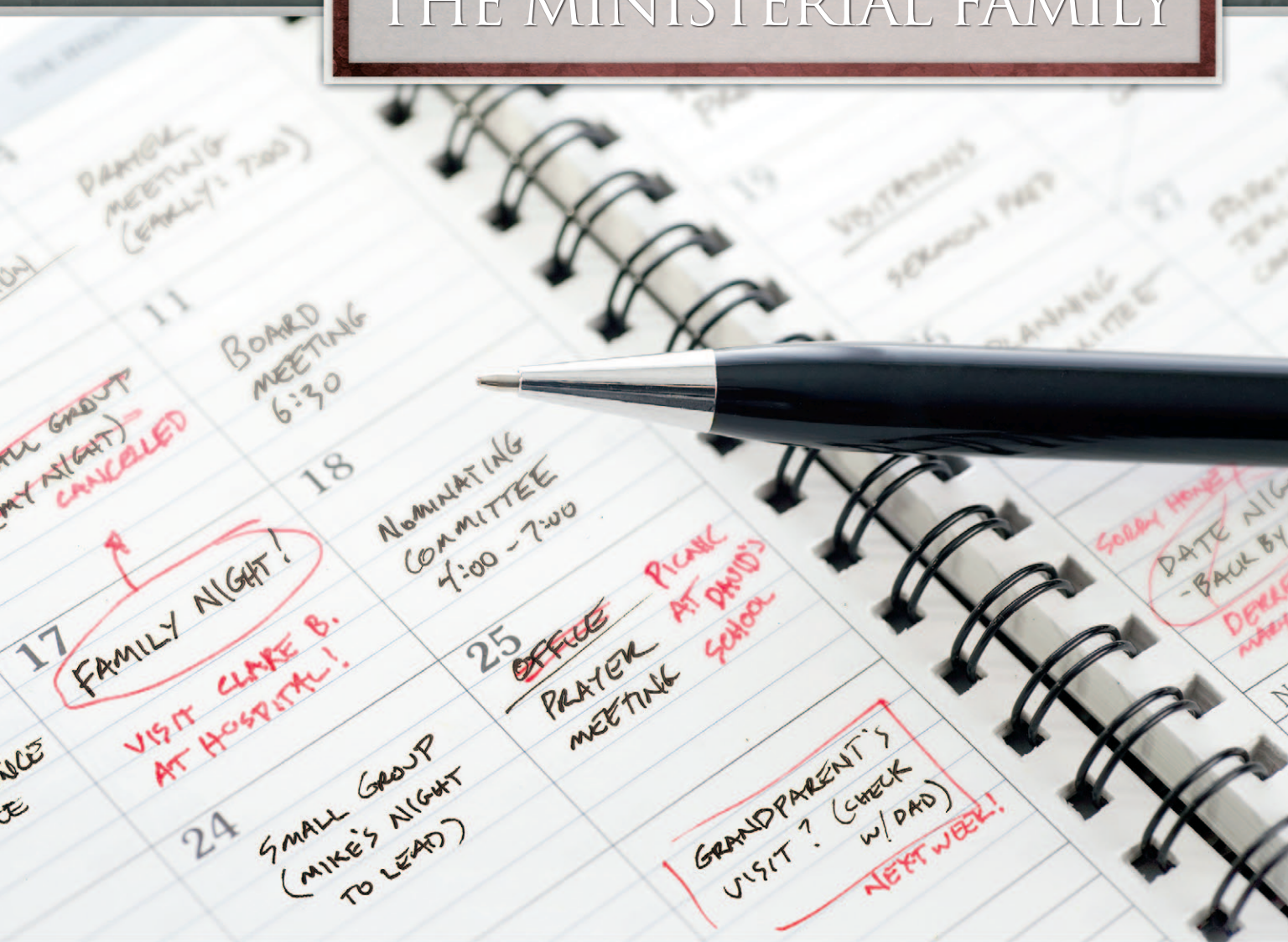


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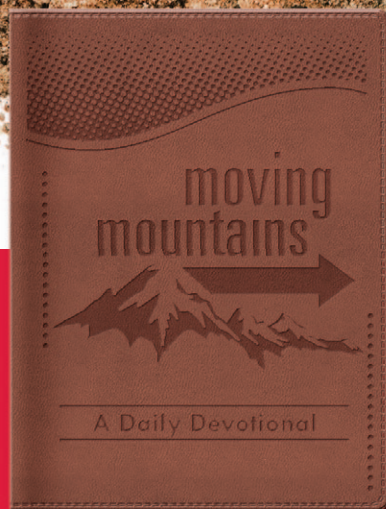
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CORRECTION: Due to font corruption during export to our printer, there is incorrect lettering in the print September 2011 Cosaert editorial, and Holmes articles. In Dr. Cosaert’s article, “wz,,” should read “A.D.” and in the editorial and Dr. Holmes’s articles, “LORZ,” should read “LORD.” We apologize for the confusion.

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“THIS SHOULD BE REQUIRED, PRAYERFUL READING FOR ALL PASTORS AND PROSPECTIVE PASTORS ON A YEARLY BASIS.”

Understanding worship

Thank you for Robert Leslie Holmes’s article (“The Weightiness of Worship” — September 2011). I have spent time struggling over what Jesus meant when He told us that we needed to worship in spirit and in truth and what the implications are for how worship in spirit and truth would be lived out in a congregation.

The passage in which Holmes wrote, “Also, God is not mocked. . . . Amos says that God is not bought off with cheap token commitments. If they do not forgive others their sins, God will not accept their worship,” speaks to the condition of most worship I have witnessed in my life in church and as a minister these past 11 years. Your affirmation of what worship should be at the end of the same paragraph, an “everyday, all-day experience” and as something powerful, flowing, and glorious that is not dull, but is a “nonstop adventure,” describes what has happened in my journey with God these last two years.

Your article struck me as a timely truth for the condition of inadequate worship that dominates American Christianity. I hope many pastors read your article and become inspired to preach, teach, and lead their people to truly follow Jesus Christ. The only thing that stops any of us from challenging the insipid,

lukewarm faith and worship of our age is the fear of man. But when you know who God really is, the joy of fearing Him makes sacrifice possible.

I pray you will continue to help many young ministers glimpse the truth and hear the call of Jesus Christ to be bold, pick up their cross, and follow Him as He confronts the dark powers of our age, to liberate those whose hearts truly seek His heart.

—Stan Hickman, email

Genuine ministry

Loren Seibold hit the target with his article, “Get Back to the Basics. Be Jesus to Someone!” (September 2011). I am the pastor of a congregation in South Dakota, as well as chair of my judicatory’s committee, responsible for helping pastors and congregations in their call processes.

Seibold’s critique of all the scenarios of pastoral ministry (preaching, administration, etc.) is accurate; but I just wonder if denominational and synod/district leaders understand just how much people appreciate their pastor taking time to visit them on a one-on-one basis; especially those who have difficulty attending worship or otherwise being unable to actively engage in the congregation’s ministry.

Thanks for publishing the article, as I appreciate most all of the articles you publish!

—Lance Lindgren, email

I have been a faithful reader of *Ministry* for many years. They get better and better. The September 2011 issue is outstanding! But the best of all the articles was Loren Seibold’s “Get Back to the Basics. Be Jesus to Someone!” This should be required, prayerful reading for all pastors and prospective pastors on a yearly basis.

—Bryce Hickerson, Carmichael, California, United States

Scripture and science

I very much appreciated Humberto M. Rasi’s discussion of the role of one’s worldview on scientific interpretation of data (“Why Do Different Scientists Interpret Reality Differently?” — September 2011). I would like to reinforce his conclusion about how “those who accept the biblical narrative as true and reliable enjoy the advantage of having at their disposal additional options and insights . . . which can generate research questions that may lead to fruitful hypotheses, explanations, and discoveries.” This is a point we cannot afford to miss.

If one observes the diagrams he provides for theism, naturalism, and pantheism, one can readily see that both naturalism and pantheism are closed, exclusive systems that exclude from consideration anything supernatural from outside

Continued on page 24 ►



Memories of a great Christian leader

Our world has lost a great Christian leader. The internationally known and respected Anglican cleric, John R. W. Stott, died on July 27, 2011. According to Dr. Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, “The death of John Stott will be mourned by countless Christians around the world.”¹ I will be one of those many mourners, but I will grieve with a thankful heart.² I have precious memories of powerful biblical sermons by John Stott during my college years in England. While many churches in England were empty, All Souls Church in London—where he served as rector and rector emeritus for more than half a century—was filled to capacity. Young adults who had grown up in a post-Christian nation came with their Bibles and listened attentively. The reason? Stott preached relevant biblical sermons that challenged them to be transformed by a renewing of their minds rather than conforming to their secular, hedonistic culture.

During my doctoral studies, I examined Stott’s preaching ministry, learning from his example that one must first listen attentively to the Word of God before daring to speak for God. Stott was a biblical preacher. “It is God’s speech which makes our speech necessary,” Stott asserted. “We must speak what he has spoken.”³ He was also a humble witness. Before preaching, he would pray this prayer in the pulpit:

Heavenly Father, we bow in
your presence
May your Word be our rule
Your Spirit our teacher,

And your greater glory our
supreme concern,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁴

Many who knew John Stott can testify that he never fell into the trap of trying to make a name for himself. His only concern was to exalt the name of Jesus.

In 1974, Stott played a significant role in the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. He urged those in attendance not only to love their neighbors but also to tell them the good news about Jesus. That was a message Stott repeated and restated throughout his ministry.

Many consider his book *The Cross of Christ* (1986) to be his magnum opus. Without a doubt, this book should be added to one’s library and carefully studied. I would also encourage you to read *Basic Christianity* (1958) and *Between Two Worlds* (1982). In his final volume, *The Radical Disciple* (2010), Stott challenges us all with this assertion: “Basic to all discipleship is our resolve not only to address Jesus with polite titles, but to follow his teaching and obey his commands.”⁵

While Stott was still living in London, I visited him at his home. I will never forget a comment he made during that meeting: “We should be praying that God will raise up a new generation of Christian communicators who are determined to bridge the chasm; who struggle to relate God’s unchanging Word to our ever-changing world; who refuse to sacrifice truth to relevance or relevance to truth.” I am determined

to honor that request and it is my prayer that this journal will help you relate God’s unchanging Word to our ever-changing world.

John Stott set a noble example. He lived well and finished well. It might be said of this great Christian leader, paraphrasing the words of the apostle Paul, “You have fought

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NAME OF JESUS.

the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for you the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to you on that Day, and not to you only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”⁶ M

1 <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2144/archbishop-remembers-john-stott>.

2 We want to hear from you regarding ways that the preaching and writing of John Stott impacted your life and ministry. Send a letter to the editor through our Web site, www.ministrymagazine.org.

3 John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 15.

4 *Ibid.*, 340.

5 John R. W. Stott, *The Radical Disciple* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 135.

6 2 Timothy 4:7, 8, paraphrased.

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

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The ministerial family: Balancing church and family life

Let us begin by taking a quiz. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. Pastoral families usually protect their personal and family lives.
2. The expectations of church members often impinge upon a pastor's family and home life.
3. A significant dimension to pastoral ministry is the modeling of healthy family relations.
4. A pastor and/or the pastor's spouse should be available whenever he or she is called upon by a church member.
5. Pastors who turn off their cell phones or home phones in order to spend time with their families deny their church members access, which they have a right to expect.
6. Pastors and their spouses often get so involved with helping others that there is no time left for their own families.

The pastor's family

What do Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White have to say about our responsibilities to our families?

"If anyone does not take care of his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, ISV).

"Exploit or abuse your family, and end up with a fistful of air" (Proverbs 11:29, *The Message*).

"There is no more important missionary field than our own home"*

Rank the following list according to how your family currently prioritizes things:

1. Work with church and church members
2. Family
3. God

As a pastor, do you make a distinction between God and work? This becomes a difficult question when your work includes service to God. Too often we lump service to the church together with service to God when they need to be kept distinct, even separate. They are not the same. Our responsibilities to God should always take top priority over our obligations to the church.

But where do our obligations to our families come in? Do we meet the needs of our church members at the expense of our own families? If so, we are making a big mistake. In order to avoid this, the minister and his or her family must find the right balance between church and home life. What follows are eight principles to help you best prioritize your family in your life.

1. Balance the urgent with the important

Consider the following depiction of things that demand your attention and decide under which heading you operate most of the time.

a: Nonurgent and Unimportant: Here we find the pastoral demands of the trivial, unimportant, inconsequential, irrelevant—or what we might call the junk mail—which some have difficulty escaping from.

b: Urgent but Unimportant: This is the area that demands most of our time. These things seem urgent but are often unimportant in the overall scheme of things.

c: Urgent and Important: This may seem like the best place in which to operate; however, in this setting, you are in crisis mode. Who wants to be putting out fires every day? There must be a better way.

d: Nonurgent but Important: This is actually the best quadrant in which to minister. Deal with the important before the important becomes urgent. The best way to get into this quadrant is to plan, organize, and prioritize. Learning to operate here saves time that you can then give to your family.

2. Let others hold you accountable and help you

You may need some outside help to review how you are using your time. Talk to your local conference ministerial secretary and seek guidance and counsel.

Keep a journal for a 30-day period and review it. How do you spend most of your time? Have a mentor review the journal with you and give you feedback. You may need someone else to “give you permission” to take some time off.

Eliminate things that are not necessary. March to the mission that Jesus called you to do, not to

families in the church regarding this important topic.

Make sure that roles, expectations, and expectations of all your church officers are clearly defined. If it is not your job, cut it out of your schedule! Let other church leaders do their jobs, and you do yours. Do not take someone else’s ministry away from them. Every pastor needs to add one item to their current job description: *commitment to my own family*.

3. Set limits on time for regular church office/work time

What is a reasonable amount of time for staff development, to sit on

an evangelistic series, when you may have no choice but to work many hours. But at the end, reward yourself and your family with some special alone time together. This will give you all a treat to look forward to as you dedicate yourself to ministry at those particular times.

4. Guard and protect boundaries

Set and lovingly communicate parameters to your church family in order to protect your private family time, and encourage them to do the same. A good minister will always respond to legitimate emergencies, but it is important to define an emer-



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the mission that others want you to do for them.

Involve the local church board and staff in your decision to make your family a priority. This does not mean that you ask their permission for time off; rather, it means that they are informed and involved in the process. Your church members should then be informed. Remember, your family can be a role model for other

committees, to meet with church members, sermon preparation, and other items? In one survey of lay people, the answers to this question averaged 82 hours per week—an incredibly great amount of time. One church member even proposed that the pastor may work 200 hours per week.

There will be those special events or times, such as during

gency. Be candid with your church about how they can expect you to respond to various crises. What is an emergency? What is a crisis? Defining these terms ahead of time will help you identify those instances that may, or may not, need immediate attention. Some “emergencies” can, in fact, wait. Your clearly communicated responses will diffuse misunderstandings before they develop and often

Questions for further reflection/discussion:

1. Where are your church responsibilities on your priority list?
2. Where is your family on your priority list?
3. What constitutes an “emergency”?
4. Are there people with whom it’s easier to say No to than others? If so, what makes the difference?
5. Why does saying No make you feel guilty?
6. Regarding my time, do I say Yes to my church family more often than to my family?
7. What can I change, beginning today?

prevent the manipulation of your time. Establish a day off each week and make sure that all your church family is aware of what time has been set aside.

Guarding your boundaries requires action. Put your computer and phone aside when you are with your spouse or children. You do not have to answer every call immediately. Preserve your family meal times. Eating together as a family is an important time to talk and share about the day’s happenings, challenges, joys, and tomorrow’s events.

5. A regular schedule makes crises easier to bear

If you have a regular day off with your family and take time to give them a place of importance in your schedule, then when a real crisis arises that takes you away, these kinds of events will be easier to bear.

6. Mentor others

Delegate as much as possible to other church leaders. Trust and train them to do the job that the

nominating committee has elected them to do. Allow them to serve. Do not take service opportunities away from your church members because you feel you can do it better or faster. Help out the church family and yourself by sharing in ministry.

If you are too busy, you are probably not delegating. Train and trust people to coordinate and lead programs and events. Investing time in the training of others will not only save you hours, but fulfill the scriptural guidance offered in Ephesians 4:11, 12: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (NIV).

7. Schedule family time in your calendars now

Schedule your vacation early in the year. Many of our ministerial families lose vacation time because they are too busy to take it. There may never be a “good time” but this must be a priority.

Schedule one night every week with your spouse, a kind of “date night.” When God created Adam, He said it was not good for him to be alone. So He gave Adam a wife, not a whole church family.

Here is a formula that may be good to adopt: Spend at least 30 minutes each evening together, one entire evening each week, one day each month, and one weekend each quarter.

Schedule one evening with the entire family. Remember to make each child feel special. Try to schedule time with each child alone. When you are traveling, remember to call home and speak to your spouse and to each child.

One minister offers his family his daily planner to have first choice for them to fill in the time they want with him. He sacredly guards the time they have agreed on, even declining to chair important meetings. He tells a story of a church board member spotting his car near the beach and seeing him playing on the beach with his kids when he had previously told him that he was not available to meet. This experience gave the minister an opportunity to testify to his own family and the church of the importance of making his family a priority.

8. Take time for yourself

Take time for yourself to renew and recommit your relationship to God. As a spiritual leader, you must take the time to grow spiritually.

Get needed rest each night. You will be profitable for no one if you are not mindful that your body needs rest and renewal through sleep.

Our families are our most important treasures and God-given gifts on this earth. How sad it will be when we get to heaven if our family members are missing. We must begin today to make them a priority so that we can spend eternity together. ❑

* Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), 476.

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The transforming power of a hope-centered life

Acts 27 records a vivid report of the first portion of Paul's travel to Rome—from Caesarea to the shores of Malta. Most likely the trip started at the beginning of autumn in A.D. 60. At Myra in Lycia, he was transferred to another ship set out for Rome with a total of 276 people and a load of Egyptian wheat.

Ships usually have a well-organized community. When on duty, sailors remain very disciplined. A strict chain of command exists and all orders are to be respected in absolute discipline. This vessel was also manned with a military unit. When we read the story of this voyage, we see that in spite of the presumed competency of the sailors and the soldiers, the report is not pleasant: "the winds were contrary" (v. 4), "we . . . sailed slowly many days" and "the wind [was] not suffering us" (v. 7), then "not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind" (v. 14), "and when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive" (v. 15). Soon the crew resorted to desperate measures: "they used helps, undergirding the ship; . . . and so were driven" (v. 17), "and we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship" (v. 18). The terse description, mostly in the third person, using short sentences and almost void

of any emotion, changes to a very personal expression of the intense pain and despair felt by the crew when they decided to deliberately throw overboard some of the sailing tools. "We cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship" (v. 19), as "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (v. 20).

And Paul was on this ship as a prisoner to Rome. The fate of the small community on the doomed ship would also be the fate of the apostle.

Is this not a word picture for the situation of our planet? The parallel is striking! International organizations, multilateral treaties, and global resolutions try to tackle every major issue. However, the problems of this planet are so convoluted that all efforts to halt or slow the destruction are too weak, too late.

We Christians live on this planet. As a part of humanity, we will share in its predicament—at least up to a point. We cannot expect special treatment or to be set apart when suffering and tragedy affect all other members of society.

Paul's status on the ship illuminates our condition in society. While visiting churches, especially those organized by him, he was easily recognized and considered an authority; but on this ship he had no status. On the ship, he entered an already structured community with its own rules and routines in the same way we

have to operate in a society existing long before we became part of it. In terms of social standing, he had little influence to change this society. Yet, over a period of several weeks, Paul transformed the thinking, and even the characters, of the crew, soldiers and centurion, travelers, and prisoners. He became a source of hope amidst devastating situations and promoted a sense of responsibility and respect for what was right in conditions bent toward chaos and erratic behavior.

Accurate evaluation

The ship remained for a short time in a place called "Fair Havens." Paul admonished them, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives" (v. 10). Why did he intervene? Because he saw himself as a responsible participant on the voyage, not just a passive passenger. He had no authority; nonetheless, he knew he had power to influence those in executive positions and used it rather than complaining about his own lack of social standing. Paul acknowledged the authority vested in the centurion, master, and owner of the ship, and approached them rather than venting his objections among the sailors or other travelers. He interacted with the sailing community in a way that should model our own interactions with society.

What was the source of Paul's advice? He possibly received this information supernaturally. He was a prophet of God who, indeed, revealed to him many things. If this was the case, why did he not disclose the source?

His hearers were not prepared for such a statement. They barely knew him and were prejudiced against him. They did not consider him a prophet or representative of God. If Paul received the revelation from God, he conveyed the message to those concerned, and was wise not to identify the Source.

But probably Paul's realization of threatened danger resulted from his own observations as a seasoned traveler. He had already made several journeys on the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, showing interest in everything connected to seamanship, observing different factors, and discussing his observations. Paul had a keen interest, not only in theology and mission, but also in many other areas of life. He was able to make practical applications of his knowledge, considering he had a duty to speak out and respectfully influence people in positions of power.

Influence is not something that can be demanded but a privilege obtained on the basis of real interest in human affairs, systematic observation, serious thought, courageous opinion, and responsible interactions with society.

True hope

The first intervention by Paul was rejected. The decision was taken to depart for Phenice, a better haven of Crete. But they were not able to enter the peaceful gulf because a tempestuous wind arose and the ship was caught and terribly tossed. Crew and passengers alike suffered from seasickness and had not eaten. They had not caught a glimpse of the sun or stars for days and had lost all hope. The centurion and the master had plenty of reasons

to regret not following Paul's advice. However, Paul showed the same deep interest in his fellow travelers, so he acted again. We read that "Paul stood forth" (v. 21). When all others were exhausted, broken, and defeated, Paul was in the same situation as the others—but his attitude was completely different.

Like Paul, we are exposed to the same injustices, calamities, and tragedies in society. Our prophetic understanding makes us more keenly aware of the terrible times to come. We have a better perception of Satan's hatred against this world and the chaos and destructions he perpetrates.

But we have a faith that helps us from being despondent. We are to stand up when others fall down; stand forth when others falter. Our posture should be a message in itself.

Paul started his second speech by reminding the people of his previous rejected intervention. Why? His attitude was not a self-righteous "I told you so." Paul was rather preparing the way for what he planned to say now, and he sought their respect and attention.

His second speech had two time references: "then" and "now" (v. 22). "Then" was the time of their distrust, disobedience, and bad decisions.

"Now" was the time of a new promise, an opportunity to trust and obey. A "then" exists in the life of every person and community. Our dark history cannot be simply ignored, otherwise we would continue on the wrong paths. Without reckoning our sinful "then," the "now" has no appeal, no attraction. And, without a "now," there is no hope, no escape from despair.

"I exhort you to be of good cheer" (v. 22), continued Paul. We can be certain that he was a living model of what he was asking of them—his countenance and body language radiated hope and courage. What was "now" the source of Paul's intervention? He stated it clearly: "the angel of God" (v. 23). He even gave the time of the revelation: "this night"! He did not procrastinate, waiting for a better time. Why was he now so open? He had had the time to become known and trusted as a man and believer, so he spoke freely about God. He knew he belonged to God and served Him (v. 23). He had a clear destination not only for this trip, but also for his life (v. 24). He would reach Rome in spite of all adversity because he had to bear testimony for Christ there.

His report to the other travelers—sailors, soldiers, and

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passengers—was explained in surprising terms: “God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (v. 24). In the same way, we can hear God speaking to us: I have given you all those with authority over you, everyone in the same town, school, and company, on the same bus, boat, or plane. We are placed in our community to act with courage and faith.

Preserver of community

The next intervention of Paul, described in verses 30–32, is quite different. The crew, apparently again in despair, tried to abandon the ship, thinking they could save their own lives. The sailors plotted to take a small boat and flee. And Paul was

opinion. Talking to the soldiers, he did not say, “Except the crew abides in the ship, they cannot be saved,” but rather, “Except the crew abides in the ship, you cannot be saved!”

Embodiment of hope

Now we reach the last reported interaction of Paul with the people on board (vv. 33–36). He expressed his tender compassion to the battered sailors and travelers. Everything was completely upset and it was possible to obtain only snatches of food now and then. All were hungry and exhausted with the most challenging times still ahead. So Paul encouraged them to come and eat, and began eating in front of them.

The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament.”*

This was the last recorded intervention of Paul. The rest of the events followed in quick succession, and, before long, the ship was completely broken by the violence of the waves. In verse 42, as the shipwreck was ominous, the soldiers considered killing all prisoners, fearing they would do what every prisoner would do—try to escape—exposing the soldiers to death for their negligence. So they reasoned, It is better to kill than be killed. The centurion resisted. He wanted to save Paul, realizing that all on board owed him their lives and that Paul had a divinely ordained appointment in Rome. Even more, during those terrible weeks, it is possible the centurion learned from Paul about the sanctity of human life, the righteous judgment of God (cf. Acts 24:25), and the duty of the higher powers to minister on behalf of God for the good of those under their authority (cf. Rom. 13:1–4). These convictions might have become strong enough to lead him to take the risk rather than kill his prisoners.

The last verses of the chapter bring the most luminous evidence of Paul’s transforming influence on all—including his fellow prisoners. They did not take advantage of the incredible opportunity to flee, but grouped on shore, ready to be put again in chains!

Two or three weeks, under the most trying circumstances, were enough for Paul to instill a living and transforming hope in more than 270 persons aboard. They learned to trust God and experienced a dramatic rescue by hope. They were inspired to respect life and the rights of others. This transformation gives a convincing testimony to the invincible power of a hope-centered life to influence, change, and redeem individuals and entire communities. ❏

* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 660.

WE ARE PLACED IN OUR
COMMUNITY TO ACT WITH
COURAGE AND FAITH.

the only one to detect their scheme! He again displayed a remarkable ability to observe the reality and understand the consequences of the attempted plot. He was willing to act responsibly, even taking personal risks. Christians should also be seen as having the clearest perception and interpretation of reality, the most responsible attitude, and the most sincere and unselfish involvement in the affairs of society.

The way Paul expressed the danger becomes very significant both for church and society: “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (v. 31). Our natural tendency is to find someone to blame for problems and have these individuals removed. But Paul was of a different

Once again, he practiced what he was preaching. The wording of verse 35 is intriguing: “And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God . . . and when he had broken it, he began to eat.” The wording is closely reminiscent of the language used by the Gospel writers and Paul, himself, to describe the Lord’s Supper. This does not lead us to conclude that Paul organized a formal supper. The daily meal of a Christian should include more than just feeding the body, but should be an act of gratitude, hope, and love. Every meal should be a shadow of the Lord’s Supper. “The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life.

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Near, but distant: Lessons from Luke on the problem of indifferent members

To have been with Jesus as He walked this earth would have been great: to listen to His teachings, observe Him heal, witness His resurrection. If around Him then, we would never doubt, never question, and never waver in our faith. And, certainly, we would not have been as indifferent and uninvolved as so many of today's Christians often are.

Or would we?

The silent majority

Our church today faces the great challenge of uninvolved membership. We find it virtually a rule that the minority in a church serves the majority. The most we can get from uninvolved members seems to just be criticisms of what active and involved members are doing. Some members are near, but distant. They are not eager to be involved in church activities, and often are just observers who come to the church for their weekly package of spirituality and then go home.

The crucial question is, How do we get these people involved?

Gospel writers described a similar attitude of indifference among those gathered around Jesus (e.g., Luke 22:54–23:56). As Luke wrote

about various situations of indifference, he also highlighted those who broke the pattern and became disciples of Christ.

The last days of Christ

As Luke described Christ on the way to Golgotha, he started with Peter. Peter was among Christ's first disciples, following Jesus when his Master was still not well known. He listened to His teachings and saw many of His healings and the raising of the dead. Peter was a faithful follower who shared both the good and bad with Jesus.

But then, later on, Luke described Peter as the one who "followed [Jesus] at a distance" (Luke 22:54, NIV). What happened to Peter, who before had always been near, but now, from a distance, denied Jesus three times (v. 57)? In the hour of trial, he became distant and ignorant.

Luke presented others who were around Jesus in His last moments, people who were near but distant. Guards in the house of the high priest started mocking and beating Him (vv. 63, 64). The Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council—those who were supposed to be the spiritual and moral leaders—were ignorant of Jesus and His ministry as well. They

gathered together for the purpose of questioning and accusing Him (vv. 66–71). Herod, with his soldiers, ridiculed and mocked Him (Luke 23:8–12). And even though he liked Jesus (v. 4), Pilate did not want to get involved (vv. 24, 25). Though all were physically near, they were very distant in regards to what counted the most.

On Jesus' way to Golgotha, Simon, a visiting pilgrim, was constrained to carry the cross. Did he do this because of sympathy for Jesus? Was he happy to be around Jesus? Roman soldiers could order any non-Romans into such service for Rome. In Simon's view, Passover weekend could not have started in a worse way. In the end, however, his enforced nearness turned out to be a great blessing.

Some women were mourning and wailing while following Jesus to Golgotha. Were they true followers? It was a custom at executions to mourn the loss. Seeing women just fulfilling their duty in accordance with local customs, Jesus told them, "weep for yourselves and for your children" (v. 28, NIV). These women were near, at least physically, but nevertheless distant. As they arrived at Golgotha, the leaders sneered. They, of their own choice,

wanted to be near Jesus in order to show Him who was in charge. They ridiculed Him and His Messiahship. "Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" (v. 35, NIV). They were near Jesus, but no doubt that proximity will, in judgment, come back to condemn them.

Where were all those who had eaten the bread and fish Jesus had provided for them miraculously? Where were all those who had been healed? Where were all those who welcomed Him to Jerusalem and sang His praises (Luke 19:38)? Many who previously were near Jesus became distant and far, while many of those who were now physically near became indifferent, even evil.

WHAT TRULY MATTERS IS
WHERE OUR HEARTS ARE IN
RELATIONSHIP TO HIM.

Roman soldiers were at Golgotha. They had to be there. They mocked Jesus on political grounds (Luke 23:36): "Look at the King of the Jews. If you are the King, can You escape our torture?" They were near Jesus but that wasn't enough. One criminal, from his cross, insulted Jesus: "'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!'" (v. 39, NIV). He did not see the nearness of Jesus as a blessing to him.

Luke finally describes a person at Golgotha who was ready to accept Jesus. Who was the man ready to accept Jesus into his heart? It was the second criminal. He actually rebuked the first criminal and testified that Jesus "has done nothing wrong" (v. 41, NIV).

How did he know that Jesus did nothing wrong? Obviously, he had heard about Jesus. Perhaps he felt that Jesus could help him. Now, here, at the cross, he had his chance, the opportunity of a lifetime. He said to Jesus, "Please, remember me; I want to be Yours; I want to always be near You!" (see v. 42). How is it that, of all the people around Jesus, this criminal was one of just a few that used his nearness for eternal gain? Among all the candidates for God's kingdom at Golgotha, he was a most unlikely candidate.

Luke continues, adding two more unlikely candidates. As a centurion saw how Jesus died, he praised God saying, "'Surely this was a righteous man'" (v. 47, NIV). In the words of

Among those who followed Jesus, ate His fish and bread, experienced His miracles, and were healed—even resurrected—only three testified for Jesus: a criminal, a centurion, and Joseph, the most unlikely of candidates.

The parallels

Where do we stand? All of us are like criminals sentenced to death. All of us await the same destiny. Being in the church is not enough. Being observant Christians only does not constitute all that is required. Serving as pastors—preaching and teaching weekly—is also insufficient. Indifference can cost us eternity. Jesus calls us to be involved. He wants us to take our stand and do our part in service to Him.

What is our part? Where do we see ourselves fitting in? The centurion testified in front of everyone; the second criminal testified and embraced Jesus with all of his heart; Joseph stepped out and did what was right, testifying about his faith in Jesus.

Where is our heart? Are we ready to embrace Jesus fully and totally, or are we holding on to things of this life that cannot save us in the end? God calls us to involvement. As the two criminals had their day and encounter with Jesus, so today we have our day and encounter as well.

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter had his encounter with Jesus (John 21:15–19). He embraced his second chance and faithfully followed his Lord and Savior until death. Do we want to remain uninvolved and distant from Jesus—although we minister in His presence regularly? Or are we ready to come near to Jesus and become involved?

Yes, it would be great to have been with Jesus when He walked on the earth. But, as we have seen, just being physically near was not enough. What truly matters is where our hearts are in relationship to Him. ❏

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The meaning of life

"I feel everything that ever happened to me, and I memorize it, but it's all in vain."

—Osip Mandelstam¹

"We've been the Beatles, which was marvelous . . . but I think generally there was this feeling of 'Yeah, well, it's great to be famous, it's great to be rich—but what's it all for?'"

—Paul McCartney²

In an oft-quoted sentence from his book, *The First Three Minutes*, Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Steven Weinberg wrote, "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless."³ Responding to the harsh blowback from the line, Weinberg, in another book, *Dreams of a Final Theory*, explained that his "rash" statement did not mean that science thought the universe was pointless but simply that "the universe itself suggests no point."⁴

To begin with, others wondered what all the fuss was about. Harvard astronomer Margaret Geller, for instance, responded, "Why should it [the universe] have a point? What point? It's just a physical system, what point is there? I've always been puzzled by that statement."⁵

Enlightenment heirs

However uncomfortable Weinberg might have made people, he was simply taking the premises of an a priori materialism to their

logical conclusion. We, in the West, are inheritors of the Enlightenment, which over time (with a strong dose of French influence) morphed into promoting a system that reduced all reality, all existence, to the natural world alone. As ministers, we must realize, too, that in this worldview, no place exists for any transcendence, much less a personal God like Yahweh. Though postmodernism, in its various incantations, has been a dialectical reaction to the cold harshness of a worldview that has turned everything into "just a physical system," the twenty-first century West remains in the grip of the modernist mentality in which science and the scientific method remain, for many, the most reliable, if not the ultimate or even only, source of truth.

Cosmology, however, is not quite a zero-sum game—and whatever we have gained, or think we have gained through the modernist world, has been offset elsewhere, especially regarding what is most personal and important—the meaning of human life itself. Friederich Nietzsche, with his harsh atheism, *because* of his harsh atheism, could see what modernism would do to humanity's sense of purpose and meaning. His famous (or infamous) "God is dead" quote was a warning about the void that the modern antimetaphysical worldview would leave inside the souls of humans. And that could easily include some of your own parishioners.

The Heisman factor

The point includes the fact that these philosophy and metaphysical issues have down-to-earth consequences. After all, life is hard enough, even as Christians who have experienced the love of God, and who, even if through a "glass darkly," know something of the wonderful richness of beings made in the image of a God who not only created but redeemed us. And yet still, what believer, even preacher, at the lowest moments, has not wondered if it is all worth it? (See Ecclesiastes 1:14.) Imagine, then, the life of those who do not know the Lord, who have not experienced the purposeful hopefulness found in the plan of salvation but believe, instead, that this existence is it, period—with nothing beyond?

Take 35-year-old Mitchell Heisman. Having lost faith in God, in anything transcendent, and delving into nihilism (the view that life itself is without meaning and—like Weinberg and Geller's universe—pointless), Mitchell Heisman committed suicide. He shot himself in front of a church in Harvard Yard, but not before writing a 1,905-page suicide note in which he expressed where his nihilism had taken him:

"Every word, every thought, and every emotion," he wrote, "come back to one core problem: life is meaningless. The experiment in nihilism is to seek out and expose every illusion and every myth, wherever it may lead, no matter what, even if it kills us."

What, though, would have happened had, on his way to Harvard Yard, Mitchell Heisman first walked into a Christian church in one last desperate attempt at answers? What would you, a minister, have said to Mitchell after he expressed his dreadful conclusion that “life was meaningless,” and so why should he hassle with all the pain and angst of living it?

What answer would you give him, or anyone, asking what many would argue consists of the most important question: What is the meaning of our lives, especially when these lives are so flawed, so damaged, so full of pain, lives that not only will surely die but surely know it, too?

The will to meaning

Victor Frankl was a 37-year-old Viennese neurologist and psychiatrist when he, along with his wife and parents, were deported to a Nazi concentration camp. Out of those horrific experiences (in which he alone survived), Frankl wrote the best-selling *Man’s Search for Meaning*, in which he proposed that our most basic need was to find meaning and purpose to our existence. Quoting Nietzsche, he wrote, “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.”⁶ In fact, playing off of Nietzsche’s misunderstood phrase “the will to power,” Frankl wrote about “the will to meaning,” the idea that, at our core, we seek purpose for our lives.

Along this line, Frankl developed what he called “logotherapy,” based on the Greek word *logos* (interesting in light of John 1:1), which he said denotes “meaning.” Frankl wrote, “According to logotherapy, this striving to find meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a *will to meaning*.”⁷

Frankl might have accurately diagnosed the problem, but his solution was lame, a kind of humanistic existentialism in which we each find our own meaning and purpose in and of ourselves. For Frankl, there

is no overarching purpose, as in deity (though he probably would find it fine if someone thought they could carve meaning for themselves that way). He used the analogy of chess: there is no one best move at any given time. You have to consider circumstance, context, and individuality, and from there, and from the immediacy of your own life, construe for yourself meaning.

One can see in Frankl the looming shadow of Nietzsche, who fulminated against any grand overarching view of the world from which we could derive meaning and purpose. Each of us, individually—we have to create our own meaning based on conscience and being authentic and true to self. Each life needs, Nietzsche argued, to become a work of art devoted to self-overcoming and creativity. We must not be trapped or limited by, he said, a meta-scheme of supposed truth that tells us what to believe and how we should live.

Of course (if one wanted to be cynical), one could humbly ask, *How did his philosophy work for Nietzsche himself?* Nietzsche, who never married (and never, apparently, had a long-lasting romantic relationship), collapsed on a street in Italy at 44 years old and spent his final years in semicatatonic insanity.

Tough luck, Charley

Though Nietzsche’s sad life does not disprove his philosophy, it does lead to the question, *How does one build a meaning for life when the very fabric of life and all that it has to work with is “just a system,” a “pointless” one at that?*

Weinberg was not, in fact, the only scientist to express this sentiment, again the logical conclusion of his premises. In 1958, a pioneer of quantum mechanics, Erwin Schrodinger, wrote, “Most painful is the absolute silence of all our scientific investigations toward our questions concerning the meaning and scope of the whole display. The more attentively we watch it, the more aimless and foolish it appears to be.”⁸

Or, as physical chemist Michael Polyani said, “Unfortunately, the *ideal* goals of science are nonsensical. Current biology is based on the assumption that you can explain the processes of life in terms of physics and chemistry; and, of course, physics and chemistry are both represented ultimately in terms of the forces acting between atomic particles. So all life, all human beings, all works of man, including Shakespeare’s sonnets and Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, are also to be thus represented.”⁹

What, then, can arise from nothing but forces between atomic particles but more forces between atomic particles? What can be made out of only aimlessness and foolishness other than more aimlessness and foolishness? Hence, the tough slough for human beings, whose every cell cries out for more than foolishness and atomic forces.

The message of modernism is *Tough luck, Charley*. This is just the way it is, and we have the science—i.e., lab experiments, mathematical formulas, and verifiable theories—to prove it. You want more? Then revert to what seventeenth-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes dubbed “the kingdom of the fairies.” The modern world has moved beyond that.

“You live in a deranged age,” wrote American author Walter Percy, “more deranged than usual, because in spite of great scientific and technological advances, man has not the faintest idea of who he is or what he is doing.”¹⁰

You do not need, however, to have lived in Percy’s “deranged age” to see the problem. Long before Christ, Solomon suffered from his own existential dread. Despite having all that the world could offer, he saw it all, in and of itself, as pointless. “Vanity of vanities,” he wrote, “all is vanity” (Eccles. 1:2). The word *vanity* (from the Hebrew *hbl*) means “vapor,” or “breath,” and is sometimes translated as “meaningless.” In Jeremiah 2:5, the noun is turned into a verb, and

describes what happened to those who turned away from the Lord. “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness [from *hbl*], and *became worthless* [from *hbl*]?” (ESV; emphasis supplied).

Building on worthlessness, meaninglessness, their lives became worthless, meaningless. What else could they become? If you add negative numbers to negative numbers, you get only negative numbers. The sum is always less than zero. A

loving God (John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:2; 11:3), and humanity as thoughtfully created in His image (Gen. 1:26, 27), a radically different approach than the mindless massacre of Darwinian evolution. According to the Bible, this God created us, sustains us (Dan. 5:23; Heb. 1:3; Acts 17:28), and, most importantly, redeemed us through His own self-sacrifice in the Person of Jesus on the cross (Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:6).

Redemption is crucial because to be merely created by God, in and of

was made (John 1:3), died for us so that we could have the promise of the eternity that He had set in our hearts. “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life” (John 6:54). “And I give unto them eternal life” (John 10:28). “Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:30). “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

THEREFORE, THROUGH OUR TESTIMONY
OF OUR LIVES OTHERS CAN COME TO
KNOW THE HOPE AND PROMISE OF
ETERNAL LIFE OFFERED EVERY HUMAN
BEING . . . IN JESUS CHRIST.

worldview that teaches that reality has no purpose but to infuse reasoning in creatures who are part of that reality with anything but purposelessness, is a miserable conclusion for beings, who at their core, as Frankl rightly said, seek purpose. Thus, Shakespeare’s line that life “is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

Eternity in our hearts

Contrast this, however, with Christianity, with the worldview it represents, which would have given Mitchell Heisman the meaning he so desperately sought but could not find in a godless cosmos filled with just “atoms and the void.”

Instead, Scripture posits the universe as the purposeful creation of

itself, is not enough to give us meaning—not when we all face death, the insidious acid that eats away at every ultimate purpose. What can life mean when it—and everyone we know in it, everyone we have ever impacted, when every influence we ever had—will all vanish into oblivion, with no consciousness of any kind to remember that we ever existed?

Scripture says that God “set eternity in the man’s heart” (Eccles. 3:11); we, then, are not only capable of contemplating eternity but have been wired for it. Yet here is precisely where we painfully, even infinitely, fall short.

That is why, central to the Christian worldview, the teaching that the Lord, the Creator of all that

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Tim. 1:16).

The answer

What, then, could you, as a minister, say to Mitchell Heisman or anyone who asked, What is the purpose and meaning of life?

The purpose of our lives is to love God first and foremost, and then our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37, 38), revealing to others and to the onlooking universe (1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10) the power and grace of a God who loved us so much that He bore in Himself the penalty for our sins (John 3:16; Isa. 53:4–6;

1 John 2:2) so we do not have to bear it ourselves. Thus, our lives are dedicated to His glory (1 Pet. 4:16; Rom. 15:6), which is made manifest by our willingness to serve others (1 John 3:16; Matt. 25:31–40), knowing that no good deed will go unrewarded (Matt. 10:42; Luke 6:35), that this existence is a “vapor” (James 4:14), and that through what Jesus has done for us we will live forever (John 17:3; Rom. 6:22; Matt. 19:29) in a new heaven and a new earth, one without any of the things that make us miserable here (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1–4). And because we know the gospel as such good news (Isa. 52:7; Acts 20:24), the deepest purpose and meaning in life is found in bearing witness (Isa. 43:10; Heb. 12:1) to the infinite value of every

human being, revealed in the infinite sacrifice made in their behalf (Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:19); and, therefore, through our testimony of our lives others can come to know the hope and promise of eternal life offered every human being (John 3:16; Rom. 10:11–13) in Jesus Christ.

That is what you could tell Mitchell Heisman (or anyone who asks) about the meaning of life.

Or, instead, there is always Steven Weinberg’s option. Though he argued that the universe itself is pointless, we can still, he said, “invent a point for our lives, including trying to understand the universe.” If, though, the universe is pointless—what is to understand? Why bother trying? One might even humbly ask, too, Is not seeking

to “invent” a point for our lives by studying a pointless universe the kind of self-contradictory and, ultimately, futile endeavor that is so often at the root of human meaninglessness to begin with?

Pointedly so. ❧

- 1 Osip Mandelstam, “Eyesight of Wasps,” in *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*, Neil Astely, ed. (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 45.
- 2 *Rolling Stone*, September 3, 2009, 49.
- 3 Steven Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 255.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 76.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 98, 99.
- 8 Erwin Schrodinger, *What Is Life?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 138.
- 9 Harry Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 25.
- 10 <http://lifeondoverbeach.wordpress.com/2011/03/18/walker-percy-on-the-deranged-age-we-live-in/>.

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Roger Hernandez, MDiv, is Hispanic ministries and evangelism coordinator, Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Gladstone, Oregon, United States.



To be **with Him**

Churches and pastors are constantly asking themselves, *How can my church grow? How can we be more effective in ministry?* I believe the answer is found in Mark 3:14, 15: “He appointed twelve . . . that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (NIV).

Recognize who called you

The person who calls you is important! Jesus called His disciples 2,000 years ago, and He calls His disciples still, but we must be clear on the source of our call. We must understand that in order to get where we are going, we need to know where we came from. A clear sense of our call is especially important during difficult times, because sometimes *all you have is your call*. Even when there exists no visible manifestation of success, your call will sustain you through periods of hard economic times and with people who are hard to deal with.

Like a seed planted in the soil, results are often not immediate or visible. In the part of the country I live in, a church was visited by a conference representative. That particular Sabbath there was just one other person in church. The conference representative was preaching his heart out when the member excused himself to go to the bathroom. A short time later, the member returned and the sermon continued.

These are extreme cases, but the point is this: sooner or later, you will experience hard times. When those tough times come, you must understand clearly who called you.

When I had only four years of ministerial experience, I was asked to help a small congregation while doing graduate studies. The first day I was there, there were six people present. The lady who was directing Sabbath School would do the welcome, sit down, do the mission story, sit down, and do almost everything else. The church was far away from our home, extremely cold, and the basement would flood, resulting in a bad odor. The town existed in the midst of a large fruit orchard, had one traffic light, and most Hispanics that lived there came and went according to the harvest. Even though it was discouraging, particularly on Sabbath, we saw God working there. I was only there for a short time, but I experienced the power of God like very few places I have seen. The lesson learned in those hard, cold, winter months was very simple—God works everywhere. We saw drug addicts converted, estranged families reconciled, and an active youth group established. God works even when we do not see any results. He did not call you to fail.

Recognize why He called you

Why He called you is very important. On earth, Jesus primarily called His disciples to “be with Him.” I

believe their miraculous acts came only as a result of a deep connection to Jesus. Their powerful preaching, timely healing, and other ministries were the result, not the object, of their ministry.

After their call, the disciples cast out demons, preached, and healed. These are great functions yet, do they qualify as the primary reason Jesus called the disciples? Is that the reason He calls us?

I am afraid that sometimes, in the modern statistics-driven Christianity we are part of, the real purpose why Jesus calls us gets lost. We are more interested in counting sheep than courting the Spirit. Yet, He calls us to be with Him. From the time He created us and forever more, God has a deep desire to be with us. It is crazy, I know, but true! *The God of the universe—madly in love with you and me*. What a concept. The whole purpose of your creation was not just that you spend time doing work *for* Him but that you spend time *with* Him. Do you remember how it felt to spend time with someone you were head over heels about? Remember the anticipation? The expectation? The satisfaction when your time was over?

Pastor Alejandro Bullón tells of an older woman who approached him after a sermon. She pointed to a graying gentleman and said, “You see that man over there? He is my husband of 40 years. I have never loved him.”

How tragic. Living with someone you do not love has to rank

highest in my “I hope it never happens to me” category. Think about it. The woman of the story was a good wife. She never cheated on her husband. She took the time to prepare meals for him. She ironed his shirts so that he could look good. She entertained guests on special occasions. She went on vacations and celebrated birthdays with him. Yet, a key component was missing. She did not love him.

Could the same thing be happening to us? Are we too busy trying to preach impressive sermons about Him, bring healing to many homes for Him, even work to com-

hardly spoke. Some were more interested in position than preaching, and one was constantly taking a piece of the pie for himself. What message was Jesus trying to send us through the selection of those disciples? Simply this: it is not about *you*, it is about *us*.

Doing ministry alongside people of different backgrounds, race, and economic status reminds me of Noah’s ark. The similarities to a congregation are plentiful. The ark had many features that kept the comfort level low. It had only one window and housed married couples and their in-laws for an extended period

it is easier to label someone and be done with it than to engage. Yet this was not God’s way.

Now, imagine cleaning up after thousands of animals everyday for over 100 days. The odor would be enough to knock you over. The church is similar. Ministry is messy. People do not always come through and stay faithful or truthful. Planning can sometimes seem like a play, diagramed by the coach on the blackboard but then fails miserably when tried on the field. Adjustments have to be made and different options looked at. I cringe when I hear some “expert” saying

GOD WORKS EVEN WHEN WE DO NOT SEE ANY RESULTS. HE DID NOT CALL YOU TO FAIL.

bat evil in society in His name, yet our personal relationship with God is lacking?

Recognize that He called others too

You should know that the *people* He called alongside of you are important to remember as well. From the beginning, Jesus instilled the team concept to ministry. This was not a one-man show even though it could have been, but was about community, collegiality.

A close look at the personality of the disciples reveals anything but uniformity. They were all different, and that was a good thing. Different backgrounds. Different social status. Different politics. Different jobs. A Hebrew revolutionary and a Roman sympathizer. One had a questioning mind, one spoke too soon, another

of time. Closed quarters can bring the worst out of people, and I am sure that even though Noah’s faith was strong, a lot of questions went through his mind as he looked outside and saw his former home covered with water.

Ministry to people has its great days, but pastoring also has its rainy, depressing, run of the mill days as well. Managing egos, dealing with childlike attitudes, having difficult conversations with sensitive people, and being watchful of extremist tendencies on both sides of the theological spectrum can make for some uncomfortable days. Or nights. Or both!

The reality? We live in a polarized society, and that polarization sometimes seeps inside the church. We address and relate to people based on their affiliations and many times

that if you implement these easy principles, you will have the church you are looking for, but this would never be that easy. Doing church would be awesome, if it was not for the people!

Conclusion

As it relates to Noah’s ark, there were probably hundreds of people who helped build it, yet only eight were saved. Just because you are working for God does not automatically translate into a saving relationship *with* God. As a friend of mine used to say, “It is not as important to work for God as it is to work with God.”

As you go through this ministry season, please remember Jesus’ words and make them the primary object of your life: to be with Him. ❏

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The reliability of the **New Testament Scriptures:** Early Christians and the codex (part 2 of 2)

Whether it is the iPad, Kindle, iPhone, or any number of “apps” that accompany them, the church always seems to lag behind with such gadgets by a few years or so. Trying to associate the church with cutting-edge technology seems as ridiculous as trying to mix water and oil—the two just do not seem to go together. While that is generally the case today, it was not always that way. An examination of the earliest manuscript evidence for the New Testament Scriptures suggests that the earliest Christians were at the forefront of a new wave of technology in the history of book-making called the “codex.” This technology would not only forever change the way the world would come to read a text but also help to spread the gospel across the ancient world.

What is a codex? What prompted the earliest Christians to be among the first to so readily adopt it? And what implications might this have for the church today?

The birth of the codex

The earliest evidence for the New Testament Scripture is a collection of 127 Greek manuscripts discovered in remote towns and villages

across ancient Egypt and written on papyrus that dates from the second to the fourth centuries. One of the most intriguing observations that emerged from the study of these New Testament papyri included the virtually unanimous nature of their format. While all the papyri vary in size, only four of the manuscripts are written on scrolls. Every single other manuscript originally formed part of a codex, a leaf-book similar to the format of books today. What makes the preference for the codex among early Christians so surprising is that the scroll continued to be the preferred writing format across the Mediterranean world until the fifth century.

The word *codex*, derived from the Latin word *caudex*, meaning “a block of wood,” originally referred to a collection of up to ten wooden tablets bound together by leather straps passed through holes on one edge.¹ Each wooden tablet was hollowed out and filled with wax. Since the surface could easily be erased, it was used for recording ephemera of all sorts: notes, school exercises, letters, and even a writer’s first draft. Sometime during the first century, the wooden tablet was replaced with parchment or papyrus.

What adds to the intrigue of the codex format of the early New Testament papyri centers around the fact that this revolution in book production appears to be intimately connected to the spiritual revolution that gave birth to Christianity and the New Testament Scriptures. Before the discovery of the early papyri, it was generally assumed that the preference for the codex over the scroll was a static development that affected both Christian and Gentile literature at roughly the same time. However, the papyri show that this is simply not the case. Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat write, “In contrast to the slow and piecemeal process by which the codex ousted the roll in secular literature [by the fifth century], the Christian adoption of the codex seems to have been instant and universal.”²

Why the codex?

Why did Christians disregard the universal practice of using the scroll in favor of the revolutionary codex? Answers to this question divide into two categories: (1) practical advantages over the scroll, and (2) spiritually significant events—or as Eldon Epp calls them, “the ‘big bang’ theories.”³

It has been suggested that Christians adopted the codex because of the practical advantages it offered: economy, compactness, comprehensiveness, convenience of use, ease of reference, as well as providing a more protective casing for the document itself. While such advantages may have been attractive, one has to wonder if any one of these advantages—or even all of them together—would have served as a sufficient catalyst to compel virtually the entire early church to switch so wholeheartedly from the scroll to the codex. Moreover, in some cases, the degree of the pro-

posed advantage has been shown to be either extremely minimal or not entirely consistent with the evidence of the papyri themselves. posed advantage has been shown to be either extremely minimal or not entirely consistent with the evidence of the papyri themselves. of the codex among Christians has produced several intriguing theories, but none with enough evidence to make them more than merely creative thinking. Colin Roberts put forth the first proposal in 1954, when he suggested that the Christian fascination with the codex began with the composition of the Gospel of Mark on a parchment codex in Rome.⁴ Some 30 years later Roberts, in a book coauthored with T. C. Skeat, changed his theory entirely. Rather than Mark in Rome, he suggested that the place of codex in Christianity arose among Jewish Christians in Antioch who recorded

could be safeguarded from either addition or subtraction.”⁶ While a number of different solutions were available to the church, recording all four Gospels on a single scroll was not one of them; that would have required the impossible—a scroll of some 99 feet, roughly 66 feet longer than the maximum length of a manageable scroll.⁷ The codex, however, offered a way to not only include all four Gospels, but also to discourage any further additions.

While this hypothesis provides intrigue, it does not fit with the evidence from the early papyri. While some codices from the third century

RATHER THAN AVOIDING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL GADGETS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES IF CHRISTIANS SOUGHT TO CO-OPT THESE GADGETS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM TODAY.

posed advantage has been shown to be either extremely minimal or not entirely consistent with the evidence of the papyri themselves.

For example, it is often suggested that the ability to write on both sides of the codex would make it a more economical format than a single-sided scroll. If cost was really the issue among early Christians, they could have just as well written on the backside of a scroll. In addition, it also has been estimated that the savings generated by writing on both sides of a codex would reduce the cost by only one-quarter. And if counting pennies was really an issue, why do many papyri have large empty margins?

The attempt to identify one key spiritual event that would have triggered the nearly unanimous adoption

of the *logia* of Jesus on tablets that eventually developed into tablets made of papyrus.⁵ This theory also gained little following since not a shred of evidence indicates Jesus' teachings were ever recorded on wax tablets or papyrus codices.

Skeat suggested another creative theory in 1994. This time he claimed that the Christian use of the codex originated in connection with the development of the fourfold Gospel canon. In his view, the publication of the Gospel of John toward the end of the first century led to a crisis in the early church. The reference to the many unrecorded deeds of Jesus at the end of John's Gospel and the growing threat of Gnosticism may have led some in the church to wonder if there was “any way in which the existing four Gospels

contain all four Gospels, the earliest codices do not; they contain only single Gospels. Even if this were not the case, one still is left wondering how a fourfold Gospel canon would influence the adoption of the codex as the standard format for the rest of the New Testament?

Harry Gamble put forth a similar suggestion but in connection with the Pauline epistles.⁸ Gamble argued that an early collection of Paul's epistles was arranged not by individual letter, but by the churches to which he wrote. By excluding the pastorals and connecting Philemon with Colossians, he suggested that the collection was made up of seven groups of letters written to seven churches—seven being symbolic of their universal significance. Since including these letters in a single

scroll would have required a scroll twice the normal size, the codex was chosen.

Like the previous theories, this theory also has several shortcomings that mitigate against it being seen as the sole catalyst for the Christian adoption of the codex: (1) it assumes far too much about the editorial activity associated with Paul's letters than any extant collection of Paul's epistles show, and (2) it places more influence on Paul in early Christianity than evidence from either the second century or the earliest manuscripts attest. For example, of the 72 earliest papyri and the five majuscules from around the turn of the fourth century or earlier, only eight contain two or more New Testament writings and of these only three are Pauline. In addition, of the entire corpus of early papyrus and parchment manuscripts, only 14 contain Pauline material. The Gospels, on the other hand, have 32, more than double the representation. Paul clearly had an influence on the early church but not in the fashion Gamble suggests.

The codex and Christian mission

A far better solution for the adoption of the codex by early Christians is found in the combination of two ideas put forth in separate review articles, one on Roberts and Skeat's *The Birth of the Codex* by Michael McCormick,⁹ and the other by Eldon Epp on Gamble's book.¹⁰ Neither work, unfortunately, seems to have had wide scale exposure. It seems far more probable that the preference for the codex by Christians hinged on a more dynamic and universal motivation within the early church—namely the missionary consciousness that pervaded the earliest church and took it from being the faith of a handful of believers in a backwater province to an empire-wide religion within a few short centuries.

The early church was a "text" driven religion and that fact should be noted. Texts, whether the Hebrew Scriptures, New Testament writings, or even other Christian writings

thought by some to be authoritative, played a critical part in the founding and development of Christian communities. This missionary consciousness and the need for texts would have been aptly served by both the portability and durability of the innovative codex.

One of the interesting things about the literary evidence for the early codex relies on the fact that our earliest references to it are connected with both of these issues.

The earliest reference in Latin to the parchment codex comes from a comment by Martial, the Roman poet, in his *Epigrams* written around A.D. 84 to 86. "You who want my little books to keep you company wherever you may be and desire their companionship on a long journey, buy these that parchment compresses in small pages."¹¹ The reason for Martial's promotion of the codex centers around the advantage its portability offers those who desire to read while traveling.

The desirability of the codex for those whose livelihood required both texts and an itinerant lifestyle exists also in a list Roberts and Skeat include of 17 non-Christian codices from the second century.¹² Among others items, the list includes a couple of grammatical manuals, two medical manuals, and a lexicon to Homer. McCormick makes the insightful observation that these are the type of texts that would have been used by "ancient doctors and teachers" whose "geographical mobility" would have made the portability of the codex a far more beneficial format than the traditional scroll.¹³

It should be no surprise then that the first reference to the parchment codex in Greek is in the writings of the apostle Paul. "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13, ESV). Accepting a Pauline authorship of the passage, which McCormick discounts, this passage dates approximately 20 years earlier than Martial's *Epigrams*. As such, it is unlikely that the passage refers

Revival and REFORMATION

Are you willing?

David penned Psalm 51 in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

It took a lot of courage for David to offer such a prayer; because asking God to effect a change within him required self-sacrifice and self-denial.

It is no different for you and me. Each of us is burdened with our past transgressions and, like David, we need to plead with God to reform us. But praying for such a divine work requires drastic change in our thoughts and actions. In praying such a drastic prayer, are we willing to accept the consequences? Ellen G. White states, "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."²

I personally find surrendering to God's will more elusive than I wish; but I also find strength and courage daily in Paul's words: "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

"Dear Lord, I surrender my all to You!"

— WILLIE E. HUCKS II, DMIN, IS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF MINISTRY.

1 All Scripture references are from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

2 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 43.

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to the use of literary texts in codex form as it does in Martial. Instead, the terminology suggests a more traditional notebook where Paul kept his notes and, perhaps, copies of his original letters.


This does not suggest that Paul, in some way, became “the founder” of the use of the codex in the church, but it does suggest a connection of the codex with the transient life of the preeminent Christian missionary. And more importantly, the terminology suggests that the use of the codex emerged as a more dynamic activity among the earliest itinerant Christian teachers and preachers themselves, rather than a formal decision made by latter Christian scribes, as Stanton suggested in an article written in 1997.¹⁴

There also seems to be a plausible correspondence between the papyri themselves and the idea that portability may have been a factor in their use by early Christians. McCormick notes that the New Testament papyri are not large, but tend to be narrow and of modest size, somewhere in the range of a breadth of 15/14 cm and a height of 28/16 cm—a size ideal for travel.

Epp confirmed these findings in his review article that provided the measurements of all the New Testament papyri available at the time that dated before A.D. 200. An examination of the papyri, published since Epp’s initial finding, indicates the earliest papyri continue to be of smaller handheld size, typically being both long and narrow or having more of a squarish form, with the average codex measuring roughly 15x20 cm or 13x26 cm.

Conclusion

The New Testament papyri discovered in Egypt provide a valuable window into the life of the early church. In addition to testifying to the importance the early church found in the New Testament Scriptures, the nearly exclusive adoption of the codex instead of the scroll also points to the missionary consciousness that filled the earliest Christians. The relatively small size of the New Testament codices points to a variety of handheld texts that were of ideal size for early Christians to take with them as they spread their faith. Rather than waiting several decades to finally jump on the

“technology bandwagon,” the earliest Christians found, in the newly developed codex, a tool that helped them spread more effectively the Christian message to the world around them. Might this contain a lesson for the church today? Rather than avoiding the latest technological gadgets as long as possible, one can only imagine the possibilities if Christians sought to co-opt these gadgets for the advancement of God’s kingdom today. 

- 1 For an introduction to the development of the early codex, see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Published for The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1987); and most recently Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).
- 2 Roberts and Skeat, 53.
- 3 E. J. Epp, “The Codex and Literacy in Early Christianity and at Oxyrhynchus: Issues Raised by Harry Y. Gamble’s *Books and Readers in the Early Church*,” *CBQR* 10 (1997): 21.
- 4 Roberts, “The Codex,” *PBA* 40 (1954): 169–204.
- 5 Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*.
- 6 Skeat, “The Origin of the Christian Codex,” *ZPE* 102 (1994): 266.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 263, 264.
- 8 Gamble, 58–66.
- 9 Michael McCormick, “The Birth of the Codex and the Apostolic Life-Style,” *Scriptorium* 39 (1985): 150–158.
- 10 Epp, “The Codex and Literacy.”
- 11 Martial, *Epigrams* 1.2, Bailey.
- 12 Roberts and Skeat, 71.
- 13 McCormick, 157.
- 14 Graham N. Stanton, “The Fourfold Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 338, 339.

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LETTERS



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the defined system of the natural universe. And theism is an open, inclusive system that is willing to consider evidence that lies outside of our defined natural, material system, including supernatural events for which there is considerable evidence but which naturalists want to exclude a priori. I prefer to think that the best science is one which includes all possible evidence, not only that which falls within a closed system excluding evidence conflicting with

one’s philosophical assumptions. In looking at Rasi’s chart comparing the biblical worldview with that of secular humanism, I would find it scary to live within the worldview of secular humanism. There is no purpose to life, no basis for morality, no hope for the future. What a blessing to have the peace, joy, and hope that the biblical worldview offers us. We must share it with others.

—Edwin Reynolds, *Ooltewah, Tennessee, United States*

Gary Burdick’s article, “How Can I Live Without Having All the Answers?” (July 2011) was a superb piece and very much appreciated—valuable not only in its focus upon science and Scripture but also when we face the big “Why?” questions of life and receive no answers. In my opinion, the article is the best I’ve seen in *Ministry* for a long time!

—Brian Hawes, email



Extending Christ's healing ministry: An interview with Chaplain Jay Perez

Editor's note: Jay Perez is vice president for mission and ministry, Florida Hospital, Orlando, Florida, United States.

Derek Morris (DM): God is using you in remarkable ways to impact lives and communities with the healing ministry of Christ. Tell us how your ministry began.

Jay Perez (JP): I have been in ministry for twenty-eight years. I come from a family of pastors. My grandfather was a missionary in Central America, and my father is a retired pastor. I spent my first thirteen years in ministry as a local church pastor in Texas and I have spent the last fifteen years in healthcare ministry.

DM: When did you first develop an interest in extending the healing ministry of Christ?

JP: During my last semester in seminary, I faced some health challenges. My immune system had been severely compromised, and I ended up in the hospital. During my first hospital stay, I had some visits that were life changing. Several seminarians came to visit me. I'm

sure that they had good intentions. One told me that we were living in the end times and that God knew that some would not be able to go through the troubles of the last days. Another told me that these trials would help me to be strong. A third reminded me that God could work good out of bad situations. Nobody talked about my fear, about my humanity. I just wanted to kick them out of my hospital room! When they left, I broke out in a cold sweat and began to shake. I realized that I had acted in a similar way when I visited church members in the hospital. Later that same evening, one more seminarian came to visit me. He apologized that it was so late. He told me that he was struggling whether to come or not because he didn't know what to say. He just told me that he was praying for me and that he loved me. When he took my hand and stood silent beside my bed, I realized that God wasn't going to leave me alone. Three months later, I spent another week in the hospital. A chaplain visited me every day. I was really struggling with issues of life and death for the first time in my life. I was only twenty-eight years old, married, and had two little boys.

Why was my future so uncertain? That hospital chaplain listened to me and I felt God's presence through his ministry.

DM: How did those experiences impact your ministry?

JP: When I finally recovered from my sickness, I wanted to learn more about how to care for people in a hospital setting. That is when I began clinical pastoral education, and went on to become a CPE supervisor. Now I have dedicated my life to helping pastors extend the healing ministry of Christ.

DM: It's remarkable how God used the visit of that one seminarian late at night and the ministry of that hospital chaplain to shape the course of your ministry. You have served at Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida, for the past ten years. How has God led your ministry at Florida Hospital?

JP: The past ten years have been a time of continued growth. We have eight hospitals in the Orlando area, with another fifteen hospitals outside the Orlando area. We have about forty-five full-time hospital chaplains

within our division who are trained and dedicated. We have another twenty to twenty-five volunteers who help on a daily basis. We also have a Clinical Pastoral Education program. We offer internships, residencies, and supervisory training. The program has six residencies and about thirty-five interns each year.

DM: How can a pastor learn more about your Clinical Pastoral Education program?

they were part of His family. We also want to treat people with dignity and respect as if they were part of our family. That's what I experienced from that one seminarian and the hospital chaplain who visited me. They treated me as a person rather than a nameless patient. The third essential element is delivering hope into people's hearts. Jesus offered hope for the present and for eternity. We want people to leave our hospitals with a sense of hope.

healing ministry of Christ. Today I have found that place!"

DM: I understand that you have pastors from different parts of the world who come to Florida Hospital to learn about your program and also find a place where they can experience healing personally. Tell us about the resources that are available for pastors.

JP: We are developing a ministry here for pastors who can come for



JESUS WANTS US ALL
TO EXPERIENCE LIFE TO
THE FULLEST . . . AND
EXTEND HIS HEALING
MINISTRY TO OTHERS.

JP: Just visit our Web site at www.floridahospital.com and go to the Pastoral Care section.

DM: I've been impressed by the strong sense of mission at Florida Hospital. Talk to us about your mission statement.

JP: Our mission statement is to extend the healing ministry of Christ. We desire to serve with compassion, care, and grace. Every Monday I speak to new employees who are joining our organization. We build trust with our employees and patients. Christ wanted people to know that they were safe and could trust Him. We want to do the same. Secondly, Christ wanted people to feel a sense of belonging. He treated them as if

DM: This idea of extending the healing ministry of Christ is part of our heritage as a Christian community.

JP: That's right. Ellen White said, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"¹

Our employees get excited when they catch a glimpse of our mission. Recently, I spoke with a nurse who is joining our team at Florida Hospital. She came to me with tears. "I've been praying for twenty-one years that I could find a place where I could use my nursing skills to extend the

a week and experience both professional development and personal healing. Our original intention was to speak about different skills needed for the healing ministry of Christ—and those skills are important. But we discovered that pastors also experienced personal healing as they could talk about their needs, hopes, fears, and challenges of ministry in a safe environment. An article published by Paul Vitello in the *New York Times* on August 1, 2010, noted that pastors now suffer from obesity, hypertension, and depression at higher rates than the general population.² In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, and their life expectancy has fallen. We're hoping to offer a program at least twice a year to which pastors can

come for professional development and personal healing.

If a pastor wasn't able to participate in a program like the one at Florida Hospital, I would encourage them to call a hospital chaplain in their area. Find a safe place where you can feel a sense of belonging and hope.

DM: How are you extending the healing ministry of Christ beyond the boundaries of your hospital campuses?

JP: Recent publications like *Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest* by Dan Buettner confirm that we have an important health message to share.³ We have developed a resource to help pastors accomplish that mission in their local communities called CREATION Health. We are continually training pastors and lay volunteers to conduct CREATION Health seminars. We have also translated CREATION Health into Spanish and are currently preparing the seminar in Portuguese. You can learn more about CREATION Health at www.creationhealth.com.


We have also developed a Web site that contains other resources: www.healthy100churches.org. Our goal through the Web site is to provide a forum where pastors can share ideas, sermons, and other resources for extending the healing ministry of Christ.

We also host health ministries events. One such event called "Imagine a Healthy 100" will be conducted on November 4, 2011. This four-hour health ministry seminar will feature internationally known leaders, including Dick Tibbits, Debbie Macomber, Les Brown, Steve Arterburn, and Des Cummings Jr. The goal of this event is to inspire people to live long with power, passion, and purpose. Participants learn simple, proven principles for living long and feeling great. They will discover that

health is more than the absence of sickness. They will also learn about the vital connection between body, mind, and spirit. Churches can visit www.healthy100churches.org to find out how to become a host for this broadcast or purchase DVDs.

From January 27–February 5, 2012, we will also participate in the NAD Health Summit in Orlando, Florida. Each evening, Mark Finley will be presenting the eight principles of CREATION Health. Those presentations will be broadcast live on DIRECTV 368 in the United States and worldwide on the Hope Channel.

We are encouraging pastors to take advantage of this resource to invite their congregations and communities to learn more about experiencing life to the fullest.

Jesus wants us all to experience life to the fullest (John 10:10) and extend His healing ministry to others (Matt. 10:7, 8). 

Four important elements of effective hospital visitation

1. Request the story

- Empathic listening is the basic function at this stage.
- What is going on with the patient?
- What hurts emotionally?
- Why is the patient telling me this story now?
- What is missing?
- What is troubling the person?

2. Reflect on the story

- Emotional reflection on the story becomes an important tool of evaluation.
- What areas of strength or liability do I hear the patient has within this story?
- What is needed?
- How and where do I hear meaning, purpose, and community in relationship with this illness?

3. Respond to the story

- Think about possible ways of intervention and help.
- How do I need to direct my ministry in order to meet the present needs that I hear?

4. Review the story

- Reassess the information gathered from the patient.
- The closure should be short, meaning-making based and filled with compassion, empathy, and grace.

1 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 143.

2 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html>.

3 Dan Buettner, *Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2008).

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The influence of secularism on religious freedom

Sydney, Australia—Whether secularism threatens religious freedom will become an increasingly significant question for religious groups—especially religious minorities—in the coming years, legal experts and academics predicted.

The 13th International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) Meeting of Experts, a three-day think tank hosted at the University of Sydney, School of Law in Sydney, Australia, drew 27 religious liberty advocates and academics from 12 countries to explore how secular values impact religious freedom. According to **John Graz**, secretary general of the IRLA, these annual forums bring together some of the world's foremost scholars and practitioners in the field of religious freedom to track legal and socio-logical trends.

"There's a widespread fear that secular values are undermining the role of religion in society," said **Dwayne Leslie**, deputy secretary general of IRLA. "But the truth is much more nuanced than that."

Leslie pointed out that, globally, religious freedom is strongest in countries where governments are grounded on secular principles, and religion is excluded from the political sphere. "Just take a look at the news headlines and compare



INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

the level of peace, security, and freedom enjoyed in 'secular' societies versus that seen in 'theocratic'-style countries," he said, "and it's easy to see that secularism can actually be a friend to religious freedom."



The attendees to the International Religious Liberty Association Meeting of Experts

But Leslie acknowledged that there is a point where secular values can begin to express themselves as hostility toward religion, and especially toward religious minorities. "This is a developing trend that needs close and continuing study," he said. He pointed to recent French legislation outlawing the public wearing of the burka for Islamic women as an example of a state appealing to the idea of

"secularism" to actually limit religious expression.

Greg Smith, attorney general of New South Wales, addressed the delegates along with university students and members of the public. In what University of Sydney Professor Patrick Parkinson described as a "substantial" speech, the attorney general outlined the history of the Australian Constitution, in particular its provisions for religious freedom. He also discussed test cases in various states of Australia.

"I wouldn't say that right now in Australia the secular perspective is privileged," said **Ken Vogel**, IRLA secretary general for the South Pacific, "but the secular perspective is being very loudly voiced, and there is a chance that that voice could actually gain so much ground that the religious voice is not only not heard but actually rejected."

Established in 1893, the IRLA is the world's oldest religious freedom advocacy organization. It has 13 regional chapters worldwide and national associations in more than 80 countries. Along with the annual Meeting of Experts, the IRLA sponsors regional religious freedom festivals and forums, and every five years organizes a world congress, which attracts an international mix of scholars, legal practitioners, government officials, and human rights advocates.

Next year's IRLA World Congress is scheduled for April 24–26, 2012, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. [Bettina Krause/IRLA/ANN]



Galatians: A Fiery Response to a Struggling Church,

by Carl P. Cosaert,
Hagerstown, MD: Review
and Herald Publishing
Association, 2011.

Carl P. Cosaert's book, which serves as a companion piece to the fourth quarter 2011 *Adult Bible Study Guide*, is divided into 14 chapters in which he attempts to address various theological issues as they arise in Galatians. He begins in chapter 1 by articulating how Paul, a previous persecutor of believers in Christ, became a believer in Christ Jesus. The author shows how the book of Acts contains a legitimate source for facts in regard to Paul's life and journeys. The author suggests that Galatians is probably the earliest document of our New Testament, though he recognizes that many scholars believe 1 Thessalonians is the earliest New Testament document.

In many places throughout the book, Cosaert attempts to explain various Greek terms and how they should be understood. For example, the term *grace* comes from a Hebrew verb that has "the idea of someone bending down to help someone who has fallen . . . and typically that of a superior to an inferior." Thus grace "is the act of extending favor or kindness to one who does not deserve it and who could never earn it" (23).

One of the key concepts for understanding Galatians consists of understanding the expression "faith in Jesus Christ" or its equivalent. The expression in Galatians 2:16 is literally "faith of Jesus" and should

probably be understood to mean the "faithfulness of Jesus," that is, Jesus' life-death-resurrection (42, 43). The author recognizes that several Bible versions translate the expression "faith of Christ" as "faith in Christ." But he also notes that the fifth century Peshitta conveys the meaning "faith of Jesus." Hence, the author believes the phrase is better understood to mean the *faithfulness of Jesus*. He then goes on to talk about the meaning of faith and how Abraham expressed faith and what that meant. He relates all this to the theologically important truth of righteousness by faith and being clothed with Christ's righteousness (84).

Other important theological issues addressed and explained in the book are the meaning of circumcision, adoption, the Law as our *Paidagōgos*, works of Law,

the old and new covenants, what freedom in Christ means, how works of the flesh and life in the Spirit are in conflict, who Paul is referring to in the expression the "Israel of God," what Paul means by the expression the "new creation," and how the "unchangeable promise" given by God was fulfilled in the person of Jesus the Messiah. He ends the book by emphasizing the centrality of the Cross.

I found the book to be very helpful in coming to grips with some very thorny theological issues. I would certainly recommend it to anyone who desires to understand Paul's letter to the Galatians. However, a book of this size can only touch upon the issues. ❏

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a pastor with the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United States.

I FOUND THE BOOK TO BE VERY HELPFUL IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH SOME VERY THORNY THEOLOGICAL ISSUES. I WOULD CERTAINLY RECOMMEND IT TO ANYONE WHO DESIRES TO UNDERSTAND PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS.

Jina Kim, MPH, is wellness program coordinator, Adventist Risk Management, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Men's health

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV).

Whether you are or have a father, brother, or husband, you should be mindful of current health issues for men. Participating in exercise, a healthy diet, and health screenings may help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer that men commonly experience. Making small changes to your lifestyle may improve your health.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports the most common cancer among men in the United States is prostate cancer.¹ Globally, the three most common cancers in men are lung, prostate, and bowel cancer.² Great strides have been made in the prevention of bowel cancer through screening tests such as the colonoscopy, and testing for occult (hidden) blood in the stools. Similarly, regular screening using blood tests and digital rectal examinations can enhance early detection and improve outcomes in prostate cancer.

Another largely preventable common disease is heart disease. More than 80 percent of cardiovascular disease deaths take place in low- and middle-income countries and occur almost equally in men and women.³ Simple but consistent lifestyle changes such as regular exercise and healthful eating can reduce cardiovascular diseases significantly.

These diseases can be modified or even prevented. However, with many obstacles and barriers such as overloaded schedules, it can be a challenge to live a healthy lifestyle on a daily basis. Many pastors do a lot of sitting, standing at the pulpit, driving for visitations, and work long hours. Such a sedentary lifestyle can take a toll, not only upon your physical

health, but your emotional and mental health as well.


The following recommended health tips will assist you on your journey to a healthier lifestyle:

- Exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes per day, at least 5 times a week. For weight loss and maintenance of weight loss as well as the prevention/reversal of diabetes, increase time and intensity gradually.
- Eat 5–9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Tomatoes are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant linked to prostate cancer prevention. Watermelons are a sweet and juicy fruit loaded with vitamins C and A, and are also rich in lycopene.
- Drink water. Water is the most important nutrient that has many benefits to health. Drink at least 6–8 cups or more a day, depending on how active you are and the ambient temperature of where you live (drink more in hotter climates—enough to quench your thirst plus a third more).
- Get screened for colorectal and prostate cancer. A colonoscopy should be done every 10 years after the age of 60 and may be needed more frequently in some individuals (as directed). Annual stool testing is recommended to detect hidden blood that may be an early sign of bowel cancer. The prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test can help identify a significant number of cases of prostate cancer early, conducted with a simple blood test. Equally important—indeed imperative—is to undergo the digital rectal examination to assess the prostate annually; this is an important adjunct in the screening process and must be done.
- Take a regular, planned vacation each year. Many pastors and church leaders have above average stress, weight gain, and depression.⁴ A

vacation can give you a chance to rejuvenate and break away from the daily worries in life and spend more time with the family.

A story is told of two pastors who noticed changes in their health and how they felt as they both experienced stress, working long days, and choosing the wrong foods that led to gaining weight. One pastor sought to lose weight by cycling at a nearby fitness center. The other pastor began walking and eating healthier. They took healthy living classes, participated in physical assessments, and tracked their progress. In doing these things, they both took the first steps to take charge of their health.

Pray for a temperate spirit that allows you to live a healthy lifestyle. Should you grow discouraged, take smaller steps to reach your goal. Remember that gradual steps in changing your habits can go a long way and can help you as a pastor, husband, father, or friend to enjoy the more abundant, quality, grace-filled life in Christ, despite your busyness and brokenness.

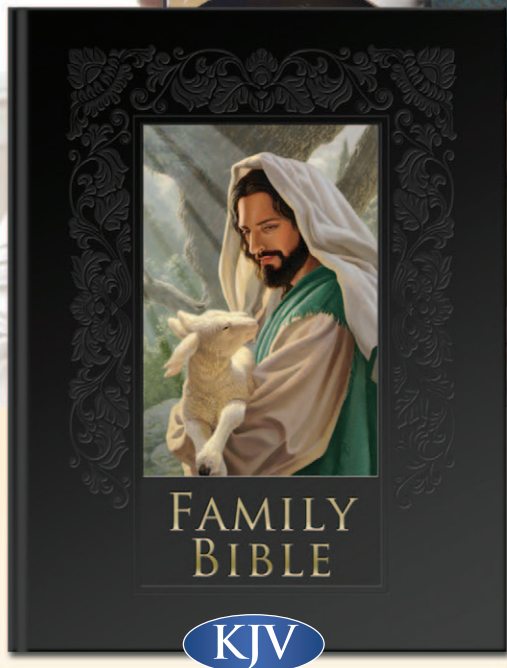
And once you have succeeded, motivate others by sharing your success story. Success stories are an inspiration and may help motivate others who are struggling with their health. Start spreading the word so the wellness culture will catch on. Leading by example is not always easy; but it lends itself as a type of worship. Doing so helps you to depend on the Lord and petition for His guidance. 

—Reviewed by Peter N. Landless, MB, BCH, MFamMed, MFGP(SA), FCP(SA), FACC, FASNC

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Top 10 Cancers Among Men," www.cdc.gov.
 2 World Cancer Research Fund International, "Stopping Cancer Before It Starts," www.wcrf.org.
 3 World Health Organization, "Cardiovascular Diseases," www.who.int.
 4 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "How Healthy Are Our Pastors," www.thelutheran.org.

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