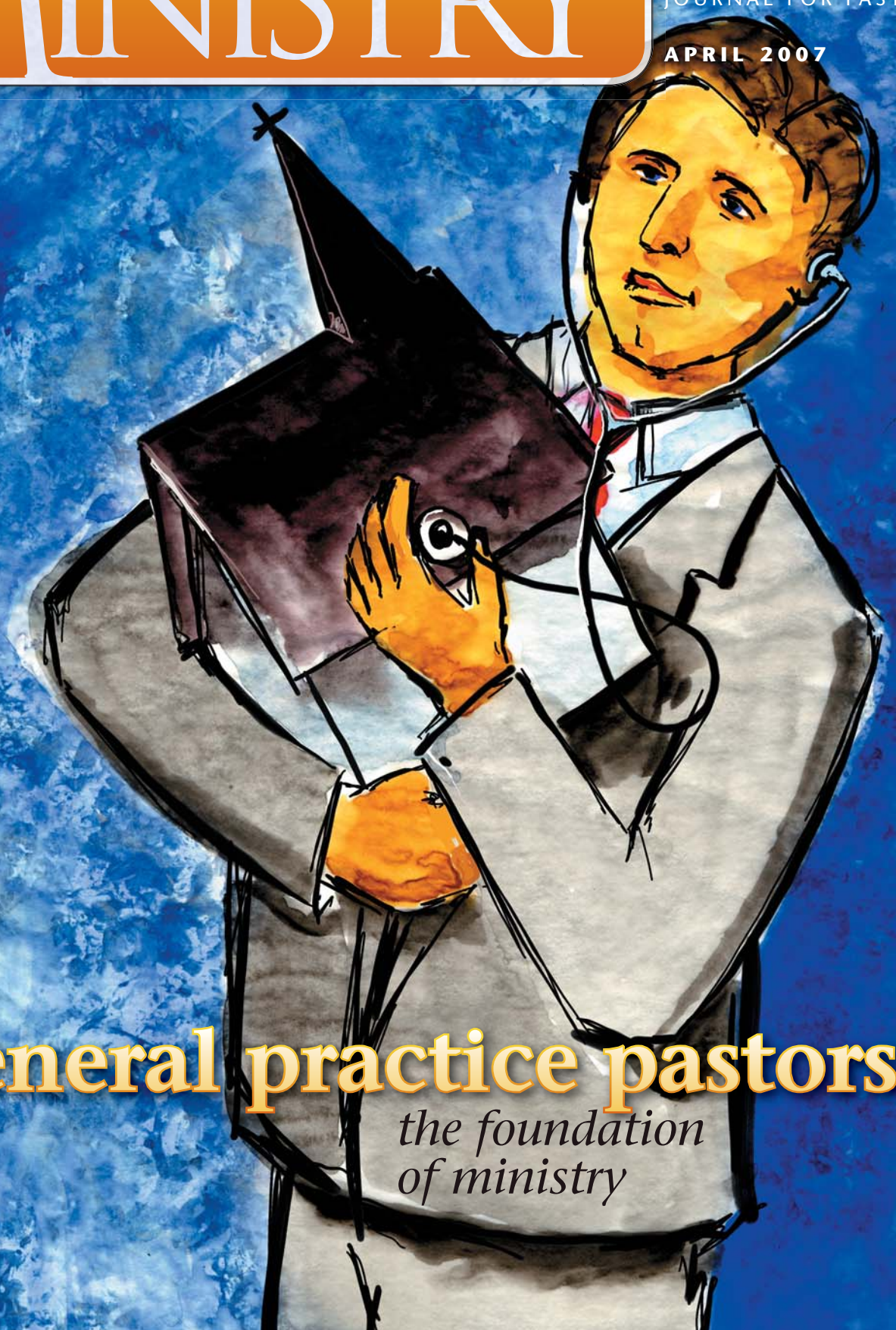


MINISTRY

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS
APRIL 2007



General practice pastors:
*the foundation
of ministry*

IN EVERY ISSUE

Letters 3

Editorial 4

Dateline 28

Pastor's Pastor 30

5 General practice pastors: the foundation of ministry
There always will be the solo pastor to conduct the bulk of the church's business. Such pastors must be competent in several areas of church ministry.
 Willie E. Hucks II

9 The Babylonian temptation: making a name for ourselves
Church leaders must constantly examine their motives as they fulfill the church's mission.
 Reinder Bruinsma

12 Discipline in children's ministry settings
Communicating love to children through words and action, as God has done to us, will go a long way in creating an environment for children to grow in Christ.
 Stephen Grunlan

14 The cosmological anthropic principle: apologists and homilists beware!
At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is much that motivates science to revise the design metaphor. Does the scientific principle discussed in this article help or hinder these efforts?
 Edwin A. Karlow

18 In defense of ritual
Three reasons why rituals should be a part of church traditions and practices.
 Loren Seibold

20 A high and sacred calling: a look at the origins of Seventh-day Adventist ministerial training
Where have we come from, as it relates to preparing ministers to preach the Gospel? Where are we going?
 Michael W. Campbell

22 God's voice through our circumstances
How do you know when God is speaking to you? How do pastors help their church members recognize God's voice?
 Ron Edmondson

24 A Friend by my side
The author reminds us that God will always be with us.
 José Vazquez

MINISTRY

Ministry is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association and has been published since 1928.

Association Secretary James A. Cress

Editor Nikolaus Satelmajer

Assistant Editor Willie E. Hucks II

Consultant to Editor Myrna Tetz

Editorial Assistant Sheryl Beck

Database Assistant John Feezer IV

Professional Growth Anthony Kent

Contributing Editors Jonas Arrais, Sharon Cress, John M. Fowler, Clifford Goldstein, Anthony Kent, Peter Prime, Kit Watts

International Editors

Chinese Robert Wong

Indonesian Edwin T. Pandjaitan

Japanese Yukio Ebihara

Korean Sung Sun Hong

Portuguese Zinaldo Santos

Russian Ilie Leahu

Spanish Marcos Blanco (South America)

Spanish Fernando Zabala (Central America)

International Advisors Alejandro Bullón, Russell Burrill, Daniel Duda, R. Danforth Francis, Passmore Hachalinga, John Kakembo, Ilie Leahu, Miguel Luna, Hector Sanchez, Houtman Sinaga, Bruno Vertallier, Gary Webster, Measapogu Wilson

Consulting Editors Leslie Baumgartner, S. Peter Campbell, Ben Clausen, John C. Cress, Raoul Dederen, Ron Flowers, Jeanne Hartwell, Michael Hasel, Roland Hegstad, Mitchell Henson, Gerry Karst, Kathleen Kuntaraf, Ekkehardt Mueller, Norma Osborn, Jan Paulsen, Robert Peach, Leslie Pollard, Angel Manuel Rodríguez, Fredrick Russell, Maylan Schurch, Loren Seibold, William Shea, Penny Shell, Dan Smith, Russell Staples, Richard Tibbits, Steve Wilsey, Edward Zinke

Advertising Editorial Office

Ministerial Resource Center Cathy Payne
 888-771-0738, 301-680-6508

Cover Illustration 316 Creative

Layout 316 Creative

Subscriptions 12 issues: United States US\$30.50; Canada and overseas US\$32.50; airmail US\$42.50; single copy US\$3.00. To order: send name, address, and payment to *Ministry* Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.

Web site www.ministrymagazine.org

Subscriptions/renewals/address changes ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org (email); 301-680-6512 (phone); 301-680-6502 (fax)

To Writers We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Before submitting, review the writers' guidelines at www.ministrymagazine.org. Please send manuscripts via email with your name, address, and telephone number. Send editorial correspondence to ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

Ministry (ISSN 0026-5314) is a journal of the Ministerial Association, © 2007, published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. Member Associated Church Press. Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Vol. 79 Number 4

Bible credits Texts credited to the NEB are from *The New English Bible*. Copyright © 1961, 1970 by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. Reprinted by permission. Texts credited to the NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States. Used by permission.

OUR READERS RESPOND...

Sinners in God's hands

Woodrow W. Whidden's article "Sinners in the Hands of God" [February 2007] touches on a major issue among critics of Christianity both within and without the church. Professor Whidden covers most of the concerns in his three point exposition on page 7. However, it seems that he understates one of the major issues at play in the crucifixion of Christ: Satan's accusation that the Godhead is unjust, vindictive, cruel, and deadly.

Calvary demonstrates God in the hands of angry men! For eternity the falseness of Satan's accusation is now imprinted in the hands and feet of our Savior. Calvary not only demonstrates what God is like, it also exposes Satan's intent from the beginning.

—Tom Zwemer, *Augusta, Georgia, United States*

Just a couple of observations in regard to Woodrow W. Whidden's article:

First, it seems that much of the weight of the argument for degrees of punishment rests on an understanding of justice that relies more on a need to make sure that people are properly punished than the recognition of the gift of free will and the inevitable consequences of choices. I am not certain that making an argument for degrees of suffering in proportion to degrees of sin is something that justice demands, so much as that genuinely free choices be taken seriously. The death of Jesus accomplishes this even as it makes a clear and powerful statement of God's love and grace. To the extent that investigative or millennial judgments are helpful, they most likely have far less to do with our being satisfied that God is doing His work of judgment well as with those who are observing are able to more fully understand the awesomeness of God's grace.

Second, I would be reluctant to build too much of a theology of judgment upon statements that attempt to express the idea that, in the final judgment, some suffer more than others—much

less make that suffering something that God imposes as a penalty. What we might find instead is a picture of a God who honors the freewill He has given us, even if we use it to reject the grace He has extended, and instead chose non-existence. If some were to take longer than others to come to that full realization, then indeed their "suffering" would last longer, but any "penalty" here would not need to be seen as something imposed by God as punishment, but simply a reflection of what has resulted from the lives they have lived.

Most of all, I appreciate Dr. Whidden's bringing us back to reflecting once again on the meaning of the love and grace demonstrated on Calvary, as perhaps the most important point of reference from which to consider this issue.

—Ken Curtis, *associate pastor, Calimesa Seventh-day Adventist Church, Calimesa, California, United States*

Thank you for Woodrow W. Whidden's article. The application of Christ's suffering on the cross to this issue was amazingly insightful.

I appreciated Dr. Whidden's analogies to the aspirations and practices of human systems of justice. But I find that nothing substitutes for the simple clarity of biblical principles.

The primary reason I find that not only allows but requires this differential punishment is the basic standard of justice set forth in the Torah, spelled out in Deuteronomy 19:21 (NKJV): "Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." This is also referenced in Exodus 21:24 and Leviticus 24:20. When Jesus called His hearers to merciful living, He still referred to this basic standard of justice (Matt. 5:38).

We also see this standard applied to the harlot of Revelation 17 and 18, particularly in 18:6 and its context: "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double." We not

only see direct correlation between her punishment and her offense, but we see intensification. This corresponds to Torah laws regarding restitution for theft. "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep" (Exod. 22:1).

I would paraphrase this standard as, "to the extent you have caused suffering for another, you will suffer; to the extent that you have deprived another, you will be deprived."

I envision that those who reject Christ's mercy, fulfilling the basic standard of justice, will suffer to the extent that they have caused suffering for others and then die the eternal second death. Ultimately, I certainly do not hold God to my feeble construction of what He has revealed in Scripture. I trust Him to do what He does in absolute love and justice.

—Bob Mason, *associate pastor, Ceres Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ceres, California, United States*

I read Woodrow W. Whidden's arguments from the viewpoint of a mother. He appeals to the "best paradigms of human justice" which find "the degrees-of-punishment position is the fairest way to proceed." Personally, I am always disappointed by those who say they can't find "closure" until the person who murdered or raped or otherwise hurt their loved one receives punishment equal to the harm they inflicted.

I find much more inspiring the stories of those who have been able to forgive and reach out to the perpetrator. If humans can do that, even though it seems contrary to our sense of judgment, should we doubt that such love and forgiveness is inspired by God?

If we could know, in the way God knows, what are the life circumstances, the genetic influences, the deep wounds and hurts, that lead to a person's hurtful actions—although we still would not excuse or overlook these actions

continued on page 16

The Word, hope, prayer— your ultimate resources

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



In this issue's lead article, fellow editor Willie E. Hucks II addresses the work of congregational pastors. These individuals are not given an opportunity to be specialists, for they need to address all aspects of their congregations.

The work of pastors is complex. They are expected to preach, teach, evangelize, lead, visit, train, etc. Thus, they have a multitude of responsibilities. And unlike ministers (administrators, specialists, professors, etc.) who visit various congregations, pastors *live* with their congregations. Once the visiting minister leaves, the congregational pastor stays with the church. The responsibilities can be overwhelming—goals, budget issues, training, conflicts, expectations, family, and so forth.

What about the resources?

How do pastors fulfill their responsibilities? The fact is that many congregational pastors lack resources available to ministers serving in various organizational units, such as conferences. The challenge is even greater in parts of the world where resources are scarce. While some pastors have to decide which computer program to buy, others have no access to any computer programs. Some pastors must occasionally decide what books they will discard, while others do not even have shelves to hold books.

What can we do to be effective in our ministry? May I suggest that it's not so much the resources, as helpful as they are, that make us effective ministers. I share with you a list—a list that could be even longer—of what every minister

can do for both the congregation and the community.

Present the Word. We can present the Scriptures to congregations or to individuals who have little or no exposure to it. Most individuals find the biblical message challenging, appealing, inviting—something that intrigues them.

I like evangelism. In fact, I am writing this editorial a day after completing a follow-up evangelism series. Once again I have found that many individuals who have had minimal or no exposure to the Bible enjoy spending time with it. What a great privilege we have—either introducing individuals to the Word or encouraging those who are familiar with it to stay focused on the Word. The Word brings a new life experience to these individuals. "For the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12, NIV). The Holy Spirit will make it a living and active Word.

Words of hope. Who needs words of hope? It may be the young person in your neighborhood whose mother is an alcoholic. Or it may be a man in your congregation whose wife just died. Perhaps it is a fellow minister under great stress in the present congregation because he believes that there is very little hope for a successful ministry there.

Listening to individuals who have lost hope has great value. More than that, we can help them focus on the God of hope. A psalmist asks life questions and gives direction:

Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God
(Ps. 42:5, NIV).

While God is the ultimate source of hope, we have the opportunity of helping those around us focus on God's hope.

Focused prayer. Ministers are often asked to pray—for members, visitors, people in the community, business enterprises. The list is almost endless. At times when there is no activity at the church, I have made it a practice to go to the sanctuary and pray. Quiet moments are a blessing. During such occasions I visualize where members sit (that's easy because members usually sit in the same place) and focus my prayers for particular people.

Jesus, in His demanding schedule, focused on His people. After praying for Himself, He prayed for His disciples and focused on His followers who would come after them (John 17).

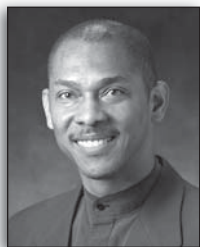
That which we all have

The above list is not long, but it is powerful. No matter where we serve, no matter how little we possess, we have access to the Word, hope, and prayer. You and I have the privilege of sharing these God-given resources with those we are called to shepherd. ■

Tell us what you think about this editorial. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

General practice pastors: the foundation of ministry

Willie E. Hucks II



Willie E. Hucks II, D.Min., is the assistant editor of Ministry.

Our three-and-a-half-year-old son was ill. Although illness is common for small children, this sickness was more worrisome than usual.

It all started on a Friday afternoon when I picked him up from day care. His caregiver told us that our son had slept all afternoon, which was unusual. His mother and I treated his fever just as we always had done, and he felt a bit better by that evening. But the next day his fever raged more furiously, and his energy level was significantly lower.

Being new to the area, we were unaware of medical resources. Someone told us that a doctor lived across the street who wouldn't mind if we called on him regardless of the time. So, in those less than ideal circumstances, we introduced ourselves to him and asked for help.

Our son, Kendall, had a restful Saturday night and good Sunday morning. We were convinced that the crisis had passed. Late that morning, to our surprise, Dr. Robert Miller stopped by the house to see how Kendall was doing. He did, indeed, have a good night, we said, and his energy level was much higher.

However, by midafternoon Monday it was clear that more medical intervention would be necessary. Dr. Miller fit Kendall into his office schedule for late afternoon. Off we went to his family medicine practice, where we learned that Kendall had pneumonia, and the quickest path to recovery would be hospitalization.

Over the next four nights and days Dr. Miller continued his general practice in the daytime, but every night he was at the hospital dutifully attending to our son. Our relationship with him continued, and he became our family practice physician. Whether it was my annual physical examination or the quick stop by his house for advice, he was always dependable and cordial.

Unfortunately, some parts of the United States will face a serious shortfall of family physicians by the year 2020. Since the late 1990s there has been a precipitous drop in the number of medical graduates who are opting for family medicine, choosing instead specialties with higher pay and more control over work hours and work environment.¹ According to Peter Landless, M.Med., associate director for health ministries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, this has become more than an American phenomenon. He states, "There is a shortage of well-trained, all-around family physicians worldwide—partly because of inadequate numbers of people being trained as physicians, but significantly because of the pull of specialized medicine."²

Wanted: more good pastors

Why this story and statistic? Because I fear that some young pastors are pursuing the same route—looking for the day when they can "specialize" in youth ministries, chaplaincy, or some administrative position. In other words, they dream, perhaps, of the day when they don't have to spend their time in the activities of general-practice pastoring, such as board meetings, church school issues, and multichurch stresses, just to name a few.

Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger isolated seven main motivations for pastors who left congregational ministry and determined that at least 27 percent left to pursue a specialized ministry. Because of other potential factors, Hoge and Wenger suspect the number may be as high as 35 percent.³ These pastors left congregational ministry for chaplaincy, seminary work, and mission work, just to name a few options.⁴ Furthermore, of those who left for any of the seven motivations, these pastors were the happiest and felt that they had previously received the greatest support from administrators and lay leaders.⁵

Are specialties in ministry needed? Absolutely—just as much as in medicine. Many years ago when I had an impacted wisdom tooth, my regular dentist was unable to help. I needed a specialist—an oral surgeon. And the surgeon couldn't operate without an anesthesiologist, another specialist.

We need specialists in church life, too. We need administrators on every level. We need individuals who focus primarily on worldwide evangelism. We need youth directors who have that special connection with young folks and who can train others to be leaders. We need counselors who specialize in grief counseling and marriage counseling—the list goes on. Yet I fear that some view pastoral ministry as a stepping-stone to a “higher” calling.

Earlier I touched on some of the reasons why some may shy away from pastoral ministry as a long-term calling: the mere thought of board meetings and business meetings, bearing the greater burden of visiting the church members, year-round evangelism, and financial pressures. Unfortunately, the focus appears to be placed on the negative side of these items. The attraction for many current and future pastors seems to be toward ministries outside the local church setting, such as chaplaincy or the attraction of being a part of a pastoral staff—in which case the burdens of ministry become divided among several professional equals.

However, there always will be the solo pastor to conduct the bulk of the church business. In fact, that solo pastor may be the only pastor over several churches. My contention? That these pastors, often unheralded, are the foundation of ministry. Their churches will have staffs, but they will comprise solely voluntary leaders as opposed to paid professionals who lead out. As a rule, pastoral staffs are limited to larger churches.

The challenge

So how do pastors get the idea that they can pastor and not have to bear all the duties of the pastorate or others who believe they can spend the bulk of ministry sharing the pastoral load with other pastors as a member of a team?

Training schools. Of course the problem isn't the school (certainly not in my case). I recall in my undergraduate and graduate studies taking classes in leadership and church administration. I recall going to church each Sabbath and watching every element of the divine worship service

being executed with pinpoint precision. While the emphasis was never overtly upon well-staffed churches as the pinnacle of success, I somehow came to believe that the pastor who did not have a well-staffed church was not successful.

Another factor might be that specialists write most of the textbooks—those who either have or make the time to write. Perhaps they have that time because they are not fully engaged in the general practice of which we presently speak. As a result, in societies with information as king, if the books don't promote general practice, then general practice will not be a priority.

Society at-large. It seems that the Christian church promotes “bigger is better.” As a child growing up in Dallas, Texas, United States, I recall W. A. Criswell (1909–2002) being the best-known pastor in the city. His First Baptist Church, which he pastored from 1944 to 1995, was reputed to be the largest church in the United States, boasting a membership of 25,000.

His was in the minority—a true megachurch. Today, many churches throughout the world boast memberships in excess of 25,000. And we laud their founders and leaders for being visionary, often growing their congregations from a small start to where they are today. Certainly, such leaders don't have the time for what we would call “general practice” (indeed it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for pastors with 1,000 members to really know all their members).

I receive advertisements in my mailbox inviting me to professional conventions throughout the world. I read professional journals that contain advertisements for these same conventions. I attend a few of them each year; some have large turnouts, others relatively small. One thing they all have in common, though, is that their presenters are large-church pastors with staffs, or specialists in their particulars fields, or both. The list of presenters includes famous pastors but never the anonymous pastor who regularly engages in “general practice” ministry in Boise or Mexico City or Auckland.

However unintentionally, the atmosphere created develops into one

that promotes the desire to be a specialist because that way one doesn't have to deal with the nuts and bolts of everyday general ministry. The life of the specialist is then considered easy—filled with expense accounts, travel, and glamour, and void of the tedium that supposedly comes with district ministry.

As one who has both pastored and taught, I wonder what can be done to stem the tide that threatens to sweep some pastors and ministerial students away down the river of potential disillusionment. Disillusionment comes easily when one doesn't have a clear picture of the joys, as well as the challenges, of pastoral ministry.

What can be done?

I again reflect back upon my undergraduate and graduate studies, as well as my time spent as a university professor, and wonder if the key to promoting and encouraging general practice pastoring might not be in what was done then as well as in some other programs providing ministerial training.

Ministerial internships. My wife is an elementary school teacher. As a part of her schooling during her junior year she spent considerable time observing a teacher in her classroom. During her senior year she took the additional step of teaching students under a seasoned teacher. That teacher could encourage her in what she was doing well and also create the environment in which she could ask questions such as, “How would you have handled this situation if you were me?”

The same kind of interactive training should be included in university ministerial training. Often universities require one year of such internships, and some schools make it optional (others, unfortunately, do not offer any). Two years should be required. Consider the following:

- Two years allows for a greater variety of experiences in a pastoral setting. Too often a one-year assignment can expose the intern only to that immediate setting, whether a small church or a large. A two-year program allows for the intern to have two separate assignments. The first year could be at a large

church and the second at a small church. Or the first can be in a single church district and the second at a multichurch district. Such variety lessens the temptation to prefer what might appear to be the easier or preferable road to travel by exposing the intern to the best in a variety of settings. Having been exposed to a variety of ministries, that intern also develops an appreciation for the wideness of ministry more than a disdain for certain elements of ministry. As such, the intern can better avoid the early desire for specialization, opting for the joys of general practice.

•The intern's exposure over those two years includes pastors with varying leadership styles and temperaments. This, of course, implies that interns are placed under experienced pastors who have the gift of mentoring. And in districts with more than one church, it does not become the job of the intern to pastor one of the churches, for that defeats the purpose of the internship program. The intern must be exposed to all the variables in the smaller churches or multichurch district settings as well as in larger church settings.

Early stages of ministry. Upon graduation, these young pastors need to again be placed in churches that have seasoned pastors. The significant difference between this proposal and what was proposed earlier is that at this stage the emphasis for the young pastor should be in the smaller church or multichurch district setting.

This admittedly runs contrary to the traditional approach of automatically placing young pastors in large churches. Nevertheless I propose this approach for two reasons: First, such an approach implies that young pastors can be mentored only by pastors who have attained senior pastor status in large settings. Second, it can create in the young pastor who serves in this church an unconscious disdain for having to eventually move to a smaller setting. Furthermore, these pastors usually are assigned to a specific ministry within that particular church, and although they are exposed to a variety of ministries within that local church, they are encouraged to focus more on one or two particular

elements. And therein may lie the seeds of specialization.

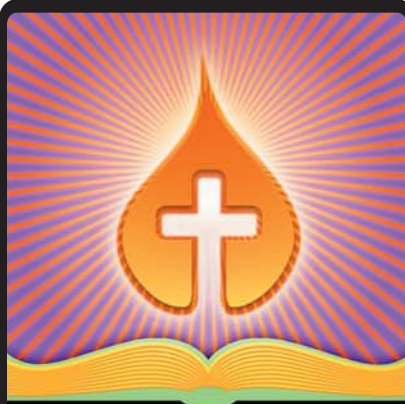
Admittedly such an approach calls for a balancing act. Young pastors can learn a lot in large-church, single-church settings that they can eventually incorporate in smaller church settings; on the other hand, it may be that their being placed in smaller church settings can lead to frustration—especially if their gifts are suited to larger church settings.

I certainly am not advocating that one must slowly climb the ladder from “entry-level” positions in ministry. I believe that it becomes quickly evident that some are destined for larger churches just as some are for conference administration. These opportunities must not be denied; indeed, they should be encouraged. I also believe that some are ideally suited to spend the larger share of their ministries in rural settings, in smaller settings, in multichurch district settings. It requires a special calling to pastor in such settings, just as it requires a special calling to serve in administrative posts (or any other posts, for that matter).

Highlight the general practice pastor. As stated earlier, much ink is spent on detailing the accomplishments of well-known pastors, evangelists, preachers, and administrators. But how many two- or three- or nine-church pastors are widely commended for their efforts? These often bear their burdens in the heat of the day, and while in some parts of the world these pastors may have an extensive and well-trained set of elders and other leaders, they nevertheless still do not receive recognition and praise like those who have the greater number of church members.

Benefits for the general practice pastor

Having spent two-thirds of my ministry pastoring (almost all of that time in multichurch districts), I have discovered many incentives that entice one to relish the general practice ministry. In my current ministry I still enjoy some of these benefits, but certainly not to the degree as the pastor who joins with the same congregation



ACTS 100
acknowledgment • communion • training • service

Essential steps for intercessory prayer

Be discreet. If you want to be efficient as an intercessor, treat each request shared with you as if it was for your ears only—because it is.

Be sensitive to needs. A part of our work in this world is to feel each other's pain—weeping when they weep and praying for them in their sorrows. “A Christian is keenly sensitive to the needs of others, because he realizes that they are Christ's property” (Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, 117).

Be encouraging. One of the best ways to demonstrate your care for others is to let them know you are praying for them—then pray for them right then and there, if possible.

Be organized. Maintain a journal, make prayer lists, plan a time to pray, and select an appropriate location.

Be committed. When you promise someone you are going to pray for them, you are making a sacred commitment and assuming a solemn responsibility. “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. . . .” (1 Samuel 12:23, KJV). In doing so, you will also receive incredible rewards.

—Raquel Arrais, Associate Director of Women's Ministry, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Fresh ideas for developing your church's spiritual life
www.ministerialassociation.com

every Sabbath, during prayer meetings, and in their life journeys (be they joyful or sorrowful).

It creates a more complete pastor. I define *pastor* in the sense that the Greek term connotes: a shepherd. The shepherd spends more time with the flock than others do. Being the shepherd of a congregation, however, does not obviate the need to delegate responsibilities to elders and others. Church members nevertheless need a pastor actively involved in ministry to the flock at times other than Sabbath and during prayer meeting. The pastor who possesses skill—though not necessarily a thorough competency—with a variety of issues in a variety of settings is, in many senses, more rounded than the specialist. As Ken Crawford so eloquently wrote, once one leaves pastoral ministry, there are several downsides for which the pastor finds it difficult to compensate, and those downsides create challenges for the one who has moved on to some specialty area of ministry.⁶

It engenders more long-term confidence. As I mentioned earlier, I went to a specialist when I had an impacted wisdom tooth. However, when it comes to my oral hygiene, I have never had any other reason to visit an oral surgeon. Normally I see my regular dentist, whose job includes monitoring my dental health to make sure that everything is as it should be, and if not, he will either take care of the problem or refer me to a specialist.

As with my doctor from a few years ago, and as with my dentist today, and because I have spent the most time with these men who know my medical and dental histories respectively, they have earned my confidence. I know that they will not give me bad counsel and that they have my best interest at heart.

My relationship with my doctor and dentist illustrates the relationship that church members develop with their pastors. This same relationship I still maintain with church members from years gone by—my infrequent contact with them notwithstanding. But I don't have that relationship with church members today. Indeed, I can't. Perhaps I have that relationship with

individual members, but with large groups of church members that privilege belongs to my senior pastor and his associate pastor. Why? Because they spend more time with the members of the congregation than I ever could spend. As such, they have earned the long-term confidence of their church members.

It creates a greater potential for the pastor to develop roots in the community. It would seem to be the opposite for the general practice pastor because so many other issues tug for attention. The ability to grow roots in the community is directly tied to the long-term confidence of people in the pastor because success arises out of a connection that creates confidence. The general practice pastor, as exhausting as the calling can be, has to personally touch both the congregation and the community.

Brian Rhoades pastors the Arlington and Fairfax churches in northern Virginia just outside Washington, D.C. He told me about his churches' partnering with George Mason University and Marymount University, operating a health ministry in their churches' communities, which has created an opening to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those neighborhoods. He states, "The health approach to community services is the best because people are thus more receptive."⁷

Unless one's specialty takes them to the community, it is difficult to touch the community. Very few specialists are able to succeed in both. General practice pastors may not be expert in both but neither are they called to be. General practice pastors may not be widely known but are known where it most matters: in the churches and communities for whom they labor.

It leads to a longer-term impact. Without a doubt, church members are still most impacted by the local pastor.

As a young teenager, my wife was impacted by her pastor and his wife, Pastor and Mrs. Van Runnels. Imagine her surprise and delight when, on her fifteenth birthday, they baked a cake and brought it to her house.

Several years later, when I was starting in ministry, Pastor Runnels took me

under his wings and gave me counsel that has stayed with me to this day. It was an easy decision for Kathy and me to make as to who would officiate our wedding. He remained our counselor and advisor until his death in 1995.

Conclusion

If you are teaching in or supervising a training program for future pastors, are you affirming the beauty of general practice pastoring? Are you encouraging men and women to "have an interest in all that relates to the welfare of the flock, feeding, guiding, and defending them. . . . manifest[ing] a tender consideration for all, especially for the tempted, the afflicted, and the desponding"⁸?

If you are preparing for a lifetime of pastoral ministry, or if you are already engaged in congregational ministry, are you committed to being "shepherds of God's flock that is under your care . . . eager to serve" (1 Pet. 5:2, NIV)?

General practice pastors worldwide, like general practice doctors, perform the most vital elements of ministry. Despite all the pressures that accompany the call, general practice pastors enjoy the long-term satisfaction of long-term relationships with the real engine of the church: members who live, love, and labor at the grass roots level. And the body of Christ is richer as a result of all that they do. ■

- 1 Associated Press, "Shortage of Family Doctors Predicted by 2020," MSNBC, September 27, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15020430/> (accessed January 4, 2007).
- 2 Peter Landless, in an interview with the author, February 20, 2007.
- 3 Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 50.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., 51.
- 6 See Ken Crawford, "Descending Into Administration," *Ministry* (February 2007), 9–11.
- 7 Brian Rhoades, in an interview with the author, February 20, 2007.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 190.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

The Babylonian temptation: making a name for ourselves

Reinder Bruinsma



Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D., is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands, Huis ter Heide, Netherlands.

Some might say that an article about the mentality of Babylon hardly fits as a subject for an Adventist journal for clergy. Because God's people of all denominations, the inhabitants of Zion, the citizens of the heavenly city, read this publication, this writing does not target those who belong to Babylon.

True enough. We want to maintain a safe distance from Babylon. We want to call others—as many as possible—to leave Babylon (Rev. 18:4). Babylon is bad news. Its philosophy and lifestyle are godless and addictive (Rev. 14:8). We, who have left Babylon, must always be reminded to stay far away from it, and not to succumb to the temptation to try to stand with one leg in Jerusalem and another in Babylon. For that reason I believe the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) remains utterly relevant.

Of course, this well-known, beautifully constructed narrative was sandwiched between the stories of Noah and Abraham and placed somewhat awkwardly between the Table of Nations of Genesis 10 and the genealogy from Shem to Abraham in Genesis 11b. It tells us how, after the Flood, the descendants of Noah moved eastward, toward the plain of Shinar. They settled in the fertile Mesopotamian lowlands, where they quickly learned to master all kinds of technologies. Eventually, they felt confident they could construct a city “with a tower that reach[e]d to the heavens” (v. 4, NIV).

Genesis 11:4 informs us succinctly of the twofold motive for this ambitious enterprise: The people wanted “to make a name” for themselves,

and also wanted to make sure that they would not be “scattered.” God expressed His disapproval in no uncertain terms, for He “went down” and put a definitive stop to the disastrous enterprise by confusing their language. Chaos resulted, and the very “scattering” the people wanted to avoid was the inescapable result.

The root of the problem

Seventh-day Adventists know that the term *Babylon* stands as the ultimate symbol for the powers that oppose God and His people. If we want to know what constitutes the very essence of that opposition, we find the answer right here in Genesis 11. *Babylon* is a collective name for all who want to do things without God, who are not intent upon honoring the name of God but want to make a name for themselves. It is the unmistakable symbol of those who, poisoned by their devilish arrogance, do not know their place and want to reach into high heaven on their own steam. And it applies, as we well know, in particular to the end-time coalition of religious powers that will be intent on destroying God's remnant people.

This profile of Babylon finds confirmation in another story of city building many centuries after the construction of the Tower of Babel. King Nebuchadnezzar, the famous ruler of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, manifested exactly the same spirit. One day, when he walked on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, he surveyed the magnificent buildings all around him and exclaimed: “Is not this the great Babylon I have built . . . by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30, NIV; emphasis added). No wonder that the prophet Isaiah referred to the king of Babylon as a fitting symbol for Satan, the first and ultimate embodiment of arrogance (Isa. 14:13, 14).

Characterized by presumptuousness, Babylon adopted the unashamed usurpation of God's honor. A second characteristic, however, becomes clear in Genesis 11—Babylon also manifests a fortress mentality. Their belief that there is safety in numbers and in staying with the crowd, coupled with their fear that they might be “scattered” and might lose influence, power, and control, fostered in the postdiluvian people the desire to build this Babylonian bastion as a monument for themselves.

What has this to do with us?

The story of the Tower of Babel has, I believe, a powerful message on two levels: for the Adventist Church, and for clergy in particular.

How does it relate to us corporately, as a church? Let us, first of all, take a step back and reflect on

the history of the Advent movement. Our church originated on the fringes of the Millerite movement. Its beginnings were among a small group of predominantly uneducated, rural folks whose leaders were mostly young and inexperienced. They were ridiculed after the 1844 debacle and treated as pariahs on the American religious scene. Their movement, at first, grew slowly. It numbered a mere 3,500 by 1863—when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially organized. By 1900 church membership stood around 75,000. Adventists were long regarded as a strange sub-Christian sect, and honesty demands to add that, though we have now grown into a significant worldwide movement, we are still regarded as a sect in many places around the world.

The church has poured a tremendous amount of resources into efforts to build its public image. We want to convince the world that we are a Christian church. We do all we can to tell the world around us that we are not as small as many tend to think. And we invite the world to look at what we are doing.

Yes, we want to be recognized as a growing, prestigious religious body. We proudly point to our annual statistical report as undeniable proof of steady growth and extension around the globe, and to our thousands of institutions in over two hundred countries. We proudly proclaim that the Adventist Church presently has about fifteen million adult members and predict that by 2020 membership may well exceed forty or fifty million. Many countries now treat us with respect. We have become widely recognized as having a strong organization and an educated ministry; we have an ever-growing number of institutions of higher learning, and our Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) continues to be increasingly respected as a global agency for humanitarian outreach.

But, could it be that we are in danger of placing too much stress on this desire for recognition? As we grow and develop, does it remain our sole purpose to honor the name of God? Or are we also intent on making a name for ourselves? And might there be the

risk that, in so doing, we follow our own human strategies rather than the divine agenda?

These questions apply not only globally but also nationally and locally. Always and everywhere the danger exists that we so focus on the church as an institution, on growth, on institutional development, on church finances, on a positive image in the press, that we forget the real mission of the church: to preach and reflect Christ. I would submit that the church exhibits a dangerous Babylonian trait if it is first of all an institution, a corporation, that tries to position itself as positively as it can in the religious marketplace, rather than as a place for spiritual growth and nurture.

This observation connects with the second aspect: the fortress mentality of Babylon. We should continuously ask ourselves the questions, Is our church open, outgoing, attractive to others? Is it interested in what is going on in the outside world? Is it making an impact on the world? Or do we prefer a church that manifests itself as a bastion, a fortress,

Remember when mission work was the most important thing we did as a church? It still is.

Every day nearly 1,000 Adventist missionaries serve in more than 200 countries around the world. Your ongoing support of the World Mission Fund gives them the resources they need to tell the world about Christ's love. For more information visit: www.AdventistMission.org.

In addition, more than 2,500 lay people currently serve as Global Mission pioneers in unentered communities. These pioneers dedicate several years of their lives to start new groups of believers within their own culture. Your support will help Global Mission projects and pioneers reach the unreached with hope. To find out more about the work of Global Mission visit: www.Global-Mission.org.

Thank you for being part of it!

ADVENTIST MISSION

Be part of it!

where we feel safe and cozy as we live together in our own little world—enjoying our own peculiar subculture? Are we happiest when we are at a considerable distance from the world and do not have to mix and interact with others who are not of our faith? Do we feel most comfortable when we talk to ourselves, in our own jargon, focused on our own problems?

If that is the situation, we have created a little Babylon and we must expect God to “come down” and take a critical look at us. Yes, we must even expect Him to shake us, and possibly even to scatter us from our Adventist ghettos, to force us out of our Babylonian fortress mentality.

Sadly, there are Adventists who want to stay away from the world as much as they can. Studies indicate that most longtime Adventists have few or no friends outside of the church. It takes, on the average, about seven or eight years for new members to lose most of their

in the world. They must know where people are hurting, and learn how to relate to real people in the real world.

Where is our focus?

But what about each of us, as individual believers, or, specifically, as Adventist pastors? Are we loyal citizens of the heavenly city, or do we continue to maintain an address in Babylon? Are we fully focused on honoring God’s name and on that grandiose promise that we will soon bear a new, God-given, name? Or are we at times still rooted in a Babylonian mode of thought and intent on making a name for ourselves?

The temptation to make a name for ourselves never goes away. I am very conscious of that temptation. Why do I work for the church? Why do I travel, preach, write, work long hours, and attend endless committees? Could it be that, deep down, I would like to make a name for myself? That question remains

about ourselves. If we try hard enough, we can do almost anything. So, at least, we are told by the media.

Many are obsessed with their work, their status, their material possessions, and the very latest gadgets. They are totally convinced of their own importance. For many, virtually no limit exists to what they will sacrifice on the altar of success. At the same time, many do not want to invest time, energy, and emotion in deep and long-lasting relationships. They seek the anonymity of the masses rather than to take a more than superficial interest in people and meet them where they are. They feel more comfortable in “networking” than in establishing real friendships.

The story of the Tower of Babel tells us that God disapproves of this widespread desire to make a name for ourselves, and of this tendency to cocoon in our private fortresses. God wants us to reject this Babylonian approach to life. He wants

...COULD IT BE THAT WE ARE IN DANGER OF PLACING TOO MUCH STRESS ON THIS DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION? AS WE GROW AND DEVELOP, DOES IT REMAIN OUR SOLE PURPOSE TO HONOR THE NAME OF GOD? OR ARE WE ALSO INTENT ON MAKING A NAME FOR OURSELVES?

non-Adventist friends. Christ was adamant: Although we are not *of* this world, we must be *in* this world. The church must have its windows open to the outside world. It cannot be reduced to a safe, secure, familiar environment for those who already believe and belong. God’s children must not live in a spiritual ghetto, but must be “scattered.” They must venture out, accepting the risks this involves. Their mission must not be to shy away from the world and to abandon the world. They should gladly accept the positives in the world and embrace the good things the world still has to offer. Possibly even more importantly, they must know the language of the world and be aware of what is happening

relevant for all of us who work for the church, whether employed by a church entity, or serving as an elder, deacon, or organist in the local church.

What are our deepest aims, our innermost motivations and ambitions? Do we want to be obedient to our calling, or do we simply want to be important? Do we strive to be influential or to be a blessing to others? Is our ambition to lead and to be in charge, or are we willing to serve?

In today’s narcissistic culture, people tend to focus on themselves. The key words are self-improvement, self-worth, and assertiveness. We are challenged to exploit our unique talents and to keep working on ourselves. We must feel good

us to realize that the deepest meaning of our lives does not include how we can make ourselves shine; it is about how He can shine through us.

Making a name for ourselves and refusing to be “scattered” so that we can bear our witness in the wider community can be identified as a Babylonian trait that should have no place among the citizens of the heavenly city. As a church and as individuals we belong in Zion. We belong to that new world with God as the focus of praise and His name honored above every other name. ■

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Discipline in children's ministry settings

Stephen Grunlan



Stephen Grunlan, D.Min., is senior pastor of Grace Fellowship, Overland Park, Kansas, United States.

Have you noticed increased discipline problems in some of our children's ministries, especially in ministries that draw the most children from outside our church? In this day of increasing single-parent families, blended families, and dual-income families, the rising discipline problems at home carry over into the church. How do we handle discipline problems in children's ministry settings?

Preventing discipline problems

The most effective approach would be to prevent discipline problems before they occur. Following are some specific steps:

Be well prepared in three areas. Teaching the lesson is the first area. If teachers are stumbling around or reading from a quarterly because they are not prepared, the students will lose interest and discipline problems will arise. On the other hand, if teachers are well prepared and can confidently present their lesson in an interesting manner, they are more likely to hold their students' attention.

The second area in which teachers need to be well prepared is with their material and supplies. For example, if teachers are fumbling around looking for craft materials for a craft project, students will begin to act up. However, if they have the supplies all ready and laid out in advance, the students can immediately become involved in the project. Any time teachers look for materials or supplies rather than focusing on the students, the potential for discipline problems arises.

The third area in which teachers need to be well prepared is with the equipment they are going to use. If teachers are trying to figure out how to work a VCR or how to plug in an overhead projector, they are not dealing with their students, and the students are free to fool around. All equipment should be checked out before class begins, and teachers need to be certain of how to operate the equipment. Anything that distracts teachers from their students opens the possibility for discipline problems. Being well prepared allows teachers to give their students full attention.

Have adequate staff. The ideal staffing ratio is 5 students to 1 teacher. This ratio gives leaders enough staff to prevent or curtail most discipline problems. When dealing with a larger group of 20 or more students, an additional helper should be available who does not carry the responsibility for any child but remains free to help with equipment, supplies, and other things needed by those working with the children. In our week-night children's ministry, we have a ratio of 1 leader for each 5 children plus a helper in each group.

Encourage and reward good behavior. Many times children use bad behavior as an attempt to get attention, so when we focus on the troublemaker, we are actually rewarding negative behavior. Therefore we should make good behavior the way to get attention. Many teachers ignore good behavior but respond to disruptive behavior, thereby giving the disruptive child attention.

A more effective approach involves looking out for good behavior and praising the child. Teachers need to reward positive behavior. Last year one of our teachers made a kindness wall. She made paper bricks, and every time she caught a child being kind or doing something good, she would let the child write their name on a brick and add it to the wall.

Teachers need to be generous with sincere praise, with the operative word being *sincere*. While flattering adults comes fairly easily, children can see right through insincere praise or manipulation. For encouragement and rewards to work, praise must be sincere.

Lay out the rules in advance. Teachers need to make sure everybody understands the rules in advance. Also, rules should state the behavior we want, not the behavior we do not want. When rules state what we do not want, they emphasize the negative. When rules state what we want, they emphasize the positive. Rather than saying students should not talk during the lesson, we should say students should be quiet during the lesson.

We also need to communicate our expectations. When students know what we expect,

they are more likely to live up to those expectations. Also, if a mistake is made, we should start out too strict rather than too lenient because loosening rules is easier than tightening them later. When we tighten the rules, we are taking something away; when we loosen them, we are giving something away. Tightening rules makes us the bad guys; loosening them makes us the good guys.

Control the environment. Have as few rows as possible. In fact, when you can, have everyone in the front row. The closer to the front students sit, the fewer discipline problems arise. Also, when possible, assign seating and separate potential troublemakers. When

Handling discipline problems

Nip problems in the bud. The best way to deal with a discipline problem is to nip it in the bud. We will look at three techniques for nipping discipline problems in the bud. The first is to make a change. Move from lecture to discussion or question and answer. Use an audio-visual aid. Have the students engage in a learning activity. Any change a teacher can make will distract the students and may eliminate the discipline problem.

The second technique is to use the name of the student who begins to be disruptive. If the student's name is Frank, the teacher might say, "As we learned last week, Frank, Noah took two of each

irritated, it only escalates the situation. Also, when a teacher loses control, the child is in control. Second, do be consistent. A teacher should not be more strict when they are in a bad mood and more lenient when they are in a good mood. Rules must be consistent across students and situations. Consistency is key to effective discipline. Third, do be fair. Children have a strong sense of fair play. Nothing will undermine a teacher's authority quicker than playing favorites or not being fair. Fourth, do handle the situation positively. Once more, deal with what you want, not with what you do not want. Emphasize the positive. Fifth, do ask for God's help. As believers

MANY TIMES CHILDREN USE BAD BEHAVIOR AS AN ATTEMPT TO GET ATTENTION, SO WHEN WE FOCUS ON THE TROUBLEMAKER, WE ARE ACTUALLY REWARDING NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR. THEREFORE WE SHOULD MAKE GOOD BEHAVIOR THE WAY TO GET ATTENTION.

setting up the classroom, face students away from distractions. For example, if possible, do not face them toward a window. Keep the room bright. When it comes to temperature, cooler is better than warmer.

Set the example. The teacher needs to set the example. If we want students to be on time, we need to be on time. Teachers need to lead the way in courtesy. Teachers need to demonstrate self-control. Teachers need to exercise patience. Teachers need to be enthusiastic. If we are not enthusiastic, why should our students be interested? Teachers lead the way with their voice and actions.

Pray. Teachers need to ask God for help in preparation and presentation. We need to ask God to help us communicate His love and grace to our students. We need to ask God to help us be the teachers we need to be. We also need to pray for our students. While we should pray about discipline problems, more importantly we should pray that our students will come to Christ and grow in their faith. We should pray for each student by name and for each student's special needs.

kind of animal into the ark." Many of the students will not even notice you used Frank's name, but he will. We are all sensitive to our name.

The third technique is to redirect the student or students beginning to act out. Ask them a question. Ask them to look up a verse in the Bible. Have them act out a scene from the story. Anything a teacher can do to redirect the student may stop the unwanted behavior. Making a change may be enough to nip problem behavior in the bud.

Steps in disciplining. When discipline becomes necessary, follow these steps. First, explain to the child the behavior you expect. Again, emphasize what you want, not what you do not want. Second, explain the consequences of disobedience. If the child continues the problem behavior, the third step should result in the implementation of the consequences. When this does not work, the fourth step is to send the child to a supervisor or their parent. Never send children on their own to a supervisor or parent. Always have an adult take them.

Dos and don'ts of disciplining. First, do stay calm. If the teacher gets upset or

we have the additional resource of God's help. We need to use it.

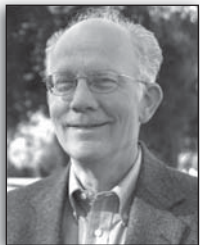
Sixth, don't threaten. Threats do not work and make a teacher look weak. When a problem becomes evident, take action. Correct, explain, or administer consequences. Seventh, don't call children names or belittle them. Never ridicule children. Treat children with respect even when disciplining them. Eighth, don't touch or hold a child unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent harm to another child. Ninth, don't use any form of physical discipline. We live in a lawsuit-conscious age, and we need to practice the utmost care in how we deal with children.

Finally, we need to love the children to whom we minister, communicating that love in word and action. When children genuinely feel loved and accepted, fewer discipline problems will arise. Teachers need to have the same love and patience with their students that God has with us. ■

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

The cosmological anthropic principle: apologists and homilists beware!

Edwin A. Karlow



Edwin A. Karlow, Ph.D., is a professor of physics, La Sierra University, Riverside, California, United States

Over the past 30 years, awareness has been growing among scientists that our universe, and our place in it, is special. Rather than seeing it as a random choice among many possibilities, scientists extol the uniqueness of how the universe was put together. Even the laws by which it operates give the universe an air of contrivance, of design. In fact, with such an appropriate metaphor, even unbelievers resort to the vocabulary of design.

Here, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, much motivates science to revise the design metaphor. Many reasons exist for this revision, the foremost being the cosmological anthropic principle (AP) with its myriad evidences of fine-tuning in the universe. Christian homilists and apologists capitalize on these evidences quickly because they seem ready-made to bolster faith and validate belief in God as Designer and Creator.

But the anthropic principle cannot be invoked indiscriminately, and mentioning specific fine tunings can involve a chain of implications that may not have the desired consequences. Particularly for Seventh-day Adventists, the implications of the anthropic principle and its attendant evidences must be carefully examined before using them as an apologetic or homiletic device.

The principles

That the earth is fit for human habitation can hardly be classified as news, for if that was not so, we wouldn't be here to note the fact. But that last sentence highlights the heart of the cosmological

anthropic principle. The so-called weak anthropic principle states that "our existence has selected from all possible universes the one that permits us to exist."¹ This cannot be classified as a claim that all possible universes do or have existed, but that our existence stands as evidence for the fitness of this world and its universe to sustain sentient beings. This fairly mild proposition was the basis for the natural theology of the nineteenth century and reminds us of David's praise to God in Psalms 8 and 19 for the excellence of His handiwork.

In its weak form, the anthropic principle cannot give a reason for our existence. For that we must turn to an agency outside the universe. However, the strong form of the anthropic principle asserts that the universe itself "must have those properties which allow life to develop within it at some stage of its history." Clearly, this form of the anthropic principle has no need of God the Creator; natural laws do it all.

Variants of the strong anthropic principle include the participatory anthropic principle: "Observers are necessary to bring the universe into being." Its reverse, "The universe is necessary to bring observers into being," is essentially the weak form recast. The participatory form is not so far-fetched as it sounds, when one recalls that we were created in God's image and at His pleasure. As Ellen White reminds us, we are invited to be partners together with God.² Even physicist John Wheeler says, "It is not only that man is adapted to the universe. The universe is adapted to man." In a very deep spiritual sense the universe and we are necessary for each other.

The fundamental constants

Clearly the anthropic principle stands as the atheistic answer to why there should be a universe at all and without further elaboration offers little homiletic or apologetic grist. The facts that motivated the principle, however, offer some compelling glimpses of what the universe must be like, and show how tightly linked and tightly constrained are the fundamental constants of nature. These effects are commonly referred to as the fine-tunings or cosmic coincidences of nature.

Hugh Ross, Christian evangelist and astrophysicist, has summarized more than 57 different precisely adjusted physical constants and relationships, some of which—if changed by as little as one part in 10^{50} —would yield an altogether different universe, perhaps no universe at all!³ In their seminal treatment of the anthropic principle, John Barrow and Frank Tipler spend over 500 pages and 600 equations elucidating the implications of these anthropic

requirements. "Twentieth-century physics has discovered there exist invariant properties of the natural world and its elementary components which render inevitable the gross size and structure of almost all its composite objects. The size of bodies like stars, planets and even people are neither random nor the result of any progressive selection process, but simply manifestations of the different strengths of the various forces of nature. . . . We can show that the order of magnitude of the key features of astronomy and physics can be deduced as inevitable once the constants of Nature are specified."⁴

Atomic, nuclear, and stellar phenomena are too remote for most of us to appreciate the implications of anthropic fine-tuning. However, Barrow and Tipler show that many characteristics of life that we take for granted are governed by the initial choice of constants and physical laws.

For example, we cannot tell why humans should be 5 or 6 feet rather than 8 or 9 feet tall, but we can explain why they are not 100 feet or only 1 inch tall. (This deduction is entirely compatible with Ellen White's observation that Adam "was more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth."⁵) Similarly the length of the day and year on a habitable planet follow from Newton's second law of motion and the fundamental constants mentioned earlier.

The carbon resonance remains as a favorite among the myriad of fine tunings because its discovery made such an impression on atheist Fred Hoyle, British astronomer and cosmologist.⁶ Had not these resonances been just right, either no carbon would form or all of it would become oxygen. Instead we have a just-right abundance of both!

Carbon and oxygen, two of the basic building blocks of living things, are formed in the nuclear fires of massive stars. Exploding supernova blast this material throughout space, where it is recycled in another series of stellar births, lives, and supernovae deaths. The physical constants and laws that permit life to exist as we know it also guarantee stars of the right kind and number that will yield enough carbon and oxygen and

other heavy elements for a planet like ours to form. "This stellar alchemy takes over ten billion years to complete. Hence, for there to be enough time to construct the constituents of living things, the universe must be at least ten billion years old and therefore, as a consequence of its expansion, at least ten billion light years in extent. We should not be surprised to observe that the universe is so large. No astronomer could exist in one that was significantly smaller."⁷

We now know that the sizes of atoms, people, planets, and even the universe are not accidental, nor are they the results of natural selection. Rather they are consequences of inevitable equilibrium states between competing natural forces of attraction and repulsion. Thus if we find it satisfying that things as mundane as the length of the day and year, and even our own height, should be constrained by the fundamental constants of nature, then AP impels us to accept with equal alacrity that things as remote to us as the size and age of the universe and the quantity of its stars are also proscribed in the same fashion. The same laws and fundamental constants govern them all.

Implications

Several issues emerge from these considerations that interact with Adventist thinking. The first and most obvious is time—namely, the time required for the development of stars and production of heavy elements. If we are impressed with the fine-tunings involved in the carbon resonance, for instance, then we must not ignore the implication that this process takes a lot of time to generate the necessary quantities of material. Why, we may ask, if God is the Creator, would He wait so many billions of years to make life? Why not do it right away?

"The answer," Hugh Ross says, "is that, given the laws and constants of physics God [evidently] chose, it takes about ten to twelve billion years just to fuse enough heavy elements in the nuclear furnaces of several generations of giant stars to make life chemistry possible."⁸

But with God as Creator, could He not have made all the necessary ingredients for life at the outset and bypassed the

tedious stellar processes? Such seems to be implied by familiar biblical passages such as Psalm 33:6, 9: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth" (RSV).

These lines provide the basis for our concept of an instantaneous creation that everything came forth fully developed from the Creator's hand. This view does not easily accommodate the vast time scales implied by the evidence for stellar evolution and the production of the elements required for life. Appealing to the fine-tunings of the universe as evidence of God's creatorship could be misconstrued as support for deep time and an evolutionary development of life.

Another issue is the implied process whereby the earth forms along with the other planets in our solar system, a lengthy process estimated in the billions of years. The developmental histories of Mars, Jupiter, and the other planets will be similar to Earth's because the same laws govern all their developmental histories. But if we constrain the physical processes we see in the Earth to six thousand years, are we not also obliged to similarly account for the histories of the other planets? We must recognize that the creation story we espouse has implications beyond planet Earth.

One possible way out of the predicament would be to argue that God set the universe operating in the remote past with the laws we now observe and later prepared Earth for habitation. This approach would seem to resolve the problem of deep time, and essentially comprises the passive "gap theory," which interprets Genesis 1:1 (God created the heaven and the earth [KJV].) as referring to the entire cosmos, but distinct from the creation of life on earth described in Genesis 1:2–2:1 (Thus the heavens and the earth were finished [KJV].).

A third issue consists of the recycling of stellar material in a series of creation and re-creation events. There is not one creation, but many—a kind of continuous creation. Stars are born, live out their fiery existence, and die. Their exhausted material becomes the stuff of other stars that form under the gravitational attraction

of the former material. Adventists have focused on the creation of Earth as the sole event. But AP applies to the whole universe, not just planet Earth. Invoking the fine-tunings requires us to enlarge our vision to include the whole of the cosmos with the Earth a part of that.

We rightly praise God for His design in the universe as evidenced by the anthropically invested fine-tunings, but too quickly do we reject the implications of that design (long ages for the universe and planet Earth, multiple creations or continuous creation, etc.) when they seem to conflict with our beliefs. This inconsistent approach has little appeal to those familiar with the science involved in AP and confuses those who look to the church for guidance in understanding scientific findings.

While AP is comprehensive, it cannot be segmented to suit specific homiletic or apologetic agendas. Appealing to one example of fine-tuning implies them all, and *fine-tuning* means exactly that! We need to do the theology necessary for embracing all of the implications of AP: The universe has a long history, its size is

vast, and these are necessary conditions for the existence of life as we know it. Lacking such fresh theology, we should be cautious when invoking AP and its fine tunings. Their injudicious use can lead to either confusion over the meaning of the science or disrespect for the basis of our beliefs. ❏

- 1 See, for example, Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress Publishing Group, 1995), 128.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 297; White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 579.
- 3 Ross, *Creator and the Cosmos*, 118–21, 138–41.
- 4 John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Cosmological Anthropic Principle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 288, 9.
- 5 White, *The Story of Redemption*, 21.
- 6 This fascinating story is best told by Owen Gingerich, “Is There a Role for Natural Theology Today?” Chapter 1 in *Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface*, ed. Murray Rae, Hilary Regan, John Stenhouse, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994).
- 7 Barrow and Tipler, *Cosmological Anthropic Principle*, 3.
- 8 Ross, *Creator and the Cosmos*, 116.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

and would seek to protect others from them—we would surely have more sympathy and understanding for the individual who acts out of such a background.

If I had a child, perhaps a child of incest or rape, and that child, perhaps because of hereditary influences, grew up to be a murderer, I might agree that my child needs to die in order to protect society. But as a mother who has loved that child since birth I certainly would not desire or find satisfaction in making that death any more painful or protracted than necessary just by way of punishment. Is God not more loving than I am?

—Carrol Grady, *Snohomish, Washington, United States*

**February 2007 book review—
comments from book author
and from readers**

I want to apologize to the officers of the White Estate for the impression given in the forward to my book *More Than a Prophet* that they approved of
continued on page 25


ACN
Presents

*The Collected Works
of Renowned Black Preachers*

**Experience the heart and
soul of Black preaching**

Order your collector's edition today! Ask for Volume 16. Three DVD set, \$29.95.

Eight preachers, eight sermons and more—360 minutes of inspiration!



"I like to visit a Black church to get closer to the most beautifully constructed and powerfully performed example of oration in the US today."

Geoff Alexander, Director and CEO for Academic Film Archive (AFA)

Adventist Preaching

800-ACN-1119 or online at www.acn.info • 800-328-0525 or online at www.adventsource.org
Also available at most Adventist Book Centers • Visit www.acn.info for previous editions of Adventist Preaching.

*Finding the one who
has loved you all along...*

HEART QUEST

October 19 - November 3

In *HeartQuest*, Mike Tucker, Speaker/Director, Faith for Today, has created an effective tool for experiencing God more fully. His messages of hope and reconciliation explore important Bible truths that present the gospel in a way that meets the needs of today's secular mind.

As with previous NETS, *HeartQuest* is the major Division evangelistic resource for church use in 2007. Live from Arlington, Texas, *HeartQuest* is also the first NAD-sponsored NET evangelistic effort designed as a direct-to-home event. Homes can become a center for outreach to friends and neighbors.

Church & Home Registration: www.heartquest.info/host · www.acn.info · 800-ACN-1119
Equipment Sales and Support: 800-ACN-1119 · 877-393-HOPE

In defense of ritual

Loren Seibold



Loren Seibold, D.Min., is pastor of the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church, Worthington, Ohio, United States.

Ritual has become a dirty word, and an unwelcome idea, among some Christians. Nowadays, all the kudos seem to go to those worship events that are novel, creative, and unique. Particularly in that segment of Protestantism where we expect worship to be Spirit-inspired, we tend to pair the word *ritual* with *empty*. I've never heard reference to a full (or better, *fulfilling*) ritual, but I believe in them. For while empty ritual should certainly be eschewed, fulfilling rituals have a place in church life.

Connection

My church, like many Protestant churches, spends a lot of time with Scripture but not much time connecting with historical Christianity. A few years ago I read Henry Bettenson's *Documents of the Christian Church*¹ and became convinced that we might have erred in neglecting the noncanonical writings of early Christians. What I did might seem remarkable: I taught my congregation a version of the Apostles' Creed.² I explained to them that we don't know for sure if the apostles had anything to do with its composition, but it unquestionably goes back to some very early Christian gatherings and expresses what the apostles believed. "Just think," I said, "when we recite this together today, we're saying the very same words a church two thousand years ago, on the other side of the world, might have said as they met to worship."

An elderly woman in my church told me that when she grew up in Armenian Turkey, the

traditional Easter Sunday greeting was "Christ is risen!" to which the response was, "Christ is risen, indeed!" We adopted it as our own ritual, connecting us to a group of Christians we didn't know and had never met but with whom we share the joy of the Resurrection.

Dozens of wedding vows are out there, ranging from the traditional to the sappy. I've stuck to just one: a variation of *The Book of Common Prayer*³ service, a descendent of Thomas Cranmer's from the fifteenth century. I've evolved from "wilt thou" to "will you," but "to love and honor, in sickness and in health, for richer and poorer, 'til death do us part"—is still there. I look forward to saying those familiar words each time I marry a couple, and I hope those who are listening look forward to hearing them.

Memory

All the weddings I've seen are loaded with ritual. Few brides would forego a procession in a white formal dress. Even such spiritually doubtful practices as tossing the bouquet and garter, as well as innovations such as the unity candle, are included uncritically. Every reception incorporates a couple of toasts, even among people who wouldn't think of drinking alcohol. Like Christmas, the wedding ceremony includes a stew of traditions, some not even remotely Christian. Yet we do these things because they are part of our collective memory of what happens at weddings. Shouldn't we be absolutely certain then that the words the officiating minister says evoke collective memories of a wedding's *spiritual* import?

Several decades ago my generation went through a sort of recasting of our rituals. There were great advantages, we felt, in discarding the old and crafting new. The wedding on the beach comes to mind, with the bearded groom in a tie-dyed T-shirt and jeans, the barefoot bride in a peasant dress, carrying weeds picked at the shoreline—pledging to one another to "always let you do your thing."

If I sound critical, forgive me. I don't mind innovative weddings, but I insist that at least *my* words, as the officiating minister, remind participants and observers that they are experiencing a serious joining of two lives in the sight of God. New rituals run the risk of breaking faith with the collective memory—something that should be avoided unless a compelling cultural change necessitates it.

A line of a wedding prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer* says, "Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties

confirmed." That's one of the things I hope the marriage ritual will do: bring to the minds of watching couples the promises they made once upon a time. With some current forms of wedding liturgies, that connection is harder to make.

Our church doesn't baptize infants, but we do have an infant dedication service. I think of the service as lovely yet fairly new to my tradition. Because it is new, we have no long-used formula cognate to the "Will you take this woman . . ." "I will" of the wedding ceremony. So child dedications are often informal—a mishmash of whatever the pastor happened to pull together that day. I've tried to create my own ritual for the infant dedication. I borrowed a service from an old Presbyterian worship book that asked the questions I want parents to answer: "Do you trust Jesus Christ as *your* Lord and Savior? Do you intend for this child to be Jesus' disciple, to obey His Word and manifest His love? Will you teach your child to be a faithful member of the church, giving of herself in every way, and teach her to seek the fellowship of the church wherever she may be?"

Please note that I'm not merely hosting a warm event for happy new parents. I'm conveying theology and expectation. My questions tell parents that there is no magic in this blessing: Your child will learn her faith, at least partially, from yours. The ritual must be accompanied by your determination that your child obeys Jesus' Word and manifests His love. I've had families back out when they realized I'd be asking them to promise they would teach their child to seek the fellowship of the church for the rest of their lives! But if you can't make that promise, I can't dedicate your child, because I believe being part of a church is essential for a lively, living faith.

Weight

I've heard Christians say, "We don't believe in ritual in our church." They are probably thinking of high-church liturgy, and they may not, indeed, experience that in their church. But just try changing the order of the worship service or introducing a different kind of music, and you'll quickly discover that all

churches have rituals, even if they don't call them that.

Overstating the importance of rituals to human society is difficult. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* goes so far as to say, "Human beings are sometimes described or defined as a basically rational, economic, political, or playing species. They may, however, also be viewed as ritual beings."⁴ That is to say, our lives are structured by rituals, from awakening until bedtime, from birth to death.

Specifically, we shouldn't underestimate the importance of these *public* rituals, the kind we use from generation to generation to make and mark significant life passages. We employ these rituals because they add weight to our decisions and actions. They anchor our intentions so that we do not easily contradict them. Take, for example, the ritual of swearing in a witness in a court: It is certainly *possible* for the witness to lie after taking the oath, but something about the ritual makes one take one's words seriously—more than one would take words spoken in casual conversation.

Christian rituals, too, lend weight to important events. We pastors deal in life transitions: birth, baptism, marriage, sickness, death. In each of these, our rituals give spiritual weight and inertia to decisions, promises, and requests that might otherwise be transient.

I would not have anyone misunderstand that I am recommending "mere" ritual—that is, thoughtless reading of a prepared text with minimal personal engagement. My wedding homily addresses the marrying couple specifically—even though the vows they will repeat are centuries old. I personalize my address to the parents of the child I'm dedicating, even though the questions are the same as I asked a previous family. The prayer for the anointing of the sick need not be original or remarkable, but you had better be present at the bedside in a personal, loving way. Even our rituals must have integrity. **M**

- 1 Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- 2 Slight modification was necessary. To be consistent with Seventh-day Adventist theology, I removed the line about Jesus descending into hell (which is based on a questionable interpretation of a couple of passages in 1 Peter) and dropped the word *catholic* from the description of the church. The latter inclusion may be defensible (*catholic* in the lower case simply means "universal"—something most Christians can affirm), but keeping it there isn't worth the almost certain misunderstandings.
- 3 *The Book of Common Prayer* (Seabury Press, 1979).
- 4 "ritual." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9109488>.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Call 402-781-2381 today for your free tax organizer. StaddonCPA.com

***"If I get my taxes done on time,
it'll be a miracle."***

Staddon CPA, PC can prepare a clergy tax return for as little as \$195 for a federal and state return. Plus, you'll get sound advice on ways you can reduce your taxable income.

We specialize in clergy tax returns.

Staddon CPA, PC
It all adds up to more time for you, your family and your ministry.

StaddonCPA


1040

Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service

U.S. Individual Income Tax Return

For the year Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2004, or other year

Your first name and initial



A high and sacred calling: a look at the origins of Seventh-day Adventist ministerial training

Michael W. Campbell



Michael W. Campbell, a Ph.D. candidate in Adventist studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, is interim chair, archives and special collections, and associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate branch office at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States

Seventh-day Adventist ministerial education has had a clear development in Adventist history. The earliest stage lasted from the beginnings of Sabbatarian Adventism through the early twentieth century. Ministers were desperately needed, but the majority of ministers were converts from other denominations. By 1919 this had begun to change. This second period was defined by the ministry of A. G. Daniells, who articulated a clear plan to increase the proficiency and effectiveness of Adventist clergy. A third and final phase would occur when Daniells's dreams were posthumously realized with the beginning of the "Advanced Bible School," which was the nucleus for what would become the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

Early attempts at ministerial training

Ministerial training has had a long journey in the history of the Adventist Church. James White, one of the three cofounders of Sabbatarian Adventism, was an itinerant Christian Connection minister. The majority of early Adventist ministers, largely self-supporting and itinerant, had been ministers in other denominations, and they considered their ordination as still valid. The threat of imposters and some who departed from the faith led to the need for ministerial credentials to certify legitimate ministers. In addition, a small group of young people began to be mentored by more experienced clergy. These young ministerial apprentices would help conduct evangelistic meetings and Bible studies.

If the youthful minister was successful, this was considered a clear indication that God had truly called the person.

This plan of apprenticeship worked well up until the 1870s when the Adventist denomination recognized the increasing need for education. They responded by starting a small school in Battle Creek that developed into Battle Creek College. By the 1880s an Adventist youth who desired to become a minister studied the classical curriculum at Battle Creek College. The curriculum was supplemented by Bible institutes and on-the-job training with a more experienced minister. While this still continued to work, the expansive vision for Adventist education combined with inherent need for more ministers as the church grew and expanded would provide significant growth in the number of young people entering ministry. The dominant focus was to train workers for Christ who would fulfill the gospel commission.

A call for change

So how would the church achieve a quality system for training ministers? Perhaps the earliest attempt at achieving this was by A. G. Daniells, who gave a presentation on pastoral training to the Bible and history teachers present at the 1919 Bible Conference. At this conference, the first of three major twentieth-century Bible conferences in the Adventist Church, sixty-five teachers, administrators, and editors studied issues related to exegesis and prophetic interpretation.

Daniells estimated that nearly half of those present at the 1919 Bible Conference were involved in pastoral education. After finishing a grueling interrogation about the nature of inspiration and the authority of Ellen White (for which this particular Bible Conference became best known), Daniells, who had come to talk about pastoral training instead of issues related to Ellen White, gave one more attempt to share his burden for ministerial education. He stated to those present that he would pour out his heart to his fellow teachers then present. These ideals, expressed more than eight decades ago and almost two decades before the beginning of the Advanced Bible School (the forerunner of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary), shed insight on the importance our church placed upon developing formal ministerial training and Daniells's dream of what such training should entail. Together these would lead eventually into a full-fledged system of ministerial education within Adventism.

Pastoral training

"I think, brethren," spoke A. G. Daniells to the group of history and Bible teachers gathered at the 1919 Bible Conference, "that among all the vocations in the world, that of the minister is the highest and most sacred, and calls for the greatest care on the part of those who enter it."¹ With these words, Daniells set the bar high for the high calling and thus the importance for the denomination to invest in quality training for ministers.

Daniells, as a church administrator, was particularly perturbed at the quality of ministerial graduates whom he saw starting out. He was particularly concerned at how ministerial students, who had often studied intensely, were poorly prepared for what the grueling task of ministry often entailed. Those who taught ministers had a responsibility to not only theoretically train future pastors but prepare them for the actual life of ministry.

Even more important was that those who taught ministers should model what true ministry entails. Teachers should model core values, including honesty, sincerity, integrity, and good judgment. This was both a responsibility and an opportunity for the teacher to go beyond theoretical knowledge and to impress upon the student the importance of a godly life.

Prospective students should be studious and learn to work hard. It went without saying that the teachers should recommend good books. In order to balance all of this, "regularity in their habits of study, working, and living" (or as he later put it, the "value of time") was "essential. A great deal of time is lost and effort wasted by [the] lack of [such] a program."

The Bible should be "supreme" in ministerial education. It is a book that "contains great power" and students need to have this "revolutionizing and regenerating influence" impact their minds and hearts. The denomination in 1919, according to Daniells's observation, was not doing "all that they can do along this line." He speculated that perhaps this was because they already had a "stiff line of study." He

wondered if they were really getting the lessons that they were being taught at that time, and such students were in need of deeper study of God's Word.

Daniells encouraged the teachers that they had more influence than anyone else for improving "the class of preachers among us."² The church's concept of preaching needed to change, he urged. In addition to making the Bible the center of ministerial education, ministers needed to expound upon God's Word in their sermons. If one did that, it would transform the way Adventist ministers preached.

Daniells was supported by W. W. Prescott during the conference. The two of them would call for Adventist ministers to learn how to give expository sermons. In addition, Prescott urged for a more Christ-centered approach to Adventist theology. Putting Christ at the center of all doctrine would transform the way ministers preached. It would also reveal Christ as the converting Word.³ This, they both believed, was the real power behind Adventist preaching and was a real opportunity for Adventist preachers to share God's Word.

Plans were laid, about the time of Daniells's appeal, to start a graduate school for Adventist students. Very little is known about these early plans, but because of "certain contingencies," these plans were never realized.⁴

The Advanced Bible School

Although these plans would not be realized for more than two more decades, they did take shape in the form of the Advanced Bible School. By 1932 the General Conference Committee began to consider plans for advanced ministerial training. Such training was clearly needed, and the church wanted to offer a place so that students would not feel compelled to study in "outside seminaries or universities." This school would be led by six to ten Bible teachers "of outstanding promise and ability" who would guide students during a one-year graduate program.

The "graduate" curriculum included courses on the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, religion, and evangelism. In addition, minors were offered in

church history, secular history, Greek and Hebrew, and "spoken and written" English. During 1933 a committee set up by the General Conference began to evaluate locations. The first summer session began on the campus of Pacific Union College on June 6, 1934.

The expenses of transporting a minister or teacher and supporting them while at the Advanced Bible School were provided by the sending organization. A matriculation and library fee of \$5 was charged to each student, and the tuition was \$3 per semester hour of credit. The General Conference committee voted a sizable \$1,500 toward this first summer school. M. E. Kern was appointed the first dean, and when the school opened its doors, forty students showed up. After the session was over the students passed a resolution of appreciation to the General Conference. The positive outcome paved the way for three more successive sessions.⁵

In 1937 the seminary moved to Takoma Park, Washington, District of Columbia, where it became a part of what would be known as Potomac University, and later it became a part of Andrews University when the school moved yet a third time.⁶ By this time Adventist ministerial education had achieved respected status. The dream of Daniells for young ministers to receive quality training was finally realized. ❏

1 Report of Bible Conference (RBC), August 1, 1919, 1261.

2 RBC, August 1, 1919, 1258.

3 RBC, July 3, 1919, 128.

4 In 1936 M. E. Kern recalled that about twenty years earlier initial plans had been laid for establishing an Adventist graduate school. See M. E. Kern, "The Advanced Bible School," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 24, 1936, 18.

5 Shirley Annette Welch, "History of the Advanced Bible School, 1934-1937," term paper, Andrews University, 1977.

6 For a description of this third move from Takoma Park, Maryland, to Berrien Springs, Michigan, see Leona Glidden Running and Mary Jane Mitchell, "From All the World, Into All the World," *Focus* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 8-15.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

God's voice through our circumstances

Ron Edmondson



Ron Edmondson, M.A., is the head of Mustard Seed Ministry, Nashville, Tennessee, United States.

Every believer wants to hear from God. We want to know, Is this God? Is this what He's telling me to do? In ministry it is especially important that we are able to discern the will of God—for our own understanding as well as for those to whom we minister. One of my most frequent challenges includes helping someone comprehend what God may or may not be saying to them.

The Bible relates many incidents in which God spoke to people in definite ways at definite times—and they knew the voice of God. Sometimes when God speaks to us, we clearly recognize that He has spoken. Other times, however, we wonder if God spoke or if the messages we heard were just thoughts in our imagination.

When God spoke to people in Bible times, such as when He appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3), there was little room for doubt that it was God. However, God didn't always speak in such a spectacular fashion—such as when He, on one occasion, spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11, 12).

We often listen for the grandiose voice of God—and sometimes God speaks that way. More often, however, the voice of God comes through more subtly than that. Often God speaks through our quiet moments, through other people, and through life's circumstances. In a crowded world of noise and life's distractions, sometimes we have a hard time understanding what God says.

How do we take the circumstances of life, as mixed up and confusing as they can be, and ascertain what God could be saying to us? Indeed, those who follow God want to hear from Him. We want to know what is on God's mind and to know His agenda for our lives. Through studying the Scriptures I have put together a process of discerning how God speaks and doesn't speak through the circumstances of life.

Evaluate our circumstances in the light of God's Word

God will never contradict Himself; He will never speak to us through our circumstances in a way that contradicts His written Word. The Bible should be our first source of information when trying to discern the voice of God.

Remember that God uses other people to confirm His voice

God often sends people into our paths to confirm His will for our lives. We will encounter people who will distract us from hearing God's voice; but God will also use people to confirm His will. We need to distinguish between those who are seeking the heart of God and those who desire to please themselves. People who attempt to follow God with their lives can help us to hear from God.

Recognize that God operates from a plan

Acts 17:26, 27 assures us that God orchestrates His plans through the events, the decisions of life, and all the people and places we encounter so that mankind will call out to Him. Proverbs 16:9 says, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps" (NIV).

Examine our circumstances in the light of God's overall plan

When trying to hear from God through the circumstances of life, we should not try to make a decision on one event or set of circumstances because circumstances may or may not be God speaking to us. We should look at our life over a span of months or years. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) indicates that God has a definite plan to prosper us and give us hope. When we look at our lives over time, we will be able to see what God has been doing for us.

We should ask, Where has God been leading us? Has He been doing something even when we couldn't recognize it? In the light of all God has been doing for us, does what we think we hear God saying through our circumstances make

sense? We should view what happens in our lives in context with God's overall plan. God's ways are obviously better than ours. He will do things in ways we do not understand—God's way of carrying out His plan may make no sense to us at all. But God is consistent. He does not change. His overall plan for each of His created beings will work.

I have had times when circumstances indicated one thing and my mind or my experience indicated another. When the Lord led me into full-time ministry, it made no sense the way He was doing it. We were out of money, had no income after the sale of a business, and had two active teenagers. But when I looked back over the span of my life, it made perfect sense. God had, for many years, been shaping me for ministry.

When the circumstances of life consistently line up over time with God's overall plan, possibly God is trying to speak through those circumstances. Someone

The disciples were in a boat as a furious storm came suddenly upon them. Jesus was with them, but asleep (Mark 4:36–41). Human reasoning would have said, "Give up!" The circumstances surrounding the event looked hopeless; but that wasn't the truth of the circumstances. The truth was that Jesus had a plan outside that one-boat experience. Jesus woke up, spoke to the storm, and the storm calmed down.

Sometimes our circumstances may look gloomy, but we haven't heard the truth of our circumstances until we have heard from God.

Ask God to show us His perspective on the circumstances

God said to His exiled people, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13, NIV). If we desire to hear from God through our circumstances, we must intently listen for

We should feel free to ask, God, what did You mean by that?

Recently I was going through one of those challenging periods of life. I seemed to have so many negative things coming at me at the same time that I began to constantly feel sorry for myself. One day I was walking along, and the thought occurred to me that maybe God was punishing me for some unknown sin. With each step I took, the more I began to think I was hearing God say He didn't love me anymore. Even though the thought makes no sense in light of God's Word, that's what happens when we allow our circumstances to speak louder than truth.

I stopped midway in my walk and asked God, "Is this You talking to me? Are You trying to tell me You are unhappy with me?" In one of the rare occurrences of my life when I knew for certain God was speaking to me clearly, He said, "Does this sound like something I would say?" Suddenly it was as if God interrupted my thoughts and took my memory to Romans, chapter 8. I was reminded that nothing can separate me from God's love.

God's primary desire in speaking is for eternal purposes

We limit God to this finite world when we fail to remember He is an infinite God. When we try to discern God's voice through the circumstances of life, we should consider how what happens around us fits into God's eternal plan to save a lost world from destruction—and to mold His children into the image of His Son.

Hearing from God is critical for His children to know His will for our lives—whether we are the parishioners in the pews or the pastors in the pulpit. We must listen intently and carefully for His voice through the crowd of noises in the world in which we live. Thankfully God has not given up on us. He still speaks to His people today. Our mission is to learn how to hear His voice. ■

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

GOD OFTEN SENDS PEOPLE INTO OUR PATHS TO CONFIRM HIS WILL FOR OUR LIVES. WE WILL ENCOUNTER PEOPLE WHO WILL DISTRACT US FROM HEARING GOD'S VOICE; BUT GOD WILL ALSO USE PEOPLE TO CONFIRM HIS WILL.

may be experiencing the call of God and have no idea at the time that God is speaking. When the call becomes clear it may appear to be a new idea, but it is not new to God. He has been planning it throughout that person's entire life.

Don't allow circumstances to keep us from hearing or obeying God

Paul spoke of the opposition he faced as he was conducting his ministry (1 Cor. 16: 8, 9). The common sense thing to do when everyone opposes you would be to leave, but Paul knew the circumstances were not indicative of God's will for his life.

the voice of God. Hearing from God is not always easy. As followers of God, we can spend our entire lives trying to discern God's will and listen for His voice.

In marriage, communication can be hard between two people of varying temperaments. I still, sometimes, try to figure out what my wife, Cheryl, tries to say to me. When I quit trying to figure out my relationship with Cheryl, my relationship with Cheryl will be in trouble. The same can be said of my relationship with God.

When life becomes challenging—as it so often does—we cannot seem to understand what is happening. We shouldn't be afraid to ask for clarification.

A Friend by my side

José Vazquez



José Vazquez, M.Div., is pastor of the Anderson Seventh-day Adventist Church, Anderson, Indiana, United States, and community services director for the Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Carmel, Indiana, United States.

Jesus' death was a devastating blow to the disciples, for they had believed Him to be the Messiah. For three and a half years they *heard* His words, they *saw* His miracles, and they *experienced* His power. There was no question in their minds that He was the long-promised Redeemer, but now He's dead. All their hopes and dreams were torn to pieces as they heard Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, NKJV).

In this context, Luke 24:13 opens with the story of two disciples walking from Jerusalem to the little town of Emmaus, a village located approximately seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. Why did they get away from Jerusalem? Perhaps Jerusalem had too many reminders of their Master? Maybe they were afraid of their enemies? Whatever the reason, they were now on their way down the dusty, windy path to the obscure village of Emmaus. Interestingly enough, *Emmaus* means "hot baths," and perhaps this was a resort town where weary travelers could relax.

The barren hills along the countryside seemed to add to the sadness of these two disciples as they talked about the sad events of that weekend. In their deep sadness, they became unaware of their surroundings and were so absorbed in their conversation they didn't notice the Stranger beside them.

Jesus walks with us

The first lesson we can learn from this story is that Jesus walked with them, and the same is true

for us. Jesus walks with us in all of our lonely roads, in all our trials, in all our tears. Sometimes problems obscure our vision of God, and at times He seems absent and distant from our world. The fact is that He is here, regardless of how we feel. Jesus identifies fully with our human condition; He meets us where we are to bring us where He wants us to be.

Jesus talks with us

Jesus not only walked with the disciples but talked with them. He entered into their discussion by asking them a question: "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" (Luke 24:17, NKJV). Jesus also enters our world of problems, longing to communicate with us and always taking the initiative to communicate. His question to the disciples was designed to elicit a response, and they began to lay out their problems. They told Him about their hopes. They told Him about the experience of the women who earlier that day went to the tomb and heard the message of the angels. Jesus listened and waited for the right moment to say something. God not only wants to speak with us, but He wants us to speak with Him. The good news: Heaven is open for business.

Jesus wants us to believe

The disciples' problem was not a problem of the *head* but a problem of the *heart*. We call this faith. He addressed the disciples' disbelief with surgical precision. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26, NKJV). He led them back to the written Word—the Word that testifies about Him. Faith in the Word allowed them to move from *fear* to *faith*; faith in the Word allowed them to move from *cowardness* to *confidence*; faith in the Word allowed them to move from *sadness* to *joy*, from *depression* to *victory*. The lesson for us today remains the same—go to the Word.

Jesus wants to stay with us

The shadows of the evening began to cover the land as they reached Emmaus, and now Jesus was no longer a Stranger but a Friend. They felt irresistibly drawn to Him and invited Him to stay with them. At that moment, sitting across from Him, they recognized Him. He then vanished from their sight, but His image stayed etched in their minds. "Did not our heart," they said, "'burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32, NKJV). Jesus found joy as

He walked with them. Jesus found joy in talking with them. Jesus found joy in opening the Word of God to them, but He found the greatest joy in staying with them.

Jesus wants to move from being a *Stranger* to being a *Friend*. Who is Jesus for you? Stranger or Friend? What do you face today? A difficult problem in your church? A personal struggle? Remember, Jesus walks with you. He talks with you. He opens the Word of God to you. He wants to stay with you. You will discover that He is not a *Stranger* but a *Friend*. ❏

* M. G. Easton, M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Thomas Nelson, 1897). Public domain.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Letters • continued from page 16

the publication. This was an unfortunate misunderstanding. There was a sense of urgency to print the book in order to help our people. More care could have been taken in the editing. Both items have been corrected in the next edition now being printed and in the free online edition of the book.

The following points made in the review do need some clarification:

1. I do not say the Church needs to “grow” but “recover” its understanding of Ellen White. This is stated in the title.

2. I do not say the truth “was hidden” in the 1919 meetings but it was openly discussed by those who were close to her.

3. The review states, “Was the real truth about Ellen White covered up? Not in the way that Bradford presents it.” And then presents my position regarding cultural pressures.

4. I do not say Ellen White was merely a product of her culture. I do say she was ahead of her time in the things God revealed to her.

5. I present a view of the inspiration of Ellen White in harmony with the church’s statements in its “Affirmations and Denials.”

continued on page 27



If you pastor more than one church—we want to hear from you

Here at the *Ministry* magazine editorial offices, we are planning another issue featuring and recognizing the work of pastors who have more than one church. In order for this issue to be valuable to ministers around the world, we need your participation. You are invited to prepare an article for *Ministry* magazine. Here are some suggested topics you may consider:

- Training lay leaders to effectively work with you
- Designing sermons to meet the needs of different churches
- Addressing family life in a multichurch district with special emphasis on children
- Organizing the evangelistic outreach in a district
- Coordinating boards and committees in a district
- Working with the communities in the district
- Creating a spirit of cooperation among the churches
- Recognizing the needs of the pastor’s spouse and children for continuity as the pastor preaches in a different church each week.

If you pastor several churches, you will no doubt have other topics in mind.

Next steps:

- Email, write, or call and discuss with us the topic or topics you are suggesting.
- Once we have agreed on the specific topic, we will ask you to proceed with the writing.

We need to hear from you.

Nikolaus Satelmajer, editor
Willie E. Hucks II, assistant editor
Email—MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org
Telephone—301-680-6510
Address—12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

Ministerial Student Writing Contest

Ministry, International Journal for Pastors, announces its first Ministerial Student Writing Contest. All students enrolled in a full-time ministerial preparation program on the undergraduate or graduate level may participate.

Submission requirements

1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission and state this information on the first page.
 - (a) Biblical studies
 - (b) Historical studies
 - (c) Theological studies (including ethics)
 - (d) Ministry (preaching, leadership, counseling, etc.)
 - (e) Mission studies
2. All submissions must follow the Writer's Guidelines as to length, endnotes, style, and other features of the manuscript. Please carefully read the guidelines found at www.ministrymagazine.org.
3. Submit your manuscript in Microsoft Word to MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org. Please include the following information at the top of the manuscript: your name, address, email address, telephone number, category for which you are submitting (see above), religious affiliation, name of college/university/seminary you are attending, and title of your manuscript.

Prizes

GRAND PRIZE: \$750	FIRST PRIZE: \$500	SECOND PRIZE (five possible): \$400	THIRD PRIZE (five possible): \$300
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--	---

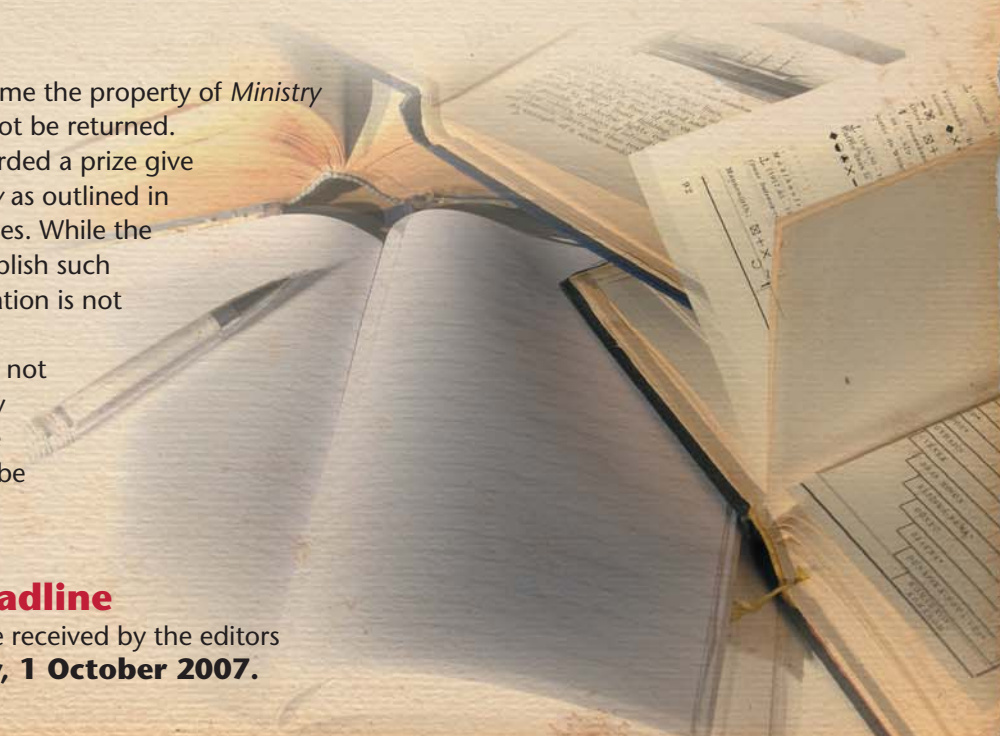
The evaluation panel will determine if all prizes will be awarded. The decisions of this panel are final.

Publication

1. All submissions become the property of *Ministry Magazine* and will not be returned.
2. Writers who are awarded a prize give the rights to *Ministry* as outlined in the Writer's Guidelines. While the editors intend to publish such manuscripts, publication is not guaranteed.
3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased by the editors at a price to be negotiated.

Submission deadline

All submissions must be received by the editors no later than **Monday, 1 October 2007**.



6. I have frequently quoted from the valuable research done by the White Estate in the 1980s and letters by Willie White.

7. Although I have received valuable input from well qualified scholars, I have never asked them to identify with this book because of the controversial nature of the material.

8. I have received positive feedback from pastors and administrators who have said this book has helped them and their people to recover confidence in Ellen White. Former pastors have said if this book had always been available they would never have left the ministry.

—Graeme Bradford, Honorary Research Fellow, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia

I read with interest Michael Campbell's book review of Graeme Bradford's *More Than a Prophet*. Campbell says Bradford's "view of inspiration . . . is fatally flawed." Unfortunately, Campbell does not explain why or how it is flawed. The accusation is a serious one, especially in view of the fact Bradford remains an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister. It implies Bradford is at odds with Adventist fundamental beliefs.

Adventist fundamental beliefs declare the Scriptures are *the* infallible revelation (emphasis mine). Ellen White's writings, in contrast, are said to be *an* authoritative source of truth. The definite and indefinite articles are vital. It is clear the Scriptures are the only benchmark for orthodox Adventists. The word *infallible* is not used of Ellen White's writings, with good reason.

Bradford's books stay within the boundaries of the fundamental beliefs. He does not cross the line and advocate either an infallible or an inerrant White. And he does not spurn her writings.

If, as it appears, Campbell's view of inspiration is radically different to Bradford's, then I must assume Campbell is unorthodox and a poor choice to critique Bradford's books.

—Milton Hook, Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia

Thank you for including Michael Campbell's review of Graeme Brad-

ford's *More Than a Prophet*. I would like to see more in *Ministry* about the 1919 Bible conference from Michael Campbell as it seems to be a favorite topic of those who want to revise our belief on Ellen White. In general I am sensing a trend, of which Graeme Bradford is only a part, on downsizing Ellen White from prophetic authority to pastoral authority—all in the name of progress.

I am not defending verbal inspiration or the use of poor hermeneutics. But let us not forget that the prophetic authority of Ellen White (not pastoral authority) is a fundamental belief of the Adventist church, and the gift of prophecy is to promote the unity of faith.

—Larre Kostenko, email

Prayer and the soul

I'm writing to comment on the use of the concept of *soul* in Ángel Rodríguez's article "Prayer: A Theological Reflection" [December 2006].

Soul is used three times in the article, leaving the impression that the soul is a part of the human like the mind, and even feels, needs, and is subject to be deceived.

We, as Seventh-day Adventists, don't believe in a soul as portrayed here. We believe that we *are* souls, but not that we *have* souls.

—Henry S. Gerber, Aldergrove, British Columbia, Canada

Ángel Rodríguez responds: *I appreciate the concern expressed. The use of the term soul in my article was not intended to express Greek anthropological dualism. The word soul has several different usages in the Bible. In Psalm 107:9 the expression "the thirst" is literally "the dried-out throat" [nephesh]. The throat is a breathing organ and is associated with life and desire. In fact, nephesh is used to refer to humans as persons with desires and emotions. Proverbs says, "The laborer's appetite [nephesh, desires, needs] works for him" (16:26, NIV; cf. Ps. 27:12). It also designates the totality of the individual as a living being, a person (Gen. 2:7). The meaning of person is so fundamental that nephesh can be used as a personal pronoun. The Hebrew way of saying "Let me live" is "Let my soul live" (1 Kings 20:32). The soul is not a dimension of human nature that can*

subsist apart from the body; it is the totality of the person as a fragment of self-conscious life in bodily form. In the article, I am using the term soul to refer to the whole person as a center of life, emotions, feelings, and longings reaching up to God in prayer. Such understanding summarizes well the biblical usage of the term soul.

Being the message

I want to thank *Ministry* for publishing Cindy Lou Bailey's "Being the Message" [February 2007]. It is an awesome reminder to us to live our life as the message. We must walk the talk with all that we are and all that we have—everything, every moment! I pray the Lord's hand of wisdom and revelation continues to be on her gift of writing.

—Diana Fletcher, email

Faith and science

As one who is not a scientist, it is not appropriate for me to comment on the personal concerns expressed by Ben Clausen ["Faith and Science," February 2007]. I would, however, like to say how graciously and without rancor those concerns were stated. I was also very impressed by how Clausen used such an unlikely subject as an opportunity to give testimony to the leading of Christ in his life. What a blessing it would be if all our differences were handled in the same manner.

—Ron Surridge, retired pastor, Grantham, England

Descending into administration

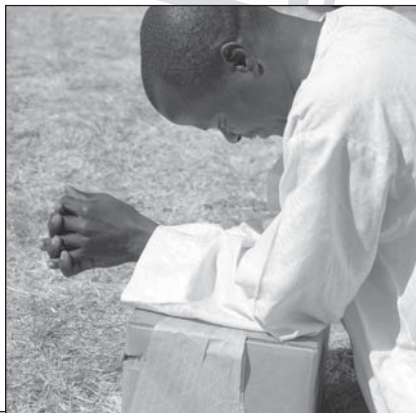
Ken Crawford's article "Descending into Administration" [February 2007] struck a chord in my heart. The writer openly and honestly shared some of the issues and struggles that come from transitioning from the pastoral setting to an administrative setting. Every administrator and director needs to find a way to keep mingling with people, planting seeds for Jesus, and keeping the fires of passion burning. Thank you, Ken Crawford, for sharing your heart and being honest and vulnerable. We need more articles like this.

—David Klinedinst, Christian Record Services, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States

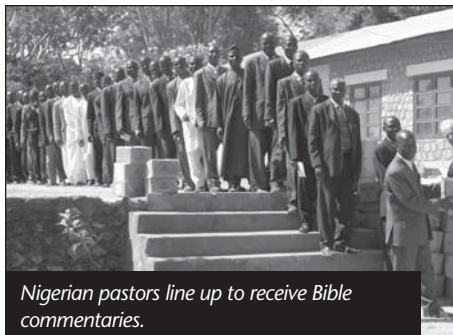
Dateline

Pastors and pioneer workers in Nigeria

Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria—The pastors and pioneer workers of the North East Nigeria Conference met for professional development meetings January 21–27, 2007. Various workshops were held, covering topics such as pastoral evangelism, discipleship, visitation, Biblical studies, preaching, and pastoral ethics. The meetings were arranged by



A grateful pastor gives thanks for his Bible commentaries.



Nigerian pastors line up to receive Bible commentaries.

Borge Schantz and conducted by **Patrick Boyle**, a retired pastor from England, and **Anthony Kent**, associate ministerial secretary of the General Conference.

“The commitment and dedication of these pastors and pioneer workers is extraordinary,” says Kent. “It really is a moving experience to observe their whole-hearted investment in ministry.”

During the week two pastors, who receive very modest incomes, made substantial donations of approximately 15 percent of their monthly income to the General Conference PREACH project. This project, which depends on the generosity of donors, provides *Ministry* magazine to clergy of various faiths.

The week culminated with each of the 70 pastors and pioneer workers receiving a set of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, donated by individuals and organizations. While it was very rewarding to see 70 pastors receive a much needed set of commentaries, there are many more pastors who have a library that consists of only a Bible and one or two other books.

If you would like to **donate a set** of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, please ship it to Pacific Press, Attn: Dale Galusha, president; 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID, United States 83687-3193. If you do not have a set to donate, you

may **send US\$125** and a new set will be provided to a pastor. Please send contributions to General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Attn: James A. Cress, Ministerial Association secretary; 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD, USA 20904-6600. If you have questions please email CressJ@gc.adventist.org.

Adventist Urban Congress

Huntsville, Alabama, United States—Adventist Community Services (ACS) invites you to join in the inauguration of the first **Adventist Urban Congress**, July 22–27, 2007, at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. The purpose of the congress is to increase the impact of Adventist metropolitan ministries as a leading force for strengthening communities and raise the standard for quality Adventist urban ministries. Pastors and church administrators will have an opportunity to acquire unconventional tools and skills for leading congregations in community development.

Speakers will be a variety of individuals, including Barry Black, Charles Brooks, and Mark Finley, who will challenge the participants to action, spiritual renewal, and dedication.

The conference is being cosponsored by Adventist Community Services, Bradford-Cleveland-Brooks Institute for Continuing Education in Ministry (BCBI), The Center for Metropolitan Ministry at Columbia Union College (CMM), North American Division Evangelism Institute, Oakwood College, Philanthropic Service for Institutions, and the Ministerial Associations of the General Conference and the North American Division.

You may register for the event at <http://www.plusline.org/eventdetail.php?id=188> or visit <http://www.communityservices.org> for more information.

Christian Leadership Center

Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States—The **Christian Leadership Center** of Andrews University, which provides leadership development programs, has announced the launch of *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*. The journal is a semiannual publication available by subscription, designed to encourage an ongoing conversation between scholars and practitioners in applied Christian leadership theory.

The journal intends to recognize learning and growing as central to the leadership process in any situation, to address the specific context of how leadership is practiced in Christian interpretation, and to examine what leadership means in all its simplicity and complexity.

The Christian Leadership Center is an organization of Andrews University, whose vision is to create a network of Christian leaders empowered by the biblical model of servant leadership demonstrated by Jesus. The center offers a professional leadership development



program delivered to cohorts within a particular organization, leadership coaching, and other leadership development services. You can contact the center at clc@andrews.edu regarding a journal subscription or other services.

Kids on the agenda

Halvorsbole, Norway—Halvorsbole was the setting for an inspirational week for pastors and their families attending a recent **Norwegian Pastor's Council and the Children's and Youth Council**. The week's focus was on Kids in Discipleship (KID).



One hundred leaders for children, Pathfinders, and youth took part in the youth council.

Kids in Discipleship is a ministry that focuses on the family but is designed for children. Parents are led to become disciples themselves, who then strive to disciple their own children.

"This is just what we need," was the common response pastors present at the KID presentation gave to **Anne-May Wollan**, Children's Ministries director for the Trans-European Division, headquartered in St. Albans, Herts, England.

A special focus for the four days of meetings was discipling pastors' kids (PKs), according to **Victor Marley**, youth director for the Norwegian Union Conference. "Too many pastors' children experience isolation from both friends and parents because of frequent moves and the unsocial and long hours often worked by their parents. There can develop a feeling of resentment towards the church and a feeling that they are playing second fiddle to God's work." ■

BOOK REVIEW



Learn to Preach Before Next Weekend by James Richard Wibberding, Telford, PA: Big Fish Publishing, Inc., 2006.

James Wibberding has produced a gem for the aspiring preacher. Whether the reader is just preaching occasionally or devoted to a lifetime of service in the homiletical tradition, this step-by-step manual is a must read. Despite his lack of stature in the scholarly community, Wibberding has succeeded in doing what many of the scholastic giants have failed in doing: making the task of preaching desirable for investigation and proclamation to the average nontheologically inclined worshiper. I find this book to be a practical guide for the beginner and refreshingly simple for the honed homiletician.

Wibberding has addressed preaching simply without being trite. In this work, preaching has retained its seriousness and depth without being unapproachable to a beginner. The author has laid out a 1-2-3 approach to preaching that takes the preacher from the *idea* of preaching a sermon to actually preaching it.

Having read many works on preaching, I find Wibberding's writing style quite refreshing. Using a tri-fold approach, he develops three primary concepts consistently throughout this 97-page manual. Using actual passages to illustrate his concepts, he shows the reader how to apply the techniques, and how to use phases to introduce shifts in the sermonic process to allow the preacher to track the development of the sermon.

Interestingly, Wibberding has managed to sufficiently address the art of

preaching without being tedious. His use of common everyday language makes for an easy read and allows the reader to comprehend the principles of the book in a single sitting. The titles of the chapters are arranged in a step-by-step format, instructing the reader on what to do each step in the process. The language makes the book so easy that almost anyone can follow it.

What struck me as most amazing is the way in which the author was able to communicate the broader themes in preaching—the core—while also taking the time to address some of the more minor nuances. He carefully reminds the preacher that preaching is a biblically informed and spiritually inspired enterprise. However, there can be no substitute for careful study and methodical preparation. While many books on preaching focus on one of two elements of preaching, the form or the substance, Wibberding highlights both. He even devotes time to some of the more oratory conventions, such as the importance of transitions, the adding of style, and the use of colorful language. At the end of the book, he provides three appendices that are designed to aid the one preparing the sermon to analyze the message thoroughly.

Having read and digested this book, I am persuaded that a place should be reserved for this little treasure in the library of any preacher—whether aspiring or seasoned. At the very least, I recommend it for the layman who feels the call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a powerful and relevant way. In instances where formal training is unavailable or delayed, *Learn to Preach Before Next Weekend* becomes more than an adequate stand-in.

—Reviewed by Gregory Nelson, associate pastor for youth, Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, D.C., United States. ■

Fasting

JAMES A. CRESS



Here we go again," I thought as Pastor Reuben Roundtree Jr. announced that his congregation, for whom I was conducting a short evangelistic series, would experience a week of fasting.

I had not been mistaken for a starving war orphan since I was eight years old. Then, I was so skinny that my mom had to "take up my trousers until the pockets met in the back." Of course, I *needed* to fast, but I dreaded enduring (attempting and failing) days without eating during a heavy schedule of preaching, counseling, visiting, and other appointments.

Imagine my delight when Pastor Roundtree explained that merely to cease eating was far too easy and called instead for various spiritually dynamic fasts in areas where we needed to experience practical changes—food (perhaps), but also shopping, television, Internet surfing, mindless reading, credit cards, workaholicism, spectator sports, gossip, and argumentative combat.

Imagine my dismay when just as I responded, "Amen! All right!" the pastor added one other fast—"news media overload." Now that was far too convicting for a news junkie who subscribes to two newspapers plus four major news-weeklies and constantly listens for fresh reports on Cable News Network (CNN). I even have a *breaking news alert* feature to interrupt my email.

As the pastor defined fasting in real-life practicalities, to have ceased eating would have been far easier than the discipline he advocated. Since then I have contemplated fasting as a spiritual discipline wider than skipping a few meals from time to time.

I have been especially blessed by a new book, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites*, by Lynne Babb,* which I found time to read only because of a ten-hour flight without any fresh-breaking news. As I write, I'm attempting

an entire week's fast from television and news reports assisted by time zone differences from NBC, ABC, or Katie Couric. Here's what I'm discovering.

Satiated life is still "right there."

In less than a day, I gravitated to a televised news feature like an addict seeking a fresh fix and found myself eagerly catching up on politics from back home, the latest tragic war report, and the imminent collapse of some business. I even found myself—and I can piously report that I follow no sports—eagerly listening to golf and cricket scores.

Fasting must not derive from an effort to earn meritorious favor.

Babb says, "When we fast, we're not trying to impress God. This is not a performance with the goal of manipulating God. God is not a genie in a lamp that we can rub and ask for things. Fasting helps us get in a place where we can hear God" (p. 127).

What am I making room for?

At its core, fasting is not a discipline of withholding. It is a discipline of making space for God. Fasting is far more complex and far more significant than merely abstaining from food on a recurring basis. For example, consider spiritual joy. Jesus says, "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God" (Matt. 5:6, *The Message*).

Scripture does not command fasting. Nowhere does the Bible say, "You must fast." Jesus assumes that His followers will sometimes fast when He gives instructions about how to—or how not to—fast.

Fasting ought to be secret.

The Bible talks about groups—even nations—fasting. But Jesus says, "When you fast, do it in secret and do not appear to be sad and suffering." While not condemning announcement of a fast, Jesus reminds us not to flaunt our fasting in order to impress people.

Not everyone should fast. While stressing moderation, Babb warns that some should not attempt food fasts—pregnant or nursing women, anyone with present or past eating disorders, diabetics or people with kidney disease, those who must take medication with food, the frail elderly, or children (who may choose to avoid sugar or a favorite toy for a time).

Balance fasting and feasting.

Babb points out that Sabbath and fasting have similarities, affirming that rhythms matter, providing structure for setting aside one thing to embrace another. They address different needs and compulsions. "The sabbath [*sic*] encourages us to face our addiction to being productive, our need to justify ourselves by what we do" . . . and "teaches grace at a deep and heartfelt place inside us. Because we stop many of our activities on the sabbath [*sic*], we learn that God loves us apart from what we do" (p. 138).

Why try fasting? Babb quotes John S. Mogabgab: "'Can we hunger for Christ, the Bread of Life, when we are full of dishes enticingly served up on the steam table of a prosperous consumer culture? From what do we need to fast today so we may develop strength of soul tomorrow?'" (p. 108). ■

* Lynne M. Babb, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Cycle of Life

“Estate planning gives us
a truly awesome power –
to make a difference for
generations to come.”

*Pastor Lynn and Lona Schlisner
Madison, Tennessee*



We wrote our first wills in the early 1970s, because we wanted to be sure that, if anything happened to us, our son would be raised as an Adventist – even though not all of our family belongs to our church. Over the years, as we’ve pastored in South Dakota, Oklahoma, Virginia and Tennessee, Trust Services has helped us learn how to plan for our growing family, conform to state laws, and remember the conference in which we are employed.

And working with Trust Services has promoted a spirit of confidence that our wishes ultimately will be carried out. We believe stewardship extends beyond our lifetime. Estate planning allows us to continue God’s work, so that we are counted in the last analysis as faithful. So it’s a very secure feeling for us to have wills. We are thankful to Trust Services for providing a chart to help us navigate the road ahead.

Call us toll free: 1-877-WILLPLAN





Happy 65th Birthday to the Voice of Prophecy Bible School

**Providing contemporary resources for
your local church for over 6 decades!**

Always there for Bible studies: personal,
correspondence, and video/DVD.

Now, check out these added features:

Small Groups

- “How to” books
- Bible study guides

Internet

- Online Bible study
(*doctrinal, prophecy, junior-age kids,
Jewish, Native American*)
- Bible Guides in 43 languages
- Church members are the online instructors (interactive)

www.discoveronline.org

www.kidzvop.com

www.vop.com

info.bibleschools.com (username: vop; password: vop)

For more information contact:

The Voice of Prophecy

P.O. Box 2525 • Newbury Park, CA 91319 • (805) 955-7659 • bibleschool@vop.com

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS
MINISTRY
1350 N. KINGS ROAD
NAMPA, ID 83687-3193

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nampa, ID
Permit No. 147