

SEPTEMBER 2022



Ministry[®]

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JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

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Please note that a zero was inadvertently added to a figure on page 6 of the June/July 2022 issue. The sentence read 16,000 people but should have read: "Roughly 1,600 people lived in the town of 500 to 600 households." We apologize for this error.

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Persevering through pain

This summer, I was struck by a heaviness engulfing many church members, yea, even pastors. The horror of worldwide crises was eclipsed by the shock of national tragedies that, in turn, was overshadowed by the persistence of personal pain. With all that's taking place globally and personally, I've asked myself, How do we get through our pain?

Pushing through pain

This summer, my wife, Pattiejean, and I rewatched one of our favorite Christian productions. *Overcomer* showcases a high school student named Hannah, for whom a running field proved the showdown for her personal struggles. Hannah's estranged and hospitalized father coaches her through a race remotely. "Even if your legs start to hurt," her father says, "don't slow down. That can make them hurt even more. Keep your pace and push through."¹

Physical therapists tell us, though, that pushing through pain may not be advisable. "We've been hearing it all our lives, in different ways: push through the pain. But is that a good idea?

"Pain is an indicator that something is amiss. It may indicate overuse, a substitution pattern of

muscle activity or poor joint mechanics."² So how do we get through our pain?

Playing through pain

As pastors, we see marriages in pain. Pastoral marriages don't get a pass either. I've looked with interest as couples experience the euphoria of wedding-day bliss. I've observed with heartache as marriages exchange ecstasy for agony. I've watched with intrigue as couples wrestle with whether to stay or go and I've asked myself, What's the answer? What do sportspeople do—just keep playing?

Therapists advise against playing through pain. "Despite what you may have heard, 'Playing through pain' is a bad idea. It can put an athlete at risk for a more serious injury. At the very least, the longer that pain continues without care, the more challenging it often is to treat."³ So how do we get through our pain?

Persevering through pain

I've settled on *persevering* through pain. Therapists, I believe I have the Bible on my side: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3, NKJV).



Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, is the associate editor of *Ministry*.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

I witnessed a pastoral ordination and a pastoral commissioning service this summer. Both services addressed enduring pain in ministry. The ordination service pondered the question, *How do you cope when the vision fails?* How do you survive when what you thought was going to happen does not happen? When you thought “your children are going to grow up and they’re going to church school, then they’re going to graduate from there and then they’re going to marry somebody with a degree behind their name and they’re going to give you beautiful grandchildren. And then you’ve got to be sitting in court with them, *when the vision fails!* . . . When you stand before God and promise God and men that you will love a certain person forever and a day, and then years come and you’re talking to lawyers about who gets to take what piece of furniture and who will see the children on what weekend, *when the vision fails!*”⁴

The speaker for the commissioning service declared, “There is only one big chair in your ministry. You don’t sit on it; it is Jesus who sits on that big chair. . . . You need to serve with distinction. Serve the rich and serve the poor. . . . Serve those with positions and those who don’t have positions.

Serve everybody, even those who will go against you and criticize you, because even your detractors will need somebody to bury them.”⁵

Pastoral pain may not be avoided, but it must be endured. It’s proof that God is at work in our ministry. So, *Press along saints, press along, in God’s own way. Press along saints, press along, in God’s own way. Persecution we must bear, trials and crosses in our way. For the hotter the battle, the sweeter the victory!*⁶



- 1 “Overcomer (2019) - Father Coaches Daughter Scene (6/10) | Movieclips,” YouTube video, 3:22, January 27, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFHudGWd7VU>. Listen at 2:30.
- 2 Symmetry Physical Therapy, “Should You ‘Push Through the Pain?’” <https://symmetryptaustin.com/should-you-push-through-the-pain/>.
- 3 Symmetry Physical Therapy.
- 4 William Nick Taliaferro, in “Allegheny East Conference Camp Meeting 2022: Ordination & Concert,” YouTube video, 3:51:41, July 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-av0Mxx26Q&t=3323s>. Listen at 54:05.
- 5 James Yansen, in “2022-07-02 | Bermuda Conference Camp Meeting – Commissioning Service,” YouTube video, 2:37:11, July 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbxCsALexj0&t=5526s>. Listen at 1:31:12.
- 6 “Press Along Saints.” <https://gospelchoruses.wordpress.com/2014/12/11/press-along-saints/>.



Learning to **navigate** in **missional** **waters**

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

In the spring of 1980, I worked in the fishing industry off Stuart Island, Washington State. My first day of training was eye-opening. I had previously thought of the ocean as a large, predictable body of water. However, I soon found myself in a small boat being ferried around tidal waters between islands. Imagine a river that flows north one day at four knots, then south the next day at six knots. Huge whirlpools—sometimes reaching 200 feet across and 50 feet deep—spun off rocks. The “terrain” of the ocean and its currents were unpredictable because of the islands, underwater obstacles, and weather. Change was ever constant, and you never knew for sure what was next.

Tough times

Similarly, we live in a time when the landscape has become fluid. What was once predictable and stable is now like the wild waters that I faced while fishing. The settled and predictable ways of modernity and Christendom have given way to plurality, fragmentation, and distrust.

It has been said that truth is stranger than fiction. Today, truth is even stranger than in the past. Turbulence has become the norm. The pace of change outstrips our ability to adjust. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube—these things did not exist 20 years ago. We have incredible tools, but technology sometimes offers an *illusion* of control—a deceptive promise of greater meaning and real community.

From maps to navigation

What do we do when maps no longer describe the territory that we once knew? How do we locate ourselves amid such confusion and change, and then find the way forward? Church-growth expert Eddie Gibbs offers a clue: “The church needs navigators tuned to the voice of God,

not map readers. Navigational skills have to be learned on the high seas and in the midst of varying conditions produced by the wind, waves, currents, fogbanks, darkness, storm clouds and perilous rocks.”¹ When maps stop working, we train navigators.

Navigation is a significantly different skill than map reading. The points on a map are fixed, and locating a point in the real world simply requires locating oneself by correspondence to known geography or artifacts and then proceeding methodically to the next point. If you have a compass and a bit of logic, it’s easy.

But when the markers are missing, navigation is needed. Navigation requires no fixed points on this planet. Instead, one learns to read the sky—the stars, really—and orients by a point *outside* the world. This requires a sense of 3D space and the ability to move *without* logic. Instead, an *imaginative framework* is applied to the real world.

Navigation requires courage and the ability to withstand harsh conditions. Faith and a fundamental inner peace are needed—something map readers do not need. When there are no physical points to locate ourselves, we rely on an internal compass. That internal compass is tuned not to earthly artifacts but to an external reference point—the North Star, Jesus.

We do not really need navigators in times of cultural stability. We need them desperately in seasons of transition.

From captivity to freedom

We have great stories of navigators in the Old Testament. After their Egyptian captivity, the Israelites followed their Lord, the God of the Exodus. God did not offer Israel a game plan for the coming miles or the next 40 years. There were no maps for the people of Israel leaving Egypt, only a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Instead of a map, God offered Israel His presence and a promise—to go before them.

Why not simply give them a map? There are at least two reasons.

First, God Himself wanted to be the way forward. He wanted a people radically dependent on His Spirit.

Second, the process was as important as the destination. God was not just providing deliverance. He was forming a people that mirror His own heart. It was not simply a journey from point A to point B. Moses was not really leading people at all; he was following the Lord and leading a process where God could form a ragtag mob into a people of the Spirit.

Eric Hoffer gives us a hint about the difference. “Moses wanted to turn a tribe of enslaved Hebrews into free men. You would think that all he had to do was to gather the slaves and tell them that they were free. But Moses knew better. He knew that the transformation of slaves into free men was more difficult and painful than the transformation of free men into slaves.”²

Navigation is both an old skill and an ancient metaphor. When a ship is entering a harbor, universal knowledge is no longer adequate; local knowledge becomes critical. The pilot comes alongside the captain and crew to guide them safely through unfamiliar waters, past hidden obstacles. Traveling in a straight line in unknown waters can get you killed.

Traveling off the map

Years ago, when I helped plant Metro church in the urban core of Kelowna, British Columbia, the mother church was entering a crisis. The Metro community and ministry were growing rapidly. With more than 50 percent of our community homeless or addicted, the needs were endless. With barely a budget, how would we hire staff? We sought individual donors and began building bridges with other agencies. New partnerships would provide stable funding. Today Metro is a hybrid: it looks like an agency from the outside but like a faith community from the inside. Metro is a novelty within the denomination but may be the future.

We can embrace ancient practices that allow us to live more deeply—the context and culture, solitude and community, gathering and dispersion, and prayer and work. We had to do that with the formation and running of Metro church.

How do we begin to cultivate navigators? By practicing skills that represent a response to

adaptive challenges. What follows are a few of those adaptive skills.

Navigators require imagination. The problem of funding at Metro required a new imagination about partnerships. A different vision of belonging required a new language around community, especially the way we divided the world into *us* and *them*. Our community is not providing services; we are inviting everyone into a new kind of family.

One day I asked a friend to read from Isaiah at a midpoint in my teaching. Tim was not a gifted reader; he had never finished high school. He struggled through the passage, but all could see the joy on his face. In *Living Gently in a Violent World*, Stanley Hauerwas relates a similar story. He notes that we often exclude people not because they lack gifting but because of our ideals of progress, which require speed.³ The “problem” of an unskilled reader is the potential that we can learn a new way of living together, a new opportunity for inclusion in a new kind of family. And this requires imagination.

Navigators invoke memory. Navigators invoke memory by telling the story. Stories create and maintain the culture.⁴ In many congregations, the narrators are too few and often those most distant from living the daily adventure. At Metro church, we structured a sharing time each week. This informal sharing time often dominated our gathering. We heard stories of victory, pain, hope, and longing—and this decentered form of preaching gathered our community around the activity of God in our midst, often hidden just below the surface of our lives.

Navigators take risks. “Organizations, like living beings, are hardwired to optimize what they know and to not throw success away.”⁵ Being hardwired makes it difficult to learn. The advantage of a new community in a new location among street people and addicts is that we are *de facto* outside our comfort zones. We are forced to experiment our way forward, to become learners together.

At Metro, we took risks in numerous ways. First, we risked meeting in a dance venue downtown. Second, we risked hiring staff who had little specialized training but obvious passion. Third, we risked welcoming a few needy or at-risk people into our homes. The cost of that kind of hospitality is the censure of the established social agencies. A few of us still have bad reputations (“You have no boundaries!”) as a result. Finally, we risked including recovering addicts in our decision-making process; they understood the needs and potential uniquely.

When the signposts have disappeared and our maps fail us, we know One who does not change and can read the waters and guide us.

Navigators convene conversations. How do we cultivate missional partnerships when values differ?⁶ Metro was invited to an interagency table, but our vision of human flourishing and the path to achieving it was radically different from most agencies. We were impatient with those conversations: we wanted to get on with the work.

While it takes time and effort to listen and develop trust, partnerships both broaden our base and strengthen our learning. Sally Morgenthaler writes, “Groups that are too much alike find it harder to keep learning because each member is bringing less and less to the table.”⁷ Paradoxically, the more unlike we are, the more we can learn together. We made time to convene conversations with the mayor, civic leaders, and other agencies because we believed the wider community could benefit from our collaboration. We saw the beginnings of dividends in slowly building trust as the agenda of homelessness and the hope of finding answers together took root. We believed God’s mission was as much about community transformation as about individuals.

Navigators offer new language to their partners. In *The Sky Is Falling*, Alan Roxburgh describes the poetic leader as one who helps us make sense of our experiences.⁸ The prologue of John tells how Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, NKJV). We must live within the traditions and narratives of the people.

One winter, my wife was driving when she saw a woman walking along the street whom we knew through Metro. Liz was a cocaine addict and a prostitute. It was cold, so Betty stopped and picked her up and gave her some gloves but also asked her about her experience of Jesus. It went something like this:

“Do you know Jesus?”

“Yes.”

“How do you know Him?”

“When I’m cold, He’s like a warm blanket. And when I’m hungry, He’s like a warm meal.”

That exchange brought tears to Betty’s eyes. She was able to pray with Liz before dropping her off at a shelter.

Navigators listen to God. The more gifted our community, the more inclined we are to rely on our own abilities. Prayer roots us outside ourselves. Prayer is an act of subversion that acknowledges our dependence on God.

Prayer is all about attention and requires that we slow down and listen. Moreover, prayer invokes possibilities beyond this world.

Navigators

When the signposts have disappeared and our maps fail us, we know One who does not change and can read the waters and guide us. When we slow down and listen, we have the chance to be led by the Spirit and engage in fresh ways. Plans may fail us; strategies may expire, but when we partner with God, as His purpose unfolds, we become navigators.

God is active in our neighborhoods and cities, bringing His kingdom. Learning to listen as new possibilities unfold, we can fix our gaze on the North Star, raise our sails in the wind, and learn the ways of the Navigator, which we need in the very turbulent waters we, as missional leaders, are fishing.



- 1 Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 66.
- 2 Eric Hoffer, *Working and Thinking on the Waterfront, a Journal: June 1958–May 1959* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1969), diary entry, May 20, 1959.
- 3 Jean Vanier and Stanley Hauerwas, *Living Gently in a Violent World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 45.
- 4 See the helpful insights of Gary Nelson in *Borderland Churches: A Congregation’s Introduction to Missional Living* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 101ff.
- 5 Kevin Kelly, “New Rules for the New Economy,” *Wired*, September 1, 1997, 192–194.
- 6 See, in particular, the work of Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Barret-Koehler, 2008).
- 7 Sally Morgenthaler, “Leadership in a Flattened World,” in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, ed. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 183.
- 8 Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky Is Falling* (Eagle, ID: ACI Pub., 2005), 164.

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STEPS

to successfully make social engagement happen in your church

Its local community was recently in the national news—once again for the wrong reason. Instead of violence, the news this time was an unacceptable level of lead in the drinking water. Over the last 10 years, this church had developed a close connection with the community. Unsurprisingly, various local media outlets regularly listed it as a center for distributing free bottled water. The church collected and donated free sneakers to the community. In the front yard of the church, they built a basketball court. Open to the public, they launched a very successful basketball tournament for the youth. “Wellness Wednesday” promoted a healthy lifestyle. In addition to 70-plus persons baptized during the pandemic, the response has been overwhelming.¹

Social engagement is biblical

When the prophet Samuel saw what was happening in his community and observed that many young people were idle and getting into trouble, he knew it was an opportunity for ministry. He

established the school of the prophets, unleashing their potential and making a tremendous impact on the socioeconomic fabric of the community.

Dorcas recognized a need in Joppa and, because of her love for Jesus, realized that she must do something about it. “She was a worthy disciple of Jesus, and her life was filled with acts of kindness. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the poor and the sorrowful.”² Twenty centuries later, her compassion and spirit of initiative still inspire countless Christians.³

God calls His “chosen people” to proclaim the praises of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV) by helping those in need physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. They are His “ambassadors” (2 Cor. 5:20), anointed by the Holy Spirit to represent Jesus. It is all about connecting the church with the community. Commenting on the explosive growth of early Christianity, Timothy Keller wrote: “Christians’ *lives*—their concern for the weak and the poor, their integrity in the face of persecution, their economic sharing, their sacrificial love even for their enemies, and the high quality of their common life together—attracted nonbelievers to the gospel.”⁴

Learning social engagement

Education and training can make a lasting impact on the community. Jesus invested much time and energy in training His disciples before sending them out to minister to the surrounding villages and towns (Luke 9). Barnabas took Saul from Tarsus, trained him in Antioch, and prepared him to be a successful missionary (Acts 11:25, 26). Then he multiplied his impact by mentoring John Mark (Acts 15:37–39). Aquila and Priscilla gently shared the full gospel with Apollos, preparing

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

him to become a more effective evangelist (Acts 18:18–28).

Pastors should seek every opportunity to engage with their communities. Newly developed programs can equip them with the latest insights to enable them to engage in social entrepreneurship, social advocacy, and social service. They must train leaders on how to initiate projects that will improve lives in their communities. It might involve raising funds, writing grants, conducting research to find relevant information about the community they serve, and partnering with other community leaders for specific goals, such as fighting domestic violence, addiction, or illiteracy. Other projects may involve the social integration of immigrants and refugees, helping people learn the local language so that they can find jobs and support their families, job training, after-school tutoring, mentoring young people, or providing sources of clean water.

Five simple steps for your church

First, *the church must involve community members* as part of key decision-making processes. This is necessary in order to build mutual respect and trust between the church and the community. Such engagement must be *with* the community, not *to* the community.

Second, before the believers proclaim the good news of salvation, they must *earn the right and privilege to share that good news* by becoming trustworthy messengers. Their message will have a more significant influence if they demonstrate their commitment in tangible ways.

Third, Christ's disciples must *address the most important issues facing the community*, not simply what they want to do. They must keep in mind the following five vital components of community engagement: (1) identify community priorities, (2) track community assets, (3) leverage those assets, (4) conduct research, and (5) generate new knowledge in the process that they can then use to reset priorities.⁵ Social

engagement should be a community-based ministry of a missional church instead of a church-based program employed just to attract others. Such engagement represents their real presence in the community.

Instead of asking people to “come and see,” a church should ask itself such questions as, What are we known for in our community? How are we relating to our community? How have we positioned ourselves in our community?

Fourth, the church must *maximize the participation and leadership* of the people living in the community. Social engagement does not focus on the question, How do we attract people to what we are doing? Instead, it asks, What are the ways we need to change in order to engage those who do not consider church a part of their lives?

Create opportunities for people in the community to be involved and serve together for the betterment of life. Pastor and civic leader Jerome Hurst recognizes that “it is imperative that the church work in partnership with others in bringing solutions to the issues the communities we serve are facing.”⁶ Gaspar Colón, director of the Center for Metropolitan Ministry, Washington, DC, calls for an “incarnational community-based ministry.”⁷ Amanatidou, Cox, and Gagliardi, from the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, encourage us to move from consulting society to partnering with society, and even to the most effective method—in which society controls the activity.⁸

Fifth, believers must *create critical service-learning opportunities* by involving students, teachers, churches, and community members. Through social innovation, participants will make a difference while learning and growing. Greg Dees, pioneering leader in social entrepreneurship, notes that social innovators engage in the “process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning.” Further, they exhibit a “heightened accountability to the constituencies” they serve and for the outcomes they create.⁹

Everyone is called

The church must sharpen its tools if it is to have a positive impact on its neighborhood and world. It will do so by educating and equipping church members to be the light to the world. Three important questions will help guide the ministries of the church: What are we doing? (the question of mission), How are we doing it? (the question of strategy), and When are we successful? (the question of measurement). Christians must become visible signs of salvation and the kingdom of God in the world. Theologian and pastor John Stott said that Jesus' "words and deeds belonged to each other, the words interpreting the deeds and the deeds embodying the words. He did not only announce the good news of the kingdom; he performed visible 'signs of the kingdom.'"¹⁰ Historian Donald Yerxa and a team of colleagues argue vigorously against the myth that religion is incompatible with innovation. In fact, they contend that religion has been inspiring amazing innovations around the world for centuries.¹¹

Compassion

The church cannot be contained by its walls nor confined and limited to just a worship program. It is not about just keeping traditions and maintaining the status quo. While the church must plant its feet in tradition, it must also advance beyond it. If we do not grow out of our traditions, we will be ineffective and inefficient. That is why God summons all Christians to participate in His mission of salvation, promote restorative justice, and bring healing to the world. Theologian Ronald Sider wrote: "If anything is clear in Jesus, the announcement and demonstration of the Kingdom are at the very core of His message and life."¹²

Following Jesus' example, His disciples will rely on the power of love and compassion to harness the resources needed to contribute to the well-being of the community. Although God's kingdom is not of this world, His disciples are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13, 14). They are the modern good Samaritans, engaged in taking care of life's victims and bringing relief to their pain and sufferings (Luke 10:25–37). Jesus wants His followers to invest their energies and resources in making a difference in the community, prioritizing the most vulnerable in society: the poor, widows, orphans, children, the elderly, and immigrants (Deut. 14:29).

The apostle James wrote: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit

orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27, NKJV). Scripture's divine command is for God's shepherds to empower His people to transform the world around us, just as Jesus and the first Christians did.



- 1 See Louise Wrege, "Promoting Peace and Unity Through Basketball: Harbor of Hope Church Set to Dedicate Rise Up Basketball Court," *Herald-Palladium*, September 3, 2020, https://www.heraldpalladium.com/communities/benton_harbor/promoting-peace-and-unity-through-basketball/article_532c8664-7a31-5661-851d-e188ed7b1d6e.html; Sylvia Rose, "Harbor of Hope Hosts Grand Opening of Basketball Court With Youth Tournament," ABC 57, September 5, 2020, <https://www.abc57.com/news/harbor-of-hope-hosts-grand-opening-of-basketball-court-with-youth-tournament>; Jharony Fernandez-Gibbs, "Church Hosts Event to Combat Violence in Its Community," *Lake Union Herald*, June 22, 2021, <https://www.lakeunionherald.org/archive/articles/church-hosts-event-to-combat-violence-in-its-community>; Jarod Facundo, "'Benton Harbor Is Not Flint'—It's Worse," *American Prospect*, February 23, 2022, <https://prospect.org/environment/benton-harbor-is-not-flint-its-worse-water-lead-contamination/>.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 131.
- 3 See, for example, Isabella Koh, "Andrews University Leadership Program Adds Social Innovation Concentration," News, North America Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, April 27, 2022, <https://www.nadadventist.org/news/andrews-university-leadership-program-adds-social-innovation-concentration>.
- 4 Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 285.
- 5 See Alan R. Fleischman, "Community Engagement in Urban Health Research," *Journal of Urban Health* 84, no. 4 (July 2007): 469–471.
- 6 Jerome M. Hurst, "Calling All Church Members to Evangelism and Mission: Ways to Connect the Local Church to the Community for Effective Ministry," News, North America Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, April 5, 2022, <https://www.nadadventist.org/news/calling-all-church-members-evangelism-and-mission>.
- 7 Gaspar F. Colón, "Incarnational Community-Based Ministry: A Leadership Model for Community Transformation," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 10–17.
- 8 See E. Amanatidou, D. Cox, and D. Gagliardi, "Social Engagement: Towards a Typology of Social Innovation" (MIOIR/MBS Working Paper Series—Working Paper 82, Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, 2018), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323809176_Social_engagement_Towards_a_typology_of_social_innovation_MIOIR_MBS_Working_Paper_Series-Working_Paper_82.
- 9 J. Gregory Dees, "The Meaning of 'Social Entrepreneurship,'" Kauffman Foundation, rev. May 30, 2001, 4, https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/03/Article_Deess_MeaningofSocialEntrepreneurship_2001.pdf.
- 10 John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 28.
- 11 Donald A. Yerxa, ed., *Religion and Innovation: Antagonists or Partners?* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
- 12 Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving From Affluence to Generosity* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 18.

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The power of testimony

There are times when I feel like I get nothing out of attending church; I am just there fulfilling a Christian obligation. My church service is in another language; how could I be “fed”? The parishioners are farmers. They keep falling asleep on the benches because that is what happens to a farmer’s body when it stops moving. I am tempted to stay home and just YouTube a sermon.

Then the church choir comes forward. You know, I have never really been into choirs (do not tell my husband this). Maybe it’s my charismatic streak that is afraid of anything structured. But recently, as I watched the preplanned song and dance, I experienced awe in worship.

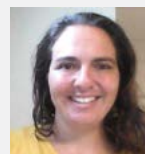
There is a benefit (and risk) in being a part of a smaller church. I know the “dirt.” As I look at the ragamuffin choir worshipping God, I see the stories. The stories were preaching at me louder than any song could.

I see a girl named Trouble who got baptized and changed her name to William (I didn’t find out until it was too late, and then I did not have the heart to tell her that William is a boy’s name). I see Situ, who does not fit in with her peers but is at home in the church choir. I see Zuhula, who has flipped back and forth between Christianity and Islam due to family pressure. There’s Kulwa, who limp dances because of a birth defect. And Hawa, who is a very loved and accepted teen mom. Eliza is so poor that she has worn holes in her shoes, and there’s another person so angry looking that I am a little afraid.

All of these stories worshipping together. Allowing their lights to shine. Their stories, intermixed with their sacrifice for the Lord, became a testimony worthy of praise. All of these broken people are allowing others to see God in their lives.

Choirs have always seemed a little bit “showy” to me. But maybe it’s a practical example of the prayer “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10, NKJV). People with histories worshipping together in creative unity, people with limps and changed names allowing their vulnerability to express the

Michelle Heed, a former missionary of eight years in Tanzania, is currently a home care nurse residing in upstate New York, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

glory of God—if that’s not praiseworthy, I don’t know what is.

The hand of God

The power of testimony is something I cannot get from YouTube. It comes from relationships with people. I see devotion in the midst of a loved one dying and in a miraculous healing. I have seen friends love Jesus in the best moments and in the hardest ones too. And without realizing it, my church is building my faith just by being genuine—faith to love Jesus when life is good and especially when it isn’t.



There is power in a testimony, and it goes beyond the miracle. Testimony includes community, our character growth, and the presence of the Lord. We can only recognize this part of the testimony as we are a part of each other’s lives. I see the testimonies of the choir, and I see the hand of God.

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10, NKJV). So, when I am in awe of a teen mom being loved and a part of our choir, I am really saying, “Thank You, God. Do it again.” When I see a widow declaring the goodness of God, I’m really saying, “Thank You, God. Do it again.” My vision is bigger because I see God working in the situations and hearts of people around me.

And that is why I go to church.

Worldviews transformed:

How God and His people
can change worldview

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Here's the problem," writes Scott Allen, author of *Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide: A Call to Wholistic Life and Ministry*. "We turn to the Bible as our authority on spiritual topics like faith, salvation, and evangelism—the kinds of things Barna deals with in his research—but we leave it behind when thinking about almost everything else. . . . As a result, we develop a kind of quasi-biblical worldview—a syncretistic worldview that embraces biblical truth for some things, while adopting prevailing cultural assumptions for everything else. Tragically, this has prevented the church from being salt and light in a dying world that God loves and is working to redeem."¹

Christian leaders have a duty to constantly examine themselves to ensure that their worldview is biblically consistent. This article will briefly show the influence of culture on worldview, what a biblical worldview is, how God works to change our worldview, and how we can help to change the worldview of others.²

The influence of culture

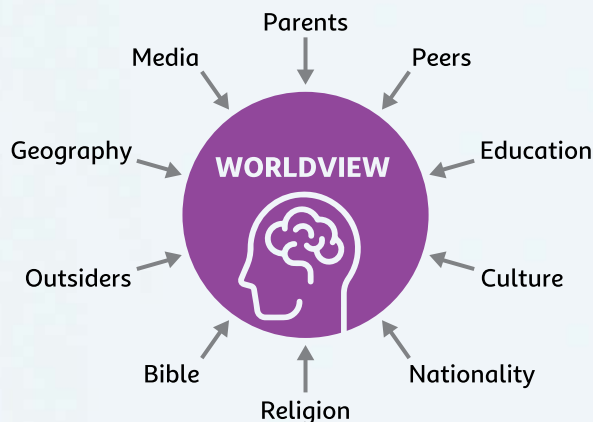
Worldview can be defined as the basic assumptions and beliefs we hold about life that help us interpret and engage with the world around us.

Theologian Kevin

J. Vanhoozer said, "A worldview is a way of thinking and living that pursues a way of life intended to achieve or maintain wellness in as many domains as possible: physical, financial, psychological, professional, social, and religious."³

Culture has been defined as "the ideas and physical objects (or 'things') that represent a group or society."⁴ Many aspects that influence worldview can be included in the overarching concept of culture.⁵ Sociology professor Diana Kendall expounds, "Whereas a society is composed of people, a culture is composed of ideas, behavior, and material possessions."⁶

Culture expresses and influences ideas, knowledge, behavior, and attitudes. While a worldview is made up of the deep assumptions of a group of people, every individual has personal variations. Our worldview is shaped through many factors, such as relationships, media, education, and religion (see chart below). The culture around us can influence our thoughts and behaviors, but as Christians, we want to be sure God is our primary influencer.



Biblical worldview

A biblical worldview is grounded in "the infallible Word of God. When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do."⁷ A biblical worldview is a way of thinking that identifies and explores the biblical paradigm, builds a biblical truth framework, develops a biblical philosophy of life, and evaluates any new input through the biblical worldview grid one has developed. Simply put, a biblical worldview is a scripturally based outlook on life. The more grounded you are in

a biblical worldview, the less likely you are to partially or completely adopt assumptions found in other worldviews.⁸

George Barna has found that having a biblical worldview can have a positive impact on a person's behaviors and practices. Those who have a biblical worldview are less likely to use tobacco products, 9 times more likely to avoid adult-only material online, and 3 times more likely to avoid a movie due to objectional content. Likewise, people with a biblical worldview are, in a typical week, 2.5 times more likely to read the Bible, 2 times more likely to attend a church service, and 2 times more likely to volunteer time to help the needy.⁹ Holding a biblical worldview leads to a more Christlike life. Therefore, our worldview is one of the biggest aspects God would like to transform in us because it affects everything else in our lives.

How God changes our worldview

Supernatural revelation. One of the ways God changes our worldview is through a supernatural encounter with Him. At the burning bush, Moses was changed from a shepherd into a leader. With the glorious light that blinded Saul on his way to Damascus, a persecutor became an evangelist. Scripture is filled with stories where people encounter God in a big way and find their worldview changed.

In Acts 11, Peter describes the vision that God gave him about a sheet full of unclean animals. The Lord was clearly opening Peter's mind to an entirely new phase of work to be entered upon by the church of Christ in which Gentile converts were to be regarded as equals with the Jewish disciples.

Peter changed from a prejudiced church leader with a narrow-minded worldview of exclusivity to an inclusive leader with an embracing worldview, patterned after the love and acceptance of Christ—all instigated by a divine encounter.¹⁰

The Holy Spirit. Another way God changes us is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to us to teach, direct, and guide our lives (John 14:26; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 2:6). Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, our hearts and minds are softened, our eyes move from an earthly focus to a heavenly focus, and we become prepared to take on the worldview of God. In addition, through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live the Christian life (Eph. 3:16).

Jesus also said that “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth”

(John 16:13).¹¹ When we are filled with the Spirit, our desire is for spiritual things (Eph. 5:18–21). As our hearts are changed, so, too, will our worldview change.

For those who would accept the working of the Spirit in their lives, great change can be made. Author Ellen G. White states, “But those who have genuine faith in Christ will be worked by the Holy Spirit. The soul in whose heart faith abides will grow into a beautiful temple for the Lord. He is directed by the grace of Christ. Just in proportion as he depends on the Holy Spirit's teaching he will grow.”¹² When we encounter the Holy Spirit, God can mold our hearts and minds, helping us to grow into His worldview.

The Word of God. A primary way to have a biblical worldview is to meet God in His Word. Through studying the Scriptures, we can learn what God's perspective and thoughts are (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We can see that everything Jesus thought, spoke, and did was rooted in Scripture. To be a whole Christian, we must take the Word, apply it, and let it change us. In this way, Christ's worldview permeates our own existence as we become more like Him.

When I, Joseph, was studying engineering, I often daydreamed about the business I would start and the great money I would make. But one day, a friend shared the text in 2 Peter 3:10, which says that ultimately everything will burn and go up in smoke at Jesus' return. This verse really struck me—all the wealth that I could accumulate would be nothing in the end! My worldview began to shift. Instead of thinking about how I could use engineering to gain wealth, I began thinking about how I could use it for God. Later, when I began pastoring, I continued to keep this verse in mind. When I was tempted to think successful pastoring meant huge churches, God reminded me that success simply means being faithful to Him and serving others.

If we want to really change our worldview to match God's, we must spend frequent and quality time with His Word. When we study the Bible diligently, it changes our thinking, beliefs, actions, life, and worldview.¹³

How we help change the worldview of others

Relationship. The early church believers spent time in intentional relationship. They ate, prayed, and studied the Bible together. Through spiritual discipline, they grew in one accord (Acts 2:42–47). This shows us how great an impact the beliefs

and behaviors of others can have on us, and how community significantly affects our worldview.¹⁴

The people who influence the most change in our lives tend to be those with whom we have established relationships. After moving to a new city, I, Katelyn, met a new friend at a coffee shop. During the third or fourth time we got together, I mentioned that I was a Seventh-day Adventist. Unbeknown to me, he had heard bad reports about the denomination. Later, he told me that at that moment, he had a choice: to change what he thought about me based on what he'd heard about Seventh-day Adventism or to change what he thought about Seventh-day Adventism based on what he experienced with me. Because of our established friendship, he was open to new perspectives on the denomination.

In Scripture, we can see the impact deep connections and relationships have on changing the worldview of others. For example, Naomi's relationship with Ruth caused Ruth to forsake all other gods to follow the God of her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:8–18). When Naaman contracted leprosy, it was through trust in a young servant girl that the commander of armies received miraculous healing from God. The life and

conviction of this young girl demonstrated to her master belief in the power of the one true God (2 Kings 5:1–14).

Changing worldview through relationships is best exemplified in the life of Christ. He mingled with others, always having in mind that they would follow, imitate, and be transformed by Him.¹⁵ Jesus modeled what having a biblical worldview looks like. He called and challenged people to change their worldview. We can see this when He invited fishermen to reframe their whole lives. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). If we are to follow Christ, it would do us well to pattern ourselves after His example as we seek to influence the worldview of others. It is through a community of faith that we can best be influenced and influence others.

Prayer. Intercessory prayer is important, as we clearly see modeled in the life of Christ. Jesus depended upon prayer as He used it to change the worldview of His disciples through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed to His Father, asking for a worldview change in the hearts of those who would follow Him, a work done through the power of the Spirit. “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only

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true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Jesus has prayed for all of us, that we would *know* Him and His Father—something we can experience through reading His Word through the guidance of the Spirit.

Pastor and author John Piper writes, “The amount of transforming good you can do by prayer is incalculable. Don’t neglect this great work God has put into your hands. . . . Let’s work to change people’s minds with truth and people’s wills with prayer.”¹⁶ Prayer releases the power of the Holy Spirit to guide and change lives. We cannot neglect prayer as we seek to help others come to hold a Christlike worldview.

The Word. If we want to see positive worldview change in our churches, we must educate members on the importance of diligently studying Scripture. This should both be verbally encouraged and tangibly modeled. The more we read the Bible regularly, the more this transformation will naturally take place in our lives. Theologian Martin Luther stated, “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”¹⁷ He knew that Scripture is an active and powerful force in the lives of men and women, possessing the ability to shape thoughts,

ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. The Bible is our direct access to the voice of God.

I, Joseph, was influenced greatly by the story of Josiah. When the king discovered and publicly read the Scriptures, his people made radical life changes. One year as a pastor, I emphasized reading the Bible and living by it through preaching and testimonies. During that year, we saw many people’s lives change. We had no problem with people volunteering for ministry and evangelism, and our offering and tithe more than doubled from the previous year. As spiritual leaders, we must constantly encourage the reading of the Word so that it will bring changes in the lives of others.

Transformation

We saw in this article how culture can insidiously impact a Christian’s worldview. Vigilant adherence to the Word of God leads to the adoption of a biblical worldview that can radically transform our lives and positively impact our community. Start living by this worldview today. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).



- 1 Scott Allen, “What’s All the Fuss About a Biblical Worldview?” Darrow Miller and Friends, September 21, 2017, <http://darrowmillerandfriends.com/2017/09/21/biblical-worldview-needed/>.
- 2 Authors and scholars from many different disciplines, e.g., theology, education, business, and social work, have discussed the significance of worldviews in our daily lives: Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); William H. Bishop, “The Genesis of Values in Genesis,” *Journal of Human Values* 19, no. 2, 127–132; Toby A. Travis, “Core Values & Worldview Affect School Outcomes,” *Transforming Teachers*, <https://transformingteachers.org/en/articles/philosophy-of-education/498-core-values-worldview-impact-school-outcomes>; McGraw-Hill Education, “Environmental Case Study: Worldviews and Values,” http://www.mhhe.com/Enviro-Sci/CaseStudyLibrary/Topic-Based/CaseStudy_WorldviewsAndValues.pdf; David A. Sherwood, “The Relationship Between Beliefs and Values in Social Work Practice: Worldviews Make a Difference,” in *Christianity and Social Work*, 5th ed. (Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 2016), 51–70.
- 3 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Being Biblical in a Pluralistic Age,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 57 no. 2 (2019): 310.
- 4 *Open Education Sociology Dictionary*, s.v. “Culture,” accessed June 3, 2021, <https://sociologydictionary.org/culture/>.
- 5 Some argue that worldview itself influences culture. Paul Hiebert has called worldviews “unseen structures underlying the entire explicit culture.” Hiebert, 32.
- 6 Diana Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006), 42.
- 7 Del Tackett, “What’s a Christian Worldview?” Focus on the Family, January 1, 2006, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/whats-a-christian-worldview/>.
- 8 “Competing Worldviews Influence Today’s Christians,” Barna, May 9, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>.
- 9 George Barna, *Think Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 20.
- 10 Even after he accepted God’s lesson, Peter had a relapse to his old way of thinking. We see in Galatians 2:11–14 that Paul corrects Peter, reminding him not to separate himself from the Gentiles.
- 11 All Scripture in this article is quoted from the NKJV.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1991), 136.
- 13 Tobin Crenshaw, “Transformation Starts in the Mind,” *Christianity Today*, February 16, 2010, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/theology/that-is-really-life.html>.
- 14 A church community can tremendously support the growth of a biblical worldview. “A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person’s Life,” Barna, December 3, 2003, <https://www.barna.com/research/a-biblical-worldview-has-a-radical-effect-on-a-persons-life/>.
- 15 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), 73.
- 16 John Piper, “Prayer Changes People’s Wills,” *Desiring God*, January 7, 1996, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/prayer-changes-peoples-wills>.
- 17 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 9, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 24.

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The Flourishing Pastor: Recovering the Lost Art of Shepherd Leadership

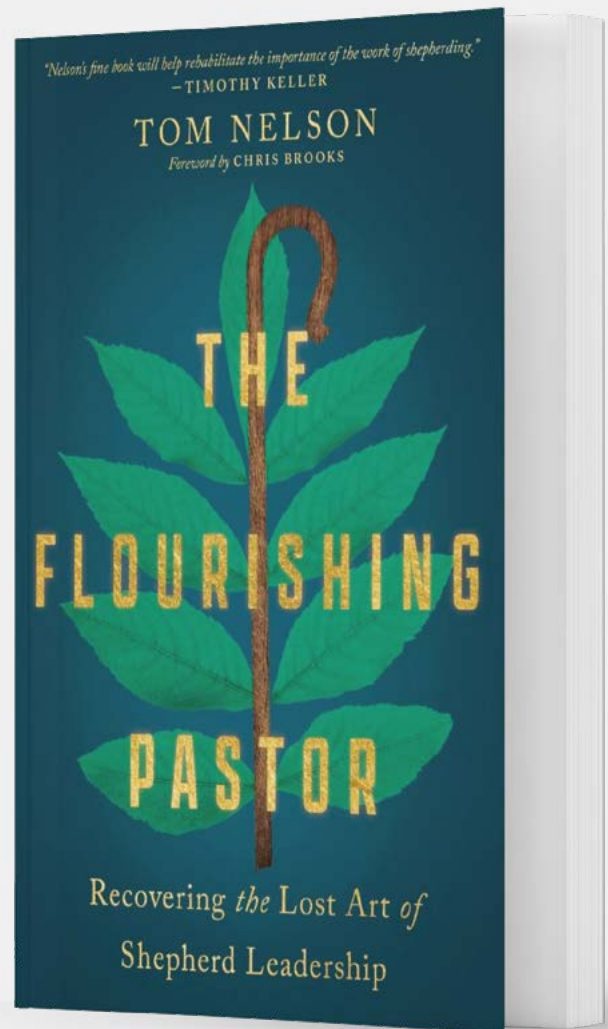
by Tom Nelson, Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity, 2021

The *Flourishing Pastor* reflects twenty-first-century shepherding. Tom Nelson, an author and seasoned pastor committed to his church in Kansas City, recognizes that clergy members in the United States are dropping out at an alarming rate. This is due to not only moral and financial falls but also, for the most part, loss of purpose. What's worst is that those pastors are still preaching every week. Tom's heart is on shepherding well; in this book, he tried to help other leaders flourish in their ministry.


In a rare weave of functions, Nelson espouses leadership with shepherding. Interestingly, the author successfully manages to address the shepherd before he gets to the function of shepherding. Nelson sees the pastorate as a sacred calling with a purpose yet desperately in need of self-assessment. *Am I an apprentice of Christ? Do I love people? Am I practicing what I preach (integrity)? Am I always in a hurry?* These are soul-searching questions that the author plainly poses to the reader.

When the spotlight shining on shepherds is brighter than the light coming from within, it's time to be transparent and vulnerable. Equally alarming are the four *Bs* of expectations: bodies, budget, building, and more recently, brand. Unrealistic expectations then grow, anxiety flourishes, and a false sense of failure (or success) dominates. Instead, the Holy Spirit should set the agenda, and different questions should drive the efforts of the church: Are our congregants being well loved? Are the vulnerable being well cared for? Are congregants being equipped for all of life? Are a growing number of leaders being multiplied?

Nelson Silva, DMin, serves as the associate director for youth and young adult ministries for the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Goodlettsville, Tennessee, United States.



Nelson draws examples from his vast experience in pastoring and mentoring leaders. He also bases his premises on well-known authors, such as Dallas Willard, Henri Nouwen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eugene Peterson, and Max De Pree.

The author uses simple, nondenominational (with a few exceptions), and relational language that draws the reader into a pastoral conversation with integrity, purpose, and recalibration. While any minister may benefit from this book, it is a must read for any senior pastor. 

Derek J. Morris, DMin, is president of Hope Channel International, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Sons and daughters of *encouragement*

Shalom! Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. My name is Joseph. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. I must confess, I felt a little intimidated to speak before such a distinguished group of leaders, but then the Holy Spirit brought the words of Jesus to my remembrance: “‘Do not worry about how or what you should speak. . . . For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you’ ” (Matt. 10:19, 20).¹

I am a Levite from Cyprus. My given name is mentioned only one time in the Holy Scriptures—when I was privileged to sell a piece of land and lay the proceeds at the apostles’ feet. Not long after that, the apostles gave me another name: Barnabas, “Son of Encouragement,” and I have kept that name and (by the grace of God) have lived that name ever since.

Saul turned Paul

I remember the first time that I met Saul of Tarsus, now called Paul. He had such a bad reputation. He had forced many followers of Jesus to blaspheme, and when they were put to death, he cast his vote against them. But Saul of Tarsus was transformed through a personal encounter with the risen Christ! Brother Ananias had given his testimony to us that the Lord Jesus had appeared and told him at his home in Damascus to go to Straight Street, to the house of Judas, where he would find Saul. There Ananias was instructed to pray for him and lay hands on him, that he might receive his sight again.

And it happened just as the Lord Jesus had foretold. During Ananias’s prayer, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he arose, praising God, and was baptized in the name of Jesus. Saul immediately began to testify in the synagogues of Damascus that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He was directed by a heavenly messenger to retreat to Arabia for a time of reflection, study, and prayer. And then he returned to Damascus in the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, he preached with such holy boldness that the local Jewish leaders wanted to kill him. Fellow followers of Jesus had to lower him over the city wall in a large basket so he could escape unharmed!

When Saul finally came to Jerusalem, the apostles were very apprehensive, to say the least. They knew of his terrible deeds. But the Holy Spirit impressed me to come alongside Saul and encourage him. I went with him to the apostles and stood by his side as he gave his testimony, preaching boldly in the name of Jesus. After listening, the apostles welcomed him as a brother in Christ.

My travels

Later, the apostles asked me to travel north to Antioch in Syria. Upon arriving, I sought, by the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit, to live up to my new name—Barnabas, “Son of Encouragement.” I encouraged the believers to be steadfast in faith and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. I do not consider myself a great orator, but the Holy Spirit helped me, and I claimed the promise of the Lord. “‘Fear not,’” the Lord said, “‘for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand’ ” (Isa. 41:10). And also the promise of Jesus: “‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8). During my ministry in Antioch, many were saved.

But the work there was too much for me. The harvest was great, as Jesus had prophesied, but the laborers few. So, led by the Holy Spirit, I traveled to Tarsus to find Saul. He was still boldly proclaiming the truth about Jesus, now in his home territory. We talked and prayed together, and he sensed the call of the Lord to minister with me back in Antioch. We served there in Antioch for a full year and taught a great many people the truth about Jesus. It was there in Antioch that followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

Missionary ventures

Later, the church leaders in Antioch, after fasting and prayer, were directed by the Holy Spirit to send Saul and me on our first missionary expedition. Now, as I mentioned, I don’t consider myself a great orator, but by the grace of God, I am a “Son of Encouragement.” And let me just tell you that Saul had times when he needed some counsel and encouragement. In Lystra, the

people wanted to worship us as gods. “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” they shouted repeatedly (Acts 14:11). They called me Zeus, perhaps because I was older and looked more distinguished, and they called Paul Hermes because, by this time, he was the primary spokesperson for our ministry team.

When we heard that the Lystrans were planning to offer sacrifices to us, we tore our clothes, and shouted, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God” (v. 15).

The mood of the crowd quickly changed; now they were an angry mob. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, presuming him dead. I'm not sure why they didn't stone me, too, but this I know—as Brother Paul himself declared: *The Lord will not allow us to be tested more than we are able to bear but with the test, will provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it* (see 1 Cor. 10:13). Along with the other disciples, we gathered around Paul's bruised and battered body, calling upon the name of the Lord, and we were overjoyed when he woke up and stood to his feet. Rejoicing in the Lord, we departed for Derbe the next day.

I have happy memories of that first missionary expedition, but there was some sadness in Perga, when my young relative John Mark decided to return home to Jerusalem. He had volunteered for the trip, as Paul was quick to remind him, but the hardships seemed too much for him, and he left us.

When Paul and I returned to Antioch at the conclusion of our first missionary expedition, we shared with our brothers and sisters all that the Lord had done, and we rejoiced together. Two other prophets, Judas and Silas, also testified in the power of the Holy Spirit and strengthened the believers in Antioch.

For our second missionary expedition, I wanted to give young John Mark a second chance. After all, the Lord has given us all many second chances, hasn't He? But Paul insisted that no weak-kneed quitter could go with us. Deeply hurt by Paul's harsh words and unforgiving spirit, I wanted to point out some of his shortcomings, but, thanks be to God, I chose rather to step back from the conflict and to take John Mark on a missionary expedition to Cyprus instead. Paul took Silas, and they traveled north through Syria and Cilicia.

What would have happened to John Mark if he had not been given a second chance? Perhaps

he might never have written the Gospel record that bears his name? Though not taking credit for what happened, I am just thankful to the Lord that I could be a “Son of Encouragement” to a young leader. I believe that Paul also learned from that experience in Perga. He became a son of encouragement to Silas, Timothy, Titus, and, yes, in later years, even to John Mark.

Twofold appeal

Why am I sharing my story with you today? Here's my twofold appeal. First, find a Barnabas who can be a son or daughter of encouragement to you. Ah, you say, “Joseph, I already have a Barnabas.” If that's true, praise the name of the Lord. Let your Barnabas know how much you appreciate his or her encouragement, wise counsel, and prayers. But if you do not have a Barnabas in your life, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to find one. This is not a luxury but a necessity. We all need a Barnabas in our lives.

Second, be a Barnabas, a son or daughter of encouragement to someone else. You don't have to be perfect to be a Barnabas. I'm certainly not perfect. In Antioch, when Peter came to visit, we were fellowshiping with the Gentiles who had come to faith in Jesus. Of course, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile—we are all one in Christ. Amen? But when Jewish leaders came from Jerusalem, we felt pressured to follow traditions, and we separated ourselves from our Gentiles brothers and sisters. That was wrong. And Paul told us so, quite directly!

I'm thankful you don't have to be perfect to be a Barnabas to someone. It doesn't necessarily need to be someone younger than you, although often that is the case. Find someone young in the faith, young in their service for Jesus, and offer frequent words of encouragement, pray for and with that person, and support him or her in times of need.

Find a Barnabas, and be a Barnabas. Then, on that glorious day when we see Jesus our Savior and Lord face-to-face and stand on the sea of glass before the throne of God, we will rejoice that we were blessed to encourage one another on our journey toward that heavenly city.



1 Scripture is from the New King James Version.

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.



Using investigative reporting in scriptural analysis

Have you ever watched an interview conducted by a professional journalist?¹ The five *Ws* and one *H* questions, a basic journalist technique, are often asked to find out interesting facts and opinions. Likewise, intuitive readers of the Bible can use this technique to enhance their critical analysis of the material.

Breakdown

Here is a list of questions that can be asked about a passage you have been reading.

Who? Who wrote these Scriptures? Every writer in the Bible had a unique perspective and personality. Was it a straight-forward, more scientific approach like Luke? Or more poetic, like David? Who is the author writing to? Who is the subject of the writings?

What? What is the author writing about, and what was his motivation and purpose? What are the key words or phrases in the passage? What was the author's attitude or mood when he wrote it? Was he excited, angry, or encouraging?

What-if questions can offer some thought-provoking discussion in a Bible study.

When? When was it written and what was the significance of that time? Timing is very important.

Where? Where was it said? Jerusalem, Rome, Judea, and so on? When Jesus talked to the woman at the well, it was important to know they were in Samaria (John 4:1–42).

Why? Why was it written? What message was the author trying to share? Sometimes there is more than one meaning.

How? How was the message presented? Were anecdotes used? Was the message compassionate or harsh? Did Jesus use a whip to get His point across (John 2:15)?

Practical example

Let's take this approach, and apply it to the first letter of Paul to Timothy.

Who wrote 1 Timothy? Paul. Who was it addressed to? Timothy.

Tim Hibsman, EdD, is a tenured associate professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania, United State.



What was the point of the letter? To guide Timothy in the conduct of his pastoral responsibilities.

When was this written? Around AD 65, shortly before Paul was martyred.

Where was Paul? Most likely he was released from prison in Rome and in Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3), on his way to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Where was Timothy? Timothy was somewhere in Ephesus or Asia Minor.

Why is this letter important to us? It helps us understand the principles of pastoral care in the church, as well as encouraging us in fighting "the good fight" (1 Tim. 6:12, NIV).

How did Paul get his message to Timothy? He sent a well-organized letter, to be followed up by another letter.

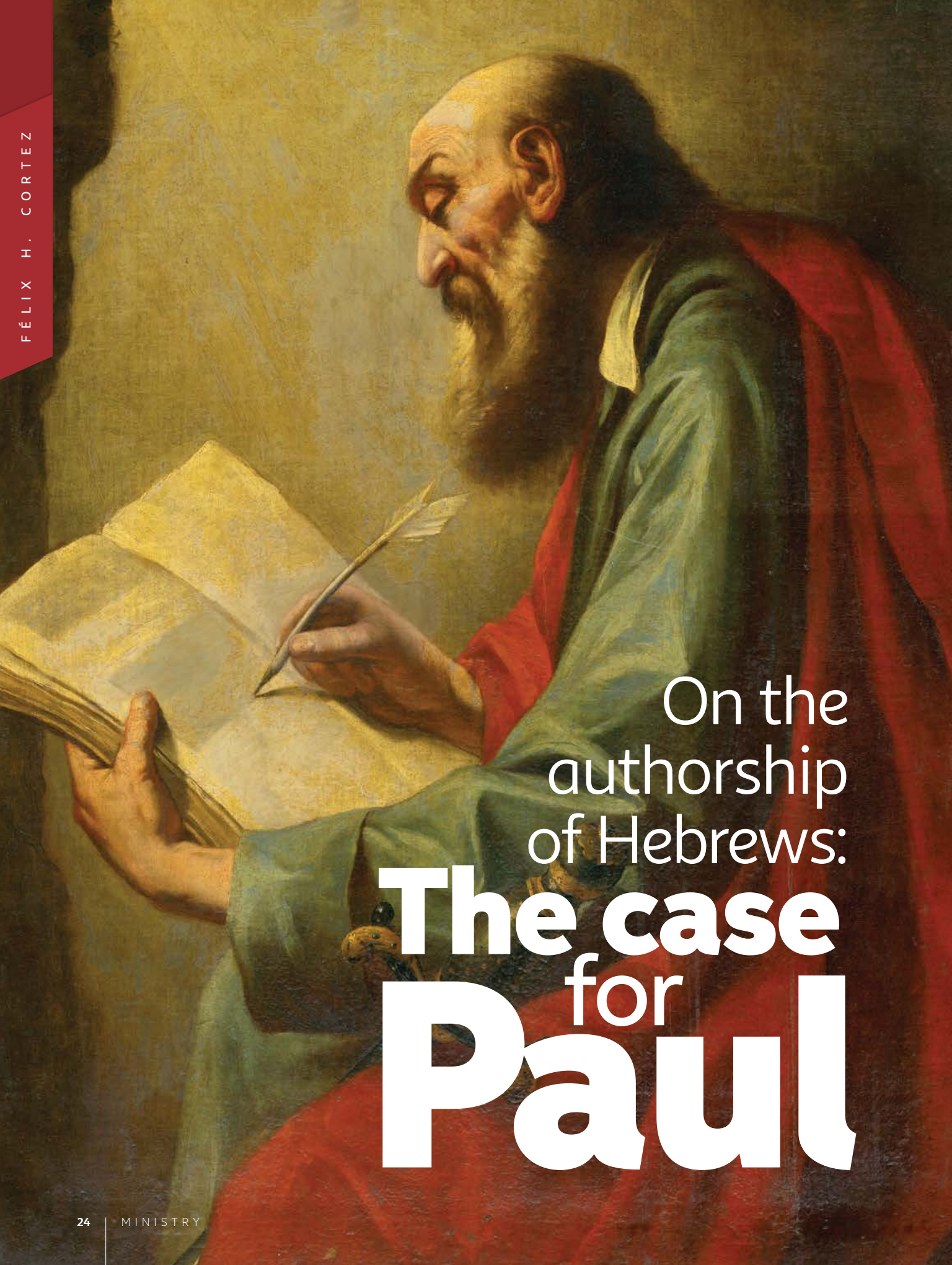
Understanding

Reading the Bible is important, but it is more important to understand and comprehend what you are reading. The *Ws* and *H* technique is especially valuable if you are having a discussion with other people. The variations of the *W* questions could be asked to different members of the group. Often, one of the areas may be of more interest to one person than another. Therefore, you can observe and learn from a new perspective. Imagine there was a group that consisted of a sociologist (*Who*—focuses on groups of human beings), psychologist (*What*—focuses on mental, emotional, and behavior issues), historian (*When*—focuses on a particular period or geographical region), archaeologist (*Where*—focuses on sites and artifacts), and lawyer (*Why*—focuses on the motives behind actions). Each person will have a unique perspective on the exact same scripture that the group is studying, due to their professional specialties and unique past experiences.

Remember the value of the *Ws* and *H*, and implement the questions in your analysis for a greater understanding and perspective.



¹ A version of this column was first published February 5, 2021 on relevantmagazine.com.



On the
authorship
of Hebrews:
**The case
for
Paul**

Félix H. Cortez, PhD, is a professor of New Testament literature at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

The authorship of the book of Hebrews can be a sensitive issue.¹ The New Testament places Hebrews among the letters of Paul, but Hebrews itself does not identify the author; most scholars think it was someone close to him but not Paul himself.

Three scholarly positions regarding the authorship of Hebrews exist. One is that Paul could not have been the author. A second asserts that we do not know the author. The third, similar to the second, says that though we do not know who wrote it, Paul is, nevertheless, most likely the author. This article provides biblical and historical evidence for the second and third positions.

The case against Paul

Most scholars believe that the book of Hebrews had long circulated independently before being accepted into the New Testament (NT) canon, and it was accepted “only through the fiction” that Paul had written it.² There are several reasons for this position. First, why did Paul not claim authorship as he did in every letter he wrote? The anonymity of the document does not seem accidental. The first sentence of Hebrews (Heb. 1:1–4), where Paul would normally identify himself, is so beautiful and balanced from the perspective of its Greek construction that the author spent considerable time and effort writing it. Certainly Paul, if he had wanted to, could have named himself as the author.

Second, early on, there were doubts about the authorship of Hebrews. In the first half of the second century AD, Marcion rejected the book of Hebrews. It is reported that Irenaeus, later in the century, rejected the Pauline authorship. The Muratorian Fragment, a list of New Testament books likely created toward the end of the second century AD, did not include Hebrews. Around the beginning of the third century AD, Tertullian attributed Hebrews to Barnabas. Also in that same century, Gaius of Rome, Hippolytus, and the Arians rejected the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. The perception in antiquity was that the churches of the East apparently accepted

the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, a position rejected by churches in the West.³

Third, church scholars early recognized differences in style between Hebrews and the letters of Paul. Clement of Alexandria, around the beginning of the third century, suggested that Paul had written Hebrews originally in Hebrew and that Luke had translated it into Greek. Origen suggested that Paul probably was the author of the ideas but that another person had taken notes and published them. Only God, he concluded, knew.

Fourth, and importantly, some argue that Paul could not be the author because the author includes himself among those to whom the gospel had been confirmed, having heard it from those who had heard Jesus in person (Heb. 2:3). Paul, however, argued in Galatians that he had not received the gospel from anybody but directly from God instead (Gal. 1:11, 12).

Finally, there are important theological differences between the letters of Paul and the book of Hebrews. One example is that no letter of Paul refers to Jesus as High Priest, an idea central to the argument of Hebrews.

For these basic reasons, most scholars today reject the idea that Paul wrote Hebrews.⁴

The case for Paul

These arguments, however convincing they might sound on the surface, are not really very strong.

First, Hebrews does not identify the author, as Paul's others letters do, because the book most likely is *not a letter*. Hebrews identifies itself as a “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22), an expression that—both in the synagogue and in the church—referred to sermons.⁵ Hebrews is, therefore, probably a homily intended for a specific congregation to which a postscript was added, and then, it was sent as a letter. Hebrews is anonymous to us but not to the original audience. The author requests them to pray for him so that he may be restored to them sooner (vv. 18, 19), which indicates they knew who was writing to them.

Furthermore, though rejecting the authorship of Paul for other reasons, Harold Attridge has identified 33 parallels between the postscript of Hebrews 13:20–25 and the letters of Paul—several very striking.⁶ For example, the expression “God of peace” (v. 20) is found in Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23 but does not appear in any other New Testament epistolary postscript. The expression “from the dead” (*ek nekron*, Heb. 13:20) appears 17 times in Paul’s letters but only two times elsewhere among the NT epistles. Finally, the author refers to a Timothy, who must have been known both by the author and the audience (v. 23). The only Timothy known in early Christian sources was the companion of Paul. Thus, unless this document were a forgery, the original audience should not have had any problem identifying the author.

Second although some doubts about the authorship of Hebrews began early, the evidence of the authoritative reception of Hebrews and its identification with Paul are also very early. Beginning with the most ancient manuscripts, Hebrews always appears as part of the Pauline collection. In fact, among his earliest manuscripts, only Romans is better attested to than is Hebrews. Similarly, Hebrews carried a title from the earliest extant manuscripts (“to the Hebrews”) that is similar to the title of the letters of Paul and different from the titles of the Catholic Epistles.

Hebrews was accepted very early as authoritative. First Clement, the oldest extant work of early Christian literature, composed around AD 96, alludes to Hebrews (1 Clem. 36:1–5) and other writings of Paul (e.g., 1 Clem. 35:5, 6), holding them in high esteem, even though, with one exception, he does not identify any author in those references.⁷ The Shepherd of Hermas, produced in Rome in the second century AD, was believed to have been trying to answer questions raised by Hebrews 6:4–8 and 10:26–31. The position that claims a wholesale rejection of Hebrews in the West is, really, overstated. By the end of the fourth century, Ambrose, Pelagius, and Rufinus, all in the West, had attributed Hebrews to Paul; 10 other Christian writers in the



West cite or allude to Hebrews as authoritative, even without mentioning authorship.⁸

Closer scrutiny shows that rejection of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews is less significant than often depicted. Marcion, who rejected Hebrews, also rejected the God of the Old Testament (OT) as well as all of the OT. He probably rejected Hebrews because of its abundant use of the OT. He also rejected most of the NT. The view that Irenaeus and Hippolytus rejected the Pauline authorship of Hebrews came from a comment made by Gobarus more than 300 years later than their time (ca. AD 600), according to the report made by Photius in AD 800! The Muratorian Fragment did not include Hebrews among the letters of Paul, but it did not reject Hebrews as it did “The Epistle to the Laodiceans” and “The Epistle to the Alexandrians,” which were forged in the name of Paul. Tertullian said that Barnabas wrote Hebrews but thought Barnabas was communicating the ideas of Paul. Gaius of Rome rejected the Pauline authorship of Hebrews but also thought that the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation had been written by Cerinthus, the gnostic heretic. The Arians, meanwhile, probably rejected the Pauline authorship of Hebrews because of its high Christology.

Third, matters of style and vocabulary are unreliable in determining whether Paul wrote Hebrews. We do not have a clear style to compare with Hebrews. Eight of Paul’s letters mention coauthors alongside Paul.⁹ These coauthors must have had at least some influence on the contents and style of each letter. Paul also used secretaries (e.g., Rom. 16:22), who probably impacted the style of his letters. E. Randolph Richards has shown that secretaries often functioned as editors—in rare cases, even as coauthors.¹⁰ Finally, the rhetorical ideal in the Hellenistic world was *prosōpopoiia*, meaning “to write in character.” In other words, writers were expected to write in different styles according to what the situation required.¹¹ Thus, it was expected that not all letters of Paul would have the same style.

Fourth, the fact that the author includes himself among those to whom the gospel was confirmed by those who heard Jesus (Heb. 2:3) does not disqualify Paul. The argument of the passage is

not that the author and the audience “received” (*parelabon*) or were “taught” (*edidachthēn*) the gospel by the apostles but that the gospel was “confirmed” (*ebebaiōthē*) to them by the apostles—those who heard Jesus (Heb. 2:3). Paul acknowledged that he received the gospel from God through revelation (Gal. 1:11, 12), and 14 years later, he sought confirmation from the apostles about the gospel he preached (Gal. 2:1, 2).

Fifth, despite differences in the theological emphasis between Hebrews and Paul’s other letters, there is no contradiction. In fact, a difference in theological emphasis should be expected. Paul’s letters were written to address specific concerns. Also, there are unique similarities between Hebrews and Paul’s other writings. For example, Hebrews 10:16 quotes Jeremiah 31:31–33 but abbreviates the formulation “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (NKJV) to “with them.” Romans 11:27 has the same abbreviated formula. The quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 in Hebrews 10:37, 38 differs from the wording of both the Hebrew and the Greek texts (LXX) but is similar to Paul’s quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17. Paul plays with the dual meanings of the Greek word *diathēkē* (“testament” and “covenant”) in Galatians 3:15–18 in the same way that Hebrews 9:15–18 does.

Finally, the view that Hebrews circulated independently for a long time before being accepted into the NT canon and was accepted only “through the fiction” that Paul had written it is unlikely for several reasons. First, there is no manuscript evidence that Hebrews ever circulated alone. Second, considering that Hebrews does not claim to be written by Paul and is different in style and theological emphasis from his other writings, on what basis should Hebrews have been included in the collection of Paul’s writings? Paul himself warned his readers against receiving letters “seeming to be” from him but were not (2 Thess. 2:1–3, ESV). This is why he signed his letters. Hebrews and Paul’s other 13 letters had postscripts, which functioned as signatures (2 Thess. 3:17, 18).¹²

Another obstacle to including Hebrews among the Pauline Epistles is that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians; Paul, however, was the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:6–9; Eph. 3:1–10). If very early on it was believed that the epistle was not written by Paul, why was the book of Hebrews not included among the Catholic, or General, Epistles, which were written by apostles sent to the Jews (Gal. 2:6–9)? Third, the practice among ancient writers was to keep copies of the letters they sent

to other people.¹³ This would explain why Hebrews is part of the collection of Paul’s letters, which he kept for himself, despite its anonymity and other differences from the rest of his letters.

Conclusion

In summary, biblical and historical evidence supports the idea that Paul could have written Hebrews. Thus, the position that he *did* write it is based on very solid grounds.



- 1 A version of this article was first published February 9, 2022 on spectrummagazine.org.
- 2 Charles P. Anderson’s summary in “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Letter Collection,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 429, is still the current view.
- 3 For example, Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.3 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF]*, 2nd ed., 1:134, 135); 6.20 (268); Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1.50 (*NPNF*, 1st ed. 5:34); Jerome, *Epistulae* 129.3.
- 4 Clare K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 235 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 6.
- 5 Acts 13:15; 1 Timothy 4:13. See also 1 Maccabees 10:24, 46 and 2 Maccabees 15:8–11.
- 6 Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1981), 404, 405.
- 7 Clement alludes to Romans, Galatians, Philippians, and Ephesians, but only when referring to Corinth, toward the end of the letter, does he refer to Paul as the author (1 Clem. 47). See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1987), 40–43.
- 8 First Clement, probably Shepherd of Hermas, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Epiphanius, Hilary of Poitiers, Victorinus, Lucifer of Cagliari, Faustinus, and Gregory of Elvira. See Rothschild, *Hebrews as a Pseudepigraphon*, 31; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 2. For a comprehensive survey of witnesses to the Pauline authorship of Hebrews in the church fathers, see Otto Michel, *Der Brief und die Hebräer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar) 13 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 38, 39.
- 9 First Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. See E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 141–155.
- 10 Richards, 33–36.
- 11 See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 60.
- 12 For an introduction to the different ways Greco-Roman letters were signed, see Richards, *First-Century Letter Writing*, 171–175.
- 13 Richards, 156–165; Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon*, 148, 149. For example, Cicero’s collection of letters published after his death was produced from Cicero’s own copies kept by Tiro, Cicero’s secretary; see Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 13.6.3.

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General Conference Ministerial Association welcomes new director and associate

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES

The General Conference Ministerial Association bade a fond farewell to **Jerry and Janet Page**, Ministerial secretary and associate Ministerial secretary, respectively, in June 2022.

Their 12 years of service at the church's General Conference were marked by a passion for revival and reformation as well as united (group) prayer. As they retired, church ministerial leaders and administrators around the world expressed profound gratitude through word and writing, both in person and online. At the church's sixty-first General Conference Session, held in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, the torch of leadership was passed to **Ramon and Aurora Canals**.

Ramon Canals was elected Ministerial secretary with an emphasis on Total Member Involvement (TMI), an initiative aimed at getting people involved with the community in Christian service and witnessing. Born in the Dominican Republic, Canals grew up in New York, USA. He holds a bachelor of theology degree from Central American Adventist University in Alajuela, Costa Rica, and master of arts and doctor of ministry degrees from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

Canals served for years in many capacities, such as a local church pastor, associate ministerial director, and Hispanic ministries coordinator,



and full-time evangelist. Canals comes to this position after serving as director of the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Aurora Canals was elected associate Ministerial secretary with an emphasis on pastoral spouses and families. Born in Colombia, Canals grew up in New Jersey, USA. Before acquiring a degree in business administration, she worked with her husband as an assistant evangelist in the Oregon Conference, USA, and helped prepare candidates for baptism. As a ministerial and

Hispanic coordinator's spouse, Canals organized convocations for training church members to fulfill the gospel mission.

With a comprehensive background in accounting and payroll management, Canals highlights to pastoral families the absolute necessity for wise financial and retirement planning. She comes to this position after serving as associate treasurer of the Chesapeake Conference in Maryland, USA.

The Ministerial Association expressed delight at the arrival of such gifted servant leaders. The Ministerial team will be introduced in full in a future issue. [Jeffrey O. Brown, *Ministry* and Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*]

Saving Ten Thousand Toes

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES

On June 5, eight weary but inspired bicyclists (five pastors, two church employees, and a local church elder) arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, completing a 1,200-mile (1,900-kilometer)

self-funded trip from Washington, DC, in celebration of the work of Australian pioneer missionary **Philip Reekie**. Reekie, in the late nineteenth century, traveled by bicycle to share Christian literature with seeker such as **Tom Kent** and others in remote locations. More than 20,000 believers have now been won to Christ as a result of this encounter, including **Anthony Kent** (associate

ministerial director of the world church) and **Rob Hansforth** (an accountant and church elder in Queensland, Australia) both great, great grandsons of Tom Kent.

From the very beginning, the commemorative ride was planned as a way of witnessing to others, as well as a fitness initiative.

Australian Union Conference secretary **Michael Worker** said, “People would wave, would welcome us, and sharing our story opened the door to witnessing. And as we shared and interacted with other Christians, it happened many times that they wanted to pray for us. We came to give, but we received,” Worker said.

“I have found that there are so many people out there who need something, who appreciate not only the books that we give them but the interaction,” said **Torben Bergland**, General Conference health ministries associate director and one of the participants.

In addition to distributing copies of *The Great Controversy* and *Your Bible and You* along the route, the cycling missionaries also raised awareness for a very special cause in the South Pacific Division (SPD). The profound need led to the creation of a crucial campaign known as Ten Thousand Toes. The cyclists wore special gloves and socks on their journey to raise awareness for the campaign, marked with a logo that features a foot with a missing toe—a sobering reminder of the toll of poor lifestyle choices.



“Every twenty minutes in the South Pacific, someone gets a limb removed,” cyclist and SPD president **Glenn Townend** stated. “We want every village and every town throughout the South Pacific to have an Adventist presence and kit to help people test for type 2 diabetes—and our dream is becoming a reality.”

Southeast Asia Union Mission publishing and health director **Pham Nguyen To Phuong**, from Vietnam, was the only female participant in the ride. She took up cycling five years ago and never looked back. “I used to pray, ‘Please, Lord, use my passion for your glory,’ To Phuong shared. “Through this trip, God answered my prayer.”

South Pacific Division senior ministry systems specialist **Russ Willcocks** added that, though the majority of people they met were not necessarily church attenders, he felt God was ahead of the riders, preparing the way and the hearts of people to interact with them. “It often happened that when we arrived to meet with people, we discovered that Jesus had arrived first,” he said. “They were ready and open to receive us.” [Shawn Boonstra and Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review* and Anthony Kent]

In Uruguay, more than 60 Adventist women trained as leaders

BLANCARENA, URUGUAY

A two-day event in late April 2022 in Blancarena, Uruguay, offered training to more than 60 Seventh-day Adventist women who already have leadership roles in their local congregations.

South American Division (SAD) of Seventh-day Adventists president **Stanley Arco** opened the event and said its goal was to train and prepare

women to support their congregations as active members and leaders by promoting women’s evangelism, training other women, and conducting visitation, among other activities.

The training focused on four areas: Sabbath School and small groups, Bible studies, new generations, and seniors.

In Uruguay, 65 percent of church members are women. “Women’s leadership in the church is essential,” Arco said. “We appreciate this move and encourage Uruguay to keep supporting the formation of leaders in all areas.”


At the end of the event, **Dagmar Wiebusch**, Women’s Ministries director of the Uruguay Union



of Churches Mission, commented that leaders feel they reached their stated goals. "The event does not end here because leadership demands an ongoing learning process, and, with the Spirit of God, I believe that we will achieve what God wants."

Jorge Wiebusch, president of the Uruguay Union of Churches Mission, said, "We are happy to have a more prepared, more committed leadership, and we hope it will become a multiplier and a watershed in the history of the Adventist Church in Uruguay."

Arco said, "I am happy and grateful to God for the work being done. As leaders, we want to give our maximum support to the goal of the regional church, which is none other than

preparing a people for the second coming of Jesus." [Juan Hilario, South American Division, and *Adventist Review*] 



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