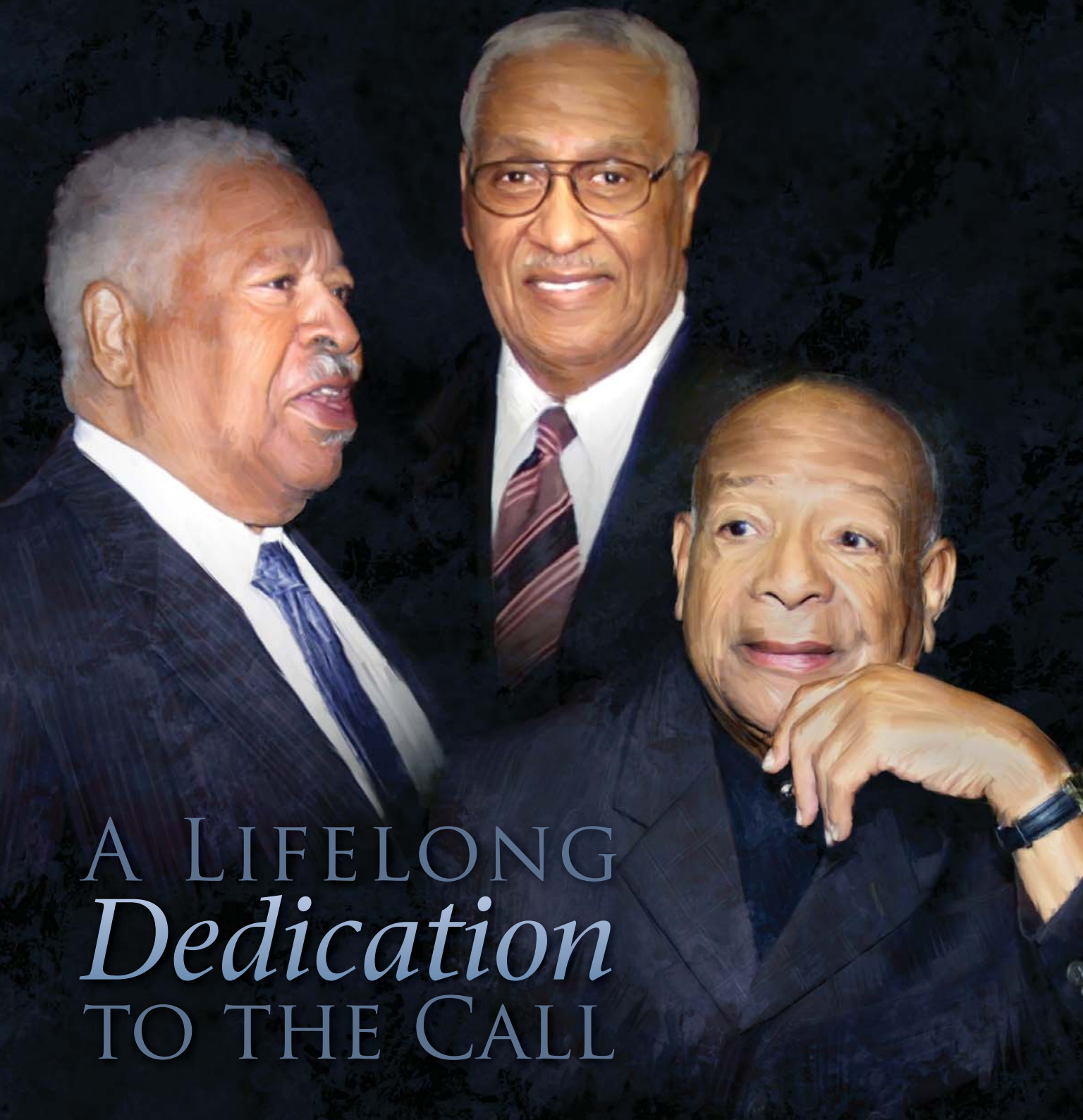


MINISTRY[®]

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS
MAY 2008



A LIFELONG
Dedication
TO THE CALL

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OUR READERS RESPOND...

The Nebuchadnezzar syndrome

I appreciated the sermon by Laurence Turner on the Nebuchadnezzar Syndrome (March 2008), and I certainly agree that humility would be a virtue most of us pastors could use a lot more of! But I was left wondering what he means by humility. My impression was that we are humble when we simply accept the authority of Scripture. Does that mean we do so without questioning, that we simply pass on truth as it was passed on to us?

I have come to appreciate short, succinct definitions of the mysterious language we use in the church, and I would like to submit a definition of humility that might be helpful. I wish I could remember where I came upon the definition, but I rarely credit myself with anything original. "Humility is the state of being teachable." Applied to Jesus as described in Philippians 2, it would hold up. Even applied to God as the "humble God" Dr. Turner describes, it would hold up as we remember Moses "teaching" God when God was about to destroy the Hebrews in the wilderness.

If pastors were more "teachable," we would pay more attention to the Scripture and listen more attentively to the leadership of God rather than to trust our own judgment and ability. When we are no longer "teachable," we fall victim to pride—the state of being unteachable—and the Bible has little good to say about that!

—Jay Hodges, pastor, First United Methodist Church, Milledgeville, Georgia, United States

I enjoyed the article by Laurence Turner, "The Nebuchadnezzar Syndrome." It

held my attention to the end, a well-crafted sermon that spoke to my own unrealized Nebuchadnezzar syndrome when I contemplate my 14 years of ministry prior to retirement. It is so easy to not see the trees for the forest of one's own lack of humility. Thanks for the article.

—Harold L. Turner, retired Methodist pastor, email

The best pastor I know

Loren Seibold's article, "The Best Pastor I Know" (January 2008) is an important paradigm if we are to stay relevant in our world. I have found that there is no better use of my time than going door-to-door and saying, "Hello, my name is Jonathan, and I'm a pastor of the nearby church, and I'm just introducing myself to the community."

I do this with a pamphlet that tells them a few things about our church and lets them know the different ways we can help them. The pamphlet also contains a promise to serve with no strings attached, which I emphasize. I write down their names and tell them to say "hello" if they ever see me in town.

Get a few of your members involved in that way, and you will have a formula for a vibrant and growing church.

—Jonathan Martin, Bible instructor, Weyburn, Saskatchewan, Canada

Thank you for the article, "The Best Pastor I Know," by Loren Seibold. All pastors should be reminded that they are called to serve the community, not just their local congregation. When I was in parish ministry I tried to be involved in as many community activities as my

schedule allowed. I was often asked to provide pastoral counsel and preside over weddings and funerals of people who didn't attend my church; often they didn't attend church at all.

Sometimes people ask me if I'll ever return to pastoral ministry. I tell them, "Only if I can pastor the community, not just the church."

—Stephen Chavez, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

So many good articles

The excellent article by Marguerite Shuster, "Love God, Love Your People" (March 2008), is probably the best I've read on the subject of pastoral preparedness and attitude. Paired with the article in the same issue, "The Nebuchadnezzar Syndrome," (March 2008), by Laurence Turner regarding humility, they went a long way in helping to inform my overall understanding of a pastoral calling.

—Rita Bair, intern, Zion Lutheran Church, Lima, Ohio, United States

Your "Pastor's Pastor" in March 2008 ("Teaching That Transforms") has been really challenging and worthy of note if we care. Preaching is basic to our faith; but what kind of preaching? Exposition can be just a show of scholarship and learning. People need a message that touches their lives and transforms them. A message that does not convict and ground a person in the faith is not worth preaching.

—John L. Wani, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kampala, Uganda, Africa

Continued on page 13

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If you're receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all clergy of other denominations. To receive your complimentary subscription, please write to us at our Editorial Office, visit us at www.ministrymagazine.org, or email us at ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org.

Titles do not make leaders

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



My colleague and friend experienced disappointment when he was not asked to take on a particular leadership role. All of the committee was very much in favor of having him serve in this role, except for one individual who spoke against him. As a result, another person was given the leadership role while my friend tried to figure out what happened. My friend had allowed himself to get caught up in the idea that important titles indicate our effectiveness in ministry. I reminded him of the influential ministry he has had, and how God was using him in the present. I had no doubt that God would use him in the future. My friend not only survived this disappointment, but went on to provide valuable ministry to God's church.

Abundance of titles

We live in a world where traditional titles are simply no longer sufficient to describe what we do. To be a professor of a particular area is not sufficient; one must have the title of a *distinguished* professor. Some years ago we started the pattern of calling pastors of large churches not simply pastors but *senior* pastors, with the explanation that since they had a pastoral staff they should be distinguished from the other pastors. But now I'm even seeing individuals who are the sole pastors in a congregation designated as senior pastors. Title inflation, though, is not limited to the world of the pastor. Conferences, presbyteries, and conventions speak of leaders as chief executive officers, with that title borrowed from the corporate world.

Before my time in the ministry, I worked in the business world for a large corporation. The head of the corporation was then known as the president, but heads of corporations now have the title of *chief executive officer*; and some in the

church feel that this title should be used to describe church leaders. Strange that we feel a need to have such titles, for I always thought that Jesus Christ was the Chief Executive Officer of the church.

At the same time, books on church leadership advance the idea that church leaders are *servant* leaders, arguing that this concept describes most adequately the biblical model of leadership. I'm beginning to wonder if the title *servant leader* will be important-sounding enough to be used by individuals or whether we will have to advance it to *senior servant* or perhaps *chief executive servant*.

Ministry before titles

The three individuals featured in our lead article are ministers of the gospel. My colleague, Willie E. Hucks II, and I did not choose them because of the titles they have had in their careers or because of the impact they have made on the world. In spite of obstacles set before them, these individuals have managed, under the power of God, to surmount the obstacles and bless the church and the world with their ministry. Each one stands out, not because of the titles bestowed upon them, but because of their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and the power and effectiveness with which they presented the gospel to the world.

Some years ago one of the three individuals featured was scheduled to

speak at a large gathering of ministers. One of the ministers present, who had never heard that speaker, was listening to the sermon. After some 10 to 15 minutes, he turned to me and said, "That's a mighty fine preacher." He did not say, "That man has a mighty important title." His *title* did not make his preaching powerful, rather, it was his *commitment* to the Word, to the Lord of the Word, and the presentation of the Word.

Our leadership

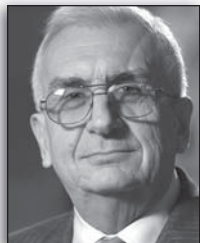
Those of us who have been called to minister in God's church are leaders. Whatever title has been attached to our role will not make us good, bad, or ineffective leaders. Our contributions are not measured by the title, but by what we do with the talents that God has given us. When others look back at our ministry, they will not remember the titles we've had, but they will remember what we have accomplished. Think back on biblical or historical figures that made a positive impact for God's church. Paul was not known as the senior apostle; rather, he referred to himself as a chief of sinners (see 1 Tim. 1:15), yet this chief of sinners has blessed the world with his commitment to Jesus Christ and his outstanding presentation of the gospel. Even prison could not prevent him from proclaiming the gospel that had changed his life.

And so whatever title you have—however humble or important it sounds—your ultimate duty is to serve Him in the ministry that He has given you. At the end of the day the Lord will not ask any one of us "What is your title?" Rather, He will ask, "What have you done?" ■

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.

A lifelong dedication to the call

Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie E. Hucks II



Nikolaus Satelmajer, DMin, is editor of Ministry.



Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, is associate editor of Ministry.

Editors' Note: Earl E. Cleveland, Charles E. Bradford, and Charles D. Brooks have collectively given 185 years of ministry to the church. Their ministries—pastoral, evangelistic, and administrative—have carried them to every continent of the earth, and as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in and through them, they have brought countless thousands into the church.

Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie E. Hucks II interviewed these three outstanding ministers several months after the opening of the Bradford-Cleveland-Brooks Leadership Center, located on the campus of Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, United States. These well-known Seventh-day Adventist ministers share thoughts that benefit ministers of all faiths.

Willie E. Hucks II (WH): *Thank you so much for taking time to speak with us today. We realize that “retirement” in no way describes the lives you live today. I want to start by asking you this question: how has ministry in the Adventist Church changed over the years since you started your own ministerial careers?*

Charles E. Bradford (CEB): *A church of seventy-five or eighty members was a good-sized church in those days. My father was a pastor who had three or four churches all the time. And I would tag along with him. The church was really kept alive by strong elders. Most of the elders in my day could give you a sermon any day. At the drop of a hat they could preach on most biblical*

topics. Ministry has changed, and preaching has changed because there is no longer that emphasis—some would say overemphasis—on doctrinal and prophetic preaching. We discovered that we had problems and psychological challenges, so we came to the place now where we have to do some problem-solving preaching and get away from this rehearsal of doctrinal prophetic preaching. I see that as a change and ministry, of course, was simpler. So somewhere along the way we discovered we have problems. Therefore, we have felt needs to meet.

Charles D. Brooks (CDB): *I’m almost loath to answer that question. When I became an Adventist, we had men preaching that were termed “old school.” I joined a church of about sixty-five adult members, along with my mother and several sisters. I was only ten years old, but somehow I thought about these things even then, and the thing that I noticed was that even though this wonderful preacher was from the old school, he could only be with us about once every month because he had a huge district. Also, the members of the church were quite ordinary, humble, dear people; we didn’t have doctors in our midst. We didn’t have masters of anything in our midst. We were just ordinary people, but you could stop one of them almost anywhere and grab any tenet of our faith and say, “Why do you believe that?” They not only would tell you instantly, but would quote the Scriptures or open the Bible and read them to you. And they could cover the gamut from all the prophecies through to the second coming of Christ. By the time I got to college and sat under great professors like C. E. Moseley, E. E. Rogers, C. T. Richards, and O. B. Edwards, this fundamental Adventism was our diet; and I don’t know why we get the idea that these standards and things should produce gloom, sadness, sorrow, and a morose attitude. No, these were joyful truths, and they were taught in that way, and I knew from them before I started to preach that the business of winning souls is the work of the Holy Spirit and these truths are challenging. You don’t hear them just anywhere, you generally hear a great deal about grace and love and Jesus and thank God for that. I believe in that, but you also found out how you were supposed to live. The ministers in those days defined doctrines and righteousness, and we were taught to do that, subject by subject by subject by subject.*

Nikolaus Satelmajer (NS): *What is it that drives your preaching? What gives you that strong sense of urgency to preach the Word?*

CDB: Let me start this way, I've been privileged to lecture the young preachers. And I made a statement that I hope has been helpful to them: I don't preach anything I don't believe. I will not preach a denominational line just to be doing it. I don't believe this idea that many of our young people have today that you have to make people feel good. I don't want them to feel good. When conviction came to me, I didn't feel good. I loved the movies, and when I learned I wasn't supposed to go, I didn't feel good, but I felt better about pleasing the Lord. Now, to deny the teaching because it's a hard truth is to fail in my responsibility to God. To do it in an overbearing way would be to fail my responsibility to God, but let's do it with love.

Earl E. Cleveland (EEC): Evangelism. For me, it was six nights a week. These little meetings that we witness now—I

WHEN YOU REFLECT ON MINISTERIAL ROCKS FROM WHICH YOU WERE HEWN, YOU CAN DOUBTLESS RECALL MORE THAN A HANDFUL. FOR ME, E. E. CLEVELAND HAS BEEN SUCH A BOULDER—FROM WHOSE STRENGTH AND INSPIRATION I DRAW CONTINUOUSLY AS STUDENT, CO-WORKER, BROTHER, AND FRIEND.

—Mervyn A. Warren

wonder how they get winded so fast. I preached twenty-one weeks in Mobile, Alabama, but I wasn't feeling well. They took me to the hospital, and the doctor looked at me and said, "You fool, if you do that again I'm going to let you die!" But then I ran a meeting in Los Angeles, California, still recovering from the previous meeting. The preachers with whom I worked were putting the tent up and calling the doctor every day, "Do you

think he's going to make it?" I got up, loaded my car, incision still weeping and paining, drove the three thousand miles to California; and on opening night stood with my toes from my left foot propped up over the heel of my right foot, and nobody could see it but me. And I preached the gospel for nine weeks and on baptism day, I couldn't go into the water—or so I thought. But when I started pronouncing those things and about nine ministers were baptizing together in that pool, I started itching. I said, "I baptize you in the

name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and I'm scratching. It was healing while I was pronouncing. I couldn't go in the water, but I put the preachers in the water, and the thing sealed up. But that was the spirit of the old days.

NS: What are some of the challenges that you believe the Adventist Church faces now? How, in your opinion, are these challenges best addressed?

Earl E. Cleveland publications

Mine Eyes Have Seen (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1968).

Come Unto Me (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969).

The Middle Wall (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969).

Free at Last (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970).

Ask the Prophets (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971).

Sparks From the Anvil (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971).

No Stranger Now (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972).

Without a Song (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1972).

Living Soul (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973).

The Gates Shall Not (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981).

The Exodus (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986).

Milk and Honey (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986).

One More River (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987).

Let the Church Roll On (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1997).

It Took a Miracle (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005).

EEC: Concerning mega-churches, it isn't that people aren't religious or don't want to go to church. Sermons are packing them into stadiums as thick as if they're at the football game now. I sit and think about that in terms of our own evangelistic experiences and what of the future of Adventism and the possibilities of us still packing them in by the thousands.

And people can look and see it on television. Now, let me tell you what has occurred to me, the people who are preaching and ministering in those big auditoriums, what are they doing? I find some of them are specializing in faith healing, and a sick man, yes, he'll turn a television on. I see them casting out "devils," and I see them making all kinds of promises. I study those brothers, and they are jamming them in. So, the question to me is, what can we do to pack them in? Now, one answer is, you can't go that route and be a Seventh-day Adventist preacher. You can't promise wealth, prosperity, so, we've still got to study how to keep people coming without that. There are some preachers that just don't want to put forth the effort, don't want to bring the ingenuity, to bring the brain to cope with what will bring a man away from the television set Sunday night. I never had that problem because preaching was my passion. It still is. Now, there were other men doing things just as important to keep the church moving and I never had any criticism of anybody else but me, and that's one thing I've always done. I've been very critical of myself so that the next time I can do a better job. But people will still pack your church without resorting to charlatanism and promising them a Rolls Royce if you sprinkle this water on your right leg. The everlasting gospel is powerful enough

CHARLES BRADFORD IS A GREAT PREACHER, PASTOR, AND ADMINISTRATOR—ONE WHO HAS A SPECIAL WAY OF MIXING THESE GIFTS IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE OTHERS. HE HAS HAD A GREAT IMPACT ON MY LIFE.

—Neal C. Wilson

goods, but Wesley said he noticed that they practiced temperance, thrift, and hard work and began to rise on the socioeconomic ladder. Adventists have gone through that. You stand before a congregation, people with all kinds of degrees, all kinds of employment, position, status, and in the Adventist Church today, the great problem is, where are we

right now to jam a church on any night of the week.

CEB: I don't know how to answer that. Are the challenges that different today? Yes, I'm sure they are. The challenges today are the challenges of mammon. We don't have to worry about parking spaces. I was a kid in the Ebenezer church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where there was no parking whatsoever. But there was no problem any Sabbath because we only had four or five cars and the preacher's car was one of them. Now our people are progressing. We're almost like John Wesley's folks. They were poor, good people, didn't have much of this world's

going to park all these cars? Saying that with tongue in cheek, but it's real. So, people are tied up with these things. The greatest challenge to us today is in Jesus' Parousia parables where He said this is going to happen. That all of them were just sleepy people, overfed people, people who had more of this life's goods to be concerned about, to take care of. I don't know if it should change our style, but maybe our approach.



Charles E. Bradford
Photo: Bill Cleveland



Earl E. Cleveland
Photo: Bill Cleveland

WH: Pastor Brooks, you have spent many years in media ministry. How has media ministry changed? And what direction do you see that it needs to go?

CDB: I used to sit in church on Sabbath at college and listen to the preachers. And I would sit, as it were, on the edge of my seat, and I would say to myself, *This should not be just for today—it ought to*

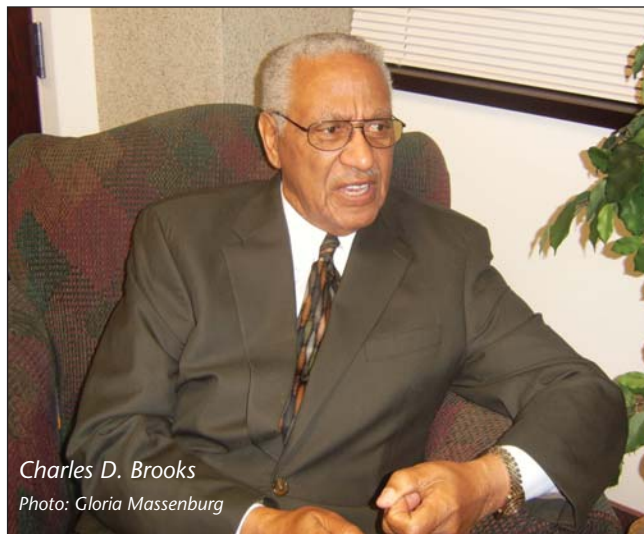
be preserved. Not just written out, but it ought to be pictures, and you catch the expressions and earnestness and all of that. In my mind, I would imagine (I didn't know about television ministry then), a great big movie camera, a sophisticated one, where the man was behind the lens and others who were assisting with this, that, and the other, was recording these services. Then we came down to the year where Walter Arties, the founder of Breath of Life, called me. Now, I knew Walt's dad and I'd seen him as a boy in Knoxville, but we didn't know each other

as such. He called me and introduced himself on the phone and said, "Pastor, this is Walter Arties." Well, I knew about him, and I knew that he was working in a television station. He began to be invited by all kinds of people to join them because of his immense talent, but Walter held a dream, and thank God for praying parents. His dream was that our church would develop a ministry that could speak to minorities across this nation. It had finally gotten approval and I say it that way for a reason: I didn't even know about it, but he called me long-distance to tell me that the church leaders were willing to sort of try it. Nobody was enthusiastic about it. And he said, "Pastor Brooks, we want you to be the speaker." I think it was 1974. I said, "I'll work with you, let's do it." When we went to the studios in California, the old media center was very wonderfully built; it was a paradise, and they fit us in. Television is a lot more efficient and proficient today. I appreciate the Hope Channel, I have access to it in my house. It's not quite the way it was in those days. Then we also felt we needed to leave the media

I COUNT CHARLES BRADFORD AS THE ONLY MINISTERIAL FRIENDSHIP WHICH I HAVE THAT GOES BACK MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS. I KNOW OF NO ONE ELSE IN ALL OF THESE YEARS WHO POSSESSES THE SPIRITUAL GENIUS TO REMAIN TRUE TO THE FAITH OF ONE'S FATHERS WHILE REACHING OUT TO OTHERS IN THE GREAT FAMILY OF GOD—CERTAINLY NOT AS EFFECTIVELY AS CHARLES BRADFORD, ONE OF THE LORD'S TRUE NOBLEMEN.

—Gardner Taylor

center, so we did a series of broadcasts more than once at Oakwood. We did it at other colleges around the country, and we even worked in Costa Rica and Hawaii for a complete series. So, we became more international. Media ministry, in my judgment, is one of those ways where the Lord will finish the work of righteousness. I was aware when I was on television, and it's more so today, that I was speaking to



Charles D. Brooks
Photo: Gloria Massenbunrg

more minority people at one time than any preacher ever had before because I just happened to be the first. You're talking to people who will not come to

your church ordinarily. They're in the comfort of their own homes and the Holy Spirit guides them, they don't know what it is, but they're arrested by the Spirit of God because we prayed for that. I've heard also [of people] who listen on the radio because these things were done as cassettes. I've met a man in Columbia, South Carolina, and he insisted on meeting me before the sermon. He said, "Man I was on my way to Mississippi, and I wasn't thinking about you. But I heard your voice, and I turned my radio back on." He's driving down

the highway into Mississippi that Sabbath, and there were two other men with similar testimonies. It is not man; it is God working through instruments that will allow it.

WH: *Pastor Bradford, you were president of the Adventist Church in North America for more than ten years. As an administrator, how have the challenges of administration changed, and what counsel would you give to administrators?*

CEB: I think of how I am a sports fan. I'm not as much into it as I once was, but I read a little bit, talk to people. The coach must not allow the game to outgrow him, so you've got a different game coming in. Vince Lombardi, the coach of the American football team, the Green Bay Packers, was the greatest coach of his day. Lombardi today would be ignored or driven out of the locker room because he was a strong, up-and-at 'em

man. It wouldn't go over now because participation is the big thing. Modern management suggests that it's time for the conference leader to get out with the

troops. I would like to come and be one who will encourage and listen to and be as the scriptures talk about—the one alongside, alongside the pastor and say, “Look, I want to be your assistant for a few days, and go in and out of homes with you.” If the conference president got that close to pastoral staff, I think it would transform ministry.

EEC: I had some experience with this. Church leaders in a moment of mental lapse, put me in charge of missions from 1974 to 1976. I had a man, an administrator for whom I have had the utmost respect through the years because I got close enough to him in those four years to know what the problem of an administrator really is in trying to get all the way down to the last pastor and get them moving and motivated. I finally told Neal C. Wilson this, after four years of working with that man, my confidence in administration skyrocketed to the heavens. I never took an idea to him that he would nix. He would sit and look at me and say, “Earl, you can try that.” And there was nothing that had a glimmer of possibility that that man did not approve. Good administration empowers its workers.

NS: *What gives you men hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

CEB: Hope for the church for me is what I hear in some of today’s preaching. I see young preachers who are not “in the box,” as they say. The preaching is thoughtful. They seem to have a sense of urgency. I can see a little crest of a wave, and it is giving me hope.

CDB: This message that we proclaim is truth. It’s like a story I read thirty years ago about a young man who was reading an adventure book about his favorite character. This favorite character got into a fight and was being whipped; the young boy was reading, and he

PASTOR BROOKS IS ESPECIALLY KNOWN FOR HIS BIBLE PROPHECY SERMONS. HIS ESCHATOLOGICAL MESSAGES ARE URGENT WARNINGS—EACH SEEMINGLY STAMPED: “TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL. OBEY IMMEDIATELY!”

—Alvin M. Kibble

could hardly stand it. After all, this was his hero, so he slammed the book shut and then decided, “I’m going to read the last page and see if he triumphed.” And when he read it, his hero had overcome the villain, and the villain was being punished. Now he’s willing to go back and read the rest of it because as he read he’d say, “If you only knew what I know!” Satan is a defeated foe, and he knows it! So why wouldn’t I have hope?

EEC: I believe, in addition to what we just said, that there is coming upon the church right now while we are sitting

at this table, a time of trouble. And that all of the prophetic teachings that we have given through the years will begin to take shape, breeding catastrophe after catastrophe. I believe that Jehovah is getting impatient to come back and will, therefore, let the angels loose the winds. There’s nothing like a little trouble to get a man off his seat and on his feet. Stuff is comin’ off this world right now and the Lord told you He was going to do this because He knows that it takes that to

even arouse the saints. And about those angels in Revelation that are holding back the winds: I believe that at that time we are going to see people coming in droves into this movement just prior to the coming of the Lord. We must not lose faith and stop doing what we’re doing, but do the best that we can.

WH: *Thank you so much for the wisdom you have shared with us all.* ☒

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.

Charles E. Bradford publications

Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Fourth quarter 1984, *Jesus Our Mediator* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1984).

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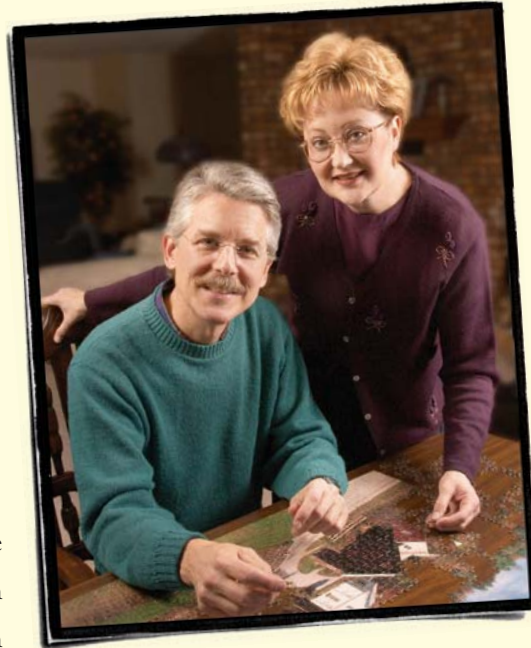
Raoul Dederen, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary Volume 12, Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001). It contains an article by Bradford on stewardship.

Study Guide accompanying the book *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2004).

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Assisting parishioners through grief

—part two of a two-part series

Larry Yeagley

Editor's Note: In part one of this series, which appeared in March 2008, the author discussed grief care and an appropriate pastoral response to those who grieve. In this concluding article, he further elaborates upon that response.

One of the most rewarding parts of grief counseling comes when people choose to evaluate their personal qualities and lay new plans to utilize those qualities. When they show interest in looking ahead, they have covered many miles toward adjustment.

There are times when a grieving parishioner becomes stuck somewhere in the processes of adjustment. Pastors need to determine whether they can help such a parishioner restart the processes or whether referral to a professional seems advisable.

While in chaplaincy training, a doctor invited me to review patient charts with him. After discussing various methods of diagnosis, he said, "The tests and lab results are indispensable in making a diagnosis, but the most essential tools are the doctor's ears. Listening gives important clues that enable us to ask the right questions."

From doctors I have learned three important lessons in assisting grievers: listen, observe, and ask the right questions. A fourth lesson I learned from mental health professionals: when a situation goes beyond your expertise, don't hesitate to refer. All four lessons are essential for the pastor's ministry to the grieving.

Listening and observing

The nature of grief can be affected by many personal events and circumstances.

- Multiple, recent losses
- Unwanted divorce
- History of mental illness
- Troubled relationship with the lost person
- Insufficient support system
- Strong dependence on the lost person
- Emotional illiteracy—difficulty in expressing feelings
- Loss considered preventable
- Loss following lengthy illness
- Sudden, unexpected loss
- Breakdown of nuclear family
- Traumatic, violent, mutilating manner of death
- Death of a child—past or recent
- Family legacy of stoicism
- Perceived blame for the loss

Some of these pointers can be red flags indicating that a grieving person may have difficulty adjusting to a recent loss. Meeting regularly with such a person is important. I need to know that movement through the processes of grief continues to happen, no matter how slowly. Regular support sessions prevent persons from allowing grief to take control of their lives.

Feeling out of control and being at the mercy of grief can lead to despair. Allowing grief to take its course without some intentionality causes a person to feel that grief will never end.

Take charge

Having observed this fear and resignation, I have developed an intentional approach to grieving that has proved helpful for many. This take-charge approach has been instrumental in preventing complicated mourning. The grieving person can be encouraged to adapt the following steps to meet individual differences:

1. Be intentional. Choose a time each day to be alone in a definite place.
2. Take reminders of the relationship to that place and provide a journal. If writing isn't your strong suit, be sure you choose a private place so that you can talk aloud.
3. Review only one piece of the relationship at each session. Write or talk aloud about what that piece means. Write or talk about how you feel about not experiencing it again.



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

4. Write or speak a short farewell to what used to be but can't be now. Repeat the farewell until the strong emotions subside.
5. At each session repeat the farewell you made the day before, then proceed to another piece of the relationship.
6. Continue this process until you sense that the physical relationship will become a relationship of memory.
7. Remember you are not saying farewell to the person or your memories. You are saying farewell to what *used* to be but *can no longer* be. This will gradually uncover the memories you tried to avoid. You will cherish the memories.

A man once told the story about a fisherman who lost his wife. His daughter expressed her fear that her father was not grieving well because he didn't talk and cry. When he was asked about his adjustment, the fisherman said, "Don't worry about me. I get in my fishing boat, and when I am almost beyond the sight of land, I talk to myself, cry, and yell." He was being intentional in his own way.

The key is to find that way. Many women find journaling useful, but most men use some other approach to intentional grieving. Everyone grieves differently; therefore, there are many ways of practicing intentional grieving. The bottom line is that people should do something about grief instead of being surprised by every wave of sorrow.

Because retrieving every bit of relationship memory can't be achieved in a short time, there will be times when something triggers an unvisited part of the relationship. Therese Rando calls these subsequent, temporary, upsurges of grief (STUG).¹ It doesn't mean adjustment hasn't taken place, but simply means that a tag along piece of the relationship needs to be processed intentionally. Grieving persons need to be told this ahead of time so that they are not taken by surprise.

Two years after Ron's wife died he accepted an invitation to attend an event at an organization of former military personnel. A friendly woman started

talking with him. And then a thought came to him. He met his wife 30 years ago in that same facility. Tears came flowing down his face. The woman asked him what was wrong. After he told her the reason for his tears she said, "Don't worry, Ron. Just keep crying." Ron had adjusted to his wife's death, but meeting another woman at the same facility triggered a piece of the relationship he had not processed.

Appropriate questions

While listening to a grieving mother I noticed increased tears when she mentioned her daughter's drug-related death. I suspected that she felt responsible, so I asked her, "Do you feel your lifestyle played a part in her death?" Her reply told both of us that we had discovered the key issue in her grief.

A woman was grieving the death of her son who was killed in an automobile accident. Her husband was driving when the car slid out of control on an icy road. After listening for 20 minutes, I asked, "Who do you blame for the accident?" She immediately named her husband and said that he always drove too fast. The accident happened six months earlier and she had not shared her anger with her husband. She told me her marriage was sliding out of control. All this information came to light by asking one question.

I often ask, "How is your life different now since your loss?" This always brings out the secondary losses that must be processed along with the primary loss. Failure to identify and grieve for secondary losses can be identified as a major cause of complicated mourning.

Asking the right questions comes as an outgrowth of listening and observing—not a process of interrogation.

Timely referral

Some pastors prefer to make a referral when they ascertain that the grief has turned complicated, but making this determination is difficult. Therese Rando remarks, "The demarcation between uncomplicated and complicated mourning is hazy at best and constantly changing. Such change is due not only to advancements in data collection in this area but also

to the fact that no determination of abnormality can be made without taking into consideration the various sets of factors known to influence any response to loss. Reactions to loss can only be interpreted within the context of those factors that circumscribe the particular loss for the particular mourner in the particular circumstances in which the loss took place."²

Looking at grief reactions alone does not reliably determine complicated mourning. The pastor needs to look at mourning as a process of movement from disequilibrium to the restoration of balance and life with purpose. If delay, distortion, or denial halts the movement in this process, complicated mourning could be occurring.

When I suspect that a person is stuck at some point in this process, I discuss it with them. Persons in grief usually sense when they are stuck. Together the pastor and the grieving person can pinpoint the roadblock, and then determine if a referral has become necessary.

Pastors need to tell the grieving person why a referral would be beneficial. Full agreement must precede any referral effort. Pastors should assure the individual that they will continue to provide spiritual support. The grieving person must never feel deserted.

When I make a referral, I tell the grieving person, "Sometimes there isn't a good person-counselor fit. If, in your first visit, you sense that this referral is not a good fit, I want you to let me know. We can arrange for a different counselor." To say so is not unethical. Physicians make this request of their patients when making a referral.

Making a good referral requires a referral base that can be built by asking reliable people for recommendations. Among these can be funeral directors, social workers, nurses, hospice directors, and pastoral colleagues.

Make personal contact with the counselors on your list. A good counselor should be happy to answer your questions. Here are some questions you may wish to ask.

- What kinds of clients do you prefer?

- Are you trained to do grief counseling? Complicated grief?
- What is your approach to counseling?
- What length of time do you usually spend with clients?
- What are your credentials?
- What are your fees?
- Describe your views on the relationship between religion and mental health.
- Would you be the only person seeing a referral?
- Are you comfortable with a pastor providing spiritual care during the time you are involved with a client?

With the approval of the grieving person, arrange for an appointment while they are present. Tell the counselor the reason for the referral being made. Ask the counselor to contact you when the person meets the appointment. If the grieving person wants you to accompany them to the first session, do so after notifying the counselor that you will be present.

Early grief support by pastor and congregation facilitates the movement through the processes of grief. This makes the need for referral less likely. Regularly scheduled bereavement support groups held at the church also

facilitate smooth movement toward adjustment. Some churches hire a licensed counselor to conduct these support groups.

The work of comforting those who grieve has been the most rewarding part of my ministry. I pray that this will be your experience. ❏

- 1 Therese A. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning* (Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1993).
- 2 *Ibid.*, 12.

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LETTERS *continued from page 3*

Legalism and righteousness by faith

Editor's note: We have received numerous letters concerning Roy Gane's two-part article, "Legalism and 'Righteousness by Faith,'" published in January and March 2008. We are sharing some of the letters (edited for space), along with Roy Gane's comments.

Roy Gane states correctly, "In the Bible, words for 'sin' can refer either to fallen nature as a dynamic state of being or to specific infractions of divine law." He also accurately declares that "Sins, as violations of God's law, can be actions or thoughts. They can be deliberate or inadvertent and unintentional." He quotes from John, "'All wrongdoing [literally 'unrighteousness'] is sin,'" and from Paul, "'whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.'"

Gane then, however, argues contrary to his scripture when he writes, "Not all human imperfection, even in the sphere of conscious activity can be regarded as sin. Human life is fraught with all kinds of nonsinful imperfections due to our limitations of skill, knowledge, memory, physical coordination, and so on." Under the subheading "Obedience" he strongly infers that Christians can live without sinning, but then he says, "Keep in mind that we are talking here about development and maturation of character, not sinless perfection of

nature, which no one receives until glorification."

He should use the biblical descriptions of sin that include all wrongdoing and thinking. Instead, in an apparent attempt to support the idea of human sinlessness, he abandons Scripture's "unintentional sins" and replaces them with "nonsinful imperfections." He needs to stay with the Bible and its two types of sins: deliberate and unintentional.

—Ross Parker, email

I have thoroughly enjoyed the article by Roy Gane in *Ministry*, January 2008 issue titled "Legalism and 'righteousness by faith.'" It is an intelligent treatment of a highly controversial subject long ignored by too many ministers. I have espoused many of the points he makes for many years, usually to deaf ears.

—Earl Wilson, pastor, Hudson, North Carolina, United States

The problem seems to be that when Gane proceeds to describe law and sin he falls into the trap he claims to be exposing. His philosophy reveals sin is sin when it is a deliberate choice—not inclination or natural human depravity. But the apostle Paul says that he is constantly on guard of his natural inclination (1 Cor. 9:27). It was Paul who declared himself to be "wretched" (Rom. 7:24).

It seems clear that substitutionary salvation is the only biblical salvation. Although dotted with lots of scripture, Dr. Gane's position more closely reflects the pre-Reformation theology (faith *plus*) than the Protestant position (faith *alone*).

—Ray W. Eaton, email

Sanctification is referred to as a "fruit" of justification. If sanctification is only a fruit of salvation, then it is reduced from a causative factor in salvation to a desirable benefit of salvation. This means that even if sanctification is not progressing well, one's salvation is still secure because of a claim of justification. In reality, both justification and sanctification are God's causative agents in salvation. The fruit of justifying grace is acquittal, while the fruit of sanctifying grace is obedience.

Dr. Gane makes an important distinction between "sin" as fallen nature and "sin" as violation of God's law. Our birth state of fallen nature has produced much imperfection and impurity, but this *result* of Adam's sin must be sharply distinguished from violations of God's commands, which cause a breach in one's relationship with God. While our birth state needs the atoning blood of Christ and healing, *it does not need forgiveness*, which applies only to moral violations of God's expressed will. Thus the terms *justification*, *sanctification*, and

Continued on page 24

First-person narrative preaching: A fresh approach for telling the old, old story

Derek J. Morris



Derek J. Morris, DMin, is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apopka, Florida, United States.

One of my members, 96 years old, has heard more sermons than I will ever preach. When someone speaks of Daniel in the lions' den, or David and Goliath, he already knows "the rest of the story." How can we retell these powerful biblical narratives in a way that will impact all of our listeners, including those who have heard them over and over?

Let me suggest a fresh approach: first-person narrative preaching.¹

Another angle

When preparing a first-person narrative sermon, you must ask yourself this question: "Where shall I stand in the story?" If you are retelling the story of Paul's missionary visit to Philippi, will you be the apostle Paul, Lydia (an influential member of the church in Philippi), or the Philippian jailer? The character that you choose will obviously affect your perspective as you retell the story.

In a six-part series on Paul's epistle to the Philippians, I opted to use a first-person narrative sermon to begin the series. My goal was to introduce the letter and also to provide some helpful historical and cultural background regarding the city of Philippi and Paul's ministry there.

With this goal in mind, I chose a place to stand in the story. I would be Epaphroditus, an elder of the church in Philippi. Listen now, as I share the old, old story from a fresh perspective.

Epaphroditus's story

Grace and peace to you, my brother.² Grace and peace to you, my sister. Grace and peace to all of you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I did not expect to meet you on the Via Appia. I am Epaphroditus, from Macedonia. I make my home in the city of Philippi. In fact, I am on my journey home right now.

You may wonder why I'm dressed like a Roman if I come from Macedonia. Well, I've been in Rome for some time, visiting our spiritual father, the apostle Paul. The Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi sent me here to Rome when they heard that the apostle Paul had been put under house arrest. They knew that he would need provisions and someone to care for him. I've been in Rome for some time now. That's one reason why I'm dressed like a Roman.

But I am also dressed like a Roman because I'm a citizen of Rome. You see, Philippi is a Roman colony. Let me tell you a little about my city. Strategically positioned on the great east-west trade route across Macedonia, Philippi was founded almost seven hundred years ago. It was originally called "Small Fountains" because of the springs of water that flow out of the base of the hill on which the city was built. Philippi was fortified by King Philip of Macedonia almost four hundred years ago. That's where our city gets its new name: Philippi. Modest King Philip named the city after himself!

For the past two hundred years, Philippi has been a Roman colony and known more as a military outpost than a trading center. There are two parts to the city. The upper part, on the side of a hill, overlooks the fertile valley of the Gangites River. The theater and the acropolis are located on the upper part of the city. In the lower part of the city, you'll find the forum and the marketplace. And right between the upper and lower city runs the Via Egnatia, the east-west trade route. Philippi is only about a two-hour walk from the coast. You just take the Via Egnatia east to Neapolis. Well, as you can see, I'm very proud of my city.

As you can tell from my name, Epaphroditus, I was not born into a family that worshiped the God of heaven, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some people have told me that my name means "lovely" or "handsome," but I've discovered that it's actually in honor of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. *Epi* means "on" or "before." So *Epaphroditus* means "one who is before the goddess of love." Devoted to Aphrodite. I've often wished that I had been born into a family that worshiped the God of heaven

and been given a name like *Timotheos*, "honored by God," or *Theophilus*, "loved by God." I even thought about giving myself a new name. But even if I don't have a new name, I do have a new heart. I have become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. That's what the apostle Paul said in his letter to the believers in Corinth. A new creation. And I am rejoicing in the Lord!

I first heard the good news about Jesus Christ when the apostle Paul came to my city, Philippi. That was more than ten years ago now. Perhaps twelve or thirteen years. Time passes so quickly! It was quite an eventful visit. A few days after Paul and his companion Silas arrived in Philippi, they went down to the Gangites River, just south of the city. There they met several women who were gathered for prayer, including a devout woman named Lydia. She is quite an influential person in Philippi and trades in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira. Lydia and her family received the message about Jesus Christ with an open heart, and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, right there in the river! She even invited Paul and Silas to stay at her home.

As they continued their ministry in Philippi, Paul and Silas met a slave girl. I don't remember her name. She was controlled by an evil spirit, but she made a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This slave girl kept following Paul and Silas wherever they went, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." That sounded good at first. After all, it was true. But the slave girl just kept shouting over and over again. People couldn't hear what Paul was saying about Jesus. Finally, Paul got very upset. Not with the slave girl, you understand, but with the evil spirit. Paul rebuked the spirit that was controlling her and commanded it to leave in the name of Jesus Christ.

That's when the trouble started. The "owners" of the slave girl had been making a lot of money through her fortune-telling. And they were angry that their business had ended so abruptly. They didn't care about the slave girl. Just

about themselves. So they stirred up the crowd and had Paul and Silas arrested, publicly beaten, and thrown in jail.

What happened next was truly amazing. Paul and Silas were thrown in the inner dungeon and their feet were fastened in the stocks. It was dark. Damp. It smelled like a sewer. All around them were the sounds of cursing prisoners. But instead of complaining, Paul and Silas started singing. Because even though it was dark in the prison, the light of Jesus was in their hearts. Hallelujah! That's a Hebrew word, you know. I don't know much Hebrew, but I like that word! Hallelujah! It means "Praise the Lord!"

And that's exactly what Paul and Silas were doing. They were praising the Lord. And then at midnight, the God of heaven worked a mighty miracle. He shook the foundations of the prison with a great earthquake. But it was no ordinary earthquake. The prison didn't collapse and kill them all. No. This was a special kind of earthquake from the God of heaven. All of the doors of the prison popped open and all of the prisoners' chains fell off.

That earthquake not only shook up the prison; it shook up the jailer too. He was so distressed, he was about to fall on his sword. After all, if you lose a prisoner, you pay with your own life. Then he heard a voice cry out in the darkness. "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!" Well, the jailer knew that something supernatural was going on. There were no lights. How could anyone see what he was about to do? The jailer called for a light, ran in to the inner dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And the apostle Paul told the jailer about Jesus Christ. He told the jailer that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He told the jailer that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. He told the jailer that, just as the prophet Isaiah had predicted, Jesus was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our transgressions. The punishment that brought us peace

was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.

Well, the jailer and his family received the good news about Jesus with gladness, and they also became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized that very night.

The apostle Paul came to visit us again several years later and encouraged us in the faith. We could tell that he loved us as his own children, and we loved him too. So when our church family in Philippi heard that Paul had been taken to Rome to stand trial, and that he was under house arrest, they decided to send me to Rome to bring provisions and offer support.

But instead of being a help, I became a problem. I'm not as young as I used to be. And I think that the long journey was too much for me. I became very sick. In fact, I almost died. When my church family back in Philippi heard about my sickness, they were very concerned about me. This may sound strange to some people, especially unbelievers. But I actually feel closer to my church family than to my own family. My church family loves me and cares for me as my fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters!

And, as I said, they were very concerned about me. So Paul decided that I should return to my home city of Philippi. He wanted to send a letter to the church family, and he knew that they would be happy to see me and to know that I have recovered from my sickness. So he asked me to deliver his letter to them. And here it is. Now one very important rule that a courier must follow is this: You must never read the contents of the document that you are carrying. But the apostle Paul gave me permission to read this letter because he said that it is also addressed to me. So I get to read it before everyone else.

The letter starts out like this. Why don't you follow along? I understand that someone made a copy for you too.³ Why don't we read it together? Let's start reading at the beginning of the scroll. "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi..."⁴

Reliving the story

This example of a first-person narrative illustrates that you don't simply retell the story in first-person narrative preaching. You relive the story! The preacher relives the story as one of the characters. The listeners relive the story as active participants. First-person narrative preaching can be a life-changing experience for both the preacher and the listeners.

I remember when I was preaching a first-person narrative sermon about Noah. As I relived that part of my story when the door of the ark was closing, I began to weep. The door of the ark was closing, and most of the people were still outside of the ark. In that moment, I experienced Noah's anguish of heart. And as I looked up, I noticed that members of the congregation were weeping. They too were reliving the story.

I always wondered if the senior members of the congregation would be resistant to this new sermon form. After all, this is a major departure from a more traditional approach.

I was surprised to discover that the senior members of the congregation, along with the children, appreciated first-person narrative preaching. They had heard the biblical stories over and over again. First-person narrative preaching gave them an opportunity to relive the biblical narrative in a fresh, life-changing way.

The preparation process for a first-person narrative sermon will require at least as much time as a more traditional sermon. And, you must do a careful exegesis of your biblical texts. If you are citing portions of Scripture, you will generally need to memorize them. Occasionally, as in the case of Epaphroditus, you will be able to read the words of Scripture from a scroll. While you don't have to dress in authentic costume, this will make it easier for both the preacher and the listeners to relive the story.

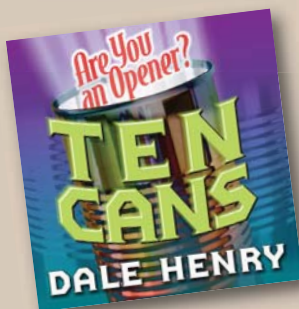
Try a first-person narrative sermon as part of a sermon series on a book of the Bible. You won't want to use this sermon form every week, but when

you are covering a familiar narrative, a first-person narrative sermon can help both the preacher and the listeners relive the story. ❏

- 1 With first-person narrative preaching, it is necessary to preach without notes. For a helpful five-step process that will prepare you to preach without notes, I suggest chapter 16 of my book *Powerful Biblical Preaching*, titled "Preaching Effectively Without Notes." General Conference Ministerial Association, Silver Spring, MD, 2005.
- 2 I began this first-person narrative by entering from the rear of the sanctuary and walking down the center aisle of the church. I stopped on my journey to greet my listeners.
- 3 Each listener received a copy of the Philippian letter when entering the sanctuary. This enabled the listeners to read with me. I was also able to challenge them to read the entire letter in the coming week.
- 4 A complete written copy of this sermon is available at www.preachwithpower.com. You can also watch a video recording of this sermon at www.forestlakechurch.org. The sermon is titled "Two Reasons to Rejoice" and is part one of the Philippian series, Rejoicing in the Lord.

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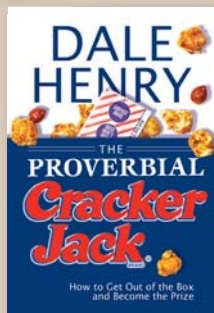


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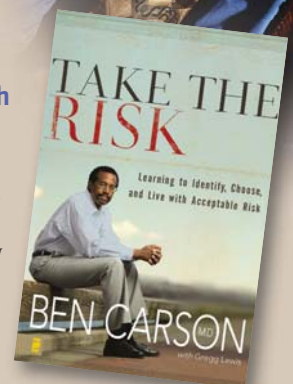
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The sinner's plight in Romans 7

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Few passages in Paul's writings have received more attention or generated a wider divergence of interpretations than Romans 7:7–25.¹ The passage speaks of a profound struggle, a conflict that lies deep within the human condition, and contains some of the most pathetic exclamations in all of Paul's letters. What is the nature of the conflict? Where does this conflict occur? Should we interpret it autobiographically or theologically? And when does this conflict take place? Is it a preconversion or postconversion struggle? Does salvation resolve it or precipitate it? Interpreters have taken many paths into this thicket of problems. Let's start with the central theme of the passage, namely, Paul's concern with the law.

Romans 7:7–25 in context

In Romans 1–8 Paul lays out the plan of salvation. In 1:17–3:20 he claims that divine condemnation rests upon all human beings—on Gentiles, who sin without knowing the law, and on Jews, who sin in spite of knowing the law. In 3:21–31 the apostle presents his central thesis that God offers salvation as a gift, quite apart from human works, in particular, works of law. In chapter 4 Paul provides scriptural support for this thesis, and in chapters 5 through 8 he answers some important questions that his thesis raises. He discusses death and life in chapter 5; sin and sanctity in 6:1–7:6.

This sets the stage for Paul's central concern in Romans 7:7–25. From everything said so far,

he makes it clear that sin and the law are closely related. This raises serious questions. Is there something sinful about the law? Are sin and law practical equivalents? Paul raises this question, "What then shall we say? That the law is sin?" And this conclusion he immediately rejects. "By no means!"² As this exclamation indicates, the purpose of what follows clarifies the relationship between sin and the law.³ Paul wants to prevent anyone from concluding from his remarks in 7:1–6 that "the law is sin."⁴

The relation between sin and the law

Between the essential nature of the law and its actual function in human life, a sharp disjunction exists. As the formal expression of God's will, the law is holy, just, and good (v. 12); in itself, it promises life (v. 10). As it functions in concrete human life, however, the law leads to death (v. 10), and the reason for this discrepancy is sin. As the expression of God's will, the law's functions are to prohibit and condemn sin,⁵ and when the law enters the domain of human affairs, where sin reigns, sin seizes these functions of the law and uses them to secure and complete its domination of human beings. By using the divine commandment to obtain victory over human beings, sin renders the law, which itself is holy and good, an instrument of death.⁶ Sin is much more than the moral failure of an individual; it is an active and enslaving power.⁷

In Romans 7 Paul weaves together the themes of law, sin, and death, interpreting each in relation to the other two. Though inherently good, the law results in death by virtue of its appropriation by sin (v. 10). This does not mean that the law brings death; sin brings death through the law. Since sin and death each derive their power over humanity from the other, their relationship is one of "reciprocal complicity." Death gets its grasp on humanity through sin; conversely, sin reigns by death, which is its normal end.⁸

Death, like sin, depends on the law for its existence. The law connects with death by virtue of its introduction into the realm of *sarx*, the Greek word for "flesh," which suffers from a number of misleading English translations.⁹ Essentially, *sarx* is the natural sphere of human activity, the sphere where humans understand themselves in terms of the visible and demonstrable. The problem is that sin now dominates the sphere of normal human activity, and as a result becomes the domain of death. Thus, the law, which ought to lead to life, becomes the servant or instrument of death.

Whose conflict? The psychological answer

All this sets the stage for the most controversial part of the passage, the portrayal of a person who finds a horrifying gulf between intention and achievement. This conflict utterly bewilders—"I do not understand my own actions" (v. 15) and deeply distresses—"Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (v. 24). But where does this conflict take place? Who is being described, and by whom, or from what standpoint? The prevalent answers to this question fall into two major categories: the autobiographical-psychological and the salvation-historical.¹⁰

Those who take the first approach regard Romans 7:7–25 as "a direct psychological analysis of the experience of salvation from sin."¹¹ More specifically, they construe the passage as a description of Paul's own inner struggle, grounded in painful introspection.¹² They take at face value Paul's use of the first person singular pronoun, and they believe that the pathetic cry of dismay—"Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from

this body of death?" (v. 24)—could only be uttered by one who had experienced this struggle himself.¹³

Those who agree that Paul depicts his own experience in these verses disagree, however, as to whether this struggle took place before or after the apostle's conversion, and the divergent answers to this question have a long history. The Greek fathers generally referred the experience to the unregenerate person, while the Latin fathers and the Reformers referred it to the experience of the regenerate.¹⁴ More recent interpreters tend to locate the struggle depicted here in Paul's preconversion experience. For C. H. Dodd, this passage describes Paul's inner state when he set out for Damascus, portraying "the momentous beginning of his Christian career."¹⁵

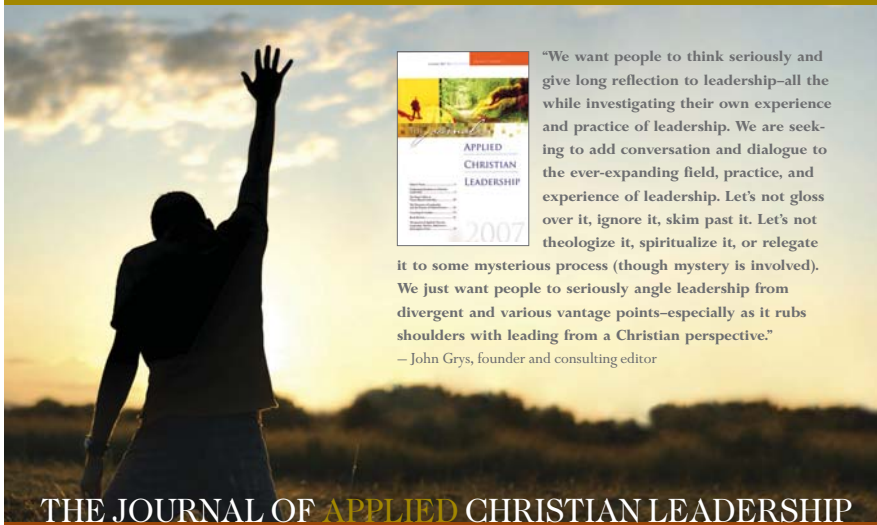
According to the autobiographical-psychological interpretation, verses 7–13 describe stages in Paul's growing consciousness of sin, and verses 9–11 illuminate this awakening with an allegorical interpretation of Adam's fall.¹⁶ There were thus two stages in Paul's preconversion experience: a

period of relatively happy ignorance, followed by a sharp conflict between the law and his sinful passions waking to activity. The first stage represents a happy childhood, before any awareness of sin.¹⁷ With the dawn of moral consciousness, however, the growing boy found desires in himself that stood in direct conflict with the law of God. He was plunged into moral perplexity by the radical discrepancy between his aspirations to keep the law and his inability to do so (v. 15).¹⁸ The idea that this struggle with temptation is an internal, subjective one finds support in the fact that the one commandment mentioned here (v. 7) is the only one in the Decalogue that could be fulfilled only by an internal attitude of mind.¹⁹

W. D. Davies believes that Romans 7:7–25 reflects the rabbinic doctrine of the two impulses,²⁰ according to which every person experiences a conflict between an evil impulse and a good impulse. Just as Paul divides his life into a period of relative innocence when sin lay dormant and a period when the commandment came and sin sprang to life, the rabbis discussed the different stages of human development. The evil impulse enters at birth and reigns alone for thirteen years during which an individual was not morally responsible. At the age of 13 the good impulse enters and thereafter the struggle between the two does not cease. For Davies, Romans 7 gives us Paul's account of his struggle with the evil impulse.²¹

According to the autobiographical interpretation, verses 21–25 depict a tragic division within Paul's personality, specifically a split between his willing and doing, which drives him to the depths of despair.²² What presumably accounts for the intensity of this internal struggle is Paul's extraordinary commitment to the pharisaic ethic of legalism, which drove him to seek aspirations he could never achieve, namely, faultless obedience to the law. When he failed to attain this objective, he began to doubt the validity of his endeavor and questioned the law as a source of righteousness. Thus, Paul's disenchantment with legalism as a Pharisee served as direct preparation for

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." —John Quincy Adams



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his encounter with the gospel, which provided a “new and better solution” to his preconversion problem and filled the “vacant place” created by the failure of his attempts to keep the law.²³

On the autobiographical-psychological interpretation, Paul’s preconversion and postconversion experiences are united by a common disillusionment with legalism. The gospel provided a solution to his pharisaic problem. Paul’s preconversion failure to achieve righteousness by keeping the law psychologically prepared him for the gospel. The law was thus valid as a “salutary and necessary discipline” and the gospel “supplemented” the work of the law.²⁴

But not all who interpret Romans 7 psychologically refer it to the Christian’s preconversion experience. Many see it as a description of Paul’s experience after he accepted Christ, and a paradigm of the struggle that all Christians encounter as they strive to live Christ-like lives and discover that they are far from perfect. Those on the Christian path need saving grace as much as they ever did, and they realize this more and more as time goes by. In this vein, G. C. Berkouwer insists that the subject of Romans 7 describes “not the natural man as seen by the believer, but the believing child of God as by the grace of God he has learned to see himself.”²⁵

James Dunn takes a similar position. The existential anguish of 7:14–24, he argues, “sounds like an experience Paul knew only too well.” Furthermore, the conclusion of the section, which directly follows the exclamation of victory—“So then I myself with my mind serve the law of God, and with my flesh the law of sin”—would be entirely confusing if it described a past state. And finally, the notion that the divided *I* continues in and through the process of salvation fits nicely with the “already-not

yet” tension characteristic of Paul’s eschatological schema.²⁶

Attractive as it seems in our introspective age, the psychological interpretation of Romans 7 raises serious questions, whether we apply it either to Paul’s pre- or postconversion experience. For one thing, it is at odds with the overall argument of Romans, where Paul shows no interest in personal experiences and confessions, nor in the moral evolution

WHAT PRESUMABLY ACCOUNTS FOR THE INTENSITY OF THIS INTERNAL STRUGGLE IS PAUL’S EXTRAORDINARY COMMITMENT TO THE PHARISAIC ETHIC OF LEGALISM, WHICH DROVE HIM TO SEEK ASPIRATIONS HE COULD NEVER ACHIEVE, NAMELY, FAULTLESS OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW. WHEN HE FAILED TO ATTAIN THIS OBJECTIVE, HE BEGAN TO DOUBT THE VALIDITY OF HIS ENDEAVOR AND QUESTIONED THE LAW AS A SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

of the individual soul.²⁷ Instead of our developing moral consciousness, Paul’s explicit concern is the course of salvation and the situation of human beings with respect to it.

A greater problem lies in the fact that the autobiographical view contradicts Paul’s own evaluation of his preconversion experience. According to Philippians 3:6, Paul, the Pharisee, regarded himself as “blameless” with respect to righteousness under the law. By his own estimation, Paul’s attempts to keep the law were completely successful, and he derived nothing but pride and

satisfaction from them. In this sense, Paul’s legalism was a success, not a failure.

Furthermore, the notion that Paul as a Pharisee experienced the law as a stimulus to sin stands at odds with the rabbinic view, according to which the study of the Torah is precisely what stems the influence of sin.²⁸ And finally, no evidence exists that Paul ever regarded his conversion as a psychological turning point. Instead, his interest in it lies purely in the theological insight which it brought.²⁹

Whose conflict? The theological answer

Those whose approach to Romans 7 is theological, rather than the psychological, view this passage in the context of salvation-history. They note that Romans frequently refers to three great stages of history: before the giving of the law, between the giving of the law and the Christ event, and after the Christ event. And they construe Romans 7:7–25 as an analysis of humanity during the second of these periods, that is, in the age of the law.³⁰

In this view, the use of *I* in this passage cannot be necessarily considered an autobiographical reference. Paul elsewhere makes use of *I* when it is clear that he did not primarily refer to himself (1 Cor. 13; Rom. 13).³¹ Similarly, the *I* of Romans 7 refers

not to any one person in particular but to humanity in general.

The salvation-historical interpretation takes the “commandment” of verse 9 as a reference to the Decalogue, and it draws important parallels between Romans 7 and 5.³² Both chapters are concerned with a “history that shapes human nature.” Romans 7, however, narrows down the sum total of humankind—the “all men” included in the Adam-Christ correlation of Romans 5—to the experiences of a single *I*. Thus understood, the two passages, Romans 5:12–21 and Romans 7:7–25, are mutually corrective. The

latter prevents Adam-Christ from being misunderstood as mere speculation, and the former prevents Romans 7 from being misunderstood as a mere analysis of the inner life.³³ In this view, the statement, “I once was alive apart from the law” (v. 9) refers to the situation of humanity in general before Moses’ time (Rom. 5:12–14), when sin was dead (v. 8). But once the law, i.e. through Moses, entered human history (Rom. 5:20), by its nature holy and good (v. 12), what in itself promised life actually resulted in death (v. 10).³⁴

Rudolf Bultmann adds an important note to the salvation-historical interpretation of Romans 7.³⁵ As he sees it, Romans 7:7–25 not only gives us a “picture of the objective situation of man-under-the-law”³⁶ but describes this situation “as it appears to the eye of one who has been freed from the law by Christ.”³⁷ In other words, it is a postconversion analysis of a preconversion situation.

According to Bultmann, subjective interpretations of Romans 7 miss the whole point of the passage. Paul’s overriding concern is to show the situation of sinful humanity as utterly desperate. One of the things that makes it so desperate is the fact that human beings under the law are pathetically ignorant of their predicament. Sin has so blighted their perspective that they think they can gain righteousness by keeping the law. Not only are their efforts doomed to fail, not only can no one attain righteousness by works of law, but the very intention to do so is a sin. As Bultmann interprets Paul, legalism, the attempt to gain righteousness by keeping the law, is not merely a good idea that turns out to be impractical, but a mistake in principle. In fact, its very premise is sinful.

On this reading, the *ou ginōskō* of verse 15—“I don’t know”—reflects the sinner’s failure to comprehend his own situation. What the sinner “doesn’t know” is that their very attempt to achieve righteousness through the law is sinful. And since this insight appears only to the eyes of Christian faith, it cannot refer to an inner division Paul experienced while attempting futilely to serve the law as a Pharisee.³⁸

For Paul, then, the most pathetic victim of sin would not be a person suffering the results of obvious transgressions—nor the struggling would-be saint, who repeatedly tries and fails to live up to the law’s ideals. Instead, it is the good person, the moral person, who believes that their legalistic goodness, the goodness achieved by efforts to keep the law, actually improves his or her standing before God. *That* person is the most pathetic of sinners. *That* is the wretched person of whom Paul speaks.

After all, the insight that our performance always falls short of our aspiration is available to any reflective person, as Ovid’s frequently cited observation attests—“I see the better and approve it, but I follow the worse.” And the Jews were well aware that transgressing the commandments of the Torah was sinful. These insights are hardly peculiar to Christian faith.

Instead, the “shock value” of this passage lies in the fact that it contradicts all the conventional wisdom of Paul’s day and ours. It is not an insight available to human beings generally, and—this is Paul’s point here—it is specifically obscured to human beings under the law. Paul’s radical contention says that human beings are sinful, not only in their violations of the law, but precisely in their attempts to keep it. Thus Bultmann writes, “The way of the law is wrong, not because in consequence of transgressions it does not lead to the goal, but because its *direction* is wrong, for it is the way that is supposed to lead to ‘one’s own righteousness’ (Rom. 10:3). It is not merely evil deeds already committed that make a man reprehensible in God’s sight, but man’s intention of becoming righteous before God by keeping the law.”³⁹

Once we see this passage as a description of “sin” from the perspective of “salvation,” everything falls into place. Since a person under the law does not see their true situation, “the willing” described in verses 15–20 cannot refer to conscious acts of volition. It is not a subjective, or conscious, movement of the will, but, in Bultmann’s words, “the trans-subjective propensity of human

existence as such.”⁴⁰ And since the “bringing about” of verse 15 is trans-subjective, it refers not to the empirical deed of transgression, but to the result of the doing. For those who exist under the law, every deed, bad or good by conventional standards, has the same outcome: it leads to death.⁴¹

The split in humanity described in verses 21–25 is also trans-subjective and not a split between higher and lower elements in our constitution or between inner and outer dimensions of our existence. This split does not presuppose a naturalistic dualism whereby our ineffective doing becomes attributed to an inferior element, such as the “flesh,” while our willing is attributed to a higher element, such as the “mind” or “the inner man.”⁴² Instead, it refers to the fact that everything we intend or will to lead to life leads only to death. Everything undertaken by human beings under the law—whether relatively good or bad—is from the beginning directed against itself. Instead of leading to life, it leads only to death.⁴³

The salvation-historical interpretation as modified by Bultmann has several advantages over the autobiographical-psychological approach. First, it takes seriously Paul’s evaluation of his own preconversion experience. Philippians 3:6 gives us Paul’s preconversion account of his life as a Pharisee, and from this perspective, everything was fine. His attempts to keep the law were entirely successful. Romans 7 gives us Paul’s view of the same experience from the standpoint of Christian faith. And from this perspective his previous self-assessment was a dreadful illusion.⁴⁴ He thought he was gaining life, when in reality he was headed for death.

The salvation-historical perspective thus provides a consistently and profoundly negative evaluation of legalism. For subjectivist interpretations, legalism is merely a practical impossibility, and it may even have positive pedagogical value. It can prepare people for the gospel by showing them how hard it is to keep the law. For the salvation-historical interpretation, however, legalism is neither positive nor neutral, but entirely negative. Unalterably

opposed to salvation as God's gift to us in Christ, it is therefore essentially, and incorrigibly, sinful. Interpreted as an emphatic critique of legalism, Romans 7 fits perfectly within Paul's theological position as a whole.

Bultmann's interpretation has generated considerable opposition over the years. For Hermann Ridderbos, Bultmann's existentialism distorts his exegesis. The sin-producing effect of the law in Romans 7 refers, not to the attempt to establish one's own righteousness before God, but to the sinful desire and the acts of transgression.⁴⁵ A more thorough critique arises from advocates of the "New Perspective on Paul."⁴⁶ For these scholars, "Paul's critique of legalism" has been drastically overstated. "Luther and his Bultmannian successors were . . . wrong in attributing to Paul an understanding of sin's essence as keeping the law 'too well.' " Proponents of the "hard Lutheran understanding" fail to ask how any Jew, even Paul, "could ever have found keeping the Torah something worthy of blame." In fact, some New Perspective scholars maintain that Paul was opposed, not to keeping the law in general, but to attaching inflated importance to certain Jewish "identity markers," such as circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance.⁴⁷

The New Perspective has stimulated interest in the whole question of Paul's Jewishness and, consequently, the relation between Christianity and its Jewish origins.⁴⁸ Does it provide a radical reinterpretation of Romans 7? Not unless we lose sight of the essential concern of the passage. The purpose of Romans 7:7–25 is to distinguish the law from sin and to clarify their relationship. The true antithesis, as Brendan Byrne notes, is not between gospel and law but between grace and sin.⁴⁹ The law is good by nature, but sin uses the law and ultimately it kills us.⁵⁰

Conclusion

So, what is the sinner's plight in Romans 7? Is there a conclusive argument for one interpretation or another among the considerable diversity we have observed? Perhaps

not. But a frustration from an exegetical standpoint may be encouraging from a personal one. Like the truth of all great literature, the meaning of Paul's letters can never be wholly plumbed or perfectly fixed. So, however unclear we are as to the sinner's plight in Romans 7—whether we place it before or after conversion, whether we see it as a subjective or trans-subjective conflict—this very uncertainty enables each of us to see our own struggle with sin in the mirror it provides. Most important, there is one thing we can be certain of, and that is the solution to the problem. As Paul makes crystal clear, Jesus Christ is our only hope. ❏

- 1 According to James D. G. Dunn, "The function of Rom. 7:7–25 is one of the most disputed issues in NT studies." *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 472.
- 2 Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptural quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.
- 3 W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 179.
- 4 Rudolf Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 153.
- 5 W. Gutbrod, "Nomos," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965–74), 4:1073, 1074. (Hereafter, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* will be *TDNT*.) These are simply the negative side of the law's positive function as the expression of God's will.
- 6 Walter Grundmann, "Hamartano," in *TDNT*, 1:311.
- 7 Günther Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 125. And by virtue of its connection to sin, death, too, is a power that makes its victims prisoners and sets the seal on their lost state.
- 8 Pierre Benoit, "La Loi et la Croix D'Après Saint Paul," *Revue Biblique*, 47 (1938): 489, 490.
- 9 As "lower nature," for example, in the New International Version.
- 10 Ethelbert Stauffer, "Egō," in *TDNT*, 2:358.
- 11 C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1959), 123.
- 12 Sanday and Headlam, 186.
- 13 Dodd, 125.
- 14 Sanday and Headlam, 184, 185.
- 15 Dodd, 125.
- 16 Dodd, 123, 124.
- 17 Dodd, 128; Sanday and Headlam, 186.
- 18 This is a universal human dilemma. Both Aristotle and Ovid describe the experience noted in Dodd, (130, 131).
- 19 Dodd, 127, 128.

- 20 W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), 27.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 23, 24.
- 22 Dodd, 131.
- 23 Sanday and Headlam, 187.
- 24 Sanday and Headlam, 188, 189.
- 25 G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, Studies in Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), 63.
- 26 Dunn, 476, 475.
- 27 Stauffer, "Egō," in *TDNT*, 2:359.
- 28 Davies, 22.
- 29 Bultmann, "Paul," in *Existence and Faith*, 114.
- 30 Stauffer, "Egō," in *TDNT*, 2:359.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 358.
- 32 Gottlob Schrenk, "Entolē," in *TDNT*, 2:550, 551. Besides Schrenk, others making this connection include Bornkamm, 125; Bultmann, "Romans 7," 157; and Stauffer, "Egō," in *TDNT*, 2:358, 359.
- 33 Bornkamm, 125, 127.
- 34 Stauffer, "Egō," in *TDNT*, 2:358, 359.
- 35 Bultmann refers to "the purpose of the law in the 'history of salvation,' " and he regards Romans 7:7–25 in unity with Romans 5:12–21. "Romans 7," in *Existence and Faith*, 157.
- 36 Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1:266.
- 37 Bultmann, "Romans 7," in *Existence and Faith*, 147.
- 38 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:267.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 2:266, 267.
- 40 Bultmann, "Romans 7," in *Existence and Faith*, 150.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 155.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 155, 156.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 361, 362.
- 45 Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), 145, 146.
- 46 This expression appears in the title of an article by James D. G. Dunn first published in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 65 (1983): 95–122.
- 47 Brendan Byrne, "Interpreting Romans: The New Perspective and Beyond," *Interpretation*, 58 (July 2004): 248, 249.
- 48 Is Paul's "Jewishness," in particular his claim to be a "Hebrew of Hebrews," a basis for affirming or rejecting the Jewish origins of Christianity? Andrew S. Jacobs addresses this important question in "A Jew's Jew: Paul and the Early Christian Problem of Jewish Origins," *Journal of Religion*, 86 (April 2006): 258–286.
- 49 Byrne, 249.
- 50 As Beverly Roberts Gaventa puts it, "the most disturbing element in the resumé of Sin is the claim made in ch. 7 that 'sin is capable of exerting power even over the law.' " "The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition," in *Interpretation*, 58 (July 2004): 234.

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.

Ministering to families affected by autism

Debra L. Ketelsen



Debra L. Ketelsen, BS, is a pastor's wife at the Peachtree City Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Sharpsburg, Georgia, United States. She is the mother of Jayla, diagnosed with PDD-NOS, an autism spectrum disorder. She is the founder of a support group for families around the world affected by autism.

Autism affects one out of every 150 children. A pastor might have members affected by autism and yet not even know it. Look for the exhausted mother who never seems to keep her child under control; look at the baby who cries unceasingly; perhaps look at the empty place where members with small children no longer come to church because it's just too hard.

Autism is here. The pastor, then, needs to know how to minister to the families affected by it.

What is autism?

Most everyone has heard of autism, but they don't know much about it. Though many mysteries shroud this affliction, we know autism as a neurological disorder that affects a child's ability to communicate and develop social relationships. Twenty-five percent of autism has a known cause, such as a genetic or metabolic/mitochondrial disorder. In 75 percent of cases, the cause is considered unknown. According to the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention, three out of every four children diagnosed with autism are boys. Autism comes in different forms, with symptoms ranging from genius to severely impaired. Some children may look very typical until you get to know them better, or until someone points out specific traits linked with the condition.

Awareness of the disorder

How then can pastors help those with autistic children?

For starters, a pastor needs to understand that children with autism are not easily handled, and they are not very good at being quiet or still. Children with autism can look typical but demonstrate some rather strange, startling, unlovable, and downright bizarre behaviors. If you don't realize what they have, you might think that they are just being unruly, or that their parents need to follow good parenting guidelines.

So the first step is awareness and understanding of this disorder. Most children with autism have sensory issues. This means that a woman's perfume, which we can barely smell, seems overwhelming to the child and can cause a spontaneous outburst, even in the middle of church. This outburst can include a shriek and then panic as they run around in circles, flapping their arms. In the meantime, what kind of looks does the family get as the child disrupts the service?

Other senses are equally affected. A glint of sun reflected on a man's watch may look like a firecracker going off in the child's face. Or you may think you are speaking directly to a child with autism, but they seem deaf because they are overwhelmed with all the other sounds that they hear like a church member folding a bulletin, change dropping in the offering plate, the clock ticking, and shoes shuffling. With these sounds overwhelming them, they can't hear you.

And if you see them spitting out soufflé prepared by a member, it's not because it's bad food, but either the texture or the overwhelming flavor, which by our standards was subtle. Again, it overwhelms the child's senses. You might have noticed they walk on tiptoe too. This may be because they feel like they have rocks in the bottom of their shoes all day.

How to help

As a pastor, you need to ask the family how you can help. Would a nursery help them to be able to listen to the service? Would they need a volunteer to sit with their child during church or Sabbath School so the parents can attend an adult class? Podcasting the sermon and uploading it to the church Web site can help when parents can't make it to church.

What about a children's club in the church? Are their leaders willing to modify and incorporate children with special needs into their programs?

Could the whole church benefit from an autism awareness workshop? If the parents want to train their child to sit in church, could there be

a special training room made available or can the church members be notified that there may be some temporary challenges? Do the parents want to have their child anointed?

Church members can minister to these families outside of church too. Asking what would be helpful is an important first step. Some people like me have a hard time accepting help, even when offered, so here are some suggestions:

- Volunteer to run some errands or do some household chores for the parents.
- Learn about the child's therapies and interventions. If the family uses "floor time," see if you can come over and play with the child.
- Volunteer to watch the child for a couple of hours or a day. You can also surprise Mom by giving her time at the salon or the spa.
- When a child with autism misbehaves, ask if there's anything you can do to help. Children with autism do not respond well to spankings or time-outs. Distracting them may help them to calm down.
- Encourage your typical child to befriend and help the autistic child by modeling typical behaviors. Never tolerate anyone teasing or berating them. Many children with autism are very intelligent despite their disabilities, and they have a lot to offer society.
- Most of all, support positive steps the parents take to help the child. Autism is a complex disorder and parents need to try various approaches to deal with the situation.

Autism should not be considered a made-up excuse to allow children to be unruly as some well-meaning members might suspect. Having a child with autism can be overwhelming. Statistics estimate that 80 percent of marriages that have a child with autism fail. The support, encouragement, and understanding given by pastors and church

members become essential to these families' spiritual and marital lives.

Ministering

Give special attention to these families. Learn how to interact with their child. Understand their needs. Many of these children can't recognize dangerous situations, so if they wander off they need to be found immediately. Some children with autism don't have receptive language, the ability to interpret and understand what you are saying, but they can respond to sign language or pictures. They have to see you in order to know that you want their attention.

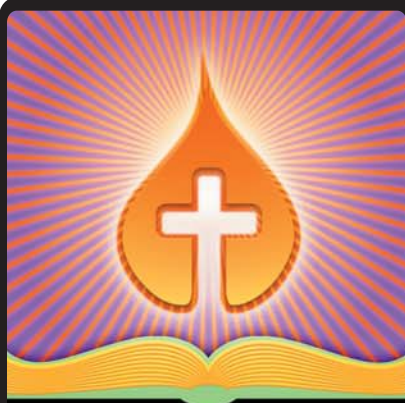
Show the child how to do things and what you expect of them. Some children with autism don't have expressive language or the ability to talk. They can get very frustrated as they try to get other's attention or to convey their thoughts and feelings. If a child has a meltdown, look for the source—for example, a strange smell, taste, sight, or sound, and remove it or redirect the child's attention. Allow the child to have a quiet place to recoup when their senses are overwhelmed. Children with autism have trouble transitioning; give them a few verbal or pictorial warnings before changing activities with them. Many children with autism are very concrete thinkers so don't use figurative language with them, like "you're putting the cart before the horse," or "you're opening a can of worms." They won't understand what you mean.

Most of all, believe in our children with autism, and praise them. They work so hard to be a part of our world. We know this is good for typical children, so how much more important for these children, who are so often misunderstood?

Try to see the child that God intended them to be and not to see them as the disorder. With early intervention, children with autism can get better, and you can be a part of their healing.

Finally, pray for these precious little ones' healing and for their families. See them through Jesus' eyes, full of hope and potential. **M**

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.



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Prayer chain

The Internet is increasingly becoming a medium for prayer.

People make prayer requests by email every day, enlisting support for a number of concerns. Prayer requests can be placed on such sites as www.ourprayer.org, where volunteers log on to pray for the requests that are posted. Virtual prayer circles are also organized at www.beliefnet.com. About 15,000 people participated in the first three years of its operation.

Some doubt whether Internet prayer will replace the old-fashioned kind. "If we're talking about prayer and not simply human sharing," says Don E. Saliers of Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, "you need a living community. . . . The Internet becomes a surrogate for that so long as we don't think that rambling on about concerns is the same as prayer." (*Christian Century*, April 5, 2003).

At www.ministerialassociation.com (our own General Conference Ministerial Association Web site) prayer requests are received and brought to our staff each Tuesday. Should you choose to join your prayers with ours, we usually gather and pray each week at 10:30 A.M. (US eastern standard time). Always know that someone in the GC Ministerial Association is praying for you.

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

Books about autism and organizations that help with autism

BOOKS

Your Child: Emotional, Behavioral, and Cognitive Development From Birth Through Preadolescence, by American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology, edited by David Pruitt, New York: HarperCollins, 2000,

10 Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew, by Ellen Notbohm, Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2005.

10 Things Your Student With Autism Wishes You Knew, by Ellen Notbohm, Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2006.

The Autism Trail Guide: Postcards From the Road Less Traveled, by Ellen Notbohm, Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2007.

Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life With Autism, by Temple Grandin, New York: Knopf, 2006.

Asperger's and Girls, by Tony Attwood et al., Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2006.

Son Rise: The Miracle Continues, by Barry Neil Kaufmann, Tiburon, CA: H J Kramer, 1995.

ORGANIZATIONS

Adventists with Autism
18 St. Charles Pl.
Sharpsburg, GA 30277
United States
health.groups.yahoo.com/
group/AdventistswithAutism
Phone: 1-770-665-4244

Autism Society of America
7910 Woodmont Avenue,
Suite 300

Bethesda, MD 20814-3067
United States
www.autism-society.org
Phone: 1-301-657-0881 or
1-800-3AUTISM
(1-800-328-8476)

Autism Speaks
2 Park Avenue
11th Floor
New York, NY 10016
United States
www.autismspeaks.org
Phone: 1-212-252-8584
Fax: 1-212-252-8676

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30333
United States
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism
Phone: 1-404-498-1515 or
1-800-311-3435

Emory Autism Center
Justin Tyler Truax Building
1551 Shoup Court
Atlanta, GA 30322

United States
www.psychiatry.emory.edu/
PROGRAMS/autism/
index.html
Phone: 1-404-727-8350
Fax: 1-404-727-3969

First Signs, Inc.
P.O. Box 358
Merrimac, MA 01860
United States
www.firstsigns.org
email: info@firstsigns.org
Phone: 1-978-346-4380
Fax: 1-978-346-4638

Marcus Institute
1920 Briar Cliff Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30329
United States
www.marcus.org
Phone: 1-404-419-4000
Fax: 1-404-419-4505

Unlocking Autism
P.O. Box 208
Tyrone, GA 30290
United States
www.unlockingautism.org
Phone: 1-866-366-3361

LETTERS *continued from page 13*

righteousness by faith, as normally used, do not apply to our birth state as the result of Adam's sin. Fallen nature needs re-creation by means of Christ's sacrifice, while moral violations need forgiveness through the same sacrifice.

—Dennis Priebe, Roseville, California, United States

When I saw Roy Gane's article, my thoughts were, "Was this going to be another sliding toward nominal (in name only) Christianity?" My concerns were unjustified. Both parts were excellent and represent the whole gospel.

Salvation by works is indeed a serious threat. But ripping the gospel in half is not the solution. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated.

To avoid "salvation by works" we have to give God all the credit for both, even when sanctification takes cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

—Fred W. Ellis, retired minister, email

Roy Gane does not distinguish between the *root* and the *fruit* of justification by faith. We must distinguish between the imputed righteousness of Christ that justifies us and the imparted righteousness of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies us.

The Bible and all of the great Protestant Reformers teach that there is absolutely no justifying merit whatsoever in anything we do, in anything God does in us, in anything God does to us, in anything God puts into us, or in anything God develops in us! We are justified by

the righteousness of Christ.

Gane teaches that God justifies only righteous people, whereas God's gift of justification gives those who believe in Jesus a righteous legal standing before God.

—Gordon Wm. Collier Sr., email

Roy Gane responds:

I am delighted that my two-part series on this crucial topic has stimulated some responses, both affirming and critical. Here are brief answers to objections that surfaced in some letters.

In the March 2008 issue of *Ministry*, Tom Hughes misrepresents my approach and misidentifies it as the Catholic philosophy of infused righteousness, which holds that the intrinsically righteous
Concluded on page 29

So, do you know what Televisiphonernetting is?

Definition: A verb used to describe what a person is doing when he/she is watching television, using the phone, and surfing the internet all at the same time.

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Building relationships through pastoral visitation

Errol A. Lawrence

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood” (Acts 20:28, NIV).

You have heard it said that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). But how about, “where there is no visitation, the people and the pastor will perish?” The primary object of pastoral, or elder, visitation is to show that pastors care for their flocks. People do not care how much we know until they see how much we care.

Yet some members say that they have not received a pastoral visit from their pastor or from an elder in many years. What kind of message, then, is being sent by the shepherds who do not visit their flock?

A lost art

There are several factors that have brought pastoral visitation into a period of neglect: First, the changing demographics—members in many countries commuting great distances to church rather than living in the community where the church is located. Second, the pattern of the nuclear family—members busily care for the needs of their family and have little time to entertain visits from pastors or other church leaders. Third, some pastors have moved away from the shepherd model to the general manager model—they are tied up with administrative niceties and complexities and have little time for the members of the congregation.

For the older generation of members, a visit from the pastor was the norm, but for

Generation X (born 1961–1981), and Generation Y, also known as the Millennial Generation (born 1982–2000), visitation has become a lost art. Though some pastors see themselves as nurturers, they attempt to do the nurturing through sermons rather than through member visitation. This is, I believe, a big mistake.

Why they leave

Between January 2006 and December 2006, there were approximately 2000 new members added to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario. However, during that same period, over 500 left. Could it be that the majority of those were never visited after their baptism? From conversations with members with whom I have visited in the hospital, in their homes, or just in casual meetings in a store, I know that many hoped for a pastoral visit.

We like to say that most of those who leave the church do so not because of doctrinal issues but because of social factors: i.e., the pastors or elders not visiting when they were sick at home or in the hospital for surgery, or when they had a problem with their child. Some members can be so particular about who visits that unless the senior pastor visits them, they do not consider themselves being “visited.”

It would appear that the church’s loss of members correlates with the feeling these people often have that the church had abandoned them after baptism. The sense of abandonment also arises in matters of church discipline, in the mid and later stages of grief, in the aftermath of separation and/or divorce, and even in retirement. Pastoral visits could do a lot to solve this problem. Again, if nothing else, these visits show that you care, and so often that makes all the difference in the world.

Approaches

The pastor who visits has the ability to nurture relationships and to acknowledge the deeper needs of the people. This should enhance retention of present members as well as the recruitment of new ones. Visitation can do what massive outreach programs can’t. For example, if pastors have a concern about one of their church leaders, rather than asking the member at church why they have not been fulfilling their responsibilities, the better thing to do would be to visit with that member either at home, work, or the pastor’s office. It will amaze the pastor how that member will resume their responsibilities without much persuasion or coercion.



Errol A. Lawrence, DMin, is ministerial secretary and Church Growth and Evangelism coordinator for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario, Canada.

Pastoral visitation is as basic as taking the time to listen to someone's deep needs. Yet one of the things that a pastor often hears is, "Pastor, I hate to bother you, but . . ." as if their needs are an intrusion upon our work. As pastors, we need to remember that their needs *are* our work. Yet many people have been told that their needs were secondary. By the time they get to us—their pastor or pastoral care provider—they've already been conditioned to consider their needs to be unimportant.

Take the initiative

As pastors are aware, a number of factors contribute to congregational strife and conflict. If pastors do not visit, based on their own initiative, they will run into problems. Congregations are sometimes willing to tolerate boring sermons, disastrous administration, and lack of organization, but members will not tolerate a lack of visitation. They count that as neglect. Even parishioners who say that they do not need a pastoral visit are often most excited when pastors do visit; they are generous in their praises of their caring pastor, who takes time out of their busy schedule to visit them.

Many a pastor's ministry has been spared from the wrath of a full-blown congregational conflict by a significant member coming to their defense and sharing how, during a time of crisis, the pastor visited and aided them. However, maintaining the peace or protecting self from the wrath of the congregation cannot be considered as a good rationale for visits. Pastors should visit because they care.

Thus, pastors should take the initiative in visiting. Taking the initiative presumes that visiting is important and appropriate for the pastor, as a caring person, to reach out, even without an invitation. But one of the roles of the pastor includes being a caring shepherd. If you have been visiting on a regular basis, you are more likely to hear about crises. The reason why some pastors do not hear about illnesses and even deaths of members is because they have not been visiting regularly. Regular visitation allows the pastor to establish a caring relationship. Such a relationship provides a climate

where the expectation of receiving care during a crisis is the norm.

Regular visitation will help people to develop trust in you as their pastor, thus preparing them to divulge more intimate details in times of crisis. One member remarked, "Because the pastor has been in my home and seen my stained couch and my fraying curtains, I feel I can trust them with the other stains that mar my life in times of crisis." Visiting results in caregiving, trusted pastors becoming involved in planning funerals or discussing surgery options for members.

Visiting tips

Should pastors visit only in emergencies? Should they just visit once a year? Since both adults in the home are often at work, it makes it difficult to find a time when both persons will be home. But in an age when gerontology has shown that people are living longer, there are more senior citizens at home, and they treasure visits from their pastor. That means that home visits will be the most common type of visit. If a member stays in the hospital longer than overnight, a visit is usually expected. A family going through any type of crisis needs a visit. New families who have been attending the church regularly should be visited and encouraged to become members of your congregation.

In this day and time when so many people are busy, pastors, in much of the world, should call and make an appointment before coming. Calling first also helps members to prepare for your visit. However, pastors are still often welcome if they drop in on the spur of the moment.

After arriving, spend time getting to know the family or the member. Ask how long they have lived in that area or about their families. People usually love to talk about their families. You can unobtrusively look around the room for clues. Family photographs, toys, books, and other memorabilia are good clues. You may wish to share a little about yourself. When you arrive, remove your overcoat (if wearing one) and never announce that you have only so much time.

Yet, do not overstay your welcome. A visit that lasts under 30 minutes appears

rushed. However, longer than one hour makes your visit just a social occasion rather than a pastoral visit.

When you find yourself drifting away during a listening session, change your body position and concentrate on listening actively. Your body position defines whether you will have the chance of being a good listener or a good deflector. Good listeners can be compared to poor boxers; they lead with their faces.

You are a pastor

When a pastor visits a parishioner, their duties include encouraging believers in their Christian faith. The pastor must not try to be the physician or the psychiatrist or the social worker. Pastors are generalists with one specific goal—to share the gospel with everyone. What the pastor says during a hospital visit, or any visit to the sick, is vitally important.

When visiting the sick, never ask direct questions like "What type of surgery did you have?" or "How long is the scar?" Ask questions like "How are you doing today?" or "How has your day been so far?" Listen sympathetically, but do not give advice or share stories of what happened to you or other people who have suffered the same illness. Remember that you are not the physician or the social worker. You are the pastor. Get acquainted with other family members. Have your Bible and be willing to share words of hope. Never leave the bedside of the sick without praying. Even if the person you are visiting lies in a coma, still pray. Hearing is one of the last senses to go. So be very careful what you say at the bedside.

Always remember that your ministry will be stronger and more meaningful if you make the effort to stand by your members through the changing scenes of life—through sorrow and through joy. This we are called to do as shepherds of the flock. ❏

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Dateline

Bicycles and water purifiers

Khartoum, Sudan—Sixteen bicycles have been presented to pastors and Bible workers, living and working in some of the earth's harshest conditions in the northern region of Sudan.

"Those who received the bikes are serving the church in remote areas, often walking on foot for several days in order to visit their members and preach," says **Miroslav Didara**, leader of the Adventist Church in northern Sudan. "The bicycles will help them to be more effective in their work and will, in many ways, improve their lifestyle," he added. In addition, five others will buy the bikes locally when they return to their territories.

The bicycles, presented during a special ceremony on February 3, were donated through an initiative led by **Patrick Boyle**, a retired minister from the United Kingdom.

Another project entitled Water Purifiers for Sudanese Pastors was also organized by Boyle. Enough money was raised for five water purifiers, which were handed over to some pastors who live and work in the areas where potable water is rare. "Many diseases are coming from dirty and polluted water," said Didara. "One water filter can secure pure drinking water for a family for at least ten years. They are also

designed to be portable, which enables the pastors to carry it around on their long journeys. To them it means better health for all the family."

"We are very thankful to those who decided to do something for others in need. Yet, we need fifteen more water purifiers in order to equip all our pastors and Bible workers with pure drinking water, so they may accomplish their ecclesiastical tasks more effectively," said Didara. [Alex Elmadjian/TED News Staff/TED News]

Lay training school approved

Ringwood, Victoria, Australia—The Adventist Church in Australia has given approval to establishing a lay-training school. The facility will probably be in a rural area near Melbourne. The facility would provide training for laity in evangelism and local church duties that would supplement, but not replace, training conducted for pastors.

The hope for these lay assistants is that they become actively involved in evangelism as well as to help relieve the pastor of some of their administrative burdens. This plan would carefully select and train lay pastoral assistants who could share the load of administrative and evangelistic work. [Phil Ward]

ADRA musical completed

Vik, Norway—In early February, **ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) Norway** announced the completion of a project primarily aimed at young people in Norway.

In an effort to create an increased awareness of attitudes and values linked to humanitarian development work, ADRA Norway has produced material for a musical designed to be used in schools by Pathfinder groups and other children's groups.

The material for the musical consists of a book presenting seven stories about children living in various conditions around the world, a CD with seven songs, and lyrics for a sing-along. It also includes a resource booklet containing a drama linked to each song, plus sheet music. Each theme focuses on issues such as fellowship, freedom of choice, as well as questions designed to initiate conversation.

"We need to include and emphasize life skills, teaching and communicating the importance of making wise choices, and teach values like justice, mercy, and empathy. In this process children will enjoy the music and learn about life in different cultures. This is the true ADRA spirit!" says **Gry A. Haugen** of ADRA Norway. [TED News Staff/TED News]

R E S O U R C E S



BOOK REVIEW

Surviving Toxic Leaders: How to Work for Flawed People in Churches, Schools, and Christian Organizations, by Kenneth O. Gangel, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008

Few who read these words would need convincing that this is a world corrupted by sin. The evidence is everywhere, as

close as the click of a TV remote control or a glance at an Internet news site.

However, it may seem less obvious to some—those younger in ministry, perhaps—that the corruption of sin has also infected the church. Just as businesses can be headed by those whose personalities are abrasive (consider "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap, onetime chairman of American appliance maker Sunbeam Corporation), so too can church entities have leaders who are at times less than truly Christian in their expression and treatment of others.

That there are those who abuse power, cheat, bully their subordinates,

practice laziness, and have a dictatorial behavior may not be a surprise. But until you are placed in a situation where such a person is your supervisor, such may seem an abstraction.

For Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel, a veteran leader who has twice been a dean and once a president at Christian universities, these situations are anything but abstractions. Instead, they're crushing realities he has had to deal with either firsthand or through the tears and heartaches of others. Out of this experience as well as a lifetime of studying leadership and the literature of leaders, biblical and secular,



comes this book. It is both welcome and, sadly, needed.

Another Christian writer titled a recent volume with a somewhat tongue-in-cheek phrase: "People Are Human." Gangel, writing in a more specific sphere, demonstrates this with an explanation of why and how leaders go astray. The reasons are varied, but the results are often the same: those under the leader find their ministries frustrated, their personalities stymied, and their spirits crushed.

The effects of such toxic administrators are incalculable, at least this side of the judgment seat of Christ. We don't know how many people have been turned away

from the gospel because the shepherds who could have guided them were less effective as a result of the misleadership of others. We may never know of those who, having observed such chaos, decided to have no part of Christian faith.

But we likely do know—and some of us may even be—those who are suffering the effects of toxic leadership. Gangel's solutions include a self-diagnosis and remedy for toxic leaders: if you're one, admit your problem; seek to make things right with those you've wronged; look for an accountability partner, someone to hold you to your word; and be patient. For those stuck under toxic leaders, Gangel

counsels patience and seeking God's will before moving on.

Overall, this book, which offers much in the way of understanding the problems of leaders gone astray, transcends the chiefly North American culture from which it springs. Because toxicity is common to organizations in all cultures, it's important to understand its roots and solutions. Gangel does this admirably and instructively.

—Reviewed by James A. Cress, Ministerial Association secretary, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. ■

LETTERS *continued from page 24*

born-again "soul" is capable of performing works that partly merit their salvation. Hopefully part two has convinced Hughes that I am with Scripture and the Reformers in holding that the only meritorious works are performed by Christ. Regarding Christ's work of saving us *from* our sins (affirmed by Matt. 1:21), I have shown that this is a process: while we will not be relieved of our sinful natures until glorification, Christ through the Holy Spirit provides the opportunity for progressive victory over sinful choices (= purification of our characters).

In this issue, Ross Parker objects to my idea that "Not all human imperfection, even in the sphere of conscious activity, can be regarded as sin." Here I was reacting to Spurgeon's misconception that "in all his actions he *commits* sin" (emphasis supplied). I was not contradicting the fact that all our actions are performed by persons who are sinful in the sense that we are mortal and subject to evil propensities. To avoid despair or confusion that can lead to theological imbalance, it is important for us to recognize that many "imperfections," including many mistakes that are impossible for human beings to overcome in this life due to their physical and mental limitations (e.g., memory loss), are not included in the biblical definitions of sinful action

and thinking (whether inadvertent or deliberate) as moral faults violating God's law. "Imperfection" is a larger category than "sin." All sin is imperfection, but not all imperfection is sin.

Ray W. Eaton thinks he objects, but he actually agrees with me that in the Bible, "sin" can refer not only to infractions of divine law resulting from choices, but also to "fallen nature as a dynamic state of being," with its evil propensities. When he says that "substitutionary salvation is the only biblical salvation," he agrees with my reference to substitutionary atonement as "the basis of our salvation" (not "a basis . . ."). When he affirms "faith *alone*," he agrees with my biblical and Protestant position that "salvation is possible only by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9)."

Dennis Priebe says, "Sanctification is referred to as a 'fruit' of justification in one place. If sanctification is only a fruit of salvation, then it is reduced from a causative factor in salvation to a desirable benefit of salvation." When I spoke of sanctification as "fruit," i.e., inevitable resulting benefit, I referred to Romans 6:22, "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness [= sanctification], and the end, everlasting life" (NKJV, brackets supplied). The

fact that the process of sanctification is fruit does not make it optional for salvation (Heb. 12:14—"the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" [NRSV]). If we do not receive God's gift of sanctification, we have rejected His gift of justification. We must accept God as a whole Person and his salvation as a whole package and process.

Gordon Wm. Collier Sr. agrees that justification is only through faith in Christ's sacrifice, with no justifying merit in anything we do and that there is an important theological distinction between justification and sanctification. However, by selective, and rigid reading of Scripture that severs the dynamic relationships between justification and sanctification and between the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit (e.g., Rom. 8:9, 10), Collier exemplifies the kind of unbalanced approach that my two part series was designed to counteract. John W. Peters, (March issue), on the other hand, aptly encapsulates the balanced biblical teaching: "The penitent believer can truly rejoice that saving grace is a 'legal' declaration of acquittal from condemnation while at the same time he realizes that genuine justification by faith works by love and is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." ■

Young men see visions; Old men draw maps

JAMES A. CRESS



Recently I experienced a déjà vu moment when my colleague's father-in-law carefully detailed driving instructions for an oft-traveled route. When the old man finished, my colleague whispered, "Watch! He will instruct us again before we leave."

Sure enough, once we were in the car, ready to depart, the same excruciating details were repeated. The scenario recalled memories of my own father's little maps that he repetitiously thrust into his sons' hands to instruct us how to drive—even the familiar route back home. My colleague understood this preoccupation of old men—drawing maps to assure themselves that those who come afterward will find their way home safely.

The Old Testament provides just such a map. We view the book of Joshua as a dynamic story of mighty deliverance, powerful acts, and conquering glory. Of course, Joshua is all this and more. But remember, this narrative is first a historical record of what had already occurred.

You probably picture Joshua as the strong warrior who assisted Moses, spied out the land, stood for justice, led Israel across the Jordan River, and conquered Jericho. I easily imagine Joshua in his prime, maybe 40 years of age. But Joshua was a senior citizen when Moses died. His spying partner, Caleb, already had reached 85 years. So when I heard Pastor Guideo Quinteros, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chile, preach these points from Joshua's account, I recognized that he was bringing to mind a road map for faithfulness.

God spoke to Joshua (Joshua 1:1). God enjoys speaking to His leaders today just as He spoke with Joshua. Thus, prayer is not only pouring our petitions into God's ear but also hearing His voice speak to our mind and heart. How shall we respond? Listen!

God instructed Joshua (Joshua 1:2). "Go over this Jordan, you and

all this people." God's distinct purpose for His people—"You are here. I want you there!" Following God's instructions propels people into the Promised Land. How shall we respond? Move!

God promised success (Joshua 1:3, 5). "You will possess the land where you make your stand; No one will dare confront you." Leaders who follow God's direction are imbued with heavenly power. Neither human nor demonic forces will attain advantage when your dream matches God's dream and you follow His instructions. How shall we respond? Venture!

God called Joshua to strength and courage (Joshua 1:6, 7b). "Don't waver; remain in the center; turning neither to extremes of left or right." Leaders cannot halt between two opinions. They must stand for something, or they will fall for anything. Endeavor boldly! How shall we respond? Achieve!


God expected sanctified people to anticipate great wonders (Joshua 3:5). When the Holy Spirit moves, people are called to holy living. A living, experiential, experimental faith takes God's word seriously, envisions victory, and lives in eager anticipation of God's faithfulness to accomplish what He has promised. How shall we respond? Expect!

God assured He would expand Joshua's influence (Joshua 3:7). "I will help you do great things. I will bring you good success. I will increase your ministry to the extent you permit me to increase your vision. You can trust your reputation to my strength." How shall we respond? Dream!

God prepared His ministers for success (Joshua 3:8). "Command the priests, . . . stand in the Jordan." Take the leadership initiative. Nothing miraculous occurred until the leaders stepped into the water. There is a time to wait on the Lord and there is a time when pastors must move, step up to the challenge, and walk in anticipation of God's deliverance. How shall we respond? Lead!

God commanded His people to memorialize His power (Joshua 4:7). Once they had crossed the Jordan River, Israel still faced great challenges and great opportunities: cities to fall, enemies to drive out, and continuing spiritual renewal and reform. First, however, Israel needed to memorialize God's mighty works. So mighty men transported huge stones from the riverbed to establish a memorial where future generations would pause, worship, and remember. For this same purpose Jesus created the Sabbath—a holy seventh of each week in which God's people pause, worship, and recall His providences. How shall we respond? Remember!

How do we remember? Remember that Jesus made us and not we ourselves. Remember we are the work of God's hand and the sheep of His pasture. Remember we are the bride of His second coming, His chosen ones, His special people, His royal priesthood, His beloved. Remember God never abandons His own. Remember His plan. Remember His will. Remember His map!

Young men dream dreams. Old men draw maps. How shall we respond? Follow the map! Get ready. Get going. Get home safe. Choose ye this day. Choose life. Choose Jesus! 

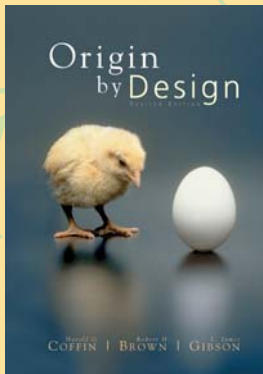
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SCIENCE DISCOVERS GOD

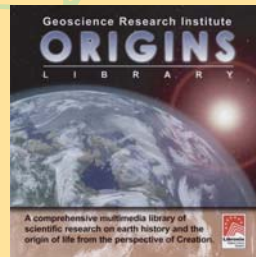
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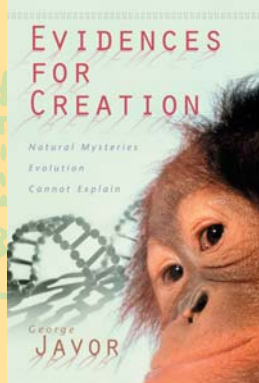


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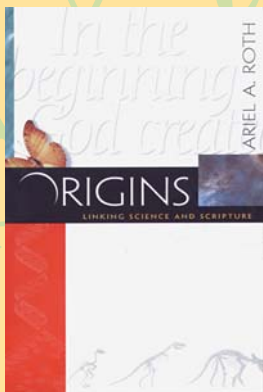
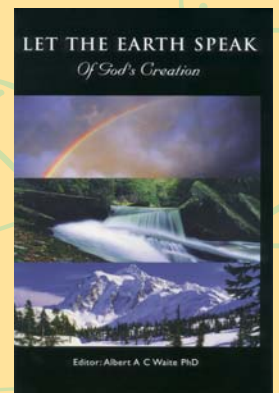
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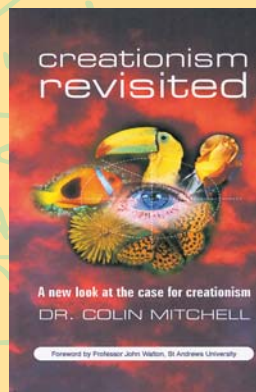
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