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Ministry

International Journal for Pastors
12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA

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Vol. 93, No. 5 © 2021

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+1 301-680-6511
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COVER

316 Creative / Shutterstock

LAYOUT

316 Creative

SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99;
Canada and overseas US\$47.00.
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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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Printed by 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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Ministry® are the registered trademarks
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Receiving hate, giving love

Many years ago, during Communism in Romania, my wife, Daniela, and I wanted to start a small clothing factory. The single person who could approve it was the president over all businesses in that county. We scheduled an appointment with him and presented our desire. Although we had all of the proper documents and passed all of the needed inspections, he refused to approve us. When I inquired why, he answered, “I hate you Christians. I cannot agree with you. You all should be destroyed.”

For months, whatever we did was not sufficient, but eventually we were approved and started our business. When the revolution was over, there was no longer a Communist party. The man lost his position and went in desperate search of work. Most people hated the former Communist leaders, so few would open their doors, let alone hire him. One day, he came to our house.

As I opened the door, the man recognized me. He started to plead for a job, with no hope that

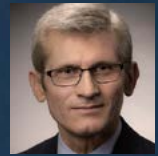
he would get hired. The hurt and his hate were still fresh in our minds. Daniela and I looked at each other, then offered him a job on the spot. Our former antagonist was amazed. “Why would you help me when I hated you?” he asked incredulously.

“I cannot agree with your views,” I answered. “But I do not hate you. In fact, I care for you.”

You don’t have to agree

In Matthew 18, Peter tries to impress Jesus. “Should I forgive people seven times?” Jesus responds, “‘Seventy times seven’” (v. 22). That seems a little eccentric. Then Jesus tells of a servant who owed the king ten thousand talents. “Forgive me,” he says; “I’ll pay it back.” Right there, he missed it—the depth of his sin and the breadth of God’s grace. One talent was about 67 pounds of gold, about 16 years of wages.

One would need to live about two thousand lives to pay that amount of debt. On the other hand, the servant is consumed with anger and unable to forgive someone who owed him a



hundred denarii—just three months' salary. The bad news is you can never pay your debt. The good news is you don't have to. Jesus paid it all.

Those who value Jesus' blood have no problem forgiving, loving, and showing grace. Turning one's back on this love and grace results in self-inflicted consequences. The third angel's message states, "And they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:11, NKJV). How should we react when we encounter persons who think or act differently from us?

Mark Finley states, "If your understanding of the mark of the beast makes you angry. . . . [If it makes you] angry at the people who don't preach it like you think they ought to, then you need to reexamine your heart. Your understanding of the mark of the beast should give you a passion for reaching lost people with the gospel of Christ. . . . If my understanding of prophecy doesn't make me a more loving, kind, compassionate Christian—then I should reevaluate my understanding."¹

You do have to love

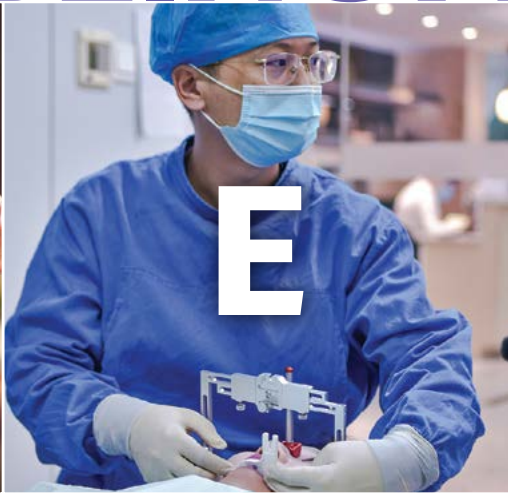
In a society where division and even hate have become more and more the norm, the third angel's message is ultimately a message of love. Even children may be taught that the proof of God's presence in one's life is the love of God manifested toward those who don't deserve it. Shama Stock states, "God's message of warning is a loud message of love. He wants to come into your heart and change you into his image."²

Jesus commands us to love one another to the same degree that He loves us (John 13:34). God is calling us to experience His love and reflect it to those around us—to the same degree that He has loved us. You cannot give what you don't have.



- 1 Mark A. Finley, "The Mark of the Beast: Has the Message Changed?" *Adventist Review*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.adventistreview.org/1806-36>.
- 2 Shama Stock, "The Third Angel: A Loud Message of Love," www.revelationforkids.com/the-third-angels-loud-warning.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF BEING A



Homer Trecartin, MA, is the director of the Global Mission Centers and the Global Mission tentmaker program called Total Employment at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

A few years ago, a Seventh-day Adventist couple in Atlanta, Georgia, felt a growing burden for the thousands of people living in a low-income housing project. At first, they thought “the church” should do something. But, as time went on, they became convicted that *they* needed to do something themselves.

Eventually, they decided to move there with their children. But as they began to make plans, they discovered they earned too much money to live in that government-subsidized housing community. So, they quit their good-paying jobs and took lower-paying positions, sold their nice middle-class house, and moved into the projects. Now *that* is real sacrifice!

They began visiting their new neighbors, organizing community cookouts, and arranging games and activities for the neighborhood kids. They were tentmakers.

What are tentmakers?

The term refers to the apostle Paul’s practice of making tents to support himself while being a circuit evangelist. So, in short, a tentmaker is someone who moves into a difficult area for the purpose of mission but does not work for the church. Their work for a “secular” employer provides for their living needs and gives them access to people they normally would otherwise not be able to touch.

We desperately need tentmakers—thousands of them all around the world. If we have to rely on church-employed workers, we will never finish the work. There is not enough money, and church employees cannot get the permits or visas necessary to live and work in many of the most difficult places. We need dedicated professionals who creatively find jobs outside the church in those challenging areas.

In some parts of the world, we are talking about whole countries that only tentmakers can

enter. In other places, it is large cities. In highly developed countries, we have towns and villages, high-rise apartment blocks, expensive gated communities, and slums that need to know about God’s love. There are thousands of massive businesses around the world without even one Christian working in them.

We need to change our perspective and start finding out where members are not living and working. Then, we need to begin to intentionally increase the number of dedicated members moving into those unentered countries, cities, communities, and businesses. And most of them will have to be tentmakers.

Let’s look at seven tentmaker principles from the life of Paul.

Principle 1: A tentmaker’s work will not hurt their witness

In 1 Corinthians 9:12, 18, Paul says, “If you support others who preach to you, shouldn’t we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ. . . .

“What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That’s why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.”¹

I was never a tentmaker. I worked for the church. When I lived in Lebanon, my residency permit had “Missionary” printed on it (in Arabic). So, if I applied for a visa to visit Algeria, their embassy in Lebanon would look at my residency permit and say, “Missionary? We don’t want you in Algeria!”

But a tentmaker could say that they are a teacher, plumber, computer programmer, nurse, cell phone tower engineer, professor, or geologist, and they would get in.

Paul had the right to be paid, but he gave it up and preached free of charge so that no one could

say he just did it for the money or to keep his job. He did it to gain access to people and places that he could not have reached otherwise.

A tentmaker's work will, in fact, open doors for witnessing that would otherwise be difficult or impossible.

Principle 2: Tentmakers help stretch church resources

In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul says, "Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God's Good News to you."

Tentmakers do not cost the church anything. Someone else arranges their visas, ships their belongings, and pays their salaries. The church supports them spiritually, socially, and emotionally but does not have to help financially. Therefore, tentmakers are not a financial burden to the church. In fact, they strengthen the church with their tithes and offerings and greatly multiply the number of witnesses available for the work.

Roger,² for example, works as a tentmaker in one of our difficult countries today. A few years ago, he was returning to his work, joyfully carrying a number of books I had given him. It was illegal, but Roger had done this many times before. And each time, he had witnessed miracles. Sometimes God helped the customs agents skip right over him without even opening his suitcase. Other times they searched his luggage and just did not see the books.

But this time they saw the books! Angrily they ordered Roger out of line and interrogated him through most of the night, one officer after another. In the early morning, they fined Roger \$800 cash on the spot. Then they released him, saying they would be reading these books and get back to him. It was clearly a threat!

Roger was scared, tired, and overwhelmed. Why had God let him down this time? These were God's books. Why did God waste all this money and time? And then, suddenly, a thought popped into his mind. It was almost as if God said to him, "Roger, you are right. These are my books. And the money is mine. And you are mine. And so are those CID officers."

As Roger told me about it later, he was rejoicing again. "Think of it, Pastor," he said. "For years, I would gladly have paid for a chance to give books to government officials. And now,

several of them have heard my testimony and been assigned to read our books. And it cost me only eight hundred dollars!"

Roger was, and still is, a tentmaker. The church does not pay him, but his witness is powerful in a part of the world where the church cannot send regular workers or missionaries.

Principle 3: A tentmaker demonstrates that work is not demeaning

In 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9, Paul says, "We were not idle when we were with you. We never accepted food from anyone without paying for it. We worked hard day and night so we would not be a burden to any of you. We certainly had the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to give you an example to follow."

One reason Paul worked as a tentmaker was so no one could sit around and say, "I want to be a minister and be employed by the church so that I don't have to work."

Jesus worked most of His life as a carpenter. His hands were rough. He got splinters in His fingers. He smashed His thumb with the hammer. And the way He responded to those situations was itself a powerful witness.

A tentmaker shows the world the blessings of real work and that being a follower of Jesus changes even the way we work.

Principle 4: Tentmakers provide an example for new believers

I am a strong supporter of sending missionaries and Global Mission Pioneers into new areas to start new work. But too often, the only model the new believers see is the minister or missionary or pioneer, someone who is paid by the church. So, they think that to be faithful followers of Jesus, they need to leave their jobs and become full-time employees of the church. That is the only model they have seen.

Tentmakers show new believers a model that all can follow—that of a believer who lives a life, has a job, and shares God's Good News through all of it while not being employed by the church.

Principle 5: To be effective, tentmakers must demonstrate accountability

Acts 14:26, 27 says, "Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God

WE EACH NEED TO BE USING THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN US. AND WE NEED BOTH CHURCH EMPLOYEES AND TENTMAKERS. ONE IS NOT BETTER THAN THE OTHER.

had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too.”

Paul reported back to his home church. But he was also working closely with the local churches where he had been sent to labor. Writing to the church in Philippi, he says, “For you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now” (Phil. 1:5).

Tentmakers are not just out there on their own; they are part of the local and world church family and must demonstrate accountability to the body of Christ.

Principle 6: One size does not fit all

Have you ever tried on something that says “one size fits all”? It really does not fit—not with clothes and not in the work of the church either.

We each need to be using the gifts God has given us. And we need both church employees and tentmakers. One is not better than the other. Paul even switched back and forth between tentmaking and church employment, depending on the needs.

One day, in the heart of a sprawling capital city in North Africa, a foreign bank employee stopped by a shop and began visiting with the young cashier. Over the next few months, a friendship began to develop. One day, this Adventist tentmaker invited the young man to a Bible study and later introduced him to her pastor, who was working in that city as a missionary.

Little by little, the young man accepted the new truths he was learning and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He married an Adventist girl from a nearby country and is now a pastor working for his own people. It is because of a tentmaker and a missionary pastor working

together that this young man is an Adventist pastor today.

Not everyone should be a tentmaker. And not everyone should be a church worker. We need both working together.

Principal 7: Being a tentmaker is not always safe and easy work

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul gives quite an overwhelming list of things he endured, including jail, whippings, being stoned, facing hunger and thirst, and even being without enough clothes.

Does that make you want to be a tentmaker?

People often do amazing things for money and fame. But tentmakers may not get much of either. Many times, no one notices what has been accomplished. Often, tentmakers do not even get to see that they are making a difference. But in heaven, the results will be clearly seen.

Whom shall I send?

Not only can tentmakers go where church workers often cannot, but also when the church is shut down and the leaders imprisoned or killed, tentmakers are often able to continue their work. I believe we are seeing the beginning of a mighty tentmaker movement that will sweep through the world and help complete the spread of the gospel so that Jesus can come. Let us keep these dedicated tentmakers in prayer as they answer the call to go wherever needed—from Atlanta, Georgia, to the most unentered and most difficult places on earth.³



1 Scripture is from the New Living Translation.

2 Pseudonym.

3 For more information, visit www.totalemployment.org.



Carrying Jesus: Is it too much for you?

Vernon T. Waters, MDiv, is the pastor of Serenity Seventh-day Adventist Church, Martinsburg, West Virginia, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

I did not pay nearly enough attention to my relationship with Jesus. I was so absorbed in ministry that I neglected that most important relationship. The essentials of morning prayer, meditation, and personal Bible study took a back seat to sermon preparation, strategic planning, member care, and other ministry-related responsibilities. My image of ministry success consisted of having a numerically growing church, Spirit-filled weekly preaching, engaging worship, increases in tithe and offering, involved membership, administrative excellence, and a well-kept facility. The incessant routine involved in the pursuit of these goals stressed me greatly.

I became dispirited and burned out, resulting in an episode of clinical depression, major depressive disorder, and a hiatus from ministerial duties.

My story, I hope, will help somebody steer clear of Satan's trap.

Carrying or carried?

It is said that, "According to legend, Saint Christopher devoted his life to carrying the weak and poor across a river. One night, when he was carrying a child, he felt his burden grow heavier with each step. When questioned, the child declared that he was Christ and that Christopher was thus bearing the weight of the world."¹ Is it possible that we may be guilty of carrying Christ to others but not receiving Him daily for ourselves? Could

this cause our work to become heavier? I admit that this was my experience. But first, what constitutes conversion?

Conversion is the process of changing or causing something to change from one form to another. When I speak of conversion here, I am not referring to the more familiar nomenclature, new birth, but to the great need many ministers and church workers have who find that Christ is growing heavier with each step. Conversion here is to change or convert from being ministry-focused to Jesus-focused. We should not attempt to carry Christ to others without Christ first carrying us. Ellen White tells us, "When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life.

"Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care."²

Caught up in the marathon of church work, I failed in practical ways to remember that Jesus and His love are the life of ministry and that my work ethos flows from a continual relationship with Him. Without this, it is natural to turn inward and depend on self. I have been painfully reminded of the imperative, as simple as it sounds, that giving myself to Christ is a daily prerequisite to working for Christ. "Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, 'I am Christ's; I have given myself to Him;' and ask Him to give you His Spirit, and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and

believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. The apostle says, 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.' Colossians 2:6."³

True power in ministry

The power of ministry does not begin with Bible study, sermon preparation, and a peaceful relationship with members. That power originates in the same place as it did for our Lord. "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:16).⁴ The very next verse concludes with these profound words: "And the power of the Lord was present to heal them" (v. 17). When we withdraw to our closets to pray, we draw power from the well of divine resources.

Derek Morris, in an interview with Rear Admiral Barry Black, the chaplain of the United States Senate, asked the question, "What is the place of prayer in your preparation and delivery of sermons?" Chaplain Black responded: "I cannot preach without praying. I cannot study without praying. I cannot live without praying. . . . When I get up in the morning, before my feet touch the floor, I swing out of bed on my knees. From that moment on, there are not many seconds of the day that I am not aware of the blessed presence of my Companion."⁵

If we want the power to carry the yoke of Christ, then we should listen to Him, "Come to Me. . . . Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me" (Matt. 11:29, 30). I am guilty of being aware of this truth while not consistently, perseveringly practicing it. I suffered for it. It resulted in emotional and psychological burnout. How is it with you?

Tell yourself the truth

It is dangerous for a person to be in the ministry and not connected to Jesus. It can lead to personal and professional disasters. Stephen Covey emphasizes that before there can be public victory, there must be private victory. In other words, before stepping from the house into the pulpit, we need to get alone with God and deal with ourselves, or, shall I say, let Him deal with us! Covey asserts, "If there isn't deep integrity and fundamental character strength, the challenges of life will cause true motives to surface and human relationship failure will replace short-term success."⁶

One place where character strength is fostered is in the chamber with God. We are weak in the things of God precisely because we are weak in our personal relationship with Him. Well did the psalmist say:

Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is none upon earth that I desire
besides You.
My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my
portion forever (Ps. 73:25, 26).

The psalmist knows something about personal weakness and the Source of real power. We must deal with our private issues in the chamber with God so that we give those we serve an unblemished look at the Jesus we are carrying to give to them. "That which was objectionable in the character is purified from the soul by the love of Jesus. All selfishness is expelled, all envy, all evil-speaking, is rooted out, and a radical transformation is wrought in the heart."⁷

Spending time with God makes us humble before Him and more dependent on His strength rather than our own, enabling us to carry the glad-some burden of bearing His name to the world. Preaching becomes a mockery when ministers are so busy with themselves that they do not spend adequate time in the presence of the Lord and with His Word. Says Ellen White: "Overburdened, a minister is often so hurried that he scarcely finds time to examine himself whether he be in the faith. He finds very little time to meditate and pray. Christ in His ministry united prayer with work. Night after night He spent wholly in prayer. Ministers must seek God for His Holy Spirit, in order that they may present the truth aright."⁸

Turning around

My problem with ministry was this: the work of the Lord became more important than the Lord of the work. When I sensed this, I knew this was Satan's trap for me and that I was in big trouble. Thank God I recovered! But how? There were three key factors in my recovery.

1. *Support.* Jesus had twelve disciples. In His time of most desperate need, He surrounded Himself with them, especially Peter, James, and John. In the garden, His emotional distress was excruciating and nearly unbearable. But for the support of a heavenly angel (Luke 22:43), He may have been crushed under the load. In my time of need, I had help as well: three allies—my spouse, sympathetic friends, and conference administration. However, unlike the disciples, these did not sleep nor desert me. My wife stood by me and prayed for me. My friends constantly encouraged me. And my

conference administration provided me with the time and resources I needed to address my concerns adequately.

2. *Therapy.* We are often reluctant to ask for help. We deny or keep our feelings, both positive and negative, to ourselves and develop dysfunctional behaviors to numb them. We fail to be honest with ourselves and break the silence by

to disengage from the ministry routine are essential to mental and physical well-being.

As colleagues in ministry, we need to remember our humanity and the essential need for balance in all things. Jesus has called us to carry Him to the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20), but before that can be fully achieved, we must develop intimacy

Preaching becomes a mockery when ministers are so busy with themselves that they do not spend adequate time in the presence of the Lord and with His Word.

being humble enough to talk with a therapist. In my case, a therapist helped me know myself better, see my blind spots, and discover my need for emotional and physical safeguards, such as inward and outward disciplines, unplugging from ministry, and plugging into nurturing relationships.⁹ A compassionate therapist is a great listener. Visiting with one allows spiritual caretakers to unload the stresses of ministry and sort out concerns that may have been carried for a long time. And I suggest you do not wait for a crisis.

3. *Self-care.* Self-care is often underutilized, and the need for it is underestimated by many servants of Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat” (Mark 6:31). Support and therapy are both parts of a complete self-care program, but there is something more. My recovery from depression and burnout is also attributable to paying attention to my own need for guilt-free rest and recreation. Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann affirm, “Ministry can be a demanding and draining business.”¹⁰ Taking a day off, engaging in physical activity such as exercise, and doing things that allow the body and mind

with Him, guarding the heart with all diligence. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16, ESV). By faithfully following the apostle’s counsel, we may be healthy conduits of God’s love and grace both to the body of Christ and to the world.



1 “Saint Christopher Carrying Christ,” The Met, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471986>. The webpage from which I obtained this story sells art pieces. The story of Saint Christopher was shared as the background story of the artwork.

2 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 77, 78.

3 White, 52.

4 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is from the New King James Version.

5 Derek J. Morris, *Powerful Biblical Preaching: Practical Pointers from Master Preachers* (Olney, MD: Trilogy Scripture Resources, 2012), 37.

6 Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 22.

7 Ellen G. White, “Go and Tell Him His Fault Between Thee and Him Alone,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 22, 1890, 2.

8 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 127, 1902.

9 See Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 117–137.

10 Wilson and Hoffmann, 179.



To infinity and beyond

There are pixels in front of our eyes, pods in our ears, and touchscreens at our fingertips. We cannot move without Uber, wait for the ride without Tweeting, eat without Yelping, work without Slacking, experience without Instagramming—we just cannot anymore. What was supposed to help us has made us less.

All the while, our humanity cries for intimacy. We are trying to supplant our physical need for intimacy with internet pornography, our social needs with “social” media, and our intellectual needs with streaming entertainment. We prefer to be sexual monists, one-sided conversationalists, and brainless consumers of moving images. While we have been waiting for humanity to harness technology to create a luxurious future of automatons, technology has harnessed humanity, sterilizing us into a generation of androids and apples.

Humanity is not found . . .

Humanity is not found in economic prosperity or political freedom. Humanity is not found even in the exploration of emotion, consciousness, and imagination. It's not in food, although food is delicious. It's not in sex, although sex is good. It's not in the number of friends or in “deep” conversations. It's not in technology. It's not even in the Christian humanistic values of passion and purpose. Ultimately, food is digested, sex ends, friends die, technology gets updated (remember Friendster? Snapchat?), passion putters, and purpose is achieved. Our humanity is found in the intimacy we have been crying for the entire time: God.

Humanity is found . . .

Genesis 1:26–28 describes our human nature as being modeled after the image of God. Within this image, we are given authority, purpose, sexual gender, relationship, consciousness, value—our humanity. Whatever He is, we are. This mimicry of God, or reflection, is the true fulfillment of our humanity, and it satisfies the cry for intimacy.

“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.”¹

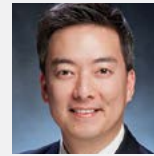
Technology culture's greatest fault

Where do we get this craving fulfilled? Is there a shortcut, post, bitly link, Wikipedia entry, tweet, that can succinctly provide this? No. Our impatience and instant microwave culture buck against this. Ironically, it is this unsatisfaction that satisfies and satisfaction that dissatisfies.

The God of time uses time to convey Himself, fulfill our need for intimacy, and make us more human. In other words, sit back; it takes time. And this is the greatest fault of the culture that surrounds technology—its abhorrence of time. The culture surrounding technology is obsessed with efficiency, and hatred for “time-consuming” eats away at us like flesh-eating bacteria. Infinite abysses



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can be filled only by infinite objects in infinite time.

Jesus reads hearts

Jesus read hearts. This is how He dealt with those trying to trap, persecute, attack, and even kill Him. This is how He dealt with those who loved, adored, and followed Him. Yet all were sinners. And to them, He revealed their motives. He revealed hypocrisy, innate and obvious. He revealed the discrepancy of exterior words and expressions with inner emotional motives.

He still reads them today. As we read Scripture, Jesus, the Living Word and the Written Word alike, reads our hearts again. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts like a powerful search engine with spiritual algorithms. We have the option to reject these results. But they do show up every morning in devotional time.

This is the intimacy we need. To be read. To change. To be like Jesus.

The world has a false intimacy, a sensual intimacy that purports to be about

raw, unfiltered emotion. It is an ecstasy that has all hormonal cylinders on in full throttle. It is an experience that verges on burning out the senses and the spirit. This is often called a divine experience that some mimic while others worship. It is loud, powerful, roaring. It feels good but ends up momentary, fleeting, and effervescent.

Intimacy with Jesus is hearing that still, small Voice through reading, hearing, and studying the Word. And what that calls for is a response. For this wondrous Being of the universe breaks any stereotype of some impersonal, timeless entity and becomes a personal, intimate, exclusively one-on-one Friend with you who elicits an intimate cry of—"Yes, Lord."



- 1 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London, UK: Penguin, 1993), 45.



The Bible's final word on buying and selling

The world we live in and, sometimes, take for granted received an unexpected shaking from COVID-19. Things that appeared stable and established are now revealed as fragile, insecure, uncertain—as the sudden unavailability of some goods and services has shown us. The routine of buying and selling, at least as we have known it, faces a less certain future. But some aspects of the future of buying and selling are not so uncertain. Three buying-and-selling events that take on increased relevance in our world's quickly changing economic and social situation are included in the book of Revelation in its record of revealed end-time conditions.

What are these three accounts, and is what we are going through now a precursor to what the Bible says is coming?

Babylon versus Jerusalem

To begin, John devotes Revelation 18 to the fall of end-time “Babylon the Great,” a designation that literally echoes the arrogant declaration of King Nebuchadnezzar just before his God-ordained mental shutdown: “Isn't this Babylon the Great which I have built to house my royal power and my highly-esteemed majesty?”¹

About seven centuries before John's day, the Babylonians invaded Judah and took many Hebrews captive, including Daniel and his three companions, and reduced much of the city of Jerusalem to ruins. As a result, to Hebrews, “Babylon” became the motif of a destructive power oppressing God's people who, in turn, were symbolized by Jerusalem. When Babylon prospered, Jerusalem languished. Only with Babylon's collapse and fall could Jerusalem revive and thrive—the biblical “tale of two cities.” This became a major motif for the Hebrew prophets.²

John reports in Revelation 18 his vision of an authoritative heavenly messenger whose arrival to the earth brings light. He hears the messenger declare, using familiar Old Testament Babylon-versus-Jerusalem imagery, good news for end-time believers: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the

Great!” (v. 2, quoting prophecies of the collapse of ancient Babylon in Isaiah 21:9 and Jeremiah 51:8). John is shown how the fall of end-time Babylon the Great opens the way for a joyful liberation of God's end-time people (Rev. 18:4).

“No longer any buyers for our goods!”

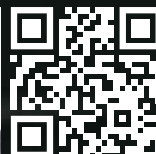
Not everyone rejoices over the fall of end-time Babylon. It is impossible, especially in today's changed economic conditions, to ignore this extended consumer-and-marketing imagery employed by John to describe Babylon's fall. He reports not just once, but twice, the weeping and mourning of the earth's merchants (vv. 11, 15) because the now-fallen “Babylon the Great” no longer buys their goods (v. 11). What had been a huge, nonstop cycle of consumption that made “the merchants of the earth rich” (v. 3) has, suddenly, collapsed.

John, in his day, was aware of Babylonia's reputation as a major consumer. He lists 28 luxury goods that so delighted “Babylon the Great” (vv. 12, 13). His list has precious metals; fine fabrics; and furnishings and ornaments made of wood, ivory, and marble. His list then names a range of upmarket spices and foodstuffs, followed by livestock, horses, and chariots. Its final item is especially poignant: “bodies—and human beings.”³

Ancient Babylon's fall brought on a sudden collapse of this consumption of luxury goods. Marketplaces were deserted, production was shut down, roads and canals went quiet. Will this be repeated for end-time Babylon? Is end-time Babylon, consuming Babylon, starting to fall? Are we witnessing its first major trembling in the suddenly changed economic conditions surrounding us? If so, what is the appropriate Christian response?

According to John, Christians should immediately obey the heavenly voice that urges, “Get out of her, my people! Avoid being caught up in her sins, and as a result suffering a share of her plagues!” (v. 4). One of end-time Babylon's sins, which Christians should “get out” from,

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SCAN FOR AUDIO



is her never-satisfied craving for both literal and symbolic luxury goods, which someday in the near future may suddenly disappear from the “Babylonian” marketplaces of this world. Christians around the world today are increasingly exposed to consumerism and must stop focusing on earthly things and focus, instead, on spiritual things.

God also urges us to participate in the “get out” proclamation! We must urgently extend this invitation to the world to come out of Babylon; this is our mission and call. Warn people of the coming crisis and show them the hope in Jesus’ soon coming; invite them to “come out.”

As in Noah’s day, the world may ridicule and mock you, but be strong! As God’s people were called to get out of Jerusalem before it was destroyed and He called them to get out of Babylon, so today God warns His people of the judgments that will soon come and invites us to pray and consider how God may be leading us regarding ministry to the cities, how to be incarnated in the city without being incarcerated in the city.

“Transaction failed—contact your financial institution”

In little more than two lifetimes, the currency used for buying and selling across much of the world has undergone a drastic change. Producing and circulating coins and notes is expensive and time-consuming. And now they have become a possible medium for spreading the COVID virus, prompting a huge currency-washing operation, giving the expression *laundering money* a new meaning!

Having money available and controlled digitally makes it easy to block one’s ability to buy and sell—the



very thing that John saw threatening end-time believers. He describes in Revelation 13 a fearsome beast emerging from the ocean that joins a beast emerging from the land. They go to work deceiving earth dwellers into giving their loyalty to the ocean beast. To help bring this about, the land beast persuades earth dwellers to make an image to the ocean beast, which is then brought to life.

Using its power of speech, this image “makes everyone, the insignificant and the significant, the rich and the poor, the free and the slaves, that they will be empowered to give them a stamp on their hand, the right one, or on their forehead, so that no one can buy or sell except those possessing the stamp, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name” (vv. 16, 17). John here declares that in their efforts to gain and maintain world control, the two beasts and the image will campaign to force all peoples of the world into submission. Extreme restrictions will be imposed on those who refuse to submit.

The seal of God

While the beasts and the image are busy marking their followers, God will also activate an end-time strategy for marking His servants. A heavenly messenger shouts to four angels who have been empowered to unleash destruction on the earth, “Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed an identity mark on the servants of our God, on their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3). John is given further detail about God’s forehead ID mark: “And with Him [the Lamb] were one hundred forty-four thousand who have his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads” (Rev. 14:1).

In summary, John reports his vision of an end-time process in which the world’s population will become clearly identified as belonging to one of only two groups: those whose foreheads carry God’s ID seal and those whose foreheads or right hands carry the beast’s stamp.

At this point, it is reasonable to ask a practical question that has increased relevance as a result of the widespread shutdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic. How can we prepare for any future, widespread disabling of our ability to buy and sell? Should we stockpile essential foodstuffs and medications? Should we retreat to isolated places on the planet, hoping to remain under the radar of the beast’s loyalty program?

John’s answer is *not* to buy and stockpile material goods, whether foodstuffs, toilet paper, drinking water, or medication! Nor should we

prepare isolated retreats. There are, however, some absolutely essential purchases Christ says that we must make now as we prepare for the coming shutdown of our ability to buy and sell.

Christ's end-time investment advice

Christ spoke to John, exiled on the island of Patmos “because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9), directing him, “What you are seeing, write in a document and send to the seven churches” (v. 11). In the letter addressed to believers in Laodicea, Christ provides highly relevant investment advice for end-time Christians. He urges us to invest in three goods that will retain their value regardless of market turmoil and empower us to face the coming time of trouble: “I advise you to *buy from me . . .*” (Rev. 3:18). Christ is the only One from whom these investment products can be bought.

Before giving His investment advice, Christ explains that they need it because they have a wildly inflated estimate of the value of their current spiritual investments. “You say, I am rich, I have prospered, I don’t need anything” (v. 17). Their core spiritual defect is thus “lack of their sense of need.”⁴ Christ’s “reliable and true expert valuation” (paraphrasing v. 14) of their situation is brief and direct: “you just don’t realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked!” (v. 17).

Christ first urges the Laodiceans to buy from Him “gold refined by fire” (v. 18). Gold is highly valued partly because it retains its purity and market value due to its resistance to combining with other elements. The gold that Jesus offers the Laodiceans is not earthly but heavenly. Later in Revelation, John comments on the prominence of pure, transparent gold in his vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18, 21). “This city has nothing to hide.”⁵ It will be possible to “see straight through” both city and residents as a result of God’s work in Christ to redeem and restore them.

Christ’s second piece of urgent investment advice is to buy a white garment in order to be appropriately dressed and avoid the shame of nakedness (Rev. 3:18b). Nakedness, shame, and fear have been linked in Scripture since the Garden of Eden.⁶ There, God Himself clothed the man and woman after their failure to properly clothe themselves (Gen. 3:21). White garments have a special meaning in Scripture. In John’s visions, white garments are standard for those who find favor with God (Rev. 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:14).

John describes the role assigned to the huge multitude standing before God’s throne in

preparing their white garments—they whitened them (Greek *leuchainō*) by washing them in the most powerful whitening agent available to humans—the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14).

Christ’s third piece of end-time investment advice is to “buy . . . my eye ointment and apply it to your eyes so you can see!” (Rev. 3:18). Much more crippling than physical blindness is spiritual blindness, especially among religious leaders. Jesus diagnosed spiritual blindness among the religious leaders of His day (Matt. 15:14; 23:16–26) and continues to diagnose blindness of end-time Christian leaders and their followers. But He also offers His own eye ointment!

At the door

In the face of these conditions, Christ urges us to buy wisely, and He holds out the only investments whose purity, quality, effectiveness, and value will not fail during the coming time of social, economic, and spiritual turmoil. Christ is already at the door, knocking, waiting (Rev. 3:20). Scripture identifies who will open the door. “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). The most important of life’s investments is to open the door, let Jesus in, make Him welcome, and seal the only deal that endures for time and eternity.



- 1 Daniel 4:27 Aramaic (verse 30, most translations). This and following Scripture translations are this writer’s own, unless otherwise noted. The title “Babylon the Great” occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible and, not surprisingly, six times in Revelation (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).
- 2 The word translated “Babylon” (Hebrew and Aramaic *bāvel*) occurs 287 times in the Hebrew Bible. It means, literally, “gate of the gods.”
- 3 Translation from Sigve Tonstad, *Revelation*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019), 261. Buying and selling slaves was one of the four main commodities, along with sheep, dates, and barley, which sustained the economy of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets (see Michael Jursa, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Pub., 2000), 782.
- 4 Following Tonstad, *Revelation*, 98.
- 5 Tonstad, 312.
- 6 Tonstad, 99.

Coming to the party?



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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Jesus hung out at parties, seeming to be glad enough to be there—rather a promising opening gambit for evangelism. At least, that type of evangelism sounds a lot more comforting than strange-looking folks carrying signs announcing coming doom; earnest, tidy-looking teens passing out tracts on street corners; or folks assaulting trapped airplane seat companions. I mean, would you not think it rather nice to be invited to a party, even if you do not particularly think of yourself as the party type?

The type your parents warned you about

At least, it would be nice if there were not such awkward problems. For one thing, Luke 5:27–32, to take a particular example, depicts events near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, when Jesus, between miracles, seemed to be awfully busy getting into trouble, most especially with the serious and dedicated members of the religious establishment. And you have to admit they had some points on their side. In particular, the people Jesus spent time with were those your parents warned you not to hang out with. You know what happens when you get influenced by bad company, right? This Jesus associated with all the "wrong" people, those everybody *knew* were the wrong people, especially in the eyes of the Pharisees and rulers—the "right" people. He was providing a perfectly terrible example.

And then, to add insult to injury, Jesus said that was exactly what He meant to do. Snubbing those who always lived by the rules, Jesus said outright that He was not even aiming to deal with the righteous, who did not need Him any more than a well person needs a doctor. He was not blind to the character of those He was associating with but frankly labeled them as sinners. We cannot excuse Him as well-intentioned but ignorant. Jesus directly intended to share table fellowship—an intimate activity, in that culture—specifically with sinners.

The odd Physician

Take another look at the invitation: Would you want to come to this party? What about your reputation? Is this type of meal worth it? Or even, since He implies He is a physician of sorts, can this self-designated doctor relieve you of any malady you actually want to be cured of? It's important to be honest about that latter point: another time, Jesus asked someone directly whether he wanted to be made well (John 5:6). The answer to that question is not always as obvious as it seems.

Might there be a chance, given our culture and what it values, and given all we have been taught about how important it is that we think positively of ourselves, that we often (maybe even unconsciously) want Jesus, if we want Him at all, sort of as an insurance policy that reassures us everything will go well in this world? That all necessary steps have been taken, and we will be well taken care of? Or, maybe, to make us look better to ourselves and others? Because, you see, if that's why we want Him, we do not actually want Him at all.

Jesus, after all, is a pretty odd sort of physician. Consider His initiative in this account. He's the one who started the whole thing. How many doctors do you know who would walk up to a corrupt guy who was more or less minding his own business and simply command him to follow Him?

Why would he do it?

This guy Levi was just sitting at his tollbooth, as he always did, carefully considering what the traffic would bear, pursuing any opportunity for gain. Of course, his business entailed taking advantage of people, and maybe those at the bottom of the economic ladder really suffered from his extortion; but he did not have to think about that too much. After all, your first responsibility is to yourself and yours, right? If people cannot take care of themselves, there's not a lot you can do about it. And if people hate you, that's just the cost of doing business.

Jesus *saw* him. The mild translation does not do the verb justice. It is more that He looked at him intently, as if seeing his character, perhaps even with pleasure: it's a rare and strong word, and weakly translating it does not quite capture that intensity of the gaze. He knew he was a crook. But there was no arrest made, which might be a dishonest agent's first fear. Just the peremptory, "Follow Me." We do not expect real physicians to make that sort of approach uninvited, and we might not trust one who did.

Still, give the tax collector a break and assume he was no more a fool than you are or I am. Suppose he was not naïve. Even so, he not only got up and followed Jesus but also explicitly left everything to do so—something very few of us, perhaps, have actually done. Why would he do any such thing? Was it Jesus' charismatic personality? Was it something he had seen or heard of Jesus' miracles? Perhaps these could have been factors, but would they be enough to make a reasonable person like a first-century tax collector

give up his whole way of life? If you have spent a lifetime consulting your personal advantage at the express disadvantage of the welfare of others (since the only way you got rich was by taking more than you were strictly entitled to), you would think twice about just walking away from it all. But Levi didn't.

Something about Him

Something about coming face-to-face with Jesus must have made Levi see himself as he was, sick with a malady no ordinary physician could touch. Surely, being called out by Jesus, Levi must have seen beyond all possible doubt who he was, what he had become. Jesus did not have to tell him. He knew.

Once you know, really know, *not* knowing is no longer one of the options. Everything has changed. Either you embrace evil head-on, like Milton's Satan saying, "Evil, be thou my Good,"¹ or you turn definitively away. As Lowell's old hymn puts it, "Once to ev'ry man and nation / Comes the moment to decide / In the strife of truth and falsehood / For the good or evil side."² Man or woman, that one choice will define your life. There will be no going back—not because you theoretically could not, not because Jesus would reject you if you tried, but because you have already decided.

Levi decided. He left everything and followed Jesus.

He was not looking for a cosmetic fix; he was not just testing things out to make sure he was OK. Possibilities like those were not on the table at all. No matter what he might have looked like to someone taking a charitable view, he *was not* OK in the most fundamental possible way. There was no escaping it. He was a sinner, as are we all, even if some of our sins are less obvious. No excuses, no patches. Something radical had to be done. Half-measures would not suffice.

Something must change

Physician Jesus did not make it easier, certainly did not caution moderation in dealing with the situation. He promises no easy path, no matter whom He might be found partying with. He calls sinners, says verse 32, *to repentance*. Something has to change. If you want fancy theological language, being saved is not just a matter of being justified, made right with God, by what Jesus has done for you, with everything then going on as it always has. Real steps of sanctification, reformation of life, must follow if the reality of one's

experience of salvation is not rightly to be called into question. A real change in one's direction and aspirations, a change in one's heart changes what one does, however imperfectly. That means some sacrifices and losses of familiar habits and behaviors. Surely no one can read the New Testament seriously and expect discipleship to be easy! There is no biblical teaching that all you need to do is follow Jesus and you may be confident that health, wealth, and endless easy days will follow you.

Bad news? Note that Levi did not seem to think so. He did not build a sad little monument to his rapidly fading prosperity or see if there weren't some little remnants of his past he could squirrel away for a rainy day. No, Levi gave a feast, threw a party, for Jesus and a bunch of other sinners like himself. Somehow, being free of the wretchedness of one's wicked self is the best news in the world. Really good news—good in the fully moral and spiritual sense that does not involve self-interest- edness or one-upmanship, but something that is open to all—demands to be shared.

Suddenly there was hope for something radically new, new from the inside out, but that certainly could not be kept merely inside. Levi

could not possibly have known that. According to the tradition we have, Levi the tax collector would be known as Matthew the apostle, writer of the Gospel that is most clearly directed at a specifically Jewish audience, full of scribes and Pharisees who needed Jesus' steady gaze and radical healing touch just as much as anyone else. No, he could not have known then what the future would hold, could not have known that his banquet would figure in a little article some two thousand years later. But he was open to whatever that future might be, and we know that this decision of a moment radically changed his life. He stood up, left everything of his doubtful past behind, followed Jesus, and threw a party for the sheer joy of it.

So, where does that leave us? Look to your right. Look to your left. Do those folks look to you like pretty good upstanding Christians, upright, law-abiding citizens, just as far as you can tell? Well then, are *you* coming to the party? You are invited, you know.



1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 4 (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2000), 76.

2 James Russell Lowell, "Once to Every Man and Nation," 1845.

A banner image featuring a person in a blue and white checkered shirt holding a black tablet. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and a path. The banner includes the Revival & Reformation logo in the top right, four text boxes with spiritual growth promises, the website URL at the bottom, and a circular logo with a flame in the bottom right corner.

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KEEPING THE FAITH



One chaplain,
one treatment
center, one
world crisis

Eric Oakes, MSW, MBA, is the chief operations officer of Banyan Treatment Centers, Pompano Beach, Florida, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

This article is not about people who practice their faith. This is not about those who seek religion. This is not about a prophet or even a tale of great works by great leaders. This is about people who seek shelter from the storm of addiction and find, hunkered down with them, a soul who provides just a little more than the shelter they sought.

I am the chief operations officer of Banyan Treatment Centers, a company with 11 Behavioral Health Centers throughout five states in the US. One day, Banyan's owner and I discussed the possibility of a faith-based approach to treatment. We had not yet put pencil to paper to create one. As circumstance would have it, such planning would not be necessary.

Chaplain Anthony Acampora arrived and built the Faith in Recovery Program at Banyan Treatment Center, a nondenominational, Christ-centered, faith-based substance and alcohol abuse recovery program. Blessed with boundless energy and contagious enthusiasm, he set up a small chapel in our outpatient center, invited speakers from the faith community, and ran a solid program. In the process, Anthony became a fixture on our staff and in the treatment community. He led many meetings and events with an opening prayer and offered pastoral comfort to all. Staff seemed to understand instinctively that Anthony was there for them. He states, "Patients come from all over the country; some grew up in the church and fell away as a result of addiction, others never stepped foot in a church. We meet every patient right where they are at on

their spiritual journey, even if they do not have a spiritual journey."¹

No condemnation

Like many good leaders, Anthony chose his current life when his past one hit a wall. Enmeshed in the world of security and intelligence, he experienced pain beyond measure, and it nearly broke him. Then Anthony embraced his faith. It is in this way that he reaches many of those who enter our Faith in Recovery program. Under his guidance, clients see another way—another purpose, perhaps—and they see it through the eyes of a gentle giant. That giant speaks Scripture and gives pastoral advice. But, perhaps more important Anthony reveals himself to them, much as he would have you believe his faith was revealed to him—not as some polished, shiny, and perfect gift but as a work in progress, a diamond in the rough, a real "fixer-upper."

In every person's heart is a longing for acceptance. Anthony declares, "Too many patients have shared feelings of guilt, shame, and judgment at their church growing up. As soon as they were no longer forced to go, they

[stopped] going. I related to their stories because this was my experience as well, with the same outcome. The sad part is that guilt, shame, and condemnation are in complete contrast with Christ's teachings. Somewhere along the last 2,000 years, the Church did not get the memo. It is not surprising that patients come in with a distorted view of God and anything associated with Him. Our goal is to break through those distortions and provide them with the truth."²



Anthony Alcampora

For real

It is not difficult to understand why other community-based, life-saving services such as first responders and hospitals have ministry components. Firefighters insist upon chaplains that “wear the uniform,” and police, the same. They need to know that their chaplain understands their unique frame of reference and that he or she is one of them. In a secular treatment setting, this kind of outreach rarely exists—but it is so desperately needed, especially by persons who can be viewed as being “for real.”

Anyone who knows “a man of God” or “a woman of God” intimately will recognize the ambiguity and dissonance that are inherent parts of the person and the persona. A religious person is destined to be seen only as an iconic figure by some or a hypocrite by many, with little room in between. It is truly the in-between that is Anthony’s domain and the life of many chaplains. He is transparent about his own life, which allows others to be transparent also.

Anthony declares, “The majority of what patients need to deal with is underneath the surface. . . . In many cases, trust has been shattered and, as we know, hurt people hurt people. The people who bear the brunt of the pain are the ones closest to the person in active addiction. They also tend to be the ones who take the most time to heal from the deep wounds. Distant and broken relationships are often restored, and the trust returns in time, so there is still hope in any and every situation.”³

As we forgive

One day, I stumbled into a conversation with Anthony about forgiveness. I asked him how to let go of resentment. I raised the question out of curiosity and a genuine desire to learn. Yes, Anthony offered platitudes, and yes, he gave me Scripture. But Anthony also did the unexpected. He sent me three more texts later that evening, trying to approach the subject from different angles.

One particularly effective angle has been Luke—his pit bull—a certified therapy dog. Anthony states, “When someone starts to cry in group, he is immediately right there with his paw on their knee and head on their chest. Sometimes I do not know who enjoys it more: the patients, Luke, or I watching this heartwarming interaction take place. What is so powerful is the fact that he does not hold any resentment toward people even though he was treated horribly prior to being rescued. He was able to forgive and move on to an incredible

life of providing encouragement and comfort to people who desperately need it.”⁴

Beyond the naked eye

Qualitatively, the outcomes of our program during the past five years have been overwhelmingly positive. That is what matters to me. Measured in countless lives through countless records and countless surveys, this “value-added service” or “specialty treatment track” has been successful beyond estimation. Testimony from staff and client alike indicates that the ministry is touching individuals that might not otherwise be reached. Through the thoughtful use of Scripture and loving guidance, we can help many people through one of the most difficult struggles of their lives.

Many staff members are in recovery themselves and are, therefore, inevitably associated with people still struggling with the constant decision to choose life or death. Former clients, we are well aware, can relapse. Many people have comorbidity issues such as weakened hearts and immune systems and damaged livers. Often, they die. Young people. Beautiful people. Sad people. Yet, our industry does little to address our burdens of losing them.

We need more, and we need more now

When the pandemic first hit, as Anthony has during past hurricanes, storms, and other emergencies, he sent me a text late one evening. “If you need anything . . .” My response was self-absorbed and brief. “Thanks, Anthony.” This pandemic is deadly—so is addiction.

This article began as some thoughts on a particular man and developed into realizing the need for more people like him. There seems an almost willful ignorance of the complexities of the diseases we treat and our constituents’ true needs. Our industry has few chaplains, despite the reality that many of us suffer burnout; emotional fatigue; fear; depression; and, in many cases, death. In this pandemic, we need chaplains in an industry that regularly deals with sickness; fear; lack of hope; and, at its worst, death and dying. We need more like Anthony.



1 Anthony Acampora, “Finding the Light in Darkness,” *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://somaticpsychotherapytoday.com/finding-the-light-in-darkness/>.

2 Acampora.

3 Acampora.

4 Acampora.



Helping People Change: Coaching With Compassion for Lifelong Learning and Growth

by Richard Boyatzis, Melvin Smith, and Ellen Van Oosten
(Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2019).

Regardless of our life status or sphere of influence, we all want to get the most out of life. Many leaders have a unique opportunity to influence people within their organization through coaching. *Helping People Change* attempts to coach people into making healthy, positive choices for their own lives.

Helping People Change offers research-based methods, enabling people to make informed decisions that will ultimately lead to increased happiness and greater satisfaction. One of the key themes throughout this book is that good coaching is not a coercive effort. The best coaches ask questions that engage self-reflection and create a desire to make lasting changes within the individual.

One factor that inspires people to change is the positive emotional attractor (PEA), which is defined in detail throughout the book. Looking for positive ways to encourage personal growth might include role modeling, envisioning future success, or asking questions that will help an individual see where they can improve. The negative emotional attractor (NEA) is a state in which people make decisions based on fear or potential consequences or because they are being coerced. Both PEA and NEA can be appropriate motivators, depending on the situation.

For example, a soccer coach found that one of his talented players was not enjoying the experience of playing college soccer. He could have activated her NEA by pushing her to perform better and train harder so that she could earn more playing time or help the team meet their goals, but he recognized that this would not work for the young lady. Instead, he engaged her PEA by asking questions that got to the heart of her motivation. As it turned out, she only played soccer because everyone in her family had played, but she really wanted to run track. The coach

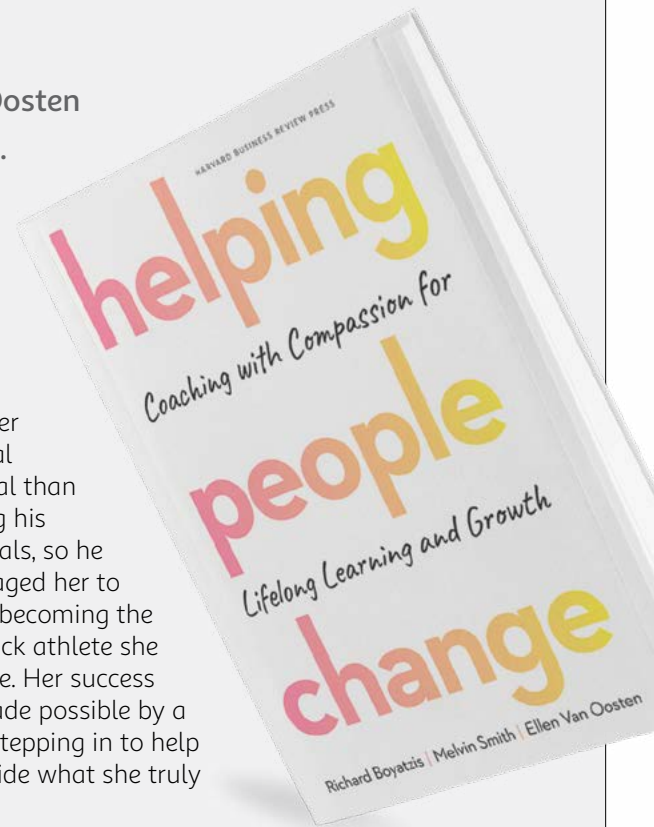
cared more about seeing her reach her personal potential than meeting his own goals, so he encouraged her to pursue becoming the best track athlete she could be. Her success was made possible by a coach stepping in to help her decide what she truly desired.

One building block to becoming an effective coach is learning how to ask questions. The authors guide the reader in how to utilize pointed questions to engage the PEA of the one being coached. Advising and coercion belong in the NEA category, and they do not inspire lasting change. If we truly seek positive change for those we mentor, we will enhance their vision of their ideal self. Bringing about that kind of clarity is the prize for a good coach.

Anyone involved in mentoring in some capacity should read this book. That being said, it is not a beginner's guide to coaching. There is an assumption that those reading *Helping People Change* are already familiar with the role of a coach.

This book will likely inspire readers to evaluate their current coaching and mentoring relationships and encourage them to seek more opportunities to coach and be coached. 📖

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Church worship services amid COVID-19

Religious institutions are improvising, adapting, and using alternative methods to reach their respective congregations due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Many parishioners are adjusting to working from home and facing unemployment, sickness, and the loss of life. The once routine and familiar have disappeared.

This is most evident as church pews remain empty; new words and actions have entered our church vocabulary, such as *livestreaming*, *social distancing*, *personal protective equipment* (PPE), and *parking lot services*.

Regardless of faith, the global public health crisis has greatly changed the way we worship. What potential long-term effects will this have on churches? How should leaders prepare for the congregation and worship services after COVID-19?

Modified worship

The transition to a modified worship service has been incredibly challenging for many churches because they lacked the personnel, training, and familiarity with conducting livestream sessions. For other churches, the transition was smooth and seamless because they had trained personnel and technological infrastructure already in place.

One common challenge for churches was adapting to the generational digital divide. However, given time and experience, the church has adapted, and now we find churches of all sizes using Zoom, StreamYard, YouTube, and/or Facebook to continue the Lord's work.

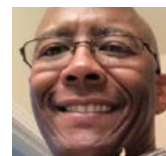
The ease and simplicity of staying at home and logging in while in your bedroom slippers have become popular. Many leaders have shortened their worship services to cover the essential



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elements, conducting services without extended songs, announcements, or other things.

Some houses of worship have reported reaching more congregants during this period of virtual worship than with their traditional worship services. Social media has allowed local churches to connect with worshipers in other states and countries. People who are unable or who may not want to enter a traditional brick-and-mortar church will log on to an online worship service.

Safer at home?

As gathering restrictions relax and churches open their physical doors, many members have hesitated to return because there is still a major health risk for the general population. This group of members favors the safety of online worship and continuing online Bible study and group meetings.

On the other hand, there is the group that is longing to worship in the sanctuary again and fellowship with their Christian brothers and sisters. Our human nature is to be social and fellowship with one another as one body of Christ. Hebrews 10:24, 25 encourages the body of Christ to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another" (NIV). Online worship does not fully allow people to fellowship with others in the way they are accustomed to in church.

Balancing health risks with traditional worship services is a challenge for all church leaders and their congregations. Medical experts suggest that this virus could be with us for many years, causing us to assess the impacts upon the church

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ►



Church in the Caribbean reaches out to Chinese community

MIAMI, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

The Inter-American Division (IAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized a week of mission as part of a cross-cultural outreach initiative to Chinese communities in the Caribbean, known as one of the most diverse and enchanting regions in the world. The evening programs, the first of their kind, touched on health, family, money, and more via Zoom.

"This important week sought to disciple baptized Chinese members, build bridges with new Chinese friends, and equip church leaders with cross-cultural competencies in contextualizing the gospel to immigrant Chinese," said **Samuel Telemaque**, IAD Sabbath School director in charge of Adventist Mission.

The event follows a long-term plan by IAD and the Chinese Union Mission to help run the two main outreach centers in the division territory, one in the Dominican Republic and the other in Panama.



Photo: Panama Union

A 20,000-strong Chinese community lives in Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic. In that city, the church will continue to invest in reaching out to families through the center with language classes, activities, lectures, and self-improvement activities every week. A missionary couple will assist with the community center for another three years.

The center in Panama is in the heart of Chinatown in Panama City, where a missionary couple began ministering a year ago. The center started offering several activities in the community, but due to the strict national lockdown measures of the pandemic, the center had to cease its services.

"The work of ministering to the more than sixty thousand Chinese people in Panama will take time," Telemaque said, "but with leaders properly equipped to combine compassion with love in sharing the message with diverse people groups, the consistent efforts will yield great results." [Libna Stevens/Inter-American Division, Kayc James, and *Adventist Review*]

Hispanic Ministries holds online evangelistic series

COLUMBIA, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES

Recently, the Hispanic Ministries department of the Chesapeake Conference in the North American Division held a virtual



evangelistic series with guest speaker **Robert Costa**, General Conference associate ministerial secretary and speaker/director of *Escrito Está*, the Spanish-language television program of It Is Written. Viewers watched from the United States and in fourteen other countries, including Colombia, Honduras, and Venezuela. Follow-up Bible studies were conducted and many baptisms took place.

"It was an unforgettable experience," said **Orlando Rosales**, Hispanic Ministries director for the Chesapeake Conference. "More than fifteen hundred individuals connected. As a result, twenty-three brothers and sisters were baptized in our conference alone, and more than twenty additional people made decisions to follow Jesus. We give glory to God for His wonderful love and plan of salvation." [Chesapeake Conference *Currents*]



Pioneering German Adventist Theologian Johann “Hans” Heinz dies at 91

BRAUNAU, AUSTRIA


Ministry and academia within the Seventh-day Adventist Church mourned the death of **Johann “Hans” Heinz** on January 27, 2021, in Braunau, Austria, at 91, from a COVID-19 infection. He is considered one of the most influential theologians in German-speaking Adventism.

Hans Heinz, born in 1930, is considered the first important German-speaking Adventist systematic theologian, according to the Board of Trustees of Friedensau Adventist University. Earning a ThD from Andrews University, Heinz became a theology teacher at Bogenhofen Seminary, lecturer in systematic theology and director of the former Marienhoehe Seventh-day Theological Seminary, and a visiting lecturer at Friedensau College (now Friedensau Adventist University).

Stefan Höschele, dean of the Department of Theology at Friedensau, said that “through the combination of biblical foundation, anchoring in

church history, and sharp systematic-theological analysis, his theological thinking, teaching, and writing established standards in Adventism in the German-speaking world still unequaled.” His main areas of research were soteriology (the redemptive work of Christ), Martin Luther, and engagement with Catholic theology and the ecumenical movement.

In 1990, Heinz founded the theological journal *Spes Christiana* at what was then Friedensau College. The total circulation of his books and writings, with translations into more than 20 languages, reached millions.


Heinz combined his faithfulness to Scripture with a passion for evangelism. He saw theologians and pastors as commissioned to stand by people when facing extreme situations in their lives and call them to follow Jesus. Until the end, he worked on theological questions and gladly shared his knowledge. Heinz retired in 1995 and lived with his wife in Austria. [*Adventistischer Pressedienst* and *Adventist Review*] 



including attendance, financial support, ministry outreach, discipleship, and methods of caring for the congregation.

Amid the adversities and extreme hardships of COVID-19, the Lord has been transforming many “tests” into Holy Spirit-filled “testimonies”; seemingly messy situations into encouraging “messages” of the Lord’s divine provision; and crisis into “Christ-centered” thanksgiving and adoration. Our Lord is active and continuing in His great love and compassion for a fallen world. During the COVID-19 dilemma, the Lord is truly healing the sick and supplying provisions for

those in need. The Lord truly works “all things for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28, NIV).

Our lives may have changed through our work, the way we educate, and how we socialize. Through this uncertainty, God remains constant and steady. This pandemic has taught us that true and genuine worship is not about traditions or even a physical building. Social media platforms are mere tools to conduct worship; the real worship is the connection we have with God. Our focus must remain on God as we continue to worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). 

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