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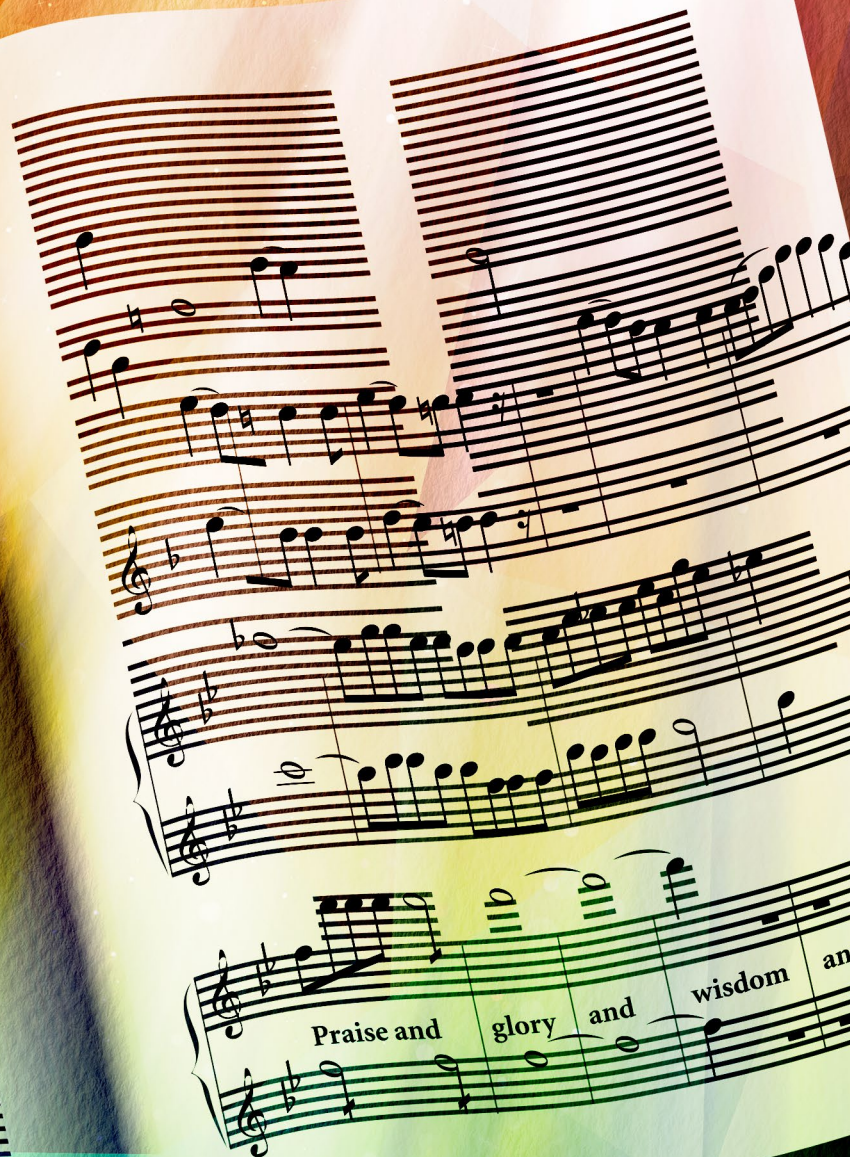
AUGUST 2016

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

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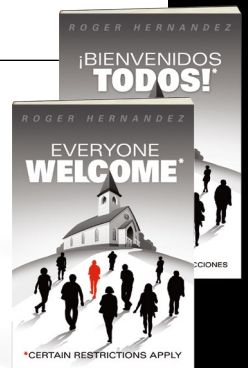
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MINISTRY®

International Journal for Pastors
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+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

COVER

316 Creative

LAYOUT

316 Creative

SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99; Canada and overseas US\$47.00. To order: send name, address, and payment to Ministry® Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A. www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe.

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Ministry® has been published monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.® Ministry is a peer-reviewed journal.

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PRINTER Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687

Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

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Vol. 88 Number 8 © 2016

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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“When we are in a faith relationship with Jesus, then we submit our desires to His will as expressed in the Bible.”

Personal happiness and self-fulfillment

David Penno's recent article (“Personal Happiness, Self-Fulfillment, and Homosexuality in the Church”—June 2016) makes a case for the importance of hedonism and personal happiness not being an end in themselves, and then links this with arguments in favor of gay marriage and/or homosexuality. Interestingly enough, even though there are probably those who would try to argue in favor of those on that basis, there are many others for whom that is not the basis of their argument, and as such, it perpetuates an unfortunate misunderstanding.

Those of whom I am aware in the church who argue for a more open stance toward those issues would point out personal happiness and self-fulfillment are indeed things that the Creator intends for us. While there are circumstance in which we may be prevented from fully realizing those as we might wish (illness, injury, or other circumstances), and while we can still live meaningful lives in spite of that (because our core commitment to something that transcends and is not dependent on those things), that does not make the desire or pursuit of a full and happy life necessarily a bad thing. Even in a world that limits our ability to fully realize it all the time, God's intent for us has always been to live full and rich lives.

As I listen to those for whom this conversation touches the closest to home, and who are committed to the same core Christian values we all embrace, the issue that I hear spoken of is not one of hedonism or an over focus on self-fulfillment; rather, it centers on what the Bible, in its context, actually addresses and doesn't address. Whatever conclusions one might personally draw about what Scripture does or does not say about the issue, while hedonism and a primary focus on self-fulfillment as an end in itself might indeed be a concern for anyone of any orientation, I am not sure that that is what really lies at the heart of this issue.

—Ken Curtis, email

Author response

I thank Ken Curtis for responding to my article (“Personal Happiness, Self-Fulfillment, and Homosexuality in the Church”—June 2016). Discussion and dialog on these important matters is very important for us as a church family.

I agree with the author that not everyone uses the hedonistic philosophical argument in relation to homosexuality. But I have personally heard a number of people use it, and so that was one reason I addressed it in the article. I also agree that all of us struggle against a hedonistic approach to life that many cultures espouse today, although our particular issues may be different.

The main issue is not that pleasure and self-fulfillment are wrong. They are not; God created us for these. But the issue is that we are tempted to cross a line that God has prohibited—a pathway to happiness and pleasure. Eve (and Adam) crossed that line with the forbidden fruit. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it” (Gen. 3:6, NIV). This fruit did indeed bring pleasure and fulfillment; but God had strictly forbidden them to eat it. Adam and Eve did gain knowledge, but at a heavy cost.

The Bible forbids same-sex sexual experience (it does not condemn the desire). It is true that the behavior brings pleasure and fulfillment to some people. But the issue is not pleasure and happiness; the issue is obedience to the Creator. Adam and Eve's punishment was not because they enjoyed the fruit; it was because they disobeyed a direct command of God. And the long-term consequences have been severe. Their sin was not in eating fruit, it was disobeying by eating the particular fruit that God had banned.

When the Adventist Church calls on members to abstain from same-sex intercourse, the goal is not to deny persons happiness and fulfillment; it is to warn them from violating a direct command of God, so that they might not suffer the negative consequences. Of course this applies to heterosexuals and sex outside of marriage just the same. Indeed, this principle applies to every aspect of our lives.

When we are in a faith relationship with Jesus, then we submit our desires to His will as expressed in the Bible. When I want it really badly, but He says “No,” then in faith I must believe that the cost of what I want will in the end not bring the happiness I desire.

—David Penno, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

Jerry Page is interim editor of *Ministry* and ministerial secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Remembering the “way markers”

For years, I’ve kept a simple prayer journal that is filled with a record of special experiences with God—concerns, prayer requests, His providences, answered prayers, and insights from inspired writings. At the beginning of each year, I go back through my journal, creating a summary list of how good God has been during the year. At times when I need special reassurance, I turn back to previous journals to remember what God has done and praise Him.

Looking back in one of my journals, October 19 stood out. In a hotel in Paso Robles, California, I was feeling down, confessing my sins, and trying by faith to accept God’s promises—when my cell phone rang. It was my sister, Carol. She was calling from Nebraska to share the story of a terrible car accident she had survived. Calling her survival a miracle of God, she went on to say how God was speaking to her through this experience and one of my sermons on CD I had sent. The sermon had arrived just when she needed it.

God seemed to be telling her it was time for a major recommitment to Him. Would I come and baptize her? So, in early December in a swimming pool on the Union College campus in Lincoln, Nebraska, my heart was filled with joy as I baptized my older sister who had helped raise me.

And there’s more. A close friend of Carol’s was frustrated with God’s church for years. Watching Carol’s spiritual journey had seemingly softened her friend’s heart and he had tentatively decided to reconnect with a local congregation.

What an encouragement to me at a time when I was frustrated with my own failures. When I felt I needed rebuke, God surprised me with encouragement instead. What a beautiful picture of God!

And when I’m becoming proud of my progress, He sends rebuke. He always gives me what I need. I want to live every day more like Jesus, so that the Father can use me continuously.

While traveling on God’s business, one morning Jesus stopped by a well in Samaria. Tired, hungry, thirsty, He waited for His disciples to return from the local grocery store. Then God sent a woman in need of her Savior. When His disciples returned, they encountered an energized Son of God. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34, NKJV).¹

In the motel that morning, I became energized with the encouragement God sent me through Carol. So often in Scripture, God tells us to “remember” how He has led us in the past (see Psalm 105). He’s such a precious Friend and all-knowing God!

I am so grateful that I have a record in His Word and my journals of who God is and how He works for His people throughout history and in my life. Those “way markers” help me face the challenges of today.

This month’s lead article by Jon Paulien reminds us that in Revelation and all of Scripture “To worship God is to recount His mighty acts. To recount His mighty acts is to rekindle the power of the original act in one’s present experience.”

In Mark 5, Jesus told the demoniac “Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how He has had compassion on you” (v. 19). When Jesus returned to that area, multitudes came out to see Him because of that man’s witness. Testimony to God’s acts makes all witness and preaching more powerful. And as Ellen White said regarding encouraging us to praise God for His wonderful

works, “No more effective means can be employed for winning souls to Christ.”²

The very best way in any culture to draw people to our Lord is when we live an authentic, Spirit-filled experience with Jesus. We should love others by sharing with them how He has answered our prayers, met our needs, and changed our lives in so many positive ways. Journaling our Lord’s acts can encourage us, strengthen our ministry, and have a major impact in helping others join the exciting adventure with Him! 📖

¹ All Scripture is quoted from the New King James Version of the Bible.

² Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1941), 300.

A message from Jerry Page

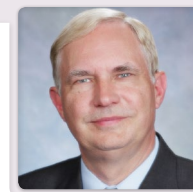
It is my privilege to serve as interim editor of *Ministry*, among my other responsibilities as General Conference ministerial secretary, while the search continues for the new editor.

We appreciate the years of excellent service by former editor, Derek J. Morris, who is now president of Hope Channel, and Willie E. Hucks II, former associate editor, who is now serving as associate professor in the Christian Ministries Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Our newly elected associate editor, Jeffrey Brown, a gifted pastor, teacher, and church administrator, is in the process of transitioning from his current ministry at Oakwood University.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

Jon Paulien, PhD, serves as dean of the School of Religion, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States.



The finale of the biblical symphony: A vision of worship

As a child, I remember struggling with the concept of worship. Part of the struggle involved the fact that my parents were members of a German-speaking church in Manhattan. The people were very nice to me, but everything that happened there was a bit foreign and strange. The strangeness was mitigated by the fact that worship in a German church was a fixed routine that never changed. There was always the doxology, with everyone standing at just the right time to sing it, followed by an invocation prayer. The offering came at a predictable time, and the recessional was always the same. The sermon was a time to tune out and whisper with my friends in the back row, as long as we did not disturb anyone. I remember it all very well, because by the time I was 11 years old, I was one of the regular organists and had to know the routine by heart.

But what were we really doing there? What does it mean to worship? Is it mainly a setup for the preacher to tell people what to do? Is it a great opportunity to meet people who believe as you do and nurture relationships? Is it an event that a pastor would travel a thousand miles to preach at but might not cross the street to attend? What is worship, really?

Worship in the book of Revelation

As a scholar of Revelation, I have learned that the clearest place to go

for an answer to these questions is the last book of the Bible. Revelation is filled with strange symbols and scary beasts. But it is also filled with scene after scene of glorious worship. What can we learn about worship from this book?

The best place to begin is in chapters 4 and 5. Revelation 4:9–11 is a powerful description of worship: “And whenever the living creatures express glory and honor and thankfulness to the one sitting on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders *fall down* before the One sitting on the throne and *worship* the One who lives forever and ever, and throw their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, *because* [Greek *hoti*] You created all things, and on account of Your will they came into existence and were created.’”¹

There are two things I want to highlight here. First, worship is described in Revelation with two key Greek words. One of them is translated “fall down” (*pesouontai*, from *piptō*), and the other is translated “worship” (*proskunēsousin* from *proskuneō*). Second, the worship in Revelation is focused on what God has done. The “one sitting on the throne” is worthy of worship because He created all things. The focus of worship is not on what we have done or should do, worship is focused solely on what God has done.

The same pattern can be seen in Revelation 5:8–10: “And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each of them having a harp and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, *because* [*hoti*] you were slain and purchased for God with your blood, people from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they will reign on the earth.’”

In this passage, we once again note a word for worship, “fell down,” followed by three reasons for worship (after the “because”). The four living creatures and the 24 elders “fell down” because the Lamb was slain, “purchased” the people of the world with His blood, and has elevated them to the highest political and religious status. Once again, worship is focused, not on what people have done, but on what God has done.

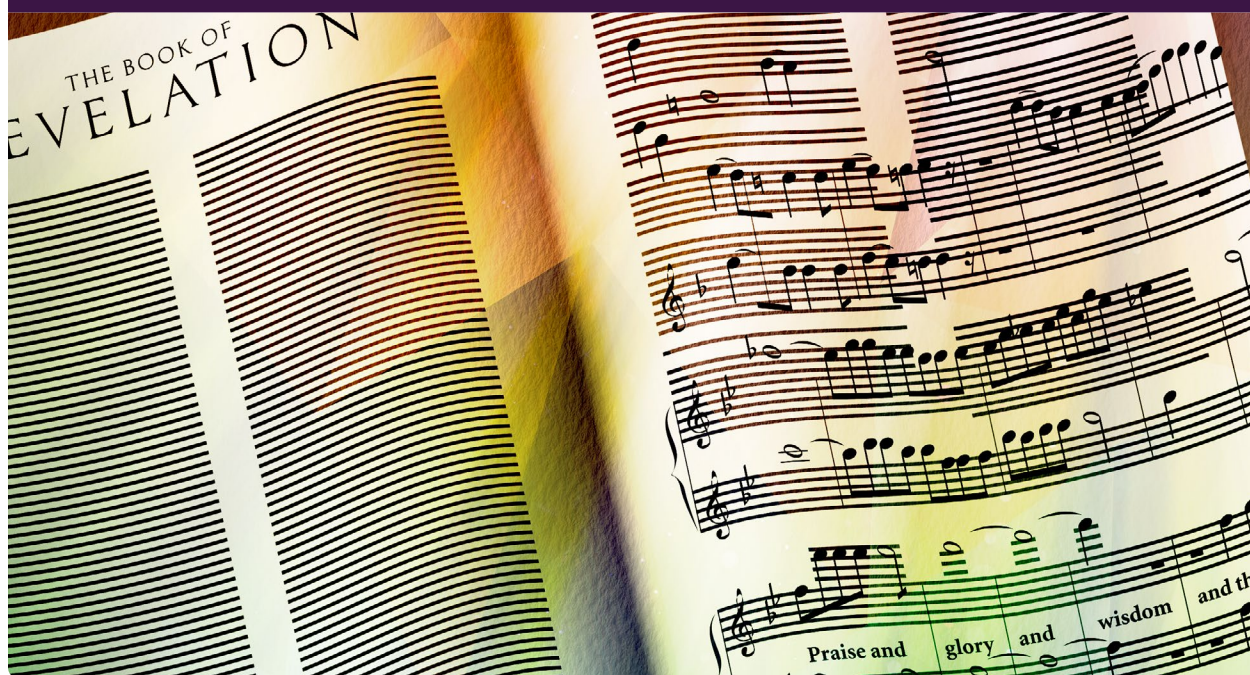
Though several more worship texts exist in Revelation, three witnesses suffice to show the consistent pattern in all these worship scenes. The third witness is 11:16, 17: “And the twenty-four elders, who are sitting on their thrones before God, fell [*epesan*] upon their faces and worshiped [*prosekunēsan*] God, saying, ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was,

because [*hoti*] you have taken hold of your great power and begun to reign.’” Once again we have the language of worship followed by “because,” which introduces the grounds for the worship. In this case, the reason for worship is that God’s reign has begun.

of meeting people who believe as you do and for nurturing human relationships. Those are important activities, but they are *not* worship. According to the book of Revelation, the reason and purpose for worship is because of what God has done.

seems to be stated in Psalm 111:4: “He [the Lord] has caused his wondrous works *to be remembered*; the LORD is gracious and merciful.”² In both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint Greek, the word for “remembered” (Hebrew *zechar*, Greek *mneian*) appears first

The focus of worship is not on what we have done or should do, worship is focused solely on what God has done.



The pattern in these texts is not based on an accident of translation; it is clear in the original language. In these texts there are two clear points about worship: (1) Worship is all about God, focused on God rather than on His creatures. (2) The act of worship itself recalls and retells what God has done.

In other words, worship is not the place for telling people what to do. It is not a social gathering for the purpose

Worship in the Old Testament

Why does the book of Revelation exhibit this pattern of worship? Because Revelation’s language, theology, and practices are built on those already found in the Old Testament. While Revelation has several scenes of worship, the Old Testament has scores, if not hundreds, of such scenes. The fundamental principle of worship

in the sentence, making it the point of emphasis. The mighty and wonderful works of God are designed to be remembered by His creatures. Worship is the place where remembering becomes reciting and retelling.

To build a solid biblical foundation for worship, let us look at three of the many worship texts in the Old Testament. We will begin with Psalms, the songs of Israel’s worship.

First, Psalm 66:3–6: “Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.’ Selah. Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. *He turned the sea into dry land*; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him.’ ” In this worship song, God’s people are clearly instructed to recount the awesome deeds of God. They are to point people to what God has done. They are to tell and retell His mighty acts. And for Old Testament Israel, the greatest story of God’s mighty acts was the Exodus, which is hinted at in verse 6.

The pattern seen in Psalm 66 is worked out with an additional element in the worship song of Psalm 78. The psalmist first recounts a specific historical incident (78:9–13, perhaps Deuteronomy 1:26 or 1 Samuel 4:10,

11): “The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep God’s covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. *They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.* In the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan. He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap.”

The foundational act of God in Israel’s history was the Exodus, their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. From verse 12 to verse 72, the psalmist retells the story of the Exodus. The additional element here is that remembering or forgetting what God has done is at the core of faithfulness to the covenant. When people remember what God has done, they stay faithful to Him. When they forget what God has done, they tend to wander away. Human faithfulness itself is never what worship is about. Worship

is about the mighty works of God. But recounting the acts of God is not a dry or sterile act. It is also powerful in the lives of the worshipers.

This is illustrated by a powerful worship story. In 2 Chronicles 20, the people of God are facing what seems like a hopeless crisis. Three countries have allied together to invade the kingdom of Judah. To deal with the crisis, King Jehoshaphat gathers all the leaders of Judah to the courtyard of the temple to seek the help and guidance of God (2 Chron. 20:1–4). When the assembly has gathered, the king leads the assembly in prayer. How would you and I pray at a time like this? It would probably sound a lot like whining, “O God, please help us, we’re in trouble, do something, anything!”

But Jehoshaphat, instead, begins by recounting the mighty acts of God for His people in the past. “ ‘O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms

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of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?’ ” (2 Chron. 20:6, 7). Instead of whining or pleading, Jehoshaphat starts recounting the Exodus, the mighty way in which God delivered His people from Egypt. He responds to the crisis, not with petition, but with worship.

Jehoshaphat continues (2 Chron. 20:10–12), “ ‘And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy—behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.’ ”

Jehoshaphat not only recalls God’s mighty acts during the Exodus, he reminds God that the nations now attacking them were specifically spared by God at that time. The very existence of these enemy nations is by God’s grace. So rather than taking up arms against them, Jehoshaphat chooses to rely on God. A prophet most of us have never heard of (Jahaziel) confirms Jehoshaphat’s approach and tells them they do not need to fight in this battle. God will be with them and fight for them (vv. 14–17).

Jehoshaphat then has a brilliant idea. If the coming battle is about God, and not about them, why not continue the worship service all the way to the battlefield (vv. 18–21)? So he puts the choir at the head of the army and has them singing all the way. And they were not singing “Trust and Obey” or “Onward Israeli Soldiers,” as appropriate as those might be for marching into battle. Instead, they sang “Give thanks to the Lord, for his

steadfast love endures forever” (v. 21). The focus of the singing was on God. And the outcome of the battle was better than they could have expected (vv. 22, 23).

This story underlines what we have already learned about worship from the book of Revelation. Biblical

feeling or emphasis, and the elder was sinking into despair. Then suddenly, as if impressed by the Holy Spirit, the deacon paused in his reading to say, “I don’t know about that point, but this I do know, God is able.” He continued reading for five minutes or so, paused again, and said once more, “I don’t

The act of worship itself recalls and retells what God has done.


worship is (1) all about God and (2) consists of recounting the mighty acts of God. But Psalm 78 and the story of 2 Chronicles 20 add an additional element that can serve as motivation to worship. When one recounts the mighty acts of God in the past, the power of the original act is brought to bear in the present. When you recount the mighty works of God in creation, the power of the original creation is reactivated. When you recount the mighty works of God in the Exodus, the power of the Exodus is rekindled. When you recount the mighty works of God at the Cross (1 Cor. 15:3–9), the power of the Resurrection is rekindled in your life and in your community.

Lessons for worship in the twenty-first century

An elder in a large Adventist Church was discouraged. He felt that his prayers were going nowhere, and the worship service no longer seemed to help. He was about to give up entirely when he felt impressed to give worship one more try. So he went to another nearby church. Much to his chagrin, the pastor was away and a deacon was appointed to read some dusty sermon from the distant past. The deacon read that sermon with no

know about that point, but this I know, God is able.” After that happened the third and fourth time, the elder found his heart strangely warmed. Although briefly spoken, the deacon’s heartfelt emphasis on God and His mighty power kindled something inside of the elder. The power of the Resurrection warmed his heart and rekindled his faith.

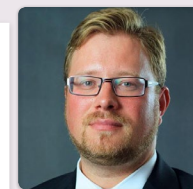
Many, today, lament the lack of spiritual power in the local church. But the biblical remedy for that lack of power is not to focus on the lack but to encourage genuine worship. To worship God is to recount His mighty acts. To recount His mighty acts is to rekindle the power of the original act in one’s present experience. This is the secret of worship. This is the secret of spiritual power.

In many ways, the book of Revelation is the finale of the biblical symphony. This is as true for worship as it is for prophecy. When the end comes, God’s people will have learned by experience, “Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 15:3). 

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- 1 All translations of Revelation verses and emphases mine.
 - 2 All Old Testament texts are from the English Standard Version of the Bible. All emphases mine.

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Sheep, goats, and social programs of the church:

An interpretation of Matthew 25:31–46

Many see Matthew 25:31–46 as a call for Christians to serve the needs of the world. “Sheep” are those followers of Jesus who do works of mercy. “Goats” are people, including those who pretend to follow Jesus, who refuse to serve the needy.¹ We base such understanding, in particular, on the identification of God as Israel’s Shepherd in Ezekiel 34:13–22. The judgment described by Ezekiel and initiated by social injustice toward the weak is a local judgment limited to God’s flock; that is, the people of Israel.² Thus one can suppose that the parable tells about a social program of Christianity directed to help the needy. And those Christians who refuse to take part in this program jeopardize their eternal destiny.

Not rejecting this sound and plausible interpretation, let us look for another possible meaning of Matthew 25:31–46.

Context of the parable

Matthew 25:31–46 ends a section that begins in 24:1 with the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem’s temple and disciples asking Jesus

about the signs of His return and the end of the world. Matthew 24 and 25 provide Jesus’ answer to the question.³

This section emphasizes the universal nature of the described events. While it is possible to understand the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as a local calamity, Jesus wants to point to the wider context of the future events,⁴ using the expression “all nations.” Thus, He warns the disciples about the global opposition they will face: “You will be hated by all nations because of me” (Matt. 24:9),⁵ and He tells them about the universal character of their mission: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matt. 24:14).

Then Matthew 24 describes events that will take place before the Advent as well as during the Advent itself. The description of the Second Coming in Matthew 24:30, 31 includes the following elements: (1) Jesus as the Son of Man, (2) great glory, (3) angels, (4) gathering of the elect, and (5) mention of “the peoples of the earth,” which is a conceptual parallel to the expression “all nations” in verses 9 and 14.⁶

The next part of the section tells about the events surrounding the

Second Coming and can be divided into the introduction (Matt. 24:32–44) and four parables (Matt. 24:45–25:46), which have parallel elements. All of them describe the reward of the righteous and the destiny of the wicked at the Second Coming.

Universal judgment

In Matthew 25:31–36, the theme of “all nations” reappears. The expression *panta ta ethne* is used again in Matthew 25:32. Besides, in Matthew 25:31, 32 the key elements of the Advent are found, which have been noted already in 24:30, 31: (1) Jesus calls Himself the Son of God, (2) He talks about coming in glory, (3) He is accompanied by angels, (4) and He talks about the “gathering” of all nations. Thus, a sort of inclusio is formed, which emphasizes that the entire humankind participates in the described events.

It seems, therefore, that Matthew 24:32–25:46 tells about a universal judgment that relates not only to the believers who await the Second Coming but also, especially, to all humankind. The idea of universality is strengthened by the repetition of the title “Son of Man,” which, in turn, refers to Daniel

7:13, 14⁷, where the Son of Man receives “authority, glory, and sovereign power” over “all nations and peoples of every language.” Thus, Matthew 24:32–25:46 contains a response of “all nations” to the preaching of the gospel (see Matt. 24:14) and the consequences of this response: those who accept the gospel are rewarded; those who refuse it are punished.⁸

Characters of the parable

The next important step is to identify the characters of the parable. They are (1) the Son of Man (the King), (2) sheep, (3) goats, (4) the least of the King’s brothers. One can easily identify

shows that Gentiles are also meant. In turn, the invitation to inherit “‘the kingdom prepared . . . since the creation of the world’ ” is, possibly, an echo of Genesis 1:28, where God blessed the first people and, through them, the entire humanity and gave them authority over all creation. And now representatives of “all nations” are invited to inherit the blessing of the royal governance given to the humankind at the Creation.

The term *righteous* does not contradict the fact that the “sheep” in the parable come from “all nations.” Righteousness is often defined as works of mercy (see Job 22:6–9; Isa. 58:6, 7; Ezek. 18:6–9). According to

to Abraham, He will curse those who “curse” Abraham, that is, do evil to Abraham.¹¹

Thus Genesis 12:3 seems to be an important text for interpretation of Matthew 25:31–46, because both passages share some verbal and conceptual parallels. In the case of Abraham, obviously Gentiles will be blessed or cursed based upon their attitude to the patriarch and his family.

The least. Identity of “the least” in Matthew 25:40, 45 is also very important. The four most common interpretations identify them with (1) all the needy, (2) the Jews, (3) apostles, or (4) Christians in general.¹²

In Matthew 25:40 the King

Every person can become a part of Jesus’ family, if they respond to the proclamation of the gospel and treat Christ’s disciples as brothers and sisters.

the Son of Man, but the others require some investigation.

Sheep. As seen from verse 32, “sheep” originally belong to “all nations.” The King names the “sheep” as “‘blessed by my Father’ ” and invites them to inherit the kingdom prepared “‘since the creation of the world’ ” (v. 34); besides, they are also called “‘the righteous’ ” (vv. 37, 46). Can all these characteristics be applied to those who do not belong to the people of God, but represent “all nations”?

The expression *blessed by my Father* can be a reference to Genesis 12:3 (cf. Num. 24:9), where God promises to bless those who will bless Abram, that is, will do good to him,⁹ and the phrase “all peoples on earth”

this definition, even Gentiles can be deemed righteous if they do righteousness.¹⁰

Although “sheep” is a common biblical symbol for the people of God, it is sometimes applied to other nations. Thus, Jeremiah 51:40 says of Babylon, “‘I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats.’ ” Similar symbols and the context of judgment over Gentiles tie this text to the studied passage.

Goats. Representatives of “all nations” named as “goats” in the parable are also called “‘cursed’ ” (Matt. 25:41). The verb *kataaomai*, “to curse,” is used in the Greek of Genesis 12:3 in contrast to *eulogeo*, “to bless.” As God will bless Gentiles who do good

speaks of “the least” as His brothers. Elsewhere in Matthew, Jesus talks about His brothers¹³ as those who do the will of the Heavenly Father (Matt. 12:49, 50).¹⁴ This characteristic of “the least” as Jesus’ brothers allows their identification as Christians.

The expression “one of the least” should be interpreted in the context of Matthew 10.¹⁵ This chapter shares a number of parallels with Matthew 24, among which are the preaching of the gospel, persecutions, witnessing to Gentiles, hatred of people, the coming of the Son of Man, and betrayal by relatives. When Jesus sends His disciples to ministry, He orders them not to take any money, food, or clothes (Matt. 10:9, 10), thus making them

dependent on the help of those to whom they preach, just as in Matthew 25:31–46. The ending of Matthew 10 resembles the last part of Matthew 25—in both cases Jesus identifies Himself with “the least”: “‘Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me. . . . And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.’” (Matt. 10:40–42)

To give a cup of water to “‘one of these little ones’”¹⁶ means “to welcome” a disciple; and Jesus repeats a similar idea in Matthew 25:40: “‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” On the other hand, those who refuse to welcome Jesus’ disciples will receive punishment in the day of judgment (Matt. 10:14, 15), just as those who did not help “one of the least” (Matt. 25:41–45). It seems, therefore, that identification of “the least” as Jesus’ disciples is possible.

Church and society in the context of Matthew 25:31–46

If we agree that “sheep” and “goats” are representatives of “all nations;” that is, humanity in general, while “the least” are the followers and ministers of Christ, then it becomes evident that the text here says not so much about the church serving society and implementing certain social programs but more likely about the society serving the messengers of the gospel and fulfilling their needs.¹⁷ It does not mean that the church should *not* serve society; in fact, “there are plenty of other texts that clearly enjoin an active concern for the needy and the marginalized of society.”¹⁸

As for the parable, it makes clear that the church can serve this world and prepare it for the Second Coming by giving society a possibility to serve Christians. The meaning of the parable can be expressed in the following way: every person can become a part

of Jesus’ family, if they respond to the proclamation of the gospel and treat Christ’s disciples as brothers and sisters. Of course this treatment extends to all God’s children, whether or not they have submitted themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

However, the above interpretation assumes that “the least” are a separate group of people, different from the “sheep” and “goats” and thus having nothing in common with “all nations.” Such understanding can be supported by Matthew 24:9, where “all nations” are put in contrast to the disciples. Still, there is nothing in Matthew 25:31–46 that explicitly presents “the least” as a third group in addition to “sheep” and “goats.” At the same time, some biblical evidence can be provided in favor of identifying “the least” as “sheep” and, consequently, a part of “all nations.” This idea is found in such texts as Isaiah 66:18–20; and Ezekiel 34:11–22. Speaking about “the least” of His brothers, Jesus could include in their number some representatives of “all nations” who were not known as Jesus’ followers but still were a part of the “invisible church.” Thus people of “all nations” can also be among “the least” and expect some care and aid while in need. In the very same way “the least,” being a part of the society, belong to “all nations” and, therefore, share with them responsibility to express mercy and compassion.¹⁹

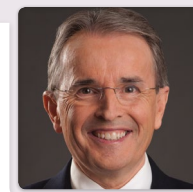
Christ does not set the church in opposition to society, or society to the church. He demonstrates our responsibility, as members of society, to His—and our—brothers and sisters scattered in this world. The parable of the sheep and goats shows that it is necessary for everybody, regardless of their relation to the Christian community, to respond to the proclamation of the gospel in helping the needy members of the invisible church of the Lord. 📖

1 Edward Schweizer, “Matthew’s Church,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. G. Stanton

(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 138, 139; Joseph A. Grassi, “I Was Hungry and You Gave Me to Eat (Matt. 25:35ff): The Divine Identification Ethic in Matthew,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 11 (1981): 81–84.

- 2 Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 163.
- 3 According to Donald A. Hagner, the disciples’ question serves as an introduction to the following discourse. See Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 2002), 687.
- 4 Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 628.
- 5 All Bible references are from the *New International Version*.
- 6 Here Matthew expands the original meaning of Zechariah 12:12 to make it universal. Cf. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 984.
- 7 Cf. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 362.
- 8 “For Matthew, then, the conversation Jesus has with all the nations in the final judgment focuses on the way humankind has responded to Jesus in the person of his disciples. . . . Now the setting is a cosmic one, presupposing the response of all the peoples of earth to the universal mission of the disciples described in 28:18–20 (cf. 24:14).” Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 359.
- 9 William D. Rebyburn and Euan M. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, United Bible Societies’ Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 274.
- 10 Cf. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 638. It is also interesting to note a parallel with Romans 2:9–16.
- 11 See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word, 2002), 277.
- 12 For a detailed discussion, see James M. Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 540.
- 13 Gardner, *Matthew*, 359.
- 14 The same thought can be found in Hebrews 2:11.
- 15 Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 745.
- 16 There is no essential difference between *ton mikron* in Matthew 10:42 and *ton elachiston* in Matthew 25:40, 45, because the latter form is the superlative of the former. Cf. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 314.
- 17 The commission in Matthew 10:1, 8 implies not so much performing of a social order but rather doing of miracles, which would confirm that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matt. 10:7) and that the disciples indeed were given special authority (*exousia*, 10:1). Cf. G. Jerome Albrecht and Michael J. Albrecht, *Matthew, The People’s Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 1996), 149. See also Jesus’ answer to John the Baptist in Matthew 11:2–6.
- 18 Larry Chouinard, *Matthew*, The College Press NIV Commentary, electronic edition (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997), s.v. Matthew 25:40. It is interesting also that Luke, the most “social” of all Gospels, lacks this parable.
- 19 Cf. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 638.

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Truth, love, and the justice of God: *An interview with Jiří Moskala*

Derek Morris: Many *Ministry* readers may not be acquainted with you personally, though they have perhaps heard your name in connection with being the dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Tell us a little about yourself.

Jiří Moskala: I was born in the heart of Europe, in the Czech Republic (the former Czechoslovakia), the country of the great fifteenth-century reformer and martyr Jan Hus (John Huss). My father was a factory worker who came to know God after World War II. My parents converted from Catholicism and became Adventists just two years before I was born. They were very devoted to the Lord and the church. It was complicated growing up in a Communist country, but it was beneficial for affirming and strengthening my faith, as I had to daily stand for my convictions. Because I did not attend school on Sabbath, which was obligatory, I experienced persecution. Nevertheless, I look back to this period of my life with gratitude to God, because He was teaching me from my childhood how to defend Christian principles and Adventist values. My father-in-law spent more than a year in prison for being a pastor.

The motto for my life reflects the biblical message: truth, love, and the



justice of God will prevail and, as I strongly believe, will conquer all and in the end be victorious.

DM: When did you sense the call of God to a teaching ministry?

JM: I always wanted to be useful for the Lord, to even witness about Jesus to unknown people in order for them to be eternally saved. I remember when I was 10 [years old] going to parks and speaking with elderly people about the second coming of Christ. I also wrote

God's promises on small pieces of paper and gave them to people so they could learn about spiritual values.

I felt God's call to ministry from a very young age and dedicated my life to Him. However, the first Adventist school I attended was the Bible seminary in Prague when I was 20 [years old]. I was only able to study there for one year before the atheistic government closed it. Therefore, on the recommendation of the Czechoslovakian Union, I continued my studies at the Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty (today part of Charles University). Upon completing the five-year theological studies program, I worked as a pastor for 11 years. I was also married during that time and had five gorgeous children. I did further theological studies in Prague and later also at Andrews University. I have written two doctoral dissertations: the first on the problematic authorship of the book of Daniel, and the second one on the validity of the distinction between clean and unclean food.

In 1995, I brought my family to Andrews University in order to finish my doctor of philosophy (PhD), which I had started several years previously. At the end of my studies, I was offered a full-time seminary faculty position. (During my studies I had been a contract teacher.) After fasting and praying with

my family and agonizing over the decision, as I wanted to return to Europe, God impressed me through His Word in Isaiah 48:17 that I should accept this call as it was His plan even though it dramatically changed my life and ministry. I have never regretted that decision as God's plans are always best for us. My ministry

of divinity program director at Andrews University. So I went through crucial steps of experiencing and understanding the importance of biblical theology and administrative work.

I believe that God gave me these previous service opportunities and challenges to prepare me for this assign-

DM: The seminary provides a unique graduate learning environment. What aspects do you appreciate the most?

JM: What I value the most is the opportunity to work with an incredibly gifted, dedicated, and godly faculty and staff. The faculty and staff are, first of all, a genuine Adventist community of faith that models how to live and work together in harmony and promote the beauty of the Adventist message. We may disagree and have different opinions on various matters but still respect each other. The focus of all on a balanced interpretation of Scriptures, a deep relationship with the Lord, a passion for spreading the gospel, and the second coming of Jesus Christ are convictions that are contagious and shared in the classroom.

I love the opportunity to encourage young pastors to anchor their hearts and ministry in the teachings of Scripture and help them deepen their spiritual life and Adventist identity. In this way, they can recognize and reject the ideas rooted in human speculations, tradition, or culture that are contrary to Scripture.

My role as a leader includes creating a space for my colleagues to prosper, and I rejoice greatly when they succeed. I direct an outstanding team that seeks to develop programs, curricula, and policy that is sensitive and relevant to the real issues of life so that our diverse student body can strive for excellence and be ready to serve God, His church, and humanity. I encourage everyone not to be satisfied with mediocrity. Adventism requires the whole person, the best minds and skills, being filled with God's wisdom and Spirit and demands close collaboration and teamwork.

A special joy for me is when I can hire new faculty members and offer them opportunities they were previously only dreaming about. The diversity of students we receive from around the world and the diversity of faculty match well in very concrete ways.

I am excited about the international scope of my work. I love being in personal contact with leaders around the world. It is a joy and thrilling experience



was tremendously broadened, which I could not imagine at that time.

DM: How did the Lord prepare you for your current assignment as dean of the seminary?

JM: God has worked in providential ways. He prepared me gradually for this kind of ministry. He gave me excellent theological training; I studied in two prestigious universities, the best in Protestantism and Adventism. I worked as a pastor, a lecturer of systematic theology and Old Testament studies, was dean of the theological seminary in Prague, director of the Czechoslovakian Union's Department of Education and Health, and the master

ment. I opened the seminary in the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 when Communism fell and worked there as the first dean, which provided me with administrative experience and sharpened my skills. Additionally, through teaching in the seminary's Department of Old Testament (OT) for the past 15 years and being chair of the OT department for several years, I gained further familiarity with the seminary's operations. Moreover, by my involvement with the Adventist Theological Society and traveling around the world, God has given me the opportunity to work closely with church leaders and become well acquainted with the needs of the worldwide church as well as with diverse people and a variety of cultures.

to work with the leaders of the General Conference, divisions, unions, conferences, universities, colleges, and seminaries.

DM: Some people make a case for short-term in-ministry training programs rather than an extensive seminary curriculum. What are some of the benefits of both training options?

JM: A short-term training option provides a good intensive start for ministry. There are many wonderful motivational programs that give introductory skills in how to study Scripture, preach, do evangelism, and offer Bible studies. However, it cannot replace the in-depth engagement with Scripture and a broad understanding of ministry that equips pastors with a variety of needed skills in order to deal with problems, challenges, and new situations in our complicated world. It also helps prevent a routine approach to ministry or a quick burnout after three to five years, where they then leave the ministry. There are notable exceptions, but usually longer and comprehensive preparation provides enormous potential for growth and service. It is like in the field of medicine where various individuals assist a patient in different capacities. Volunteers, first-aid assistants, nurses, family doctors, surgeons, cardiologists, and so forth, are all needed in the care of a patient.

Similarly, when preparing for various ministries within the church, each training has a different purpose. For example, during the two-to-three-year MDiv program pastors build their biblical-theological understanding in a very systematic way over this longer period of time and develop a variety of skills. Spending several years rather than just a few months makes a vast difference in the absorption of the biblical material and in learning how to serve effectively. Remember the training Jesus' disciples received at His feet, and the time Paul spent in Arabia after his conversion. Pastors are dealing with matters of eternal life and death, and this immense responsibility cannot lead to less study than in medicine, economics, or law.

Each cutting-edge knowledge demands a comprehensive approach. We are encouraged by Ellen White to search for the truth as miners are digging for nuggets of gold.* The study of the Bible and its theology takes time and focus for which we provide guidance through our more than 40 dedicated seminary professors, who have spent their lives seeking to apprehend biblical theology and a knowledge of how to apply it in our postmodern world. There is no better place in the world than to be trained by these experts in various fields in order to gain a practical knowledge of how to do ministry and share the gospel in today's world. We also offer an outstanding in-ministry study option, namely the masters in pastoral ministry, for those

pastors who are unable to devote full time to residential studies.

DM: What resources does the seminary offer for pastors who want to continue to grow spiritually, intellectually, and professionally?

JM: In addition to the books, articles, workshops, Bible conferences, symposia, and seminars provided by seminary faculty to our church or non-Adventist entities, the theological seminary offers six doctoral programs (doctor of ministry; doctor of missiology; doctor of theology; doctor of philosophy [religion]; doctor of philosophy [biblical and ancient Near Eastern archaeology]; and doctor of philosophy [religious education]), five



master's programs (master of divinity; master of arts [religion]; master of arts in youth and young adult ministry; master of arts [religious education]; and master of arts in pastoral ministry), six dual-degree programs (master of arts [religious education]/master of social work; master of divinity/master of arts in communication; master of divinity/master in public health; master of divinity/master of social work; master of arts in youth and young adult ministry/master of social work; and master of arts in youth and young adult ministry/master of science in community and international development), and a postdoctoral fellowship program. We now also have a strong chaplaincy concentration in the master of divinity (MDiv) program.

Let me highlight three activities that are probably most attractive for pastors:

- The DMin program helps experienced pastors who hold an MDiv or its equivalency to enhance their spiritual life and ministry and move it to the next level. It is designed for full-time pastors and professionals and is completed while they continue their ministry. The DMin's guiding vision is "Changing the People Who Change the World."
- The Seminary Distance Learning Center offers both free video lectures as well online master-level courses for credit (www.andrews.edu/sem/sdlc/index.html). We are working toward creating a fully online MDiv program with different concentrations and already have a number of classes available. We are currently preparing a fully online MA (religion) program for international students.
- We are also providing many free online continuing education opportunities through the new Adventist Learning Community (www.adventistlearningcommunity.com).

DM: What are some of the greatest challenges pastors face in the twenty-first century?

JM: People's thinking has dramatically changed in recent decades. Our world is rightly characterized as post-Christian, and believing in God is much less attractive than in previous years, because of (1) antagonistic and vicious neo-atheistic attacks on God's existence, the Bible, Christianity, and religion; (2) the dominance of empirical science and evolutionary theory above all other branches of knowledge; (3) the strong influence of naturalistic spiritualism in the public, films, video games, and music; (4) the attractiveness of Eastern religions; (5) the high quality of entertainment, TV, educational programs, music, and recreation that powerfully compete with the proclamation of the eternal gospel as expressed in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14; (6) the stress on the uniqueness of an individual emotional experience that makes everything relative; thus people think that there is no absolute truth, particularities are destructive, and exclusiveness is dangerous and harmful; (7) religious extremism (including terrorist attacks); (8) growing sympathy toward the papacy and its moral influence; (9) persuasive thinking that all religions are equal and they have the same basic idea to love; and (10) populist ecumenical tendencies among Christian leaders with merging theological thoughts.

These powerful facts lead to a very distorted picture of God in addition to a blatant antipathy toward organized religion. This makes evangelism and ministry to people, especially in an urban context, very challenging. Believers become secular. Temptations in personal life are more subtle, like immorality and pornography that steal spiritual vitality even among the clergy. The business of life leads away from the commitment to spend meaningful time with Jesus in prayer and studying His Word. To relevantly answer these intellectual and spiritual challenges, one needs to be rooted in the Bible and theology. Theology is essential and really matters.


On the other hand, postmodern people are hurting and deeply wounded

because of selfishness, injustice, abuse, wars, divorce, family tensions, violence, financial crises, and health issues. Studies show that people long for meaningful relationships and social bonds. This is what our churches should provide. They need to be safe spiritual oases for people so they may grow together in the knowledge of God and service to others.

DM: What words of counsel would you offer to pastors who long to be used by God in world-changing ways?

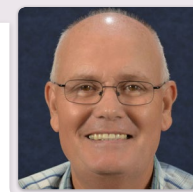
JM: I am convinced that the best years of our church are ahead of us. So let each pastor be ready in whatever capacity God calls him or her to serve. May they daily dedicate their lives to Him who is always faithful that He may lead them to fulfill His vision and mission through them.

To all pastors I would like to say, do all God has set before you today, perform it humbly, diligently, with love and joy, trusting that each day He will empower you with His Spirit to do His will. Never stop growing in your knowledge of Christ and intellectual capacities. Read widely, visit people, and listen to them carefully. This will provide you with a rich fountain of insights for your preaching, writing, discussions, further visitation, and reflections. Be in touch with people in order to know their thinking and respond in a meaningful way to their queries. Be available for them.

Search, love, preach, and share God's truth, but do not try to possess it. Never manipulate truth. Be honest with yourself, sincere, and transparent, and allow God be the Lord of your life and ministry. Let Him transform you. Bring God's presence with you everywhere you go. Remember that our God is a holy God, and serve Him with enthusiasm. Never forget that God's truth, love, and justice will prevail and ultimately conquer all. 

* See Ellen G. White, "Candid Investigation Necessary to an Understanding of the Truth," *Signs of the Times*, May 26, 1890.

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The pulpit and church growth

Numbers are important in most cultures, such as when attendance at a sporting event has surpassed the previous record. Team and sporting event promoters take these numbers seriously; they seek to discover what factors contributed to the increase, or decrease, in attendance.

In many ways, Sabbath School and worship service can be seen as an event. This is not suggesting that what happens on Sabbath is just a game, but church is an event where we certainly want maximum attendance. A challenging question, then, for both pastor and lay preacher is, “Is the weekly sermon a factor in the congregation’s attendance and growth?”

With many other things happening in the local church to influence attendance, we may be tempted to think that determining the impact of the sermon on church growth is futile. However, it is important for the preacher to realize that the sermon has an important role to play in the nurture and establishment of new believers and in the building up of the congregation. Thus, to emphasize the importance of the sermon for church growth, we will consider the various stages of crafting and delivering a sermon, but with church growth in mind.

Sermon preparation for growth

Preaching is serious business. Frank J. Retief makes the point: “It is true that the pulpit can become a stage where

the preacher puts on a performance. But if preaching is to be true preaching, it must be rooted in the integrity of the spiritual life of the preacher.”¹ Powerful preaching grows out of the preacher’s life with God. Not that preachers come to the pulpit with the ambition “I will grow this church,” but rather they must come with the idea “We preach Christ and Him crucified, and the congregation grows spiritually and numerically.”

Ilion T. Jones says, “Like all other skills, preaching skill is achieved by hard work, self-discipline, continuous practice and regular revision of procedures.”² But even then, preaching effectiveness is not guaranteed by using good techniques alone. Even these may fall short of transforming those who hear the preacher. There is a well-documented correlation between the amount of time spent in prayer and study and the quality of the sermons produced. John Piper writes that “the goal of preaching is utterly dependent on the mercy of God for its fulfillment. Therefore, the preacher must labor to put his preaching under divine influence of prayer.”³ Darrell W. Johnson emphasizes the need to spend time in study. “There is no doubt that the degree to which the preacher has been and is being affected by the text plays a role in the effectiveness of the sermon. There is no doubt that the degree of the preacher’s faithfulness to the text plays a role in the effectiveness of the sermon.”⁴

This sermon quality is measured not only by the process of crafting and

the expertise of presentation but also by the impact that the preacher has upon the hearers.

Calvin Miller suggests that while we analyze our sermon’s Scripture passage, we should also analyze the audience: “Half of those who enter the church and take their seat are moving in a privatized fog of their own ills.”⁵ That is, they have come to church with all of their personal and spiritual struggles, and it is important that the preacher analyze the congregation as best that he or she can. At the very least, the preacher should realize that, in any congregation, people want a sermon that will touch their lives.

The average attendee is probably not interested in the intricate social details of the ancient Hittite kingdom or the nuances of Hebrew or Greek grammar. But they do want to hear an enlightening word from the Lord that will be a blessing and challenge.

A sermon is not just giving people information, even information about God. A preacher can use sound theology, but that does not necessarily take the people anywhere. If we want to encourage people to return—and churches grow only when visitors and members return—then we must understand the contribution that the preaching makes and prepare sermons accordingly.

Sermon content for growth

In 1992, a book was published, titled *How to Close Your Church in a*

Decade. In it, David Cohen and Stephen Gaukroger suggest that your church could close in a decade if you neglect crucial aspects of church life, which include neglecting to preach a Bible-based message applied in a challenging way: “If we want to see our churches die in a decade, the quickest way to affect their demise is to remove the Bible from that central point in their lives. If we want life and growth, we will make

*Powerful
preaching grows
out of the
preacher’s life
with God.*

sure that the Bible is the basis of our preaching and teaching ministry; that its message is applied in a relevant way to the lives of our congregation, and that preacher and hearers alike humbly submit to what God has to say to us through it.”⁶ Conversely, “If our churches are to come to life and grow, our preaching ministry must be based on the Bible, but we must be sure that it is Christ centered.”⁷

In short, preaching matters to church growth.

“One could easily get the impression from church growth experts that the pulpit plays little or no part in church growth,” laments Earl V. Comfort, who relates his futile search for references to a pulpit ministry in church-growth books. “And yet when church growth situations are examined in this country [USA] one cannot overlook the fact that at the heart of growth is an effective pulpit ministry.”⁸

So how do we recognize an effective pulpit ministry? Comfort surveyed his congregation and came up with seven sermon qualities:

1. The sermon must be biblical. Preachers must expound the Scriptures, not just refer to them.
2. The sermon must be understandable. Every effort should be taken to communicate clearly.
3. The sermon must be warm, expressing the love the pastor has for his flock.
4. The sermon must be positive. Instill a positive attitude toward God.
5. The sermon must be practical, relevant to the people’s lives today.
6. The sermon must be exemplary. The preacher must practice what he or she preaches.
7. The sermon must be exciting. Avoid sermons that have no substance and act like a sedative.⁹

Sermon presentation for growth

Nestor C. Rilloma points out the dangers of what He calls “dis-exposition.”¹⁰ Dis-exposition in a sermon occurs when a text is introduced but never expounded or even referred to again. “There is no attempt to convey the true meaning of the passage.” For Rilloma, “dis-exposition causes Sabbath indigestion” and can negatively impact church growth.

Kent Hughes lists five more of what Rilloma calls “abuses” in preaching.¹¹

1. **The “de-contexted sermon.”** A sermon in which a text is removed from its surrounding context and mistakenly applied.
2. **The “lensed sermon.”** The preacher sees every sermon through the lens of his or her favorite theme.
3. **The “moralized sermon.”** Every sermon has a moral. Regardless of what the text actually says or is referring to, some moral will be infused into it.
4. **The “doctrinalized sermon.”** The preacher uses the Bible in a proof text way in order to prove the doctrinal preference of the preacher.

5. **The “silenced sermons.”** The preacher preaches on details that are not actually in the text.

A congregational “bill of rights”

Congregations expect certain things. Thus, will they continue to attend if their expectations are never realized? Marvin Hunt lists what he calls “Your congregation’s bill of rights.”¹²

Your congregation has the right to expect that your sermon will be based solidly on the Bible. This means that you will not use the Bible as a launching pad to go into orbit about your pet peeves or favorite topics. Your listeners deserve to have the question answered, “Is there any word from the Lord?”

Your congregation has the right to expect that you have spent hours in prayer, study, and preparation so that you will not waste the sermon time they have given to you.

Your congregation has the right to expect a sermon more than one-mile wide and one-inch deep. You cannot preach the Bible until you know your Bible. The Bible needs to fill your mind, rule your heart, and be a lamp unto your feet.

Your congregation has the right to expect that your sermon will have a clear beginning, middle, and ending and that they will know when you have arrived at your final destination.

Your congregation has the right to expect an Adventist sermon, one with that “certain” sound. Just like Sabbath dinner, they have the right to expect that the meal laid out before them will be one especially made to feed Seventh-day Adventists. They have the right to expect that if you stand behind an Adventist pulpit, you will preach a message that will attempt to move God’s remnant church forward.

Hunt also introduces the concept of “Starving in the midst of plenty.” There are many reasons why people may be starving in church. Maybe the spiritual food served up is not nutritious? Or maybe it is, but some have refused to eat? Or maybe they are unable to assimilate the food? Whatever the

reason, some will feel the need to look elsewhere for spiritual nourishment if you do not feed them properly.

The challenge to preachers

When people change congregations, what are they seeking? Of course, reasons for “church hopping” will be many and complex, and preachers will be reluctant to admit that their preaching has played a role. Although not everyone who changes congregations cites unpalatable preaching as the reason, this may well be a factor.

So, while determining why people change churches, and to what extent their reasons for doing so are valid, would be a complicated task, the sermon is a big part of what happens on Sabbath. As Warren Wiersbe points out, “Our goal in preaching is not just to provide religious education but to encourage spiritual transformation.”¹³ This is a vital point, especially given that in 2011 George Barna noted that only 21 percent of Christians surveyed said that it is imperative for a person to be connected to a community of faith if

they want to mature spiritually.¹⁴ Thus, preachers must more intentionally consider where the sermon can contribute to healthy congregational spiritual and numerical growth.

In their Adventist classic *Adventures in Church Growth*, Dudley and Cummings say that the experience of growth includes “proclaiming the gospel, winning and baptizing converts, incorporating them into responsible membership, nurturing their spiritual development, equipping them for further service, motivating them to missionary tasks, and supporting them as they go out to exercise their gifts to bring in still others.”¹⁵

While the pastor should be focused upon all these important aspects of growth, the pulpit ministry must also be uplifted as vitally important. The challenge to preachers, both professional and lay, is to view their pulpit ministry as a significant factor contributing to church growth, both spiritually and numerically. ▮

1 Frank J. Retief, “Preaching That Grows the Church,” in *When God’s Voice Is Heard: The Power of Preaching*,

ed. David Jackman and Christopher Green (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 125.

2 Ilion T. Jones, *Principles and Practice of Preaching* (New York: Abingdon Press, no date), 9.

3 John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 98.

4 Darrell W. Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 31.

5 Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 41.

6 David Cohen and Stephen Gaukroger, *How to Close Your Church in a Decade* (London: Scripture Union, 1992), 96, 97.

7 *Ibid.*, 135.

8 Earl V. Comfort, “Is the Pulpit a Factor in Church Growth?” in *Vital Ministry Issues*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Michigan: Kregel Resources, 1994), 133.

9 *Ibid.*, 135.

10 Nester C. Rilloma, “The Divine Authority of Preaching and Applying the Word: Ellen G. White’s Perspective in Relation to Evangelical Viewpoints” in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16, nos. 1, 2 (2005), 164.

11 Kent Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition: Logos, Ethos and Pathos,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 44–58. Cited in Rilloma, “Divine Authority of Preaching,” 165.

12 Marvin Hunt, *So You’ve Been Asked to Speak* (Silver Spring, MD: The Ministerial Association, 1996), 8, 9.

13 Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 69.

14 George Barna, *Maximum Faith: Live Like Jesus* (Austin, TX: Fed and Company, Inc., 2011), 39.

15 Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummins Jr., *Adventures in Church Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1985), 32.

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The Heavenly Sanctuary: *A pattern for the earthly*

The study of the sanctuary is crucial for understanding the plan of salvation. This article seeks to address the issue of the relationship between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. In the historical books of the Old Testament, is there a connection between the heavenly sanctuary and the earthly sanctuary as affirmed in Hebrews 9:23, 24? To answer this question, we will analyze the chronicler's understanding of the link between Moses and David in the pattern they received for the earthly sanctuary and temple.

A caveat is in order at this point. For the purpose of this study, it is not necessary to know the exact dimensions of the heavenly sanctuary, for any finite building can at best shadily resemble that which is infinite. We ought to remember that God showed Moses the pattern of the sanctuary that he was to build, and “no earthly structure could represent [the heavenly sanctuary’s] . . . vastness and its glory.”¹

The link to the heavenly sanctuary in the historical books

The earthly sanctuary symbolized God's presence in a covenantal relationship with Israel, His chosen people (cf. Exod. 15:17, 25:8). Through the sanctuary, Israel would commune, worship, and interact with God. As with the tabernacle in the wilderness,

Solomon's temple became the locus of God's Shekinah glory and the center of Israel's worship; all the furniture and details of the tabernacle in the Holy and Most Holy places were transferred to the temple.

God's presence demanded obedience from His people, beginning with their leader, be it Moses, Aaron, David, or Solomon. God's dwelling in the earthly sanctuary by extension meant that He chose to dwell with His people, and this dwelling expected that His people, beginning with the king as their representative, would follow God's law (1 Kings 6:12, 13). In fact, as long as the temple stood, the prayers of His people in or toward the temple were heard and answered by God from His heavenly abode (1 Kings 8:30, 39, 43, 49; 2 Chron. 6:21, 30, 33, 39; Ps. 102:19). God's omnipresence demonstrates His ability to examine everything (cf. Prov. 15:3; Job 34:21; Jer. 16:17). While God is said to fill both heaven and earth, He is usually portrayed as looking from heaven (cf. 2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 34:15). God's concretization of His presence was through His glory while filling the temple (cf., Lev. 9:6, 23; Exod. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; Ezek. 43:2). Therefore, His real dwelling would remain in heaven, whereas the earthly sanctuary was a representation and an assurance of God's presence among His people (1 Kings 9:3).

The heavenly pattern: A survey of 1 Chronicles 28

The choice of the site where Solomon would build the temple—the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite—is a result of divine intervention. At this site the judgment and mercy of God met. The chronicler tells that for the sin of David taking a census of God's people, judgment poured out and 70,000 people perished (1 Chron. 21:1–14). Seeing a repentant David, pleading for God's mercy, God “relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, ‘It is enough; now restrain your hand’ ” (1 Chron. 21:15).² Because God ceased His judgment and revealed His mercy and forgiveness on the threshing floor of Ornan, David bought that threshing floor and vowed that there shall be “the house of the Lord God” (1 Chron. 22:1; 21:18–30). After erecting “an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor,” (1 Chron. 21:18), and after acknowledging that he himself was disqualified by God to build His temple because he had “shed much blood and [had] . . . made great wars” (1 Chron. 22:8), David passed on the divine commission to build the temple to Solomon.

To be sure, the chronicler connects the Israelite worship and rituals to the Mosaic laws.³ For example, when the Philistines captured the ark, he indicates how, in the days of King David, religious worship followed

Moses' commandments: "to do all that is written in the law of the LORD which He commanded Israel" (1 Chron. 16:40). Thus with the rituals in the temple of Solomon: during the time of the historical books they suffered no great change, since they followed the Mosaic directives (2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chron. 30:16; Ezra 3:2; 6:18; Neh. 1:7, 8; 8:14; 9:14, etc.).

As with Moses, David received every detail of Jerusalem's temple through God's inspiration. God explic-

with patterns of every part, and of all its instruments of service, as had been revealed to him by divine inspiration."⁵

In 1 Chronicles 28:19, David says that the "LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans." Thus, David acquired a capacity for a deep intuitive understanding of the plan for the temple. In addition, the *Yhwh âlay*, "Yahweh upon me" (v. 19) refers to a direct and divine activity through God's Spirit (cf. Isa. 61:1; Ezek. 3:14;

Pattern and reproduction

Yahweh revealed the plan to David as He did to Moses. In fact, God made Moses look upon the heavenly sanctuary. The term *mar'eh*, "to allow someone to see something (with one's eyes)" (Exod. 25:9; cf. 1 Chron. 28:10)⁸ indicates how God showed Moses a pattern. Accordingly, the causative sense may have this literal meaning: "according to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle

The earthly sanctuary conceptually associates to the heavenly, for the heavenly is the foundation and the true tabernacle from which all answers spring forth.

itly directed Moses that he should build the sanctuary "according to the pattern" that was given to him "on the mountain" (Exod. 25:40; 26:30; 31:18).⁴ Moses' heavenly vision and later David's special inspired directives stand in parallel to underscore the fact that the sanctuary in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem were both directed by God's disclosure of the sanctuary and the temple plans. When the chronicler states that "David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat," the chronicler makes sure that Solomon knows the source of all these plans. He says, "And the plans for all that he had by the Spirit" (1 Chron. 28:11, 12). This undoubtedly refers to God as the source of understanding and direction that David had for the construction plans of the temple. Ellen White says it well: "David gave Solomon minute directions for building the temple,

2 Sam. 23:1, 2).⁶ This is a characteristic mode of expression for a prophet entering into a state of prophetic vision (cf. 2 Kings 3:15; Ezek. 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; Isa. 61:1). Hence David, like Moses, received the instructions and insights for building the sanctuary through divine intervention.⁷

The Old Testament certainly shows that the sanctuary in the wilderness was patterned according to a heavenly model. Moses was not the originator of the tabernacle in the desert; rather, he built the sanctuary according to the pattern and the purpose of God (cf. Exod. 25:8; Lev. 20:3; Ps. 78:69). While it is true that David's plan for the temple was not identical to the sanctuary in the wilderness in terms of size and materials, still both developed from a single sacred prototype concept of compartments—the Holy and the most Holy. God's involvement in both, perhaps, presupposes a temple of heavenly origin, at least from human perspectives.

and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it' " (Exod. 25:9). In addition, in Exodus 25:40, Yahweh commands Moses to visualize (imperative form of *Râ'âh*) the appearance in a dynamic vision. The verb *mar'eh*, "showing" implies that God allowed Moses, in a real image appearance, to see the original version (27:8). The noun *mar'eh*, "seeing," "appearance," or "vision," in Numbers 8:4 lends support to this view.⁹ As the Mosaic construction was based on the *tabnît*, "pattern," "copy," or "reproduction,"¹⁰ the Davidic-Solomonic temple was also based on this important construct. First Chronicles 28:11, 12 puts it this way: "Then, David gave to Solomon, his son the plan of the porch and its houses, and its treasuries, and its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and the room of atonement. In addition, the entire plan he had by the spirit with him¹¹ concerning the courts of the house of God and for all the surrounding chambers: the treasuries

of God's house, and the treasures of the votive offerings" (my translation).

The implications of *tabnît*

Verses 11 and 12, with the term *tabnît*, recall the Mosaic narrative of the tabernacle in the desert (Exod. 25:8, 9, 40). This is clearly what they understood when they built the sanctuary: the first temple was modeled upon the heavenly dwelling. God indicated to Solomon, "Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel" (1 Kings 6:12, 13; cf. Exod. 25:8; 29:45; Lev. 26:11).

The Septuagint renders *tabnît* to mean the heavenly original of the earthly tabernacle. In Exodus 25, the LXX twice translates *tabnît* by *paradeigma*, "that which is formed" (the same as in 1 Chron. 28:11, 18), whereas in verse 40 it translates the term by *typos*, "an object formed to resemble some entity." The *tabnît* is the model of the sanctuary, and the word agrees with the book of Hebrews, where the heavenly sanctuary comprises the pattern for the earthly tabernacle (8:5, 9:24).

The substantive *tabnît* appears 20 times in the Old Testament.¹² The basic meaning of this feminine term is "form," "pattern" or "model." It suggests properly the style or form of construction and is applied to other cases as well (Exod. 25:9, 40). The word is sometimes linked with the term *samel*, "image," "sculpture," as in *temûnat kol-samel*, "the model of any sculpture" (Deut. 4:16–18). It may also depict idols in a work of art, any male or female forms, and different creeping creatures. In Joshua 22:28, the term represents the reproduction of the divine altar. In 2 Kings 16:10, the term is differentiated with *demût*, "model," which is more like an indistinct shape of something, whereas *tabnît* refers


to an exact representation of it. Thus the term refers to the similitude of an existing model after which another structure is built or the sample of what has already been built.¹³

Conclusion

The historical books envision a temple in heaven, after which the earthly temple was based, as a copy of the heavenly "pattern" (Exod. 25:9; 1 Chron. 28:11, 12, 19). Regarding the first temple, the historical books signify that David's pattern was based on the analogy between heaven and earth. Such a stance makes it possible to interpret the book of Hebrews in the light of the Old Testament understanding of the earthly sanctuary being a pattern of the heavenly sanctuary. The tradition of a heavenly sanctuary being a model for the earthly sanctuary reaches far back into the history of Israel. Exodus 25 and 1 Chronicles 28 indicate that the heavenly temple provided a pattern for the earthly. While God was the Designer and Originator of the sanctuary, Moses, David, and Solomon were only executive builders.

The God of Israel desired to dwell among His chosen people to accomplish His covenant with them. The earthly sanctuary conceptually associates to the heavenly, for the heavenly is the foundation and the true tabernacle from which all answers spring forth. Therefore, the relationship existing between the two temples is significant in the historical books. The earthly sanctuary relates to the heavenly, which is eternal and nontemporal, and where God's true dwelling is indeed located. Moreover, the earthly sanctuary is perceived as a lower part supporting God's activities from heaven. The earthly and heavenly sanctuaries are connected in a very close relationship as depicted in the historical books. The heavenly needed the earthly to depict the plan of salvation—to show how the human problem of sin is solved from the sacrifices offered in the sanctuary or temple to

the ultimate sacrifice in God's redemptive plan: the Cross. To say this is not to miss the distinction between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

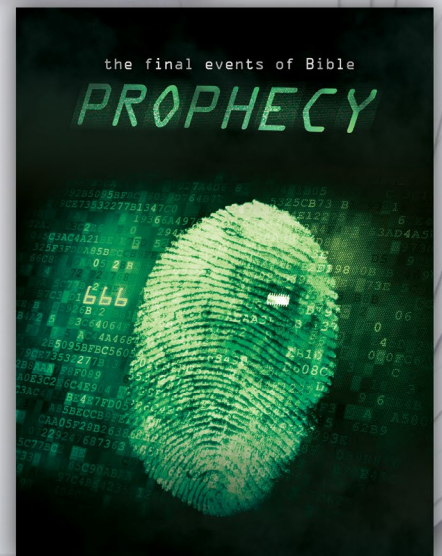
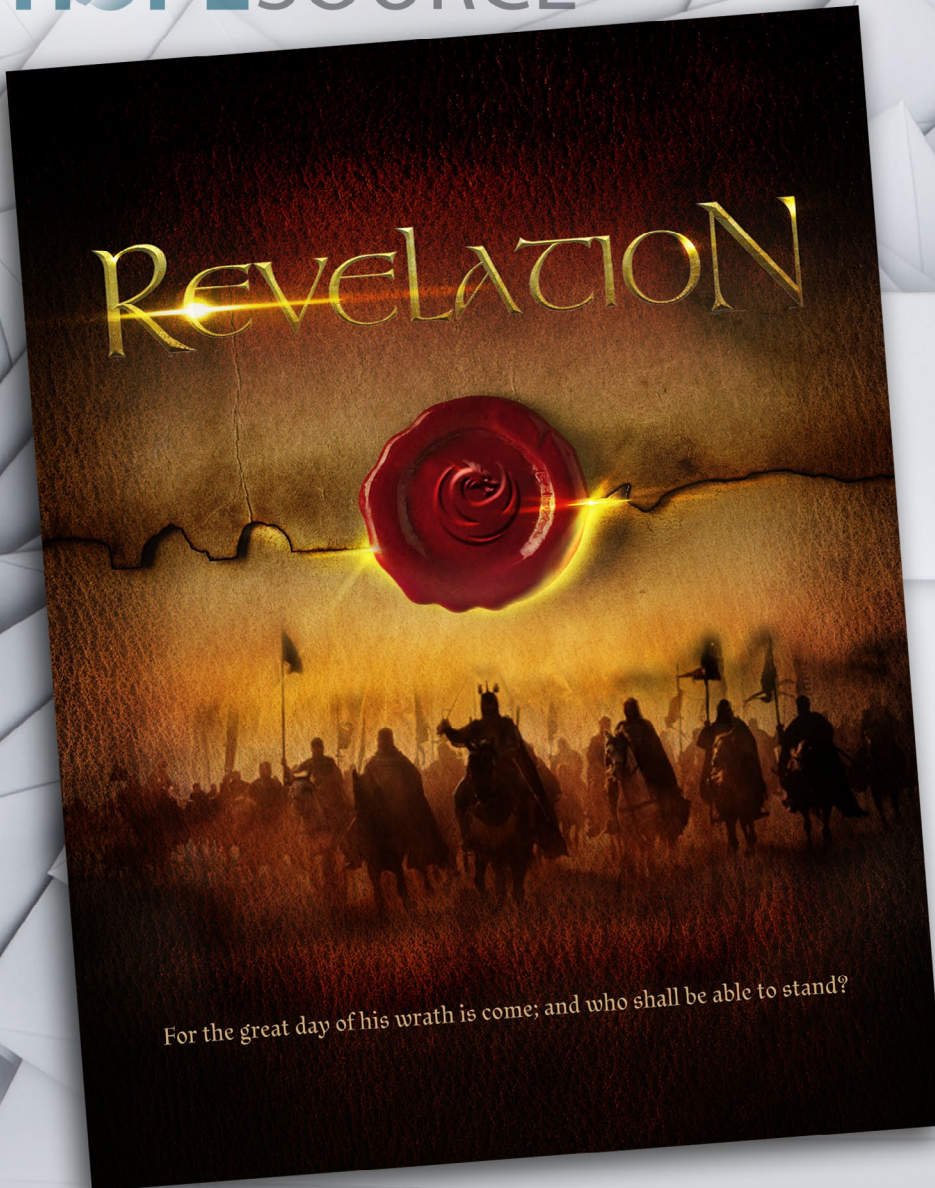
The heavenly sanctuary is the conceptual entity from which the earthly sanctuary draws its function and upon which it depends for its significance. 

- 1 See Ellen G. White, *Patriarch and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 357. Apart from the temple at Jerusalem, which is known only through 1 Kings 6, only one sanctuary has been found from Iron Age II: the temple of Arad. See V. Fritz, "Architecture," *Dictionary of Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2005), 86.
- 2 Except as otherwise noted, all Scripture passages are from the New King James Version.
- 3 See Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, vol. 115 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 25.
- 4 So does Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2004), 535.
- 5 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 751.
- 6 Frank B. Holbrook says the phrase "From the hand of the Lord concerning it" (v 19) is a translator's conjecture. The Hebrew reads: "from the hand of the Lord upon me." "The Israelite Sanctuary," in *The Sanctuary and Atonement; Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallekamps and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), 30.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner suggest that in *hiphil* the term may indicate that God may "let someone see something, or show someone." *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)*, s.v. "mar'eh."
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "tabnît." R. G. Hamerton-Kelly considered Exodus 25:9, 40 to reflect to a heavenly model on which the earthly was patterned. "The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970): 4.
- 11 Among the meanings of *rûach* is "breath" as support of life, though the semantic distinction with *rûach* meaning "the natural spirit of human being," as "sense," "mind," "intellectual frame of mind" is difficult to draw. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "mar'eh."
- 12 Exodus 25:9bis, 40; Deuteronomy 4:16, 17bis, 18bis; Joshua 22:28; 2 Kings 16:10; 1 Chronicles 28:11, 12, 18, 19; Psalms 106:20; 144:12; Isaiah 44:13; Ezekiel 8:3, 10; 10:8.
- 13 The LXX uses three different words for *tabnît*: *paradeigma*: "model" (Exod. 25:9; 1 Chron. 28:11, 12, 18, 19); *dedeigmenon*, "make known" (Exod. 25:40); *omoiôma*, "representation" (Deut. 4:16, 17, 18; Josh. 22:28; 2 Kings 16:10; Ps. 106:20; 143:12 [H 144:12]; Ezek. 8:3; 10:8).

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Omar Miranda, author and youth counselor, resides in Plainville, Georgia, United States.



Connecting teens with Jesus

How often have you heard . . .

“They never even try to talk to me.”

“It is like I do not even exist!”

“I might as well not attend this church!”

“It is like we are from two different worlds.”

I could go on and on with similar expressions of frustration. I am sure you have heard them, but surprisingly not from the youth. Instead, these have been spoken by adults, often ministers, about their interactions with youth.

We need to move away from expressions of frustration and focus on the youth. What are realities of youth ministry today? Here are some of the crucial realities we face:

- Every church is only one generation away from extinction.
- The youth of the church are its greatest asset and hope.
- Connecting with youth is difficult.
- Many youth are angry, hurting, and lonely.
- Youth have a need to be loved, connected, and needed.
- Youth are leaving the church at an alarming rate.

As pastors, in order to connect our youth to Jesus, we must connect with them ourselves. We cannot delegate this responsibility to someone else because most churches do not have the budget for a youth pastor.

Before the youth are excited about attending church, we have to make sure that we approach them as Jesus would. We have to be willing to try to

understand them and their world, meet them at their point of need.

The problem

Jesus knocks on the doors of our hearts (Rev. 3:20) and invites Himself to be part of our lives. Yet many times His invitation is drowned out by what the world offers us—money, reckless sex, power, position, and prestige (1 John 2:15, 16). Jesus makes it clear that we cannot love God *and* the world. But the devil tries to fool our youth to think that they should be afraid of God and not see Him as a Friend. The devil did the same thing to Adam and Eve. After they sinned they became afraid of God, and yet God came looking for them (see Gen. 3:8–10).

Teens have been hiding from God ever since. The devil has convinced many of them that God wants to take their joy. But in reality, the only way they can truly have fun, freedom, fulfillment, positive power, purpose, and peace is experiencing life God’s way. The apostle Paul asks the Romans, “When you were slaves of sin, you didn’t have to please God. But what good did you receive from the things you did? All you have to show for them is your shame, and they lead to death. Now you have been set free from sin, and you are God’s slaves. This will make you holy and will lead you to eternal life. Sin pays off with death. But God’s gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:20–23, CEV).

David also reminds us that fulfillment is found in God. He writes, “My soul finds rest in God alone” (Ps. 62:1, NIV) and “You, God, are my God,

earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water” (Ps. 63:1, NIV). God’s love, David points out, brings joy and gladness: “Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days” (Ps. 90:14, NIV).

If the youth do not experience joy in the Lord, their connection with God will be damaged or even destroyed. Roger L. Dudley points out that more than 40 percent of teenagers who accept Christ will leave the church in their twenties.¹ Dave Kinnaman, of the Barna Group, shared another alarming statistic. He points out that 59 percent of Mosaics—also called Millennials—drop out of church life after their teen years.²

Reason for optimism

It seems to me that the youth in our churches and schools often have knowledge about our doctrines but may lack godly wisdom or true experiential knowledge of a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord. Because of this, they neither understand nor experience practical Christianity.

I believe there are reasons to be hopeful. Our young people can comprehend deep, applicable, real-life biblical teaching from someone who not only knows the information and can teach it effectively but, more importantly, lives the message.

We must help our youth understand that Jesus is the answer to their needs. They must have a saving relationship with Him today. They also need to know

what they believe, why they believe it, and how to live it. Finally, they need to know how to explain what they believe and share it with others. We need to help them realize that Jesus fills the collective holes in their souls.

We can help

Our youth need to connect with parents, teachers, youth pastors, youth leaders, and adults who have a positive relationship with God. These individuals will be able to help the youth with some of the questions they face. It seems that there are at least six burning questions that they want answered:

- Security: Who can I trust?
- Identity: Who am I?
- Belonging: Who wants me?
- Significance: Do I matter?
- Purpose: Why am I here?
- Competence: What do I do well?

If the youth have a good relationship with others who are followers of Jesus Christ, they will hopefully also develop a positive relationship with

God. A personal connection with God is needed, for “we cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don’t love the people we can see?” (1 John 4:20, CEV). Through the lives of others, the youth will be able to see God and experience God in their own lives.

Fixing what is broken

Roger Dudley points out some of the needs of youth and possible solutions. He lists items that adolescents need and adults may have difficulty understanding:

1. Time to think and daydream—to develop abstract thinking—to question values.
2. Time to scream—we need to love them through the period of turmoil, no matter how trying.
3. Time for privacy—time away from parents.
4. Time to explore their sexuality.
5. Time to form a philosophy of life.
6. Time to consider the claims of Jesus Christ on their lives.

Dudley also lists what adults need to do in order to understand and help adolescents:

1. To recognize in ourselves the tendency to be intolerant and threatened by evidences of independence in youth.
2. To understand the effect of rigidity and overcontrol on the need for adolescent independence.
3. To recognize the crucial difference between morals and mores (customs).
4. To understand the key role that modeling plays in making religion attractive to youth.³

Dudley posed this question to youth: “If you could design the ideal . . . congregation, what would it be like?” Out of the hundreds of answers several themes emerged.

- friendly and caring
- deep spirituality
- like a family
- involved in community and mission
- a thinking climate

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Develop a strategy


After we consider the problems, issues, and approaches, I suggest that we develop strategies for our youth ministry. Here are six simple strategies for connecting with youth:

- **Understand the realities that youth are dealing with.** A lot of church leaders acknowledge that they feel unprepared and unqualified to understand youth culture. Read more about it and get more training.
- **Be honest with youth about your lack of connection.** If you have been neglectful about connecting with them, apologize.
- **Connect with youth on a regular and consistent basis.** Whether a weekly “check-in” with the youth group or teaching the youth group once a month or quarter, be consistent and communicate with them. You will be amazed at how this will

translate into stronger relationships in the present and future.

- **Connect with their support systems in any way that you can.** As I previously stated, today’s youth lack effective emotional and spiritual support structures. This can usually be seen through a lack of interest in spiritual things and many times behavioral, academic, social, and even legal difficulties. Although initially the family of a teen may not appear too interested or excited that a pastor shows an interest in connecting with their son or daughter, assure the family that your motivation is to provide assistance for the family with their young person.
- **Connect youth with older, more experienced church members.** Encourage mentoring because it is an effective way to strengthen others. The apostle Paul, when writing to Titus, made the point that for Christian maturity, mentoring remains crucial (see Titus 2:2–8).
- **Teach youth how to effectively connect with their world.** This

generation of teenagers deeply wants to do something positive to help others. Take some time to educate them about their spiritual gifts, and by extension, help them explore how these gifts can be translated into real-life vocations.

As we have seen, our youth are not that much different from us; all they want is to love and be loved. The Christian church is literally only one generation away from extinction. But God can work through us if we make a conscious and concerted effort to honestly connect with them and their worlds. Then, and only then, can we truly hope to lead them into any kind of loving, saving, and vibrant relationship with our Lord. 

- 1 Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 35.
- 2 David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 24.
- 3 Roger L. Dudley, *The Complex Religion of Teens: A Lifetime of Research Reveals How Adolescents Relate to Spiritual Matters* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2007), 126, 127.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 194.

Ellen White and total member involvement

Christ’s statement in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,” was foundational to Ellen White’s understanding of global mission. She believed that every church member is responsible for reaching the world—that regardless of talents or circumstances, every member should be involved in ministry. She returned to this theme time and again.

For example, in 1902, Ellen White affirmed: “The heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world in this generation is the noblest that can appeal to any human being.

It opens a field of effort to everyone whose heart Christ has touched.”¹

In a sermon to the 1903 General Conference session, published in the *General Conference Bulletin*, she enjoined her listeners: “Our question is to be, What can I do to proclaim the third angel’s message? . . . It is to be proclaimed to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. How are we to give it?”²

This is still the question every Seventh-day Adventist should ask himself or herself: “What can I do to proclaim the third angel’s message?” Not everyone can go as a cross-cultural or foreign missionary; but those who cannot go can give to foreign missions,

pray, or can witness at home, as what Ellen White called “home missionaries.” Only if every Adventist takes personal responsibility for reaching the world will it happen. But *only* then. There is much for us to do. We need every church member to be involved.

—David Trim, PhD, serves as director, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 262.
- 2 Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the Sending Out of the Spies,” *General Conference Bulletin*, March 30, 1903, 10.

Revival
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YOU, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR CHURCH, YOUR COMMUNITY



The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World

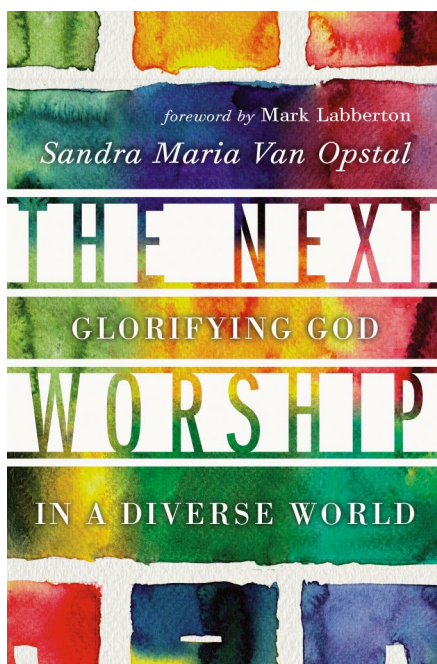
by Sandra Maria Van Opstal, InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Few books have I picked up and read from cover to cover in one sitting. *The Next Worship* qualifies as one of them. Sandra Maria Van Opstal, a pastor at the Grace and Peace Community in Chicago, Illinois, masterfully addresses throughout this book her questions at the close of her introduction, “How do we lead worship in communities that are growing increasingly diverse? How do I get my congregation onboard with multiethnic worship? Is it even necessary?” (17).

Van Opstal writes about worship within the context of gathering around a table for a meal. In fact, she begins each of the eight chapters with a story; and most of those stories center on cooking or food—a tribute to her mother and pride in her Latina heritage (159). Theologically, she couches her emphases within two scriptural motifs. The first is the parable of the great supper, found in Luke 14, noting that “All are invited [to] the banquet: the social elite as well as those from the highways and byways. The tension mounts: people from different ethnic and socioeconomic standings gather. The result: awkward dinner conversations” (25). Also referring to Luke 14, Van Opstal notes that “First, God calls all people to himself. Second, God calls his people to one another” (60). The second is based on the worship scenes throughout the book of Revelation. She states that “Worship is not only contextual but also crosscultural” (34)—connecting that reality to what transpires in Revelation 7:9–12 (20, 34) and 4:8–11 (20, 74).

The anecdotes she shares, resulting from interactions with her students in a variety of settings as well as her

travels, reveal that she is no mere theoretician. Rather, she possesses a broad grasp of many worship cultures that has led her to understand that we best reflect the divine ideal when we take the time to learn from one another. Van Opstal tells the story of being impacted by music learned during a trip to Swaziland and teaching




the lyrics to her students, thus broadening their worldview. She surmises that “multicultural worship is not entertainment. It is an act of solidarity with communities we may never meet” (22).

Leadership proves pivotal in creating a climate for effective worship. Van Opstal tackles the subject of shared leadership by relating a story that speaks to those who enjoy privilege as being the ones who often lead out in determining the shape and contours of the worship event. She

aptly states that “[l]eading worship in relevant, dynamic ways for the future of a diverse church depends on our ability to share leadership” (80). She argues for such collaborative leadership on several levels. For example, she speaks of “inviting crossculturally”; that is, being intentional in seeking individuals from different backgrounds and mentoring them, recognizing that “gender, ethnic or socioeconomic biases affect how we choose leaders” (85). She also stresses the reality that “the rock star will have to move aside for leaders who are willing to share space” (87). By “rock star,” she refers to the leader who demands to be the center of attention, centralizing authority/control to himself or herself.

In addition to other chapters, Van Opstal includes nine valuable appendices that speak cross-culturally.

What I valued most about this book is its cross-generational and international appeal. While it becomes a simplified approach to treat such worship concerns as a black versus white North American phenomenon, worship wars take place in many cultures on every continent. How do we embrace all worshipers by creating an inclusive worship experience that glorifies God and lifts the assembly heavenward?

Van Opstal’s book makes a valuable contribution and should reside in the library of every pastor and worship leader, and it should serve as a reference work for those who instruct worship and liturgy courses. 

—Reviewed by Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, associate professor of church ministry, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

► C. D. Brooks Remembered as Great Adventist Evangelist of 20th Century

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Charles Decatur Brooks, one of the foremost Seventh-day Adventist evangelists of the 20th century, succumbed to pancreatic cancer on June 5, 2016, at the age of 85.

Brooks, better known as C. D. Brooks, led a 60-year ministry that resulted in more than 15,000 baptisms on six continents. He was known for his innovative methods of embracing new media to spread the gospel, including through the *Breath of Life* television ministry, where Brooks served as founding speaker for 23 years.

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, paid tribute to Brooks as “an eminent and much-loved senior statesman in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Wilson continued, “He was a highly dedicated and successful evangelist and biblical preacher who loved the Lord, His prophetic church, and the Advent message.”

C. D. Brooks’s own conversion experience came when, as a 17-year-old recent high school graduate, he

attended meetings by Adventist evangelist E. E. Cleveland in Greensboro, North Carolina.

“Two Sabbaths before Cleveland closed, I was sitting in his tent by myself on a beautiful sunny day, and an overwhelming impression came from the Lord that said to me, ‘This is what I want



you to do, and I will help you to make truth clear,” Brooks said.

Brooks led eight-to-ten-week evangelistic meetings for the next dozen years in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Ohio. He then accepted an administrative position as general field secretary of the Columbia Union Conference but continued to lead major

evangelistic meetings in big cities. In 1971, Brooks became a general field secretary of the General Conference while continuing to lead evangelistic meetings, eventually traveling to six continents.

In 1974 Brooks was asked to be the founding speaker for *Breath of Life*, a television ministry being developed for African-American viewers. In that role Brooks led three or four evangelistic campaigns every year, establishing 15 congregations.

Carlton Byrd, the current speaker of *Breath of Life*, said in an email statement, “Pastor C. D. Brooks kept the light shining. He attended the flame of truth, compassion, and love, and that ministry forever changed the world. He epitomized the words of Jesus, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 5:16).”

C. D. Brooks is survived by his wife of 63 years, Walterene; two children; and three grandchildren. [Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review]

► Hope Channel churns out record 410 shows for South Pacific islanders

Suva, Fiji—Seventh-day Adventist-owned Hope Channel pumped out an unprecedented 410 television programs in May 2016 in Fiji as part of a major effort to provide local programming to the remote islands of the South Pacific. Volunteers from Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands teamed up

under the auspices of the church’s Trans-Pacific Union Mission to produce the television episodes for their communities.

A team of technicians from Hope Channel International in the United States and Hope Channel SPD in Australia, the Philippines, and Papua New Guinea descended on Fiji’s

capital, Suva, to train the volunteers in camera operation, lighting, editing, audio recording, and other aspects of production.

“This is a record,” **Kandus Thorp**, director for international development at Hope Channel International, said of the number of programs. “It was 18 months ago that I first visited Fiji and



we began discussions,” Thorp said. “I am so proud of our Hope Channel team in the Trans-Pacific Union Mission.” She especially thanked **Wayne Boehm**, director of Hope Channel SPD, for his leadership in directing the project.

Boehm described the successful completion of the project as a miracle. He said he arrived in Fiji as the country was being buffeted by a category 3 cyclone and still recovering from a devastating category 5 cyclone last year. While overseeing the television programs, the team experienced earthquakes and tsunami warnings. “Five weeks later, we’re leaving the country with 410 programs on sermons, health, family, music, and relationships,” Boehm said. “God helped us exceed our expectations. It’s nothing short of miraculous.” Boehm paid special tribute to the volunteers, saying it was heart-warming to see people willingly leave their homes and loved ones for the project. He was



Photo: TPUM Project Hope / Facebook

particularly inspired by the youngest presenter, a six-year-old child from Fiji. “It shows you’re never too young to start being involved in discipling,” he said.

Fiji’s president, **Jioji (George) Konousi Konrote**, attended a special

May 6 ceremony celebrating the conclusion of the project. Konrote, a Seventh-day Adventist believer, thanked the Adventist Church for its leadership in media ministry and presented each volunteer with a commemorative certificate. *[ANN Staff]*

► Members of the deaf, deaf-blind community are celebrated through an international congress in Europe

Seville, Spain—Approximately 230 people sought to affirm members of the often marginalized deaf, deaf-blind community during the International Congress for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind in Seville, Spain from May 13 to 15, 2016.

The “Through My Hands” congress featured musicals, sermons presented by the deaf for the deaf, and audio messages in English for those who were hearing. Attendees also had the

opportunity to tour historical and religious sites in Seville and Cordoba.

This congress is but a sample of things to come. It is anticipated that the General Conference will host a world congress for the deaf and deaf-blind in 2019. The venue has yet to be determined. The vision to minister to those with special needs

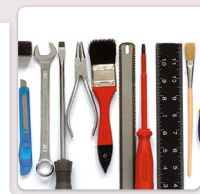


Photo: Inter-European Division

is spreading—not only for the deaf but for the blind and those with physical and mental limitations as well as for the orphans of the world. *[Larry Evans/ ANN Staff]*

Larry R. Evans, DMin, is assistant to the president for specials needs, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Jeffrey Jordan, MDiv, pastors the Southern Deaf Fellowship, Cleveland, Tennessee, United States.



The last to “hear”

Today we estimate that globally there are more than 300 million people with disabling hearing loss. With the lack of interpretation in churches around the world, it should come as no surprise that it is estimated that only 2 percent of the deaf are Christian. This can change when those who hear work together with those who cannot.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with the word *disability*, it does give an emphasis to what a person cannot do. Many deaf feel disrespected by the hearing people, though most hearing persons have no intention of conveying that impression. Every effort needs to be made to affirm the talents and spiritual gifts of the deaf person. There is much more to deafness, however, than being unable to hear. The deaf, for example, see themselves as being part of a linguistic cultural-minority people group more than as a collection of individuals with a common disability. The idea of a “culture” suggests a full range of learned behavior patterns. In turn, this results in the consciousness of a special identity.

An element of separation and exclusion can result in the minds of both the hearing and the deaf when these unique cultural characteristics are added to the use of a fully recognized but foreign language. The deaf communicate their “sign language” not only without words but with a combination of hand, facial, and body expressions. This recognition of the deaf as a cultural community or people group is important when efforts are put forth to develop working relationships between the deaf and hearing. A few communication practices by the hearing when working with the deaf can be helpful. Consider the following:

1. Learn the deaf person’s name or sign.

2. To get a deaf person’s attention, tap his or her shoulder lightly.
3. Face the person with whom you are speaking.
4. If speaking through an interpreter, address the deaf person, not the interpreter.
5. Maintain eye contact.
6. Include the deaf in general conversations.
7. Appoint a deaf person to serve as an officer in your church.
8. Invite the deaf to have a part in planning church events. When attending church events, be sure to recognize and include them in the various activities.
9. Deaf are visual. During the worship service it is important that they be seated near the front and that the interpreter to be close to the platform.
10. If an interpreter is not present during the worship service, provide a device, such as an iPad, where they can watch a “deaf church” sermon preached elsewhere while still being part of the worshipping church.*
11. When possible, the deaf prefer to have their own church during study time and worship. However, on special occasions they like to be involved with the hearing congregation.
12. As the deaf group grows, they will need their own pastor or elder/leader.
13. As with any cultural group, there are some practices to avoid. Here are a few:
14. Do not refer to the deaf as “dumb,” “deaf-mute,” or “handicapped.”
15. Do not stomp your feet or make huge waving or rude gestures to get the deaf person’s attention.
16. Do not allow your attention to be diverted by another hearing person.

17. Do not treat the deaf adult like a child.
18. Do not persist in helping the deaf when they do not need or want help.
19. Do not assume deaf people can read lips. Only 30 percent of words in English can be read on the lips. And many letters look the same when pronounced—like *b* and *p*.

The greatest liability a hearing person has when working with the deaf is when decisions impacting the deaf are made without first consulting them. The ministry *for* the deaf is really most effective when it becomes a ministry *with* the deaf. There is no better way of doing this than first spending time with them in their own setting. Jesus, our Example, did this.

With such an Example, we ask, “Must the deaf be the last to ‘hear?’” 🗣️

* One option is the live stream worship service by the Southern Deaf Fellowship pastored by Jeffrey Jordan. The link to the live streaming is www.deafchurchonline.org/index.php/live-sermon. Deaf congregants can also go to our archives section to see previous sermons.

Helpful resources

Esther M. Doss, *Can You Hear Us?: A Quick Guide to Deaf Ministry* (Greenbelt, MD: Three Angels Deaf Ministries, 2014). Download it at www.adventistdeaf.org/uploaded_assets/7125.
 Larry R. Evans, “Do We Hear Them?” (*Adventist World*, February 2012).
 For a list of resources for your deaf congregants, please visit www.adventistdeaf.org/deaf-resources.

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