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Of barks and bites

When we moved to Maryland several years ago, we planted a little garden and started to pray for opportunities to minister to our neighbors.

With most of them, we were on very good terms. However, one family got very angry about our dogs barking one particular night. They yelled, swore at us, and even called the authorities. We were tempted to retaliate, but then words from Jesus stopped us: “‘But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you’” (Matt. 5:44, NKJV).

We started to pray specifically for this neighbor—and our dogs rarely barked again. However, this family’s own dogs would bark—all day long. While it didn’t bother us, other neighbors started screaming at them. One day, their dogs got free and came into our backyard. We didn’t get upset or afraid. For many, their bark is worse than their bite. We gave them something they would like, treated them with love, and then gently led them home.

The husband, outside watering the flowers, saw me with his dogs. “Your dogs are so sweet!”

I sang out in a very friendly voice. “I hope it was OK—I gave them some treats. Now, if you don’t mind, would you please come this way?” Perhaps assuming I wanted to show him some damage his dogs had done to our property, he appeared hesitant. But he came.

I led him to our garden. “We have so much fresh produce,” I said. “We would like to share some with you. Would you like to pick some for yourself, or would you prefer for me to pick for you?” I did not ask whether he wanted the produce or not.

His eyes opened wide in surprise. The tension disappeared from his face. Smiling, he said he would be very thankful for some produce. I picked some tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplants for him and assured him he was welcome to come anytime for more. I then invited him and his family for a meal at our house so that we could get to know each other better.

Know your neighbors

This incident humbled me. It made me wonder what would happen if every church member,



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starting with the pastor, would reach out to their neighbors and friends—perhaps take produce or homemade cookies to those around our homes—listen to them, pray for them, and build friendships. “Every follower of Jesus has a work to do as a missionary for Christ, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the town or city where he lives.”¹

Then I wondered about those around our churches. While preaching is important, it’s not enough. “The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled upon the church book, but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by the number of her persevering, faithful workers. Personal interest and vigilant, individual effort will accomplish more for the cause of Christ than can be wrought by sermons or creeds.”²

So I ask, do the people who live around your home feel comfortable reaching out to you if they need help raking their leaves? Do the people who live around your church feel comfortable contacting you if they need a place to hold their parent’s funeral? “Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary

work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual condition.”³

It is very difficult to reach a stranger—it is easier to reach a friend. Douglas Cooper tells the story of a preacher who told a young man on the streets of Harlem, New York, that God loved him. The young man replied, “I’m sick and tired of hearing people talk about love. I want to see love with skin on it.”⁴

Jesus is coming soon! God has allowed particular neighbors to be located around us. Let’s not get upset or afraid. For many, their bark is worse than their bite. Let’s give them something they would like, treat them with love, and then gently lead them home.




- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 632.
- 2 Ellen G. White, “Scattered Churches,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 6, 1881.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 296.
- 4 Douglas Cooper, *Living God’s Love* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1975), 18.



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Practical aspects of the proclamation of the three angels' messages

The three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6–12) have been at the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the movement began.

The first angel's message brings the “everlasting gospel” to the entire world—a call to worship God as Creator and an announcement of the hour of His judgment. The second builds upon the first, proclaiming that Babylon—a false system of worship that rejects the proclamation of the first angel, accepts the delusions of Satan, and unites with the world—is fallen. The third angel's message brings to light the mark of the beast in contrast to God's true Sabbath as the seal of God, urging people not to receive the mark.

Seventh-day Adventists are familiar with the *content* of these messages, but how often are they proclaimed, other than in public evangelistic meetings?

“The angels are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming to the world a message of warning, and *having a direct bearing upon the people living in the last days of this earth's*

history,” wrote Ellen White. “No one hears the voice of these angels, for *they are a symbol to represent the people of God who are working in harmony with the universe of heaven. Men and women, enlightened by the Spirit of God, and sanctified through the truth, proclaim the three messages in their order.*”¹

Clearly, we are called to proclaim these life-saving messages, but how do we do so in an angelic way? Here are four practical aspects to keep in mind:

1. Believe the messages personally and allow them to transform our hearts

We cannot authentically present a message as true if we are in doubt. Now is the time to carefully study the three angels' messages and let their meaning sink in deeply. But head knowledge is not enough; these messages must penetrate the heart.

“The enemy will set everything in operation to uproot the confidence of the believers in the pillars of our faith in the messages of the past,

which have placed us upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, and which have established and given character to the work," wrote Ellen White. "Those who have a hold of the truth theoretically, with their finger tips as it were, who have not brought its principles into the inner sanctuary of the soul, but have kept the vital truth in the outer court, will see nothing sacred in the past history of this people, which has made them what they are, and has established them as earnest, determined missionary workers in the world. The truth for this time is precious; but those whose hearts have not been broken by falling on the rock Christ Jesus, will not see and understand what is truth."²

Let's believe God's Word and allow it to do a work of reformation in our own hearts.

2. Allow God's Spirit to fill us with a deep, Christlike love for everyone

The theme of God's love permeates the Bible. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).³ "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (v. 11).

In Luke 10, we see God's love illustrated in both practical and spiritual ways. When asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (v. 29), Christ responded with the story of the good Samaritan, who went out of his way to compassionately care for the wounded man's needs in a very practical way.

Later, we find Jesus at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Martha is annoyed because Mary is not helping with the practical aspects of entertaining. Instead, Mary is listening to Jesus, who then gently reproves Martha while commending Mary, who has "'chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her'" (v. 42).

While we must do what we can to relieve pain and suffering, how important to provide "'that good part, which will not be taken away.'" These words of Christ were given from a deep love for all humanity and, as such, should be shared—particularly through the three angels' messages—in that same spirit.

3. Use biblically based methods to share the complete message

In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul declares, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Along the same lines, God has blessed us with multiple ways of reaching people—even during COVID-19. While traditional public evangelism efforts were put on hold, hundreds of thousands of lives were touched

through online evangelism, telephone evangelism, social media, and small online groups, as well as through television, radio, and more—efforts that are continuing.

Comprehensive health ministry has become increasingly important as health crises have come to the forefront. Thousands are looking for ways to improve and maintain good health—physically, mentally, and spiritually—and we have so much to offer through our God-given health message. This can be an entering wedge that leads people to deeper truths.

Reaching people through literature—print and online—is a very important method of spreading the three angels' messages, especially with the 2022 Missionary Book of the Year, *The Final Hope: Three Messages for an Anxious World*,⁴ and *The Great Controversy*. I urge you to share these heavenly messages in every way possible, as the Lord leads.

Also, when considering how to reach people, we often refer to "Christ's method alone," as described in *The Ministry of Healing*. While this is certainly a divine method, it is important to keep in mind the full context of that well-known statement:

"We are living in the midst of an 'epidemic of crime,' at which thoughtful, God-fearing men everywhere stand aghast. . . . Who can doubt that satanic agencies are at work among men with increasing activity to distract and corrupt the mind, and defile and destroy the body?"

"And while the world is filled with these evils, the gospel is too often presented in so indifferent a manner as to make but little impression upon the consciences or the lives of men. Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something which they have not. They long for a power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace. Many who once knew the power of God's word have dwelt where there is no recognition of God, and they long for the divine presence.

"The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁵

We are called to come close to people and, through the power of God’s love, to share the last-day messages of Revelation 14, inviting them to follow Jesus.

4. Create a supportive, faith-affirming atmosphere

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other

work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”⁶

How important it is, then, for pastors and leaders to create a supportive, faith-affirming atmosphere, where all members are encouraged to become disciples and share these important messages. This can be done through modeling and mentoring, through classes and workshops, and much more. Use your creativity in finding ways to promote an atmosphere encouraging total member involvement in the proclamation of the three angels’ messages!

Proclaim the truth

Friends, God is changing the hearts of those who hear these marvelous messages. The Holy Spirit moves on the minds of individuals who need to make a decision for Christ, and what a privilege is ours to be used as God’s instruments to reach others for Him.

Only by relying completely on Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit will we be able to accomplish anything. God is now preparing us for something very unusual—the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. Let the second coming of Christ and His three angels’ messages be proclaimed by every Seventh-day Adventist around the world because Jesus is coming soon!



- 1 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), 429; emphasis added.
- 2 White, 430, 431.
- 3 Scripture is from the New King James Version.
- 4 Clifford Goldstein, *The Final Hope: Three Messages for an Anxious World* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2021).
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), 142, 143.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 19.

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Humility:

Prerequisite for ministry

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If I asked what the qualifications for ministry are, I would probably get answers such as competence, commitment, and a strong academic background. However, when I read the Bible carefully, I find that most prophets whom God summoned to His service did not ascribe their fitness for ministry to their competence, their academics, or any specialized training. They demonstrated that their most vital qualification for ministry was humility.

Ministry is a call to work with God in His business of restoring fallen humanity. God requires certain qualities to fit a person for the sacred task of serving in ministry. When God called Gideon, the “man said to him, ‘Oh, Lord, how shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house’ ” (Judges 6:15, WEB). King Saul told God, “‘Am I not a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me after this manner?’ ” (1 Sam. 9:21, WEB). Even though Paul had strong academic training, he boasted only in God’s power, not his own ability.

How to be fitted in ministry

During the 27 years I have served the church as pastor and ministerial director, I have seen ministers elevate their academic credentials. I have known those with a promising start to their ministry, end up disappointed in their careers. Some who thought they would assume high positions of leadership, ultimately failed in ministry— largely because they lacked humility. Such examples have confirmed to me that only the humble can lead God’s people, as did Moses, from the bondage of this world’s sin to the heavenly Canaan. How Moses became qualified for service is instructive for how we should be fitted for ministry.

When God appointed Moses to lead His people from bondage in Egypt, Moses had a thorough Egyptian education, was militarily trained, and had had experience in taking care

of his father-in-law Jethro’s flock. But he did not deem himself prepared for such a divine call. “And Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’ ” (Exod. 3:11, WEB). Ellen White comments, “The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord.”¹

Despite his military training and extensive education, Moses still felt helpless to serve God in such a capacity. Moses depended on God’s power and strength for his success. Ellen White stated, “Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.”²

I have noticed that working with God forces me to recognize my own limitations. Those really called by God find themselves brought to a deep acknowledgment of their own ignorance and weakness. While humans look at power, wisdom, competence, and self-confidence when selecting leaders, God does not choose the strong and the mighty to serve Him. He chooses those who sense their weakness, a quality that some ministers sadly lack.

Ellen White states, “Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are perishing in

their sins. He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail.”³

Humility has proved to be the most important qualification that fits a person for God’s ministry. Experience has shown me that only the humble uplift Jesus in their ministry instead of themselves.

Unfitting in the work of ministry

I have observed that, sometimes, God does not tolerate those who exalt themselves instead of Him. Any success we achieve in ministry we should attribute solely to the Lord because “when men exalt themselves, feeling that they are a necessity for the success of God’s great plan, the Lord causes them to be set aside. It is made evident that the Lord is not dependent upon them. The work does not stop because of their removal from it, but goes forward with greater power.”⁴

The success of every minister depends on divine aid. Without it, every effort we make will be futile. “All the shepherds who work under the Chief Shepherd will possess His characteristics; they will be meek and lowly of heart. Childlike faith brings rest to the soul and also works by love and is ever interested for others. If the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, they will be Christlike and do the works of Christ. Many who profess to be the ministers of Christ have mistaken their master.”⁵

Ministry is all about possessing the characteristics of our Master Jesus Christ. Without humility, we are not fitted to serve Him. Clergy who continually minister without the Master’s character may assume that they are serving Him, but in a real sense, they are working for a different master. Such individuals “are not aware that it is Satan’s banner under which they are rallying. They may be worldly wise and eager for strife and vainglory, making a show of doing a great work; but God has no use for them. The motives which prompt to action give character to the work. Although men may not discern the deficiency, God marks it.”⁶

Because the ministry we are in belongs to Jesus Christ, we are just privileged to labor with Him in this noble mission. The Owner of the work marks every action and the motive that led to each and every decision or action we make.

Trained for ministry

When I started to serve in the church, I did not have a ministerial degree. But seeing the nature of the work and the church I was serving led me

to get such training. I do not remember sitting under any lecturer who did not advise us to be humble if we were to survive in ministry. Never did even one of those leaders who visited us at the university advise me not to study to prepare for high positions in the church. Yes, ministers need to be trained so they can serve well. But the knowledge acquired in colleges, seminaries, or universities should humble any minister who is willing to work under the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. Any training that does not humble them is not real education.

As one wise minister has observed, “Many people have been educated but have not learned.” When I am really trained in ministry, I have to know the church I am serving in, how it operates, and the characteristics of its Owner. Humble and lowly, He does not exalt Himself. In His ministry on earth, He exhibited humility throughout His life, leaving us an eternal example.

Not my will

Too often, once clergy have reached a certain educational level, they assume they are ready to be elected into various offices. Some campaign for positions. Do the degrees we get in seminaries qualify us to be fit in ministry without humility? Are we not mistaken if we go to schools in order to be appointed to high positions?

People may look at how competent and self-confident someone is when they elect leaders, but God does not choose the strong and the mighty to serve Him but, rather, those who acknowledge their weakness and nothingness. To be fit for ministry does not depend on education, competence, or self-confidence, but on humility. The work of soul-winning and restoration still requires it.



- 1 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890), 255.
- 2 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 255.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), 436.
- 4 White, *The Desire of Ages* 436.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1875), 377.
- 6 White, 377.

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The passive-aggressive pulpit

Sarah¹ had recently escaped an abusive situation with another church member, only to be confronted, *from the pulpit*, with abuse from the minister, who sided with the abuser without having ever heard her side of the story.

“Sitting there in that pew,” she said, “as the pastor stared down at me, I felt shocked, small, and angry.”

In the sermon, the pastor indirectly indicated that Sarah did not have enough forgiveness in her heart toward the abuser.²

“I could not just forgive and forget and have things return to being the same way,” she said. “He did not seem to understand. He did not ask questions or listen to my viewpoint or even take the time to confront me individually and share his viewpoint. Instead, he decided to give a very pointed sermon on why we should forgive others.”

The pastor preached that if people wanted forgiveness, then they should forgive others. Sarah noticed the elevated amount of eye contact that the pastor gave her. So did her friends. They asked her if she wanted to leave, but she did not want to make a scene. She felt as if all eyes in the church were fixed on her.

“It seemed like the pastor was saying I should return to an abusive situation because it is what Jesus would do. Throughout the entire sermon, my fists were clenched. I was infuriated by the unfairness. It was a misuse of power. He was using his position as a pastor to argue on behalf of an abuser.”

Since then, she has not returned to that church.

Such a misuse of the pulpit should serve as a reminder of the ethical obligations that we have to our congregations and how those ethics can be eroded under the pressures of pastoral ministry.

The passive-aggressive pulpit

No question, there are times for public rebuke and using our voices in a prophetic manner.³

At the same time, far too many clergy members have damaged victims of abuse through the poor application of forgiveness theology. *Ministry* magazine has produced several articles dealing with this subject, including Roy Adams’s work on Matthew 18, where Peter asks Jesus how many times one ought to forgive. In the piece, Adams concludes that “common sense tells us that a multitude of physical and psychological offenses exist that are so egregious, abhorrent, and emotionally damaging that they



could not possibly fall within the purview of Jesus' response."⁴ There exist "offenses so ghastly that the specter of enduring them for even a second time (let alone a seventh or a seventieth) becomes unthinkable."⁵

This article focuses on something informally discussed among ministers: passive-aggressive preaching—or addressing congregational issues that target particular members in a way that makes them feel exposed before the rest of the church.

Ministerial folk wisdom says that whenever you write a sermon for specific people, they never show up. However, they often do show up—and, although they expect to hear about Christ, they hear, instead, about their dirty laundry or personal pain. And so does everyone else in the church.

It is basic pulpit etiquette to ask people for permission to use their stories in a sermon, but it is also basic pulpit ethics to leave even vague allusions to a parishioner's current personal/private pain out of a message. This point is so obvious that it should not need to be stated. The fact that it is stated points to the reality of this problem.

Taking the congregation into the pulpit

In *The Witness of Preaching*, Thomas G. Long reminds us that all preachers take their

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congregations with them into the study. "Just so, the preacher goes to the biblical text as a priest, carrying the questions, needs, and concerns of congregation and world, not as an agenda to be met but as an offering to be made."⁶ The presence of our parishioners influences our interpretation of the biblical text.⁷

Without awareness of how the congregation's presence impacts our preaching preparation, we risk using their deeply personal issues in ways that damage both them and our ministry. Salient struggles often occupy our minds as we prepare sermons. However, those struggles may be more about us than about what the church needs.

Countless pressures

Countless pressures face preachers as they prepare to give the weekly sermon. Pastors have all manner of expectations placed upon them by their families, churches, and themselves. Yet, three specific pressures contribute most to passive-aggressive preaching.

The first is time. The endless succession of worship services can take a toll. As soon as one message is delivered, the need for another looms. Finding time to craft sermon material can be difficult. Without careful time management and boundaries, ministers can be tempted to use the content of personal conversations in a public forum in order to meet sermon deadlines.

The second pressure is relevance. We want messages to be sensible and applicable. When we know a congregant's specific struggles, it's easy to assume these struggles are general ones that the congregation needs to hear about. It's guaranteed relevant, but it risks repercussions when church members feel like privacy has been violated.

Finally, preachers can feel pressured by parish politics. Church members involve themselves in each other's lives and develop opinions on how issues and incidents should be dealt with. These opinions have a tendency to grow louder and become directed at the pastor. It might feel as though a refusal to address issues from the pulpit will result in the loss of member support.

None of these reasons justify passive-aggressive preaching. But is there an ethical way to address important issues occupying the congregants' minds related to personal situations within the church community? In tight-knit fellowships, how can we address those painful realities that weigh heavily on the hearts of those under our care? There are at least two possible pulpit paths under the concert of being pastorally active rather than passive-aggressive.

Pastorally active versus passive-aggressive

The first path involves engaging in the work of pastoral care with the abused. Preachers need to earn the right to speak to these painful realities. Addressing abuse from an academic distance is not enough. Understanding the painful rhythms of the hurting requires a participatory homiletic. If we have not spent time conversing with the hurting or been granted permission to enter their lives, how can we do justice to their experience?

Second, there are times when a participatory homiletic is not possible due to a lack of permission. We are not entitled to people's personal pain,

especially as sermon material. Not to mention, even if we intend to speak on behalf of the abused, it may put an uncomfortable spotlight on them and open them up to further abuse. In those cases where we do not have permission, consider taking an invitational rhetorical approach. For example, instead of talking about how you think someone should forgive, talk about your own struggle with forgiveness or a time when someone tried to put a band-aid on something deeply hurtful by asking you to forgive. Then, reflect on what *you* learned from the experience. Often this is enough for people to see how they might apply this to themselves.

In *Overhearing the Gospel*, homiletics scholar Fred Craddock discusses this type of invitational rhetoric. He suggests using personal narrative to create distance between speaker and audience: "I am much more inclined toward a message that has its own intrinsic life and force and that was prepared with no apparent awareness of me than toward a message that obviously did not come into being until I as a listener appeared, and then was hastily improvised with desire for relevance offered as a reason for the sloppy and shallow content."⁸

PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY SABBATH, OCTOBER 9, 2021

"As you sent me into the world, so
I have sent them into the world."

JOHN 17:18, ESV



This distance is vital to separate the narrative from the victim's circumstances and make it appear about the pastor instead.

Especially important here is not to identify with what you think the victim should do (including what the congregation thinks the victim should do). Perhaps you can identify with a time that you felt hurt, maligned, and abused and with how the trite responses to your problem hurt you. You may even share a time when you were the one who hurt someone or failed to respond correctly. After all, it is not good to consistently cast ourselves as the hero in all our sermons.

Incarnational ministry

Each of us is called to active pastoral care, not passive-aggressive preaching. When troubles come to our people, we need to make sure it is not the *personal* pressures of parish life that lead us to make public speeches. When we do feel led to speak to a struggle those in our congregation face, it must be born out of an incarnational experience and with permission. If not, it must be rooted in our personal experience instead of the appropriated experience of the hurting, shared as vague gossip.

The story of Sarah reveals a crucial point: we are called to speak up for victims of abuse, not to add to that abuse from the power of our pulpit.



- 1 The name, and some details, have been changed to protect those involved. This was related directly to me.
- 2 This was not a case of general conviction sometimes felt when the speaker happens to be speaking on a general topic they are wrestling with. Some details have been left out to protect anonymity.
- 3 See Greg G. Scharf, "The Pulpit Rebuke: What Is It? When Is It Appropriate? What Makes It Effective?," *Journal of Evangelical Homiletics Society* 15, no. 1 (March 2015): 60–78.
- 4 Roy Adams, "Seventy Times Seven": How We Misinterpret Peter's Question and Jesus' Answer," *Ministry*, July 2017; <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2017/07/forgiveness>.
- 5 Adams.
- 6 Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 73.
- 7 Long, 175.
- 8 Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Chalice Press, 2002), 104, 105.

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LETTERS

Thank you for this excellent article (Joy Wendt, "Sweet Communion," June 2021). It reminded me of how often we find ways to wall off the blessings of Communion from our churches and ourselves.

Years ago, the president of one of the unions in India and I were teaching a group of ministers. I asked them how often they celebrated communion. "Oh, never," was the frank response. "We don't know how to make American bread!"

"Well, neither did Jesus," I responded.

We discussed how Jesus used unleavened bread at the Last Supper, which was exactly what they ate every day when they ate their chapatis. When they further demurred by saying they couldn't access grape juice, we discussed how raisins (readily available in the bazaar) could be soaked in water to produce their own variety of grape juice. We also

discussed that having the little white towels and special basins (which were beyond their church budgets) could be replaced by having everyone bring from home their own buckets and towels.

I recognized the need to make this real, so the following Sabbath we had our own Indian/local version of Communion. Multicolored buckets of water with a variety of towels appeared for the ordinance of humility. This was followed by everyone bringing various sized plastic cups of raisin/grape juice, and we tore up pieces of chapati for the bread. I could sense the empowering mood as this group of pastors grasped the reality that Jesus (from the Middle East) was closer to them than some picture they had of a North American ritual.

Let us continue to find ways to make this ordinance relevant. Thank you, Joy Wendt!

—James Astleford, country director, ADRA Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

Imprecatory Psalms:

Confrontation
and comfort

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

My personal battles with anger, grief, and doubt, along with both valuable and even not-so-helpful advice from friends and counselors during desperate times, motivated me to find a way to hear God speak even while navigating the shadows. Particularly in my own situations of loss—including a crumbling family in childhood, miscarriage in the first trimester of pregnancy after a decade of infertility, and long-term income decline through job loss—I have found resolution, comfort, and an affirmation of my faith through the Psalter.

As with no other portion of Scripture, the book of Psalms has shaped the world's understanding of the character of a God who “is present even when He seems absent, who saves when all is lost, and who provides when necessity arises.”¹ Within the context of Christian counseling, open expression can be a positive and effective method for providing psychological relief to those dealing with anxiety, broken relationships, depression, and mental illnesses among other difficult situations.

Through authentic and honest examples of the psalmists crying out to and questioning God while also reiterating His power and promises, believers see the benefits of giving a “voice” to their debilitating thoughts, emotions, and reactions within the context of scriptural insights. Bringing to light God's responses to such pleas steers both hurting souls and spiritual counselors onto a wise path. With a healthy alternative for processing and then releasing inner conflicts, many can again find balance along with a deeper understanding of a heavenly Father and a strengthened relationship with Him.

Despair

The Psalter offers tangible examples of people who faced dark emotional trials, and their stories shed light on how to weather and overcome similar challenges in our modern age. The author of at least half of the psalms, the shepherd-turned-king David faced a breadth and depth of events during his lifetime that ranged from the pit of agony to the pinnacle of joy, equipping him “to sing

the sweetest and saddest songs of the human soul in its thirst for God.”² Within the book's 150 lyrics, readers today can find scriptural tools to help them find resolution, comfort, and assurance when they suffer anger, grief, and doubt.

During His time on earth, Jesus Himself quoted from the psalms more than any other book of the Old Testament.³ The poems were ingrained in all aspects of His life and death, and the well-known verses were one avenue through which He spoke truth, confirmed prophecy, faced temptation, voiced questions to His Father, and found comfort.⁴

Mourning

Masterful expressions of “misery, hurt, and agony” provide a starting place for rehabilitation and restoration by “defining the experience of suffering” for the one in pain.⁵

The language of Psalm 23 depicts the God of the universe not only comforting but also accompanying David in the valley of the shadow of death. It is imperative to note that consolation comes “only *after* much grief and loss.” Even when a strong faith follows someone down into the unexpected pit of pain, the shock of loss may, at first, render that person unable to hear any voice—including God's. There are no words that do not ring superficial in those early moments.⁶

Rather than “whitewashing” the anguish of suffering, God's people cry out, weep, and wrestle. Just as today, the process back then was disjointed. Yet, while not masking their feelings, the authors also did not betray God in suggesting that He does not exist in the valleys.⁷

Anger

The Psalter clearly expresses anger, being “full of imprecatory fury,” “a bloody plea for God to destroy an enemy, a howl of indignation demanding that evil suffer.”⁸ At the same time, God's reactions to these heated expressions from His people are often surprising, and the victims' paths take unexpected turns. A cathartic outlet is a necessary first step in the process of resolution when someone faces angering circumstances.

Venting shock and confusion is a positive sign that a person understands the wrong done not only to themselves but also to God.

After catharsis, the moment of being still first escalates pain by forcing the realization that vindication is not imminent and may never happen in the victim's lifetime. The person comes face-to-face with the fact that their only action is to depend on God. As an individual now "grieves and struggles with God," they probe what He is doing, if they understand Him, and what their fury reveals about themselves. During such a mental battle, "the righteous heart waits for God to reveal His character."⁹

Transition

Imprecatory emotions often dangerously morph into chronic rage and personal vendettas that leave people exactly where they began. Thus, God's will takes a back seat to personal expectations as the progression of "therapeutically moving from acknowledgment to release" comes to a halt.¹⁰

One pastoral counselor recalls a client who held on to anger at her parents for years until the unresolved wounds and emotions began to manifest as unexplained rage at her spouse and other family members. Along with the minister's help, Psalm 15 was instrumental in finding the words to voice her pain and uncover the source. Once she was able to "own her anger," resolution and acceptance soon followed.¹¹

At the center of the Psalter, the wisdom in the middle of imprecatory Psalm 73 points all cursing and painful questions to "the sanctuary of God" (v. 17),¹² offering upright judgment at the perfect time. Only in His presence can God's people find experiential understanding and resolution that overcomes the anger of a crisis of faith.¹³

Faith

Data confirms the correlation between personal health and well-being and active faith.

In cases of widowhood and parenting developmentally challenged children, regular worship and deep religious faith resulted in more joy and less depression for women. "People of faith tend to retain or recover greater happiness after suffering divorce, unemployment, serious illness or a disability." Overall, higher survey responses about spiritual commitment equated to higher levels of reported happiness.¹⁴

Donald Capps echoes the effectiveness of the psalms as engaging with "deep conflicting feelings of resentment, anxiety, envy, anger, and

despair, on the one hand, and gratitude, serenity, confidence, and joy on the other." He cites the Bible as a " 'means of stimulating and generating the necessary psychic energy' to enable one to 'accept responsibility for doing the thing' that is 'necessary and inevitable' for one's own 'salvation and healing.' "¹⁵

Thomas Merton penned in his diary, "This is the secret of the Psalms. Our identity is hidden in them. In them we find ourselves, and God. In these fragments He has revealed not only Himself to us but ourselves in Him."¹⁶

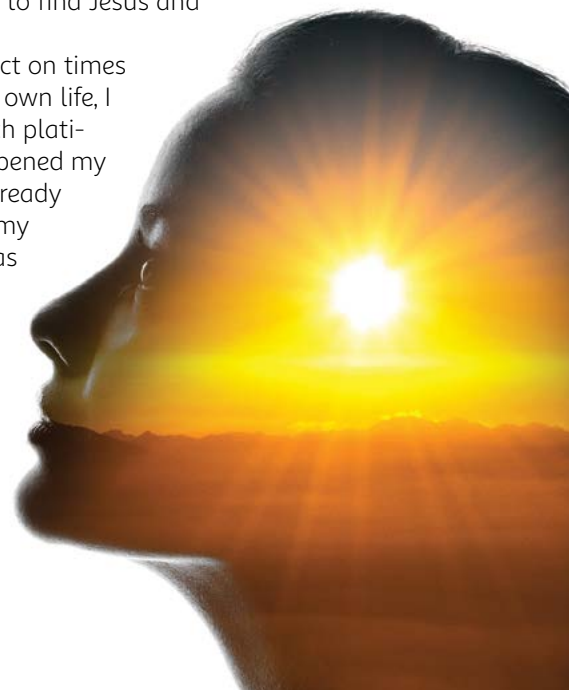
Comfort

One pastoral team included portions of the Psalter among the multisensory spiritual tools used to enhance hospital visits. They offered receptive patients a paper containing a brief quotation (examples came from Psalms 23; 90; 118; 121; and 126). After reading it aloud, they invited the individual to keep the printed slip. Many "often gratefully hold on to the page of psalm verse or tuck it [under their pillows or] away in a special place."

Patients could relate the passage to their own struggles. The simple but evocative language of the songs of lament spans cultural and religious boundaries to resonate with hurting people. In addition to expressing "enthusiastic gratitude," most "stated that they were touched," and "it gave them more hope" or made them feel "less alone," and some requested future visits.¹⁷

Carrie Doering touches on the "theological naïveté" of ministers who offer such explanations to their congregations as "God does not give them more than they can bear, this suffering is their cross to bear, or that suffering is an opportunity to find Jesus and be saved."¹⁸

When I reflect on times of doubt in my own life, I realize that such platitudes only deepened my desperation. Already overwhelmed, my first instinct was to give up on God as I clearly was not meeting His standard as presented by His representatives.



Today my thoughts are in line with Eric Johnson and Stanton Jones's caution that reservoirs of faith and church can be "exhausted or insufficient" at times, requiring supplemental resources "from scientific and professional psychology."¹⁹

Praise

Scholars agree that psalms expressing sorrow and troubles follow a pattern that "switch[es] from lament or complaint to praise. . . . Praise, or the promise of praise, is considered to be a valid part of the complaint song."²⁰ Repeatedly, they demonstrate the practice of using times of tribulation as a platform for thanksgiving. Psalm 54 vocalizes this transition from the fear surrounding the expression "save me" to the acclaim that "He has delivered me out of all trouble;" Psalm 62 advises "trust in Him at all times" alongside "pour out your heart before Him" (v. 8).

At times, the psalmists' lyrical gratitude salutes past experiences of healing or triumph over foes, and the poetic equality of Psalm 30 reminds us that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (v. 5). As a young boy, David penned six verses of trust and affirmation as an opening for Psalm 27 before sharing his lament and coming full circle to conclude the song with thanks. Could it be that "praise can and maybe should precede pleas,"²¹ a way of keeping blessings and troubles in perspective?

Salvation

Despite 20 years and two birthed children since my miscarriage, the pain of that loss still brings tears to my eyes. But my hope is anchored in Psalm 139:16, which affirms the pervasiveness of God's ways that transcend the sin of our world: "Your eyes saw my substance, / being yet unformed. / And in Your book they all were written, / the days fashioned for me, / when as yet there were none of them."

I hear God speak to me through David, recognizing the tiny lost life and giving that precious child value and a future. The turning point in my darkest hour was a realization that restoration would come, even though I did not know the exact form. Still, I cannot help but imagine Jesus gently placing a newborn in my arms as I enter the gates of heaven while He whispers, "Thank you for believing that I would make this right and not letting go of Me." Holding on to that hope became my comfort and, ultimately, my salvation.

The experiences, conversations, and divine perspectives found within the book of Psalms can

play a powerful role in Christian counseling by effectively guiding and supporting the transition of suffering believers from anger to resolution, from grief to comfort, and from doubt to trust in God, even if the exact science of the transformative process remains unexplained.



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- 3 Peter C. W. Ho, "The Shape of the Davidic Psalms as Messianic," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, no. 3 (2019): 516.
- 4 Danijel Berkovic, "Jesus and the Psalms," *KAIROS—Evangelical Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (2016): 41, 54–56.
- 5 Donald Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981), 74.
- 6 J. David Pleins, *The Psalms: Songs of Tragedy, Hope, and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 19.
- 7 Donald A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 73, 74.
- 8 Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman III, *The Cry of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 49.
- 9 Allender and Longman, 46–49.
- 10 Dominick D. Hankle, "The Therapeutic Implications of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Christian Counseling Setting," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 3, no. 4 (2010): 278.
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- 12 Scripture is from the New King James Version.
- 13 Martin G. Klingbeil, "Psalm 73" and "Psalm 75," in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, ed. Jacques B. Doukhan (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., [forthcoming]).
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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Three missional tendencies Adventism needs to avoid

In many respects, the story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of success. Officially organized in 1863 as a peculiar, misunderstood group with around 3,500 members, the church is now a global organization with nearly 22 million members¹ and an annual tithe of US\$2.5 billion.² Its ministry has positively changed millions of lives.

However, while in 2019, the global population grew by 1.05 percent,³ the membership of the Adventist Church increased by just 0.66 percent.⁴ Are we losing ground at worst and stagnant at best? Have we become lukewarm? Is the world resistant to the truth? Should we increase our focus on evangelism? Are there things we could do to revitalize our witness and increase our impact in a broken world?

I believe the answer to these questions is—"Yes!" More specifically, I believe there are three areas of missional effectiveness that can be strengthened. But addressing these areas is challenging because, in many ways, they embrace habits deeply woven into the our fabric. Openly and honestly discussing such needs, however, can be a healthy step toward a better future and stronger church.

Here are the three areas that may need reexamination: first, emphasizing excellent preaching as the way to share our faith; second, priding ourselves on sharing the whole truth with others; and third, having as our goal to baptize people into our faith. Let's explore these three tendencies and see if Scripture has missional principles that, at times, we may overlook.

1. Stressing preaching well rather than living well

I spent a summer as a literature evangelist during college. People often asked, "What church do you belong to?" It fascinated me how they would react when I told them I was a Seventh-day Adventist.

Many had never heard of Adventists, and some would confuse us with another religious group. Perhaps the most unique response came from an overly confident man who said, "Oh, I know about Adventists! You're the ones who give your fiancé a wristwatch instead of a ring, and the church members have to gather around and wash the pastor's feet!"

Generally speaking, however, most of what people knew about Adventism centered on the unique religious beliefs we typically share in our witnessing and evangelistic preaching efforts. In short, the religious beliefs we preach about (regarding Sabbath, prophecy, health, etc.) stood out.

Is this a good thing? Yes, in a sense, it is. Beliefs matter, and preaching is obviously important in the Bible. But have we sometimes neglected something even more central? Is preaching the most effective way of reaching hearts?

Let's pay close attention to Jesus on this point. Never did He say that our identity as His disciples would be known "if you correctly preach doctrinal truth." Instead, He said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).⁵ In the parable of the sheep and the goats, He invited His "sheep" into the kingdom because they fed the hungry,

clothed the naked, and visited the sick. Preaching is important, but unless supported by our way of life, it alone has no impact on others. Christ's followers, then, are known and judged more by how they live than by what they say.⁶ Actions speak louder than words.

Reflecting on the preaching of the apostle Paul, Ellen White writes, "The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed, gave convincing power to his preaching. Here lies the power of truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity."⁷

Throughout our history, Adventists have been quite busy preaching biblical truth. That's good. But we should never downplay *living* the truth. If we, as a church, will live what we preach and love more fully, people will notice, and we will be a more vibrant movement. It is still true that "a kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity."⁸

2. Sharing all the truth rather than just present truth

Many years ago, a member of my congregation "welcomed" a new, non-Adventist neighbor with the gift of a single sheet of paper. On it, the church member had painstakingly typed up quotations from the Bible. Were they biblical words of welcome? A blessing on their new home? Promises of God's presence?

No. The sheet of paper listed Bible passages dealing with the seventh-day Sabbath. The member's reasoning went like this: "I've shared the truth with them; now it's up to them how they will respond." That church member thought that sharing the truth made him or her a faithful witness.

Thankfully, I suspect that their approach is less common among Adventists today. Let's contrast this approach with that of Jesus. Near the end of His public ministry, He said to His twelve disciples: "'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth'" (John 16:12, 13).

The passage clearly indicates that Jesus actively withheld truth from His closest followers, even after talking and traveling with them for more than three years. Why? Because it was more than they could handle. They were not ready to receive it. Jesus knew that for truth to be beneficial and convicting, it must be shared at the right time, in the right manner, with the right person.

As followers of Jesus, we have not always reflected His example on this point. Some of us are sometimes too quick to present difficult teachings of the Bible in large, public settings before understanding the nature of the audience. We may send out mass mailings containing challenging and, at times, potentially offensive claims, without knowing precisely who will receive our literature.

Our message will not always be popular. There exists a time for sharing hard truths. But the example of Jesus reminds us that we must be wise, patient, and kind to our audience. We should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we share the truths our audience most needs to hear and is best prepared to receive at the moment. We should teach the truth gradually so they can understand and benefit from it.

3. Converting people rather than blessing them

Seventh-day Adventists often work to convert others to our faith. For us, baptism signifies conversion and represents our central task. We track who joins our church and generally view high baptism numbers within a region as a sign of success. That is as it should be. We should rejoice for every single individual who decides to get baptized. However, baptism should not be the sole goal.

The word *proselytize* (to convert someone from one religion to another) comes from the New Testament Greek word *prosēlytos*. Given the missional focus of the New Testament, we might expect the word to show up everywhere. It does not. In fact, although the New Testament writers knew the word meant "convert," they never used it to describe someone who came to faith in Jesus. Instead, they only employed the word to describe someone who converted to Judaism (Matt. 23:15; Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43). The association is so strong that many versions of the Bible will translate the noun *prosēlytos* as "a convert to Judaism."

This surprising point must be made clear: the Bible does not emphasize that followers of Jesus are to convert others.⁹ Instead of the goal to convert others to our religious organization, the greater biblical concern centers on blessing others as well as showing them God's character and love, helping them to know Him, giving them the good news of salvation. The real blessing comes when we unite the temporal love, care, and blessings with the good news of salvation. The centrality of blessing is clear from the very

first chapters of Genesis, which introduce God as One who blesses. His first words to the creatures of the sea and sky and to humanity are ones of blessing (Gen. 1:22, 28). He blessed the seventh day (Gen. 2:3), Adam and Eve (Gen. 5:2), and Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:1).

Genesis 12 again emphasizes God's desire to bless when He calls Abram, saying, "I will make you into a great nation, / and I will bless you; / I will make your name great, / and you will be a blessing. / . . . [A]nd all peoples on earth / will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2, 3).

Scripture explicitly states God's purpose in calling and blessing Abram: His chosen people are the channel through which God will bless all peoples on earth. Through them, others will have a chance to know Christ and then follow Him.

Again, we should not understand this call to bless as a weakening or a "watering down" of our evangelistic calling. Blessing others does not mean that we forget about repentance, obedience, and genuine discipleship. After all, salvation is the greatest blessing that anyone can experience! We want everyone to respond to the call of Jesus and know the joy of salvation. So, living a life of blessing will certainly include sharing our testimony, studying the Bible with others, and inviting them to commit to Jesus. But it will also mean a willingness to do whatever the Holy Spirit asks, even if it is as simple as offering a "cup of cold water" (Matt. 10:42) to someone who needs it.

Something profound happens when we approach others while prayerfully asking the simple but powerful question, "Lord, how can I be a blessing to this person?" Asking it benefits us in at least three ways.

First, it opens us to the Holy Spirit because "How can I be a blessing?" isn't always easy to ask. It means we must humbly ask God for help and then patiently listen for the Spirit's guidance specifically for how we should proceed in that precise moment.

Second, it fosters genuine relationships and creative ministry. We will not feel undue pressure to complete a certain curriculum or immediately transmit a full dosage of religious knowledge to everyone we encounter. If we meet someone who is mourning, we may be a blessing by grieving with them. Should they be lonely, we may be a blessing by listening. As a true friend would, we can patiently listen, support, and encourage them. When we live like this, we will find that our circle of friends will grow and our family of faith will increase.

Third, asking this question of blessing encourages us to serve in difficult regions among those we may see as enemies. Jesus instructed us to "bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28). So, when faced with resistance and hatred, we need not immediately move on to a new territory where it seems easier to reach people for Christ. The call to be a blessing inspires us to stay among those who seem closed to spiritual things, blessing them in whatever ways we can and trusting that, in God's time, a harvest will result.

Make no mistake about it, the words of Jesus are still true: the fields are ripe for harvest. May we labor faithfully in those fields as a people who do not just preach well but also live well. May we share the right truth at the right time so that people will be able to receive it. Finally, may we do our best to be a blessing. God has called us to this noble task. Let us be faithful to what our Master has asked.



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- 7 Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 511.
- 8 Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1892), 122.
- 9 In the New Testament, the words used to describe someone joining the Jesus movement varied. A new believer was "newly planted" or someone who was "born again." They became a "follower" or a "disciple." These are organic and relational words, while *proselyte* is a more ecclesial, organizational designation.

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Adventist principles propel growth in northern California

WEIMAR, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

During the May 14–16, 2021 graduation weekend, leaders from Weimar Institute, a self-supporting educational and health institution in Weimar, California, unveiled the institution's official name change to Weimar University. The way the principles of health and service are interwoven in the Bible-based curriculum captured the attention of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) accreditation evaluation team in 2019.¹

In the two years since receiving WSCUC accreditation, the institution was approved for and then began offering its bachelor's degree in Nursing in August 2019 and a graduate program in Counseling Psychology and Wellness in fall 2020. This master of arts program has two tracks: Marriage and Family Therapy and Licensed Professional Counseling. Another graduate-level master's program in Religion, Biblical Mission, and

Wellness has recently been submitted to WSCUC for approval. More graduate-level programs are under consideration.

Noting the institution's focus on both physical and mental health within a uniquely Adventist framework and its expansion into graduate-level education, a WASC peer reviewer thus suggested the name change. Leaders felt the name change more accurately reflects the organization's mission and purpose. "It indicates that this is an institution of higher education for those seeking to obtain an education modeled on Christ's educational methods," said **Phil Mills**, chairman of Weimar University Board of Directors.

Weimar University uses the HEAL acronym for health, evangelism, academic excellence, and labor and service. Regarding the service aspect, Weimar University has run a weekly service program called Total Community Involvement (TCI)² for the past four years. Every week, students and faculty visit individuals in the community who need help with yard work, decluttering, moving, health education, and healthy cooking tips.

When COVID-19 protocols restricted the TCI teams from visiting their friends in the community, students and faculty stayed in touch remotely. They also began work on a trail last semester to be used by the community. Along the trail, 36 etched stones sequentially share the Adventist belief of the seventh-day Sabbath and together are a walking Bible study.

Additionally, Weimar University students and faculty recently coordinated an in-person evangelistic series. Approximately 350 people attended the nightly meetings, and over 59 have been baptized to date, with more baptisms scheduled and numerous Bible studies in progress.

Students point to TCI as an integral part of their decision to



Dr. Neil Nedley, Weimar University president, introduces the institution's new name and logo during the graduation vespers.

Photo: Rodolfo Ramirez



A community member baptized by Pastor Don Mackintosh

come to Weimar University. Increasing numbers of international students and students from missionary families have come to the campus, drawn by the mission focus. This diversity has helped create a unique global culture. University leaders are committed to maintaining this mission-mindedness and a purposefully large faculty-to-student ratio to better nurture students.

Weimar Institute was founded in 1978 by a group of Seventh-day Adventists. "Its mission remains to provide higher education that is unapologetically biblical and uncompromisingly scientific where students can learn hands-on with patients who have come to Weimar for healing, to the NEWSTARTTM program, Depression and Anxiety Recovery ProgramTM, and the medical/dental clinics on campus," noted **Neil Nedley**, Weimar University president.

Weimar University offers a variety of undergraduate majors. Graduates of the preprofessional natural science program have been accepted to medical school, dental school, graduate-level engineering schools, or other allied health fields.

In addition, a one-semester certificate program for health coaching, "Health Evangelism and Leadership Training for Him" (HEALTH), is available both on-campus and online.

Weimar University also operates an academy, natural food store, inn, NEWSTARTTM program and lodge, cafeteria, and a K-8 grade school.

According to a campus climate survey this academic year, Weimar University has a 99 percent student satisfaction rate regarding educational quality. For more information about Weimar University, go to Weimar.edu. [Weimar University Media]

- 1 Weimar Institute Media, "Weimar Institute Granted Accreditation for Six Years," *Adventist Review*, March 26, 2019, <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story13516-weimar-institute-granted-accreditation-for-six-years>.
- 2 Heather Quintana, "Adventist Institute to Launch Initiative to Reach the Community," *Adventist Review*, June 23, 2017, <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story5215-adventist-institute-to-launch-initiative-to-reach-the-community>.
- 3 NEWSTART is an acronym trademarked by Weimar Institute that stands for nutrition, exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, air, rest, and trust in divine power.



Andrews University Launches Certificate in Global Leadership

BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

The Andrews University Department of Leadership is offering a new certificate to nurture professionals, students, entrepreneurs, and organizational leaders into world changers with a spiritual mission.

The Global Leadership Certificate, which will be offered online beginning September 2021, was established to empower people “to be catalysts for social reformation, soul healing, and spiritual

regeneration.” **Erich Baumgartner**, director of the Global Leadership Institute at Andrews University, shares further, “The Global Leadership Certificate was created as a laboratory to equip professionals for their spiritual calling to be world changers. It is designed for the marketplace.”

The curriculum consists of five online classes over five semesters, followed by a “World Changer” capstone event. The set of classes is available as a Professional Leadership Certificate or a Graduate Leadership Certificate for credit that can later be transferred into the Andrews’ master of arts or doctorate in leadership. For more information, please visit the “Certificate in Global Leadership” page on the Andrews University website at andrews.edu/go/global. [Jeff Boyd, Andrews University]

In Brazil, school for YouTubers trains Adventist teens for mission

A new Seventh-day Adventist–sponsored school in Brazil is set to train a new generation of Adventist young people to become YouTube evangelists, leaders in the South American Division (SAD) said. Feliz7Class is a project born of a partnership between the Adventist Church and Brazil Adventist University (UNASP). The initiative seeks to teach audio and recording techniques and content creation tips to talented young people who want to use their skills to share the gospel with new audiences.

The content is targeted especially at young audiences. “Many teenagers and young people who visit Feliz7Play [the SAD video streaming site] send messages expressing their desire to participate in the series, movies, and mission to share Jesus through video content. Seven Class is a response to these requests,” **Carlos Magalhães**, SAD digital strategy manager, said.

The goal is “to train and prepare a generation, which already knows a lot about technology and social networks, to serve as missionaries and positive influencers in the digital world,” Magalhães said.

Classes will be offered periodically, leaders said. Students will learn how to plan content for a YouTube channel, receive technical instruction on audio and video, and learn how to distribute and share their channel’s content. The plan is to offer 166 video lessons plus 13 extra classes.

The first lesson will be available for free on the Feliz7Play YouTube channel so everyone can get acquainted with some of the content. Those who register will have access to classes through Next, UNASP’s distance learning platform.

There are also local pastors and church leaders who will learn and improve their gifts for preaching on the internet. An additional digital ministry initiative will be launched in the coming months.

With content focused especially on leadership, the proposal is that church leaders learn to communicate better using new technologies, occupying spaces on social networks, and creating content for YouTube and other platforms.


For former SDA communication director **Rafael Rossi**, this is a much-needed step. “It is essential that leaders are ready and get involved in this new and growing way of speaking about Jesus,” he said. [Anne Seixas, South American Division, and *Adventist Review*] 



Photo: South American Division News



Leading Without Authority: How the New Power of Co-Elevation Can Break Down Silos, Transform Teams, and Reinvent Collaboration

by Keith Ferrazzi, New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2020.

Full-time pastoral ministry is a second career for me, and I still enjoy reading nonfiction books from the secular world on a variety of topics, especially leadership and teamwork. An important contribution to the leadership community as a whole and church leadership specifically is made by Keith Ferrazzi.

From the outset, the title intrigued me. What does the author mean by *leading without authority*? I automatically assumed it meant not leading in a hierarchical, authoritarian, centralized way. To some extent, he presents this concept through a report from 2016 that states, “The entire concept of leadership is being radically redefined. The whole notion of ‘positional leadership’—that people become leaders by virtue of their power or position—is being challenged” (7). However, leading without authority means so much more. The concept he introduces is *co-elevation*: “‘going higher’ together” which “nurtures a generosity of spirit and sense of commitment to our new teammates and our shared mission” (9).

Furthermore, he strongly challenges the notion that someone cannot exercise co-elevation leadership because that person is not in a “power position.” Everyone can learn to lead in co-elevation by (1) knowing who your team is; (2) accepting that it’s all on you; (3) earning permission to lead; (4) creating deeper, richer, more collaborative partnerships; (5) codeveloping; (6) praising and celebrating; (7) co-elevating the tribe; and (8) joining the movement.

Part of the co-elevation philosophy involves working across corporate “silos” that traditionally

keep different teams/departments separated from one another when collaboration would co-elevate each team/department to meet and even exceed their goals—thereby elevating the entire organization.

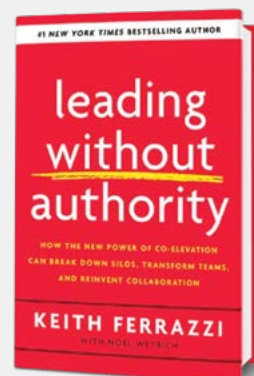
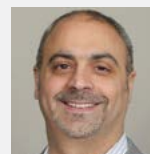
I heard about a pastor who presented principles of collaboration at a board meeting. One ministry leader asked incredulously, “So are you saying that I need to share my interests and plans with these other teams?” This was one of those “aha” moments. Ministry leaders realized they had not tapped their full potential as a church.

Although written primarily with the corporate business world in mind, Ferrazzi states that the book’s principles can help any organization, including “charitable nonprofits” (10). There is a need to break down the independent “silos” of ministry and collaborate in “radical interdependence” (23) for the elevation of not only the ministries but also the church in the community, with the result of lifting up the name of Jesus Christ!

Another way to apply this concept to churches is in a metropolitan area where there are multiple churches. Sharing ideas, resources, even members with other churches is rare for fear that it will cause us to lose existing members or potential new members to a sister church. Consciously or subconsciously, we often become territorial. But what if we tore down these ecclesiastical “silos”? What if we learned to co-elevate for kingdom growth, and whatever church happens to reap the harvest, then so be it? Christ tells us that regardless of who does the work, we should all celebrate and rejoice together in that success (John 4:36)!

This book meets my hearty approval. It can benefit local church leaders as well as the broader sisterhood of churches and the larger corporate bodies (i.e., conferences and unions). Within each of the rules, Ferrazzi provides practices to help fulfill these co-elevation principles. These should be prayerfully reviewed and adapted to fit your context. You will not be sorry for having added this book to your library. I’m not.

Rob Alfalah, MAPMin,
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Coloring outside the lines: Stemming the flow of clergy exodus

Larry Yeagley, now retired, has served as a pastor and chaplain. He lives in Gentry, Arkansas, United States.



At eight years old, I was fortunate to meet evangelist H. M. S. Richards. He came to camp meeting. I followed him around the campus and sat on the front row when he spoke. I heard the call. I was going to become a pastor and work for Jesus!

Career day was a time to shine for many professionals. In Adventist academies and colleges, they hoped to help students decide on a life work. Presentations were lively and fresh and students eagerly collected glossy brochures. But this was not so in the room where ministry was promoted. No brochures. No excitement. Just a soon-to-retire pastor whose spark had died out.

Pastors who came to my hometown church seemed pressured to meet organizational programs. Several left pastoral ministry for health-care employment. Several left ministry altogether. How can a pastor keep his or her love of pastoral ministry? From my own experience, we can do so in four ways:

1. Innovate. The fun and excitement of a pastor's life is not designed by administrators; it is the responsibility of the pastor. I have found joy and a sense of accomplishment treading a new trail. By God's grace, I helped to organize three hospices and became the chaplain for them. I developed a grief-support program. I accepted the presidency of the American Cancer Society in my county. I lectured in over 200 cities for clergy of all faiths. I helped over 1,000 smokers quit. This was done while pastor of two churches. I was busy and happy. God helped me contact people who would never have responded to traditional and outmoded evangelism. You want to keep being a minister? Try creativity.

2. Educate. I met H. M. S. Richards again some years later. I mentioned to him that I had conducted seminars in his area, and he scolded me for not coming to visit him. He wanted to show me his library. You see, when I graduated, he had given me a list of 50 books every self-respecting pastor needed to read. He knew how to remain a

pastor—read, read, read. Your congregation can tell when you don't. For four years, I attended a clergy breakfast and listened to authors presenting their recent books. Under every chair was a bag of ten of the latest books. I spent two days with Norval Pease studying about worship. If you learn to prepare sermons with lots of good content, listeners will look forward to every worship service—and so will you.

3. Delegate. You can't be all things to all church members. Learn to refer. One of the largest churches in my community employs three pastors. I asked if they had a referral list. I was met with puzzled looks. It soon became evident that they needed what they did not have. Burnout started to take its toll on the staff. A year later, that large church is losing members and financial troubles are naturally following.

Let me recommend a text that taught me how to refer: William R. Miller and Kathleen A. Jackson, *Practical Psychology for Pastors* (Prentice-Hall, 1995). The art of referring can enhance your ministry.

4. Participate. Open your eyes to the dozens of events close to you. I attended the first national convention of hospices in America. Then I attended a weekend training event with J. William Worden, a scholar in the area of thanatology.

One of my most enlightening experiences was colecturing with the PREACH program sponsored by *Ministry* magazine. That took me to scores of cities in United States, Canada, and seven countries in the Far East. If you want to grow and remain in the ministry, participate.

My great-granddaughter is my model. She opens her coloring book, grabs a crayon, and with pleasure shows me her creation. She is happy with her "Rembrandt." She has illustrated for me that a growing pastor is a happy pastor—because coloring outside the lines is fun. 🎨

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Mark Finley

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REVELATION 14:6, ESV

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