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www.ministrymagazine.org
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org

EDITOR
Pavel Goia

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jeffrey O. Brown

CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR
John Fowler, Clifford Goldstein,
Myrna Tetz

EDITORIAL SPECIALIST
Sheryl Beck

FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGER
John Feezer IV

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N. C. Wilson

ADVERTISING

advertising@ministrymagazine.org

SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANT

Sonya Howard

SUBSCRIPTIONS/RENEWALS/ADDRESS CHANGES

subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org
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+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

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SECRETARY Jerry N. Page

ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Jonas Arrais, Jeffrey Brown, Robert Costa,

Pavel Goia, Anthony Kent, Janet Page

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“At 75+ I am now serving a small congregation, which is a delight for both them and me.”

Ending ministry

I enjoyed reading your article about preparing for retirement (“Questions for pastors as they prepare for retirement,” November 2017). Since I was serving in an elected position, I was not totally ready for retirement when I was not elected at age 70. It was a difficult time because I had been used to working, probably 60 hours per week, and suddenly I had nothing to do. I did not see anyone or hear from anyone. It was an eerie feeling. I did have work to do

but not what I expected in retirement. At 75+ I am now serving a small congregation, which is a delight for both them and me. I had thought I might enjoy serving as a pastoral assistant when I retired. I did help one of my pastoral sons for 1.5 years with preaching until he got a full-time assistant.

You can plan ahead for what you might do in retirement, but be prepared for what the Lord wants you to do, which may well be different from your plan. I am thankful that money

has not been an issue. I always enjoy reading your magazine. God’s richest blessings!

—Rev. Dr. David Buelmann, Lutheran Church
Missionary Synod

Beginning ministry

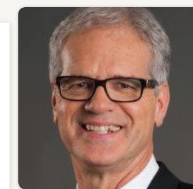
Someone shared with me a copy of *Ministry* magazine (November 2017). In it there is an excellent article entitled “Seven rules for pastoral interns.” I would like permission to send this out to our interns here at Heritage College & Seminary. Thank you for the useful resources.

—Keith M. Edwards, Director, Heritage Partner
Church Resource Center/Internships, Heritage
College & Seminary, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

HELP US PLAN OUR FUTURE

www.ministrymagazine.org/survey

Jerry Page is ministerial secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



God's work or mine?

My wife, Janet, and I had just arrived home exhausted from a ministry journey to Romania. We had gone there to help young adults discern God's specific vision and plans for their lives. We immediately received a message from our neighbor, Bob, asking us to call. He wanted us to pray for him because he had just found out that he had aggressive pancreatic cancer and would have major surgery the next morning. We had come to love Bob and his wife Barb over the last few years through eating, walking, and praying together. Bob was raised Jewish and sometimes we have been able to share about our love for Jesus, and we longed to see them more interested in a living experience with our Lord.

Janet and I were overwhelmed with all we had to accomplish in the days leading up to our departure for Japan. We were going there to support our pastors and members prayerfully seeking God's vision and leading in reaching a very secularized culture. Janet came under strong conviction she should drop everything and go to the hospital and be with Barb and her daughter. They were quite anxious and appreciative of her presence. The surgery lasted much of the day, but the results were good, and we now have a much deeper relationship with them. We thanked God for the opportunity and wisdom to go where God was already at work.

Our Lord is always at work to seek and save those who are lost (Matt. 18:11; John 5:17, 19). He has been working in each person's life, family, and people group for a long time. Our call as disciples is to seek Him to reveal what His specific mission is for us, our churches, and our people groups. Sometimes God's mission requires major breakthroughs in

salvation history, as John McVay points out in his excellent lead article this month on Peter, Cornelius, and the mission to the Gentile world. At other times, God's mission requires a breakthrough in our relationships with family or a neighbor. Too often we just take a method that has been successful somewhere else and try to humanly impose it on our territory. We need to seek God's heart and vision for our mission.

I think of Keith and Tammy Mosier. Keith was a very spiritual and gifted young missionary's son taking theology. We called him to be a pastor in Central California, but he heard the Lord call him to the Congo. He married Tammy, a missionary's daughter. They knew the Lord wanted them to go to Kisangani, one of the most isolated and undeveloped parts of Northeast Congo. While they knew that human comforts would not be there, they were convinced that the Holy Spirit was already there. So they raised funds and established Frontline Congo Missions. Twenty new churches have been organized for our Northeast Congo Union Mission. This young, Caucasian couple, now with four very happy children, have another 50 church planters establishing new church plants in an area filled with violence and disease. They talk with passion about the massive challenges with major portions of the Congo still unreached with the gospel. The Mosier family thank God for the opportunity, gifts, and wisdom to go where God was already at work for years.

Last December, we spent time with our church pastors and their spouses from the South Sudan field. Because of the civil war, they have been through deep distress, often coupled with the agony of family separation. Some of the spouses lived in refugee camps in

Uganda. They told of the traumatized women they found there. The Lord led these ladies to gather the women to pray together. The field president's wife then suggested they make purses to be sold. These women prayed, worked, and laughed together. They grew to be close friends. Their testimony at the ministers' meetings was that through these friendships and "Come We Pray" gatherings, there are now 117 newly baptized believers in that refugee camp.

God is always at work, and if we seek His plan and join Him in His work, amazing results will come! 🙏

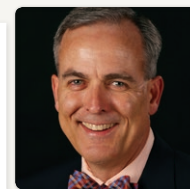
*Seven Realities**

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him, and He accomplishes His work through you.

* Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 63.

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John K. McVay, PhD, serves as president of Walla Walla University, College Place, Washington, United States.



Cracking the Cornelius code—part 1

I sense a growing, gnawing hunger. Not the physical, stomach-growling kind (that comes a bit later)—but a spiritual hunger, a cavernous opening of heart and mind that leaves one feeling a deep, almost painful, hunger for God. Such a hunger will propel you to a place where you can be alone with God. This will urge you toward prayer and drive you to your knees. And, on this day, it does that for me.

And so there, on a sizzling rooftop in the seaside town of Joppa, I look out over the scores of other, nearly identical rooftops, marching their way to the azure waters of the Great Sea. And though the town is named after a daughter of the wind god, there is no wind. It is hot and still; and it is lonely. No one else is foolish enough to be on a scorching rooftop at noontime. In my urban isolation, I begin to pray: “Oh, Lord, I cannot explain this strong, spiritual hunger. I do not know why I am driven to my knees on this rooftop. But I know that I need You.”

As I am praying, a strange thing happens. Through the spiritual hunger, physical hunger begins to assert itself. In my experience, this is strange. In those moments when I am spiritually hungry, as hungry as I am on that rooftop, nothing else matters. And yet, there it is—piercing through the strong, spiritual desire is that basic, human instinct for food. And the smell of lentil stew, cooking down below, is wafting up

to the rooftop. And just at that moment, a truly weird thing happens.

My perfectly alert, conscious state begins to be altered. The scenes of reality become entwined with surreality. A new reality is superimposed over the scene before my eyes of steamy roofs and an azure sea. Slowly the surreal becomes the real. A huge container, rather like a large tablecloth, descends slowly but steadily from the heavens, suspended by its four corners. As it descends, I see movement. Things are moving around inside that cloth, writhing, causing the tablecloth to bulge here and then there. As it descends a little farther, I can see the cause of the commotion.

It is a zoo in there.

An array of faces flop over the edge of that sheet. Some I know; others I do not. One moment I am staring into the gentle eyes of a newborn calf; the next, into the quizzical eyes of a large-nosed, floppy-eared animal with its handlike paws grasping the edge of the cloth. Then comes the yellow-eyed, reptilian stare of an oversized snake. And with the sights come sounds: squawks, bellows, hisses, and grunts. And smells, the aroma of cooking lentils now amid a rank mix of animal odors. There are smelly, strange, creepy critters in there, some of the strangest animals that have ever walked on four feet. And snakes of all sizes and colors together with birds, eagles, vultures, and the like. It is as

though an earthquake occurred at the zoo, and all the animals got mixed up together in this textile ark.

The oversized tablecloth still descends. As it lowers further, I see more of the animals. My adrenaline flight instinct kicks in. In just a moment, the container will lie flat on the rooftop and all of those creepy crawling things will be free to pursue me, the only prey available. It is easy to see what I should do—run.

As I turn on my heels to do so, a voice speaks: “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” I recognize the voice, and still I disagree with the command: “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.” The voice speaks again: “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” Twice more comes the divine command, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” Twice more I repeat my protestations. Twice more comes the tagline, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.”¹

Then, in a flash, it is gone. The tablecloth vanishes into the heavens. The rooftops and the Great Sea come back into focus. Right on cue my hostess, a slight note of exasperation in her voice, shouts up to me, “Peter, dinner is ready . . . and there are three men here to see you!”

Men or menu?

Seventh-day Adventists have been highly interested in the story of Peter’s

strange vision—told in the story about Cornelius. We employ it often in Bible studies. We are specialists in what “they” *does not* mean. We are justifiably concerned that the zoo-in-a-tablecloth vision of Peter not be misunderstood as an endorsement to eat anything in sight. It is refreshing to have our view validated by others. Chris Miller titles an article on the topic with a clever question, Did Peter’s vision in Acts 10 pertain to men or the menu? He answers this way: “This event [Peter’s vision] *could* be dealing with the abrogation of food laws, but it would be very difficult to prove it from the Book of Acts. . . . The only change in Peter’s dining habits at the time had to

- Scene 3—Acts 10:17–23a—The entourage from Cornelius arrives at the house where Peter stays.
- Scene 4—Act 10:23b–33—Peter and Cornelius meet and share their visions with each other.
- Scene 5—Acts 10:34–43—Peter preaches the gospel to the household of Cornelius.
- Scene 6—Acts 10:44–48—The Spirit descends on the members of Cornelius’s household, and they are baptized.
- Scene 7—Acts 11:1–18—Back in Jerusalem, Peter defends his ministry to the household of Cornelius, retelling the story.

fringes, yes, but still within it. Cornelius is clearly a Gentile. And he is won to faith by none other than Peter himself. The clear identity of Cornelius as a Gentile and the involvement of Peter and the Jerusalem church make this the “decisive breakthrough.”⁴

Cornelius is the test case, the precedent. With him, a change occurs. The paradigm shifts. The tipping point is reached. The gospel will not be—cannot be—constrained within the boundaries of Judaism. It will go as well to the Gentiles.

As we carefully examine the Cornelius code, though, we discover another message encrypted there. This

We dare not forget these stories about Cornelius. They draw us out of our constrained views of Christian mission and toward the expansive horizons of God’s grace.

do with the men, not the menu.”²

We have argued well the case for what the Cornelius narratives *do not* mean, and we appreciate Miller’s help in making the point. However, if the stories about Cornelius, including Peter’s vision, do not mean the abrogation of Jewish food laws, what *do* they mean? The narratives of Peter’s ministry to Cornelius are clearly important in Luke-Acts. Luke tells the story three times, just as he does the story of the conversion and call of Saul of Tarsus. He tells and retells the story in considerable detail and with narrative skill, he encodes the story, encrypting his message as a story with seven dramatic scenes and an echo:

- Scene 1—Acts 10:1–8—The vision of Cornelius.
- Scene 2—Acts 10:9–16—The vision of Peter.

- The echo—Acts 15:7–11—Years later, as part of the proceedings of the Jerusalem Council, Peter briefly narrates his ministry to the household of Cornelius.

So why does Luke exercise such great narrative skill in repeatedly recounting the story of Cornelius? And how do we crack his code, extracting the message concealed there?

The tipping point

Cornelius represents the tipping point of Christian mission. One could argue that he is not the first Gentile won to faith in Christ. Philip has already preached in Samaria (Acts 8:4–25), and the Ethiopian official, a man from the ends of the earth, has also been won to faith in Christ (Acts 8:26–40).³ These people, though, are regarded as still within the orbit of Judaism. On the

is more than a simple news flash about Christian mission. It is more than a record of the next great thing in evangelism. To crack the Cornelius code is to make a pilgrimage into the heart of God Himself. The Cornelius stories present more than great missiology. They offer profound theology. And in doing so, they offer us an enigma, a strange riddle to decipher. In that echo of the Cornelius files at the Jerusalem Council, Peter says something profound about God: “After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart [Greek, *ho kardiognōstēs theos*, “the heartknower God” or “the heartknowing

God”], testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us” (Acts 15:7–9).

God, indeed, is the heart-knowing and heart-cleansing God.

Data management

Some years ago it became known that the United States (US) Treasury Department had issued “compulsory subpoenas” to SWIFT, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication. At the time, SWIFT was distributing data messages among 7,800 financial institutions in more than 200 countries, each day handling more than 11 million transactions and exchanging US\$6 trillion. The United States government required SWIFT to provide data on financial transactions by suspected terrorists. The purpose? To “follow the money,” to prove links between terrorists, and disrupt terrorist activity.⁵

Compare the data that flows through SWIFT with the data handled by the heart-knowing God. If the US Census Bureau’s World Population Clock is correct, there are now about 7.5 billion people in the world.⁶ So God handles data from 7.5 billion hearts—a bit more than 7,800 outlets. SWIFT handles 11 million transactions a day. By contrast, each of those 7.5 billion people think how many thoughts a day? Pray how many prayers? This data stream is inestimable. The US Treasury subpoenaed the SWIFT data to ferret out terrorist activity. The heart-knowing God needs no subpoena. He has instant and complete access to every one of those 7.5 billion hearts. His interest, though, is not in terrorist activity. His interest is in glimmers of Spirit-inspired faith. He scans the data to save, not to condemn.

God is the heart-knowing and heart-cleansing God. But here is what makes that wondrous fact part of an enigma: His followers are surface-reading people: “For the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward

appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Imagine that you are a good, law observant Jewish-Christian believer who hears the description of Cornelius in Acts 10:1 and judges based on “outward appearances.”

Wrong man? Wrong place?

“In Caesarea there was a man . . .” He lives in the wrong place. Caesarea is the headquarters of the Roman occupation. It is the administrative and military capital of Palestine and is filled with collaborators of Rome. It is a highly urbanized and cosmopolitan city overrun by Gentiles and known for its ungodly and lascivious ways. For that reason, Jews call it “the daughter of Edom.” When you sail into the large, beautiful harbor of Caesarea, you sail right toward the Temple of Augustus and Rome. And it boasts all the godless installations of the Roman city it is—theater, amphitheater, and hippodrome. It is a heathen, pagan, idol-worshiping place.

“In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius . . .” He lives in the wrong place, and he bears the wrong name. He is named “Cornelius,” a common, Gentile name, underlining his separation from grace.

“In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion . . .” He lives in the wrong place, bears the wrong name, and practices the wrong occupation. It would be bad enough if he were a mere soldier in rank. But he is in charge of many others who suppress the populace.

“In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort . . .” He lives in the wrong place, bears the wrong name, practices the wrong occupation, and comes from the worst place. As a concluding characterization, confirming Cornelius’s separation from grace, he is part of the “Italian Cohort.” He comes from Italy, the headquarters of the occupying power. He comes from the “lair of the dragon,” Rome.

The algebra of exclusion

Jewish-Christian believers sometimes practiced what they believed to be a Bible-based algebra of exclusion: “Gentiles are idolaters. We Jews steer clear of idolatry and idolaters. So Gentiles are unclean, off limits.” Peter and company would never have included Cornelius and his ilk on their list of target audiences for the gospel. God had to go to considerable extremes to convince them that Gentiles like Cornelius represented the future of His church. Had they followed their own well-considered evangelistic strategies and church-growth plans, they would have missed the whole Gentile mission, and Christianity would have fizzled into obscurity.

God’s followers may be surface-reading people. Their God, though, is the heart-knowing and heart-cleansing God. “But the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). When God looks upon Cornelius, He sees beyond living in the wrong place, bearing the wrong name, practicing the wrong occupation, and coming from the worst place. What does He see? “He [Cornelius] was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God” (Acts 10:2).

And what of us today? We dare not forget these stories about Cornelius. They draw us out of our constrained views of Christian mission and toward the expansive horizons of God’s grace.

Part 2 will be published in the May 2018 issue. 📖

1 Acts 10:13–15. All Bible quotations in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version.

2 Chris A. Miller, “Did Peter’s Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (2002): 317.

3 And ministry to the Gentiles had likely already occurred in Antioch (Acts 11:19–24). Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 132.

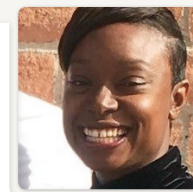
4 Ibid.

5 “U.S. Searching Bank Transactions,” *CNN Money*, June 23, 2006, money.cnn.com/2006/06/23/news/international/terrorism_finance/index.htm?cnn=yes.

6 U.S. and World Population Clock, www.census.gov/popclock/.

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LaKeisha Williams, MEd, is a doctoral student at Regent University. She resides in Huntsville, Alabama, United States.



Leading simply: *Jesus' third manifestation during uncertain times*

My dad enjoys fishing. If I call him early on a weekend morning, and he does not answer, the odds are that he was out on a lake somewhere. There is something serene about the fishing experience for him. I have accompanied him on a few trips, and I have found the whole ordeal to be somewhat stressful and boring. The actual reward of catching a fish seems worth it. But, too often, my dad gets up early on a day off, only to return home empty handed. To me, that is the worst experience ever!

Sometimes my dad has returned fishless but he appears rejuvenated. He immediately delves into an activity on his to-do list with much vigor and energy. I have often envied his ability to recuperate, especially after a disappointment. But his response suggests that fishing trips bring more rewards than the obvious expected catch of fish. To the avid fisherman, fishing trips bring an intrinsic satisfaction worth more than two or three small fish.

John 21:1–14, at first glance, contains a simple narrative about a successful fishing trip. The narrative unfolds after the death and resurrection of Jesus. At this point, Jesus had appeared to the disciples in at least two

other instances. It is unclear why Peter decided to go fishing. Perhaps, like my dad, he needed a quiet getaway.

Maybe there was something about water that reminded Peter of Jesus. After all, Jesus did many things in, with, and around water. He calmed storms. He made wine. He walked on water and healed with it too. As a matter of fact, Peter met Jesus while he was out on the water. For Peter, going fishing was a good idea.

Peter and the other disciples were in a time of waiting and uncertainty. They were confident that Jesus was alive. They had seen the empty tomb, and Jesus had appeared to them multiple times. At His last appearance, Jesus told the disciples to wait in the city until they received the Holy Spirit. This directive more than likely explains the disciples' presence in Galilee, which was far from Jesus' burial site.

Peter did not know, however, that Jesus was getting ready to show up again. In John 21:1 the Johannine writer uses the Greek word, *phaneroō*. *Phaneroō* means “to manifest” or “to reveal oneself”—to make something known that was unknown.¹ The departure of the disciples' present leader was imminent. After three years of shared ministry, what was left for Jesus to

reveal or to make known to the disciples during this time of uncertainty?

John 21 includes an intense plot of activity with minimal recollection of dialogue. Through the close study of John 21:1–14, Jesus' example provides several leadership principles. When confronted with change and in times of uncertainty, His example demonstrates that it is important for leaders to: (1) engage with employees in simple day-to-day activities, (2) share in and meet the needs of organizational members, and (3) remind the organization of its original mission.

Phaneroō

The previous time *phaneroō* was used in the book of John was John 17:6, when Jesus talked with the disciples for the last time before Judas betrayed Him. During the conversation, Jesus paused to speak to God, confirming that He had revealed God's name to the men that were given to Him by the Father. It was almost like a farewell speech. Jesus' prayer confirmed that He had done what He was supposed to do.

The next time we encounter *phaneroō* is after the Resurrection. In the book of John, *phaneroō* appears in only one post-Resurrection narrative,

here in chapter 21. However, the writer shares that this is the *third* manifestation, or *phaneroō*, of Jesus. If the four books in the biblical canon on the life of Jesus are connected, the word is used for the post-Resurrection in two additional instances. The book of Mark details both of those other times.

In Mark 16:12, Jesus manifested Himself, *phaneroō*, among two men walking to the country. The story is told

bread at dinner, the two men's eyes were opened. Jesus then disappeared, but the two men immediately ran to the other disciples to share what they saw. As they reported their experience, Jesus manifested Himself, *phaneroō*, again, this time in the room with the disciples (Luke 24:36; Mark 16:14).

After these two manifestations, *phaneroō* is not used post-Resurrection until John 21. The narrative in John

had not caught anything until Jesus instructed them to cast their nets again. Following Jesus' instruction, the disciples caught so many fish that their nets broke. In Matthew 4, Jesus then responded with the Greek word, *deute*, meaning "come now." The disciples immediately left all and followed Jesus (Luke 5:11).

In John 21, the story repeats. While fishing, Peter and the other disciples



Oftentimes, as leaders, we are so busy looking for the next best thing that we neglect the simple things in life.

in more detail in Luke 24:13–31. In the passage, Jesus joined two men walking on the road to Emmaus. While walking and talking, not knowing who Jesus was, the men recounted to the Stranger the rumors of Jesus' resurrection. Disappointed by their apparent doubt, Jesus led the two men in a Bible study, reminding them of all the things in the Scriptures that pointed to His own death and resurrection. As the journey ended, the men, still not recognizing Jesus, begged the Stranger to stay with them. As Jesus broke and blessed the

21 begins with inside information to prepare the reader. Jesus is getting ready to manifest Himself again.

Called—again

The third post-Resurrection manifestation of Jesus is eerily familiar. The story line closely mirrors the first calling of Peter and the other disciples, as written in Luke 5. Prior to becoming disciples, Peter and his brother were professional fishermen. While they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus walked by. At this point, the fishermen

found themselves in the same predicament—a night of fishing—but no catch. As morning dawned, a Stranger appeared on the shore, telling them to cast their nets to the right side. Obeying immediately, they cast their net, and it filled quickly. Realizing that it was Jesus, the disciples quickly made their way to the shore. As they met land, Jesus used the same Greek word, *deute*, to call the disciples to breakfast. To Peter and his friends, this word, more than likely, served as a reminder of their first calling to discipleship.

What about the fish?

John 21:11 informs the reader that there were 153 large fish in the catch. While the disciples use some of the fish in breakfast with Jesus, there is no mention of what the disciples do with the rest. It is almost as if the experience with Jesus is so satisfying that the disciples forget about the large catch. In the first fishing story, in Luke 5, there are so many fish that the net breaks. But the disciples do not seem to focus on the count in that instance either.

At this point in the narrative, there is a sense of excitement. Peter is leaping and swimming. The other disciples are pulling, counting, and towing. Is not this why Peter went fishing in the first place? Yet, as the narrative continues, the writer reveals that the excitement is not really about the fish at all—but about something more rewarding: another moment with Jesus.

Leading an organization through uncertainty

The story of the third manifestation of Jesus is significant because it is surprisingly practical. As before, Jesus could have revealed Himself with a grand parade through the streets of Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9). He could have made the skies open and speak in confirmation of His deity (Matt. 3:16, 17). He could have returned to Jerusalem as the travelers returned home from the Passover and loudly declared His name in the temple (John 2:13–22). Instead, He chose to manifest Himself in a much less dramatic way. In this last manifestation, Jesus revealed Himself in the simple ways of life.

As a leader, Jesus needed to leave a lasting imprint. The disciples were getting ready to experience ministry in a whole new way. This moment on the lake was a calm before the storm. In a short time, the disciples were going to be propelled from the positions of followers to leaders.

Connect in the day-to-day. The Sea of Tiberius was also known as the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1). One commentator suggests that the author of the book

of John used the word “Tiberius” to relate to the Gentile reader years later.² Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, He returned to Galilee regularly. While the Bible suggests that crowds found Jesus in Galilee (Matt. 14:13), it also provides evidence that the Sea of Galilee was desolate and a place of respite for the Messiah (v. 15).

Much of Jesus’ ministry developed in the region. Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, was located in Galilee, and His first and second miracles were in Galilee. In Cana, He turned water to wine. In Capernaum, He healed a sick boy nearing death. When Herod captured John the Baptist, Jesus retreated to Galilee. He performed miracles there, prayed there, walked on water there.

Thus, it is no surprise that Jesus appeared to the disciples one last time in this location before His ascension. Some scholars suggest that Jesus revealed Himself only to believers after His resurrection.³ This possibility is significant because there is nowhere in the text that provides evidence of the disciples being the only ones on the lake. But the passage does imply that the only ones who recognized Jesus were His disciples (John 21:12). Perhaps, if someone recognized Jesus, as at times before, it would have initiated crowds in wonder of the resurrected Christ. But for this moment, the crowds were unnecessary.

By returning to the lake, Jesus revealed that at the point of organizational change, the most important place was not a press conference or grand opening. He revealed that the most important place was in the stillness of day-to-day activity. It was in the stillness of intimate moments and fond memories. I imagine that the presence of Jesus on the lake brought peace to the troubled and uncertain disciples. As they slowed down in waiting for the Holy Spirit, Jesus slowed down too.

Meet and share needs. In addition to a place of reminder, Peter’s decision to go fishing suggests a return to his former occupation. As they waited for the next instructions from their leader,

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there were still immediate needs for the disciples. As an area of expertise, fishing was a realistic option for income.

As they continued into the morning, Jesus appeared on the shore and spoke to the disciples, asking questions that confirmed their need. He asked them if they had fish and then directed them to cast their net on the other side. Immediately the net was filled.

Jesus' example in leadership revealed that, in a time of organizational change, it is important to meet and share the needs of the followers. As the disciples arrived to see a breakfast of fish and bread on coals of fire, Jesus did not simply disappear. He sat down with the disciples and ate with them. By sitting with them, He shared in their needs.

Jesus also utilized some of the fish caught by the disciples. Through this act, He reinforced the disciples' methods for provision. He empowered the disciples by partaking with them in their own area of expertise. Jesus' leadership example demonstrated that leadership affirms the follower. If He had provided in another way, it would possibly have had a diminishing effect on the disciples' confidence. They would have walked away feeling as if any participation from them was futile.

Revisit the organizational mission. The John 21 narrative mirrors Jesus' first calling of the disciples. This reminder of the beginning was crucial for strengthening the disciples for the future of the organization. Without this moment, the disciples would have entered a time of leadership in a whirlwind, perhaps, with little ground for faith. They needed this time of reminder before the next phase came.

It was through this moment that Jesus communicated explicitly to the disciples through His actions. He declared loud and clear: *Do not forget that I called you! Do not forget what I called you to do! Do not forget what I have done and can do for, with, and through you!* This reminder propelled the disciples into a time of

remembrance. It took them back to the first time they left all and followed. Jesus' use of the same Greek word to call them to breakfast sounded in the disciples' ears like His call to "Come follow me!"

The book of John was written, it is believed, after the early Christian church had formed. It was written to Christian readers to deepen their reflection on the significance and richness of the treasure in Jesus. It was also written to encourage the reader to hold on to this treasure.⁴

Some suggest that John 21 is an addendum to the book of John, added to the completed manuscript in later years.⁵ If true, then this passage reveals that from the future perspective of the author, the most important information for the believer at the moment of change was a reminder of mission and calling, "I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17; Matt. 4:19). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19).

In a time of organizational uncertainty, Jesus' example demonstrated that it was important for leadership to remind the organization of the original mission. No time was more important to ground organizational members in the mission of the organization. This reminder served as an anchor for what lay ahead.

Conclusion: Leading simply

Oftentimes, as leaders, we are so busy looking for the next best thing that we neglect the simple things in life. Through John 21:1–14, God communicates a vision of leadership striking in contrast to some of the more innovative and progressive Biblical models. Jesus' final earthly manifestation highlights the need for leadership to slow down sometimes.

Following the ascension of Christ, the disciples are thrust into rapid change (Acts 2:1–4). There are no more fishing stories. The rest of the Bible, detailing the accounts and writings of the Christian leaders, is filled with

speaking engagements, large-scale evangelistic meetings, baptisms, home visits, small group sessions, and prayer meetings. Foreseeing the needs of the future global evangelists, Jesus slowed down to help the disciples refocus on what was most important. He found them in their day-to-day activities, met their unspoken needs, and then set them purposefully in a place of focus on the mission.

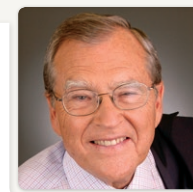
As the spouse of a minister, I have the privilege of sitting in a front row seat while witnessing some of the most powerful and Spirit-filled moments that I have ever experienced in my life. But in all honesty, my most favorite moments in ministry are not the moments when we stand in crowded auditoriums with our hands lifted, tears streaming, as soul after soul takes a stand for Christ. My most favorite moments are not the pastor-appreciation dinners, completed building projects, or successful back-to-school community outreach events. My most favorite moments are actually quite simple.

My husband is still in close contact with many fellow seminarians, and while more than a decade has passed since they embarked on separate ministries, we have regular moments where our worlds come together and we celebrate the acts of God. As we sit together laughing, talking, and reminiscing, while our kids argue over the gaming system in the background, I am overwhelmed by the goodness of God in my life and the lives of those I love. Strangely enough, these are the best moments. They are like short fishing trips. I really do not care if I catch anything at all. The simple experience in itself is worth more than a few fish. 🐟

- 1 All Bible quotations in this article are from the New American Standard Bible.
- 2 Henry D. M. Spence-Jones (ed.), *St. John*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 499.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 405.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 403.

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R. T. Kendall, DPhil, is pastor emeritus of Westminster Chapel, London, England. He resides in Hendersonville, Tennessee, United States.



The holy nudge¹

Never in my life had I felt fire in my bones like this.

It was a pivotal night for Westminster Chapel and for my own ministry. Arthur Blessitt, the man who carried a twelve-foot cross 42,279 miles (68,041 kilometers) across the world, had come to preach. The sanctuary was packed.

Before the sermon, Arthur and I lingered in the vestry, where he casually told me he would invite people to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I was not prepared for this. It was not even an evangelistic event. This was the annual meeting of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).

“Arthur,” I said, “we don’t do that here.”

“You don’t?”

He looked incredulous, so I said, “Well, if you feel led, go ahead.”

So, Arthur gave the invitation after preaching. Dozens stood and confessed Christ. The place buzzed with Arthur’s message; the last people I expected to, were singing his praises.

It was such an extraordinary evening that I persuaded Arthur to stay at the chapel for longer than he intended. It was the most controversial decision I made in 25 years at Westminster Chapel. But I felt what my old friend Pete Cantrell called a “holy nudge”—it was like a gentle prod from within, a sense of duty in the heart.

Arthur preached six successive Sunday nights. His ministry changed the chapel and me. Never would we be the same again.

The nudge: Holy or not?

In more than 60 years of ministry the question I have been asked most frequently is, “How do I know the will of the Lord?” So often we hear people say, “God led me to do this” or “The Holy Spirit told me to say this.”

When you are in the presence of the Lord, you may experience a feeling that you must do something. But is this “nudge” always holy?

Many times have I felt a “nudge” that turned out to be from God. But other times a nudge has proven to be of the flesh, not of the Holy Spirit. How do we know if an unexpected feeling to do something comes from the Lord? How can we trust what comes into our hearts; after all, does the Bible not tell us the heart is deceitful above all things and incurably wicked (Jer. 17:9)?

Ask yourself the following five questions, and you may have *PEACE* about not being led astray:

Providential. Does the door open, or do you have to knock it down? When Arthur said yes to feeling led to make an appeal, that made it providential. So far, so good.

Enemy. What do you suppose the devil would have you do? The devil would have wanted me to give in to fear of man and not ask Arthur to spend six weeks with us.

Authority. What does the Bible say? Is there anything in Scripture that would prohibit what you feel? If the answer is No, then it is biblical.

Confidence. Does your confidence increase or decrease at the thought of

doing this? When you lose confidence, that means something has gone wrong. Never had I felt such boldness than when inviting Arthur to stay with us.

Ease. What do you honestly feel in your heart of hearts? This is where integrity must rule. To quote Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “To thine own self be true.” I knew that I could never live with myself if I did not do all I could to persuade Arthur to preach for us.

Where could a nudge come from?

A nudge has three possible origins: the flesh, the devil, or the Holy Spirit. How to know the difference becomes the big question.

Prayer is an important step in discernment. In my daily prayer, I ask of the Lord, “Help me to perceive quickly what is of the flesh, the devil, or the Holy Spirit.” Furthermore, I pray that I accept only what the Spirit warrants.

Of course, prayer every morning does not guarantee that I will be led by the Spirit all day long. We need to pray as well as *watch*. This is why it is crucial to have a solid theological foundation, a strong knowledge of the Bible, and an openness to the immediate and direct witness of the Holy Spirit.

Plenty of well-meaning people believe themselves to have a hotline to God, but all “words of knowledge” and “prophetic words” must be tested against Scripture (1 John 4:1). The Word says, “Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be extremely wise; why should you destroy yourself?” (Eccl. 7:16).²

Be aware. When we feel as though we are God's favorite, God will show us how much He really loves us by whittling us down to nothing. I know I have felt a strong anointing when preaching as though I had "arrived." Of course, then, I preach again, and it goes so badly that it is utterly embarrassing.

The heart: Seat of personality

Do you trust your heart? Honestly? Our hearts play tricks on us. This is why the Bible teaches against self-reliance: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understand-

In more than 60 years of ministry the question I have been asked most frequently is, "How do I know the will of the Lord?"

ing" (Prov. 3:5). We trust in the Lord with all our hearts, which means we are completely committed to relying on Him, not ourselves.

God tests us so that we can see what is in our hearts (2 Chron. 32:31). This is for us, not for God, as He knows our hearts better than we do. Through testing, we uncover the evil in ourselves. If you are feeling a nudge to do something, is it from God or is it from your heart?

When Proverbs tells us to "guard" our hearts (Prov. 4:23, NIV), it shows that we can rise above the heart and gain some measure of objectivity about ourselves, keeping our feelings from

determining what is true. Paul said, "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent" (1 Cor. 4:4, NIV). It is God, alone, who will "bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart" (v. 5, NIV).

Moses was tutored in understanding what was a holy nudge from God. Stephen tells us that when Moses was 40 years old, "it came to his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel" (Acts 7:23). Moses grew to realize that he was a Hebrew, a sobering truth when he saw how the Egyptians treated his people. He could have repressed his feelings and kept it from bothering him. But he did not dismiss what he felt in his heart. This was when integrity stepped in.

As the Bible teaches, the heart can be the vehicle of either integrity or deceit. "As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). "Set your heart on the right path" (v. 19, NIV). "Guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Prov. 4:23, NIV). There is so much rooted in the heart: conscience, feelings, and motivation. Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies" (Matt. 15:18).

So, can you trust your heart? The answer is, you must be very careful. You could be right. You could be wrong.

A holy nudge, an unholy nudge

Rabbi Sir David Rosen and I wrote a book together titled *The Christian and the Pharisee*. The book was born because of a nudge. It was during my quiet time before breakfast when I felt a nudge to ask David to write a book with me comprising our letters to each other. We were going to have breakfast one morning at the Mount Zion Hotel in Jerusalem, and that was where I made the suggestion. I posited that I would present the biblical case for Jesus being Israel's Messiah and that David could reply as he pleased.

"Don't answer now—just think about it," I said.

"Let's do it," David said.

This book began with a nudge that was holy. It was published on both sides

of the Atlantic and welcomed widely by Jewish Christians. I hoped it would lead some Jewish people to Christ, but, as far as I know, that has not happened. But as Yogi Berra would say, "It ain't over till it's over." As for David and me, well, we are still good friends to this day.

After *The Christian and the Pharisee* was published, I felt another nudge—a huge nudge. Certain reviewers of the book suggested we write a book that included Muslims. I agreed.

My time was spent interviewing or seeking interviews with heads of churches in Jerusalem, including the Russian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic leaders.

What I learned was if I wanted to hear from the most powerful Muslim leaders, then all roads led to Egypt. So I visited Cairo, thinking I was on my way to meet the Grand Mufti of Egypt. Everything seemed so providential. Then I hit a wall and, in the end, everyone said no.

The nudge was not from God. It was my own grandiose idea. None of the interviews with church leaders flowed. A lot of time and money was spent pushing for something that God was not in.

John Paul Jackson, a speaker and minister who accompanied me on some of these interviews, gave me a warning: "Your ego will drive you to politics. The Spirit will keep you focused on salvation."

In retrospect, I am thankful that my "nudge" did not drive me to write that second book.

What was the difference between the "feel" in the latter nudge and the "feel" in my nudge to write *The Christian and the Pharisee*? Honestly, I felt no difference. That is why we should test our feelings. Measure it against the PEACE acrostic. Pray, and the answer will be made clear. Additionally, when we do not have to knock down doors to make things happen and the nudge leads to peace, we know that it is a holy nudge.

Another nudge

Lastly, what I am about to share might be difficult to believe. I will simply tell you what happened.

In June 1970, my wife, Louise, and I were seated at a Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Denver when I felt a sudden nudge to look to the New Testament. I needed to confirm a strong leading that I was feeling.

Allow me to just say: opening your Bible to receive a verse for guidance is precarious. I do not recommend it. However, I responded to my nudge and asked the Lord that what my eyes fell on would be specific, clear, and decisive.

My heart was pounding in my chest. I knew what I was about to read would reveal our future.

After years of reflecting on how I never finished my degree at Trevecca, I knew I had to decide now to finish or forget it forever. I was 35 and very happy in my Baptist church at Fort Lauderdale.

If I ventured back into the world of academia, I would not be back into full-time ministry until I was 40.

I knew the gospel and the Word of God. My public speaking skills were strong. But, like most other ministers, I felt uncomfortable with not having academic credentials. *Should I give up my church, finish college, and go to the seminary?*

I kept thinking, *If only God would give me a Word.* So, I opened my little King James Version New Testament. My eyes fell on these words: “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel” (Acts 7:22, 23, KJV).

That was it. Everything fell into place. *Forty years old.*

I turned to Louise and explained what I knew now. We both agreed that we would resign from our church and go back to school. We never looked back.

In light of these experiences, let us conclude with this: remember that no experience of God—whether miracle, healing, sign, or wonder—will remove our need to have faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

Between the nudges and moments of intense discernment, never lose faith in the Lord God. 📖

1 This article is based on R. T. Kendall's book *The Presence of God* (Charisma House, 2017).

2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture in this article is quoted from the Modern English Version (MEV) of the Bible.

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Prayer meeting in prison

Last month I went to prison. Actually, I have been going fairly often since one of my congregations conducts prison ministry in the correctional facility in town.

One day, I asked the men at our prison prayer meeting about their Christian walk. They began to give theological answers but said nothing of their experience with Christ. They shared stories of disagreements with other denominational groups and wanted to know how they could defend their beliefs. It became clear why these men were in prison. They had a knowledge of the Bible but not a living, transforming experience with Jesus. These individuals professed Christ before they broke the law and were incarcerated. One young man in the group recently died after a series of drug overdoses. He professed to be a Christian but was out of control.

Unfortunately, we find this problem in churches also. Pastors regularly experience difficult people. Some

profess to believe God's Word, but when they were baptized, they were “buried alive.” Self did not die, and they were not born again (John 5:39, 40). We may be actively searching the Scriptures but still fail to gain eternal life because we never really came to Christ!

“Listen,” I told the group, “it's not your job to go around telling others that they are wrong. Your first job is to spend time with Jesus Christ.” I strongly encouraged them to take at least an hour each day to draw close to God through the Scriptures and prayer.

The next time I saw these men, it was like they were different people. Their faces were lit up with smiles and happiness. They had taken the advice seriously and were spending regular time with Jesus!

As pastors, we are called not only to share the fundamental teachings of Scripture but also to teach others to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and to demonstrate what it means to be

a disciple of Christ. Strive to include the importance of personally knowing Christ and the experience of practical Christian living in every sermon. Share stories of how God has given you the victory over sin in your life. Pray the prayer of David:

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You”
(Ps. 51:12, 13, NKJV). 📖

—Jed Genson is pastor of the Sault Ste. Marie, Manistique, and McMillan churches in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, United States.

Revival & REFORMATION

Shaunti Feldhahn, master of public policy (MPP), is a social researcher, best-selling author, and popular speaker residing in Norcross, Georgia, United States.



Game changers: *Five transformative truths every pastor needs to know*¹

Over the years I have done hundreds of pastoral interviews in which a pastor interviews me during the divine service. In advance conversations, I have also heard their burdens as pastors—and, probably, yours too. I hear about the tiring pace, the constant putting out of fires, the twist in their gut that comes with answering a phone call from a church member only to hear, “I have to talk to you about something.”

As a church leader, you have the unparalleled opportunity to bring Jesus into the lives of broken people in a broken world. But it also means that you are constantly dealing with broken people in a broken world. I want to give you hope that you can help *prevent* a meaningful portion of those broken situations, particularly in marital relationships, and see immediate evidence that even more of your people are thriving in their lives and relationships.

Based on 15 years of rigorous research, I will outline five “high leverage” truths: surprising facts that are simple and effective at heading off many of the problems facing ministry workers today.

Game-changing truth 1: The 50 percent divorce rate is a myth, and the

rate of divorce is *much* lower in the church.

This was the biggest research shocker of my career. For years I believed (and said from the stage) that the divorce rate is 50 percent and that it is the same in the church. And I knew that those “facts” made it far easier for struggling couples to lose hope and give up. Then I saw contradictory Census Bureau data. After investigating the complex statistics for eight years, in my 2014 book *The Good News About Marriage*,² I debunked this damaging urban legend. The fact is, the vast majority of marriages last a lifetime, and those who stick with troubled marriages usually make it.

A bit of detail: the divorce rate for society as a whole is not and has never been close to 50 percent. Only very high-risk groups have gotten that high (like those who marry as teenagers). There is no way to measure the exact divorce rate, but for first-time marriages it likely falls somewhere around 25 percent. And if those in the most troubled marriages stick with it, 80 percent are very happy five years later.

Even better, church attendance significantly reduces divorce. We have all misunderstood the Barna studies, which, it turned out, did not examine

whether the people being surveyed went to church. My senior researcher, Tally Whitehead, and I partnered with Barna and reran the numbers, but now with church attendance included. Bottom line? According to both the Barna numbers and every other study done on this, regular attendance drops the divorce rate anywhere from 25 to 50 percent.

Countless pastors and congregants I have spoken with have been discouraged by the false belief otherwise. As one pastor put it, “If the rate of divorce is the same in the church, despite all my hard work, then all my hard work doesn’t mean very much.” And as one churchgoer said, “If on something as crucial as marriage, doing what the Bible says makes no difference . . . what does that mean about the Bible?”

Hear me on this: you can boldly proclaim the truth *that church attendance does matter*. Doing what God asks *does* change everything. In fact, since my book came out, a 2016 Harvard study found that regular church attendance lowered the risk of divorce by 47 percent, the risk of depression by 29 percent, and even the risk of dying early by 34 percent.³

I have seen firsthand the all-important hope and motivation that returns to even the most difficult

marriages when a couple hears the awesome truth that most of the marriages such as theirs make it and that if they will plug in to the church community and not give up, they can make it too.

Game-changing truth 2: Much of the power of pornography stems from a little-known element of male brain wiring—and a wife’s understanding of it makes a huge difference in his ability to get free.

As every church leader knows, porn is a major factor in ensnaring men and marriages. The research for my book *Through a Man’s Eyes*⁴ confirmed that much of the heartache comes not just because of temptations and poor choices but because neither the struggling husband or his wife understand two things: first, just how radically different men and women are in this area; and, second, the transformational power unleashed when both truly understand what is behind the temptation and how to face it together.

Because women’s brains are wired to respond to visual stimuli completely differently from men, most women truly have no idea that every man—even *without* looking at porn—is being visually, sexually stimulated without his consent multiple times every day. Two steps are involved in every visual temptation. Step one: the initial sight of a woman dressed to show a great body (that colleague at work, the image on the television) creates an automatic, involuntary, very strong stimulation in a center of the male brain called the nucleus accumbens. Step two: a second later, the cortical thinking centers of the brain kick in. Now the man has a choice of what to do about that image: savor that stimulation or push it away. There is a war in the brain. Many times a day, he must overcome the temptation, win that war, and make the godly choice.

But women have no such war, which is why we do not understand this at all. The female nucleus accumbens is never stimulated by sexual sights. Instead, when she sees an attractive image, her cortical centers light up from

the outset. So she thinks, *That guy is hot!* And that’s it. Because a wife has no intra-brain war, she may have no idea that her husband does. She thinks her husband *chooses* to be tempted by other women because that is what it would be for her—a choice. She has no idea of the constant effort a man must make to stay pure and how weary some men might become in this culture.

here is what we discovered in our research with men. In most cases, a wife misunderstands what sex means to her husband. There are exceptions, of course, and couples where the dynamic is reversed. But in most cases, we found that sex is primarily an *emotional* need for men, not primarily a physical one. A wife probably does not know that while her man looks confident, he has a great

The fact is, the vast majority of marriages last a lifetime, and those who stick with troubled marriages usually make it.

None of these factors excuse poor choices, but we have seen that upon finally grasping these a wife can finally empathize with and support her man in meeting a godly standard. And, as her husband understands more about his own temptation and feels like he can share it with his wife, he is more likely to overcome it.

Game-changing truth 3: Both spouses typically have a major misunderstanding about what sex means to the other—and knowing the truth can transform the marriage.

There are many reasons why God says sex is important in marriage, yet men and women are so very different in this area. As Billy Crystal’s character Mitch joked in the movie *City Slickers*, “Women need a reason to have sex. Men just need a place.”

Behind that humorous line are so many differences—and yet if women and men understand how the other person is wired, it can change everything. In our book *For Women Only*,

deal of vulnerability and self-doubt. So, he has a deep need to feel that his wife desires him—and if he feels desired, it gives him confidence in every other area of his life. If he feels desired, he also feels like a good husband, a good dad, and a good man, and therefore he is more loving and caring in every area. An amazing emotional comfort and power comes from being built up in this area of emotional need—and yet women have no idea that need even exists.

Similarly, a husband usually misunderstands why sex is not happening. He thinks it is because he simply is not desirable and does not realize it is usually due to a paired physiological-emotional difference that can be overcome. First, the more integrated emotional wiring of women means that they need to feel close outside the bedroom in order to want to be close inside the bedroom. But even more misunderstood is the fact that women have a different type of sexual desire. Where his greater amount of testosterone usually creates “assertive”

desire (so he desires to pursue sex and is ready at a moment's notice), her greater amount of estrogen usually creates "receptive" desire (where she is just as willing but is absolutely *not* ready at a moment's notice). A wife usually needs what we call "anticipation time."

In other words, this means staying connected day to day and flirting in the morning to suggestively plant a seed for romance later that night. This allows her to switch gears in her head and anticipate it, so when "later" comes, she will be all in.

Now, some couples are the opposite. But regardless of who has what type of desire, here's another crucial fact: the more sex persons have, the more their body stimulates testosterone, and the more they will desire sex again. Conversely, there is also a negative cycle: the less sex they have, the more their testosterone drops—so they want sex even less. Neuroscientists have found that having sex about once a week elevates testosterone levels enough to create a self-sustaining positive cycle.

Game-changer 4: A wife saying "Thank you" every day and a husband showing "I'm glad I married you" are huge factors in creating a good marriage.

After surveying thousands of men and women, we found that the most crucial game-changers for the emotional health of marriages are these: husbands, reassure your wives of your love; and wives, respect and appreciate your husbands.⁵ This, of course, comes straight from Ephesians 5:33. Here are two simple, incredibly effective ways to do that.

A wife needs to know that at least 75 to 85 percent of men look confident but have a lot of insecurity and self-doubt—and her husband is probably among them. It is so easy to feel inadequate, which is his most painful feeling. He wonders "Am I any good at what I do?" and looks to his wife for signals about the answer to that question. So, when

she avoids the knee-jerk comments that he sees as criticism ("Why didn't you have the kids wear their heavy coats?") and looks for ways to show appreciation, the results are astonishing. In particular, we discovered that "Thank you" is the equivalent of "I love you" for a man. "Thank you for taking out the trash" and "Thank you for working so hard to provide for us" hits the priceless mark for men. A man who hears that throughout the day will *feel* in his very bones that his wife cares about him—a fact that can prevent many problems.

On her side, a husband usually does not realize that his wife will not feel permanently loved just because she is married. At least 80 to 90 percent of women have the inner question *Am I loveable?* which in marriage translates to *So, does he really love me?* and *Is he glad he married me?* She looks to her husband for signals about the answer to that question. So when he purposefully looks for little ways to show his love, it sends a priceless message. When he reaches to take her hand when they are walking across a parking lot, it says, "I'm so glad I married you." And when they are in an argument and he says, "Look, I need to get space, but we're OK," it creates a powerful reassurance in her.

Game-changer 5: Building the daily habit of focusing on and doing things that are worthy of praise, and doing away with all negativity, transforms people and can transform a church.

Scripture commands us to be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32), and most of us think that we *are* kind. We do not realize that we are a bit deluded. In our research, we discovered three simple daily actions that transform people, transform any kind of relationship—and can make a church leader very happy.

We call it the "30-Day Kindness Challenge."⁶ The person taking the challenge picks someone with whom they want a better relationship. Then, for thirty days they say nothing negative about that person (either to them or

about them to someone else). Next, they find one thing to praise or affirm the person about each day. Finally, they do one small act of kindness or generosity for that person.

The results were amazing. Fully 89 percent saw an improvement in their relationship—even though the effort was all one-sided. We also discovered that the person had so thoroughly retrained their mind-set that they had much less negativity overall. (Can you imagine training all the negativity out of your congregation?) We found the results so amazing that we created a complementary small group curriculum.

Conclusion

For 15 years, my main priority has always been to partner with churches and equip leaders in their mission of helping people thrive in their relationships and faith because *you* are the ones out there on the front lines. Thank you for what you do. I truly hope that these five truths not only impact those you love and serve—but help you as well. 🙏

- 1 This article is based on research shared at the 2017 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States and at the 2017 Adventist National Christian Family Conference, Sydney, Australia. N.B. These "transformative truths" do not take the place of professional marriage counseling. They may, however, be instrumental in preventing marital breakdown.
- 2 Shaunti Feldhahn, *The Good News About Marriage: Debunking Discouraging Myths About Marriage and Divorce* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2014).
- 3 See hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/religious-service-attendance-womens-mortality-risk-and-relevantmagazine.com/slices/harvard-study-links-church-attendance-lower-divorce-rates.
- 4 Shaunti Feldhahn, *Through a Man's Eyes: Helping Women Understand the Visual Nature of Men* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2015).
- 5 See Shaunti Feldhahn, *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men*, rev. ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2013) and Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn, *For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women*, rev. ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2013).
- 6 Church resources can be found at the 30-Day Kindness Challenge website, jointhekindnesschallenge.com/churches.

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To lead is to serve: An interview with Dr. Josmar Arrais¹

Editor's note: In Brazil, very few professionals, let alone pastors, have obtained a PhD in leadership; Josmar Arrais is part of this select group. He is president of a consultant company focused on corporate and personal leadership development and serves as an adjunct professor of leadership at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Márcio Nastrini (MN): What made you interested in the study of leadership?

Josmar Arrais (JA): Although the phenomenon of leadership dates to the beginnings of humankind, only in the last century, specifically the last fifty years, has this subject been studied from a more scientific perspective. For twenty-five years, Andrews University has been a pioneer in the leadership doctoral program, with an emphasis on servant leaders. In 1998, a group of Brazilian teachers ventured into this innovative project. We received support, brought the course to Brazil, and began to publish a journal within the master's program. While teaching leadership courses for Brazilian companies, I realized that the servant-leadership approach was very distant from the model practiced by corporations; in fact, most still acted with the outdated mentality of the industrial era, not from the era of information and knowledge.

Currently, as president of VitalSmarts and a facilitator of its courses, and as professor of the master's degree in

leadership offered by Brazil Adventist University in partnership with Andrews, I have dedicated myself to highlighting the importance of cultural transformation, relationships, crucial conversations, and the scientific use of motivation, accountability, and influence theories.

MN: How do you bridge current leadership models with biblical teachings?

JA: An analysis of biblical history reveals that leadership has always been related to its context. At times, centralized political systems generated dictatorial leaders; at other times, dictatorial leaders produced centralized political systems. Humanity and political and religious organizations have always given us examples to be followed or to be rejected. The great question of leadership that pervades biblical history is the concept of service and the use of influence, authority, and the relationship between leaders and the people they are leading.

We have seen examples of committed leaders who have acted with

determination and passion for people's well-being—and not for themselves. The modern concept of servant leadership, created by Robert Greenleaf, is based on biblical teachings, especially those of Jesus. Throughout the Bible, human relationships and leadership concepts have always been intertwined.

MN: In the twenty-first century, what should the pastoral leadership model be, and what is its main challenge?

JA: The egocentric pursuit of position, power, and responsibility is the greatest obstacle facing the postmodern world, along with the scandals caused by lack of integrity. This mentality can also contaminate ministerial leadership.

Unfortunately, genetics, the environment, circumstances, and determinism are frequent excuses for the absence of initiatives and actions. Allied to this, the postmodern world, with its emphasis on relativism and immediacy, has not helped, either. However, what has grabbed my attention is the absence of good leadership models.

So first, we need a servant leadership methodology in which God's ministers serve people rather than use their influence to meet their own psychological, social, and spiritual inclinations. One of the biggest challenges today is to lead a church that does not easily accept leadership authority.

And then second, we must recognize that contemporary leadership is changing from individual centralization to pluralism in leadership. Now power is shared with the people. This new model of leadership will require training future pastors to pursue a deeper knowledge of how to work with volunteers and motivate them for wider participation and better results.

MN: Are trust, relationships, and vision vital elements for spiritually effective leadership?

JA: Absolutely! *Trust* is the foundation of leadership. Without credibility, almost nothing works. Specialists tell us that trust is built through the combination of two attributes: character and competence. Most organizational problems such as bureaucracy and stagnation could be avoided, even eliminated, if a culture aims to build a healthy environment based on trust.

Relationships? These are the absolute essence of personal and organizational lives. Companies are not buildings, systems, processes, and equipment. They comprise people with their relationships, and these relationships are the foundation upon which good results will follow.

As far as *vision* is concerned, this is fundamental to the direction of any organization. It lays out the scenario and depicts where we want to arrive. Unfortunately, more often than not, we see leaders acting as managers of past problems more than as inspiring guides for the future.

I would add *mission* to your list. Mission defines the reason for the

existence of an organization. From mission, we establish goals and objectives. Mission moves people to perform effectively.

MN: How can pastors inspire confidence in the people they lead and, thus, succeed in ministry?

Photo: Ministério



JA: At its root, the word *trust* includes the concept of "with faith." The leader must win the people's trust, which means passing through the path of *inside out*. What does that mean? Well, first, you develop self-confidence. Second, you build relationships and trustworthy teams. And finally, you build the organization, the community, and the society.

The factors that have the greatest potential to inspire trust are summarized by Stephen Covey in his book *The Speed of Trust*.² They are character and competence. We do not always perceive these two qualities in church leaders. Character means the development of integrity and intentions and the ability to live in agreement with principles and values. Competence is related to the concept of skills and results. Character and competence are indispensable qualities for a leader. Both of these are vital for ministerial leaders to possess.

They need to understand the times in which we are living and then lead *with* the people.

MN: Is the task of leading volunteers, as occurs in churches, more difficult than leading a group of salaried employees?

JA: The challenges are greater, given that economic incentives are not present when a person volunteers. But the big challenge is that church leaders need to learn to understand people and what motivates them. Leaders need to bring people with them.

According to Daniel H. Pink in *Drive*,³ people are motivated by autonomy, mastery, and purpose. They want to participate and do something that challenges them. People are motivated by a relevant mission. If the purpose does not resonate in the person's heart, the leader's success in engaging that person will be limited. In addition, the leader needs to establish a plan of action that considers the person's motivations and abilities, not only on a personal level but also socially and structurally. Leadership that understands this will certainly be more relevant.

MN: How should the leader manage conflicts, differences, and opposition?

JA: In *Crucial Conversations*,⁴ the absence of good relationships and results almost always stems from differences in opinion on high-stakes issues that are unresolved or even suppressed. Divergences of ideas and opinions are welcome and lead to innovation and creativity. They should be valued. Personal differences, however, usually result in conflict.

To manage disagreement and opposition, the leader must be prepared. The first step in managing conflict is self-awareness. Determining what you want and expect for yourself, what you expect from others, what you expect from the relationship, and what you

expect from the ministry are important questions that need to be answered.

Incredibly, most leaders do not know what they want. Their fight is with irrelevancies, not essentials. But if the leader can provide a safe environment when interacting with others, create a common goal, and listen to and respect diverse opinions, then wonderful results can emerge from an apparent conflict.

MN: Is there a risk that pastors can lose the focus of their leadership by seeking to implement modern management practices?

JA: Yes, there is. But first we need to understand what spiritual focus is and what modern management practices are. If we confuse leadership with management and control, yes, we risk overemphasizing goals and results. If we understand leadership as service, I don't think so. The development of

people and the attainment of goals will be a natural consequence. Today, having a spiritual focus no longer means just accepting what leaders say; it means embracing what and whom they exemplify.

MN: Do you have a final word for twenty-first century church leaders?

JA: More than a final word, I leave an appeal: pastors and leaders, please give up once and for all that search for position and power. Leadership is not a position; it is an opportunity to serve. Make sure your decisions are not contaminated by self-interest and blinded by an agenda. The greatest evil of our century continues to be egocentrism.

Marshall Goldsmith says, "What got you here won't get you there." Past methods and achievements don't guarantee future results. Using computer language, we need to *reset* our mind-set from what was previously formatted in

the industrial age, where people were merely tools to achieve goals. We need to understand our time period within the larger context.

We need to use our resources and plans to improve the well-being of people and to fulfill the mission. Share resolutions clearly. Develop tolerance and patience. The world is perishing because of exclusivism and the rejection of those who are different. So, talk. Dialogue. Build unity in diversity. And this we know for sure: The same God who got us here, will get us there! 🙏

- 1 A version of this interview first appeared in the November-December 2016 issue of our sister publication, *Ministério*, located in Brazil. Used by permission.
- 2 Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
- 3 Daniel H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011).
- 4 Kerry Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High* (Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corporation), audiobook.

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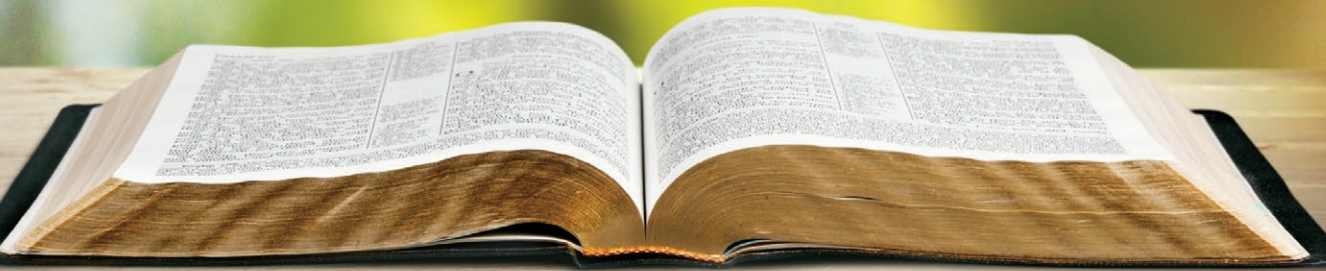
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Christopher Kabwe Mukuka, MA in Missiology, serves as pastor in Mwami Mission District, East Zambia Field of Seventh-day Adventists, Chipata, Zambia.



Crossing boundaries: *The universality of God's mission*

Crossing any cultural boundary can only be accomplished successfully by espousing the historical corpus in the context of both the Old and the New Testament. In fact, any articulation of missions can be perfected only if it is based on an adequate biblical and theological foundation.¹ George Peters felt that missionary theology should move up until it finds its position in theology.²

Hence, the eminent missiologist David Bosch, like many other missiologists, has grounded his theology of mission in the witness of the Bible.³ This article maintains that Christian mission is in danger of being swayed by winds of culture because all too often our mission is not grounded in biblical theology. The hazardous consequence of such an omission is that God's purpose for the church is distorted and God's witness in the world is thwarted. When mission is grounded in biblical theology, it embraces the universality of the call to salvation as well as the call to service.

What is mission?

To embrace a biblical theology of mission, we must first understand what mission is. Arthur Glasser and Donald McGavran define mission as "carrying the gospel across cultural boundaries to those who owe no allegiance to Jesus Christ, and encouraging them

to accept Him as Lord and Savior and to become responsible members of His church, working as the Holy Spirit leads, at both evangelism and justice, at making God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven."⁴ Bosch defines mission as "primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. . . . This is the deepest source of mission. . . . There is mission because God loves people."⁵

Mission, therefore, includes the clear declaration by Jesus Christ in Luke 4:16–19: healing the brokenhearted, preaching deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and setting at liberty those that are bruised.⁶ Mission is thus God's sending action in which the church contributes.⁷

The Greek New Testament uses two terms to describe sending: *pempō* and *apostellō*. These words are used more or less synonymously to depict God sending angels and prophets, the Father sending the Son, the sending of the disciples, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the sending forth of men and women in ministry (Acts 2:17, 18; Gal. 3:28).⁸ Thus, all members are included in this sending.

The start of mission

Genesis 3:15 is considered to be a universal "protevangeli-um": the first

gospel promise. It is basic to the Old Testament revelation as well as the soteriological leitmotif (dominant, unifying, and all-inclusive thrust and intent) and hermeneutical principle that govern Old Testament interpretation.⁹ It is the first universal promise of salvation and of the Redeemer that would be the Seed of the woman.

By the close of Genesis 3, the main characters entered this drama of mission. They include God, humanity, the accuser, and a Savior.¹⁰ George Peters states that sin is written in big letters across the pages of the Bible and that only Genesis 1, 2 and Revelation 21, 22 are exempt from its harmful stain. The remainder is a record of human sin and divine intervention bringing about salvation.¹¹ Therefore, the Creator is a missionary God who calls to Adam, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). God's intention is to save all of humanity. "These haunting words reveal the heart of God: he seeks lost men and women."¹²

The heart of mission

The New Testament informs us that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father on a threefold mission: to reveal the Father (John 1:14, 18); to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8); and to save the world (John 3:17). Hence, the purpose of Christ's mission was twofold: to serve and to save. "The Son of man is come to seek

and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, KJV). Also, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt. 20:28, KJV). Thus, God’s mission has to do with being saved, then being sent by God to serve people so that they are saved. To fulfill this mission, God chose particular people as an entry point into the world and declared to His disciples, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21, KJV).

The mission of the church is embedded in the purpose of Jesus’ call for His disciples. “He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that

The transmission of the mission

The universality of speaking foreign languages was for the purpose of spreading the gospel to a diversity of peoples and cultures on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).¹⁶ After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Pentecost was the day on which the church was born—or born again. The resurrected Jesus had sent His disciples to the ends of the world as their Great Commission (Matt. 28:20).

The power of sending was granted as they received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The sending of the church is intimately linked to the sending activity

growth, and sharers of God’s grace in ministry (Rom. 1–3).¹⁸

Though his content remained the same, Paul preached in different ways when addressing the Jews or the Gentiles (Acts 14; 17). Sensitive to their backgrounds, he tailored his message to fit his audience. We sorely need the sensitivity of Paul, being careful not to embrace isolated texts for the purpose of justifying our own viewpoints. The danger lies in ignoring, consciously or unconsciously, biblical material that does not conform to our understanding of mission. Thus, one finds a justification for his or her own biases on mission

Jesus’ mission is one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups.

He might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14, NKJV). The ministry of the disciples was to imitate the ministry of Jesus. John Harvey succinctly points out that their authority, message, and target group as well as the results were the same as those of Jesus.¹³ They did not have an independent assignment as long as the Lord remained on earth.¹⁴ Andreas J. Kostenberger summarizes Jesus’ sending in John’s Gospel as (1) glorifying the Sender, (2) doing the Sender’s will and speaking His words, (3) witnessing to the Sender, and (4) knowing the Sender intimately. “All these aspects of what one sent is required to be and do, are applicable to the disciples as they are sent by Jesus.”¹⁵

Without understanding the essence of sending, there is no gospel. The core of the gospel is that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to the world for the purpose of redeeming humanity (John 3:16).

of the Trinity. It is not by human authority but through the authority of the Triune God: the Father sends, the Son redeems, and the Spirit empowers.¹⁷ All are included in salvation, and all are included in service.

Gentiles: The object and the subject of mission

The universality of God’s mission is also apparent in the call of the apostle Paul to the unreached Gentiles. He sought to reach all people groups, declaring, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; . . . to those who are without law, as without law. . . . I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:20–22, NKJV). For Paul, there was no hierarchy of merit. Both Jew and Gentile had sinned and failed to live up to the light of God. Both Jew and Gentile were recipients of God’s grace in salvation, dependent on God’s grace in

practices without ever seriously grappling with Scripture.¹⁹

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul launches his missionary strategy from the Old Testament foundation. Old Testament theology states, “ ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ ” (Exod. 19:6, NKJV). Paul calls himself an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8) and “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God” (Rom. 15:16, NASB). Thus, mission is rooted in theology. Thomas Schirrmacher states:

Whoever wants to practice missions pragmatically and therefore to renounce theology and teaching, because they might hinder practice, is doing mission in his own commission and does not care *what* God says about it.

Whoever teaches dogmatics which do not focus on world

missions and does not lead to practical steps to reach the unreached, teaches in his own commission and does not care *why* God gave us His Word and teaching.

Biblical and practical world missions will always begin with sound and thorough biblical teaching. Sound and thorough teaching will on the other side always lead to biblical and practical world missions.²⁰

It is understood that the most systematic and theological letter of Paul is written with missions in mind. Initially, Paul uses Jerusalem as a launching pad for his universal missionary strategy targeting Spain (Rom. 15:27–31). In his future plans for a universal missionary project, his aim is to preach to all humankind without exception. He, thus, does not accept barriers of culture, race, education, or social status (Rom. 1:8–15). Hence, in Romans 1:1–15 his aim is to prove that “the expansion of world missions is God’s own plan.”²¹ Therefore, to prove that God’s mission has always been universal (worldwide) within the framework of the first chapter of Romans 1 and

the last of Romans 16, Paul is heavily indebted to the Old Testament citations that affirm that all people, worldwide, must hear the gospel. This is very clear in the concluding remarks of Romans 15:14–16:27.²²

However, Paul once again refers to the same Old Testament promises made to the fathers concerning the Gentiles so “that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy, as it is written . . .” (Rom. 15:9, NKJV). In Romans 10:11–13, Paul confirms that salvation for the Jews cannot be separated from salvation for the Gentiles. In Romans 15:9–12 Paul cites five references from the Old Testament that affirm that all nations of the world will praise the Lord one day (2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 117:1; Isa. 11:10). Thus, from this context, Paul proves that the gospel and world mission are not against the Old Testament but are, in fact, supported by it.²³

This universality of God’s mission for the church includes the participation of both men and women filled by the Holy Spirit, regardless of the diversity of their cultural milieu. They are all equal in Christ (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12–14; Ps. 133:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26,

27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10–15; Eph. 4:14–16, 1–6; John 17:20–23).²⁴ The Holy Spirit breaks down all walls of partition. It results in a type of unity in Christ that allows all members full participation in the service of the church. All are called to work together, according to their God-given spiritual gifts.

Conclusion

From both the Old and New Testament perspectives, there is an authentic biblical and theological foundation of mission in the context of God’s universal historical revelation. The inclusiveness of Jesus’ mission embraces people from all walks of life, both male and female, poor and rich, oppressed and oppressor, sinner and devout. Jesus’ mission is one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups.²⁵

Therefore, with this approach by the apostle Paul, it must be understood that every missionary venture of the church must be universally inclusive. It must go beyond the barriers of culture, race, gender, social, or ethnic status and reflect the intent of God’s sacrificial love. 🙏

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21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 Timothy J. Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec., 1990): 201.

25 Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 344.

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Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application

by Roy E. Gane, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

Roy Gane, professor of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern languages in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, has done a great service for contemporary readers grappling with the intricacies and, sometimes, strange logic of biblical legal texts permeating the Old Testament.

Gane highlights important points in the introduction of the volume. He correctly notes that post-New Testament Christian tradition has tended to isolate the Ten Commandments as the only “moral law” (xiii) and has overlooked divine wisdom in other law bodies. Combine this with the ostensible lack of relevance for some types of laws (e.g., laws dealing with agriculture or the Israelite sanctuary) and the number of obscure (or even disturbing) laws completely foreign to most western readers (e.g., the levirate marriage law in Deuteronomy 25:5–10), and there is a good rationale to invest time for careful reading. Gane’s main purpose was to demonstrate the relevance of Old Testament laws, place them in the stream of divine revelation, and highlight the important principles contained in them.

The book has been divided into four major parts. Part 1 (3–57) introduces key issues to readers, including relevance for New-Covenant Christians and the authority and underlying principles of Old Testament law, as well as its purpose. Gane suggests that God’s character was revealed by these laws and sees divine love for humanity as the underlying model (40). He also proposes that the echoes of ancient Near Eastern laws in biblical law reflect a conscious adaptation and careful synthesis that focuses on God’s character. As an example, he cites assault laws found in the second millennium B.C. Code of Hammurabi that bear some similarities but differ at important intersections, such as not making any class distinctions (cf. Lev.

24:22). Biblical law underlines equality of individuals before the divine Lawgiver, regardless of their standing in society.

Part 2 (61–133) offers a general introduction to law types and collections in the Old Testament, highlighting distinct legal formulations (such as unconditional, or apodictic and conditional, or casuistic, law). He also describes the distinct historical contexts helping to illuminate these laws. “Biblical laws express or encapsulate values and principles that transcend cultures,” writes Gane, “but God did not give them in a cultural vacuum” (105). Very often, modern readers fail to properly understand the historical context in which a particular law emerged or functioned. This context helps one to understand more appropriately the bigger concern (or underlying principle) of the law.

Part 3 (137–235) offers a way of applying Old Testament laws to Christian life (distinguishing between direct and indirect applications and continuity versus discontinuity). Gane suggests a moderate position between the extremes of continuity and discontinuity that focuses on values and principles expressed in the law (173), something he calls “Progressive Moral Wisdom” (197–218). He lists five major steps a modern reader should take before attempting to apply biblical law: (1) analyze the law by itself; (2) analyze the law within the system of Old Testament laws; (3) analyze the law within the context of its historical situation; (4) analyze the law within the process of Redemption; and (5) relate findings regarding the function of the law to modern life (218). Gane then applies his Progressive Moral Wisdom method to Exodus 23:4 (“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again”).

Part 4 (239–397) focuses on the values of Old Testament laws, dedicating significant space to the

discussion of values contained in the Ten Commandments. Gane also highlights the importance of social justice and theodicy in the body of legal Old Testament texts and reviews the significance of six often-discussed laws (forbidden mixtures, prohibitions regarding the cutting of one’s hair and flesh, tithing, dietary restrictions, the prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation, and homosexual activity and marriage). The final part of this section suggests a number of underlying values for ritual laws, including the central place of God in human life, the importance of worship, the removal of sin, the assurance of reconciliation with God, and the notion of holiness. Since much of my own writing has focused on biblical ritual and ritual texts, I would have wished for more engagement with this important biblical genre.

Gane has done an excellent job offering sound methodology, careful (and often very detailed) interpretation, and relevant deduction focusing on values and principles. In some cases (not always providing the rationale) Gane decided to include the relevant research history of a particular topic, which tends to lose some nonspecialists. Overall, the volume comes highly recommended for tackling a difficult topic, the willingness to ask tough questions, and the ability to look beyond minute details to the big picture involving underlying values and principles. A very detailed table of contents and several indexes make this volume even more user-friendly. Every pastor who reads the Old Testament and preaches from it should take the time to dig into this valuable volume. 📖

—Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, DLitt, research professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

► Australian pastor sees Christian education pay dividends

Gongolgon, New South Wales—Currawah Aboriginal Education Centre is looking forward to a bright future after reopening this year. The Seventh-day Adventist school in western New South Wales (NSW), Australia, has faced many challenges over the years, but, thanks to the support of church leaders and members, it is up and running again.

Formerly known as Currawah Adventist Aboriginal College, the school closed in 2013 due to issues of compliance with the Board of Studies, Teaching, and Educational Standards.

A number of local Adventist churches supported Currawah, including Gosford church, which donated mountain bikes for the students. “The

school has a viable future now,” said **Richie Reid**, a pastor and member of the school’s board of directors. “It has met all the registration and accreditation requirements, and with the help of government funding, Currawah will finish the 2017 school year with a healthy cash surplus.” They have already received about 50 enrollment inquiries for 2018. “Because it’s an independent Aboriginal boarding school, there is interest from around Australia,” Reid said.

The students have not only been on the receiving end of support; they have also participated in community services



Photo: Adventist Record

activities throughout the district. “At Currawah we are helping to change one life at a time,” Reid said. “These children have often come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Education helps to lift them out, it breaks the cycle, giving them opportunities and a positive future.” [Tracey Bridcutt, *Adventist Record*]

► Japan church leaders dream big for 2018

Yokohama, Japan—The Japan Union Conference (JUC) reports that the All Japan 2018 Maranatha evangelistic meetings are scheduled for May 2018. “Currently Japan has 94 organized churches nationwide,” explained leaders, “but the JUC plans to have more than 160 simultaneous evangelistic series, which is more than 1.5 times the number of organized churches in Japan!” The evangelistic series will be held not just at churches but at companies, small groups, and institutions.

At the Amanuma Church, Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) ministerial association director **Ron Clouzet** conducted field school training during

2017. The last time Japan conducted this many consecutive evangelistic meetings in such a short span of time was at least decades ago.

Through the Amanuma Church experience, leaders said they were able to confirm that holding consecutive evangelistic meetings is still an effective method of evangelism, even in this modern Japanese culture.

“As Japan gets involved with intense mission efforts, we hope that many more people will decide to attend the program and be inspired to do more mission work,” said NSD youth ministries director Nak Hyung Kim.

Japan will host the August 2020 Tokyo Olympics with many visitors

from around the world. The JUC plans to use the opportunity to be prepared for special evangelistic plans to implement during the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. Japan has a population of about 120 million, and fewer than 1 percent are Christian. Out of the 1 percent Christian, about 15,000 are Seventh-day Adventists.

Regional leaders asked the world church to keep praying for the Adventist Church in Japan. “Please continue to pray that the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ will speedily be shared throughout the country,” they said. [Toshio Shibata, Northern Asia Pacific Division News & *Adventist Review*]

► US church partners with church in Columbia for a “cocaine-free world”

Colombia—While **Jimmy Munoz** was visiting Colombia in 2005, a small boy ran up to him and offered to

shine his tennis shoes. “Our Colombia friends felt bothered by the street boy and wanted to send him away with

nothing,” said Munoz, associate pastor at Seabrook Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lanham, Maryland, United



States. “I felt deeply touched by his plight.”

Since this experience, Munoz learned that Columbia has more than half a million unschooled children, making them prime targets of drug lords who want them to work on illegal farms. “From that day on, I have wanted to do something to help those who

feel that they have no other option but to work in the production of illegal substances.”

Last year, Munoz and a team of people flew to Colombia to help begin Munoz’s dream of helping to create a cocaine-free world. The team taught leadership principles, conflict resolution workshops, and addiction treatment and prevention seminars.

At the locals’ request, the group also conducted evangelism meetings, where 12 people decided to be followers of Christ. A local church, whose dream is to open a Christian school, received US\$3,500 in donations.

“The vision of this ministry, Cocaine Free World, is to promote entrepreneurship and to one day employ people in

producing helpful items that have a high demand,” said Munoz. “We are also working to attack emotional poverty by inspiring people to aim high and dream of starting industries that are greatly needed for community members to have honest and productive jobs.”

While in Colombia this past year, Munoz met **David**, a member of an Adventist church who works as a tailor. David dreams of growing his business to employ family members and neighbors who do not have jobs.

“Through this ministry, I want to make it impossible for drug lords to find illiterate people who are willing to work in their fields and to have those 500,000 children in school, learning to dream big—dream about the second coming of Jesus Christ—and how they can make the world a better place prior to the Advent,” Munoz said. [Potomac Conference News]



Photo: Potomac Conference News

► South England Evangelism Expo 2018

Bracknell, Berkshire, England—On January 7, 2018, about a thousand people attended a South England Conference (SEC) Evangelism Expo at Newbold College of Higher Education.

The attendees were in awe of the thought-provoking, transforming message from the guest speaker Dr. **Sam Telemaque**, director of Adventist Mission, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries for the Inter-American Division.

Telemaque drew his illustration of the future of the church from the experience of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. God transformed Peter, a Jew who had a fixed mind-set, to be able to go and meet Cornelius, a Gentile. “God will do the same for the church in England,” Telemaque encouraged. “Do not be afraid of the mission in England, because through Cornelius, God showed that all people are important to Him. God will do something new in the SEC, in England, and in the world!”

Before delving deep into the strategy, SEC president Dr. **Emmanuel Osei** took the audience on an affirming journey of how, for the church to make headway, it had to move toward total member involvement. This involves every member taking part, being disciples, and utilizing their God-given talents, but it also includes engaging with the millennials (18- to 35-year-olds) and working with them to fulfill the Great Commission.

The current 40 percent loss of members shows that there is more work to be done. Local church leadership trainer **Godwin Benjamin** showed how the church can move toward seeking the lost. “Each church will have a Reclamation team, which will train members on various ways of retention,

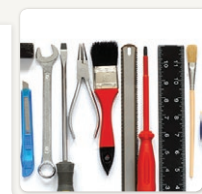


Photo: Judith Makiankhondo Nyirenda

including sensitivity with those members being reclaimed,” said Benjamin.

With more than twenty-five workshops, presented with so much enthusiasm, members felt truly equipped to fully participate in the change and thinking of the church as it endeavored to reach out, especially to the millennials who up until now feel sidelined. Seventeen-year-old **Gisela Simbana**, who attended the teens’ workshop with her parents, said, “I look forward to using my talents in the church.” [Judith Makiankhondo Nyirenda] 25

Peter A. Kerr, MA, MDiv, academic director and associate professor of Leadership and Communications at Southeastern University (Extended Education), resides in Spanaway, Washington, United States.



Crafting a Christian “corporate” culture

To attract more talent and visitors, Christian organizations need to be intentional about communicating their values through their environment and work policies.

Growing up in Europe, I visited hundreds of magnificent cathedrals. These edifices were designed to make a person feel small so that he or she would marvel at the greatness of God. The spires rose hundreds of feet high. Hand-carved figures of saints often stood over the entrances, and high on the parapets you could see the stone gargoyles fleeing the presence of the Holy God within. Inside were tombstones with statements of undying faith, statues of honorable people, and beautiful stained-glass windows telling Bible stories that were enlivened by the coruscating light.

While it is the people inside a church whom God most treasures, church leaders should ask themselves how they can best make their workplaces glorify God and speak of His presence. A well-planned environment will not only make your workers happier and encourage them to share your values but also welcome visitors and inspire them to linger and return.

I once visited a church and decided to explore a little since I was early. I quickly noticed that the walls were mostly barren, with old white paint slightly peeling and stained in places. One tattered poster of Jesus’ face without a frame was stuck to the wall with yellowing tape. Near the entrance I spotted a cork bulletin board and decided to see what kinds of activities were available. To my astonishment, I discovered that most of the notes were deprecatory statements like “Whoever stole the darn Wii controller from the

youth room GIVE IT BACK!” I remember thinking I had made a mistake in visiting and wanted to leave before the service started.

While many in the business world realize that investing in a positive work environment pays dividends, the church has been more prosaic in its understanding of work environment, relying only on God’s Spirit to make a place feel comfortable. While I agree that there is nothing more attractive than feeling the Spirit of the living God dwelling in a place, I also think we should join King Solomon and try to make our houses of worship as attractive and inviting as possible.

Studies show that a positive business culture inspires more engagement from employees, attracts top talent, and delivers higher retention rates. To create a positive culture, you must know your own values and then ensure they are being projected by your environment, celebrations, and policies. Strive to understand the total employee or visitor experience. Consider installing large windows, French doors, or skylights. Try to plan informal meetings in your building foyer that have good, natural lighting. Embellish these places with live plants, and ensure there is a place to sit that has access to the most recent publications that you believe in. This will allow your visitors and employees to spontaneously educate themselves and better understand the wider world.

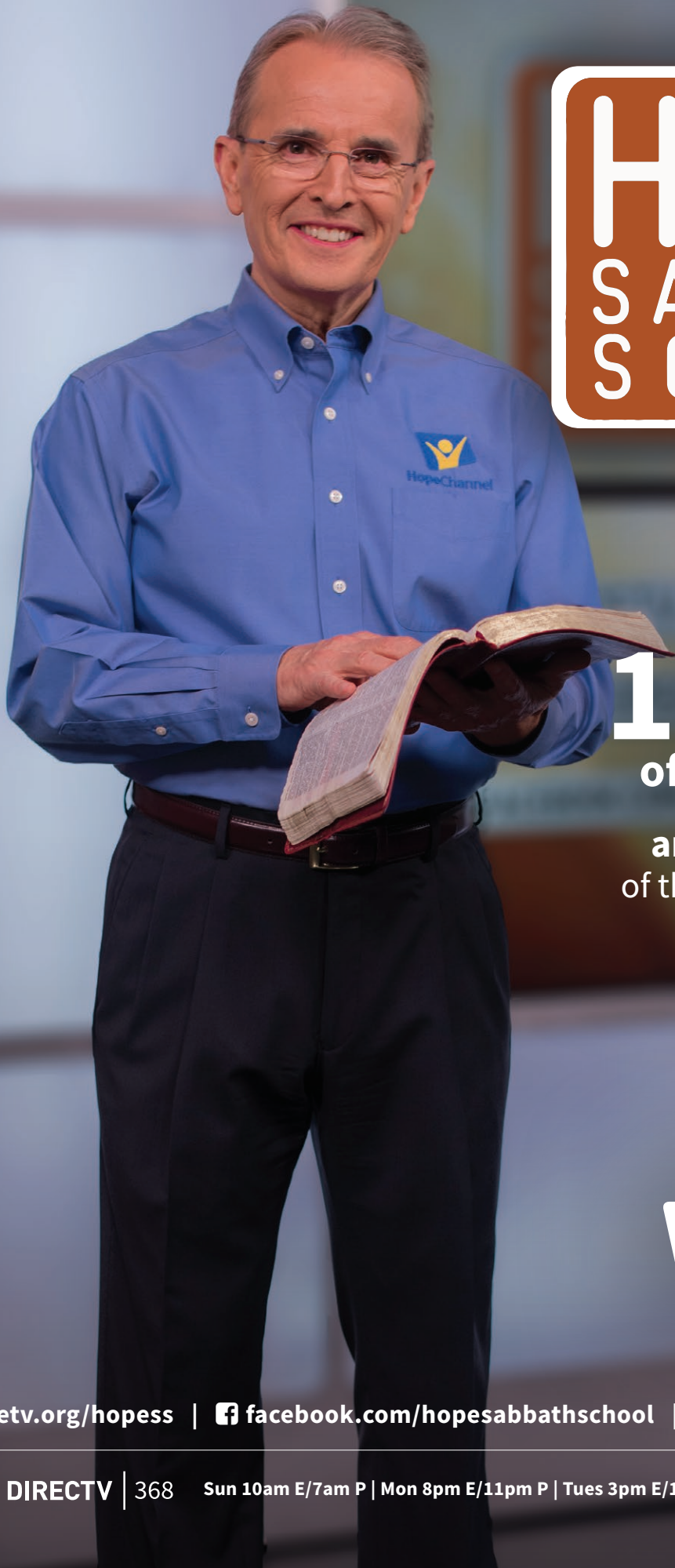
Have your values written out and made into professional signs for your walls, and consider having a “hall of fame” where you place pictures of the missionaries you support or organizations that partner with your ministry. Consider places to hang the

flags of all the countries where you have influence. Have a place to herald your heroes, possibly honoring a “person of the month” or having pictures of employees’ families or hanging pictures of religious leaders, scriptures, or values that you most admire. Maybe you could just put up pictures that depict God’s beauty in nature.

Yearly events, traditions, and celebrations can also proclaim your values. Initiate yearly, grand Mother’s Day celebrations where every mother gets a flower and is honored by the reading of submitted praises that complete the sentence “My mom is the best because . . .” Try holding annual hands-on missionary nights where people go through different rooms to experience stories from missionaries, food from foreign places, and the types of work that missionaries do. Consider celebrating the biblical Jewish holidays, and take the opportunity to explain their relevance. The important thing is that you consider what is worthy of celebrating and then celebrate it well.

Finally, consider how you treat your workers (whether full-time or part-time employees or volunteers) and how that reflects your values. Workplace expert Daniel Pink suggests that the modern workforce mostly wants autonomy, the ability to gain and employ mastery, and the knowledge that they are working for a true purpose.* If you restructure your ministry setting to create a positive Christian culture that delivers these things, you will find the environment a happier place, and your visitors will also notice it and want to linger and return. 📺

* Dan Pink, “The Puzzle of Motivation,” talk presented at TEDGlobal 2009, TED, ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.



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