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## Calling to and caring for ministry

**T**hank you, Daniel [Opoku-Boateng], for an article well written (“Toward a Theology of the Call to Pastoral Ministry,” July 2017). It is thoroughly versed in all-encompassing detail. The article is very enlightening and has enriched my learning about the pastoral call, as I am being called, myself, to kingdom ministry. My eyes are “wide open” as I pursue this servanthood. Thank you!

—Frank Cervini, by email

**S**adly, I think the ministers who treat ministry like a guaranteed cushy job are the ones who suffer burnout. Unfortunately, there is not enough support for the ministers who care, and

not enough accountability for those who don’t.

—Tony Rigden, by email

## Authoritative preaching

**R**ight on! Please preach the Word, and preach it like you believe it, as if it makes an eternal difference whether or not your hearers believe and act upon it (Patrick Anani, “Preaching with Authority,” March 2017). Our people need to hear the ring of authority from the pulpit. We who preach must know that we have received a message fresh from the throne of God for those who are present. We don’t need more theatrics from the preachers on Sabbath morning, but we need a holy passion for Christ, His truth, and His Church.

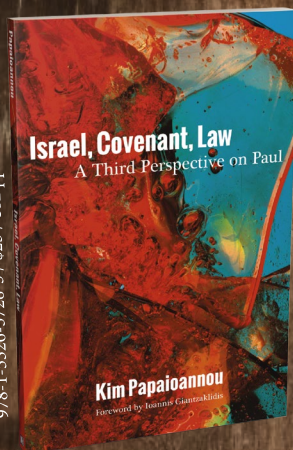
—Mark Cockerham, by email

## God’s presence and His Spirit

**T**hank you so much for the beautiful January 2018 issue of *Ministry*, especially the article by Zac Page, praise God! I have read that article five times already. It just means so much, and I sense God’s presence so much every time I read it. I am thankful also for the letter by Rev. Hellam (in the same issue), and I was very impressed by the reply from Seth Pierce. I believe we use Ellen G. White quotes because to us she is the most reliable source outside of the Bible. We believe she also was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write about what she did, because we needed it.

—Ardyth Trecartin, spouse of retired minister and conference worker, Maine, United States

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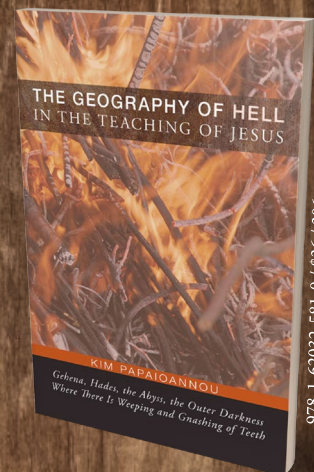


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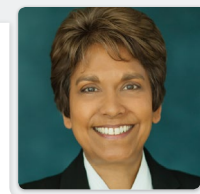
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# My Father's business

It was a busy and noisy registration day in Johnson Gym at Andrews University. This would be my final year in preparation to be a teacher. I had just switched one of my majors to religion and was now standing at the teacher-certification table. The person at the table looked at my revised paper work and said, "You can't be a certified teacher with these two majors." There was a brief pause, and then I responded, "That's okay; I'll be a pastor."

When asked about my calling, I am hard pressed to determine the exact moment of that call. Did I hear God's specific voice amid the new reality about my majors? I'm not sure. I believe that moment was the spontaneous expression of the natural progression of where God was leading me.

God used the voices of many. My calling started with Adventist parents who intentionally lived out their Adventist Christian faith in contagious ways. They took me to church and made Sabbath the best day of the week. They inspired me to want to earn money so that I could return my own tithe and offerings. They moved from Trinidad to England to Canada and sacrificed to send me to Adventist schools.

My teachers at Toronto Junior Academy (now Crawford Adventist Academy) partnered with my parents and the local church in giving me the opportunity to serve and lead. My choir director, Jackie Juriansz, taught me about music and relationships while on trips to Baskin-Robbins for ice cream. Pastor Duane Anderson taught me that I was saved because of Jesus' gift of salvation, not because I was a good kid. Brian Townsend, my gymnastic coach, taught me to love Ellen White's books. Her books inspired me to dig deeper into Scripture and love the Lord of the Bible.

Because of my interest in gymnastics and sharing my faith, I chose to go to Andrews University so that I could be on the university gymnastic team—the Gymnics. During that era, the Gymnics were a witnessing team—presenting four religious programs and one gymnastic show on weekends.

During my second year in college as a physical education major, one of my coaches, Ernie Stevens, handed me the book *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon. I read it that weekend, and the bookstore ended up ordering more than 150 copies because of all the referrals I made. That book led me to follow up on a summer job interview I had brushed off. That summer job set up the next chain of events.

The summer of 1978 found me working for the Adventist Collegiate Taskforce, doing tasks that did not resemble the job description I had been given. I ended up working with five churches and preaching almost every Sabbath. Most important, that summer, I gave my first Bible study. While cleaning out a church closet, I found a "shoebox" with Bible study interests. Embarrassed that there had been no follow-up, a couple of us set to work to contact each person. That became our summer job.

One number I phoned revealed that the person had died since filling out the interest card. That was a sobering moment. Other phone calls led to Bible studies and baptisms. I learned that when people had the opportunity to know and experience the truth about God, they would often make the decision to love Him back. The experience of leading people into a love relationship with Jesus became addicting. I wanted more. Back at school, I changed my minor to religion.

The next summer I was asked to work with an evangelistic team in South Bend, Indiana. Again, I had the chance to open Scripture with people. One woman readily accepted the new teachings. She said she did so because she had seen me in a dream before I even came to her door. She believed that God had sent me.

*My dad always inspired me by saying, "A woman's place is in her Father's business."*

After the summer of 1979, I wanted even more. That was when, on that registration day, I switched my religion minor to a religion major and heard myself say, "I'll be a pastor."

I am grateful for those who helped me hear God's call and find my place. My dad always inspired me by saying, "A woman's place is in her Father's business." I'm challenging us, as ministers, to be instruments that God can use to help men and women hear His call and find their place. 📖

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**Jacques François, MA**, serves as pastor of the New Life Adventist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, United States.



# No more sparklers!

It proved almost impossible for me when I was young to contain my excitement when the Fourth of July rolled by each year. Excitement and apprehension battled in my stomach as I looked forward to the festivities. Excitement because of the mini explosions caused by smoke balls, bottle rockets, firecrackers, Roman candles, artillery shells, and jumping jacks. Apprehension because I always hoped that this would be the year that I could graduate from sparklers to the louder fireworks that were available in the arsenal.

Every year, my mother faithfully purchased sparklers for the children to enjoy. When we were very young, the sparkler was more than sufficient to quench our thirst for opulence. As we matured, our hearts panted after what we called “real firecrackers.” We begged my mother to upgrade the stockpiles of sparklers that she saved every year and give us more variety to choose from. One year she finally relented and purchased quite a number of cherry bombs.

My nephew and I (we were like brothers because we were the same age) were really excited about this new development. Immediately we went to work. The evening started with lighting one cherry bomb at a time. Because our street was littered with empty beer bottles that were tossed carelessly aside, we decided to light the cherry bombs in the bottles to see whether they would explode. To our satisfaction, they did. After blowing up a few bottles, we got the ultimate idea. We decided to

stuff many empty bottles with cherry bombs and then squeeze as many of those bottles as we could into our mailbox. After packing the mailbox with these makeshift bombs, we lit them, slammed the mailbox door closed and ran as fast and as far as we could. After a few moments, we heard a tremendous *boom!* When we went to inspect the mailbox, it was completely disfigured. There were holes everywhere, the door was thrown violently across the street, and the blast was so intense that it blew our plastic mailbox right off the post!

This act was, of course, extremely dangerous. I dare not put into words how my mother responded.

## The gospel explosion

Cherry bombs are explosive; so is the gospel. The gospel causes explosions so intense that it mangles the kingdom of Satan and unhinges sin’s power base. Paul in Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”\*

The word “power” comes from the Greek word *dynamis*, from which we derive the English word *dynamite*. God has put a stick of dynamite in our hands to obliterate any obstacle to eternal life that the enemy puts in humanity’s path. God knows that we cannot impose this type of carnage with a sparkler. Like dynamite, the gospel blows things up. When the gospel is unleashed, it leaves in its wake a “race” of people who have experienced the saving grace of God. Sin’s stronghold is diminished, flames

of Christ’s righteousness (Rom. 1:17) are kindled, and the restoration of God’s image is implanted in His creation.

Pentecost inaugurated an unprecedented season of courageous gospel preaching. That morning found 120 members of the Jerusalem church in earnest prayer. After the Spirit of God poured Himself on the church, the gospel was preached with clarity and, when the dust settled, 3,000 people were added to the church rolls.

I must point out that Peter was not alone in preaching that day. The Holy Spirit fell on everyone in the upper room (Acts 2:2, 3). Verse 4 iterates “*they were all filled* with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Verse 11 expands this notion when it says, “we hear *them* speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” In a high-octane church, the preacher is not the only who proclaims the gospel. Everyone is given a treasure chest of gospel dynamite. The gospel was detonated during Pentecost, and 3,000 individuals were extracted from the grip of death. As my nephew and I ignited our cherry bombs on the Fourth of July and shoved them in my mother’s mailbox, so God’s people ignited their explosives on the day of Pentecost, shoved them into sin’s abyss, and it was blown off of its foundation.

## Set it off

Every year, we stood waving the sparklers in a circular motion until the fire was extinguished. This was cute but

inconsequential. My mother gave us the sparklers because they were safe and they did not cause any damage. The bombs, on the other hand, massacred the mailbox. The force of the blast left it devoid of further value. There was something that the sparklers and the cherry bombs had in common, however. While the sparklers and the cherry bombs had differing physical makeups, in order for any effect to take place, both had to be aroused with fire.

The gospel contains capabilities that can annihilate anything in its path,

free tickets to go to the home football games. My reality was astronomically different in class than it was at a football game. In class, I sat, listened, recorded what the instructor had to say, and took advantage of opportunities to ask questions. The interaction between the teacher and me was structured, limited, and designed to teach me something that I did not previously know. However, at the football game I was emotionally attached to the outcome of the game. When FSU struggled, fell behind score-wise, and eventually lost, I was tense,

for war, dispatched messengers would bring news to the citizens of the outcome of the battle. Sentinels would stand on top of the city walls awaiting the tidings of the messenger. The messenger would approach the city in a specific manner that would indicate whether the king won or lost. If the messenger demonstrated that the king won, the sentinel would cry with a loud voice: *“Euangelion! Our king won!”* The inhabitants of the city had an emotional stake in the outcome. If their king lost, they would be enslaved or destroyed by



*As the inferno of preaching burns, it ignites the dynamite of the gospel and shatters all obstacles in the way of the salvation of man.*

but it needs fire to unpack its destructive nature. Without the flame of Holy Spirit, preaching the gospel is of none effect.

I must make a bold statement—*the gospel was designed to be preached!* If we look at our high-octane commission, you will notice that the first two parts specifically tell us to preach, whereas the third part tells us to teach. Whenever the Bible discusses the presentation of the gospel, it always does so in the context of preaching. God designed the gospel to be transformational, not just informational.

When I was a student at Florida State University (FSU), all students received

apprehensive, mad, and/or sad. When my team performed well and eventually won, my mood was quite different. I was happy, overjoyed, and proud. You could hear the boom of our roars and shouts as we cheered our team on. In class I had an intellectual interaction with my studies. At the football game, I had an experiential interaction with the outcome of the game. I am not promoting emotionalism. I am advocating that preaching allows the hearer to *experience* the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Greek noun for “gospel” is *euangelion* and is translated as “good news” or “gospel,” but it has a rich history. When kings went to the battlefield

the opposing king. The citizens shouted just as they would have if they were on the battlefield with their king’s army. The fact that our King won the battle should make us rejoice more than we would if we attended a football game and watched our team vanquish our adversary.

### **Tailor-made**

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me to  
preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent me heal the  
brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” (Luke 4:18, 19)

When we examine the ministry of Christ, it is easy to notice the clinical aspect of His miracles. He was a dermatologist, because He restored the leper’s smoothness of skin. He was an ophthalmologist, because He restored sight to the blind. He was a hematologist, because He cured the woman with the issue of blood. He was an orthopedist, because he healed the paralytic. According to the text, Christ was anointed to preach, and the gospel was tailor-made to address the spiritual, social, and sensational aspects of the human condition as well. God retrofitted the gospel to heal broken hearts, give liberty to the captives and the oppressed, counteract spiritual blindness, and offer hope for the future. The gospel paves a highway to salvation.

This is precisely why the gospel is dynamite: because it blasts through rocks and structures that impede the progress of the sinner to have transformation. What good is a stick of dynamite if fire is absent to kindle it? What good is the gospel if the preacher is not available to thunder it from the mountaintops? As the inferno of preaching burns, it ignites the dynamite of the gospel and shatters all obstacles in the way of the salvation of man.

Paul in his missive to the Roman church says, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace,  
Who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Rom. 10:14, 15)

The gospel speaks through the medium of preaching. The preceding passage presents dominoes that fall

one by one. The domino that initiates the falling of the other dominoes is the Spirit-filled preacher! When I was pursuing a master of arts degree in pastoral studies, one of my professors asked a question in class: “How does the gospel receive a hearing?” I am possibly oversimplifying the answer, but according to Romans 10:14, it is through preaching.

According to Scripture, “John the Baptist came preaching” (Matt. 3:1); “Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14); the disciples “preached everywhere” (Mark 16:20); the apostles “preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2); and Jesus told us in the gospel commissions to preach (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

### Not the pastor only

A great and unfortunate misconception that exists in the body of Christ is that the preaching of the gospel can be accomplished only through the words and energy of the pastor. The pulpit stands as the pastor’s greatest leadership tool, but the pulpit should not serve as a cage for the gospel. God designed the gospel to leak into the highways and the byways, the streets and the mountaintops.

Take a glimpse at the book of Acts where the prayer assembly mobilizes to pray in chapter 1 verses 13–15. One hundred and twenty people pack the upper room with their prayers and supplications. When the sound of the rushing, mighty wind filled the house where they were praying, cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them in Acts 2:3. Verse 4 continues with the fact that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. In verses 8 and 11, every person heard the wonderful works of God in their own tongue. Up to this point, Peter has not stood to preach. The gospel was preached by everyone who was endowed with the Spirit of God.

Allow your holy imagination to picture a moment when every member in your church goes looking together

for the masses in the community and begins to preach the wonderful works of God to the residents. All the pastor has to do is extend the altar call like Peter did and give the invitation to repent, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, to receive remission of sins, and to accept the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). Picture the type of energy and heat the proclaimed gospel will generate and how the community will be impacted. What would it be like to claim entire street corners, blocks, neighborhoods, cities, countries, and continents for Christ through this intentional and aggressive form of evangelism?

The world does not need another homiletician or theologian. The world craves bold individuals who are unafraid to open their mouths and declare the magnificent good news of Jesus the Christ! God needs every hand on deck to accomplish the greatest commission ever given to humanity. The most basic meaning of preaching is proclaiming. Everyone, even without a theological education, can proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Just ask the leper of Galilee (Mark 1:40–45), one of the ten lepers who was healed between Samaria and Galilee (Luke 17:11–19), the man healed by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2–15), and the woman at the well (John 4). Only one prerequisite preceded the preaching of the gospel in all of the mentioned cases: each person experienced the goodness of Jesus Christ.

Choose a community and attack it with your army of believers like the 120 did on the day of Pentecost. Unleash each member to proclaim the gospel to everyone whom they encounter in the community. Publish the gospel from house to house and from apartment complex to apartment complex. Visit parks, recreation centers, and grocery stores. Take the community by storm. Ask God for holy boldness—and preach the gospel, for there is, indeed, *dynamis* in the proclaiming of the good news. 📢

\* All Scripture is from the New King James Version; emphasis added.

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# Billy Graham:

## *A man of courage and grace*

**Ted N. C. Wilson, PhD,** is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Few have impacted the world in the way Billy Graham has. Listed by Gallup more than 60 times as one of the 10 most admired men in the world, this preacher of Christ was heard by an estimated 2.2 billion people during the course of his life. Of that number, it is estimated that 215 million people heard him preach at live events, with 2.2 million responding to Billy Graham's invitations to give their hearts to Christ.\*

Graham's work took him to an estimated 185 countries and territories, but he was always delighted to return home to the mountains of North Carolina to be with his five children and Ruth, his wife of more than 63 years. In addition to Billy Graham's live evangelistic events, television and radio broadcasts, a regular newspaper column, and a magazine, he managed to write 33 books, including his 1953 best seller, *Peace With God*, of which more than two million copies sold.

But Billy Graham represented much more than statistics. Throughout his life, Pastor Graham

proclaimed Christ's salvation and righteousness. Transcending borders—cultural, national, sociological—his all-inclusive preaching knew no barriers of any kind. He included all people in his preaching, lifting up Christ and His Word with the outpouring of his sincerity and passion for truth, accompanied by his genuine desire to have all saved through the grace of Christ.

Billy Graham articulated his life goal clearly and forthrightly: "My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ." He worked for God with a tremendous zeal and held His banner high, encouraging everyone to take hold of it with him. His preaching exemplified an honesty and openness befitting someone extolling God's truths to the world. He did many things that promoted a positive identity for Christianity and made every effort to uphold and live by the standards of Christ, according to his understanding of biblical truth.

As Seventh-day Adventists, what an example we have in declaring the fullest truth provided to human beings. May we proclaim with complete focus and enthusiasm the urgent messages in the Scriptures, lifting up Christ, His Word, His righteousness, His sanctuary

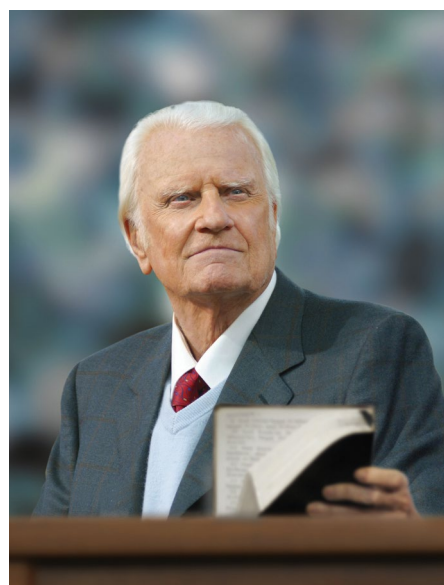


Photo: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

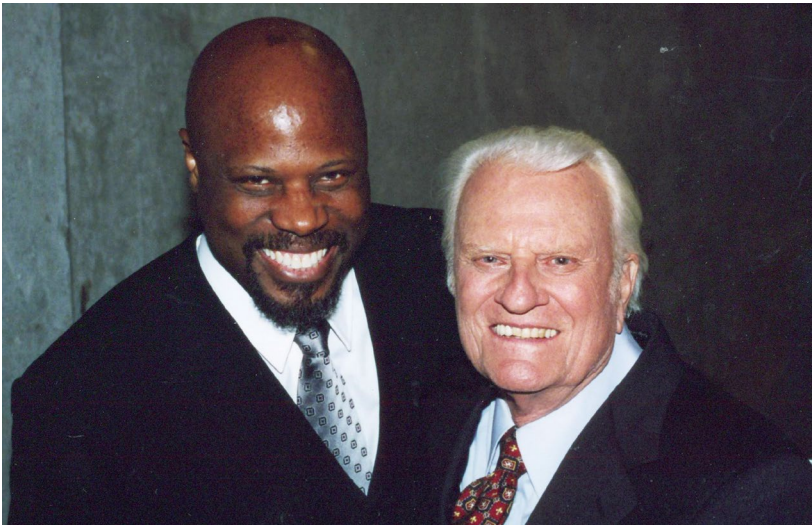
service, His saving power in the great controversy, His three angels' messages, His health message, His last-day mission to the world—including the need to plead for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit—and Christ's soon second coming.

Billy Graham's example of courage and grace is a reminder to all of us to live up to all the truth we know from the Holy Word of God and proclaim God's eternal truth.

\* Factual information found in "Billy Graham: Profile," Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, <https://billygraham.org/about/biographies/billy-graham> and <https://factsandtrends.net/2018/02/21/billy-grahams-life-ministry-by-the-numbers/>.

# Precious memories of **Billy Graham**

Photo: Wintley Phipps



**Wintley Phipps, MDiv**, vocalist, entrepreneur, serves as pastor of the Palm Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church, Florida, United States. He was a singing evangelist for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

**B**illy Graham will be remembered for his loving heart and humble spirit. For more than six decades he proclaimed the gospel of Christ with power and perseverance, and for almost 30 years it was my privilege to sing at Pastor Graham's crusades.

Throughout the years of knowing him, I have marveled at his integrity and his kind and gentle spirit. He was born on a dairy farm in North Carolina. "Billy Frank," as they called him, grew up surrounded by a loving family and rugged discipline. In his autobiography he said, "I was taught that laziness was one of the worst evils, and that there was dignity and honor in labor."\*

"As a teenager," he said, "our family Bible reading, praying, psalm-singing, and church going—all these left me

restless and resentful. In a word, I was spiritually dead."

One night after attending evangelistic meetings, Billy gave his heart to the Lord.

As a young Fuller brush salesman, Billy went all over North Carolina knocking on doors, learning the lessons of hardship and flexibility and the inconveniences of constant travel—and conversation. He said of that summer, "Selling Fuller brushes taught me a lot about myself, about human nature, and about communicating a message to people even if I had to talk my way in and out of all kinds of situations." Little did he know that God was preparing him to preach to more people than any other evangelist in history.

Over a span of 25 years while I was singing for many functions and crusades for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, I witnessed many thousands walking forward and giving their lives to Jesus Christ. For his worldwide outreach, Pastor Graham has been

recognized as the most widely heard evangelist in history.

When the Billy Graham Library was built in Charlotte, North Carolina, I was humbled to sing at its opening. The ceremony was attended by three former presidents of the United States. It was also my blessing to host television specials on the life and ministry of Pastor Graham and to travel to the Florida Bible Institute near Tampa, where he would preach to a congregation of cypress stumps.

I have so many precious memories of words I have heard Pastor Graham share. They will stay with me for the rest of my life. As we traveled back from his first crusade in Russia in 1992, he said to me, "Wintley, many people see America as a Christian nation. But more than America was meant to be a Christian nation, it was meant to be a nation of Christians, of Jews, of Muslims, a nation where people could worship God according to the dictates of their conscience." Christlike diplomacy was something I saw exemplified in the life of Pastor Graham.

He said of America, "We have become a neighborhood without becoming a brotherhood." His message was one of love, unity, and inclusiveness. To be in the room and listen to Pastor Graham speaking to President Ronald Reagan about the matchless love of God is a privilege I will always cherish.

Some years back, I saw Billy Graham being interviewed. The reporter asked him, "Mr. Graham, when you began your ministry back in the fifties, your vision was to reach the world for Christ. Tell me Mr. Graham, realistically how long did you think it was going to take you?" He thought for a while and then said, "I thought it would take at least a lifetime." When his death came at almost 100 years, it was clear to all that Billy Graham had given his lifetime in service for Christ. He leaves behind a beautiful legacy: a bright light for Christ in a dark, foreboding world.

\* Biographical information in this tribute can be found in *Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

# Undying influence: Reflections on Billy Graham's influence

**Mark Finley, DDiv,** evangelist, serves as an assistant to the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



I first heard Billy Graham preach in Boston in October 1964 when I was a freshman theology student. I was deeply impressed with the simplicity of his biblical message and the profound impact it had on his audience.

Conservative New Englanders are skeptical of appeals that play on the emotions and can readily detect hypocrisy or showmanship. The hundreds who responded to Billy's altar call that evening sensed a sincerity, genuineness, and commitment to the living Christ that touched them deeply. Here was a man with the message of Jesus that touched hearts and changed lives.

In an age when a significant number of public evangelists faced challenges in moral and ethical areas, Billy Graham was above reproach. A man of sterling integrity, uncharacteristic humility, moral purity, and unwavering commitment to his Lord and family, he became a model for tens of thousands of young preachers.

Early in his ministry, he and a few close confidants met in Modesto, California. They made a lifelong commitment to hold one another accountable. In this so-called "Modesto Manifesto" each man pledged to never be alone with any woman other than his wife and to be transparent in all his financial dealings.

Billy Graham's ethical integrity, open transparency, and genuine sincerity are among the hallmarks of his 99 years. Although we never met, his influence on my own life was significant.

Here are three specific ways Billy Graham influenced me: First, I sensed early in my own ministry that the proclaimed Word has little value if it is not the lived Word. Preachers may draw large crowds, but if their lives do not reflect the gospel they preach, their words will have little impact on their audiences. Second, I was impressed by Billy Graham's preaching with the simplicity of the gospel. As a preacher sharing the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6–12), I am constantly reminded that the essence of the prophetic message is to lift up Jesus. Third, Billy Graham was not afraid to make appeals. There was a sense of urgency in his preaching. He made powerful appeals, calling people to a decision. In a secular culture, he still believed in the importance of confronting people with the life-and-death message of Scripture.

On a significant number of occasions, individuals who attended his evangelistic meetings and accepted Christ came to my prophetic presentations seeking still more truth. Early in my ministry, I distinctly recall visiting

with a woman who was longing for an even deeper understanding of God's Word. She explained that she had made her commitment to Christ while watching Billy Graham preach on television.

There are countless others rejoicing in the truth of Scripture who had their first flush of faith when they heard Billy



Photo: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Graham preach. He led them to Christ, and Jesus took them on a journey of discovery in Scripture from there. I am reminded of John's poignant words in the Bible's last book, Revelation, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Rev. 14:13, NKJV).

Although Pastor Graham rests in Jesus, this powerful preacher's undying influence still lives on. [Mark A. Finley, *Adventist Review*]



BARRY C. BLACK, PH.D., D. MIN.  
CHAPLAIN

## United States Senate

OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7002

**LIE IN HONOR CEREMONY  
REVEREND BILLY GRAHAM  
U.S. CAPITOL ROTUNDA  
*Wednesday, February 28, 2018*  
DR. BARRY C. BLACK**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the fountain of every blessing, we praise You for Your greatness and goodness that gave our Nation and world the gift of Your servant, Evangelist William Franklin Graham Jr. We thank You for using him to preach Your gospel around the world, to counsel and pray for national and global leaders, and to invite the multitudes to start and sustain an experiential relationship with You. Lord, we are grateful for his scandal-free life of integrity, characterized by conduct that was above reproach. You blessed him through his humility and commitment to You to bring deliverance to those held captive by sin, to restore sight to the morally and ethically blind, and to set on the path of freedom those shackled by addictions and despair. Thank You that the force of his convictions transcended the boundaries that divide humanity, creating a spirit of oneness. Inspired by his great life, challenge us all to become salt and light to our generation. Use us as You used Evangelist Billy Graham so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts will always be acceptable to You. I pray this prayer in the Name of Billy Graham's Savior and closest Friend, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Barry C. Black, PhD, DMin,** is the first African American, first navy chaplain, and first Seventh-day Adventist to be chaplain of the United States Senate.



**Audrey Andersson, MA in pastoral ministry**, is executive secretary of the Trans-European Division, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.



# Falling into a black hole

**W**hen life crashes in on you, what do you do? Events are so traumatic that the whole world seems to shrink and be encapsulated into a single moment. Life seems like a black hole, one of those mysterious objects in space so dense that their gravity allows nothing, not even light, to escape.

Sympathy, compassion, understanding, and good advice are helpful when the problem is not yours. But when it is yours, when you, yourself, are immersed in that black hole, is there a way out of the darkness?

## Life-changing moments

Twice I have been confronted by life-altering moments. In April 2005, our home burned down, leaving my husband and me just in the clothes we wore, homeless, with memories and nothing else. Watching everything you own burn is a sobering event that radically changes priorities.

Then, in October 2016, my husband was killed in a work-related accident. Losing inanimate things is difficult, but it pales compared to losing your spouse.

Nothing prepares you for such traumatic, life-changing events. I have come to learn that God's grace, love, and mercy know no bounds. His grace is truly sufficient to heal the worst hurts of the soul.

There is no right or wrong way to deal with situations of significant loss. After my husband's death, someone said: "You are now a member of a very

exclusive club, which no one wants to join. You have experienced the worst kind of loss. It marks you, and in time, you will come to recognize the signs in other people." The person knew what she was talking about: her son, a few years earlier, had committed suicide.

No matter how similar the loss, everyone responds differently. Yet, in all kinds of situations of loss, there are commonalities. I want to share some of my journey, some of what I have learned, in the hope that it may help others.

## God is with you

The psalmist wrote: "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18).<sup>\*</sup> Jesus echoed these words, saying: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). They are not empty words. Paradoxically, God is nearer at times of grief and loss than at any other time. Memorizing and meditating on the promises brings hope and comfort in tangible ways to those in trouble. As with physical injuries, significant loss leaves scars that will never completely disappear until we get to heaven, but God's promises bring healing, no matter how terrible the loss: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds" (Ps. 147:3).

God is a God of surprises. At times of great need, God sends what I have come to regard as "random blessings": blessings that come through people and events so unexpectedly and beyond our normal experience that we

acknowledge they have come only from our loving Father, who weeps with and cares for us.

## Press Pause

When the unthinkable happens, the world seems to stand still. I will always remember the moment when my husband phoned to say, "The house is on fire; there will be nothing left," and the phone call saying, "I am so sorry. Lars was killed in an accident." Initially it was difficult to even comprehend what was being said. This seems to be one of the brain and body's defense mechanisms. As the words do sink in, they are followed by a myriad of emotions, feelings, and questions, existential and practical. At this point, as far as possible, press Pause. Some practical decisions—for example, funeral arrangements—cannot wait, but everything that can wait should wait. Perspective and wise decisions come with time.

## Grieve

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, says:

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:1, 2, 4, NIV).

Grief is normal. Crying and showing emotions help articulate the hurt, loss,

anger, and numerous other feelings. It is a necessary part of the healing process. Standing at the graveside, I was acutely conscious of the contrast between my own grief and that of friends without a faith in God. Ours was not that gut-wrenching grief without hope. As Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, we should “not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). This moment is not the end; rather, it is a hiatus on the journey.

Grief cannot be compartmentalized. Catastrophic loss may happen in a split

*I have come to learn  
that God's grace,  
love, and mercy  
know no bounds.*

second, but its consequences continue for a lifetime. Difficult as it seems initially, life continues. A new reality gradually takes shape. People talk about “closure,” but a better description would be to reach an “accommodation” with what has happened. The psalmist understood this; he did not pretend that everything was good or perfect. Rather, the psalmist often complained and expressed his frustration to God. Time dulls grief. Over time, good days outweigh the bad, but there will always be moments when grief returns like a whirlwind: anniversaries, memories, precious special moments. Then, too, memories may be triggered by something as simple as a smell, word, look, or flower.

Transparency helps others know what I am feeling and enables them to offer support. Eight months after my husband was killed, I was sitting on a platform in Mexico, with other division executive secretaries and GC associate

secretaries. Two weeks previously, 17 young Adventists had been killed in a bus accident. Five survived, and as local and world leaders surrounded the survivors and prayed, I could not contain the tears. Suddenly, I felt an arm around my shoulders and a hand grip mine as colleagues on either side silently expressed their understanding and support.

### Pray

In the immediate aftermath of my husband's death, I often found myself praying, saying to God, “Here I am,” not knowing how to formulate what I wanted to say. For a period of time, it was enough. Others were praying for me who knew and articulated my needs. By coming into the presence of God, their prayers on my behalf were sufficient.

Meeting people, sometimes strangers who had heard of the accident, and hearing how they have prayed and are still praying gives me strength and courage on a daily basis. Intercessory prayer on behalf of others should never be underestimated.

### Ask for help

As I was traveling home following the news of my husband's accident, the receptionist in the airport lounge saw that I was upset and asked what was wrong. I blurted out what had happened. Immediately she took control, staying with me until I boarded my flight. As she left me, she said, “Ask for help. Allow others to help you.” As time has progressed, I have understood and appreciated her advice.

Sometimes others can see your need better than you can. Following the funeral, I returned to England. One of my colleagues came to my office and told me that he was coming to charge my car battery that evening. I told him it was fine; the car had started that morning without a problem. He insisted, and the battery charger proved him right.

Asking for and accepting help may not come easily, but opening the door for others to help becomes a double blessing: you are blessed, and so is the other person.

### Gratitude

Processing loss is difficult. Acceptance enables me to function at an adequate level. Embracing loss takes me to the next level, allowing me to engage, process, and recognize that this is something that will shape my life and who I am. It grafts the loss into the fabric of my life, creating a seamless whole from the past and present, allowing both to merge into the future. Finding gratitude *in* the loss offers the greatest potential, yet it is totally and completely beyond my natural ability to do so. In these situations, gratitude is a gift from God. When I discover gratitude in the midst of the loss, seeing it for what it is, a consequence of living in a broken, sinful world, then the unwanted and unacceptable can be transformed into a blessing, an expression of God's grace and goodness in my life, and true healing takes place.

### “The land of no more”

All significant loss is the start of an unwanted journey—a lonely, painful journey, washed in tears. A journey of self-discovery, healing, restoration, and change. A journey of blessing, joy, laughter, and gratitude.

For me, it is an ongoing journey where I have come to a better understanding and experience of the goodness and love of God. I can only express my gratitude to God for blessing my life beyond all measure, helping me to a clearer understanding of a bigger perspective than just the immediate moment. As I look to the future, I know that the God who has not failed in the past will not fail in the present or future.

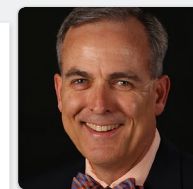
Yes, I felt as if I were, indeed, in a black hole from which no escape is possible. But I *can* face the future with confidence, and hope. God never fails. His goodness and mercy know no limit and are a constant support on the pilgrimage to “the land of no more”—no more sorrow, no more pain, no more parting—and no more death. 26

\* Unless otherwise stated, all scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

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# Cracking the Cornelius code—part 2<sup>1</sup>

The Cornelius narratives in Acts 10:1–11:18; 15:7–11 challenge us with a strange riddle. God, a heart-knowing God (vv. 7–9), works through 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).<sup>2</sup> God, who seeks the salvation of all people, is served by saints bent on guarding and constraining His pursuit. Buried in these stories about Cornelius are three keys that will help us crack this riddle of the Cornelius code and journey into the heart of God.

## The Qumran solution

The big, burning question for early Christians was, Should God’s holy people fellowship with Gentiles? The answer of the Qumran community, the code of the Dead Sea Scrolls, was intriguing. God has granted the Qumranians “to inherit the lot of the Holy Ones. He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven” (1QS 11:7, 8).<sup>3</sup> The worshipping community on earth, you see, is joined with the one above. So worshipers below are in the presence of and participating in worship with “the Sons of Heaven,” “the Saints,” the “holy ones,” the angels. The fact that angels are present in the congregation affects who can join in worship. “And no man smitten with any human uncleanness” such as paralysis, blindness, or deafness “shall enter the assembly of God

... for the Angels of holiness are [with] their [congregation]” (1QSa 2:3–10).<sup>4</sup>

God, in the last days, will establish a temple made up of people. To this temple, composed of men, “shall not come [even to the tenth generation and for]ever, Ammonite nor Moabite nor bastard nor stranger nor proselyte for ever.” Why? It was because “His holy ones [the angels] are there” (4Q174 1.1–7).<sup>5</sup>

The code of the Dead Sea Scrolls is decipherable. If you wish to know who is pure and who is impure, *watch the angels leave*. If the wrong people are in the assembly, the angels, being holy, will depart. Angels do not associate with impure people like Ammonites, Moabites, or even a full convert. In short, angels will not have anything to do with Gentiles. That is the code of Qumran, the code of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## Follow the angel

But what of the Cornelius code? What does it have to say? If you wish to leave behind your merely human views of who is pure, clean, and acceptable to God, then attend to key no. 1: *follow the angel as he goes in*. “One afternoon at about three o’clock he [Cornelius] had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius’ ” (Acts 10:3). Later, Peter ends up back in Jerusalem defending his evangelistic field school in Caesarea. As part of his defense of his actions, Peter says: “ ‘He [Cornelius] told us

how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter’ ” (Acts 11:13).

This is actually the fourth time that Luke has related to his readers the vision of Cornelius. Luke waits until now to disclose that the angel actually went into Cornelius’s house: “ ‘He had seen the angel standing in his house.’ ” Chris Miller writes, “The rhetorical impact of this revelation cannot be overemphasized. The statement came directly after Peter admitted that he had entered the man’s house (v. 12) in the face of the accusation (“you went to uncircumcised men,” v. 3). Peter admitted that he was guilty as charged, but the trump card of his defense . . . is that Peter was not the first one in the house; an angel of God had entered this Gentile house before Peter! In essence he said, ‘Blame the angel; he rushed in first.’ ”<sup>6</sup> If you would crack the Cornelius code, you must use key no. 1: *follow the angel as he goes in*.

## Listen to Peter

Buried in the Cornelius code is another key that will help us crack it and journey into the heart of God, key no. 2: *listen to Peter as he speaks up*. When Peter shows up at the home of Cornelius in Caesarea, Cornelius is waiting and has assembled the congregation. He has estimated the travel times, sent out the messages, and convened “his relatives and close friends” (Acts 10:24).

As Peter speaks to this group, he shares three words from on high that give us another key to crack the Cornelius code.

Peter walks into Cornelius's home and sees the gathered congregation. The sight inspires statement no. 1 (v. 28): "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or

*The very one we might judge to be on the fringe, unimportant to the future of Christian mission may, in fact, be the linchpin, the tipping point, the crucial figure inducing a paradigm shift in outreach.*

to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean."

The preliminaries over, the introductions given, Peter gets down to preaching and begins with statement no. 2 (vv. 34, 35): "Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'" I am not so sure Peter is right about his own

understanding. But I dare to believe, though, that Peter is right about God: "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

Peter shares the Savior with those saints in Caesarea. He tells the story of Jesus. His sermon is about to be rudely interrupted, but before it is, he shares statement no. 3 (v. 43): "All the prophets testify about him [Jesus] that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'" As the old hymn puts it, "Come, every soul by sin oppressed. . . . He will save you, He will save you, He will save you now."<sup>7</sup>

### Watch the Spirit

Buried in the Cornelius code is a third and final key that will help us crack it and journey into the heart of God, key no. 3: *watch the Spirit as He comes down*. This key is buried a bit more deeply than the others. It is itself encrypted. But follow the logic. Peter is preaching, and the Spirit decides it is time to interrupt: "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days" (vv. 44–48).

Whatever doubts Peter and his entourage have about Cornelius and his household are power-washed away by a torrential downpour of the Spirit. Please notice carefully: The Gentiles have just heard and believed the gospel. The Spirit descends. Peter and the six Christians who accompany him from Joppa hear the Gentiles speaking in a wide variety of tongues, just as Jewish Christians did in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4–8).

The descent of the Spirit and the gift of tongues shout a divine message:

Hear echoed in the strange phonemes of the world's languages planted on your tongues My destiny for My church, the mission I have bequeathed to it. I wish for every person of every nation to be part of My church! They are already Mine by creation, My sons and daughters. Let Me use you to make them Mine again by redemption, drawn from "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, KJV).

### See God's heart

Peter's writhing tablecloth is not a picture of his future menu. It is a picture of the church as God was then shaping it and bringing it into being—and as it is now developing. The members you serve and the people you will seek to win are unlikely to look or act like you. They may not come from your race, speak your dialect, or know your culture. The churches you serve will be full of diverse people and—God be praised!—more are on the way. Peter's vision is God's way of shouting, "Vive la différence!"

Christian mission is not so much something that we plan as it is a wondrous journey of discovery into the very heart of God Himself. The itinerary is bound to surprise. The very one we might judge to be on the fringe, unimportant to the future of Christian mission may, in fact, be the linchpin, the tipping point, the crucial figure inducing a paradigm shift in outreach. To understand that, and more importantly to experience that, would be to crack the Cornelius code and begin the trek into the heart of the heart-knowing God. ☞

- 1 Part 1 can be found in the March 2018 issue of *Ministry*.
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version. Emphasis is added.
- 3 Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd rev. and aug. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 79. The Qumran community was a Jewish monastic community that lived near the shores of the Dead Sea.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 5 The translation is that of George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context*, JSOT Supplement Series 29 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1985), 91, 92.
- 6 Chris A. Miller, "Did Peter's Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 635 (July–Sep. 2002): 313, 314.
- 7 John H. Stockton, "Only Trust Him," 1874.

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# The next great thing?

## *A postlude from John McVay*

It has been a long, challenging day of ministry. While dinner is baking, you sit in a comfortable chair on your back deck, the smell of lentil loaf in the air. And the real begins to bond with the surreal. A goat. Stumbling across the sky, superimposed above your lawn. His beard is long and scraggly. His hair mangy. As you try to separate the strands of reality from surreality, the old goat begins to morph before your eyes. Satyr-like, the old goat's head becomes a human face. The front legs become hands and the back, feet. And before long, there he stands. An old goat. Wholly other. His wrinkled hands, laced by prominent veins, quiver as they reach out to you. There is a dull look of a bygone era in his eyes. He repeats the same story to you three times in as many minutes. He fumbles with his hearing aid and snaps his jaw awkwardly to readjust his dentures. His eyes, refracted through thick glasses, seem too large and are full of anguished plea. There is no chance he will lead a small group, chair the finance committee, or help underwrite the building program. Even helping a bit with the yard work is in his past. What good is he now? Who is he, friend in ministry? A threat to your time and efficiency? A deterrent to church growth? Dead wood?

Or is it just possible that he represents the next great thing in mission? Could it be?

*The smell of lentil loaf engulfs you, and the scene changes. A writhing, black snake appears, cobra-like, its hooded form glistening in the sunlight as it jerks and writhes its way toward you. The hood morphs into hair. The long, lithe, reptilian body gives way to her slender form, garbed in too few clothes. She holds in her hand a small, electronic trinket. She holds it with such care and attention that it seems sacred, the crucible of her life. Thin wires trace their way up through her dyed, jet-black hair to ears pierced with cheap metal for their full arc. Matching metal flashes a few inches above her low-slung, metal-studded belt . . . and in her lips . . . and on her tongue. Her body jerks and writhes as she stands there; her arms and wrists bear the marks of self-harm, of cutting. Who is she, this one who now materializes before you? A distraction to your real ministry? Someone impervious to the message you bear? A waste of time, effort, and care that could*

more profitably be spent on others who have greater potential to build the church and grow the kingdom?

Or is it just possible that, in a youth-oriented, postmodern culture, she represents the next great thing in mission? Could it be?

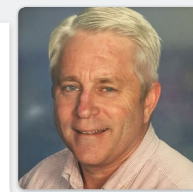
*There is a hint of burnt lentils in the air, which means the crusty bits around the edges are just about right. And the scene shifts yet again. A raptor, a hawk, a falcon. Appearing quickly, flying straight for you. As he hurtles toward you, you flinch. He brakes with outstretched wings, his talons come straight for you; he utters a piercing, wrenching cry. In that frozen moment of time, the hawk morphs. The talons become legs. The feathers a robe. The crested head, a turban. And now there he stands, an apparition hovering over your deck, this Osama bin Laden look-alike. An AK-47 is slung over the back of his robed form, his chest crisscrossed by bullet sashes. The needle on the baptismal candidate meter in your mind drops perilously close to zero. Yet his robe thins at the knees, betraying a piety that mirrors Cornelius's own, a devout man who fears God with all his household, gives alms generously to the people, and prays constantly to God. He addresses you in Arabic with blessings and words of Godward praise drawn from the Qur'an. Who is he? A terrorist bent on destroying the civilization of which you are a part? An armed imam breathing anathemas down upon the infidel? Someone impervious to the message you bear?*

Or is it just possible, given the shifts of macro-demographics, that he represents the next great thing in mission? Could it be?

*O Lord, just as You did for Peter and those early Christian saints, impel us beyond our personal, ecclesiastical, and missional boundaries. Teach us that not every constraint we feel is one You endorse. Not every ban we have posted is one You have revealed. Not every boundary we acknowledge is one You trace. And not every anathema we hear is a curse You have spoken. Jog us out of our deepening ruts in evangelism, mission, and ministry, and set us on a new course, an itinerary into Your very heart. Breathe new life into us, dry bones and all, that we might rise and live and minister in your name. Grant us the joy of cracking the Cornelius code and knowing You, our heart-knowing God. 🙏*



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## Five disciplines of highly effective pastors

**M**y doctoral dissertation was titled “The Relationship Between Critical Spiritual Incidences and Their Impact on Pastors’ Calling, Philosophy, and Success in Ministry.” As the title implies, I was hoping my research would establish a link between the number of spiritual experiences a pastor had and their success as a pastor. I expected to find that virtually all highly successful clergy are empowered and energized for ministry by having had dramatic, critical spiritual incidents in which they clearly experienced the presence of God or the action of God (i.e., miraculous events). I also hoped to find a pattern of behavior that these pastors use to bring about or to put themselves in a place where intense spiritual experiences would occur—a pattern that others seeking to be more successful could follow. I was motivated to take on this research project because of my deep concern about the continuing decline of Christianity in America and my desire to uncover information that might help halt or reverse the decline.

The criteria I used in selecting highly successful pastors included full-time clergy who (1) had served churches that grew significantly under their leadership to an attendance mark of over seven hundred, and (2) were recognized as successful leaders in their community and by their denomination.

I was able to obtain the help of Florida United Methodist Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. to find highly successful pastors. He nominated 14 clergy members from the 720 churches of the Florida United Methodist Annual Conference as being the most successful pastors. Five of the selected pastors are published authors; two others serve churches with 3,000 or more in attendance; and another serves the church now attended by the current governor of Florida. By any measurement, these are highly successful pastors. In addition to the 14 highly successful United Methodist Florida clergy members, I also interviewed a group of seven more typical pastors from several Protestant denominations as a reference group.

Thus I began my research, and to my surprise, I did *not* find the link between spiritual experience and success that I expected to find. But I did find, instead, five disciplines that all of the highly successful pastors have in common.

What follows is what I found.

### The problem

The subject of clergy success is really a critical issue because Christianity is on the decline in America, and church growth experts agree that the success of a church depends on its clergy leadership. The *Washington Post* reported in May 2015 that Christianity is declining across the entire United States—in all

racess, genders, educational levels, and geographic regions. They reported that the number of adults who describe themselves as Christians dropped 10 percent to about 71 percent of the American public from 2008 to 2015.<sup>1</sup> This downward trend follows a larger pattern of continuous decline of religion in America for the last 60 years—but has been accelerating in the last ten.<sup>2</sup> According to research done by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, in a random survey of more than 32,000 churches conducted in 2015, the average attendance in American churches shrunk from 129 in 2005 to 80 in 2015.<sup>3</sup> Should the average number of attendees continue to decline at the same rate for the next 10 years, church attendance will shrink to 50! I like to put it in graphic terms: Christianity, the body of Christ, is like a person who has been shot and no one stops the bleeding. Our decline is less apparent and is slower than that of an untended gunshot victim, but our end, if left untended, is just as certain.

### Barking up the wrong tree

As a United Methodist pastor with more than 30 years in the denomination, I have experienced many denomination-wide efforts to halt the downward slide in membership since the denomination was formed in 1968, one that now affects every Christian denomination in America. Church growth experts have studied highly

successful pastors and their churches in exhaustive detail. They have carefully laid out the “how to” details and put together plans on how these successful programs or activities can be implemented. They have carried out comprehensive clergy training events, in which virtually every denominational pastor has been trained—and yet the downward trend continues unabated.

So then, what do all highly successful pastors have in common? We generally assume that these highly successful pastors are very passionate about their service. My study confirmed that one factor they share is their passion for serving God and His people. It is not the ministry techniques and practices they use that make them successful, because they use different approaches and techniques, but their passion about their ministry is what drives them. In my study I questioned these pastors about the source of their passion and how they fed or nurtured it. I also asked them many detailed questions about the disciplines that their passion to serve engenders in them, and I was delighted to discover that passion for ministry leads all these highly successful pastors to faithfully use five ministry-related disciplines, and these five disciplines feed their passion.

## The study

My study consisted of a series of interviews using a survey form that included the same quantitative and qualitative questions for each pastor. The interviews revealed that 41 percent of the highly successful pastors (hereafter referred to as *the select pastors*) reported having actually heard God speaking to them and calling them into ministry, compared to zero percent of the reference group. That is a significant difference, but it still meant 50 percent did not have a critical spiritual incident leading them to feel called. Fifty percent of the select pastors’ group also reported experiencing more than five large-scale, dramatic, and/or miraculous spiritual incidents (compared to just 17 percent of the reference group). I was likewise

surprised when my interviews revealed that 17 percent of the select pastors had not ever experienced even one large-scale, dramatic, and/or miraculous spiritual incident. So I found some correlation between having experienced critical spiritual incidents and clergy success; however, those pastors who had not ever experienced one or more miraculous or critical spiritual incidents clearly show that this type of experience is not essential to clergy success.

One interview was particularly important. The pastor has grown his church from fewer than 400 on Sunday to over 3,000 in the last 20 years. I was expecting to hear about many amazing spiritual incidents that he had experienced. Instead, I was shocked to hear that he could not point to a single miraculous experience or critical spiritual incident in his life. At the same time, this pastor’s conversation, his demeanor, and his personal and professional disciplines, all showed he was consumed with passion for serving God and God’s people.

As the rest of the interviews were carried out with the other select pastors, I realized that not only were all of them extremely passionate about their ministry but all of them were practicing the same five disciplines! These disciplines, as a rule, emerged in these pastors because of their passion, but all of them were empowered and impassioned by their disciplines, so they are in a positive reinforcing cycle where their passion drives the disciplines and the disciplines fuel their passion. I realized this seems to be the formula for clergy success: passion for serving God and God’s people that is expressed in, and fed by, five disciplines, and these disciplines can, fairly simply, be emulated by clergy seeking to be more successful.

## Discipline no. 1: An unshakable sense of calling

In each of the interviews I asked the pastors to describe their calling: what led them to believe God wanted them to serve as a pastor? The strength of their perception that they were called

by God was one of the most unexpected findings of the survey. One hundred percent of the select pastors were absolutely convinced of their calling from God, compared to only 33 percent of the reference group. I expected that the 50 percent of pastors who had a miraculous or mystical calling would have a much greater conviction or certainty about their calling than did those whose calling was not so clearly mystical, but this was not the case. One hundred percent of the select pastors expressed absolute certainty about their call and, significantly, they all also reported mentally revisiting the memory of their call, or their sense of being called, at least daily.

The interviews also revealed that pastors who did not have a strong sense of calling served much shorter terms in their pastorates. Though they were the same approximate age, they were on average four years in their current ministry setting versus 14 years for the select pastors.

The conclusion I reached is that the most important thing pastors can do to increase their effectiveness is to get in touch with their sense of calling and reaffirm that calling daily. Whether doing this in a disciplined daily prayer time or altogether during an individual retreat, pastors must get in touch and stay in touch with their calling.

## Discipline no. 2: Keeping the relationship strong

Another important discipline the select pastors practice is being intentional about working on their relationship with God. One hundred percent revealed that they find ways to nurture their faith or relationship with God daily. One hundred percent either prayed or spent time with God daily. I was surprised to discover that 100 percent felt spiritually fed by perceiving God moving in the lives of others whom they were serving in ministry. One of the highly successful pastors who said he could not recall ever seeing or experiencing a miracle or other action or event that was undeniably the action of God is, nevertheless, passionate about

his perceptions of God working subtly, in the day-to-day events of his ministry, which he calls “glory sightings.” Each staff member is expected to report on their “glory sightings” at their weekly staff meeting.

I was intrigued to discover that the select pastors find that their passion for serving God is empowered by their observation of God at work in small-scale and seemingly minor parts of their daily ministry. One put it succinctly, “What drives me is seeing people putting their faith into action; I’m seeing this payoff in lives transformed.” Compared to hearing God speak or having a vision, seeing someone putting their faith into action certainly is a lower intensity spiritual experience, but to these pastors such observations are like manna, spiritual food that nourishes their passion for ministry. So whether the pastor was fed primarily by prayer time or by the experience of the miraculous power of God or by the observation of God at

work in and through his or her ministry, these pastors take time daily to feed their spirit, and this, in turn, feeds their passion for ministry.

The benefits of the discipline of maintaining a strong relationship also were apparent: 100 percent of select pastors said their spiritual experiences positively influenced them professionally in one or more ways, which included enabling them to stay in ministry, being better able to share the love of Christ with people, and being better able to give their life entirely to God. Out of all the five disciplines, making time for God requires the most effort, attention, and self-discipline, but the discipline of daily taking time to maintain a good relationship with God is critical to success and longevity in ministry.

### Discipline no. 3: A commitment to health in body, mind, and emotion

Another unexpected result of the survey was that the select pastors are

not just healthy, they are robust. The Canadian Mental Health Association and the Parish Nursing Association both define health in terms of body, mind, spirit, and emotions. These pastors are highly intentional and diligent about taking care of themselves in each of these four measurements of health. I have just described what they do to take care of their spirit, but an impressive 100 percent of the select pastors also expressed a commitment to taking care of their *bodies* through regular exercise. Each one exercises several times a week. Several said they would like to lose weight, but none were obese. All pastors expressed that exercise was both a stress reliever for them and a way to honor God by taking care of the themselves physically.

These pastors are committed to improving their *minds*. I was surprised at the hunger for knowledge these pastors demonstrate through their voracious consumption of books, articles, and online content. These pastors



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see themselves as being on a lifelong journey of self-improvement. One pastor told me, "A leader is a reader!" He showed me a shelf of more than 30 ministry-related books that he had read in the last two years. Another showed me on his Kindle that he had read 35 books in the last 35 weeks. Every one of the successful pastors took time at least weekly to read, both for relaxation and professional enrichment. Regarding the Word of God,

- 100 percent read the Bible weekly,
- 92 percent read the Bible daily.

Another significant discovery for me, second only to the discovery of how intently the highly successful pastors focused on their calling, was the extent of commitment these pastors make to caring for their *emotional health*. One hundred percent referenced the emotional support they received daily or weekly from a strong network. This network of support takes a slightly different form for each, but they are all strongly connected to one or more other pastors or to a covenant group of pastors or to a mentor, counselor, therapist, or coach. These pastors referenced drawing strength for the challenges of ministry from the emotional support they received: they know they are not in ministry alone. A benefit these pastors receive from their emotional connections is that, while they are receiving emotional support, they are at the same time being held accountable to remain faithful in using the other disciplines.

### **Discipline no. 4: Diligent students of ministry practices**

In answering the survey questions, the select pastors frequently referenced or quoted the teachings of the most successful pastors in America. They each showed themselves to have a good working knowledge of the writings of multiple experts on church growth and church healthiness. One pastor showed me the books about good business practices that he had read in the last

year, there were more than a dozen. He said he was a student of business practices because church is a business. He told me, "I am successful because I use a combination of business practices and spirituality." All of the select pastors had different authors whom they followed and different ministry practices that they employed, but in their interviews 100 percent attributed their success, at least in part, to their use of good business practices and good ministry practices. They were all

- seeking to borrow heavily from the techniques of other highly successful pastors,
- building their churches up through good ministry practices, and
- intentional about providing quality preaching.

Each of these pastors has used their reading, study time, and continuing education to make themselves experts on good ministry practices.

### **Discipline no. 5: A great commitment to the great commandments and the Great Commission**

In the course of the interviews, several of the select pastors named the great commandments (Matt. 22:36–40) as driving their passion for ministry and shaping their ministry practices. All of the highly successful pastors referenced their deep love of God. Because they love God, as commanded by Jesus and His Father, they feel a great commitment to the second greatest commandment—to love others. Because they love others, they want others to come to know the joy of loving the God they know. Because they love God, they feel a deep commitment to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20), namely to make disciples of all people on earth.

### **Conclusion**

All highly effective pastors are passionate about ministry. Their passion for serving God and God's people is what drives the various practices or programs

their churches carry out. Their passion for serving comes from a deep love for God and their fellow human beings,

*Whether doing this over time in a disciplined daily prayer time or altogether during an individual retreat, get in touch with and stay in touch with your calling.*

which leads to daily work on their relationship with God, including daily revisiting their calling, and to using these four other disciplines. For these pastors, their passion for ministry leads them to use the same five ministry disciplines, and the ministry disciplines, in turn, increase their passion for serving God.

I cannot promise that employing these five disciplines will make any pastor successful. I can say that 100 percent of the highly successful pastors I interviewed follow each of these disciplines. I can also say that there is a definite connection between a pastor's passion for ministry and longevity of service, ministry success, and overall happiness. 🙏

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# Stand up, speak up, shut up: *Lessons from a picketing prophet*

In increasing intensity, the cry for justice, equity, and freedom for the oppressed, deprived, and marginalized is spreading around the world. Also, more classes and categories of society are lending their voices and marching in protest against the social inequities they find. Not left out of the fray are Christian churches, leaders, and members, especially in recent protests across America.

While many more Christians would, perhaps, have loved to join the marches for justice, for them several other questions first need to be answered: What role should Christians play in the issues of contemporary society? What examples or models do we find in Scripture that would serve as patterns for responding to such concerns?

One scriptural example of how to confront today's social issues, I believe, appears in the ancient book of the prophet Habakkuk. This pithy account in the Old Testament presents a prophet who, rather than speaking as the oracle of God, seems to be taking up the role of a picketer in protest against his Sender and Sovereign.

## The prophet Habakkuk

The prophet Habakkuk, who wrote the book named after him, lived just

before the Babylonian captivity of Israel during a period when social injustices were especially abundant. It was a time of great national upheaval characterized by gross social injustice.<sup>1</sup> While the prophet was, on the one hand, concerned with the oppression and abuse of the righteous by the wicked in an era when law was ineffective, on the other hand, he focused his attention on what he considered a more serious problem—God's apparent silence and passivity in the face of unrelenting evil.<sup>2</sup> Although he appeared to be greatly moved by the lack of social justice in his nation, themes in the book include faith, morality, and the necessity for prayer.<sup>3</sup> And central to the book of Habakkuk are the themes of theodicy and theophany.<sup>4</sup>

The second chapter of Habakkuk, the heart of his brief book, relates his dialogue with God as he stands up, speaks up, and shuts up in the presence of the Almighty. Habakkuk, whose name means "to embrace,"<sup>5</sup> makes his appeal before the court of the Sovereign of the universe through three significant acts. We will examine the significance of these three acts for contemporary Christians and their relevance for modern-day ministers immersed in a world of great social injustices.

## Stand up

After decrying the widespread injustice in Israel and God's seeming indifference to the issues of the day, the prophet awaited the Lord's response (Hab. 2:1). Habakkuk, like the other minor prophets whom God commissioned, was to confront contemporary vices and social issues. The messages of the minor prophets clearly indicate that God is truly concerned with how people, His creation, are treated—He has an interest in their welfare, because He is their Father. Similarly, God's people ought to consider the plight of the alienated, marginalized, powerless, and oppressed. However, it ought not stop there. Not only are Christians to be concerned, but they are also to alleviate the conditions of such persons by addressing their situations, because we all share a common heritage with God as His children.

History demonstrates the impact of the Christian conviction, as they have a responsibility to stand up against society's evils. For example, through Christian actions, eventually the great evil of transatlantic slavery ended, despite its widespread economic power. Also, because missionaries sought not only to preach the gospel but to transform lives, they established

schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure that eventually brought social reform to the lands they had gone to evangelize.

At some stage, however, the passion for social issues became submerged under the priority of proclaiming the gospel, and the church eventually lost its position as the primary agency for bringing about social change. In recent times, after much debate and consideration, Christian organizations have finally come to acknowledge that they cannot divorce the teaching of the gospel from a concern for social issues, for they are, in reality, complementary.<sup>6</sup> It is not enough just to protest the plight of the poor, suffering, or downtrodden. Christians must also act in their behalf,

systemic injustice faced by the poor and suffering entails legal and structural reform—something they cannot do, due to their disenfranchised and powerless situation. For this reason, the voices of Christians need to be heard on behalf of the powerless wherever legislation is made and executed.

Fortunately, history records the powerful interventions and rhetoric of individuals such as William Wilberforce and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The advocacy they employed before the governments of their day did not consist merely of rhetoric alone but included artistic images that graphically depicted the visual horrors of enslavement.<sup>7</sup>

To the present day, there still exist many issues that demand the interven-

play catch up with secular philanthropic organizations who have well-developed structures and resources to deal with the social issues that the church now struggles with.

John Stott cites the primary causes behind the church's current neglect of its social responsibility—known as the “Great Reversal”—as (1) the fight against theological liberalism, (2) the reaction of evangelicals to the “social gospel” promoted by the “liberals,” (3) the widespread disillusion and pessimism that followed World War I, (4) J. N. Darby's premillennial dispensationalism teaching, and (5) the spread of Christianity among conservative, middle-class people.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the church lost its position as the vanguard

*The voice of the church will be amplified and more authoritative when it is truly seen to be a fellowship of people who care for and are involved with each other.*

doing whatever is possible to bring relief. God's children must demonstrate His love and mercy. Affected by their situation and motivated by divine love, they will do whatever has to be done to render help to all who suffer.

## Speak up

Another noteworthy step the prophet Habakkuk took was to speak up to the Lord about the social and moral issues that he observed (Hab. 2:1; 1:2–4). Similarly, Christians have, as part of their responsibility, not only to relieve the burdens of the suffering but also to speak on their behalf. Besides the hurt and pain caused by deprivation and oppression, another very significant issue confronting victims of injustice is their lack of representation. A critical factor for resolving the

tion of the church on behalf of those adversely affected by such powerful social forces as globalization, urbanization, industrialization, technological progress, and immigration. Such conditions and issues have been fueled by greed, selfishness, inhumanity, and all that sin has caused.

Curiously, the strongest voices speaking up for the suffering and needy are not coming from the church but, rather, from secular agencies. Yet, early in its history, the church became well-known for its ministries of compassion to the extent that the emperor Julian once remarked, “Jews took care of their own, the pagans took care of nobody, but Christians took care of everybody, not only their own, but the pagan needy as well.”<sup>8</sup> However, at present it is the church that is trying hard to

for social concerns and, in addition, abandoned its prophetic voice as the conscience to the nations.

It is encouraging to note that the Seventh-day Adventist Church not only seeks to engage the social issues of the communities where it is present but increasingly is taking a position of advocacy.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, some still question how far the church should go in speaking out against societal wrongs and ponder what level of advocacy is proper to effect structural and systemic reforms that would correct exploitation and oppression.

## Shut up

A unique contribution of Habakkuk in response to issues of social injustice is the lesson of silence. After two rounds of complaints from the prophet and



counterresponses from God, Habakkuk hears the command to be silent. The Lord is in His holy temple, therefore all the earth must hush (Hab. 2:20).

While engaged in the task of responding to social injustice and the concerns of the suffering, it is sometimes easy to succumb to the temptation of becoming more righteous than God. Not just a few persons have left the Christian faith over issues of theodicy, protesting, “If God is so just and righteous, why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?” Some have also suggested that part of the reason young people, especially millennials, are leaving the faith is that they do not see the church actively engaged in the social issues of the day. In other words, they regard the church and God as irrelevant to contemporary challenges and needs.

Habakkuk was not unique in questioning Yahweh about His justice. Others, such as Jeremiah (Jeremiah 12) and Jonah (Jonah 4), have done the same. Job seemed to be asserting his righteousness in contrast to the senseless adversity that he was passing through (Job 29).

Although the command to be silent (Hebrew *has*)<sup>11</sup> was given to Habakkuk, it also applies to others seeking to address social injustice. It was noteworthy, however, that God prefaced the command by the reminder that He was in His holy temple (Hab. 2:20), which is to say, Yahweh is at His duty post, He is at His watch. Implied is the idea, “You stay at your post and take care of your job, because I am on top of Mine!”

Another important lesson speaks to those who might consider social issues more important than the task of evangelization. The fact that the Lord is in His holy temple means that He always has a plan wherever a problem exists. In our concern to respond to the plight of the powerless and oppressed, we must have the wisdom and discernment to know when to stand up in their behalf and when to wait in silence and prayer for the Lord’s greater purposes to become manifest. The prophet leaves modern-day activists to grasp the divine gift of patience. Christian activists

and social ministers need, as did the prophet Habakkuk, to learn to trust that the Lord is in control so that they can step out of His way, lest they interfere with what He is set to accomplish.

In the third chapter of his short book, Habakkuk finally recalls the Lord’s miraculous works in history and is encouraged by them. Similarly, Christians who work for social justice and equity need to remember God’s mighty interventions throughout human history that demonstrate His sovereignty and justice. Crises in social injustice, therefore, provide opportunities for activists and protestors to question themselves, not God, as to whether they still trust that He is in control of human affairs (Dan. 4:17, 32), and that, in the fullness of time, He always acts. Contrary to the impression of the prophet and of some contemporary activists, God does have a divine timetable for responding to societal injustice, and His plans know no delay.<sup>12</sup> His call for silence is also an appeal for reflection and introspection.

Without a shadow of doubt, Yahweh’s purposes will inexorably come to pass—Bible prophecies adequately demonstrate this. However, His people need to learn how to wait patiently and confidently. God’s ultimate solutions for dealing with societal injustice are usually long term and rarely quick fixes. As Jeff Boyd wisely observes, Christians who advocate for change fall into two errors of judgment—believing either that they can quickly end injustice or that they can make no change at all.<sup>13</sup>

We need to understand that human suffering, and the related cosmic problem of evil, results not from any single factor but, rather, occurs for complex reasons blending poor human choices, greed, selfishness, satanic devices—in short, sin. While we often may seek to address the visible signs of the problem, God goes to work at the root, and because of the intricate dynamics of interrelationship, solutions are not as easy as we think—just as the prophet Habakkuk discovered (Habakkuk 1).

Though we may not always discern God at work, we must recognize that

God is always at work. He never sleeps or slumbers. Even when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God was still moving upon the face of the waters. Our task, then, must be to join God in *His* mission.

Dr. George Webber, former president of New York Theological Seminary, tells the story of how he and his friends, seated in chapel as students at Union Theological Seminary, read the words inscribed on the stained-glass window: “Go ye into all the world . . .” Webber says, “Sitting there with several fellow students, we felt a challenge to take the Lord of the church to the pagan streets of East Harlem. . . . The fact was that in East Harlem there were many signs of his presence for us to discover. If Jesus Christ truly is Lord, then we are called to point to signs of his presence, to join in his continuing ministry rather than to bring him as a stranger to a world from which until the Christian clergy arrive, he is otherwise absent.”<sup>14</sup>

## Finally: Look up

Christians indeed do have a divinely appointed duty and responsibility, like the prophet Habakkuk, to stand watch at their duty posts, write and proclaim the words of the Lord against social injustice, and wait patiently in prayer and faith for Him to act. However, while they are waiting, they are expected to be living obediently and faithfully (Hab. 2:4).<sup>15</sup> It is not enough for Christians to take up placards against social evil and injustice when even in their congregations racial, tribal, and class issues remain unresolved and ignored. We cannot cry out against the sins of government and not notice the hungry, homeless, and hurting in our midst. The voice of the church will be amplified and more authoritative when it is truly seen to be a fellowship of people who care for and are involved with each other.

Habakkuk also directs the attention of picketing Christians to the cruciality of worship even as they watch, write, and wait on the Lord. Service and ministry to humanity must never distract from the

importance of worship and fellowship with God, for it is there that we discover, as did the psalmist, that God is always on duty in His sanctuary, working out His purposes in justice and mercy (Psalm 73).

Although Habakkuk, as a prophet, ought to be the bearer of divine judgments to the people, paradoxically he, rather, complains to God about the wicked. Perhaps another lesson for Christians involved in community would be that while they have a duty to respond to the needs of the suffering and powerless, they should, like the prophet, learn to look up and address their challenges to God. Habakkuk reminds us to stand up, speak up, and know when to shut up, for God is always in control and has never not been in control. 📖

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- 2 Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 96.
- 3 Patterson, "Habakkuk," 400, 401.
- 4 James D. Nogalski, *Micah – Malachi: The Book of the Twelve*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Pub., 2011), 654.
- 5 Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 93.
- 6 Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 144.
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- 8 Quoted in Darrell R. Watkins, *Christian Social Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 9.
- 9 John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today: A Major Appraisal of Contemporary Social and Moral Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 28–30.
- 10 See Lehnart Falk, "Does the Church Have a Social Responsibility? Advocacy, a Biblical Legacy" and Jeff Boyd, "Advocates for Social Change," in *Church and Society*.
- 11 Nogalski, "Micah–Malachi," 674.
- 12 Patterson, "Habakkuk," 414.
- 13 Jeff Boyd, "Advocates for Social Change," 268.
- 14 George W. Webber, *Today's Church: A Community of Exiles and Pilgrims* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979), 27.
- 15 Smith, "Micah–Malachi," 107; Patterson, "Habakkuk," 414.

## The lighthouse

At Parkway Baptist Church, a lighthouse stands for much more than a place's history, purpose, or presence. It is not a beacon to warn of physical peril or a tourist attraction. For the members of this church, the word *lighthouse* holds a significance that very few people know.

At Parkway, the music ministry was one of my favorite aspects of church. As a choir member, I was able to use my musical talents to reach other people's hearts. Our worship leader, Craig Stamper, never seemed weighed down by his duties; he just embraced them. With eyes shining and a hand raised high toward heaven, he would exclaim, "God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good!"

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, struck close to home. For Craig and his wife, Susan, it was with heavy hearts that they headed north to be with family who had lost one of their own. The next day, our senior pastor broke the sad news. They did not make it to New York. A rainy evening and bad road conditions were to blame for Craig's

car spiraling out of control and hitting a tractor trailer head on. Craig didn't stand a chance.

Our heads spun as our hearts cried out to God. Why would God allow so many people to die on 9/11? Then how could God allow such a godly person as Craig to lose his life so horribly in a tragic car accident? Answers did not come immediately; but they did come.

Craig's family, members of the community, and the entire congregation of Parkway Church gathered to say goodbye. God be praised, Craig's wife, Susan, had been spared in the accident. With her broken arm in a cast and sling, she stood bravely near her husband's closed casket. Her eyes glistened as she greeted people who came down the aisle. My heart ached for her.

The senior pastor spoke, then stood on the platform steps. That is when we heard it. Craig's voice! It rang out over the sound system, singing his favorite song: "There's a lighthouse on the hillside that overlooks life's sea . . . And I thank God for the lighthouse, I owe my life to Him." His voice was strong and clear as if he were right there, just like

## Revival & REFORMATION

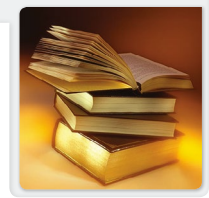
before; and one by one, people came to the altar.

What was intended to be a memorial service turned out to be a day of salvation. Thirteen people accepted Jesus into their hearts. We began to understand. There was more involved than our losing such a great leader; more even than his family's unimaginable grief.

No one was being punished for anything. God used Craig to be our lighthouse, beckoning lost people to salvation. I could almost hear Craig's voice one last time calling out to us: "God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good!" 📖

—Kimalee Finelli writes from Orlando, Florida, United States

\* Heritage Singers, "Jesus Is the Lighthouse," *Vintage Collection*, [heritagesingers.com/track/469334/](http://heritagesingers.com/track/469334/)



## ***The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More, and Change the Way You Lead Forever***

by Michael Bungay Stanier, Toronto, ON: Box of Crayons Press, 2016.

Coaching is arguably one of the most essential skills leaders can use to successfully develop others, yet many seldom do. And even when they try, they struggle to coach effectively. The author attempts to simplify coaching by offering “seven essential questions”:

1. Get straight to the point in any conversation with “the Kickstart Question”: What is on your mind?
2. Stay on track during any interaction with “the AWE Question”: And what else?
3. Get to the heart of any interpersonal or external challenge with “the Focus Question”: What’s the real challenge here for you?
4. Understand the basis for any adult relationship with “the Foundation Question”: What do you want?
5. Save hours of time for yourself with “the Lazy Question”: How can I help?
6. Save hours of time for others with “the Strategic Question”: If you’re saying *yes* to this, what are you saying *no* to?
7. Ensure that your coaching is mutually beneficial with “the Learning Question”: What was most useful for you?

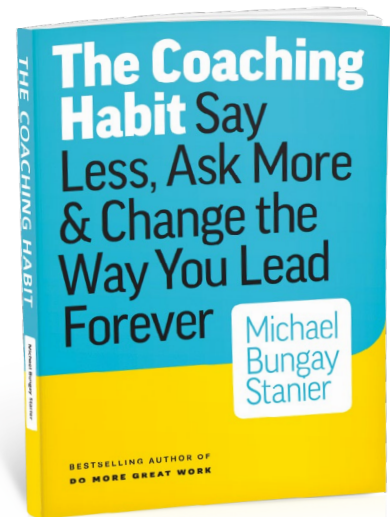
Through these questions—with practical tips and entertaining anecdotes weaved in—Stanier elevates the concept of coaching from a skill to a way of thinking, an attitude, a day-to-day approach to working with people—a coaching habit. “The change of behavior at the heart of what this book is about is this: a little more asking people questions and a little less telling people what to do” (17).

This is contrary to many management theories of leadership commonly applied in business and often based on reward and punishment: “Do what I say, and you’ll be rewarded. Ignore what I say, and you’ll be punished.” Many organizations outside of business—even ministries—are using this approach in an attempt to get results. This book, however, advocates a different approach that mirrors participative theories, which include others in the decision-making process by welcoming and encouraging their input.

Rather than focusing a conversation on a selfish agenda or motive, this coaching habit “invites people to get to the heart of the matter and share what’s most important to *them*. You’re not telling them or guiding them. You’re showing them the trust and granting them the autonomy to make the choice for themselves” (39, emphasis added).

If leadership is a shared process—not one person controlling or coercing others; but a community conversation that leads to decentralized power and decision-making—what would happen if leaders were to truly “say less and ask more”? “It increases the sense of tribe-iness, as, rather than dictating what someone should do, you’re helping him solve a challenge. And in doing so, you’re increasing not only his sense of autonomy—you’re assuming that he can come up with answers and encouraging him to do so—but his rank as well, because you’re letting him ‘have the floor’ and go first” (123).

The author suggests that many leaders are guilty of desiring control in very subtle ways when they have the urge to be what he calls the “Advice Monster.” Leaders who “say less and ask more,” on the other hand, seek to empower others to think of the answers and solutions



themselves rather than to control the outcome.

I recommend this book for anyone interested in working more effectively with others. The concept of “saying less and asking more” can be applied to just about any organizational setting, especially in a coaching relationship (“the coaching habit”). By applying the principles in the book, the “coach”—supervisor, manager, boss, mentor, pastor, elder, parent, insert your title here—shifts the focus away from performance and starts to address development. The dialogue is less about the issues and more about the person dealing with the issues. “This conversation is more rare and significantly more powerful” because it calls others “forward to learn, improve and grow, rather than on just getting something sorted out” (40).

What would leadership look like if it focused less on the tasks and more on empowering the people in charge of those tasks? The author suggests that the results would be a positive shift toward greater engagement and productivity. 📖

—Tony Yang, MBA, MDiv in progress, is a pastor and an author and serves as director of enrollment and strategic marketing at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



## ► Inter-American pastors review best practices for evangelism and retention

**Miami, Florida, United States**—130 pastors, administrators, and lay preachers from the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout the Inter-American Division (IAD) met during a two-day summit to review evangelism practices and set up new strategies to reach more people with the gospel.

Summit leaders met in several groups to highlight their best practices and new ways of improving evangelism, discipleship, and retention and devise new evangelism initiatives they can implement this year.

**Robert Costa**, associate ministerial secretary for the Adventist General

whole message, then it's pastoral malpractice."

Preaching the gospel from the pulpit is what **Claudius Morgan** has been doing for more than 31 years. He's been a well-known evangelist throughout the Caribbean, the Inter-American region, and even in parts of North America.



Photo: Keila Trejo/IAD

**Balvin Braham**, assistant to the president in evangelism for the church in the IAD stated, "What leaders want to see is at least 200,000 or more new believers across the territory every year. For that to happen means not only empowering and energizing church members into becoming disciplinarians, and getting children and young people more involved, but also finding better methods to preach the gospel in public and small-group settings."

Conference, encouraged leaders to look for ways to adopt new methods of evangelism.

"We... cannot discount technological media," said Costa. "Using Christ's method of preaching, technology tools and proclaiming the message every Sabbath will bring success," he added. "When the people are cemented in the Bible message, they stay in the church because there is power in the Word . . . so, if we don't preach the

"The key is that connection with the Holy Spirit, digging deep into the Word of God with a mix of prayer nights, anointing services, food drives for the needy in the community, children's programs, fellowship, and more," said Morgan. "Getting church members involved in the preparation and running of a public campaign is key to growing the church and retaining members."

Pastors in Guatemala began equipping and involving more church

members in all kinds of evangelistic efforts, such as distribution of tracts and books, social projects in the community, discipleship training, social media impact, and more. Already, 114 new churches have been planted since last year, and pastors are challenging the 5,000 trained and actively involved members spreading the gospel throughout Guatemala to commit to winning five new souls each this year.

**Israel Leito**, president of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the

IAD, praised the hard work of pastors and members in growing the church but challenged leaders to reach further. **Sam Neves**, General Conference associate director of communications, stated, “In the next 24 hours, more than 100 million people will look to Google, YouTube, and Alexa for trustworthy answers to their deepest questions and crisis. Unfortunately, they will not find the eternal gospel God has called us to proclaim, because the nearest Adventist website is beyond page 3.”

“We presented a few things to group leaders on possible ways to measure other metrics outside of baptisms and the numbers, as well as new tools for members to be involved in evangelism efforts continually,” said **Jose Romero**, IT director for the church in the IAD, who led a technology team during the summit.

“Leaders will compile all the methods discussed and evaluated during the summit and will apply them for greater effectiveness across Inter-America,” Braham said. [Libna Stevens/IAD]



Photo: Keila Trejo/IAD

## ► Concerted efforts result in almost 4,000 baptisms in Cameroon

**C**ameroon—Baptisms crowned the “harvest” phase of the Pentecost 2018 series, an outreach and evangelistic initiative of the West-Central Africa Division (WAD), a church region that includes Cameroon and 21 other nations in Central and West Africa. The public commitment of new members through baptism came at the end of a series of biblical messages on 611

public sites. Public evangelism was driven by the support ministry of 3,482 small groups and a series of planned acts of community service and charity.

Cameroon Union Mission (CMUM) evangelism director **Meting Jean Pourrat** shared that he was able to witness God’s assistance throughout the logistically challenging initiative. “Once again God has led us through,

but I believe we can still do better than this to the glory of God,” he said. Several medical specialists joined a Health Mobile Clinic initiative, including cardiologists, ophthalmologists, dentists, gynecologists, laboratory technicians, and nurses.

Community outreach and service initiatives opened doors and made it possible for the church to launch the





final phase of evangelistic preaching. Meetings were held on house porches and at lounges, in public spaces and in local churches. Many church member volunteers contributed to the success

Statistics reveal church membership has now reached 108,000 members worshipping in almost 1,500 churches and groups in Cameroon. The challenge, however, is how to nurture and keep

help new members succeed via the Total Member Involvement program. “By involving every newly baptized member in missionary and community activities, we will make strong disciples committed

Photo: West Central Africa Division News



of the initiative. Besides local preachers, guest speakers from the WAD headquarters and the world church preached in various venues across the country.

“I felt blessed as every evening I was able to share God’s Word,” said Stella, a church member who attended and listened to General Conference associate secretary **Hensley Mooroven** preaching in the capital city of Yaoundé. At the end of the series, all across Cameroon, 3,741 persons were baptized. Another 1,000 people are still studying the Bible, with plans to be baptized in the near future.

those members “in the fold.” Leaders shared that the regional church is now implementing an intentional plan to

to prayer and Bible studies,” said CMUM president **Assembe Valere**.

The 163 pastors called to minister to church members in Cameroon recently attended a spiritual retreat with General Conference Ministerial Association leaders **Jerry** and **Janet Page** as guest speakers. “It was all about rekindling the flame so that the authentic experience of the early Christian church can be reproduced,” leaders said. “It was a beautiful conclusion of Pentecost 2018 in Cameroon. It really rained.” [Adventist Review & Abraham Bakari, West-Central Africa Division News] 



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Fred Hardinge, DrPH, RD, is an associate director of the General Conference Health Ministries department, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



# Always relate to others with love

A vegan food truck owner, Delinda Jensen, who scolded victims of the Las Vegas shooting massacre as “meat eaters,” said she has received death threats for her comments. She wrote on Facebook, “How many animals will live because of the deaths of the 58 victims?”<sup>1</sup> Jensen made the post a day after the deadliest mass shooting in modern United States history that also injured more than five hundred concertgoers.

These sad comments from this misguided lady remind me of the importance of attitudes we exhibit

*“Because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently.”*

toward those with whom we may disagree. Unfortunately, we sometimes hear similar, but perhaps less extreme, ideas expressed within the church.

I am deeply troubled when I witness the “potluck wars” that take place in some churches. Why is it that some lacto-ovo vegetarians look down upon those who eat flesh foods, and some vegans look down upon lacto-ovo vegetarians? The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not make one particular dietary pattern a test of fellowship. We are a global church and have many

believers in parts of the world where fortification of foods is either nonexistent or financially impossible for the majority of members. Small amounts of milk, eggs, and clean flesh foods may be the only guarantee of a healthful diet. (Please don’t hurl rotten tomatoes at me before reading on!)

What diet does the church recommend? “Because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures.”<sup>2</sup> Even though we may recommend a vegetarian diet, we do not enforce it. Each member remains free to humbly follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in choosing their eating pattern while remaining in regular standing with the church.

No matter which dietary pattern you follow, remember that your attitude toward those who may differ with you should be rooted in the Spirit of Christ. “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (Rom. 12:21).<sup>3</sup>

I have found the following counsel to be most helpful in my ministry to others of differing habits and beliefs:

Remember that you cannot read hearts. You do not know the motives which prompted the actions that to you look wrong. There are many who have not received a right education; their characters are warped, they are hard and gnarled, and seem to be crooked in every way. But the grace of Christ can transform them. Never cast them aside, never drive them to discouragement or despair

by saying, “You have disappointed me, and I will not try to help you.” A few words spoken hastily under provocation—just what we think they deserve—may cut the cords of influence that should have bound their hearts to ours.

The consistent life, the patient forbearance, the spirit unruffled under provocation, is always the most conclusive argument and the most solemn appeal. If you have had opportunities and advantages that have not fallen to the lot of others, consider this, and be ever a wise, careful, gentle teacher.<sup>4</sup>

“In working for the victims of evil habits, instead of pointing them to the despair and ruin toward which they are hastening, turn their eyes away to Jesus. Fix them upon the glories of the heavenly. This will do more for the saving of body and soul than will all the terrors of the grave when kept before the helpless and apparently hopeless.”<sup>5</sup>

So, “fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (Phil. 4:8). We will make friends by being kind and loving, not by being critical and rude. ☺

1 Delinda Jensen, quoted in Bill O’Boyle, “Death Threats Follow Local Vegan’s Facebook Post About Vegas Shootings,” *Times Leader*, Oct. 5, 2017, [timesleader.com/news/local/677746/death-threats-follow-vegans-facebook-post-about-vegas-shootings](http://timesleader.com/news/local/677746/death-threats-follow-vegans-facebook-post-about-vegas-shootings).

2 “Living: Christian Behavior,” [adventist.org/en/beliefs/living/christian-behavior/](http://adventist.org/en/beliefs/living/christian-behavior/).

3 Scripture in this article is quoted from the New Living Translation.

4 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn. 1942), 494.

5 *Ibid.*, 62, 63.

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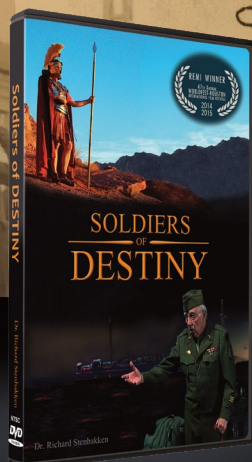


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