious beliefs.

The brief claims last year's ruling also mandates undue responsibility on applicants to raise concerns over religious observance. Applicants might not always know the employer's requirements. Church legal counselors said the ruling then allows an employer's

ignorance to eliminate protections for religious-observant applicants, which violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

"If this decision were to stand, employers would be able to avoid their obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for employees of faith," said **Todd McFarland**, an associate general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters. "It could mean that everyone from Sikhs who are wearing a turban to Seventh-day Adventists and Jews who need Sabbath off from work could be denied a reasonable accommodation."

The case stems from a 2008 incident in which **Samantha Elauf** wore a *hijab* when applying for a sales position at an Abercrombie & Fitch store in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After a manager confirmed with a supervisor that Elauf's headwear violated store policy, she was deemed ineligible for hire without discussion of religious accommodation.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which filed a lawsuit on Elauf's behalf, said the move defied Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The title obligates employers to take steps to "reasonably accommodate" a prospective employee's "religious observance or practice."

While a federal judge sided with the EEOC in 2011, the Tenth Circuit's ruling last year upended that decision, claiming Elauf never told Abercrombie she needed a religious accommodation, even though she was wearing a *hijab* in the interview. And that, Adventist legal counselors say, places

undue responsibility on the applicant to determine


whether her religious beliefs or practices conflict with company policy.

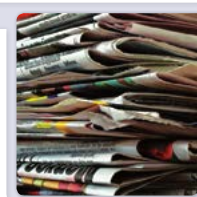
The amicus brief points out that "Frequently, an applicant will be unaware of a work-religion conflict simply because of her inferior knowledge of the employer's work requirements." Also, a hiring process can be technologically structured so that an employee cannot raise the issue of potential conflict, such as online applications asking applicants which days of the week they are available to work.

Religious clothing and the observance of Sabbath and other holy days are the most common areas of conflict in the workplace, McFarland said. *Hijabs*, turbans, yarmulkes, and other head coverings frequently conflict with a company's "look" policy, while Sabbath observance can clash with scheduling.

The Adventist Church is joined on the brief by the National Association of Evangelicals, Union for Reform Judaism, Christian Legal Society, the Sikh Coalition, American Jewish Committee, KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, and American Islamic Congress.

Abercrombie & Fitch changed its policy on headwear approximately four years ago. The Ohio-based company has settled similar lawsuits in California, the Associated Press reported last year.

[Ansel Oliver, with additional reporting by Elizabeth Lechleitner.] 



Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain

by Richard Rice, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.

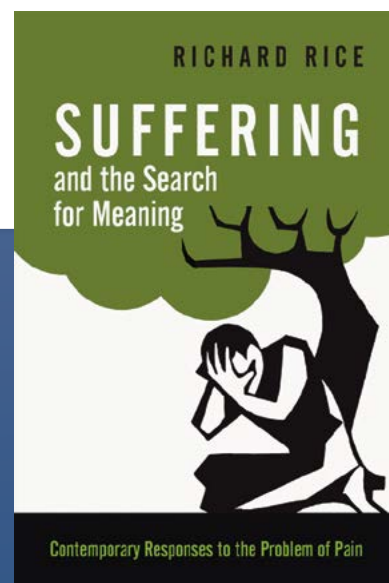
In *Suffering and the Search for Meaning*, Richard Rice, professor of religion at Loma Linda University, revisits the old question of theodicy—the attempt to justify or defend God in the face of evil. His book is driven by one central question: How can ideas about suffering help those who face the experience of suffering? Far from writing a cliché-filled book, Rice interweaves his sound, scholarly training with a deep pastoral concern while he tries to make sense of suffering.

Although suffering denotes a practical problem, it also has a theoretical side. While it is true that “sufferers don’t need explanations” in the face of tragedy, they need theoretical explanations over time. Theoretical models are a map to help the suffering understand their situation in relation to general human experiences and then find a way to cope. With this purpose in mind, Rice surveys seven widely embraced views: the perfect-plan theodicy, the free-will defense, the soul-making theodicy, the cosmic-conflict theodicy, the openness-of-God theodicy, the process theodicy, and the theodicies of protest.

He identifies, classifies, describes, and compares these different theodicies, showing their strengths and weaknesses. As an interesting detail, Rice distinguishes Ellen G. White as one of the main proposers of the so-called cosmic-conflict theodicy and quotes Gregory A. Boyd’s estimation that she “integrated a warfare perspective into the problem of evil and the doctrine

of God perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else in church history” (80).

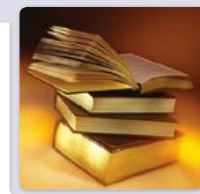
Beyond this philosophical background, the author presents examples of people who went through painful, life-changing experiences, showing how these theoretical models helped them overcome their personal tragedies. Rice’s call for a personal practical theodicy takes a very helpful biblical/pastoral approach, emphasizing the



Rice not only provides a masterful summary of the different views; he also impartially answers most of the many questions each of these views raises.

Cross as the hermeneutical key of human suffering. Finally, Rice lists some central convictions drawn from his personal perspective on suffering: (1) God is Lord and God is love; (2) suffering is real and suffering is wrong; (3) God is with us when we suffer; and (4) suffering never has the last word.

The main contribution of this book is the description and analysis of the different perspectives on suffering. Rice



not only provides a masterful summary of the different views; he also impartially answers most of the many questions each of these views raises. His definition of a practical theodicy, however, is controversial. Rice fosters an eclectic approach, suggesting that the subjective experience of the individual hermeneutically governs the decision about which theodicy is the best one. He even uses

the French term *bricolage* to describe the result of this “practical theodicy.” In his own words, a practical theodicy “pulls together strands from various theodicies, even those that seem incompatible on a logical level” (142). Notwithstanding, it is difficult to see, for instance, how a Calvinist/deterministic approach can coexist with a free-will approach in the same theological background.

Pastors, chaplains, care providers, counselors, theology professors, and anyone concerned about suffering should read this work since suffering is arguably one of the most pervasive human conditions.

—Reviewed by Marcos Blanco, editor-in-chief,
South American Spanish Publishing House, Oeste,
Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Every pastor, chaplain, and church elder will profit from reading Richard Rice’s *Suffering and the Search for Meaning*.

The author examines the positive and negative aspects of theodicies. The term *theodicy* was coined by the seventeenth-century German thinker Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. A theodicy “is an attempt to justify, or defend, God in the face of evil. . . . It is common for people today to use the word to refer to any thoughtful interpretation of suffering” (20).

Rice explains a number of theodicies. While this is important for caregivers to understand, the writer emphasizes that “what they (the sufferers) need is compassion. Instead of burdening them with theories, offer them a listening ear, a sympathetic touch, something in the way of concrete, practical assistance” (21).

In the preface Rice says, “Knowing what thoughtful people have to say about suffering can help us understand what suffering people are going through. So, in spite of our efforts and our hopes, suffering never makes perfect sense” (10).

One theodicy may make some sense to one and not to another. For

that reason a caring person must not think that one approach will fit all.

Sufferers often develop their own personal practical theodicy. This may consist of many fragments from a number of theodicies, including past experiences and religious beliefs. “The fragments that people pull together from here and there as they search for ways to respond to suffering may lack perfect logical coherence and yet provide personal strength and reassurance” (142).

Religious people may lay responsibility for suffering at the feet of God. Rice says, “We should never view God as the source of suffering. It not something God wants for any of us. When we suffer, there is nothing to be gained by trying to find specific divine purpose or reason for it. . . . We should never assume that our suffering is something that God intends for us” (98, 99).


The author believes everyone should form his or her own personal practical theodicy. He shares four perspectives that form the bedrock of his own:

1. God is Lord and God is love.
2. Suffering is real and suffering is wrong.
3. God is with us when we suffer.
4. Suffering never has the last word.

His fourth perspective is based on the Cross and Resurrection. Without the resurrection of Christ, the cross has no meaning, and the plan to restore and renew the world and God’s creatures is a sad failure. Jesus’ suffering on our behalf, followed by His resurrection, looks beyond suffering to the day when all our tears will be wiped away. Until that day, God’s promise to never leave or forsake us, even in suffering, means that suffering will not have the last word either now or beyond.

As a pastor, I am challenged by Rice’s following words: “It is not enough to consider only *their* suffering and *my* suffering. A practical theodicy must take into account *your* suffering as well” (155).*

Suffering will hopefully cause the careful reader to critique his or her funeral methods. Entering into the suffering of the grieving avoids any effort at proselytizing and allows a person to engage a unique personal practical theodicy.

—Reviewed by Larry Yeagley, a retired pastor,
chaplain, and author residing in Gentry, Arkansas,
United States. 

* Emphasis in original.

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



Raising the dead to life

Those of us who have dedicated our lives to health education are thrilled with the emphasis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on comprehensive health ministry. This broad term seeks to bring a wide array of services focused on some aspect of health (physical, mental, social, and spiritual) under one umbrella, with a particular emphasis on bridging a sometimes rather wide gap between the ministry of physicians and ministers.

The health message can do far more than modern science has discovered.

For more than 150 years now, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has emphasized the importance of making healthy choices within the context of stewardship, i.e., the best management of the good gifts given to us by God. These choices extend to every aspect of our being. Scientific support for much of this message has been growing for many decades.

As I have the opportunity to visit many parts of the world, I am thrilled with the revival of interest and excitement in emphasizing the health ministry. Yet, I fear that the meaning and scope of this

precious message is not fully understood by many. The lack of a clear understanding can lead to us into troubled waters.

There are five realities that I would like to suggest are pertinent to understanding what we often refer to as the health message:

1. The health message is not just a set of scientifically established health practices that prolong and preserve life.
2. The health message is profoundly more important than its component parts of balanced nutrition, exercise, rest, temperance, and so forth.
3. The health message can do far more than modern science has discovered.
4. The health message, when rightly understood and linked with Scripture and the God of Scripture, can restore the dead to life.
5. If we confine any part of the health message merely to its scientifically validated facts, we have tragically shortchanged our audience of the eternal health benefits that only come from Jesus.

With these realities understood, we may ask, What is the health mission of the church? If the health message is, in any degree, separated from the gospel message, it loses its power. If people attend a health program in one of our churches and understand and apply the principles, they may have gained a few years of life. However, if they did not learn that the power to change comes from Jesus, the church has failed in its mission to the community. James said faith without works is dead (James 2:20). Science without Jesus is dead as well.

Too often we focus our programs only on the physical facts, leaving Jesus out of the picture, or only making veiled references to God's power to change habits. We often do this because we do not want to offend those who do not believe as we do. Also, we avoid weaving Jesus and His power to change lives into the content of our programs.

We must offer people the help we know they need—whether or not they respond as we expect or wish—and we need to love and respect them regardless of the choices they make. We should be ever grateful that many of the health-promoting effects of this message have been confirmed by science, while recognizing that today's most skillful and perceptive scientist cannot bring the dead to life. Jesus is the only Life-Giver, and He is the only health-Giver.

Scripture recounts thrilling examples of Jesus raising the dead to life along with performing many miracles of healing. We are privileged to be called to the same work today. Health education—health ministry—seeks to create new tastes and new motives in those who are spiritually dead.

"To arouse those spiritually dead, to create new tastes, new motives, requires as great an outlay of power as to raise one from physical death. It is indeed giving life to the dead to convert the sinner from the error of his ways; but our Deliverer is able to do this; for He came to destroy the works of the enemy."^{*}

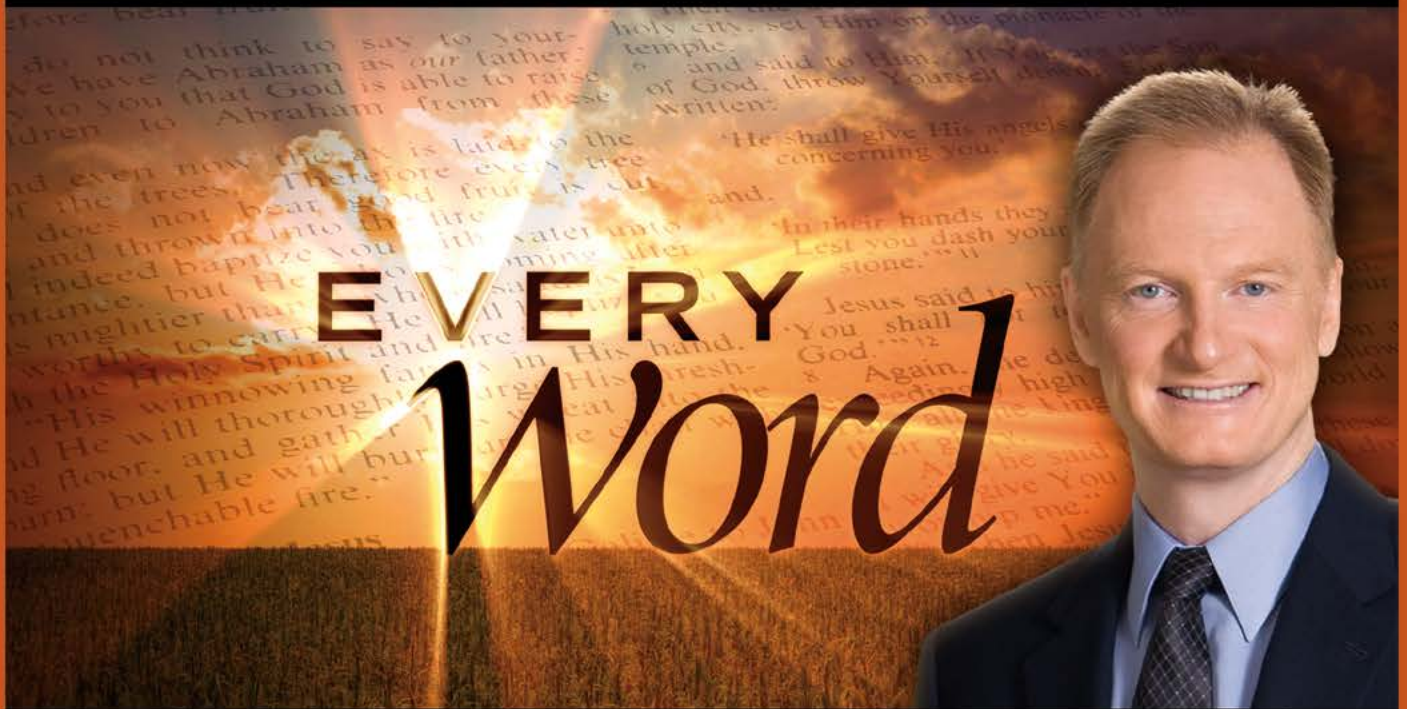
As we participate in the work of true, comprehensive health ministry, we have the privilege of witnessing miracles—the miracle of seeing the dead raised to life today! [V](#)

^{*} Ellen G. White, "Lessons From the Christ-Life," *Review and Herald*, March 12, 1901.

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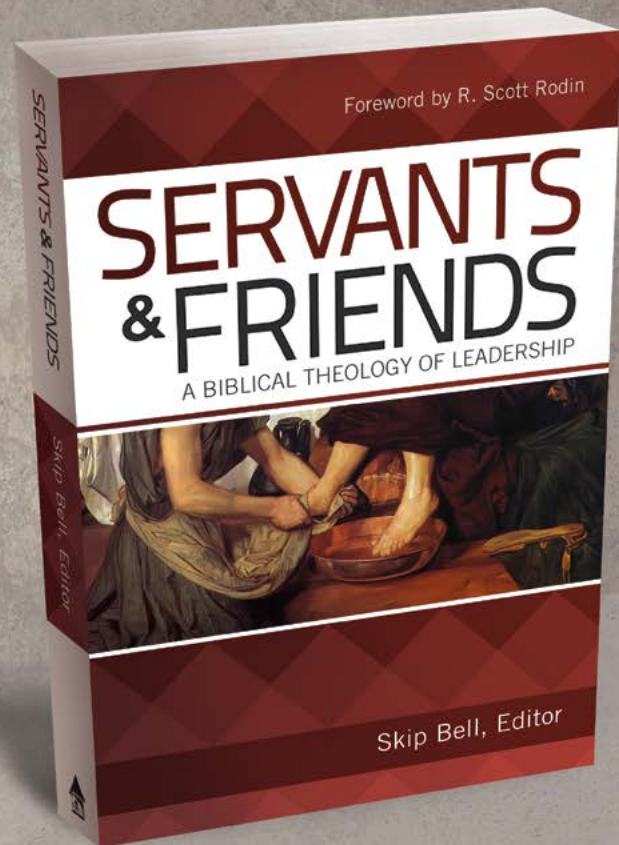
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 Chair, Department of Leadership
 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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