

# Ministry

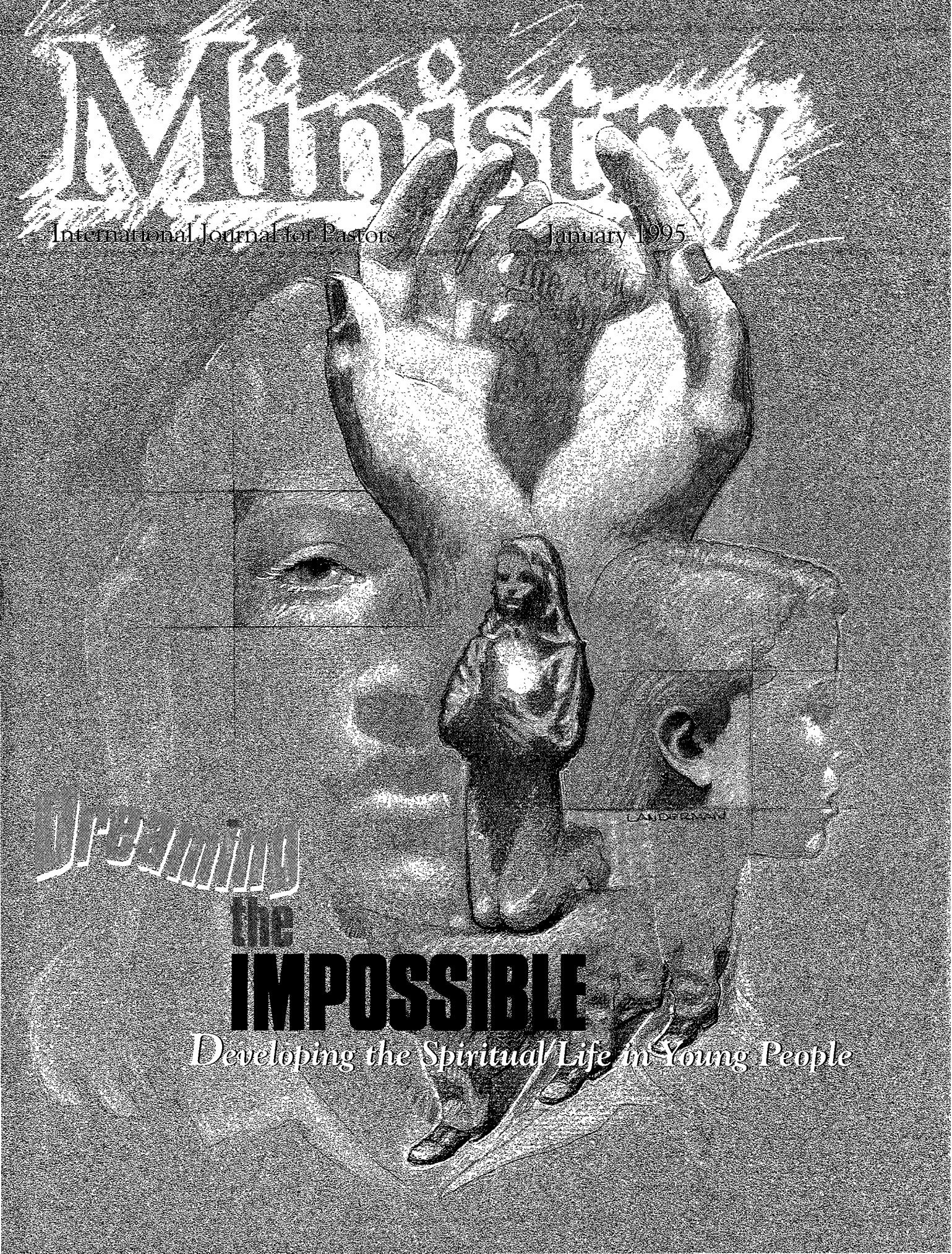
International Journal for Pastors

January 1995

OVERCOMING  
THE

## IMPOSSIBLE

*Developing the Spiritual Life in Young People*



## Needed: the Gospel

It is ironic that the September 1994 *Ministry* carrying an appeal from Robert Folkenberg for gospel preaching should also have Roger Dudley inform us that only 29 percent of young Seventh-day Adventist adults are "enthusiastic members" of the church, only 9 percent "evidence high faith maturity," and only 42 percent think that their congregation "emphasizes grace and forgiveness."

After being an Adventist for 70 years, I am not surprised. We have been majoring elsewhere. Folkenberg states that "many SDAs know the *doctrine* of the gospel" but not the "*experience*." I disagree. Many do not even yet know the gospel. How, then, can they experience what they do not even know?

Most SDAs can tell you all about the beasts, the trumpets, and Babylon, the great whore of Revelation. They can diagram the 2,300 days and the sanctuary doctrine. They can cite proofs that we are *the* remnant. But this does not mean they know the gospel. I hope Folkenberg will be successful in getting at least equal time for the gospel message among us.—Frank R. Lemon, Beaumont, California.

## Can pastors keep the Sabbath?

Can pastors keep the Sabbath (March 1994)? Instead, ask a simple question, What would Jesus do? Then read John 5:1-9, where Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath.

Sabbath is a very important workday for a pastor. From managing personnel to delivering the Word, many pastoral duties must be carried out. In times in which systematic pastoral visitation is an uncommon practice, there is more to be done on Sabbath than any other day. For the pastor, Sabbath is

a day of work—works of love, whose wages are healed emotions, buoyed spirits, settled differences, and lives saved for eternity.

Can pastors keep the Sabbath? Jesus is our ministerial paradigm. What would He do?—Danny R. Chandler, Madison, Mississippi.

## Preaching for eternity

I would like to express my appreciation for Robert Wurmbrand's article on preaching (July 1994). It is always timely to be reminded that preaching comes out of a lifetime of wrestling with the Truth, integrating it into our lives, and speaking from our experience of it. Sometimes we wonder how effective is the sermon in light of the sophisticated and skilled technology used by the mass media. Wurmbrand shows us that when the sermon addresses our deepest aspirations and needs, there will be a response.

Too often my own sermons are superficial—off the top of the head—and I need to be reminded that sermon preparation requires quality time, sustained prayer, and hard work. If we are not willing to be disciples of the Master, our preaching may sound hollow and unconvincing. It was refreshing and challenging to read Pastor Wurmbrand's wisdom.

Thank you for the complimentary copies you have been sending me for years. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity.—Everett Hobbs, pastor, Anglican Parish, Chance Cove, Newfoundland, Canada.

## Soft-touch church discipline

Church discipline ("Soft-Touch Church Discipline," March 1994) has always been a hot potato. It can be a minister's nightmare. I have

seen actions taken by the church concerning members do more to divide a congregation than any discrepancy over prophetic interpretation or budgetary expenditure.

As I mature in the ministry, I am beginning to understand where the rudimentary problem lies. First, people tend to be myopic. They do not see or are not concerned about the long-term affects of not disciplining a member. They worry about the member's response to the church's action. Will they be angry? Will they leave the church? They would rather err on the side of mercy than justice. They would rather show leniency than tough love. They vicariously exchange places and vote as defendants.

Second, there is a general misunderstanding as to how Jesus handled discipline. The incident of the woman caught in adultery is used as a crutch to suggest that because we are all sinful mortals, we are unqualified to discipline others.

Finally, many believe the church has been too hard in the past. Some acts that were once punishable are now excused. The Bible is the standard of Christian conduct. The Church Manual is an accessory. When a member violates a church standard, disciplining the individual is not casting judgment. It is upholding a standard that is set, and was agreed upon by that person prior to baptism.

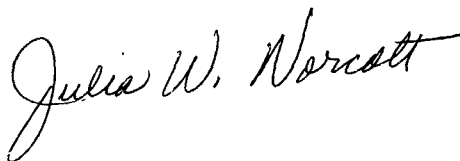
Any disciplinary action taken by the church should be seen, and understood as redemptive, and not punitive. The goal is correction and restoration, not alienation. And the person involved needs to hear it in our deliberation, sense it in our motive, and see it in the action taken.—Danny R. Chandler, Madison, Mississippi.

In his editorial David Newman urges us to spend more time contemplating God and reaching out to Him. He suggests three basic components of the Lord's Prayer that need to be part of every devotional life.

Youth who are facing great personal difficulties often need more bandages of love than they do prayer groups and sermons. Writing about building an atmosphere of friendship, Richard Duerksen believes that the youth will realize genuineness and respond.

Pastoral counseling fuses theological perspectives with counseling insights. Theology tells us how God interacts in human life, and social sciences tell us about human behavior and needs. Pastoral counseling brings both together to serve those who are hurting (p. 18).

"Fasting with balance" (p. 20). Madeline Johnston explores fasting as practiced in the New Testament and in our church history. In conjunction with our prayer requests, she says we need to practice more fasting, being careful how we define and employ this spiritual discipline.



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# Charging your devotional life

J. David Newman

**D**oes your devotional life scintillate with energy? Where do prayer and Bible study fit in your life as a preacher? Are you so busy with the needs of the parish that the only time you open a Bible is to prepare your weekly sermon? How vibrant is your prayer life? How often do you talk to God in a meaningful way?

I would like to suggest three basic components that need to be part of every devotional life. If any one of these three are missing, you will not be firing on all cylinders. These three foundational building blocks are found in the Lord's Prayer.

Luke reports that one of Jesus' disciples observed Jesus praying and when He had finished asked Him to teach him and the other disciples to pray just as John had taught his disciples (Luke 11:1). Jesus replied by giving them a model prayer that takes less than 30 seconds to pray. How can such a short prayer help us know how to pray?

## Upward

Jesus tells His disciples that every prayer must begin with God. We need to look upward before we look anywhere else. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (verse 2). Jesus directs us to that which is unchanging, certain, firm, unshakable, secure, solid.

Throughout Scripture God is likened to a rock: "The Lord is my rock,

and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps. 18:2, RSV). "To thee, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit" (Ps. 28:1, RSV). Throughout the Psalms God is referred to as a great and mighty rock.

When we build a house we make sure that it is built on a firm foundation. So Jesus told His disciples that before they considered their own needs or the needs of others they needed to focus on the One who provided their identity, who created them, who loved them so much that He came and died for them.

The strong devotional life spends much time in praising God and His great salvation. It spends time contemplating God and reaching out to God. When we have filled ourselves with God, then we are ready for the next stage—the inward look.

## Inward look

"Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). Yes, we are to ask God for the necessities of life. Notice how short this part of the Lord's Prayer is. God does not want us taking an enormous amount of time asking for ourselves, but He does want us to ask. And in verse 9 He tells us that anyone who asks will receive. God delights to bless.

We may complain that God does not always seem to answer. God answers to the degree that we are able to

receive. A glass half full of water can receive only a half glass of milk. A full glass of water cannot receive any milk. The degree to which we have surrendered to God is the degree to which God can bless and fill us with His blessings. That is why He wants us to spend so much time praising Him, spending time singing His goodness, His salvation. It is in the contemplating of God's justice and mercy that we are led to renounce self and enable God to prepare us to receive more and more of His blessings.

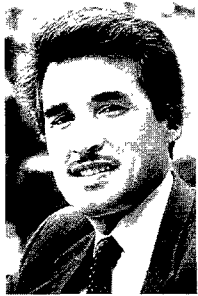
We must feel good about ourselves. We cannot share with others if we are insecure in our relationship with God. Christ's death on Calvary reveals our worth. He died while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), not when we were good. Jesus told us that the second great commandment is to love others as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:39). The degree to which we feel good about ourselves is the degree to which we can love others. So it is important that God fills our daily needs.

But there is a third component to the devotional life—the outward look.

## Outward look

And "forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (verse 4, NIV). Once we know where we are anchored, once our own needs have been met, then we are ready to look outward and pray for others. Most mental illness occurs because people hold grudges and are unwilling or unable to forgive. So Jesus

*(Continued on page 30)*



# When you're undereducated

Martin Weber

**A**re you undereducated, assigned to perform a ministry for which you are inadequately trained? Do you lack the academic titles that adorn the names of your peers?

Some pastors, particularly those from economically depressed environments, have not had the same educational opportunities as other clergy. Yet they have the same ministerial functions to perform; they must serve the same congregational nurture needs and community outreach needs. With the requirements of the pastoring profession so diverse and demanding, few would deny that inadequate training is a decided disadvantage. If such is your situation, how do you cope? Some ideas:

1. *Value your advantages.* Though formal education is vital, the seminary classroom isn't the only place you can learn to meet the needs of people—which is what ministry is all about! While your peers were parsing Greek words preparing to be preachers, perhaps you already were leading sinners to the Saviour, learning His lessons day by day. That informal yet practical education is worth something. A great deal, in fact. Moses learned more about leading and nurturing people while chasing Jethro's sheep than he did in the classroom.

Some "higher learning" might not be merely useless but actually counterproductive. While many fine seminaries equip students to be down-to-earth expositors, counselors, disciplers, and administrators, other seminaries of many denominations have

lost touch with God, His Word, and His people. Perhaps some pastors whose titles you've envied actually were not completely equipped by their seminary training, while your real-life experiences have equipped you for real-life ministry.

Remember, this is not to disparage education. On the contrary, a trained pastor who remains humble and godly can be far more effective than an equally committed but undereducated peer.

2. *Accept what you cannot change.* Whatever your limitations, educational and otherwise, you are complete in Christ as God's precious child and anointed servant. But if your level of ministerial development makes you a moped instead of a Mercedes, better not try to speed down the fast lane of every autobahn of opportunity. Don't venture beyond the dirt paths of your limitations—unless the Lord deploys the angel Gabriel to send you on some special mission. To make this practical: if you don't know Hebrew and Greek, avoid making a fool of yourself by posturing as a biblical scholar. Instead, content yourself with polishing the gems that others have mined from the original languages, along with gathering the practical jewels strewn throughout the surface of Scripture's landscape. In everything you teach, point to the Pearl of great price, and your members will rise up and call you blessed.

3. *Change what you cannot accept.* You may not be a trained biblical scholar, but you don't have to stay that way. Throughout your ministry you

may have many continuing education opportunities. Let church leaders know how eager you are to sharpen your skills so you can serve the Lord more efficiently and effectively. But perhaps no leave of absence is possible outside your field of labor, even for a short summer course at a seminary. Then attend field schools and in-service seminars.

If you live in a part of the world in which no educational opportunities of any kind are available, there are many informal opportunities you can exploit. Nothing beats the Bible itself as a source of wisdom and knowledge; all true education is based on the Book. And beyond the Bible, every good book you read is a chapter in your continuing education. Your General Conference Ministerial Association is committed to providing pastors around the world the finest resources at minimum cost. Additionally, there are increasingly exciting tools available in computer Bible study. Some CD-ROM programs provide access to the Hebrew and Greek in ways never before available to nonscholars.

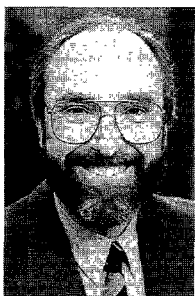
Nobody knows everything. Even the finest scholars have just islands of expertise amid oceans of ignorance. But if you faithfully avail yourself of every educational opportunity, in years to come you will unquestionably be the scholastic equal of most fellow pastors. Too often seminary graduates conclude their education when they leave the classroom. Intellectually and scholastically they go downhill the

*(Continued on page 30)*

# Dreaming the impossible

**Richard Duerksen**

## Developing spiritual life in young people



*Richard Duerksen is vice president for communication, marketing, and creative ministries, Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Columbia, Maryland.*

**D**o you remember the fairy tale of the ugly toad who was really a handsome prince? All he needed to break the spell of the wicked witch was a kiss from a beautiful maiden. But what beautiful maiden would stop to kiss an ugly toad? Obviously, only one who stopped first to talk to him and get to know him.”<sup>1</sup>

It’s true! The only way to help young people build spiritual lives is to stop, listen, become a believable friend, and then personally demonstrate Christ’s remedies for their needs.

I was sharing this concept with a group of youth workers over a cafeteria lunch when a young pastor began to sputter, “It cannot be done. The kids are just too much into the world. No matter how close I come to them, I cannot offer them anything as exciting or meaningful as all that the devil is providing. Toads just do not become princes anymore!”

Not true! But the pastor’s frustrations are real and common. In fact, the job at times does seem beyond all hope, and we find ourselves dreaming impossible dreams. But dreams do come true. In my own ministry I have learned many times that impossibilities do become realities.

As principal of a Seventh-day Adventist boarding academy, I had dreams for the school and for the students. I wanted each young person to find a rewarding relationship with Christ while at the school. Regularly I shared that dream with faculty and students, and we worked night and day to make it happen. We planned meetings, study groups, sermons, prayer sessions, retreats, campouts, and even “Christian tugs-of-war.”

But the students seemed more excited about Satan’s glittering offerings than those of God. We were almost to the point of accepting that our “impossible dream” really was impossible.

Then one night the planned program fell through and I invited a retired minister to speak to the students. He simply said, “God needs you to change the world.” Even though he talked too long and broke many of the rules of homiletics, we sat amazed as princes and princesses were created before our eyes.

The result of all that? Four guys in the senior class decided we needed a “mission project.” Several girls started prayer bands in their dorm rooms, and faculty members found themselves flooded with interest about spiritual things. The students raised more than \$40,000 and built a church in Nicaragua, helped start an orphanage in the Dominican Republic, bought a bicycle for a pastor on Guadalcanal, and sent a nurse to an island in the South Pacific.

As the students became more involved in practical spirituality and began to focus on the needs of others, a whole new feeling began to grow on campus. Before long, Christianity was the in thing and the devil was losing out. Our impossible dream was coming true!

Even though it didn’t happen just when and how we wanted it to, it happened. Our role had been to create a campus climate that made room for God. Then, at the most opportune moment, God moved in and was able to transform young people.

I have surveyed hundreds of teenagers and youth workers over the years,

trying to discover from them what youth leaders can do to build the kind of climate that makes it possible for God to make major transformations. From those conversations come five major points of advice: (1) be a model of what you want them to become; (2) build an atmosphere of friendship; (3) be aware of what they are going through; (4) remember that each youth is a unique individual; and (5) remember that you are here to serve them.

### Be a model

Be a model of what you want your youth to become. Nothing can substitute for your own personal dedication to Christ. Young people are not so much interested in facts about Jesus as they are in the story of what Jesus means to you. They are watching to discover if your Christianity is something worth experiencing. Paul Little says, "We ourselves must be convinced about the truth we proclaim. Otherwise we won't be at all convincing to other people."<sup>2</sup>

The more you experience the personal joys of growing as a Christian, the more you will feel God leading you toward creative solutions in your youth ministry. Youth, you see, are not impressed or moved by "part-time Christians." They are looking for leaders who are "real," whose Christianity is a practical, daily friendship with Jesus. Young people are keenly aware of justice and injustice in life. They will be watching to be sure that your Christianity includes a well-developed sense of fair play.

Roger Dudley, in his book *Passing On The Torch*, has put it well: "It is not our responsibility to force our values upon our young people. It is our responsibility to model our values so attractively that these youth cannot help seeing that they are vastly superior to the competition, and will freely choose them."<sup>3</sup>

Youth ministry is a demanding responsibility, and it is very easy to get so caught up in the activities and expectations that you neglect your relationship with God. The youth will pick that up quickly and, even though the programs may continue to run, you will have compromised your influence.

On the other hand, when you remember that you are not doing your own work but are following after Him, the youth will realize your genuineness and respond to it. To inspire spirituality, be spiritual; be transparently His.

### Be a friend

Build an atmosphere of friendship. During a Bible conference at which we were discussing youth leadership, a young man came up to me with some advice for youth leaders. "If you want to lead me," he said, "be my friend. Don't spend your time pointing out all my wrongs, but lead me toward the rights, like a friend would. Give me more love and less criticism."

Friendship, true friendship, is a key to the success of any youth leader. "But how," one newly appointed youth leader asked, "can I become the friend of young people who are automatically aloof from adults, and especially from youth leaders?"

Several years ago I saw a cartoon on youth ministry. It showed a young youth worker who had only six basic body parts: *eyes*—open to see all needs, even in dark places; *ears*—open to listen to all needs, as a true friend; *heart*—open to share others' feelings in interested empathy; *feet*—moving, visiting, carrying, going to, going for; *hands*—extended and open to grasp and lift, to give a hand; *knees*—calloused from praying for and praying with.

If our eyes, ears, heart, feet, hands, and knees are open and dedicated to meeting the needs of our youth, we are truly serving them as their friends. In our lives they will then see a model of Christ, a person who is living the Father's love for others.

But this is not an easy assignment. It requires time, energy, dedication, and sacrifice. "If love is real, it will be expressed. If it is God's love (*agape*), it will be expressed sacrificially. Divine love cannot remain silent or uninvolved! People are waiting for its expression—for someone to get involved with them where they live and work (and play)."<sup>4</sup>

How can we do that effectively? The following possibilities are given only as idea starters.

1. *The focused half hour.* Plan at least 30 minutes each day when you do nothing but work with your youth. This is not a time for you to sit in the study and plan; it is a time for you to be with one or more of the youth in person or on the phone. It is a time of focused friendship. Your conversations may include planning for the April Fool's Day party, but you will probably spend more time talking about the pizza at Valentino's, the Super Bowl, or today's hit song.

2. *Your place, however humble, is best.* Our family's favorite memories include teenagers joking, laughing, playing games, and telling tall tales around our kitchen table. In fact, we have made many friends there over corn bread and chili, friends who stop by when they're in town, who ask us to share in their weddings, who call when they want to just talk. Those are some of our richest friendships.

Invite the youth to your home. No, you don't have to prepare a great meal or plan any marvelous entertainment. Just open your home and your popcorn popper, set your family photo albums on the table, and open your heart to your youth. Be a friend.

3. *Outdoors, even in the parking lot, is wise.* Take them outdoors, away from the TV, away from stereos, away from the church out into somewhere different and as natural as possible. You will find it much easier to get to know most youth when they are outdoors. While you're out there, share a personal experience of how you are growing in Christ. Somehow it is all more believable outdoors.

Your outdoor experiences could include weekend campouts, longer retreats at a summer camp (in the deep snow of winter), or just part of a day in a local park. Be sure to let the young people choose the place, plan the program, and prepare the menu.

4. *Phone numbers, wallets, and automobiles are for sharing.* You must be willing to be used for a vast variety of needs. If the youth realize you are serious, they'll call when they need help, ask if they can "borrow" a dollar, and hope you can take them to town to get the new starter for the car.

Yes, you must share responsibly.

But you must share openly, as a Christian servant would share.

5. *Enjoy things their way.* I know, you hate to think of another pizza supper, but as long as you do not compromise your witness by being along, be where your youth are.

6. *Look for needs.* Your youth have many very special needs, needs that you and the Lord can nicely fill. Keep your eyes and ears open for signs of those needs. If you are praying for God to reveal their needs to you, you will always be juggling two dozen special challenges with your youth.

Adolescents need friendship. You can provide that friendship. You and God.

### Be aware

Be aware of what your youth are going through. Being an adolescent can be extremely traumatic! It is a time of crisis, of reevaluating everything, of searching for meaning. For Christian youth, it is also a time of faith crisis, a time when all they have ever believed is "up for grabs."

You must be tuned in to the individual faith crisis of your youth. Each one is going to respond to this time a little differently. Each one is going to need your support in a creative, individual way. The key is simply being aware of what is going on and being open and available.

Charles Shelton, in his book *Adolescent Spirituality*, lists eight forces to which youth must relate during this "faith crisis."

1. *Peer pressure.* Peer pressure is "one of the greatest barriers to making proper ethical decisions."<sup>5</sup> The temptation to rebel against organized religion is enhanced by the large number of peers who have already chosen that option.

When college freshmen move into the dormitory, for instance, they often notice that many of their peers are not attending Sabbath services. This peer behavior then becomes both a subtle pressure to conform and a legitimate and safe avenue for the young person's own withdrawal from the practice of

group religion.

2. *Institutional alienation.* Young people are more interested in personal, relational forms of worship than they are in large institutions, large worship services, or church "programs."

When you are aware of this fact, you will be much more understanding when youth express dissatisfaction with "church," throw verbal rocks at the school, and stay away from programs in droves. Your understanding will lead you to help them discover alternatives within the institutional church, creative ways to keep them as part of "church" in ways that are comfortable.

Youth are very idealistic and often enjoy being involved in social causes. If you help them focus on the needs of

wanting to break free from all parental authority.

4. *Rebellion.* Sometimes the process of "finding myself" takes a direction the psychologist Erickson calls "negative identity." Most youth leaders simply call it "rebellion."

You can be a key factor in those lives by accepting the rebels for the developing adults they really are, and by helping them find creative and acceptable avenues for their rebellion.

5. *Search for meaning.* Remember that this process is healthy! Young people are now having to answer the great questions of life honestly and carefully. You are privileged to be right there to help them articulate those answers in the context of God's love and His will for their lives.

Design some of your activities to provide for discussions on topics such as God's will, the Christian's mission, the Christian and politics, God's answer to hunger, and how to hear God's voice.

6. *Disillusionment.* Youth see the failures of adults and wonder aloud if life is worth the trouble. Religious youth see the hypocrisy, pride, jealousy, and other forms of sin that tarnish the lives of church members, and they ask, "Why

bother?"

Their asking gives you a marvelous opportunity to answer with friendship, love, and an open discussion on the character of God. Don't be afraid to point out some of the renegades like Peter, King Manasseh, Moses, and Uncle Billy, whom God transformed by continuing to give His love freely.

7. *Personal difficulty.* Teenagers are having to grow up in an ugly and confused world. Many come from homes where the conflicts are harsh and constant, and their emotional insecurities simply do not encourage them to make a "faith commitment" to God. Youth who are facing great personal difficulties often need more bandages of love than they do prayer groups and sermons.

8. *Environment.* Concerns about spiritual things are seldom very high on the list of discussion topics in groups

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## Youth who are facing great personal difficulties often need more bandages of love than they do prayer groups and sermons.

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the poor, help them work for the hungry people in your community, or guide them in attacking some other social issue, you will find them interested, involved, and even excited.

3. *Separation from parents.* In the teen years most youth are thrashing about in an attempt to discover who they are and where they fit in life. This is also true in the area of personal faith. Although the faith of their parents forms a foundation for the search, each young person must now develop an understanding of what God means for "me."

It is important for you to encourage their need for independence while at the same time discouraging the feeling that their parents are "old-fashioned" and "no good." Help them understand why their parents still want to be involved in their lives. And help parents understand why teenagers are



of adolescents. In fact, most youth seem almost happy to be sucked along into "live for today" cultural pressures. That truth gives you the challenge of helping youth look at their culture as critically as they look at the church. A critical perspective, one that is always honestly asking the wise "why" questions, will be a great asset as even greater challenges come along.

These are by no means a complete list of pressures and problems youth face, but being aware of them will help you face impossible situations with understanding and hope.

### **Be alert to their uniqueness**

Remember that each of your youth is a unique individual. Don't expect all young people to react to ideas, programs, or even to you in the same way. God created each young person as different, unique, and special.

Each young person with whom we work is changing at a unique rate. Each is in the process of personal discovery but is discovering different things at different times. Your responsibility is to love each as the person he or she really is, and to be a personal, trustworthy friend. You also need to plan activities that encompass the interests and personalities of each young person in the group. Some youth are repelled by small group devotions, so plan some devotional activities for larger groups and develop a few other devotional suggestions for individual and team study, prayer, and service. God will work through you to help individualize the pathways to friendship with Him.

### **Be ready to serve them**

Remember that you are here to serve your youth. It is always a temptation for a leader to be more concerned about his or her personal reputation and "success" than about the spiritual growth of each young person. Great youth leaders, however, work to make others into whole people by giving them a larger vision and purpose than they would have come up with on their own.

This happens best when you see yourself as a servant of God and there-

fore as a servant of the young people. Such an approach makes it possible for you to let them make many of the decisions regarding youth activities while at the same time challenging them to take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. It gives you the privilege of supporting young people as they grow into the persons God wants them to become. Then the impossible dream will become possible. ■

<sup>1</sup> Howard G. Hendricks, *Say It With Love* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1975), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Roger L. Dudley, *Passing On The Torch* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987), p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> William M. Fletcher, *The Second Greatest Commandment* (Colorado Springs, Col.: NavPress, 1983), p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry White, *Honesty, Morality, and Conscience* (Colorado Springs, Col.: NavPress, 1979), p. 62.

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# Salvation: God's greatest work

Charles H. Spurgeon

A classic sermon of  
the great nineteenth  
century preacher

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isa. 45:22).

Six years ago today I was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity," but had yet, by divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of its slavery. Seeking rest and finding none, I stepped within the house of God and sat there, afraid to look upward lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit and, as I have done this morning, read this text: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I looked that moment; the grace of faith was granted me in that same instant, and now I think I can say with truth:

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die."

I shall never forget that day, nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord. How wonderfully and marvelously kind that he who heard these

words so little time ago for his own soul's profit should now address you this morning as his hearers from the same text, in the confident hope that some poor sinner within these walls may hear the glad tidings of salvation for himself also, and may today, on this sixth of January, be turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Salvation is God's greatest work; and therefore, in His greatest work, He specially teaches us this lesson—that He is God, and that beside Him there is none else. Our text tells us *how He teaches it*. He says; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He shows us that He is God, and that beside Him there is none else, in three ways. First, by the Person to whom He directs us: "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved." Second, by the means He tells us to use to obtain mercy: "Look," simply "look." And third, by the persons whom He calls to "look"; "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*."

## Look to Me

First, to whom does God tell us to look for salvation? Oh, does it not lower the pride of man when we hear the Lord say, "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"? It is not "Look to your priest, and be ye

saved." If you did, there would be another god, and besides him there would be someone else. It is not "Look to yourself." If so, then there would be a being who might arrogate some of the praise of salvation. But it is "Look unto me." How frequently you who are coming to Christ look to yourselves. "Oh!" you say, "I do not repent enough." That is looking to yourself. "I do not believe enough." That is looking to yourself. "I am too unworthy." That is looking to yourself. "I cannot discover," says another, "that I have any righteousness." It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness, but it is quite wrong to look for any.

God says, "Look unto *me*." He would have you turn your eyes off yourself and look unto Him. The hardest thing in the world is to turn a man's eyes off himself; as long as he lives, the tendency remains to turn his eyes inside and look at himself, whereas God says, "Look unto *me*." From the cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy; from the Garden of Gethsemane, where the bleeding pores of the Saviour sweat pardons, the cry comes: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." From Calvary's summit, where Jesus cries, "It is finished," I hear the shout "Look, and be saved."

But there comes a vile cry from our soul, "No, look to yourself!" Ah, my hearer, look to yourself and you will be damned. As long as you look to yourself there is no hope for you. Salvation is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and what Christ is. It is looking from yourself to Jesus. Oh! how many misunderstand the gospel, imagining that righteousness qualifies them to come to Christ, whereas sin is the only qualification for a man to come to Jesus. "Look!" This is all He demands of you, and even this He gives you. If you look to yourself you are damned; you are a vile miscreant, filled with loathsomeness, corrupt and corrupting others. But look here! See that

Man hanging on the cross? Do you see His agonized head dropping meekly down upon His breast? Do you see that thorny crown causing drops of blood to trickle down His cheeks? Do you see His hands pierced and rent, and His blessed feet, supporting the weight of His own frame, rent nearly in twain with the cruel nails? Sinner! Do you hear Him shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Do you hear Him cry, "It is finished"? Do you mark His head hung down in death? Can you see His side pierced with the spear, and His body taken from the cross? Oh, come here! Those hands were nailed for you; those feet gushed gore for you; that side was opened wide for you; and if you want to know how you can find mercy, there it is!

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## Salvation is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and what Christ is.

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Look! "Look unto *me*!" Look no longer to Moses. Look no longer to Sinai. Come here and look to Calvary, to Calvary's Victim, and to Joseph's grave. And look up there to the Man at the throne who sits with His Father, crowned with light and immortality. "Look, sinner," He says this morning to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." This is how God teaches that there is none beside Him: He makes us look entirely to Him, and utterly away from ourselves.

### Just look

The second thought is the means of salvation. It is "Look unto me, and be ye saved." *Look!* There is not an unconverted man who likes this. "Look unto [Christ], and be ye saved." No, he

comes to Christ like Naaman to Elisha, and when it is said, "Go, wash in Jordan," he replies, "I verily thought he would come and put his hand on the place, and call on the name of his God; but the idea of telling me to wash in Jordan, what a ridiculous thing! Anybody could do that!" If the prophet had instructed him do some great thing, would he not have done it? Ah! certainly he would.

It is a simple gospel that we have to preach. It is only "Look!" "But," you protest, "is that the gospel? I shall not pay any attention to that." But why has God ordered you to do such a simple thing? Just to take down your pride, and to show you that He is God, and that beside Him there is none else. Oh, mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is "Look, look, look!" Four letters, and two of them alike! "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Some divines want a week to tell you what you are to do to be saved, but God the Holy Ghost wants only four letters to do it. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." How simple is that way of salvation! And, oh, how instantaneous! It takes us some time to move our hand, but a look does not require a moment. So a sinner believes in a moment, and the moment that sinner believes and trusts in

his crucified God for pardon, at once he receives salvation in full through His blood.

### All may look

Finally, mark how God has cut down the pride of man, and has exalted Himself by the people whom He has called to look. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." When the Jew heard Isaiah say that, "Ah!" he exclaimed, "you should have said, 'Look unto Me, O Jerusalem, and be saved,' all the ends of the earth. . . ."

Now, who are the ends of the earth? I think "the ends of the earth" implies those who have gone the furthest away from Christ. "Ah, I have not been one of these, sir, but I have been something worse, for I have attended the

house of God, and I have stifled convictions and put off all thoughts of Jesus, and now I think He will never have mercy on me." You are one of the "ends of the earth"! So long as I find any who feel like that, I can tell them that they are "the ends of the earth."

"But," says another, "I am so peculiar. If I did not feel as I do, it would be all very well; but I feel that my case is a peculiar one." That is all right; God's people are a peculiar people. You will do. But another one says, "There is nobody in the world like me; I do not think you will find a being under the sun that has had so many calls and put them all away, and so many sins on his head. Besides, I have guilt that I should not like to confess to any living creature." Here we have one of "the ends of the earth" again. And once more I cry out in the Master's name, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." But you say that sin will not let you look. I tell you, sin will be removed the moment you do look. "But I dare not; He will condemn me; I fear to look." He will condemn you more if you do not look. Fear, then, and look; but do not let your fearing keep you from looking. "But He will cast me out." Try Him. "But I cannot see Him." I tell you, it is not seeing, but looking. "But my eyes are so fixed on the earth, so earthly, so worldly." Ah! poor soul, He gives power to look and live. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Christian! In all your troubles, look unto God and be saved. In all your trials and afflictions, look unto Christ, and find deliverance. In all your agony, poor soul, in all your repentance for your guilt, look unto Christ, and find pardon. Remember to put your eyes heavenward and your heart heavenward, too.

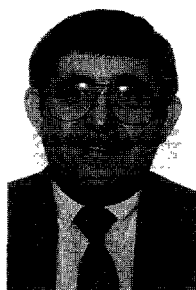
Look unto Christ; fear not. ■

This article is condensed and adapted from Spurgeon's sermon "Sovereignty and Salvation."

# Restoring the pastoral dream

**Cameron Johnston**

## Help from Moses for your midlife crisis



*Cameron Johnston is pastor of a Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Newfoundland.*

**M**inisterial dreams are vulnerable to wear and tear. When they are worn out, ministry degenerates into an endless routine. God seems distant. Activities once fulfilling become empty, and the pastor is left with Solomon's lament: " 'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless' " (Eccl. 1:2, NIV).

Under the unrelenting pressure of modern ministry, even inspired dreams can turn to ashes, and a once firm faith in Christ can waver. How can pastors maintain the enthusiasm and fervor of their early ministry?

Many serious adjustments are required throughout anyone's lifetime, but those needed in the early 40s are among the most treacherous and perplexing. Even for pastors, the forces of change can create a midlife crisis. In fact, one's sense of a divine call to ministry combined with unrealistic and sometimes false expectations tend to make midlife adjustments even more challenging.

Some pastors by their 40s have already accomplished their major lifework, while others haven't really begun to fulfill their potential. The majority are somewhere in between. Whatever the case may be, entering middle years confronts us all with the

shortness of life; compounded with that may be the pain of failing to fulfill life's ambitions.

In the idealistic years of youth, many pastors set high goals and objectives in response to God's call and the urgency of earth's final hours. They launch their ministry with high expectations and dreams of success. Believing that with God they can conquer all obstacles, they pour all their energy into what they believe He wants them to do. By age 40, however, with just enough life lived to sense reality, with enough understanding of human nature to be of some help, and with a self-confidence that is dangerous, they find it easy to do something foolish. Then follows disillusionment, frustration, and even cynicism.

Moses had such an experience. Knowing how he survived a major midlife transition helps us adjust our own ministry to harmonize with God's plan for us.

#### **Moses at midlife**

Few of us have the opportunities, talents, and destiny that belonged to Moses. Suddenly at the age of 40, everything fell apart. Consider this man—gifted and affirmed as a leader of destiny by his parents (both natural and adopted), teachers, and peers, and yes, even by God. He stood without equal as a historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator. Moreover, he had the moral strength to choose God rather than the riches and fame of the world. Then while seemingly on the verge of fulfilling his destiny, life unraveled.

You know what happened. Moses' first attempt at fulfilling his God-appointed mission backfired. With career and life itself in shambles, he fled into the desert. It was a major adjustment to find a new home with Jethro in Midian and settle into a dramatically different family and work environment. Moses' first few years on the ranch must have severely tested his faith in God's providence. Eventually he accepted his new role and surrendered his former career goals.

Never, however, did he give up on God's people in Egypt. No doubt he prayed that God would find someone else to do the work he had failed to accomplish.

So Moses resigned himself to his new circumstances. Caring for the sheep allowed him much time for thoughtful reflection and heavenly communion. A special relationship developed with God, who Himself testified of Moses, "With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord" (Num. 12:8, NIV).

As the years rolled on, Moses learned that relationship—not activity and accomplishment—is the heart of a productive and fruitful life. No longer did he feel the need to excel in human affairs. All his needs, desires, and joys were met in God. This freed him from the artificial pressures im-

posed by a restless society. At that point, God could really use him.

ence. Although a talented and dedicated man, somehow over the 20 years of his ministry he had become deeply cynical. I found myself both inspired and troubled by our time together—inspired by his experience and expertise but troubled by his attitude. My dismay deepened when a foolish mistake later forced him out of the ministry.

Years later I came to understand that this gifted pastor was dealing with mid-career adjustments that I as a young worker yet knew nothing about. Now after nearly two decades in the daily grind of ministry, coping with some hard knocks, recovering from near burnout with its disillusionment and cynicism, I can understand why some pastors stumble along the way. They first succumb to activity without end, unlimited expectations from family, church, and community, complicated by semi-Christian views of righteousness that result in a natural dependence on self. Given the right circumstances, the result is frustration, disillusionment, cynicism, and ultimately the inability to minister.

So much for false and unrealistic human expectations. What does God expect from us? "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humble with your

God" (Micah 6:8, NIV). Why is it so hard for pastors to walk humbly with God and meet His expectations, even when we get paid to do it? Perhaps it's a lack of appreciation for God Himself, and the substitution of activity and accomplishment for relationship. After all, it is easier to do spiritual things than to be a spiritual person.

Which brings us back to Moses, who learned in the wilderness that life's greatest reward is God Himself. Spiritual activity has its vital place, but only after quality time with the Master. Moses might have become cynical in the wilderness with the sheep, but his relationship with the Shepherd restored his broken ministry and propelled it beyond his fondest expectations.

God can do the same for us today. ■

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## **Then follows disillusionment, frustration, and even cynicism.**

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posed by a restless society. At that point, God could really use him.

#### **Learning what Moses did**

All pastors and church leaders can enjoy an intimate trust relationship with the Lord of Israel. God does not need more activity from us; He wants quality time, quality relationship.

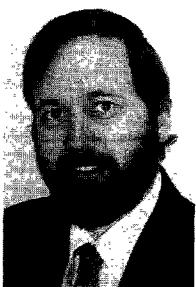
Most of us already know that. Yet because activity is our natural impulse and priority, we too often sacrifice our relationship with God. We fail to cherish and trust Him. And so, a crisis occurs in pastoral ministry after 15 or 20 years that is similar to Moses' situation in Egypt.

A vivid experience from my early ministry comes to mind. During an evangelistic series, I was assigned to visit with a minister in his early 40s—one of the shining stars of the confer-

# The Bible and the Middle East

**Robert K. McIver**

## The dangers and opportunities in preaching on Israel's role in biblical prophecy



*Robert K. McIver, Ph.D., is a lecturer in biblical studies, Avondale College, Cooranbong, Australia.*

**D**oes the Bible offer any insight into the Middle East crisis? Is the current situation in Israel related in any way to biblical prophecy? The issue may be examined under four sections: What does the Old Testament say about the future of Israel? How do dispensationalists approach the question of Israel? How should prophecies concerning Israel be interpreted? Are those prophecies relevant to today's Middle East problems?

### The future of Israel in the Old Testament

Of all the prophets, Zechariah and Ezekiel portray the future of Israel in explicit detail. Zechariah 14 provides an exposition of many of the main points. The chapter deals with the day of the Lord (verse 1) when God will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. The city will be conquered and nearly destroyed, the houses will be plundered, the women ravished, and half the captives will go into exile (verses 2). At this bleakest hour of her history, when all appears to be lost, the Lord will begin to fight against the nations (verse 3). The enemies of Israel will meet a terrible end: their flesh will rot as they stand, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths (verse 12). Those few enemies who survive will come up to worship the Lord at Jerusalem (verse 16).

At this time the geography of the Holy Land will change. When the Lord descends, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will be split in two (verse 4). From Jerusalem will flow two rivers, one to the western sea (the Mediterranean), and one to the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) (verse 8). Presumably, the one to the eastern sea will flow through the gap in the Mount of Olives. Not only will the Mount of Olives split in two, but the whole country will become a plain. Only Jerusalem will remain a high point.

Such is Zechariah's startling picture. Something more than political warfare is in view. The enemies of God almost overtake the holy nation, but when God steps in, the whole earth will be reformed to make Jerusalem its focal point. The enemies will be no more. The nations of the earth will come to Jerusalem to serve the Lord there.

Not only Zechariah but Ezekiel too describes the future of Israel. He devotes much of the last half of his book to this theme. Chapters 38 and 39 portray the alliance of all the enemies of Jerusalem, and the intervention of God to bring about their miraculous destruction. The enemies of God will become food for the birds, and all God's people will be returned to the Promised Land. Ezekiel is then shown a vision of the new temple. This vision, extending for several chapters (Eze. 40-48), gives great detail as

to the dimensions and allocations of the new temple. Flowing from the eastern gate of the temple is a river, that gets broader and deeper as it goes (Eze. 47:1-5). It restores life to the desert and makes fresh the salty waters of the Dead Sea, although there will be some areas of salt left to provide minerals (verses 8-12). Land allocations for the 12 tribes, the priests, the princes, and the temple are listed (Eze. 47:13-48:35).

While Ezekiel provides more details than Zechariah, the picture is remarkably consistent between the two. The enemies of God's people come against the Holy City. When all appears lost, God Himself intervenes and destroys His enemies. The land is restructured. Jerusalem becomes the worship center for the whole world.

The same picture is to be found in other prophets, although not in such detail. Isaiah 2:2-4 speaks of Jerusalem "established as the highest of the mountains . . . and all the nations shall flow to it."\* The Lord will rule from Jerusalem, and there will be peace (see verses 3,4). Obadiah speaks of the destruction of the heathen nations, and safety in Mount Zion (see verses 15-21).

The interesting thing about all these prophecies is that none of them have been fulfilled. Many of the nations that surrounded ancient Israel are no more (in fulfillment of many of the prophecies), but the promises concerning the future of Israel have not yet come to pass. This raises the issue of how this should be understood.

### **The dispensationalists' approach**

Dispensationalism is probably best known for its doctrine of the secret rapture. This doctrine more or less grows out of dispensationalism's interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies about Israel. Its line of reasoning goes something like this: A true prophet does not make a prophecy that fails to be fulfilled (see Deut. 18:22). Zechariah and Ezekiel were true prophets of God, so therefore what they said must come true. It has not yet come true, so it must come true in the

future. There will come a future time when the nation of Israel will rebuild the temple. All her enemies will surround Jerusalem and almost take it. It is at this time that God will intervene. Jesus will come back to earth. His feet will touch the Mount of Olives, which will be split in two, and rivers will begin to flow from Jerusalem out to the two seas.

There is a problem here, however: the problem of the Christian church. What is happening to the Christian church while all these things happen to Israel? The church is in heaven! It has been raptured. All the Christians have been snatched up from the earth and are now in heaven. While they are in heaven, all the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled. When Jesus came to earth He preached the kingdom of God. He offered this

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## **There is a problem here, however: the problem of the Christian church.**

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kingdom to the Jewish nation, but they rejected Him as the Messiah. The Christian church was then inaugurated, but this church is not something that was known in the Old Testament. The church is the mystery that God revealed only after Jesus had been rejected. In dispensational thinking, the Old Testament does not deal with the period of the church at all. Thus, it is only with the rapture of the church that the prophecies can be fulfilled.

The dispensationalist interpretation of the prophecies allows the current crisis in the Middle East to be immediately relevant as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The nations around Israel would like to destroy her. Her enemies are Syria, Iraq, Jordan—just new names for Syria, Babylon, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. The enemy coming from the north can easily be understood as Russia. One can tune

into the religious telecast channels in the United States and, on several different occasions each day, see a preacher pointing to a map of the Middle East to show what will happen to Israel when World War III breaks out. While not all dispensationalists would go along with such sensationalism, these are the kinds of accounts that naturally grow out of dispensational understandings of prophecy.

Dispensational interpretations of the Old Testament prophecies have strong appeal to conservative Christians who respect the Bible as the word of God. It is easy to see why. Dispensationalism takes the Bible as the word of God and says, "If God said it, it is true. God said that this will happen to Israel in the future, and happen it will, because God does not tell a lie." In other words, a dispensationalist would think that arguing against this position is arguing against both the plain meaning of Scripture and its authority as the inspired word of God. However, I have some serious reservations about a dispensationalist approach to the Old Testament.

First, where does Christianity fit into the dispensational scheme? Where does the cross fit? In dispensationalist thinking the cross cannot be crucial, because dispensationalism envisions the reinstatement of the temple and the animal sacrifices after the rapture. Christianity thus becomes an anomaly. One wonders what Paul would have thought of this (vis-à-vis Rom. 10:4)! Is Christ the ultimate revelation of God for dispensationalists, or is the temple and sacrificial system more important?

Second, one has to ask about all the prophecies concerning the future of Israel that the dispensationalist ignores. Good things were promised to Israel, but so were bad things! Foreign enemies were not the only ones who received threats of judgment—Israel did also! Ezekiel promises a glorious future, but Ezekiel 23 threatens Judah with the same fate that had befallen Israel. Jeremiah 11 threatens Judah with the curses of the covenant,

not the blessings. Amos 2:4-11 threatens Judah and Israel with severe punishments. The dispensational reading of prophecy is far too selective. It reads only the positive, not the negative. Israel was promised both blessings and cursings. They could choose either. The prophecies were not given to determine that only blessing would come; instead, Israel and Judah were offered a choice between two possible futures. They stood at a crossroads. As Jeremiah 36:3 says: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." These prophecies did not predetermine the future—they were conditional. Indeed, when the Messiah came, Israel did reject the offered kingdom, and hence rejected the possibility that the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament would be fulfilled.

Third, the coming of Christ has made a dramatic difference in God's relationship with His promised people. The New Testament shows that while there is continuity with the Old, there is also a dramatic difference. This difference will be further explored in the next section.

### **Interpreting the prophecies**

If the dispensationalists are wrong in their interpretation, how then should the prophecies be understood? Are there any general principles that will guide us in our interpretation of the predictions of a glorious future for Israel? There are many, but for the sake of brevity I would like to comment on three: one from the Old Testament, and two from the New Testament.

1. *The covenant of the Old Testament.* The covenant concept promised rich blessings on the people of Yahweh. The covenant, however, was a two-way obligation. Yahweh would bless His people only if they remained faithful to His covenant. If they did not, then the covenant provided for cursings, not blessings.

Deuteronomy 27:1 to 29:1 speaks of this dual aspect of the covenant, a point the prophets pointed out when condemning the sins of the nation. They repeatedly warned that if the nation continued in sin, then the curses of the covenant would descend on them. In other words, the promised future blessings of the Old Testament were conditional. They were condi-

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## **The chosen people are not literal Israel of the Old Testament, but the followers of Christ.**

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tional on Israel remaining in the covenant. Since Israel did not remain true to the covenant, the promised blessings were not fulfilled. Rather, the threatened punishments transpired.

2. *The place of Israel in the New Testament.* With Israel's rejection of Jesus a new element was added vis-à-vis Israel's position. Matthew, for example, speaks of the threat of Jesus to the Jewish leadership: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matt. 21:43). To the nation Jesus had come proclaiming the kingdom of God. By rejecting Him the nation was rejecting the kingdom. The kingdom was henceforth to be associated not with the Jewish nation but with the Christian church. When the word of the kingdom is preached, it is the Christian church that does the preaching, and this preaching is received in different ways (c.f. Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). While the church is not to be equated with the kingdom of God, it is nevertheless intimately associated with the proclamation and spread of the kingdom. The promised kingdom now belongs to those who accept Jesus, not to ethnic Jews or national Judaism.

In Romans 9-11 the apostle Paul deals with the role of Israel in terms

of the concept of the remnant, which he explains by the image of the olive tree. Some branches have been pruned off the olive tree, but that does not mean God has rejected His people. Other branches have been grafted in, but again that does not mean that God has rejected His people. Some proved unfaithful, and were pruned off. Others proved faithful, and were grafted in. In this regard the church is the true Israel.

Paul is not alone in identifying the church as the true Israel. Peter, in 1 Peter 2:9, also applies titles of Israel to the church: a chosen race (cf. Isa. 43:20), a royal priesthood (cf. Ex. 19:6), and a holy nation (cf. Ex. 19:6).

Thus we have the second interpretive principle. The chosen people, according to the

New Testament, are not literal Israel of the Old Testament, but the followers of Christ. Christians are the true inheritors of the chosen nation. Any prophecies as to the future of Israel would have to be read in the light of this new reality.

3. *New Testament reinterpretation of the Old Testament prophecies.* The principle of applying New Testament interpretation to Old Testament prophecies would indeed be difficult were it not for the fact that the New Testament itself provides clear guidelines on how this principle can be implemented. The most explicit example of such an interpretation is found in Revelation 20:7 to 22:15. In this passage we find that the enemies of God surround God's people. For a moment it looks as if all is lost, and evil will triumph. But then God Himself intervenes, and destroys His enemies. Then Jerusalem becomes the center of the worship of the whole world. God Himself dwells there. From Jerusalem a river flows outward to bring healing to the nations.

While some of the details are different, there is a remarkable similarity between Revelation on the one hand, and Zechariah and Ezekiel on the other, in the broad development of what happens. What has been provided is a Christian reinterpretation



of the Old Testament promises to Israel.

### **Bible's relevance today**

Is the Bible still relevant to the Middle East crisis? Yes, but not in the way proposed by some dispensationalists. We are not to look for the nations of Israel, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (or even Russia) to fulfill these prophecies. They will be fulfilled in terms of spiritual Israel (the true Christian church), and in terms of the re-creation of the earth, which will happen at the right time subsequent to the second coming of Jesus.

While Old Testament prophecies may not be directly related to today's political upheavals, their message is surprisingly relevant at a deeper level. The prophets spoke against injustice, demanded protection of the poor and defenseless, insisted on religion of the heart, preached against oppression, and proclaimed an ideal society of equality, justice, love, and peace. They indicated the deeper causes of social unrest: injustice, selfishness, and sin. They pointed to a glorious future, when God will intervene again in human affairs. Yes, the prophets are relevant to today's crisis in the Middle East!

Thus the prophetic message is relevant to the issues raised by the continuous crises in the Middle East. Not only that. There is still a prophetic voice that needs to be raised. However, in proclaiming this voice there are both dangers and opportunities.

#### **Dangers in proclamation**

1. *Sensationalism and lack of credibility.* Happenings in the Middle East provide a high level of interest. In an effort to make these more interesting, more is claimed than the circumstances warrant. If predictions made about the current crises do not come true, then this can only cause a loss of confidence in the overall credibility of the speaker.

2. *Misuse of Scripture.* A key concern of Christian proclamation is promoting proper understanding of

Scripture. This does not take place when a biblical text is read to fit a current crisis, ignoring some of the wider issues of scriptural interpretation.

3. *Lack of truthfulness.* A Christian commitment to truth cannot be sacrificed to short-term success that comes from sensational interpretations. The kind of solutions advanced in this article require some effort to understand and communicate the real intent of Scripture. Such an effort lacks the immediate impact of pointing to a map and saying that Russia will attack through the Baltic, make an alliance with Rome, and then come to the valley of Megiddo to fight the combined forces of Israel and the United States. This scenario is easy to understand, sensationally interesting, but unbiblical.

4. *Lack of long-term stability.* The Bible's relevance to a crisis is a good way to get the attention of the unconverted or the backslidden, but it may not be an adequate basis for a long-term Christian commitment. Long-term Christians are those who are rooted and grounded in Scripture, and who have a deep love relationship with their Master. Their commitment will carry them through all kinds of crises—personal, national, political, or whatever. Their Christianity is not

are also great opportunities that might be missed. They include:

1. *Topicality.* The Middle East continues to be of topical interest. In speaking to this issue the preacher addresses the concerns of today, and shows that the Bible is relevant to the questions that humanity faces.

2. *An opportunity to approach an important Old Testament theme.* The concept of the covenant, so prominent in the Old Testament, is not one that naturally arouses interest, but seen in the context of this issue, it becomes an exciting solution to a real dilemma. The topic also provides an opportunity to speak in an interesting manner on all kinds of issues—the faithfulness of the covenant community, God's expectations of His covenant community today (that is, God's expectations of the church), and the like.

3. *A distinctive contribution to Christian thought.* Those who speak most about the role of Israel fall into either the dispensational camp or the liberal camp (which says, essentially, that these predictions were pipe dreams that have no meaning). We can present an approach that is distinctive and provides a viable alternative to the sensationalism of dispensationalism and the despair of liberalism.

4. *The presentation of strong ethical dimensions of the covenant.* The concept of covenant provides a richer way to read the Old Testament than a "this is fulfilled in that" kind of approach. The issues of justice, righteousness, God's will for humankind, and of personal and corporate response find their appropriate expression in the concept of covenant. Preaching on the role of Israel provides an ideal vehicle for approaching these matters.

Such preaching enables the prophetic voice to be heard with a new relevance and urgency, and can bring renewed interest in the long-awaited and soon-to-be-realized consummation, when Jesus will return to make all things new. ■

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## **Long-term Christians are those who are rooted and grounded in Scripture.**

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based on excitement, but on a sense of deep commitment to the One who is to return and a sense of urgency to be ready for that event.

#### **The opportunities**

The dangers associated with preaching on the role of Israel in biblical prophecy might lead the preacher to turn aside from this topic, but there

\* Scripture quotations in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

# Pastoral counseling with a professional touch

**Gregory Matthews**

**Pastoral counseling is more than spiritual advice.**



*Gregory Matthews is a retired U.S. Army chaplain.*

**R**oberta<sup>1</sup> looked at the handbill for the second time. She was not a churchgoer. She was living away from home, enlisted in the U.S. Army. Something in the handbill announcing an evangelistic series grabbed her attention. The meetings addressed an incomplete area of her life and she went back for more. The sponsoring church welcomed her warmly. Each week she met with Deacon James for in-depth studies in Christian living, often sharing meals with the deacon and his wife.

When her Army enlistment was over, Roberta returned to civilian life. Soon she joined the church. Shortly after her baptism, however, a tragedy occurred. Roberta's relationship with Deacon James left her pregnant. Confused about what to do, she confided in Mary, a member of the evangelistic team, someone she thought she could trust.

But soon the news was out. The church board was discussing discipline. An unsigned letter warned church families not to allow Roberta into their homes as part of a husband protective measure.

Devastated, Roberta left the community, obtained an abortion, and reenlisted in the Army. That's when she came to see me. She wanted more than what psychology or mental hygiene could offer. Her questions included God, church, and people.

My responsibility to Roberta was more than that of a pastor. Twice she

trusted, and twice she was betrayed: first, by a deacon to whom she looked for spiritual guidance; second, by Mary, to whom she unburdened her heart. Roberta felt condemned and rejected. She and I needed to talk about God and people who act in God's place. We needed to talk about sin, guilt, and forgiveness. Roberta needed to understand human nature and God's healing grace.

These are some issues that concern pastoral counseling.

## **More than advice**

What is pastoral counseling? It is more than giving advice on spiritual matters or explaining Scripture. Pastoral counseling fuses theological perspectives with counseling insights. Theology tells us how God interacts in human life, and social sciences tell us about human behavior and needs. Pastoral counseling brings both together to serve those who are hurting. Without a theological perspective, counseling ceases to be pastoral. Without an understanding of human nature and behavior, counseling is of little value.

Take for example, guilt, a universal human condition. As pastoral counselors, we have something more to offer guilt-ridden people than professional counselors do. We can speak of God's forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. Because of this a trained pastoral counselor can help people like Roberta cope with guilt.

Colonel Dedicated had served the United States Army for almost 30 years, holding important positions. But now it all seemed over. Several evaluation boards failed to recommend him for promotion. He considered his next assignment a dead end and retired in anger. The colonel's problem was essentially a spiritual struggle. In a situation like this, secular psychology can help somewhat, but a counselor sensitive to life in all its dimensions—involving God, self, and others—has more to give.

A spiritual perspective of life, however, is not always enough to help troubled people. Rosa came from a dysfunctional family. As a young child, she saw her mother become an invalid confined to her room. Rosa's father belonged to an evangelical church and was a leader in a local congregation. His relationship with Rosa was negative and aggressive. Often he blamed Rosa's sins for his wife's illness. He brought girlfriends home, and also sexually abused Rosa. During times of financial stress, Rosa had to drop out of parochial school, while her brother received the best possible education.

Eventually Rosa left home. She stopped going to church and adapted a lifestyle that left her a very troubled person. Now something was calling her back to her roots. Occasionally she ventured into church, seeking help for change. The pastor counseled her to forgive her father and encouraged her to pray for strength.

The pastor was right. Rosa did need to forgive her father, but that could come later. Right now she needed help with the forces that drove her into a destructive lifestyle. She sought help from a mental health clinic, where a professional team suggested that a restoration of her church relationship would be healthy. As a member of the clergy, I joined her treatment team.

### **More than prayer needed**

I take seriously the church's call to a changed lifestyle, but one who calls for change must also proclaim the power to change. A troubled Rosa

needed more than prayer. Using the knowledge of human nature that God has given is not a denial of faith. Rosa needed more help than the pastor alone could give.

For those who have internalized religious values, religion is indeed a positive factor in mental health and social functioning.<sup>2</sup> But such is not the case with those whose religious values are external, and it is these people who need a pastoral counselor. The pastoral counselor can help them to recognize that destructive behavior is often symptomatic of a deeper spiritual crisis. Such a recognition mandates a right relationship with God before any attempt to change behavior.

People commonly express emotional issues in terms of significant persons, objects, and institutions in

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## **I have never tried to defend God. The issue was not about God.**

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their lives. These may include God, the church, parents, society at large, school, and the work environment. At the death of a child, for example, I have had mothers strike me with their closed fists and cry out against God. I have never tried to defend God. The issue was not about God. It was about loss and grief. This is where I attempted to focus their energy.

I have seen people in open rebellion against the standards of their church. Usually the problem is not a religious struggle but a failure to come to terms with authority issues. To deal with such people on a religious plane is often shortsighted and would likely play into their conflicts. To be helpful, the pastoral counselor should help them resolve the underlying authority issue. With that done, their struggle with God and the church will likely be settled.

Destructive behavior does not always stem from personal sin. Other factors may be involved. Some mental illnesses, for example, are associated with abnormal brain circuitry, genetic abnormalities, or changes in neural chemistry. To suggest to such people that prayer and theology are the final answers to their situation may not help at all. The underlying causes cry out for attention. Hence clergy involved in counseling must have adequate training in the understanding of the human condition and be able to relate appropriately to people with problems.

Consider Jane and John. They had dedicated their lives to God and became leaders in their church. They raised a good family. Then came a traumatic divorce. Untrue charges and countercharges were exchanged. The court hearings dragged on for months.

The children suffered. Counseling revealed that both Jane's and John's parents had undergone a similar experience. They too were church leaders. Their marriages also ended in divorce, involving scurrilous charges.

Social sciences tell us that much of our destructive behavior is learned. Family systems theory suggests that there is often a third and fourth generational pattern of maladaptive conduct. Jane and John needed to learn new ways of living and relating. They needed pastoral counselors who understood their problems. Unfortunately, such counseling was not available to them in time.

No pastoral counselor will be able to provide all needed help. Referrals will need to be made to other professionals. This does not mean that the pastor has abandoned the person. The pastor, chaplain, and other counselors working together in a cooperative relationship enhance the healing process. ■

<sup>1</sup> Names cited in this article are fictitious.

<sup>2</sup> See I. R. Payne et. al., "Review of Religion and Mental Health: Prevention and the Enhancement of Psychosocial Functioning," *Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues Newsletter* 16, No. 3.

# Fasting with balance

**Madeline S. Johnston**

## A look at the purpose and the history of fasting



*Madeline S. Johnston, a developmental psychologist, is a freelance writer and editor in Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

**I**n recent years one local church lost many members, even after earnestly praying for them. Was there something more we could have done? What about fasting?

Would God somehow be more apt to intervene if our supplications were accompanied with fasting? While avoiding a works-righteousness mentality, could fasting demonstrate that we really meant our requests? Would fasting somehow encourage God to disregard Satan's objections to His intervention? And if so, with so many people having great needs, how much should we fast? We couldn't abstain totally in every situation without starving to death!

While processing those thoughts, I recalled having witnessed a couple dramatic events that followed prayer and fasting. As missionaries in Korea, our family had a coworker who developed a malignancy. Following surgery, the prognosis remained poor. Yet much to the surprise of doctors, the patient recovered. Was this sheer luck, mere medical skill, or divine intervention? In association with an anointing service, one Korean pastor and his family had fasted. Was there some connection between this and the healing?

Another remarkable development on a spiritual level happened with a college friend of my daughters. In the depths of spiritual doldrums, she transferred from Andrews University to a distant state college. One weekend she and her parents planned to meet at our home, as travel took them in opposite directions. Our daughters an-

nounced to me: "We're going to fast and pray for her on Friday. Would you like to join us?" I agreed.

Just before leaving Saturday night, the young woman's mother begged her: "I wish you would come back to Andrews."

"No way," she flippantly replied. "We can't afford it, and Andrews doesn't have what I need anyway."

But then, within 24 hours, a series of unusual circumstances convinced her to change her mind. Roadblocks vanished, and she returned to Andrews. Although she graduated as an unbeliever, her very presence at our college was a dramatic answer to prayer. It left me wondering: What part, if any, did fasting play?

In probing for answers, here is what I've come up with.

### **Normally, not on Sabbath**

Now and then our church announces a worldwide day of fasting, typically on Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> But the timing of this does not seem to be supported by the biblical practice, meaning, and context of Sabbath observance. In Bible times the Day of Atonement was the only fast day mandated by law (see Lev. 16:29-31; Acts 27:9).<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the weekly Sabbath was a day of feasting—not gluttony, but celebration. Sabbath is to be a day of great joy. Maybe when the church suggests a day of fasting, it should be some other day. How about Friday? There could follow a Friday sundown or Sabbath morning convocation to praise the Lord for hearing our prayers, after which the fast is broken.

## Jewish/Old Testament examples

The typical Jewish fast called for one day of abstinence, generally lasting from morning until evening; perhaps just one meal a day was involved. Such fasting often was tied in with alms, perhaps with donating to the poor what was saved by fasting.

Biblical examples of fasting abound. Moses fasted atop Sinai when receiving the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 34:28). The citizens of Jabesh-Gilead fasted seven days after recovering from the Philistines the bodies of Saul and his sons and giving them a proper burial (see 1 Sam. 31:13). When the ark was returned and all Israel repented, they fasted all day at Mizpah while Samuel interceded for them (see 1 Sam. 7:5, 6). Daniel fasted for wisdom regarding prophecy that he did not understand and also for God to have mercy on His backslidden people (see Dan. 9:2, 3). David repented with fasting (see Ps. 69:10; 35:13), and he fasted while praying for the healing of his first son by Bathsheba (see 2 Sam. 12:16-23). He expressed grief over Abner's death by fasting (see 2 Sam. 3:35). Esther asked her people to fast when under the threat of death (see Esther 4:16). Ezra fasted when requesting a safe journey to Jerusalem (see Ezra 8:21). God's message through Joel was "return to me with all your heart, with fasting" (Joel 2:12, RSV). The people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and God accepted their repentance (see Jonah 3:5). King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah when threatened by invading forces (see 2 Chron. 20:3).

## New Testament fasting

Anna worshiped "with fasting and prayer night and day," waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:37, RSV). She then recognized the baby Jesus (see verses 36-38). Jesus fasted 40 days before beginning His ministry (see Matt. 4:2). During His sermon on the mount that followed, He taught: "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:16, RSV)—apparently assuming that all His listeners did

fast. The Pharisees customarily fasted twice a week (see Luke 18:12).

In the early church, after fasting and praying Christians received instructions from the Holy Spirit (see Acts 13:2). Paul fasted for three days after his conversion on the Damascus road (see Acts 9:9). The church at Antioch fasted and prayed before sending Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (see Acts 13:3).

## Fasting in church history

Generally, in the early church fasting meant abstinence from all food until evening *or just one meal a day*. Later it came to mean abstinence from certain foods, keeping to the barest necessities.

More recently John Wesley recorded (1756) in his diary a national day of prayer and fasting when France threatened to invade Britain. A footnote in the diary remarked, "Humility was turned into national rejoicing, for the threatened invasion by the French was averted." In early America the New England states ordained both annual and special fast days.

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### Fasting by Seventh-day Adventists

The Ellen G. White Estate has a thick file on the subject of fasting in Adventist history. Along with quotations of Ellen White, the file includes research papers and letters from church leaders. In 1865 *Review and Herald* editor James White mentioned that certain days were dedicated to fasting and prayer for the end of the Civil War—after which it did end speedily. The General Conference Committee endorsed Sabbath, February 11, as a day of fasting and prayer.

In March of that year members observed four days of humiliation, fasting, and prayer during which they had a minimum food intake; some abstained altogether as health permitted and convictions prompted. James White testified that he had never seen such intensity and feeling, nor better times in Battle Creek or the whole world field. Many prayers were answered.<sup>3</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists have carried the practice of fasting into the twentieth century. In preparation for a day of fasting and prayer in 1979, G. D. Strunk compiled from Ellen White's counsels the following goals of fasting: to search out essential truths so that the way of salvation will be clear,<sup>4</sup> to seek the heavenly wisdom God has promised,<sup>5</sup> to seek His direction in planning,<sup>6</sup> to rise above indolence in dedicating our talents in Christian service,<sup>7</sup> to request God's help in crises,<sup>8</sup> to contend with demonic forces,<sup>9</sup> to seek God for more laborers,<sup>10</sup> for unity among members.<sup>11</sup>

According to another compilation of Ellen White's counsels, prepared in 1980 by W. P. Bradley, fasting can be beneficial in seeking light and wisdom,<sup>12</sup> fostering heart cleansing and confession,<sup>13</sup> overcoming temptation,<sup>14</sup> conquering disease (for a meal or two),<sup>15</sup> and developing an appetite for plain food.<sup>16</sup>

Eager, as in every other area, to maintain a balance with fasting, Ellen White also counseled: "We are not to make crosses for ourselves . . . by denying ourselves wholesome, nourishing food."<sup>17</sup> "The spirit of true fasting and prayer is the spirit which yields mind, heart, and will to God."<sup>18</sup> This advice harmonizes with Isaiah 58, which describes what is and is not acceptable fasting in God's sight. Using one's resources to help the poor is more important in fasting than the actual abstinence from food.

### Testimony of nutritionists

Since fasting from food affects physical health, it is important to note what nutritionists have to say. Alice Marsh wrote to a pastor that entire

abstinence from food may not be required; one can eat sparingly of the most simple food.<sup>19</sup> She added that fasting actually can be fatal to diabetics and is unwise for pregnant or lactating women, and people with hypoglycemic or hyperthyroid problems. She quoted studies on the effects of fasting, including mood alteration. Cautioning never to eliminate water, Marsh added that even a juice fast can be far from balanced because of the high sugar content. Her advice for a *minimum balanced diet* for an extended fast included fruits and vegetables—four servings (one green or yellow, one citrus or tomato), whole-grain bread and cereal—four servings, milk—two servings, protein—two servings, seed oil—two teaspoons (a total of 1,200-1,300 calories).

Other nutritionists suggest that a simple diet would please God as much as or more than abstinence, and that a physician should supervise any fast of more than one day.

Mary Margaret Eighme wrote a paper in 1978, noting that between 1850 and 1900 there were 42 official seasons of fasting in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1904 Ellen White instructed that from then until the close of time we should be more earnest, setting aside days for fasting and prayer.<sup>20</sup> (Yet from 1900 to 1977, we have had only nine church fasts.) Ellen White cited the biblical examples of Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. While speaking favorably about following their example, she also cautioned enthusiasts like Joseph James Bates, who was only eating one meal a day and then fasting two days, saying that God did not require such behavior.<sup>21</sup>

Winston Craig, professor of nutrition at Andrews University, points out that if one totally fasts for an extended time, biochemical changes take place. The brain needs energy from food, and the lack of nourishment causes the breakdown of tissues—particularly muscle and adipose tissue. One muscle that can degenerate is the heart, resulting in cardiac arrest within a few weeks. Electrolytes also can be thrown out of balance. Light-

headedness and nausea may result.

How long it takes for fasting to become dangerous varies according to individual health and size, but Craig would not recommend more than a few days. "I would not recommend a total fast even for one day," he says. Fruit juices and zwieback can help keep up the carbohydrate level.

Craig asks, "What are we achieving by fasting? If we seek a higher spiritual plane, is it not better to eat lightly of good food, get exercise in fresh air, maybe go on a retreat to the mountains, than to make yourself lightheaded, thinking continually of food, weak, no exercise, etc.?"

### Applying it personally

Personally, I've experimented a little with various means of fasting: a day with milk, juice, or light soup if I get lightheaded, a day of eating the most simple and nourishing foods while omitting added fats and sugars, or omitting one meal a day. My experimentation has not been as consistent as I would like to report, but I've concluded that there is something to be said for the total commitment that fasting seems to bespeak—a feeling that I have finally given everything, even my appetite, to God in my earnestness to have Him answer a particular prayer. And that in itself gives a particular closeness and a readiness to accept whatever answer He does or does not give.

*The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* ably summarizes this matter of fasting: "It is a praying with the body, affirming the wholeness of the person in spiritual action; it gives emphasis and intensity to prayer; specifically it expresses hunger for God and His will; it asserts the goodness of creation by means of the temporary surrender of enjoyment of some of its benefits and therefore always includes an element of thanksgiving; it is a training in Christian discipline and specifically against the sin of gluttony; it expresses penitence for the rejection and crucifixion of Christ by the human race; it is a following of Jesus on His way of fasting; it is one element in mortification; the acceptance of the death of self in the

death of Christ, and thereby an act of faith in the resurrection."<sup>22</sup>

Because of the united testimony from biblical teaching, church history, Ellen White's counsels, and the findings of science, there must be something to this matter of fasting. As individuals and as a church, I think we must practice more fasting in conjunction with our prayer requests, being careful how we define and practice this spiritual discipline. ■

<sup>1</sup> For example, the first Sabbath of 1979 was declared a day of prayer and fasting for the spiritual needs of the church. In 1980 the Sabbath of April 12 was set aside to pray and fast for the upcoming General Conference session in Dallas.

<sup>2</sup> See also Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909), pp. 279-284.

<sup>3</sup> James White, in *Review and Herald* editorial, Apr. 25, 1865; articles, Jan. 31, 1865, and Feb. 21, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> ———, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), Book 2, p. 364.

<sup>7</sup> ———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 517, 518.

<sup>9</sup> ———, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 431.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White Letter 26, 1883, quoted in *Adventist Review*, Mar. 27, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White Letter 98, 1902, quoted in *Adventist Review*, Mar. 27, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> White, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 650.

<sup>13</sup> ———, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 187, 188.

<sup>14</sup> ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202.

<sup>15</sup> ———, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 189.

<sup>16</sup> ———, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1951), p. 148; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 190; and G. D. Strunk, "Fasting," *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, vol. 27, No. 24 (Dec. 21, 1978), p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 626.

<sup>18</sup> ———, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189.

<sup>19</sup> Alice Marsh, to Kenneth Schelske, Feb. 11, 1975. She also quoted from Ellen White, in the *Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904.

<sup>20</sup> White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 188.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>22</sup> *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 148.

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# A survivor's litany

Robert H. Lloyd

*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.\**

**I dwell in another secret place.**

**It's called the land of forgetfulness and suppression.**

**Many are the shadows lurking in that land,  
yet none are called the shadow of the Almighty.**

*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

**O, how I longed for You to be my refuge and my fortress!**

**Where were You, God, when I desperately needed You?**

**I didn't willingly give up my innocence.**

**I was seized in an act of betrayal and terror.**

*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

**I believed You would deliver me, God. Why didn't You?**

**Why didn't You stop it *before* it began?**

**You tell me to trust. How can I?**

**I'm sorry, Lord, but when someone tells me to trust,  
I get scared—even when that Someone is divine.**

*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*

*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

**Not true, God. Even now I walk in terror and aloneness.**

**I am one of the ten thousand who fell at Your right hand.**

**I was an *innocent child* who believed in You.**

**God, You *know* that evil came near me—revoltingly near.**

*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

**Let me tell You what my eyes see, Lord.**

**My eyes see adults who protect their spouses, or relatives, or friends, or reputations—rather than their children.**

**My eyes see children intimidated by a justice system they don't understand,  
but whose hostility they feel.**

**My eyes see scars—ugly scars—carried by survivors, often for the rest of their lives.**

**My eyes see a road most traveled by survivors—a road devoid of self-esteem  
and self-respect, a road of alcoholism, drug addiction, obesity, sexual  
dysfunction, prostitution, divorce, and suicide.**

**And through bitter tears, my eyes see a church whose silence regarding  
my plight is deafening. ■**

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\* Scripture passages (in lightface, italic type) are from Psalm 91.

# Ministers need people too

Robert Peach

**Pastors are not emotional islands.**



*Having been a pastor for 18 years, Robert Peach, D.Min. and M.S., now directs the Kettering Clergy Care Center.*

Ministry would be great if it weren't for the people," a burned-out pastor muttered after a particularly rancorous board meeting. Indeed, people *can* frustrate and discourage pastors, but they also can be marvelously affirming.

Relationships are vital to everyone, pastors included. The ability to touch and speak to another who unconditionally accepts and values us is beneficial—even if the other is only the family dog. Research indicates that people who have pets such as dogs have an increased life expectancy. Why? It seems that the simple relationship of touch and talk that pet owners share with their animal brings contentment.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, babies who are provided with the necessities of food and shelter and cleanliness but are not cuddled by the caregiver suffer in their physical and emotional development.<sup>2</sup>

## **Importance of interaction**

Human beings can be likened to countries possessing certain natural resources but lacking others. Such countries in a modern world economy require commercial interaction with other nations. They send away what they have in abundance and receive back what they lack. Likewise, people do not stand as self-sufficient islands complete unto themselves; they need both to give and to receive.

So people need people. The Bible says it was not good for the first human to be alone (see Gen. 2:18). God's solution to this aloneness involves more than sexual interaction

in marriage; it includes also His gift of *relational complementarity*. This is where one person finds in another both a difference and a sameness that are fulfilling.

Henri Nouwen speaks of the need for interpersonal relationships: "Thousands of people commit suicide because there is nobody waiting for them tomorrow. There is no reason to live if there is nobody to live for."<sup>3</sup> Lloyd Rediger, minister and a counselor to pastors, advocates a pastoral support system that he compares to a stool with three legs. The first leg is the pastor's own self-esteem, the second is the pastor's intimate relationships, and the third is the pastor's spiritual support system.<sup>4</sup> Rediger thus describes the intimate relationship leg: "We pastors often feel we already spend enough time with people. Sometimes we feel we don't have enough time for our work, much less just sitting and socializing with family and friends. Such feelings are misleading. . . . This is valuable time in keeping us human, in keeping us pastors from having a distorted view of ourselves and others. Such time is certainly valuable to those with whom we have intimacy commitments."<sup>5</sup>

Everyone needs both to give and to receive intimacy in relationships with others. Charlotte and Howard Clinebell express this well in *The Intimate Marriage*: "There is in the heart of every human being a powerful longing for a meaningful relationship with at least one other person. For some, the longing is a conscious awareness; for others it remains un-



conscious, felt only as loneliness or an absence of meaning in life. This hunger is a part of being human with deep roots in man's long infancy and childhood. Personality is formed and deformed in relationships."<sup>6</sup>

The family is the primary group to which its members look for fulfillment of their needs for intimacy. If intimacy needs are not significantly met within the family, then family members will look elsewhere. Moreover, if the primary social group—the family—fails in providing intimacy needs, the ability to have such needs met elsewhere gets stunted.

### Loneliness in the parsonage

Loneliness is one of the occupational hazards of ministerial families. In a study of 157 Adventist pastors' wives, 67 percent indicated they felt loneliness and isolation in the ministry.<sup>7</sup> According to *Leadership* magazine, a survey of 166 ministers' wives disclosed that 56 percent had no close friends in the church.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Rediger indicates that the "loner lifestyle" is a common characteristic of the clergy role. He identifies this as one of a number of potential burnout factors for clergy.<sup>9</sup> Many preachers perhaps choose their profession because they want to do the right thing out of the desire to please people who are significant in their life, but with a weakness that makes them fearful that they will not be able to do so. Later this leads to a personality style that shows reluctance in being open and vulnerable to others because of their potential to withhold praise and inflict pain.

What a paradox! Ministry needs individuals who are open and available to others in order to minister effectively to them, not those who have developed the loner lifestyle out of self protection. Tremendous conflicts can arise for individuals caught in such a dilemma. These clergy have a central need to know others and be known by them, yet they cannot seem to break out of the lonely lifestyle in which they find themselves.

No one can be an island, not even pastors or their family members. They must allow themselves to be known as

human beings within and without their congregations. They must shed the isolation that the pastoral pedestal urges upon them, or they risk ill health. The systems and structures of the church should assist in recognizing this reality.

If the ideas in this article ring a bell, do not delay to spring into action. Right *now* you can decide to select someone close at hand for enhanced personal contact. Perhaps you can give a small personal gift to your spouse or child, maybe extend an invitation to lunch to a coworker, write a letter to an old school classmate, or enjoy a Saturday night of games with another family. Whatever comes to mind, don't put it off to a more "favorable" time. Remember, you are not an island! ■

<sup>1</sup> Jake Page, "Companion Animal Therapy," *Science*, January/February 1984, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Mia Pringle, *The Needs of Children* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 34ff. See also Jere E. Brophy, *Child Development and Socialization* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1977), p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> G. Lloyd Rediger, *Coping With Clergy Burnout* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1982), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Howard J. Clinebell and Charlotte H. Clinebell, *The Intimate Marriage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Carole Luke Kilcher, Roger L. Dudley, Des Cummings, Jr., and Greg Clark, "The Pastor's Wife as a Person: A Study of Morale of the Pastor's Wife," (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Institute of Church Ministry, September 1981), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Pat Valeriano, "A Survey of Ministers' Wives: The Struggles," *Leadership*, Fall 1981, p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> Rediger, p. 24.

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## Ministry Reports

# Adventists and AIDS

A Christian's Response to AIDS" reflects the ongoing commitment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to deal with contemporary social issues. Last May, Andrews University hosted the four-day conference that featured a keynote address by Kristine Gebbie, AIDS policy adviser for the United States government.

Video and audio cassettes of the conference are available through Rudi Maier, Department of World Mission, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104. Phone: 616-471-6505.

Pictured below are panel participants (left to right) Harvey Elder, Bruce Moyer, Eunice Diaz, and Wayne Greaves.





# Women's ministries in your church

James A. Cress

**W**ho is the Adventist woman of the nineties? She is full-time mother, job holder, struggling single parent, widow, handicapped, spouse of a nonbeliever, single, financially secure, impoverished, divorced, abused, foster parent, church leader, childless, burned-out church volunteer, marginal member, newly baptized, executive, physically fit, daughter of God.

Although Adventist women widely outnumber men in membership numbers, we are essentially a male-dominated church structure, as evidenced by the small numbers of women in leadership at every level of the church from the local congregation to the General Conference.

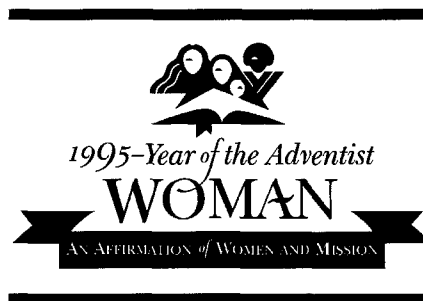
This disparity alone could easily determine an agenda for 1995, the *Year of the Adventist Woman*. However, rather than focusing on inequity in 1995, women's ministries will focus on expanding the base of women who will work for the Saviour wherever and however their talents can hasten our Lord's return.

Specific global objectives for the *Year of the Adventist Woman* include six critical challenges facing women within and without the church. These are: illiteracy, poverty, threats to health coupled with poor health care, workday length, and abuse—plus the lack of training, experience, and opportunities to participate in the church's mission. Worldwide strategies will address these issues and the way in which they impact women in each of the world church's divisions.

## What the congregation can do

More significant, however, is what occurs in the local church where the everyday life of most women relates to Christ and His mission of extending the kingdom to every person. Every pastor and local church elder should determine an appropriate response for their congregation to the *Year of the Adventist Woman*. Try these doables:

**Elect** a women's ministries coordinator for your church. Appoint her to the church board, and establish a working committee to support her leadership.



**Meet** with your women's ministries coordinator. Pray together, identify needs, and seek workable ideas that meet objectives for your church.

**Survey** the women of your church to determine their needs and interests and to establish action priorities for what your members can accomplish.

**Appropriate** sufficient budget funding for your women's ministries team to serve effectively. It is unreasonable to expect women's ministries to serve without funding similar to other church programs.

**Sponsor** special events and programs, such as the International Women's Day of Prayer, March 4. Host special Sabbath programs that feature the work of women's ministries in your community. Recognize those who minister effectively.

**Promote** women's ministries in your sermons, newsletters, bulletins, and the homes of those whom you visit. Others will follow your example!

**Nurture** women in your church family by the ministry of faithful women members. "*When a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to women.*"<sup>1</sup> Women can do a work in families that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life.

**Utilize** women in the evangelization of your community. "*If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth.*"<sup>2</sup>

**Distribute** resource materials and promotional announcements that cross your desk to your women's ministries coordinator. Remember that the pastor is often the only conduit of information from the wider organization.

**Organize** men's ministries in your congregation as well. Now is the time to emphasize the effective service of every group in the church. ■

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 460. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 471, 472. (Italics supplied.)

## Marketing for Congregations

Norman Shawchuck, Philip Kotler, Bruce Wrenn, and Gustave Rath. Abingdon, Nashville, 1992, 424 pages, \$24.95, cloth. Reviewed by Kermit Netteburg, professor of communications, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

*Marketing for Congregations* is an outstanding addition to the very small field of literature on how to market churches. It is more comprehensive than any other book on the topic, particularly in the treatment of societal marketing and creating a responsive congregation. The book is organized like a marketing textbook for a seminary class, covering all the traditional marketing concepts, but relating them to pastoral needs.

For example, the authors show how market segmentation can help a church. Segment first to males and females. Then segment the females into "at homes" and "working outside the home," each of which will have different needs for church programs. "[Some] homemakers are attracted to courses for spirituality of children, self-enrichment, and improved homemaking skills, while [others] are more interested in fellowship spirituality for women and career preparation" (p. 177).

The book reads well. Case studies illustrate virtually every point, making for interesting reading and greater understanding. Pastors with growing churches will be fascinated to find how marketing techniques can help in church growth and administration.

## Life on the Road: The Gospel Basis for a Messianic Lifestyle

Athol Gill, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1992, 309 pages, no price recorded. Reviewed by Billy Leonard, pastor, SDA church, Coleraine, Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

Athol Gill worked in Australia as a professor of New Testament and a church pastor. Thus he is able to bring together the expertise of academics and the experience of practics in this

book on discipleship, published just after his untimely death.

Using the "Life on the Road" motif, Gill takes the reader on a journey through discipleship, covering some important mileposts: the call, the cost, possessions, mission, power, prayer, and grace. The approach to each topic is a tribute to the author's skills in exegesis and exposition. Each chapter ends with questions for discussion, thus providing an easy format for a seminar on discipleship.

The author has some challenging things to say, especially to Western Protestant churches. Charging them of tailoring the gospel to the needs of individualism and consumerism, Gill expresses his concern that there are very few "prophetic figures" living

Nashville, 1991, 95 pages, \$8.95, hard cover. Reviewed by Dick Duerksen, communication director, Columbia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Columbia, Maryland.

I am not a fan of thin (but expensive) hardcover books that masquerade as "great gifts for academy graduates." Unfortunately, this book looks like all the others teenagers receive and never read.

But there is a surprise in the reading. Methodist pastor James Moore has culled his best illustrations and strongest sermon outlines and created an excellent sermon resource. I doubt that this was his purpose in writing the book, but I found three marvelously usable illustrations in the first five chapters!

Each chapter answers a question that modern Christians are asking, and does so using a simple outline spiced with stories and quotes. You'll find in the outlines strong skeletons for topical sermons. The stories and quotes will fit comfortably into a hundred conversations and presentations.

The book includes some great old chestnuts but sparkles with pointedly turned phrases and wonderful new stories:

"When Will Rogers visited Rome he said he found it interesting that 'everyone wanted to see where Saint Peter was buried, but no one wanted to live like him.'"

From a German concentration camp Dr. Viktor Frankl writes, "The last of the human freedoms [is] to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."

And Pastor James Moore adds, "When I first became a Christian I was so excited I wanted to hug God. Over the years, I have learned that the way you hug God is to hug His people."

Buy the book. But don't buy it for a graduate. Buy it for yourself. Then buy a new "highlighter."

## You'll find in the outlines strong skeletons for topical sermons.

out gospel discipleship. He denounces materialism as irreconcilable with the demands of God. To him, discipleship is "a reversal of value judgments about people, status, and titles."

I have three reservations on the book. First, the author sometimes resorts to lengthy biblical quotations in the text. Second, like many other Christians with a genuine concern for the poor and underprivileged, the author makes God to be an exclusive God of the poor. God exists among the poor no doubt, but He also exists among every other group as well. Third, the author sometimes leaps from argument to conclusion, and one could query the content of the latter when strictly placed against the former.

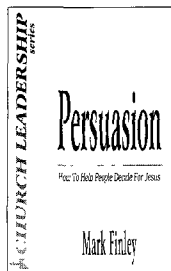
## Can You Remember to Forget 32 Other Questions for Tomorrow's Leaders

James W. Moore, Abingdon Press,

## Jesus' Word, Jesus' Way

Randolph J. Klassen, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1992, 168 pages, US\$7.95, paper. Reviewed by

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tool  
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Norman A. Yeager, Duncanville, Texas 75137.

This book looks at evangelism differently than many other books. It goes to the root of evangelism, to see how "Jesus shared God's good news." Beginning with Jesus' identification with sinners, the author moves through Jesus' use of the Word, His advertising, His sense of urgency, and then Jesus' prayer and worship life.

The chapter on Jesus' use of the Word is compelling. The author explains how the Word was important to Christ in every area of His life. No one could proclaim God's Word unless that Word had taken hold of the individual. But how did Jesus receive power to witness? According to Klassen, through His prayer life and worship habits. When throwing out the line to dock the boat, the sailor does not pull the dock to the boat, but the boat to the dock. So it is in prayer, argues Klassen. Prayer brings us to the heart of God. When we are near to the heart of God we learn His priorities and make them our own.

The author sees worship as the most important element underlying one's ability to witness. "A true evangelist is first of all a worshiper." Worship takes place corporately and individually, and will lead the worshiper to reach out to others. This book is an essential tool to any preacher seeking to lead a congregation into authentic witnessing.

**Celebration of Healing**

Emily Gardiner Neal, Cowley Publications, Boston, 1992, 210 pages, US\$12.95, paper. Reviewed by Chad McComas, Medford Seventh-day Adventist Church, Oregon.

If healing ministry interests you, you will find *Celebration of Healing* a breath of fresh air. The book is a compilation of Emily Neal's best works. It covers her confrontation with physical healing in a church setting while she had little faith in God or belief in healing. As a reporter she undertook an investigative search to uncover the truth about healing ministries. During that search she found God and discovered a personal healing ministry that enveloped her the

rest of her life.

Why has healing through the church declined over the years? Neal writes: "I believe that the decline is attributable to increasing controversy within the church and to the church's position of conflict with emerging medical science. The once-united church had become split by controversy and was no longer steadfast in faith. Much as it is today, it was floundering in the morass of conflicting opinion, and inevitably there occurred a weakening of spiritual power and of the people's faith. It became a vicious cycle: as the church's faith weakened, so did the power of healing; and as healing declined, the faith that remained was further diminished."

Even though I can't agree with her theology of death, Neal's views on pain, repentance, and faith are insightful.

**The Vital Singles Ministry**

Harry Odam, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1992, 143 pages, \$11.95, paper. Reviewed by Gary Russell, Arcadia, California.

Why a singles ministry? According to Odam, there are at least five reasons: (1) the 1950s birthed a new culture with a sea of singles; (2) many of these singles are in need of emotional and spiritual help; (3) church-sponsored single ministries can help heal these hurts; (4) most singles do not feel comfortable in other church classes; (5) singles ministries can strengthen the church's overall ministry effectiveness.

The author calls for understanding that singles do have special needs. Many need to deal with the trauma of divorce. All need to deal with their sexuality. Many feel uncomfortable discussing these in the church because the church traditionally has not been open enough for such discussion. Singles often feel alone, as the church continues to place its emphasis on family as defined by father, mother, and children living together in the same house. At times inadvertently, at times consciously, the church reminds singles that they are not quite up to the standard expectation in terms of family.

The bulk of this book is a step-by-step method for developing a singles ministry. Even the smallest church can follow the steps and establish a ministry. The author outlines a six-month, week-by-week schedule and tells what to do each week. He also gives valuable help on activities, special forms, suggested bylaws, leadership concerns, and problems common to organizing singles ministry.

If you've ever wanted some help on starting a ministry for singles, you've got it now.

#### **When Not to Build**

*Ray Bowman with Eddy Hall, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, 156 pages, \$9.95, paper. Reviewed by Roger H. Ferris, pastor, Renton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Renton, Washington.*

Four decades as a church architect and dozens of buildings later Bowman concedes that building and church growth do *not* necessarily go together. His arguments make sense to a pastor who started pastoring when Bowman started designing.

"An exciting, growing congregation builds to make room for continued growth, only to see their growth stop as soon as they build," Bowman notes. The change of focus shifts from serving people, killing church growth. Debt absorbs the energy of the church. "When building is allowed to become a church's focus, even temporarily, the church's ministries suffer and growth slows or stops," he concludes.

Three principles are suggested for having a positive building experience. First, the principle of *focus*. To Bowman, the church that is focused on people and their needs, both spiritual and temporal, is a growing church. Second, the principle of *use*. Churches make major investments in buildings for minimal use. Single-use space is the result of poor planning, and sanctuaries with fixed seating forever control the destiny of the nongrowing congregation. Third, the principle of *provision*. Borrowing to build says subtly that God cannot be trusted to supply the church's need at the time of the need. Borrowing places the church under the lender's authority, "substi-

tuting debt for trust in God."

The book brims with other excellent pointers. The building committee should be made up of users and those who understand building processes. Planners should operate from the premise of a "ministry center." A "ministry center" uses movable seating, has carefully planned storage, has no sanctuary for the single use of worship, has low lines in scale with the

people who will use it rather than forbidding vertical ones, has a foyer larger than any other part of the building, and *visitor* parking near the entrance of the foyer. This is just the start of a refreshing checklist!

Bowman has done well. Every page has a stimulating idea. This book is worth the reading time. It even makes me eager to lead another building program!

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## Charging your devotional life

From page 4

says to His disciples that when you pray, make sure you pray for others and that you forgive them despite what they may have done to you.

The hard part about forgiving is forgetting. We have not truly forgiven unless we are also willing to forget. We cannot love others if we keep remembering the unjust and unkind things they have done to us. As we pray forgiveness for others we are then able to relate to them in the same way that God relates to us. People will sense our love and our acceptance of them.

If any of these three components are missing, our devotional life will be stunted and never rise to the full maturity that God longs for us to reach. So even though this prayer is so short, it is a treasure of structure, psychology, and theology.

### Jesus models on the cross

As Jesus hung dying on the cross at Calvary He modeled all three parts of His teaching to His disciples. As He breathed His last breath He handed His spirit over to His Father—the upward look. He knew where His rock, His security lay. He died confident in His Father's love.

He recognized His own needs. He thirsted—the inward look—and even the rude Roman soldiers offered Him some liquid. Hanging in the hot sun soon dehydrated a body. Jesus was human and cried out for His own needs.

But there was also an outward look. He took care of His mother, handing her over to the care of John. He prayed for forgiveness for His enemies. He ministered to one of the thieves and reassured him that he would be in heaven.

There you have it. Three mighty components of the Lord's Prayer—the upward, inward, and outward looks. May they become an integral part of your devotional life this coming year. ■

## When you're undereducated

From page 5

rest of their lives. Meanwhile, you can be learning and growing all the time for the glory of God and the good of His people.

4. *Remember that God has no limitations.* The Lord can easily override our education or lack thereof to fulfill His purpose for our ministry. Often He veils Himself from the supposedly wise and reveals Himself unto babes (see Luke 10:21). "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen" (1 Cor. 1:27, 28). Why? "That no flesh should glory in His presence" (verse 29).

A stroll down the hallway of salvation history will humble human pride. When Jesus was born in a barn to a peasant virgin, God bypassed the scholars and scribes to herald the Incarnation. Cave-dwelling shepherds communicated the good tidings of great joy. To proclaim the resurrected Christ, once again God boycotted the religious intelligentsia, employing a scorned but reclaimed prostitute. At Pentecost divine wisdom spoke through a foolhardy fisherman with an embarrassing history of foul speech.

What to conclude from all this? God will be God. Hallelujah! He uses the uneducated slingshot just as readily as the sophisticated sword. He will finish His work in simple ways using people of simple faith. So whatever our level of education may be, let's make ourselves available to Him and then make the best of whatever we have and whatever we are. We need not allow past circumstances to limit our future. God will then work through us, beyond us, and even in spite of us to achieve His sovereign purposes. ■

\* All scriptures are from *The New King James Version*.

## Personal retreat

Frustrated with the typical seminar intended to rejuvenate your ministry? Plan your own pastoral retreat: a week at a member's recreational cabin. Many parishioners do not use such facilities during the week and would enjoy sharing with their pastor.

Beforehand, plan a daily routine for your week away. Here is a sample daily schedule, with time allotted for each activity:

1. Study one book of the Bible. Use the exegetical tools learned in seminary. Record in a journal your new discoveries. Jot brief sermon outlines. Two hours.

2. Relaxation time. Walk in the woods, along the road, near a stream or field, observing nature and people. Enjoy life without a specific task to accomplish. One hour.

3. Professional development. Read about one aspect of pastoral ministry to strengthen your ministry. This could be preaching, pastoral care, administration, counseling, teaching, or worship planning. Two hours.

4. Journal of life. Reflect in a personal journal the congregational developments that are both encouraging and disappointing, family issues, personal spirituality concerns and professional stages of development. Offer confessions to God for error, disappointment, and omission. Identify the successes of your life and career. One hour.

5. Read the Bible.

Select a different book than the one studied intensively. Read it without being evaluative; just let it speak to you devotionally. Focus on the Psalms and laments. One hour.

6. Goal setting. Develop a set of goals to pursue in the following areas: congregational direction, professional development, spirituality management, and family relationships. Three hours.

7. Mealtime. Eat two meals per day. Allow time for planning and participating in meal time.

8. Do not hesitate to take short naps when feeling tired.

Upon returning home, take two hours to share your experiences with your bishop or district superintendent. Review your goals, confessions, disappointments, and joys.—Clyde G. Kratz, New Holland, Pennsylvania.

## Archeology inventory clearance

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syllabus, \$4.

*Through the Bible and Bible Lands.* Nine studies covering the story of Israel from Abraham to the return of Judah from Babylon. 414 slides, \$45.68; syllabus, \$3.

*Footsteps in the Holy Land.* In His Steps; Jerusalem. 335 slides, \$40.20; syllabus, \$1; Booklet *Footsteps in the Holy Land*, \$2.

*The Wonders of Egypt.* The Wonders of the Pyramids; 900 Miles Up the Nile; The Discovery of King Tutankhamen's Treasure. 280 slides, \$33.60; syllabus, \$1; Booklet *The Wonders of Egypt*, \$2.

*The Seven Churches of Revelation.* Views of the sites, giving their history and results of archaeological discoveries. 280 slides, \$33.60; syllabus, \$2. An additional 230 slides giving the prophetic interpretation. Only two sets left, \$27.60 (same syllabus).

*Movement of Prophecy.* The Roots of Adventism; The Sifting of Adventism; Adventism and the Sabbath; A Prophet Among Them; Corn Flakes and Peanut Butter; More Than a Prophet; Lest We Forget. 552 slides, \$66.24; Syllabus, \$2.50.

*Revelation and the Church.* Twenty-six in-depth studies on the book of Revelation (including parts of Daniel): nine covering the seven churches and seven seals;

17 that unfold the three angels' messages. 2284 slides, \$274.08; syllabus \$10.

On all orders, add 10 percent for postage and packaging. Overseas orders go surface mail unless air, at extra expense, is requested.—Order from Orley Berg, 31829 Mountain Lane, North Fork, California 93643.

## Hospital opportunities

While ministering to my own members in the hospital, I've learned not to ignore other patients in the room. This started one day when I was visiting a parishioner with the privacy curtain drawn. We were discussing a favorite portion of Scripture when a plaintive, pleading voice came from outside the curtain: "Will you read it loud enough so I can hear it too?" I drew back "the veil of separation" and ministered to two hungry souls.—Michas M. Ohnstad, North Branch, Minnesota.

## Baby: ministry partner

Most people are attracted to babies. Their unconditional smiles and captivating gestures never fail to win hearts. My own baby has become a partner in my ministry. I began taking him on home visitation and discovered that he helped lukewarm members warm up to my visit.—Daniele D. Palomares, Davao del Sur, Philippines.

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