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FEBRUARY 2017

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YOUR SPEAKER
Mark Young
Mark Young is the author of the book 'Future of Freedom: The Coming Conflict'. He has spent the last 15 years researching the Bible and speaking at conferences across the United States to people of all backgrounds and ages. Mark has been a frequent speaker at the Hamblin's HopeSource National Seminars and is the host of the 'Future of Freedom' radio show on radio station WCCO in St. Paul, MN. He is currently a pastor at the North Star Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN.

SESSION SCHEDULE
SESSION 1: THURSDAY, FEB. 17
7 PM: THE FUTURE OF AMERICA & THE COMING CONFLICT & THE NEED FOR FAITH
SESSION 2: FRIDAY, FEB. 18
7 PM: AMBIGUITY'S ROLE IN THE COMING CONFLICT
8 PM: THE HEALING CODE & THE COMING CONFLICT
SESSION 3: SATURDAY, FEB. 20
7 PM: CLARIFY THE HISTORY OF THE COMING CONFLICT
8 PM: WHEN KINGDOMS COLLIDE IN THE COMING CONFLICT

A CONTINUING PRESENTATIONAL FUTURE TOPICS
WHAT OTHER
We want all attendees to get something out of the event. We want you to feel something and have a new perspective on something you hear from Mark Young about:
■ The coming conflict
■ The Bible
■ The future of America
■ The role of faith
■ The role of the church
■ The role of the individual
■ The role of the nation
■ The role of the world
■ The role of the universe
■ The role of God
■ The role of Jesus
■ The role of the Holy Spirit
■ The role of the angels
■ The role of the demons
■ The role of the spirits
■ The role of the powers
■ The role of the principalities
■ The role of the thrones
■ The role of the dominions
■ The role of the powers of the air
■ The role of the powers of the earth
■ The role of the powers of the sea
■ The role of the powers of the sky
■ The role of the powers of the land
■ The role of the powers of the water
■ The role of the powers of the fire
■ The role of the powers of the wind
■ The role of the powers of the earth



Prophesy
An Intelligent Look into Bible Prophecy
National Seminar
Coming to Tacoma, WA
in the Hamblin's Hope Channel
only dates: Feb. 14 & 15, 7 p.m.

Opening Night
Saturday, Feb. 14, 7 p.m.
Unlocking Revelation's Mysteries
Discover the Bible's greatest prophecy and how to unlock its mysteries. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

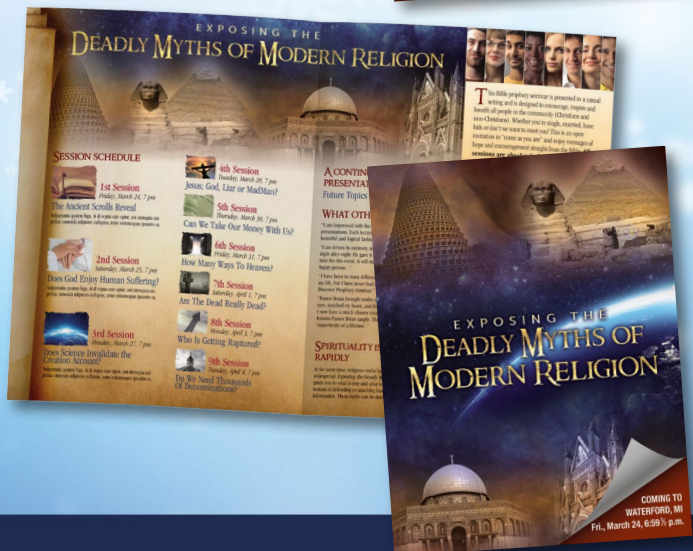
Second Night
Sunday, Feb. 15, 7 p.m.
Clash in the Night
Discover the Bible's greatest prophecy and how to unlock its mysteries. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

Third Night
Monday, Feb. 16, 7 p.m.
Spiritual Warfare
Discover the Bible's greatest prophecy and how to unlock its mysteries. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

Fourth Night
Tuesday, Feb. 17, 7 p.m.
God's Love and the Coming Conflict
Discover the Bible's greatest prophecy and how to unlock its mysteries. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

Free Will
Discover the Bible's greatest prophecy and how to unlock its mysteries. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

What you will learn about the Bible:
■ The Bible's greatest prophecy
■ The Bible's greatest prophecy
■ The Bible's greatest prophecy
■ The Bible's greatest prophecy
■ The Bible's greatest prophecy



EXPOSING THE DEADLY MYTHS OF MODERN RELIGION
Mark Young
Mark Young is the author of the book 'Exposing the Deadly Myths of Modern Religion'. He has spent the last 15 years researching the Bible and speaking at conferences across the United States to people of all backgrounds and ages. Mark has been a frequent speaker at the Hamblin's HopeSource National Seminars and is the host of the 'Future of Freedom' radio show on radio station WCCO in St. Paul, MN. He is currently a pastor at the North Star Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN.

SESSION SCHEDULE
1st Session
Monday, March 26, 7 p.m.
The Ancient Scandal Revealed
Does God Enjoy Human Suffering?
2nd Session
Tuesday, March 27, 7 p.m.
How Many Ways To Heaven?
Are The Dead Really Dead?
3rd Session
Wednesday, March 28, 7 p.m.
Who Is Getting Raptured?
Do We Need Deliverance Or Exorcism?

A CONTINUING PRESENTATIONAL FUTURE TOPICS
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REVELATION
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only dates: Oct. 4 & 5, 7 p.m.

Friday, October 4, 7:00 p.m.
What Does the Future Hold?
Can you still believe the Bible and have some of the most interesting questions that you've ever asked?

Saturday, October 5, 7:00 p.m.
Who Is the Antichrist? Part 1
The prophet Daniel prophesies the Antichrist's rise and fall. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

Sunday, October 7, 7:00 p.m.
Who Is the Antichrist? Part 2
John's vision of the Antichrist in the book of Revelation. This evening event is for everyone who wants to know more about the Bible's greatest prophecy.

Tuesday, October 8, 7:00 p.m.
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“The same sense of service to God when called to defend my faith should be just as strenuously applied to my interaction with my family, my church, and the community I live in.”

Thank you for sharing the link to the *Ministry Magazine*. I am enjoying reading the various articles and blogs.

It is my prayer that the Lord will continue to inspire the team in their effort to present the undiluted truth about Jesus and His imminent return. God bless.
—Keith Wellington, Mandeville, Jamaica

This article, “Bridging the Gap Between Religion and Business: A Conversation” (December 2016) discusses the possibility of pastors ministering to business professionals.

As a business professional in the building trade for some fifteen years, and while I taught computer science for another fifteen years, I did not think the pastor needed to single out business professionals, or teachers, to talk about what God expects from us. And when I became a pastor, it never occurred to me that I should single out any profession for special treatment. Perhaps I have overlooked something.

I do not believe a person gets a pass on ethics in any profession, just because he feels he hasn’t had a pastor deal with his approach to life in his or her particular profession.

The same rules for how I treat my neighbor the way I want to be treated

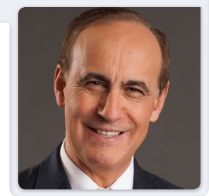
fit how I earn a living as well as every other aspect of life. Making a profit always takes second place to glorifying God in my every action. The same sense of service to God when called to defend my faith should be just as strenuously applied to my interaction with my family, my church, and the community I live in.

My ethics while running my business, or interacting with my students, was sometimes my principal means of witnessing. I will always owe this to God and must do no less. Please forgive me if I have missed the point of the article.

—Ronald W. Booth, retired pastor, Iron Range district, Minnesota

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Robert Costa is an associate ministerial secretary and worldwide evangelism coordinator of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Love, listen, and lead

There is nothing more disarming than the power of love. And this is especially true when presenting the gospel message to the world. “If I don’t have love, I am a loud gong or a clashing cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1b, GW). As a pastor and evangelist, sharing the good news without love spells disaster.

When we love our audience, our churches, and those for whom we labor, they know it and respond. Love takes away all fear—in ourselves and in others—and allows us to present the full prophetic gospel message without fear, because love ultimately draws everyone to Jesus.

I have seen the power of love and compassion lead people to Jesus in every corner of the world. Let me share just a few of the stories I personally witnessed during an evangelistic series I held in Chile this past November:

Mario, the best known of the 33 miners rescued from a mine in Chile and portrayed in a film by Antonio Banderas, attended the series. He gave his testimony of how God and the Bible helped him during the 69 days in the bowels of the earth. He was overwhelmed by the love and support of our local church in Chile, and I have kept in touch with him and his wife, encouraging them in the study of Bible truths so they may experience true rescue.

Manuel, a high-profile engineer in the country, was given hours to live due to a failed liver transplant. One of our churches learned of his plight, and a group went to pray for him in the hospital. Miraculously, his body accepted the new liver, and he recovered. When I spoke to him during the series, he said, “All I can remember in my time of agony is a group of people praying for me.” He

is now studying the Bible with another engineer from our church.

But the story doesn’t end there. One of the hospital volunteers, impressed by the love shown to Manuel, attended the series and was baptized the last Sabbath I was there. Ten of her friends from work attended her baptism in full hospital uniform and enrolled in Bible studies.

Daniel, a teenager who attends one of our schools, was led to Christ and baptized thanks to the unceasing work of the chaplains. He became a missionary in his home, bringing his mother, Elizabeth, to Christ. As she exited the baptismal pool, I asked Daniel, who stood next to her, “What’s next for you?” He replied without hesitation, “Now we go for our grandfather. He is next.”

Javier, a young architect who designed the central church in the city of Concepción, Chile, as well as the Adventist college in Talcahuano, after struggling each night with the biggest decision of his life, finally surrendered his heart to Jesus and was baptized on the last Friday of the series. His testimony was, “I want the Divine Architect from here on to do His work in me.”

Oscar, a pastor of six Pentecostal churches, attended the series every night. He has now decided to keep the biblical Sabbath. One of his churches, while still holding meetings on Sunday, has already started worshipping on the Sabbath. I keep in contact with him as well, as do the local pastors.

Nilse, a young saleswoman, stopped by the church to sell seaweed and other health products. The ladies from the Dorcas society bought some of her products and invited her to study the Bible. She and her children were baptized during the series.

I have seen the power of love and compassion lead people to Jesus in every corner of the world.

This past year alone, I participated in more than 4,000 baptisms and witnessed thousands more making decisions for Jesus, due to the fearless testimony of others.

In this issue of *Ministry* we will see how the power of love can move people to reach out in different ways and by different means to tell the world the good news of salvation. But many times reaching out requires listening. And one aspect of love is caring enough to listen and learn about the needs and interests of others.

It was said of Jesus, “He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. . . . He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instruction into the household. . . . His strong personal sympathy helped to win hearts.”*

This suggests that in Jesus’ method of soul winning listening is crucial. Listening is a divine attribute, and as we listen and guide others, we are given the assurance that God is ready and waiting to listen and guide us. “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14, NASB). ✓

* Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999), 119.

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The most overlooked spiritual discipline—Part 1

Do you wonder whether God ever feels like standing at the top of His celestial staircase and calling down to the world, “Would everybody please listen?” Our lives are continually surrounded by noise. The noise interferes with our purpose and gets in the way of fulfilling God’s purpose on earth. There is really only one way to turn down the noise of our own incessant chatter, only one way that cuts through our narcissism and focuses our attention on God, our own soul, and the trials and struggles of those around us—the practice of the spiritual disciplines referred to in Scripture.

Discipline is not a popular word, but there is a long Christian tradition that holds the spiritual disciplines in high regard, and we ignore them at the peril of our own spiritual well-being. The spiritual disciplines are those habits that nurture spiritual health and maturity—or sanctification, if you like. The Bible speaks about them frequently; though in its typically unsystematic way that leaves us culling and organizing from across the Scriptures to create the categories and lists that we find so handy for remembering everything from doctrine to practice.

Various writers from different Christian traditions over the centuries have collected and defined the spiritual disciplines that shaped these Christians according to the emphases of their faith

tradition. And though these different enumerations have many overlapping and synonymous categories, there is no agreement on a definitive list. Characteristically, these lists share disciplines such as prayer, study of the Word, praise, worship, confession, giving, and fellowship. Other disciplines are less consistently named, such as chastity, contemplation, fasting, service, and simplicity. Most of these come backed up with a formidable list of Bible verses that can be easily collated by a quick look in a concordance. Three of the most popular, for example, are prayer, with more than 240 references; praise, with more than 200; and worship, with more than 150.

The most often mentioned but least often noted discipline

But one spiritual discipline is virtually never mentioned in these lists even though this discipline is featured often in Scripture. That is the discipline of *listening and hearing*, two words treated synonymously in the Bible. These two words are mentioned about 700 times in the Bible. About 500 are in the imperative or instructive form, as a practice to be followed. Listening is implied in such disciplines as prayer, contemplation, and meditation, but listening as a discipline in its own right often becomes obscured. There are obviously too many texts with “hear” or

“listen” to list, but some of the better-known include the great Shema, the prayer that forms the centerpiece of Jewish prayer services, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one,” (Deut. 6:4),* and the New Testament repetitions of “Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matt. 11:15; Mark 4:9; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Certain books that particularly emphasize listening are mainly books of instruction, prophecy, and gospel: Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Samuel, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and Revelation.

The fruit of listening

The Bible associates listening and hearing with many spiritual qualities. A partial list in no particular order, with selected references, includes compassion (Exod. 22:27); justice (Deut. 1:16, 17; Mic. 3:9); wisdom, instruction, and understanding (Deut. 4:1; Job 5:27; 34:16; Prov. 1:5; Matt. 15:10); reverence (Deut. 4:10); discipline (Deut. 4:36); blessing (Luke 11:28; Rev. 1:3); the presence, attention, forgiveness, and intervention of God (1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 19:16); the Word of the Lord (Jer. 22:29); confession (Neh. 1:6); praise (Isa. 24:16); spiritual direction (Isa. 30:21); humility and teachability (Jer. 13:15; Neh. 9:17); reproof (Jer. 36:3); counsel (Ezek. 3:17); trust (Mic. 7:7); encouragement (Zech. 8:9; 3 John 4); testimony and witness (Matt. 11:4; Ps. 66:16); healing (Luke

5:15; Acts 28:27); obedience (Deut. 5:27; 31:12); spiritual fruit (Luke 8:8); belonging to Jesus' family (Luke 8:21; John 8:47); believing (John 9:27; 11:42); and listening as a gift of God (Rom. 11:8). A more complete list of godly character could hardly be compiled.

The discipline of listening becomes crucial because, as Scripture says,

concept of the Lord's work but in fact have been creating more harm than good. Indeed, the greatest damage to the name of God is not bad people doing bad things; it is good people doing bad things in His name. Hence the Bible's emphasis on listening, hearing, and "giving ear" to God in order to avoid, or at least minimize, our tendency to con-

the standard by which to measure all other sources of hearing God, hence its absolute centrality.

The Spirit is the second way of hearing God: through solitude, prayer, and confession, the Spirit of Truth speaks directly into our heart's ears.

Spiritual mentors are another way for us to hear the word of God, as



The second dimension of listening to God can be practiced by learning to hear each other.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?
(Jer. 17:9).

As self-centered beings, we are in desperate need to hear from the Source of truth. Even as Christians, we find it easy to confuse our own will and desires with those of God. Many of us may have had experiences with well-intentioned Christians who have been doing their

fuse our will with that of God. Psalm 19 notes at length how listening to the law, instruction, and statutes of God refresh, make wise, give joy to, and enlighten the soul and heart, helping us discern error and overcome even our hidden faults.

How to listen to God

Listening to God is a discipline requiring practice. The primary way to do so is through *the Word*, written and spoken. The Word provides

we practice submission and mutual accountability. Mentors are a key feature in the development of spiritual discernment of biblical characters, from Joshua to Samuel to Elisha and from the Twelve Apostles to Timothy (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).

The final way is through *experience*—trial and error. Road testing the will of God is vital but must always be subject to the other ways of listening in order to prevent us from making God into our

own image and, thus, hearing from God what we would like Him to say. Too often we road test first, instead of using the Word, the Spirit, and our mentors to help discriminate between those prompted by our own limited understanding and those which are genuinely of God. The Bible encourages us to practice laying aside our mind-set and hearing the mind-set of God. “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

A three-way spiritual discipline

Spiritual disciplines are advocated as ways of connecting with God. So, too, is listening. But learning to hear God can be difficult: He is not present in the flesh, and for many, He rarely speaks audibly into their lives. There are other dimensions to spiritual listening, and all contribute to our capacity to hear God. And in doing so, they also expand

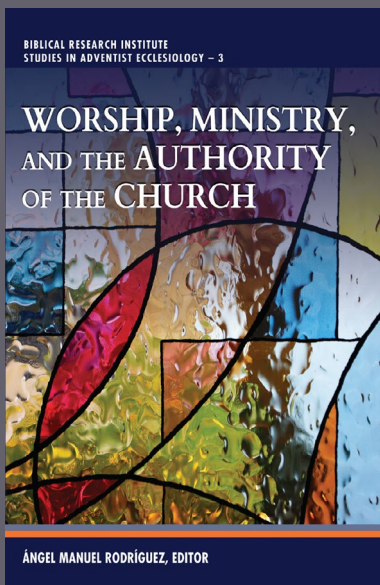
our capacity to grow personally and minister effectively.

The second dimension of listening to God can be practiced by *learning to hear each other*. Biblical listening is associated with relationship and empathy between humans (Job 31:35; Gen. 23:13–15; Gen. 42:22) and with romantic love (Song of Solomon 2:14; 8:13). The Bible encourages listening in order to have listening reciprocated (Judg. 9:7) and notes that silence comes as a pathway to wisdom and understanding (Job 33:31, 33; 34:2, 10, 16). As we have already seen in Philippians 2:5, having the mind-set of God in place of our own is something we should bring to our relationships with each other. The whole concept of biblical mentoring is premised on listening to each other.

Frequently, in conversation we are simply waiting for a gap where we can jump in and say our piece, which we are composing while the other speaks.

We are still in our own mind-set. *We are not really listening*. We need to practice hearing each other, for others are the concrete realization of the presence of God. Doing someone the favor of actually listening to them is as Christian an act as giving food to the hungry and visiting the prisoner in jail. “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40).

There are many biblical concepts that are counterintuitive to sinful humanity: the last shall be first; the meek inherit the earth; laying down my life will save it; and the leader is servant of all. Growing from the last is yet another paradox: *I feel* powerful when I talk; *I am* powerful when I listen. In another counterintuitive truth, the higher the position of leadership, the more the leader needs to listen. Usually we associate leadership with talking and following with listening. But



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while powerful preaching can change a church, sensitive listening will more likely bring about better and more committed change.

In one personal instance, convincing arguments beat down opposition to spiritual reformation but left a trail of casualties. In another later instance, after the humbling experience of learning that in listening is real power, a listening leadership motivated most of those being led to work harmoniously to bring about change. Both talking and listening resulted in change, but listening caused less damage and resulted in more permanent progress.

The last form of hearing encouraged by the Bible flows from this: *to listen to oneself*. Soul awareness is featured in many verses (1 Sam. 1:15; Job 7:11; Pss. 31:9; 35:3; 42; 62:1–5; 130:5; 131:2; Prov. 19:8) and is associated with satisfaction and renewed life (Isa. 55:2, 3). Listening to myself allows me to identify my needs and have them addressed instead of sublimated and ignored. In so doing, I am in a far better state to welcome and receive God’s healing love and grace. Traditionally, Protestant Christians have been very nervous about any inward focus out of fear of pride and self-sufficiency. But the largest book of the Bible also contains the greatest density of introspective language. Imagine the Psalms without their powerful expressions of the poets’ own soul. Try removing all of the “I, me, my” statements from the Psalms and see how poorly and ineffectively they read. It was in recognizing their own pain, distress, anger, and joy that the psalmists burst into song, sought the Lord with passion, and praised His name with abandon.

Jesus the Master Listener

Jesus was often called “the Master Teacher,” but might He not also be called “the Master Listener”? Let us examine the Gospels on Jesus’ experiences as a listener. First, *He listened to His Father*. Jesus insisted that His

entire ministry on earth was simply carrying out the will of the Father, and all that He taught was merely what He had heard from His Father (John 6:38; 7:16). To do that must have involved a lot of listening on His part. He noted that even the Spirit worked in the same way, only reflecting what He had heard (John 16:13). There are also many references to Jesus praying, and a few of them detail that He could tarry in prayer for many hours, even all night (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Matt. 14:23). While we do not know the specific content of

His awareness of His own need of the Father. He grieved over an unrepentant Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37). In the Garden of Gethsemane, He begged for relief from the impending cross. At Calvary, He articulated His thirst.

God, the Ultimate Listener

Have you ever wondered, why is God powerful? This has much to do with Him being a listening God. He is “El Shama” or “Ishmael,” “the God who hears me” (Gen. 16:11); the Word made flesh (John 1:1–3); and the Comforter, sent to convict


I feel powerful when I talk; I am powerful when I listen.

those hours in prayer, He cannot have been talking the whole time; a good part of His prayer time was listening. In Gethsemane, He prayed to be relieved of the agony of the cross. But He accepted it, demonstrating that He was listening to the will of the Father.

Second, *Jesus listened to others*. Having listened to His Father, His heart was hypersensitive to those around Him, to the point where He could hear their unspoken, even unrealized, cries. Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Zaccheus, and the paralytic who was let down through the roof, among many others, had their appeals to Him answered; not just in full but beyond what they had articulated. And in hearing their very souls’ cry, He best demonstrated the loving heart of His Father.

Third, *Jesus was sensitive to the speaking of His own soul*. He could tell the difference in His spirit between a purposeful touch and the random shoving of the crowd (Luke 8:45, 46). His many hours in prayer testify to

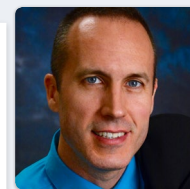
and guide (John 16:12–15). God listens more than the rest of the universe put together. He hears not just every human prayer; He hears a sparrow fall; He keeps track of the ever-decreasing number of hairs on my head (Luke 12:6, 7). We find the uniqueness of the Christian faith right here in God’s eagerness not just to tell us things but to demonstrate to us that our cry for salvation has been heard. God made Himself manifest and dwelt among us. God was so serious about listening to His children that He became one of us.

The theory and theology of this is all very well, but the question remains of how to practice this invaluable discipline. Fortunately, we live in an age where the practice of listening has been well-researched and its benefits clearly attested. The second part of this article exploring the practice of listening as applied to the role of the pastor will be published in the April 2017 issue. 

* Scripture references are from the New International Version.

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Back to the future: Lay-led churches and a return to our roots¹

I found myself standing on a makeshift wooden platform in the middle of a sandlot in Nigeria. People were scurrying back and forth, preparing the stage for the nightly meetings that would begin the next day. As I was contemplating what the next few weeks would bring, a man interrupted my thoughts.

“We want to be like you,” he said. His comment startled me.

“We hear the churches in America are vibrant and growing fast. We want to be like you.” I hardly knew what to say. It pained me to tell him that, although there are churches in America that are vibrant and growing, many are in desperate need of revival and reformation.

Questions flooded my mind. *Why is it that we hear these exhilarating stories from other parts of the world of mass baptisms and thousands attending evangelistic meetings? Why is it that we hear of packed churches and overflowing Sabbath Schools—but most often in other countries? Why is it that we hear of overseas conferences planting hundreds of new churches and companies each year? Why is this happening in some parts of the world; but not as much in North America and other areas of the world? What must we do to promote revival, reformation, and growth in North America?*

I know that the answer is prayer, but prayer must be combined with

other actions. What can we actively do? I pondered this question for some time. Then I found part of the answer in the most unlikely place. I was sitting in the rugged dining room of one of our overseas conference offices preparing for an evangelistic meeting. My eyes were drawn to the wall on the right side of the room. What I saw opened my eyes.

On the wall was a list of the churches and companies and the pastors who were in charge of each district. I was amazed to see that many pastors had ten or more churches in their district. Each church was led by lay people and elders who might see their pastor only once a quarter—and many of these churches were growing. I began to question: *How can this be? They see a pastor once a quarter and, yet, are growing? These churches are essentially led by local church members, and they are doing just fine. If my churches back in America saw me only once a quarter, there would be rebellion!*

Then I discovered something remarkable. Many parts of the world field that are experiencing rapid growth have been organizing larger districts with lay-led churches for years.² Finally, it hit me. The New Testament church formed lay-led churches from the start and experienced the same rapid growth. They were led by ordinary people who were encouraged by the apostles and empowered by the Holy

Spirit. This is how the church was able to evangelize the world.

I, then, wondered, *If that is what the New Testament church did, is that what should be done in North America? More specifically, is that what I should be doing with the churches I am pastoring?*

The early New Testament church

As I searched the Bible, it appeared to me that there were no paid pastors overseeing a congregation or house church and doing ministry for the people in the early New Testament church. Those who were paid by the tithe were sent out to evangelize and plant churches in unentered lands and cities. Tithe was reserved specifically for this purpose. The existing churches were left in the hands of capable lay people. This is why the apostles raised up elders and deacons in each church. We read in Acts and Titus for example: “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23).³ “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” (Titus 1:5).

As with these two verses, many other references in the New Testament indicate, directly or indirectly, that elders and other laity were the leaders

of the local churches (see Acts 11:30; 16:5; 20:17; 1 Pet. 5:1–3; James 5:14). This is why it was important to Paul to choose elders wisely (see Titus 1:5–9). He knew they were to oversee the churches. This is also why most of the books of the New Testament are letters to churches. As the apostles evangelized new cities and towns, they wrote letters of instruction and encouragement back to the leaders of the churches. The elders and deacons were to lead the churches, and ministry was put into the hands of the church members (i.e., laity). It would have been unheard of for tithe to be used to pay someone to oversee a church when elders and deacons could do that. It would have been seen as a waste of money. The tithe was used to support “workers” laboring to evangelize new areas.

Following this method, the early New Testament church grew astronomically. When lay leaders were made partners in the work of ministry, the life of the church exploded. Under this structure, Christianity took the gospel to the world of the first century (see Acts 17:6).

The early Adventist Church

Then I discovered something even more remarkable: this was also the structure under which the Adventist Church began. In the humble beginnings of the Advent movement, there were no paid pastors assigned to churches. Most churches and house groups were led by lay people. Ministers who were paid from the tithe functioned as evangelists and church planters in unentered areas, just like in the New Testament church. When new churches were planted, the lay people were trained to lead the church, and the minister moved on to another unentered area.

Notice what James White wrote: “Paul was not what is now called a ‘settled pastor.’ . . . These early teachers of Christianity remained in one city, or place, till their testimony aroused the people, and they had brought out a body of believers, and established them in the doctrine of Christ. Things were

then set in order so that these disciples could sustain the worship of God. And then these ministers would pass on to a new field of labor.”⁴ This indicates a major reason why the early Adventist church grew so rapidly.

In the early 1900s, people began noticing the growth of the Adventist Church. Other churches had been around for hundreds of years, but here was this new denomination that was not even 50 years old yet was growing rapidly. The Adventist Church carried forward the Great Commission very differently from other Protestant

weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and work will be on a retreat.”⁵

I was struck with more conviction when I found that Ellen White echoed the same counsel. “There should not be a call to have settled pastors over our churches, but let the life-giving power of the truth impress its individual members to act, carrying on an efficient missionary work in that locality. As the hand of God, the church is to be educated and trained to do effective work. Its members are to be the Lord’s devoted, Christian workers.”⁶

When lay leaders were made partners in the work of ministry, the life of the church exploded.

churches. While most other churches followed the method of appointing a paid pastor over each church; the Adventist Church did the opposite. Churches were led by lay people while tithe was used to send workers to evangelize unentered fields.

When asked about this method, A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference in the early 1900s, said, “We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work and brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to

A. G. Daniells’s statement in 1912 was prophetic. He said that if we ever stopped organizing lay-led churches and began to settle pastors over churches instead of sending them into unentered fields, the growth of the Adventist Church would decline and its spirituality would suffer. It appears this is exactly what happened in the first half of the 1900s.

Not long after the death of Ellen White and the end of Daniells’s presidency, people in the church began to call for settled pastors. Ellen White had warned about this when she wrote: “The churches are dying and they want a minister to preach to them.

“They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.”⁷

The popular Protestant churches of the day had big buildings and large congregations, and some advocated that we should do the same. Like Israel of old, God's people insisted on having a "king" rule over them, even though this was not God's plan.

A study of North American church membership records during the first half of the 1900s reveals a correlation between the time that we stopped organizing lay-led churches and began settling pastors over churches and the time when church growth started to become stagnant and decline.⁸ There appeared to be a loss of focus on mission. I could not help but wonder, *Is it time for Adventism in North America to return to lay-led churches?*

Our commission

If we do not follow this pattern, how will we ever finish the work? Revelation 14 has given us an important commission, a God-sized task. We have been told to take the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. Ellen White has also counseled us to take the light to all people groups and to erect a humble house of worship in those places.⁹ How can we possibly accomplish this monumental task of taking the gospel to every town in North America and erecting humble houses of worship? If every church were to have a paid pastor, it would cost a fortune; we could never afford it!

I could come to only one conclusion: we must start organizing lay-led churches again. We must let elders and deacons lead churches while tithes is used to send workers to evangelize and plant churches and house groups in towns and cities that have no Adventist presence. How can we do this? How can we transition our structure to a model of lay-led churches? Change is always a challenge. There is no quick fix. It will take time, but it can be done.

Two options

I see two options for accomplishing this restructuring:

Option 1: Large "mission districts."

I first heard the term *mission districts* used in the Pennsylvania Conference. This is done by combining two or three districts into one large district of five to ten lay-led churches. Each church in a mission district is pastored by the local group of elders. The conference pastor is then assigned to oversee the district. His or her main job is to train and equip the lay pastors and elders in ministry skills. He or she visits each church on a rotating schedule to disciple and coach the lay pastors and elders. This model frees up money for more pastors, who are then sent into the unentered areas of the conference to begin raising new churches.

Option 2: Mother church model. In the Iowa-Missouri Conference, of which I am a part, the pastors are seeking to move the churches forward by initiating a lay pastor program in the city of St. Louis. In this model, the conference pastor begins the process of training his or her elders and deacons to become the lay pastors of the church. This discipleship process could take three to five years. In large metro areas, a group of conference pastors could work together to provide lay-pastor classes for their elders. When the elders have been sufficiently trained to lead a local church, the conference pastor can then transition his or her time to church planting in unentered areas. It would be ideal if he or she could take a small group from the local church and form the core group of the new church plant.

So the two main responsibilities of the conference pastor would be planting churches and equipping the lay pastors and elders of the existing church(es). These lay pastors would then provide leadership to an existing church; that way, the conference pastor can transition his or her focus to church planting. Alternatively, the lay pastor could partner with the conference pastor in planting churches. The lay pastor would eventually lead out in the church plant so that the conference pastor can move on to plant more churches.

Conclusion

There are challenges with both models, and there will be resistance to either model, yet I believe these two models more accurately reflect the structure of the New Testament church and the early Adventist Church. Therefore, for the sake of the mission, we have to do it. For the sake of the Great Commission, we have to do it. For the sake of the lost whom Jesus loves, we have to do it. It may not be comfortable but is our duty and responsibility as the remnant, who have been entrusted with taking the final message of Jesus to a lost world.

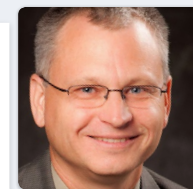
What would happen if more churches in North America followed these models? What would happen if we started gradually transitioning churches to be lay-led by trained, dedicated elders and deacons? Then the ministers could be sent to nearby towns and cities to evangelize and plant churches where no Adventist presence exists. Like the apostles of the early church, the minister would return to the churches, periodically, to provide further training and encouragement, but the majority of his or her time would be spent in raising new churches and companies.

Imagine how this would change the face of the North American church. Congratulatory statements about exciting church growth in America will then be an accurate reflection of reality. Lord, hasten the day . . . 🙏

- 1 A version of this article was originally published on outlookmag.org, July 23, 2015.
- 2 Russell Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1998), 221.
- 3 Scripture references are from the New King James Version.
- 4 "'Go Ye Into All the World and Preach the Gospel,'" *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1862.
- 5 A. G. Daniels, Ministerial Institute Address, Los Angeles, California, March 1912, as quoted in Russell Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach*, 177, 178.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Important Testimony*, 5, https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_PH038.5.1¶=320.18.
- 7 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 381.
- 8 Compare General Conference Department of Archives and Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church, 189–191.
- 9 See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 100.

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Of mission and swords

I often read the story in Luke 9 and 10, when Jesus told His disciples to take nothing with them for their missionary journeys. I understood His reasons for doing so. But in Luke 22, He told them that the time had come for them to take with them everything they would need, including swords. This disturbed me, but I never investigated it deeply. My commentaries informed me that the conversation is “difficult to interpret,”¹ or that it is suspected of not being genuine Lukan writing,² or that Jesus was preparing the disciples “to face future realities” where they would need to fend for themselves.³

Such explanations were anything but satisfying. Then one evening, while I was reading the story with my family, everything suddenly fell into place. My boys looked bewildered as I laughed aloud, delighted by clarity that could not be attributed to anything but the Spirit working through the plain Word of God. What was I shown that the commentaries had missed?

Take nothing with you

The twelve disciples had been with Jesus for many months. They had made great strides in their understanding of how Jesus conducted His ministry because they had watched Him, listened to Him, and been instructed and sometimes corrected by Him. They had gained confidence in ministering together with Him and were becoming proficient in that work. But they were lacking something. Ellen White mentions that they needed the experience

of working alone, without Jesus’ physical presence with them.⁴

So one day Jesus called them together to give them an assignment with specific instructions. “And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics a piece.’” (Luke 9:1–3, NASB).

In college I took art classes where, for certain projects, the instructor let his students create whatever we chose, while on other projects he would severely restrict us in what we were allowed to create. For instance, he might assign a project using only a single color. His goal was to force us to be creative in different ways. Narrow options force a person to think differently.

When Jesus told His disciples to go out preaching and healing but to take nothing with them on the journey, He intended for them to think differently about what they were doing and how they were doing it. His purpose was to teach them that when doing His business, they could and should rely upon God to meet their needs, not on themselves.

Later, in Luke 10, Jesus sent 72 disciples with the same instructions. They obeyed and were thrilled that in Jesus’ name even demons submitted to them. They returned with no complaints of hunger, no stories of shivering through

the night, and no blistered feet for want of extra sandals. Most of us as pastors would be hard pressed to name a single dramatic instance of divine care of the sort the disciples must have experienced. Why not? I suggest two reasons.

Taking ministry seriously

The first reason may be that we are not entirely serious about our Father’s business. When the disciples embarked on their bare-bones missionary journey, it meant that they carried nothing to distract their minds from the task at hand, focusing instead on God, their only source of help.

They had no phone to sidetrack them, no entertainment device to amuse them, no air-conditioning to make it more comfortable to stay home than to go out, no car radio to direct their minds to music or politics or to the latest news, and no TV or novel to help them escape the stresses of life. Therefore, they could more easily take their mission seriously.

Ancient Israel serves as an example of not taking mission seriously enough. They had been raised up by God for the specific purpose of demonstrating what it means to live faithfully to the God of heaven. God promised His extravagant blessing if Israel would do this work. His plan was for the nations of the world to recognize that Israel possessed something better and therefore be drawn to the true God through them.

King David catapulted Israel onto the edges of the world stage. Solomon, the son of David, had his mission laid

out clearly for him. Solomon's kingdom was the one to which the nations would flock to learn the secret of Israel's prosperity.

To aid in this task, God gave Solomon everything he needed. God did not tell Solomon to take nothing

was if they knew that they were being completely obedient to the Spirit's leading. They recognized instinctively that straying from the path laid out before them would mean straying from the path of safety. If they drifted from the task at hand, they could not count

we do take on our Father's business, we prepare as though we must accomplish the mission alone.

Gideon is a prime illustration. God asked Gideon to drive the Midianites out of Israel, but Gideon was afraid. After several signs, Gideon finally acknowledged that God was indeed behind the mission, and then he spared no effort in preparation. He called everyone he could find to join the army.

This strategy, commendable in other Bible stories, was not commendable this time. God told Gideon to take practically nothing with him on this journey. He cut Gideon's already outnumbered fighting force to a mere 300 men. That way, God told him, no one would have any choice but to rely only on God.

I have noticed a similar phenomenon with my preaching. Countless times I have felt that I was thoroughly prepared for a sermon and presented it well but received minimal positive responses. Then there were times when I was less than prepared and felt I butchered the delivery yet received enthusiastic response. I have no choice but to humbly credit the Holy Spirit with working where I am inadequate. We say the right words about relying on the Spirit, but we still act as though we must work alone.

Buy a sword

And if we insist on working alone, God politely steps out of the way and lets us try. This brings us to the reason Jesus told His disciples to take provisions with them in Luke 22.

"And He said to them, 'When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?' They said, 'No, nothing.' And He said to them, 'But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, "And He was numbered with transgressors"; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.' They said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them, 'It is enough' " (Luke 22:35-38, NASB).

We say the right words about relying on the Spirit, but still we act as though we must work alone.

with him for the journey. In fact, He loaded Solomon with blessings at the beginning of the journey.

Unfortunately, Solomon allowed those blessings to distract him from the mission. He began to value his comforts, pleasures, and reputation too much. Ultimately, Solomon, and Israel with him, failed to fulfill the mission God had given them because they became distracted.

God would have preferred for His people to have accomplished the mission while living in peace and prosperity, but they could not handle it. That is why a thousand years later, Jesus Christ arrived in Israel with the same mission. But this time the Son of David did not come with great power and prosperity. He came with nothing at all for His journey except total dependence upon His Father. With Jesus Christ, gone were the things that so easily distract God's people. Instead, they were given nothing to take with them on the journey except their faith in God's provision.

Therefore, Jesus' disciples had every incentive to care deeply about the task they had been given, not merely for altruistic reasons but also in their own self-interest. The only way they could count on God to provide food, shelter, and safety, not to mention success,

on God's blessing. This was not because God would strike them with punishments but because He could not give them what He had promised if they did not give Him what they had promised. That is the way covenants work.

While pastoring, I once saw this contrast in action. When we ran a series of meetings in Moscow, Russia, we did it on a shoestring budget. We had little to take with us on the journey. But the church members were enthusiastic, and the people from the surrounding community responded. Later, I ran a similar series in the United States, which was much more strongly funded and promoted. But the church members hardly attended, and the community members responded the same way. We may be tempted to cite the dissimilarities between countries, but I have noticed striking differences in the success of meetings even within the same church district, the only variation being the commitment of the members.

This is the first reason that we may not see the dramatic experiences that the disciples saw. We are too often distracted from our Father's business with the business of our own creation.

Going it alone

The second reason we may not have such dramatic experiences is that when

Why would Jesus tell His disciples to take nothing with them earlier but now tell them the opposite?


Jesus spoke these words just before Gethsemane when, according to prophecy, He knew His disciples would desert Him. On previous journeys He had restricted their packing because they were going forth in the power of their faith in Jesus. But now, as Jesus prepared to face the cross, the journey the disciples would soon take was a journey of abandoning Jesus. So Jesus was preparing them for that sort of a journey. If the disciples had no intention of trusting Him to supply their needs, they needed to prepare for life alone. In that case, they ought to take money for food; a bag for belongings; a coat to keep warm; and, more important than even a coat, a sword for self-defense.

Not that these precautions would really help them. When Jesus told His

disciples to prepare for this journey by taking money and sword, He was reproving them for their lack of faith. But the disciples did not understand the irony, which is why they delightedly informed Jesus that they already had two swords.

I imagine Jesus' face falling at their announcement. He knew these things must be, so He said, " 'It is enough.' " But what they had just proudly told Him, without realizing it, was that they were already prepared to abandon Him. They still had not learned the lessons of faith that their earlier journeys had proven to them.

Fortunately, Jesus also knew that His Father would not abandon His disciples of little faith. He knew that the event of His death would be a turning point for them. So while saddened by their lack of trust, He was far from losing hope for them.

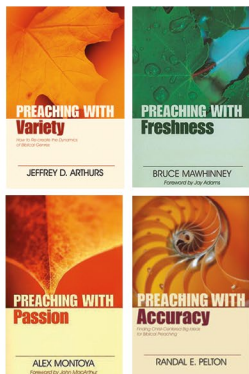
So it is with us today. We disappoint Jesus by our insistence on self-reliance, but He has not given up hope. He will bring us again and again into dire straits where our preparations will be insufficient. He hopes that we will recognize the impossibility of going it alone. He hopes that we will surrender to His care and protection, and in that state of mind that we will focus entirely on the mission that He has given us to do. 

- 1 Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, "Luke," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10, *Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 318.
- 2 John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 35C (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 1075.
- 3 Darrell L. Bock, "Luke," *NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry C. Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 560.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 349.

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Revival and the Holy Spirit

What does it really mean to be a Christian?” asked a student at Australasian Missionary College in August, 1939.¹ Although always an important question, at this particular moment in history it held special significance for Adventist youth and, indeed, for the world as a whole.

Beyond the college, the world of 1939 was in a state of ugly unrest, for Nazi Germany had just occupied Prague and was greedily eyeing Poland, as Japan and Italy left the League of Nations. Their breakaway was a deathblow to that unsuccessful federation that Adventist evangelists of the time referred to as the mixture of Daniel 2:43, the feet of iron and clay. In Britain, still called the Mother Country by Australians and New Zealanders, conscription had been introduced, and thousands of Jewish children from Central Europe were being received into foster homes following the persecution of German Jews. On August 2, the physicist Albert Einstein wrote to the American president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, telling him that scientists had discovered how to create a nuclear chain reaction that could lead to “extremely powerful bombs of a new type.”² This was a year for serious questions, needing serious solutions.

It was at this moment in remote, rural, safe Cooranbong, in the Australian state of New South Wales, that the annual Week of Prayer began at the Australasian Missionary College, the denomination’s senior tertiary

institution in the South Pacific (today it is Avondale College). For this event, Pastor Len Minchin, youth leader of the Adventist Church in Australasia, had been chosen as speaker. A couple of days into his series, on that Tuesday evening, Pastor Minchin invited anyone who would like to talk or pray with him to meet at the music building after the meeting. Some of the male students and their friends accepted the invitation. The time sped by in good fellowship and prayer, with questions answered and discussed. At 2:00 A.M. one of the group asked that all-important question: “Let me get it straight tonight before I go to bed. What does it really mean to be a Christian?” It started discussion and prayer all over again.

At dawn, the students were joined by friends who had come searching for them. “Something is happening here,” several students said. Minchin later recalled, “I never before felt such a spirit of prayer, praise and surrender.”

Later that day, Pastor Minchin told the full assembly of staff and students what had happened the previous evening. Then he introduced a new topic, the Spirit-filled life. But suddenly, a student stood up. “Please excuse me,” he said, “but I cannot keep quiet any longer. I feel I must apologize publicly to my theology teacher.” He turned to face his teacher. “Sir, we had a problem, and I was unforgivably rude, and I also spread unfair rumors about you. I must apologize! Please, please forgive me.”

Silence followed this unusual interruption. Some students looked away, while others watched the faces of the guest speaker and the college president, Pastor A. H. Piper. The stillness was broken when the theology teacher stood up and faced the student who had spoken. “I was largely to blame—I provoked you. Son, I ask *your* forgiveness.” He went over to the young man and put his arms around him.

Without any planning or rehearsal, the meeting then changed as a line of students formed, all desiring to stand near the platform, compelled to speak. As their testimonies and confessions continued, well past the chapel hour, Minchin noticed the chapel clock. He said, “Pastor Piper, it is now time for classes to resume. What shall we do?”

The prompt reply came in a resolute voice. “Brother Minchin, we shall extend the chapel time. We cannot program the Holy Spirit.”

So the Wednesday morning meeting continued, well into the lunch hour. Occasionally, a student left the chapel to go to find a friend who had stayed away. They would return together, swept into the electric atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit worked upon hearts. The week continued with the same spirit, intensifying as young people gave their hearts to the Lord Jesus, confessed their sins, and resolved to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives so that they would know what it meant to be a real Christian.

That was the beginning of the Avondale revival of 1939 that spread

out into the wider community of the church in the Southern Hemisphere. Walter Scragg, later a distinguished theologian, General Conference (GC) communication director, pioneer of Adventist World Radio, and president of the South Pacific Division, recalled its impact on his own life and others in his home youth group. He wrote: “The great revival that swept through Adventism in 1939 . . . found me as a lad in the Tasmanian camp meeting of that year. In the fall-out of that remarkable Spirit-inspired event, I gave my heart to the Lord and was baptized. A whole generation of young people . . . felt the influence of the revival.”³

Does this story matter? There have, after all, been other revivals in Adventist history—and there will be more in the future. The 1939 Australasian revival had wider significance, because shortly after the Week of Prayer, on September 3, 1939, the Second World War began. Now came the hour of challenge, especially to young men at Avondale. Now they had to decide where they stood personally, as Christians, about war—it took courage and conviction to refuse to bear arms. Pastor Piper and the college staff believed that the Holy Spirit had visited the college in that week in August 1939 to prepare and strengthen the youth for the challenges that lay ahead.

Nevertheless, it could not be said that this revival changed the course of Adventist history. So why single it out? There are two reasons. First, to make the point that just because a revival does not completely change the worldwide Adventist Church, it is not any less important. As Ellen White wrote in 1887, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”⁴ That was true then, and true now, and it will always be true, until the outpouring of the latter rain. The remnant church will *always* need revivals, because every Christian needs constantly to be reshaped and revived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And this leads to the second reason for telling this story—to draw attention

to the words spoken by A. H. Piper. The first Australian to serve as a foreign missionary, Piper had buried his wife in the mission field. He had been mentored, as a young man, by Ellen White. He was a man of great spirituality and perception, and his words to Pastor Minchin are profound: “We cannot program the Holy Spirit.”

We all need revival: that is as true today as in 1939. But whence comes revival? In 1902 Ellen White wrote: “A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s official Revival and Reformation initiative is important, but by itself this would be destined to disappoint—if this is just a GC program, it is doomed to fail. Why? Because “the Spirit cannot be programmed.” Church leaders can, should, and must make room for the working of the Spirit and point out to people the continual need to be revitalized and revived.

That is why the church’s “Revival and Reformation” initiative seems laudable, indeed essential. But in the end, every church leader, like every

A revival does not need to change the whole church, all around the world, to be a success in the eyes of Heaven. It needs to change just one life: mine.

two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices.” However, reformation “will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness *unless* it is connected with the revival of the Spirit.”⁵

The root of true revival is with the Holy Spirit. He uses men and women of deep, true spirituality—powerful preachers, articulate authors, skillful musicians, and others—to prompt us to reflect on our lives and to want to have our relationship with Jesus rejuvenated. But ultimately, true revival cannot be effected by human efforts.


church member, has to say, “The Holy Spirit does not come as something that I help other Seventh-day Adventists find—I need the Holy Spirit *myself*.” And every church member can say, with the apostle Paul, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15, NKJV). Not that I need to convict others—I must be convicted myself.

To rephrase Ellen White: A revival of true godliness is *not* the greatest and most urgent of the church’s needs—but the greatest and most urgent of *my* needs. When the Spirit works in us, there is a greater chance that others will hear and see something in what church workers and

church members say and do that makes them open to the workings of the Holy Ghost, in turn. True godliness, moreover, is more than prayer and Bible study, though they are its necessary preconditions.

While “revival” in Ellen White’s thinking is inner renovation, “reformation,” which she regularly pairs with revival, must have real-world impact: it should (in the words quoted above) “bring forth . . . good fruit.” A. H. Piper certainly would have agreed, for he taught students what he had learned from his prophetic mentor: revival should lead believers to serve, whether in the church, their local community, or the wider world.⁶ Because revival and reformation are twin fruits of the Spirit, the greatest of “my needs” is twofold: *both* to experience personal spiritual renewal *and*, as a result, to engage in service.

Finally, when we see the Spirit working, inwardly or outwardly, we need to be humble enough to acknowledge the Spirit, be thankful for it, and then cancel classes,⁷ cancel committees, cancel all our regularly scheduled programming, and let the Spirit work all these things as He wills.⁸


Ellen White asks, “Are we hoping to see the whole church revived?” She answers, “That time will never come.”⁹ A revival does not need to change the whole church, all around the world, to be a success in the eyes of Heaven. It needs to change just one life: mine. 


- 1 This article draws on interviews with students and staff of Australasian Missionary College (today, Avondale College of Higher Education) by Marye Trim, who studied at the college soon after the revival this article describes.
- 2 Einstein to Roosevelt, August 2, 1939, American Experience, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-ein39/)

/truman-ein39/.

- 3 Scragg to Marye Trim, 1982, quoted in Marye Trim, *Courage in the Lord: The Story of Albert Henry Piper* (Sydney: Department of Education, South Pacific Division, 2004), 34, fn. 10.
- 4 Ellen G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, 177.
- 5 Ellen G. White, “The Need of a Revival and a Reformation,” *Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902, 113 (emphasis added).
- 6 See Marye Trim, *Courage in the Lord*.
- 7 “When the Spirit seemed to be striving with the youth, did you say, ‘Let us put aside all study; for it is evident that we have among us a heavenly Guest. Let us give praise and honor to God’? . . . “ . . . When the Holy Spirit reveals His presence in your schoolroom, tell your students, ‘The Lord signifies that He has for us today a lesson of heavenly import of more value than our lessons in ordinary lines. Let us listen; let us bow before God and seek Him with the whole heart.’” Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1943), 363, 364.
- 8 Compare 1 Corinthians 12:11.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 122.

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Maurice Brown, DMin, ministered as a lay preacher in London, England. In his retirement, he serves as an elder for the Mandeville Seventh-day Adventist church in Mandeville, Jamaica.



Preaching from the roundtable:

Listening together for the voice of God

A growing awareness exists about a dearth of wholistic preaching that integrates the preacher, the listener, and the message in the context of a Christian community. After the presentation of the sermon on a given week, we find it not unusual to hear comments suggesting that, although “good,” the sermon did not meet the needs of the church members. At the root of this deficiency comes the firmly held view that revelation has been given to the pastor; and to him or her alone.

The prophet Isaiah was called to preach the good news to God’s people in exile, and in chapter 50 verse 4 we read:

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue,

To know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,

Wakens my ear to listen like one being taught (NIV).

Isaiah’s portrait of servanthood reveals a magnificent portrayal of the life of a preacher who has been called by God and who learns to listen before he or she speaks. Collaborative

preaching becomes preaching that elevates listening as an ingredient of primary importance. The preacher learns to listen to both the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and the echoes of his or her community. In short, the preacher learns to listen to both.

In this context, our church in London, England, asked a group of six to eight representatives, chosen from the church membership to reflect age, gender, culture, and educational and religious background, to participate in roundtable discussions with the pastor. What we learned shows that sermons prepared in collaboration with members of the congregation are often better able to meet the needs of the hearers.

Method

Participants were given the pastor’s text, along with any guidance from the pastor, and allowed a reasonable time for study prior to the meeting. They were then reminded of the goals to be achieved, which were to: (a) widen the biblical interpretative process to include members of the laity; (b) engage and influence the ways in which the congregation moves forward in its drive toward becoming a Christian

community; and (c) learn to listen to the voice of God and follow the will of God.

Members were informed of the hermeneutical and exegetical principles that would inform the interpretative process, as well as the listening skills that would help members comprehend the dynamics of sermon preparation and delivery.

The process of interpretation began with members reading the text from different translations. Following the reading, members divided into pairs to discuss the insights and ideas gained from the text. After the allotted time, they came together for general discussion and role play, using all their imagination. They needed to look at the text in its historical setting and to enact the text in the context of the church community in a way that accorded with the needs, expectations, and life experiences of the members.

After the sermon preparation meeting, the preacher’s task was to work with the Holy Spirit to create a sermon that would reflect the text and incorporate from the group discussion any material the preacher deemed pertinent. After the sermon was preached, the group celebrated the word together

and joyfully shared personal blessings gained as well as insights received through their interaction with the rest of the membership.

Each group functioned for one year, then another group was chosen. We did this for three years and then asked church members what it had meant for them. What do you anticipate the results were? Before I share the results, permit me to give some background.

Listening

A need for self-evaluation exists, indeed, for what J. H. Oldham calls

way for this to happen is to facilitate a manner of listening through which the preaching moment unites the Word, the preacher, and congregational life.

The apostle Peter says, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20, KJV). Conversation between clergy and laity can help to bring about a common language of faith and the building of a closer and stronger community. As this is done, the community learns and develops a wealth of metaphors, images of faith, and a language of the heart that accords with the Word of God

it is an understanding of preaching that is grounded in a mutuality and solidarity between the preacher and the community.

In order to evangelize the whole world, Christ shifted the responsibility for teaching and healing from Himself to ordinary people who would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. A similar shift becomes necessary between the clergy and laity in all areas of ministry, including sermon preparation. For this to take place, the procedures and structures of the church will need to be simplified and new priorities adopted.

The sermons preached over a three-year period demonstrated that participation with the members of the congregation can increase clergy-laity dialogue and heighten awareness and listening skills among congregants.

a revolution in our present outlook: “The need to restore the broken connection between the church and life as actually lived demands a radically new understanding of the place and function of the lay members of the church. . . A revolution is needed in the present outlook of the church.”¹ This revolution may begin by inviting the opinions of marginalized voices into the work of sermon preparation.

The apostle Paul says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, NKJV). Through listening, the preacher learns about not only the experiences and expectations of the members but also his or her own limitations. For this to happen, the church needs to encourage true participation—a coming together of clergy and laity in the task of ministry. One

and the experiences of its members.

Fred Craddock discusses the essential role of the preacher.² He suggests that the preacher should above all be “a listener to the Word of God” seeking to experience the Word as “an event” or a happening. In addition, the preacher should “really be a member of the congregation,” “able to be vulnerable” and to live and preach in “relationship with the people.” Craddock further characterizes the new relationship as “listening by the speaker” coupled with “contributing by the hearer.”

Christine Smith suggests that the preacher and the worship committee are not separate and distinct realities.³ She asserts that preaching is not grounded in the preacher’s “special rights, power, knowledge, and capacity to influence or transform.” Rather,

In general, preachers have systematically followed the pastoral form or what Bernard Swain calls the “sovereign style” of leadership.⁴ This style is modeled after the prophets who interpreted and mediated God’s word for the community. In the sovereign style of preaching, the pastor determines and embodies the final word on God’s will for the members. The preacher, however, may be enriched by listening to the heartbeat of the congregation as well as the vibrations of the text. Without the former the sermon may become a positivistic restatement of a scriptural truth without being true biblical preaching.⁵

Collaboration

John McClure regards preaching as a collaborative process in which leaders

create roundtable conversations that give the laity opportunities to interpret the gospel in the context of their own lives.⁶ It involves members of the congregation in sermonic brainstorming. In this way the sermon becomes what David Hesselgrave calls the “rhetoric of listening”: a form of communication between preacher and hearer that allows the theological insights of the preacher to penetrate the congregation and also permits the biblical interpretations of the congregation to find a voice in the pulpit.⁷

Lucy Atkinson Rose contends that the preacher and the congregation are colleagues exploring the world as it relates to their lives, the congregation at large, and society in general.⁸ All Christians, irrespective of their station in life, have a unique experience with God, and all should be invited into the process of interpretation.

I contend that a collaborative effort involving planned, structured interaction between the preacher and members of the congregation will not only widen the process of interpretation but will also lead to deeper spiritual lives and better relationships among members. The experience of the group will, ideally, mirror that of the pastor. However, in listening to the sermon, the group finds themselves also in a position to dialogue together to increase understanding and facilitate change. Dialogue can be considered a tool for bringing about reflection and change.

Dialogue

Though I recognized the need for increased relevance and more balance in my preaching, it was not until seminary that I realized how one-sided my sermons had been. The seminary enabled me to preach more evenhanded sermons and to make the preaching moment an event that enables the hearers to experience the assurance of grace so that they will “never quit praisin’ God.”⁹ However, I was also introduced to the deeper process of dialogue, which enables the body of Christ to have an encounter with God, one that leaves them with a

stronger faith and deeper commitment to do His work.

Most churches have what we consider to be a shared ministry. Deacons and deaconesses participate in the communion service, and elders are given opportunities to preach; yet its hierarchal structure creates a gap between the pastor and the laity. There exists some dialogue, but the sovereign style does not permit or allow for dialogue in the early stages of sermon preparation.¹⁰ Preaching is often conducted through a *closed-door* process that, by its very nature, is exclusive.

The need for change has long been recognized. The distribution of spiritual gifts was, and is, for the building up of the church as the body of Christ, and it provides ample proof that the early church was led by the laity (1 Cor. 12:3–10). In contrast, we have established a two-tier system where the professional pastor leads and the laity follows. Rose is convinced that “the preacher and the congregation are not separate entities, but a community of faith.”¹¹ Because traditional homiletical theory presupposes a gap separating the preacher from the worshippers, it may be difficult to take seriously alternative experiences that are rooted in dialogue.

If the church is to model the example of the early believers, the members must engage in varying forms of ongoing collaboration between pastor and laity. The collaborative process refutes the lone ranger model by listening to those who share our perspectives as well as to those who disagree; but whose perspectives we nevertheless take into account.

Results


So what were the results? The testimonies of the lay participants were glowing. They felt humbled, but empowered. One group member stated: “As a member of the group, working with the preacher on the sermons has been one of the highlights of the year. I now have a better understanding of how to read and interpret a passage. It has been a learning

process for me. I have learned new ways of looking at a text, visualizing the various images and metaphors that can contribute to an interpretation of the Scripture. I realize the need to read the text in a certain way, and I am more focused on what the text is saying.” Another group member said: “The idea of trying to unravel the mysteries of the Bible is itself a mystery, but one that I have come to realize can be carried out through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. Guided by the pastor and working together with other people, all of whom are on different levels of experience and faith, was in itself a lesson in faith.” Yet another group member declared: “Although we had read the text, we still continued to look at it from the perspective of the author of Luke’s gospel. Although our interpretations were similar, because of preconceived ideas, they were nevertheless different to the pastor’s. From the subsequent dialogue with the pastor, we learned the need to focus on the text, and what it is saying to us. We were also reminded that texts have several layers and dimensions of meaning which need to be considered.”

The sermons preached over a three-year period demonstrated that the participation of the pastor with members of the congregation can strengthen clergy-laity relations and heighten awareness and listening skills among congregants. Church members reported that their biblical knowledge had increased and their spirituality and faith had been greatly enhanced.

Ellen White states, “The dissemination of the truth of God is not confined to a few ordained ministers. The truth is to be scattered by all who claim to be disciples of Christ. It must be sown beside all waters.”¹² Equally upon the whole church of Christ, clergy and laity alike, the duty to minister is laid. Collaborative preaching does not usurp the place of the Holy Spirit; rather, it increases the need, for the Holy Spirit, enables the preacher to recognize and utilize the talents and gifts of the church at large, and makes our collective stories an offering to God.

Paul Scott Wilson made this point quite emphatically: “As preachers we do not stand against the people, untouched by their struggles. We stand with the people, as one of them, under the Word. The people are the church and they have set us apart for a particular kind of ministry, to bring their lives into focus before God.”¹³

Traditions die hard and changes often take time. If a pastor would like to introduce collaborative preaching, we suggest it be implemented for short periods, intermittently. The prophetic voice of the preacher cannot be muffled by the sensitivities of the saints. Yet if preachers are to meet the needs of our congregants, we need to know what those needs are. And what better way to know those needs than, simply, to listen?¹⁴ 

- 1 J. H. Oldham, *Life is Commitment*, (New York: Association Press, 1952) 97, 98. Quoted in Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer a Minister* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 11.
- 2 Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority: Inductive Preaching* (Enid, OK: Phillips University Press, 1974), 43, 35, 83. Quoted in Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 61.
- 3 Christine M. Smith, *Weaving the Sermon*. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 57, 46
- 4 Bernard F. Swain, *Liberating Leadership: Practical Styles for Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986). Quoted in John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 1995), 31.
- 5 Cf. Fred Craddock, “The Inductive Method in Preaching,” in *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method*, ed. Richard L. Esinger (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 123.
- 6 McClure, 49.
- 7 David J. Hesselgrave, “‘Gold from Egypt’: The Contribution of Rhetoric to Cross-Cultural Communication,” *Missiology: An International Review* 4 (1976): 95 in McClure (1995), 57.
- 8 Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 4.
- 9 Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2013), 3.
- 10 Compare Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times: The Preaching Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 78–81; Vassel Kerr, *The Power of Biblical Preaching* (Oshawa, ON: Miracle Press, 2000), 173–182.
- 11 Rose, 22.
- 12 Ellen White, “The Salt of the Earth,” *Review and Herald*, August 22, 1899, par. 12.
- 13 Paul Scott Wilson, *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 29.
- 14 For more information on this topic see Maurice Brown, *Preaching from the Roundtable: Where Collaboration Amplifies Revelation and Facilitates Proclamation* (Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2009).

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Seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness


It was 2008, the year of the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression. I had just become the new pastor of a church in Michigan when the global financial disaster touched our church budget, and it began bleeding thousands of dollars. At this rate I envisioned the church having to close its doors on my watch.

At our next prayer meeting, my members passionately expressed a desire to pray sacrificially. We agreed to come to the church every Sunday morning at four o’clock to pray for revival. Sunday morning the members came, and we prayed for two hours and claimed the promise that “a revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”¹ We prayed for a revival of primitive godliness and for us to be able to reach our community for Christ. We continued to meet each week to pray, although we eventually

moved the time to seven o’clock in the morning.

In the upcoming months our congregation witnessed a transformation among our young people. They shared their faith with fellow students at the local state university with dramatic conversion results. A young, atheistic Chinese student studied the Bible with us and was baptized seven months later. A son of a Baptist preacher began Bible studies and was baptized into the church. A young student answered a knock at his door by a member, began Bible studies, and was baptized. This young man would go on to attend Southern Adventist University and is now a pastor in New York. The conversion stories kept coming.

As for our finances, every year after we began that early morning prayer meeting we ended the fiscal year with a positive surplus. Our tithe

giving increased by 40 percent. Donors funded an increase to our church staff. The Lord also provided funding to completely renovate our kitchen and bathrooms and to upgrade our sound booth. Our members were astounded. It was clear that our prayer for revival through the Holy Spirit had indeed brought “all other blessings in its train.”² 

—David Shin, MAHT, currently pastors the Hillside O’Malley Church, Anchorage, Alaska, United States.

- 1 Ellen G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, 177.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1940), 672.

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What Can I do?

1. **Everyone can do something!**
2. **Get involved** in Sabbath school care groups or church outreach.
3. **Support** Adventist World Radio, Hope TV, the Voice of Prophecy, or other Bible schools, so their work can continue over the airwaves.
4. **Support and pray** for Adventist Mission and indigenous workers in unentered areas.
5. **Participate** in local and institutional health outreach events, such as health expos, or Pathways to Health events.
6. **Volunteer** with a local Community Service event or ADRA project.
7. **Organize** a health seminar, small group, Bible study, or evangelistic series in your home using the New Beginnings DVD.
8. **Help** with children's, youth, or Pathfinder community service projects.
9. **Volunteer** with evangelistic events or Prophecy Seminars.
10. **Befriend** new members and disciple them.
11. **Pray like never before** for the advancement of the Gospel in hard-to-reach areas of the world. Pray that God will reveal ways that you can personally work in His vineyard.

► Croatian Adventist pastor receives 2016 human rights award

Zagreb, Croatia—Adventist pastor **Dragutin Matak** was one of three individuals awarded the 2016 Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights award Friday, December 9, 2016, at a ceremony in Zagreb. He and **Dubravka Šimonović** and **Inoslav Bešker** were recognized for promoting human rights, religious liberty, and interreligious dialogue.

Dr. Matak is an Adventist pastor and theologian who is also general secretary of the Croatian Religious Freedom Association. He involves

himself in all of the major religious and politically current issues in Croatia and the Balkans. Among his recent activities, Matak was part of a delegation of religious representatives from Croatia who visited the religious and political leaders of Iran during the summer. As such, his contribution to public life in Croatia is widely known and appreciated.

In his acceptance speech Matak emphasized the need for personal moral responsibility in achieving human and religious freedom.

Dr. Dubravka Šimonović is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and she is a member of the UNHCR Advisory Group on Gender, Forced Displacement and Protection. Dr. Inoslav Bešker has spent a lifetime in journalism and is renowned for his outstanding contribution to human rights. Representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia and the Adriatic Union supported this achievement by attending the ceremony. [tedNEWS]



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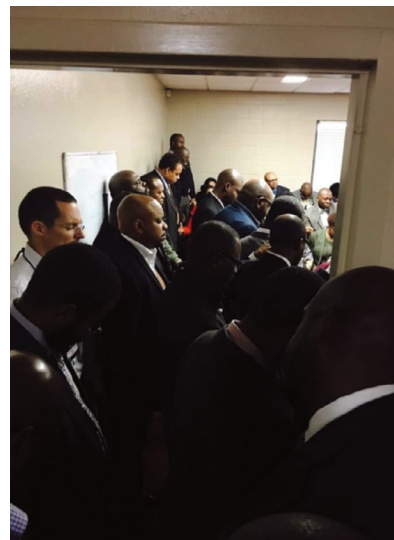
► The Holy Spirit disrupts Adventist pastors' meeting at Oakwood University

Huntsville, Alabama, United States—“A God opportunity that I have hungered after for forty years,” said **Ben Jones**, president of the South Central Conference and chair of the Tuesday morning, December 6, 2016, devotional session where Pastor **Tricia Wynn-Payne** of Indiana had challenged her congregation to “wait for it.”

As many as 1,000 attendees heard Pastor Wynn-Payne speak from Acts 1:4, where the resurrected Jesus commanded His disciples to “wait for the promise of the Father.” “Powerful,” said **Dr. Anthony Medley**, senior pastor of the Emmanuel-Brinklow congregation in Ashton, Maryland. And Pastor **Lola Moore Johnston** said, “It was obvious that spiritual warfare took place before. We become overwhelmed by the enormity of the assignment and turn inward to focus on our skill set. But it was evident to me that the preacher took her own words seriously: she waited for it. She waited for the Holy Spirit to do His work in her.” Her ministry gave “unmistakable” evidence of “God’s handiwork,” said **Dr. Jesse Wilson**, director of the Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership

Council (PELC), the largest and oldest annual gathering of Seventh-day Adventist pastors and leaders in the world, meeting annually at Oakwood University.

The results were spiritually stunning. “Pastor Tricia disrupted everything,” one attendee said; “the Holy Spirit showed up and took us by surprise.” Pastor Wynn-Payne, a trained physical therapist who left her nets in response to God’s call to pastoral ministry, said she was still processing what had happened, even the day after. The message and worship experience so disrupted the proceedings that organizers spontaneously invited those who were interested to gather in one of the meeting rooms to pray. The next meeting scheduled for that room was long delayed as the prayer session continued for more than an hour. One after another, with no pause between prayers, pastors, administrators, and lay people lifted their voices and hearts to God in confession of sin, surrender to the Spirit’s will, and pleas for His anointing in their lives as well as His church’s program here on earth at the end of time.



Picture credit: Garry Gordon, Florida Conference

As Elder Jones made final remarks and the solemn yet thrilling spiritual experience drew to its close, someone offered a comment that was pregnant with allusion to the historical experience that inspired Pastor Wynn-Payne’s sermon (see Acts 1:4, 5): he had counted the number of people in the room—not a straightforward task, since people were crowded in against the walls and squeezed into corners. Nevertheless, he wanted it to be known that about 120 individuals had been praying in the room. [Lael Caesar | *Adventist Review*]

► Inter-America trains administrators and committee leaders online

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Inter-America Division (IAD) provided their newly appointed church administrators an online orientation to assist them as they lead and make decisions for the fulfillment of the work in its territory.

The one-day training session was organized under the IAD’s Segment Leaders Development (SeLD) program and focused primarily on those who serve on committees and boards,

organizers said. It was also open to individuals in key leadership areas in the IAD, including institutions, schools, and churches. It had connections in 280 locations, and more than 2,500 views of the program were accessed within 24 hours after the webcast.

“This is the first time we are reaching all committee and board members across the division in an effort to train and equip board members in their responsibility to help lead this

church,” said **Israel Leito**, president of the IAD.

Many come from various environments and may not understand the organization as it is, noted Leito. Leito reminded leaders that no concentration of authority rests in any of the church’s organizational levels, from local field, union, division to the General Conference level. “Authority is disbursed; committees have authority granted and render accountability



to the constituencies they serve,” he said.

Adventist General Conference president **Ted N. C. Wilson** congratulated IAD leaders for the governance training session and encouraged viewers to be loyal to Christ’s church and His mission. “We need authentic, genuine, humble, Christian leaders in the

institutions in the organization; the function of policy in boards and committees; the fiduciary responsibility of leaders; conflict of interest; and groupthink on boards and committees. Viewers were able to submit questions during the program to be discussed during question and answer sessions featured after each training segment

“It is imperative that we invest in training and development to avoid mistakes that result from lack of information and knowledge,” said Balvin Braham. “To deepen or change the organization culture and make the organization relevant to achieve desired results, leader development must be intentional and continuous.”

Image by IAD


IAD who govern, who supervise, who encourage as Christ did,” said Wilson. “God wants you to be transformed to lead effectively before Christ’s return.” The president reminded leaders to study the Word of God, pray, and share with others about the transforming relationship with the Lord in dedicated service to fulfill the mission of the church.

The online training also included training sessions by IAD executive secretary **Elie Henry**, division treasurer **Filiberto Verduzco**, and SeLD coordinator **Balvin Braham** on the function of unions, local fields, and

during the six-hour program. A case study exercise for leaders was also featured.

Braham said the leadership development the IAD has undertaken for more than ten years is all-important for the church organization to thrive and function effectively in today’s environment of continuous change. Usually, dozens of newly appointed administrators travel to IAD Headquarters in Miami, Florida, for annual development training. But the online program became a cost-effective and time-efficient method to reach the large and diverse group of leaders.

Leaders were happy that the live, online program had connections in 280 locations, and more than 2,500 views of the program were accessed within 24 hours after the webcast. According to Braham, plans are underway for a face-to-face leader development conference to be held July 10–17, 2017, in Miami, Florida. “This conference will include a wider cross section of individuals. Church elders, pastors, department leaders, and administrators at all levels are invited to attend. [Libna Stevens | Inter-America Division]

To view IAD’s SeLD online training session, visit webcast.interamerica.org. 



A Day for Healing

by John C. Brunt, rev. ed., Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2016.

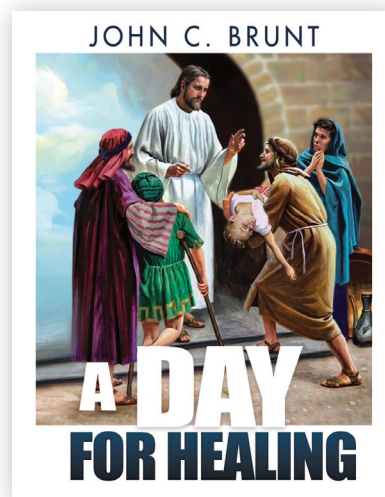
In this slender text, seasoned scholar and beloved pastor John C. Brunt aims to show not only how Jesus' practice of the Sabbath was situated within the Jewish context of His time but also how He offered a significant corrective. To accomplish this, Brunt focuses on Jesus' Sabbath miracles as a window into what the Sabbath is ultimately about—a day he claims to be “a day for healing.”

Originally released in 1981, *A Day for Healing* is a unique Seventh-day Adventist publication. According to Brunt, there was a serious lack of published material on the positive significance of Jesus' Sabbath miracles. So instead of looking for ways to defend the validity of the Sabbath commandment based on Jesus' practice, Brunt sought to reveal something about God's character and its relevance for how we ought to celebrate the Sabbath today. In this slightly revised second edition, Brunt continues to place Jesus' miracles in the foreground but adds one additional chapter, bringing the total to seven.

Before considering the five Sabbath miracles in chapter four, the author offers two background chapters. Chapter two includes a discussion on how the Sabbath was observed in Jesus' day, primarily through the lens of Jesus' harshest critics: the Pharisees. According to Brunt, the “pharisaic system of Sabbath observance reveals the result of their legalistic attempt to build a fence around the law as an aid in perfect obedience” (20). Chapter three considers the significance of Jesus' healing ministry as a type of sign pointing to “Jesus' power to bring total spiritual healing” (24). In the remaining four chapters, Brunt examines each Sabbath miracle in turn and then discusses theological, ethical, and

pragmatic implications for Sabbath observers today.

Of all the ways the author probes Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath, the question posed at the beginning of the fifth chapter is perhaps the most penetrating. Assuming Jesus knew of the trouble that would result from healing on the Sabbath, why did He “insist




on performing these controversial miracles” (56)? Brunt's response can be placed in two categories. By purposefully healing on the Sabbath, Jesus sought to show, first, what the Sabbath is *not* and, second, what the Sabbath is. As to the former, he argues how Jesus' Sabbath miracles illustrate “that the Sabbath is not a day for legalistic rules and rituals” (60). Instead, based on Jesus' example of intentionally looking for people to heal on the seventh day, the Sabbath is, therefore, a day for healing. “Jesus, by word and action, demonstrates that salvation lies at the very core of the Sabbath” (67).

Although Brunt states he is writing for the general Sabbath keeper, he seems to have a certain Seventh-day Adventist practitioner in mind. There

is an underlying bias in which Sabbath “rules” are prohibitive for authentic Sabbath practice, not an infrequent critique of the Sabbath. Focusing on rules may interfere with healing on the Sabbath, but these two are not mutually exclusive. Another unintended implication is the potential of misrepresenting New Testament pharisaical Judaism as representative of the sum total of Judaism then and now.

To be fair, Brunt offers a word of caution about becoming careless with respect to preserving the “purpose and sanctity of the Sabbath” (72). Moreover, when John references “the Jews” in his Gospel, Brunt offers this caveat: “he is not referring to all Jews” (48). Nevertheless, these are passing comments on the way to emphasizing how “the Sabbath brings life only when the focus is on Jesus and on His healing and saving activity, rather than on rules” (74). I know quite a number of religious Jews and rabbis who would beg to differ. In a time when many are returning to the Jewish roots of Christianity, we may wish to avoid distancing ourselves from God's original source for Sabbath preservation—the Jews. After all, Jesus was Jewish.

These critiques notwithstanding, *A Day for Healing* is an especially important book because the Sabbath story is not exclusive to Judaism. Christianity adds an additional number of chapters, and, for this reason, Jesus' Sabbath miracles deserve attention. In a world that is in desperate need of what the Sabbath has to offer, Brunt provides important material for reflection and helpful advice for practice.

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Relevant ministry in the twenty-first century: Continuing education for ministry

We live in the Information Age. To put this unofficial title of our times into perspective, consider the following assertions: Ninety percent of the world's data was created in the last two years.¹ This means that humankind's knowledge about the universe has grown by more than 90 percent in the last 24 months. Human knowledge is doubling at a rate of every 12 months.² Every 60 seconds 150 million emails are sent, 2.78 million YouTube videos are viewed, and more than 700,000 Facebook logins are made.³ The Internet, social media, and the rate at which we receive and cognitively digest information have all created seismic cultural and societal shifts that happen seemingly overnight. Consider how rapidly society has changed its thinking regarding same-sex marriage, immigration, populist politics, and religious terrorism. Entirely new worldviews and ways of being are formed every few years; previously these transformations took decades or even generations. The world is changing at an unbelievable rate.

In such a world those in ministry are faced with a fundamental question: How do we stay relevant in the Information Age? The answer to the query of relevance is biblical and vital to all of us. The secularization of our institutions and philosophy, shrinking congregations, attracting and retaining youth within our churches, and the ever-increasing difficulty of evangelism all point to the need to be more relevant

and meet the spiritual and human needs of contemporary audiences. Let us be clear, being relevant has nothing to do with “watering down” our beliefs and values. Being relevant has everything to do with rethinking how we share the love of Christ and the importance of His teachings in the everyday lives of those living in the modern world.

The question of relevance in an ever changing world can largely be answered by never ceasing to learn. Professional development is both biblical and foundational for our church and, therefore, should be a core component of any ministry. According to the Bible, the true measure of a professional is the eagerness to continually improve. Biblical support for lifelong learning is unmistakable. Proverbs 1:5 states, “Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance” (ESV). Speaking directly to ministers, 2 Peter 1:8 states, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (ESV). In both of these texts, the Bible speaks to the necessity of continually seeking knowledge and self-improvement.

In *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White expands on the biblical principle by writing, “Those who are chosen by God for the work of the ministry will . . . by every possible means seek to develop into able workmen.”⁴ Sister White went a step further and made the matter of continuing education

for pastors plain when she wrote, “The gospel is not properly taught and represented . . . by men who have ceased to do with students.”⁵ Pastors are not alone in this endeavor of lifelong learning. Sister White writes that as ministers “manifest earnestness in improving the talents entrusted to them, the church should help them judiciously.”⁶

Pastoral professional development is the intentional growth of skills and knowledge related to specific areas of the ministerial profession. It is learning that deliberately focuses on an area of identified need. We all have strengths and weaknesses, both personally and professionally. However, what matters most is not that we have shortcomings but what we do to overcome them. Professional development is all about being the absolute best you can be at your job. It helps you maintain your expert status throughout your career, even decades after formal education. Physicians, electricians, teachers, and bankers all have professional development requirements. Most licensed professions do. These occupations require continuing education because times change: technology improves, culture evolves, expectations vary, and unexpected challenges constantly emerge. Whether you are a plumber or an attorney, professional development is key to maintaining specialized relevance and effectiveness in our ever-changing landscape. It's also customizable, because learning how to enhance skills can take many forms,



including reading a book, attending a seminar, or taking a college course.

Often in ministry, the pastor is supposed to have all the answers: a Bible verse at the ready, an expertise in conflict management, and the strategic vision to accomplish anything. No longer are pastors, teachers, administrators, or lay leaders seen as the unquestioned “go to” experts they once were. Pastors are scrutinized for relevancy, professional currency, and effectiveness at every turn. It simply isn’t realistic to think that once a person earns a graduate degree, they know it all or that a person has no need for professional growth.

Professional development is learning that takes place after graduation

from a formal academic institution. It is evidenced by continual professional growth until retirement and beyond. Regardless of institutional ranking or the significance of your diploma, it’s ill-advised to think that after receiving your degree you have learned everything there is to know about your area of study. Professional development provides opportunities for specialists to hone their craft throughout their lifetimes, and it fills the learning gap that the cessation of formal education leaves. Lifelong learning is key to maintaining specialized relevance and effectiveness in our ever-changing landscape.⁷

1 SINTEF, “Big Data, for Better or Worse: 90% of World’s

Data Generated Over Last Two Years,” *ScienceDaily*, May 22, 2013, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/05/130522085217.htm>.

2 David Russell Schilling, “Knowledge Doubling Every 12 Months, Soon to Be Every 12 Hours,” *Industry Tap*, April 19, 2013, <http://www.industrytap.com/knowledge-doubling-every-12-months-soon-to-be-every-12-hours/3950>.

3 Jeff Desjardins, “What Happens in an Internet Minute in 2016?” *Visual Capitalist*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.visualcapitalist.com/what-happens-internet-minute-2016/>.

4 Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 353, <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/aa/aa33.html>.

5 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 48.

6 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 353, 354, <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/aa/aa33.html>.

7 For further information on this topic see www.adventistlearningcommunity.com.

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