

# Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

May 1998



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## Ministry

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**Mary K. and Carla Faye**

For several years I have been receiving your magazine, and I would like to thank you for it.

I write specifically to thank you for your fine editorial on Mary K. and Carla Faye (March 1998). It was touching and beautifully written.—B. Clayton Bell, Sr., Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas.

**January 1998 issue**

With great interest I read the letter by Rev. John Cuthbert in the January '98 issue of *Ministry* concerning "Adventists and the Sabbath." Rev. Cuthbert ends his letter to the editors with a hard question: "Do SDAs still believe that other Christians who fail to observe the Sabbath will receive the mark of the beast and so be disqualified from heaven?"

Rodriguez's reply to that letter is the most profound, concise, heartwarming response that man's finite mind could formulate.—Ray L. Roth, Pastor, Moscow SDA Church, Moscow, Idaho.

● I've just read with interest, with amazement, and almost with disbelief Bert Haloviak's reporting on the 70-year saga of *Ministry* in the January 1998 issue. The editorial staff, as well as the assistant director of Archives and Statistics of the General Conference, are to be commended for such candor and objectivity in journalism which contributes significantly to the credibility of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. And as for guidelines for future articles, the compilation of quotes from the writings of E. G. White found in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, the chapter headed "Attitude Toward New Light," might add perspective to some of the theological tensions currently experienced within the church.

Again, my strong note of appreciation—and a request for continued encouragement of openness among the ministry, the church

administrators, and the biblical scholars.—Jim Kaatz, Ed.D., professor emeritus, San Diego State University; president, San Diego Chapter, Association of Adventist Forums, California.

● I would like to congratulate *Ministry* staff and the General Conference office at large on this occasion when *Ministry* celebrates its seventieth year. May the divine Shepherd of our church be praised for having given the knowledge of writing and so the production of such sound materials.

I commend Dr. Donald Rhoads for his article "The Word in Worship." It has appeared distinctly that the prominence of the scriptures in most of our church services has diminished greatly. This has consequently given room to the rhetorically talented ones who do not treat with fairness the contexts of the Word to lead many of our people into fanatical extremes. I believe our churches have to be more serious with the presentations that are made in order to keep them out of unnecessary interpretations that are faulty.

With "Questions from the Well," by Elder Folkenberg; "Soul-Winning Through Relationships," by Josephine Benton; and "Hermeneutics and the Canon," by Luis Acosta, it's clear that the January 1998 issue was one among the best that deal with the real purpose of our and church's being. I wish all journals would be balanced after such a model.

I once again pray that the Lord may use the journal to do more for His church. I personally keep my fingers crossed for editorials.—Robert E. M. Tuvako, South Nyanza Conference, Tanzania, East Africa.

● Thanks for the article "The Word in Worship." A few reflections on it:

1. It must be interesting for members and ministers of "historical" churches to see how younger denominations, like

ours, are discovering the need to do what they have done for so long and struggle at times to achieve what may seem like "rediscovering the wheel." I am talking about a regular reading cycle, reading from the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Gospels, and the Psalms.

2. I am glad that the difference is seen by the author that while it is necessary to diverge from others when there is error, there is nothing wrong in doing what others do when it is biblical and good. I have traditionally seen a lot of bigotry against anything that resembles what others are doing, just for the sake of being different or for fear of losing identity.

3. While the author's efforts are very worthy, it may be left for his consideration, which he probably knows, that there is a three-year cycle *already* followed by Christian churches, and that of course follows the liturgical year.

4. The singing of Psalms is hard because the hymnal does not have them all (only a few Isaac Watts, etc.). Any idea of resource for sung psalms?

Thanks for this article and the magazine in general.—Samuel Garbi, via Internet.

● I was so happy to read William Rabior's article "Observations of a Therapist." I can say from experience that many administrative leaders today have such a skewed concept of therapy that they actually add stigma to an experience that can be not just therapeutic but very much growing and ministry-expanding.

We initiated the request to go to clergy care, not because of the trauma of immorality or marital infidelity but because of the trauma of being misjudged by administration. Despite this, we have experienced many nervous questions regarding the "final conclusions" of our therapist-questions that imply that because of our therapy, we now need some type of "stamp of approval" that

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**Free Subscription**

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



**T**he world is thirsty for a Word. It seems to me that in their hearts people want an earthy, guileless, unaffected word. We are thoroughly

disillusioned with pretentious words, whether they be commercial, political, scholarly, or religious. Increasingly, people are seeing through communicators who use words largely calculated to create an impression, cover a weakness, or manipulate in order to gain some edge. The truth is that in many cultures people have developed a cynical, distrustful streak because of an overabundance of real or perceived verbal exploitation.

We also find ourselves searching more and more urgently for a genuinely authoritative word. We are listening for those people who speak with that rare engaging power that seems to carry its own sway. More and more of us are turned off by words spoken with the demanding, authoritarian insistence too common in contemporary religious teachers. We are seeing all that for what it seems it so often is: a vain and offensive attempt to marshal the dynamics of religion to bolster a tenuous control over the lives of people.

In the church we have wondered about the causes for the declining authority in so much Christian preaching. We tend to point fingers of condemnation at the evil of the world, damning it for its dullness and unrepentant opposition to the message of Christ, when in fact that dullness may be as much due to the hollowness of our proclamation as it is to anything in the hard hearts of the worldly. We have been challenged again and again by the haunting thought that our words, doctrinally and theologically correct as they may be, nevertheless do not carry the influence that the word of truth has borne when spoken by other hearts and mouths. It seems to me that the truth is

## Thirsty for a Word

W I L L E V A

that words are only allowed to come fully to life when they are used for their originally designed purpose and when they are spoken by a heart that knows and lives by the quality of their earliest design and purpose for words is well-embraced by John when he says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14, RSV). Increasingly, the world and the church thirst for transforming words, forged on God's primeval linguistic anvil.

We might also ponder which is more responsible for the loss of credibility and respect for the Bible and the church: the onslaughts of higher criticism or the emptiness of our religious traditionalism and speech. Either one has the power to devalue the Word and shunt it off onto the side tracks of meaninglessness and disillusionment.

"One of the most frightening aspects [of this question] is that no one seems capable of finding the living word that is needed."<sup>1</sup> That is the word that needs to be found that it may be spoken to bring healing to the people. Nobody would dare to claim that no word at all has been spoken in the face of the great needs of humanity. Yet look at the daunting task of finding a definitive, healing word for what faces us here and now. Let us say it forthrightly: It is the calling of the Christian minister to find and effectively proclaim that word, or better, to find the Word and proclaim Him wherever God has set us down to work.

But do we not already have a word . . . the Word? Of course we do. But what is so challenging is that the genuinely effective word, the one that actually introduces

healing truth to the thirsty lips of the human soul, is much more than a theological discovery, a doctrinal formulation, or a verbal expression of some kind. Although we have heard this again and again, I am not sure we are really convinced of it.

We know the effective word is even more than the words published on the pages of a book we call the Bible. But if it is more, what is it, and why is it so elusive? Here is some carefully conceived light on these questions: "Leaders and people are deprived of the word because they no longer speak with meaning but use words as counterfeit to impress people, to prove a point, to . . . extract an advantage. And that is not what the living word is for. . . . What is so terrible is that the words that should be said are so simple, and [we] cannot say them, because the words know they will not live, not be made flesh. For the word breathes and lives only by honest and truthful intent."<sup>2</sup>

Here indeed is the essence of the challenge for the Christian minister. In the latter part of this statement, "words" are seen to have a certain, almost conscious, perception of their own. They are viewed as possessing the ability to refuse to yield their deeper meaning and practical impact as long as the one speaking them is employing them to impress, prove a point, or extract through them some personal advantage. In effect, this leaves them unspoken. Perhaps there is more than a mythical element in the concept that words have this consciousness, especially if we remember the Word we are called to proclaim. It is a marriage of our "words" to the "Word" that we are after.

We have tried the professional systems, the sermon planning, and the leadership strategies, along with the glory of gilded oratory. We have done these things and expected too much from them. They are alluring. First, because they have a highly legitimate part to play in our ministry; but second, if they are well-performed, they have a way of influencing and

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# WHY BIBLICAL AUTHORITY RARELY IMPACTS THE LOCAL CHURCH

**I**t's eleven o'clock at night, and you realize you have to preach the next morning. With a longing look toward your warm and comfortable bed, you head into the study instead.



*Jon Paulien, Ph.D., is professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

The concept of prayer suddenly looks more appealing. After that fervent appeal for wisdom, you begin working. You think about your congregation and its needs. You think about the direction God wants you to take your church. For a moment your mind is almost blank. Then, gradually, you sense the leading of the Spirit of God. One idea forms, then another. At first it seems just a muddled collection of ideas, but suddenly, in a moment of inspiration, a thread appears, and the project begins to fall into place. An outline develops; some things are dropped, others added. This isn't going to be half as bad! you think. It's 1:30 in the morning. You reach for your Bible concordance. . . .

*Hold it right there!* Why do you reach for your concordance only then? In order to sprinkle your sermon with Bible texts, why else? But why would you do that? Simply in order to dress your sermon with the authority of the Bible. Yet by doing this, your sermon will gain an influence that it doesn't deserve. It will sound like the will of God when it may have been

only the educated musings of a stressed-out and sleep-deprived pastor. The Bible had little or nothing to do with the development of the sermon. You never took the time to bathe yourself in the Word so that your texts really said what needed to be said.

What you have done is tantamount to fraud, hermeneutical fraud, claiming something you haven't invested adequate time and proper procedure to achieve.

Something even worse happens. Those who listen—with a care and an attention that your preparation may not have merited—will learn a hermeneutic, a way of approaching the study of the Bible that doesn't yield the best results. They will pick up the undertone that it doesn't *really* matter what the Bible says as long as you can *use* it persuasively. They will learn to read the Bible, not to submit themselves to God's authority but to support positions they already believe. They will put texts together that don't belong together in order to make a point. One day, these careful listeners may even use your hermeneutic against you.

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J O N P A U L I E N

### Exegesis versus intuition

The frightening thing is that this approach actually comes out of a high view of inspiration. You and your church members believe that the Bible carries God's authority. If you didn't believe that, you wouldn't *use* it the way you just did. Certain *uses* can be even more dangerous than *not using* the authenticity of the Bible.

If you preach a sermon based on psychology, sociology, or experience, level with your people. "I didn't get this from the Bible, so I don't want anyone to feel compelled to accept what I am about to share. But I believe the Spirit of God has placed a burden on my heart this morning. Please listen prayerfully and then decide whether or not God would want you to make this part of your life." You don't have to claim some special authority in order to preach this sermon. You don't have to demand that everyone agree. If you got your ideas out of a book or a personal experience, just say so; let the Spirit apply God's authority if, in fact, you have it. What often happens instead is that we use the Bible to provide a cloak of authority to a sermon based on psychology, sociology, experience, or mere intuition.

If, on the other hand, you want to preach a truly biblical sermon, you need to get your message from the Bible. It sounds so simple and obvious, yet it can be difficult. Perhaps God has ordained that the truths of His Word will yield themselves only to the diligent and obedient student (2 Tim. 2:15; John 7:17). The gems of truth can be mined only by digging deep, which demands investing significant amounts of time in a productive approach to Scripture.

How can we study the Bible so as to draw out the truths that are actually there and not simply see what we want to? In other words, how can we do biblical exegesis? Exegesis simply means "read out." The exegete wants to "read out" of the text what is there. The opposite is what happens the night before the preaching appointment: eisegesis—"read in" to the text what we want to see or already believe.

### The problem of self-deception

The bottom line for most misuse of Scripture is self-deception. We deceive ourselves, and we don't even have a clue

how it happens. We turn the Bible into a book that looks like us by reading our own ideas, concepts, and needs into Scripture.

Psychology talks about defense mechanisms—automatic, and even unconscious, ways that we have of avoiding the pain that comes from knowing the truth in certain situations. These natural defense mechanisms are designed to protect us from the emotional arrows of a sinful world. But they also get in the way of receiving the Word. Have you ever been reading the Bible and then suddenly realized that you had no idea

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what you were reading? Automatically, even subconsciously, we can tune out and reinterpret threatening biblical concepts.

As a result, I've developed a playful definition of exegesis: "The process of learning how to read the Bible in such a way as to leave open the possibility that you might learn something." It is easy to study the Bible without learning a thing, especially if what we might learn is that we are wrong or that we may have to change. So, instead, it is easy for us to avoid the truth and deceive ourselves, even as we study the Bible.

### The original languages

The best safeguard against self-deception is a knowledge of biblical languages. Scholars have done a poor job

of selling this point to young pastors. For example, how did you learn English (or whatever language background you were born into)? As you heard certain words over and over, you gradually understood the meaning of those terms in the context of everyday life. Every word came to you in a certain time, place, and circumstance. When you read the Bible today in your native language, every word triggers these personal associations. The translation evokes events, contexts, and people you automatically associate with the words in the verses. When reading Scripture in your own language, therefore, you inevitably import your own ideas into the text.

In contrast, reading the New Testament in the Greek allows you to break the bonds of your personal past and begin to experience the text as it was meant to be. Scholarly study of the New Testament forces a person to learn the Greek in its original context. You consult lexicons and dictionaries, which unpack the original meanings. When I read the New Testament in the Greek, I begin to feel associations and patterns that I would have never noticed in English. Over time, a reading knowledge of the Greek causes a greater break with one's own worldview and immerses one more into the worldview of the Bible writers, which is the primary goal of exegesis.

Many will, however, never develop a reading knowledge of the Greek or become specialists in the ancient time, place, and circumstances of the text. It is imperative, therefore, that they have a way to do serious, honest exegesis without such knowledge.

How can you and I reliably approach the Bible in our own language, time, place, and circumstances? In the conclusion of this two-part series (to appear in July), I will share five simple principles of Bible study that mark out the difference between using the Word, on the one hand, and receiving and obeying it on the other. Hopefully, in the light of these principles, we will be weaned away from the night-before forays and consistently compose sermons that use Scripture as the source of deep truth rather than as a flimsy cover for what might not even be truth at all. ■

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*This is part 1 of a two-part article. Part 2 will appear in the July 1998 issue.*

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# WHEN PERSECUTED IN ONE TEXT, FLEE TO THE NEXT

**I**f Protestantism ever dies with a dagger in its back, the dagger will be the Protestant sermon.” In that brief quip Donald Miller puts the finger on a challenge to both Protestantism in general and to Adventism in particular.



*George R. Knight is professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

Too many preachers have apparently understood Matthew 10:23 to read “When they persecute you in one text, flee to the next.”

In the average pulpit, there is too much fleeing from text to text or even away from the text altogether. I recall one pastor who preached to the same congregation nearly every week but had only three sermons. I don’t mean that he had only three sermon scripts, but three topics, each of which he worked over about once a month. To be sure, he produced variations and mutations in his limited topical repertoire, but it was all very much the same to those of us who held down the pews. In fact, it was all quite predictable, except for those times when in frustration he added a little spice to his sermonic exercise by “beating up” the congregation.

His three sermons, as I recall, focused on the Second Advent, the Sabbath, and stewardship. Thus you can see that he was a “good Adventist,” even if his flock received rather impoverished pulpit fare.

**Preaching the Word versus preaching ourselves**

How many times we pew-warmers wished our obviously sincere pastor had followed the injunction of Paul to “preach the Word . . . in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2, NIV) rather than bouncing from one proof-text to the next as he used his few passages to support *his* ideas. Did God have no “word” for us?

Now, topical preaching has its occasional place, but all too often it has very little to do with preaching the Word. Let’s face it, most of us preach to ourselves; we preach to the problems that we fear or the issues that challenge us. In short, we scratch where we itch. In the process, the entire congregation gets scratched where the pastor itches when their real need is to be fed a well-balanced diet of biblical, expository preaching.

The solution to the homiletic disease of preaching to one’s self is to “preach the Word.” We need to move away from what *we* want people to hear toward what *God*

wants them to hear. That means biblical preaching in the expository sense. The need is to let God speak as He sets forth His messages through the various books of the Bible. The Bible presents a vast array of topics in varied formats. When we preach expositively from Scripture, it keeps us away from hobbyhorses and, more positively, helps us preach to the entire range of subjects God wants us to deal with. Don't worry about such topics as stewardship, justification, works, or the Sabbath. They are all embedded repeatedly in passages just waiting to be expounded.

Unfortunately, Adventism doesn't have many role models of sustained expository preaching. Even the Sabbath School lessons generally follow the injunction of fleeing from one text to the next in a manner that gives many the idea that their purpose is to serve readers an extra biblical agenda rather than to provide class members with a better knowledge of what God has to say to His people. It's almost as if something in our Adventist agenda (an agenda that I am in harmony with) might get lost if we don't help the Bible out a bit. This tendency is even present when we are studying Bible books in their entirety. Thus, for example, a few years ago we found the concept of works being imported into a lesson on Romans 4, where the concept was quite foreign and didn't fit. Paul, of course, expounds forcefully on the topic beginning in chapter 6 and climaxing it in Romans 13 and 14. In fact, the entire book of Romans is couched in Paul's affirmation that he had been empowered to "bring about the obedience of faith" to the Gentiles (see Rom. 1:5; 16:26, NRSV). Balance is found in the totality of the book. If we let God speak in His own time through His Word, He will tell us what He wants us to know in its proper context.

*If you haven't figured it out by now, the present essay is a call to increased biblical, expository preaching and less fleeing from one text to the next.*

### Preaching and priorities

But, you may be thinking, how can we "preach the Word . . . in season and out of season" when we have so little time for serious Bible study? Thanks for asking. For a while I thought we would never get to this point.

Here we are dealing with a matter of priorities. What, we need to ask, is the primary function of a pastor? That is the most important question we can ask about our calling. Unfortunately, too many of us have our understanding wrong at this precise point, and biblical preaching ends up being one of the casualties.

I don't know where I picked up the concept, but somehow in my early ministry I got the idea that the essence of being a pastor was baptizing a certain number of

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people (i.e., as many as possible) and raising financial goals (i.e., as much as possible). With such an agenda I didn't find much time for biblical preaching and discovered pastoral work to be less than fulfilling. In fact, I became a bit disillusioned, even though I became better than average at meeting goals.

It was only later that I arrived at the conclusion that the trouble with many denominations, congregations, and pastors began when they learned how to count. We count baptisms, members, contributions, institutions, and so on as if they were ends in themselves.

Now, I don't imagine God has too much against goals, numbers, or even counting, as long as such exercises remain in their proper places. Part of the problem is that they take on a life of their own and end up at the very center of what many people,

pastors, and church leaders see as "doing church." In such cases, goals become the center of what ministry is all about. Ministry becomes tending the machine and even making sure you have ever more machinery. As one head pastor of a large institutional church put it, his function was "running the local franchise of the Adventist Church, somewhat like being responsible for making a link in the McDonald's chain pay off."

I have come to the conclusion that too many of us have it all backward. We need to "forget" the goals and move on to ministry. A pastor has two primary functions: loving God's people and feeding God's sheep. For too long have we viewed nonchurch members primarily as potential baptismal candidates (as numbers) and members as "gospel cows" who need regular milking. Thus we visit people with an agenda. In like manner, the sermon becomes a tool to achieve that agenda.

*We need to reverse our priorities. Pastors are called to be lovers of people and preachers of the Word. Just think, pastors are paid to love people, to study the Bible, and to present God's Word to His children. What a job! What a delight! It sure beats running the local franchise while sporting the name pastor.*

*I firmly believe that when we get our priorities straight, the goals and numbers will take care of themselves. Many church members are tired of being treated as "gospel cows" on an ecclesiastical dairy farm, and they are frustrated with less-than-biblical preaching. And the large number who feel that way certainly have no burning desire to expose their friends and neighbors to what they believe is less than satisfactory. People are hungry for both genuine Bible preaching and genuine interpersonal caring. Members will bring their friends to church if they consistently hear the Word of God skillfully proclaimed and if they know that they and their acquaintances will be cared about as people rather than treated as goals or numbers.*

That means that pastors need to visit their members and those members' neighbors just because they care about them, not so they can promote some hidden agenda. It means that pastors need to become not only lovers of people but lovers of the Bible so they can help people learn to enjoy walking through



God's Word. People will come to a church where they are genuinely cared for. They will support the program, and they will bring their friends to hear God's Word and share His kindness.

Expository preaching means regular and serious Bible study. But even in study I fear that most of us too often flee from one text to another and settle for something less than a deep contextual understanding of the biblical text. Again, that fleeing and its resultant shallowness shows up in the pulpit.

The truth is that without in-depth exegetical study it is impossible to consistently present insightful biblical expositions in our sermons. We end up running "on the hoof" and "when persecuted in one text" we have no choice but to "flee to the next." The results may "get us through" the eleven o'clock service, but they may be less than inspired. In short, we cannot preach the Word if we don't know the Word. While getting to know the Word takes time and effort, it stands at the very heart of genuine ministry.

#### My study of the Bible

Our great need is to *flee to the Word* that we might be more effective preachers of it. Some years ago I took that injunction to heart in my own life and work. In 1980 I began an intensive, verse-by-verse study of the Bible that I estimated would take thirty years to complete. My first target was the Gospel of Matthew. I devoted an hour a day for a full 12 months. Then followed eleven months with Genesis, four with Ecclesiastes, and so on.

My method was quite simple. Not only did I arm myself with various translations and aids to study the text, but I also selected three well-written commentaries for each biblical book. I read each of those commentaries daily in my verse-by-verse study, not because they had the whole truth but because the skills and knowledge of their authors aided me in unpacking the text in a systematic way. They helped me see things that I often passed over when studying on my own. It was something like sitting down with three articulate friends who held differing opinions. Some days I managed to work through four or five verses, but on other verses I would spend two or three days, always studying in context and in relation to each biblical book's purpose. As I fled to, rather than from, the

text, the months passed, and I began to think about the Bible in new ways. My daily walk with God in the text began to affect my preaching and writing.

I might say at this point that my method is only one of many ways of coming to grips with the Bible. It is not so much the method that counts but that we faithfully and consistently give a portion of our time to systematic Bible study.

In my commentary method I was careful to select works that were highly recommended for their textual insight. Thus I asked a few questions and did a bit of research as I moved from one Bible book to the next. I wanted volumes that were insightful, generally faithful to the text, readable, and not overly large (many commentaries today are coming out in two or three large volumes per biblical book). Rather than buying sets, I tended to go for the most helpful individual volumes I could find. Having said that, I will note that I found the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (InterVarsity Press) to be helpful, along with the various volumes in the New International Commentary (Eerdmans) on the Old and New Testaments. Beyond that, I have benefited from William Barclay's Daily Bible series. Even though Barclay quite often strayed from the text, he helped me see practical applications that more scholarly works never stopped to explore.

On a more sermonic level I found the various expository works by such authors as Martyn Lloyd-Jones to be helpful, since they worked systematically and expositively through the text in a pastoral setting.

#### The must of Bible study

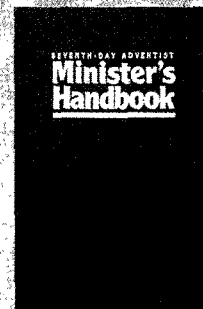
No matter what our method, consistent Bible study is a must—it is a pastoral and personal essential rather than a luxury. In my case it has literally transformed my preaching. Whether it has been a series of sermons on Christ's parables or a recently completed 14-week series on Matthew, I have found a joy in presenting God's Word. Beyond that, people are fed in a way that they yearn for and in a manner not accomplished when we simply flee from one text to the next.

Beyond preaching, systematic Bible study has directed much of my writing. For

example, some years ago I noted that the daily devotionals put out by the denomination tended to follow the flight from one text to the next! I decided to write a devotional that would stick to the text while at the same time making "sermonic" applications to daily life. The result was *Walking With Jesus on the Mount of Blessing*—365 readings that follow the text of the 111 verses of the Sermon on the Mount for a year's exploration of Matthew 5–7. Had I been in a pastorate, the result would have been 10 to 25 expository sermons from that special biblical gold mine.

In the not too distant future I will be developing a similar devotional entitled *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans*. Meanwhile, I would love to sit in a church where the pastor spent a few months walking us through that crucial book. But such a pastor will, of necessity, have had to walk privately with Paul and his Lord in the text before he or she provided a guided tour for the rest of us. The effort, however, would be well worth it for both pastor and people. ■

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# PREACHING: THE ENDEAVOR ITSELF

**A**lthough it is said that data, and knowledge in general, doubles every eight months or so, the primary source material for preaching remains the same as it has been for thousands of years: the Bible.



*William Loveless, Ed.D., is senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, California.*

The cognate source material for preaching is, however, a different story. There is an unlimited spectrum to explore, and different preachers are drawn to diverse disciplines for sermon material. I use history, philosophy, psychology, education, biology, art, and music to provide illustrations and metaphors. With a different focus in every pulpit, preaching offers variety that can be exciting and rewarding.

Sermon content, a major component of good preaching, depends on quality information cogently presented. The only way to maintain a consistent flow of relevant and stimulating information is by reading. There is no shortcut. What a wonderful privilege the minister has: getting paid to spend a good part of life reading the Bible and other material of interest.

If one were to ask What's more important, form or content? I would place content first. Despite the short-term appeal of an entertaining, charismatic preacher, the long-term impact of preaching depends on substance. The substance must achieve consistency with sermon objectives, management of the worship hour, and evaluation protocol.

## Constructing clear sermon objectives

Sermon objectives will change with each situation. The objective must relate to the age, comprehension level, and ability of the listener to deal with the abstractions that characterize most preaching. A set of generic questions is worth asking during sermon preparation. The correct answer to one or more of these is likely to yield one or two objectives to work on. A sermon with more than two or three well-honed objectives will be too scattered to provide focus during the delivery. This list of questions can be expanded to fit a preacher's congregation and concerns.

What formal applications will my hearers be enabled to make from the sermon? What is the best way to represent God, Jesus, and salvation? What long-term value will the listeners gain by listening? Do the sermon illustrations have a cutoff date when they become obsolete? What do I want people to feel, think, and do as a result of hearing the sermon?

While preaching, I sometimes announce goals for the sermon. This puts me

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WILLIAM LOVELESS

on the spot because sometimes my objectives are not transmitted. Remembering this possibility helps me see just how fragile the transmission network often is. Stating the goals is good for my listeners because they are introduced to the strange concept that preachers do have objectives established for the sermon.

Because the listeners' attention wanders, the preacher-stated objectives can help the listener stay on target; in addition, each listener picks up and encodes incidental information ("I didn't know Jericho was that close to Jerusalem!" "Sounds like God changed His mind!"). Much of this incidental information is quickly forgotten—and has no integrative function with the sermon's objective.

What voice should listeners have in defining sermon objectives? In a formal sense, not much, because most listeners do not know the sermon material as well as the preacher. On the other hand, objectives for sermons often arise from questions, life situations, and issues that prevail in the congregation or community.

#### Managing the worship hour

Worship has been and will continue to be the subject of study, argument, and enlightenment. Without obviously attempting to, the sermon and the preacher manage the worship hour. There are others: musicians, children, Scripture readers, and others. But the management of the hour of worship is so crucial to the life of the church that, especially in larger churches, it deserves about as much time as the sermon does.

#### Questions for the worship hour

A set of questions should guide decisions about the worship hour: What traditions of worship do we want to maintain during the service, and why? What variations (interview with a member; change in order of service; slides from school, Junior camp, or Maranatha trip) will be introduced? What's in it for the single mother of two, the teenager, the member who lost his job, the first-time visitor? What significant items can "fill" otherwise dead spots when people are approaching or leaving the platform? What participation are we providing the con-

gregation in addition to the singing of hymns and taking of offerings? How should we improve the "blips" that occurred in last week's worship service (interminably long prayers, a section unattended by deacons during the offering, musicians practicing in the basement while we wait for their entrance)? How can we streamline some tedious moments (i.e., extended remarks during baby dedications and baptisms, weather remarks during morning greetings)? What notice should we take of the calendar (Did we honor mothers on their day and neglect fathers on Fathers' Day)? How should we provide for varying musical tastes and talents so that we achieve balance and quality?

#### Evaluation of the sermon

Most of our members, confronted with our greeting after church, will offer a perfunctory "I enjoyed the sermon." A better assessment of effectiveness arises when listeners offer a serious question about what was said (this includes a reasonable disagreement) or want to talk about their own lives in progress. A preacher can count this as a signal that the message got through and engendered substantive response.

Preaching and teaching have much in common. Both are directed toward behavior change. Learning is behavior change, so surely teaching the congregation is a worthy goal for the preacher. Though factual information itself is important in its own right, evidence remains that information does not change behavior. If it did, the AIDS epidemic would generally be under control, people would stop smoking, and war would cease.

Worship styles have come and gone, but meaningful time spent in the Word in the worship service remains. The preacher can be an inspiration, an examiner of values, and the source of biblical knowledge, along with a positive outlook on life. Thus our continuing concern must be that the sermon arouse interest, initiate life-altering action, and challenge the attitudes and beliefs of the listeners. ■

*This article is the first in a series of three.*



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# BRINGING TOGETHER THE TEXT AND THE CONGREGATION

One of the many things Christians mean when they say the Bible is inspired is that it has furnished, and continues to furnish—in every time and place—the deepest and truest insight into their lives.



*O. C. Edwards is professor emeritus of preaching, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Weaverville, North Carolina.*

There are two aspects to this belief. One has to do with the Bible itself. It claims to record God's self-revelation to the world, a revelation made in the history of God's chosen people, Israel, and in the life of God's incarnate Son, Jesus Christ (including the response of the apostolic church to Him). The other aspect is that the biblical text has the capacity to illuminate every human situation, so that Christians can learn from it how their situation looks from God's perspective. This is a stupendous claim, and it says that the library of documents that came together almost two thousand years ago is relevant in all times and places since then. The question prompted by this overwhelming fact is not only how it happened but how those with the responsibility for proclaiming God's Word can become effective channels through whom the Bible's illumination of contemporary situations can be revealed.

In accomplishing this, the first thing is to simply ask for God's help. Just as the Holy

Spirit inspired the original text of the Bible, He inspires our interpretation and also our application of Scripture. We need to turn to God for understanding of individual passages and the message of the Bible as a whole. We need to turn to the same God for insight into the world in which we live. And we need to call upon God to help us unite the two in a way that will speak most directly to our people.

## Tasks underlying our use of Scripture

We have three tasks. The first is to understand the original meaning of a particular portion of Scripture. Next, we need to understand what is going on in the world in which our people live. And, finally, we have to apply our insight of the text to the aspect of life today in which that insight applies.

The first two of these tasks have much in common: Both are efforts to understand, interpret, and exegete a situation. In the one case, the situation is that which the biblical text itself addresses; the other is the specific

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O. C. EDWARDS, JR.

situation in our congregation. And, finally, these two have to be united so the situation in the text can be made relevant to the present problem.

In exegeting the text, we should not be seeking abstractions. The Bible is not a book of formulas as much as it is a history of events in which God has been active. A large portion of the Bible is historical, a record of God's activity in the life of His people. And the books that are not narrative imply narrative. They are not abstract treatises but analyses by prophets or apostles of the situations in which they found themselves and how these situations looked to God. The subject of the Bible is God's mighty acts. What is to be looked for, then, is the structure of situations, the pattern of God's involvement—and the dynamics of the interaction of the faithful with each other, with others, and with God.

#### **"Exegeting" the congregational situation**

Much less familiar to many ministers is a method for exegeting the situation in their congregation. While they may have been operating with an implicit understanding of how to discern the needs of their people, they have never been taught, or worked out for themselves, the elements of an adequate method for dealing with all the various concerns of their flock.

We can start with the individual believer and the crucial issue of his or her spiritual and moral situation. Beyond these, of course, God also cares about their personal problems, the things that cause them to lie awake at three o'clock in the morning. God cares about how they get along with members of their family, with their friends and neighbors, and with their enemies. Their private physical and emotional conditions are also concerns of God, as is their life in the church. Their work and their play are important also.

God is not just concerned with individuals as individuals. There is much more in the Bible about God's relation to the community of faith than about His relations with solitary believers. That relation raises questions about both the local congregation and the larger fellowship of each particular tradition in the wider Christian community. The situation at the local church level involves issues of worship, how members get along, what

kind of witness they have in the community, and leading the community in the solution of common social and moral problems. How does the congregation relate to the denomination itself and to other Christian bodies? And, beyond the local level, how does the denomination as a whole carry on a faithful witness to the society? How does it involve itself in relation to other churches?

Beyond all these, there are many other ingredients of the congregation's situation, because no one leads an exclusively religious existence. We all participate more or less in our culture. We are shaped by the media. Much of what we take for granted is just as reflexive a belief for us as it is for non-Christians. And some of these assumptions—the familiar furniture of our minds—have religious implications that we have never thought about because we assume that the matter looks the same to everyone else.

All of these dimensions—personal, religious, and cultural—are part of the situation in the congregation that the preacher needs to "exegete." If the situation in the congregation is to be brought together

meaningfully with the situation in the text, a preacher must understand both and be able to meaningfully relate each to the other.

How do we exegete the situation in the congregation? Many steps are involved. Home visitation is one of the best, not just so that you can hear what those who live there have to say but also so that you can see how the members of a given family relate to one another. In unconscious ways they will show us what their values are and what is important to them. Such knowledge is deepened when we do pastoral counseling. And, while not all churches have sacramental confession, all clergy have church members who unburden themselves to the pastor. We also get to know them by working with them in the activities of the church and by sharing in its social occasions. In all these situations, we need to listen for what they say (and do not say!) about themselves, their faith, and their world.

Because we also need to understand our people as members of a society, we must read newspapers, magazines, and sometimes even books that analyze and insightfully comment on our culture. Much can also be learned

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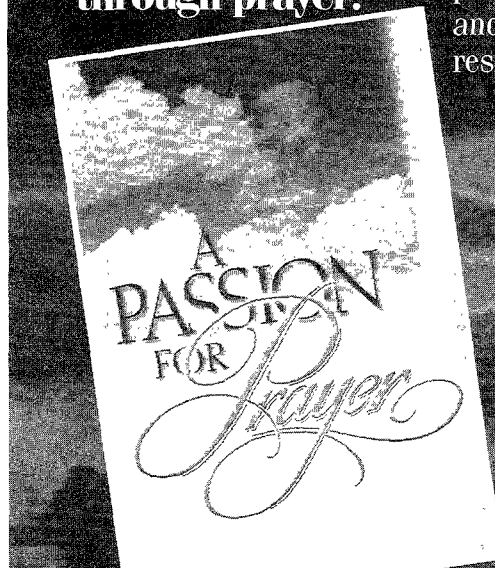
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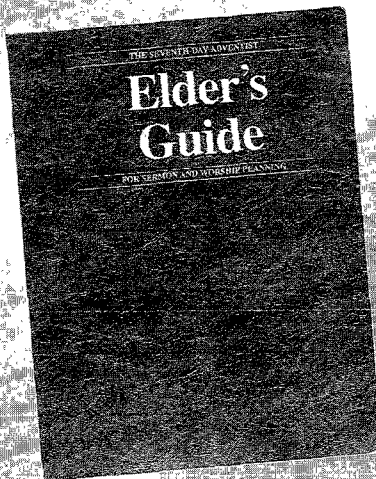


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from the artistic media surrounding us: contemporary songs, certain comics or cartoons, television, and commercial advertising. In all of these we can learn much by answering the question "What's going on here?"

Advertising, for instance, often operates at two levels. The conscious appeal is to practical reason, recommending what only seems common sense. But the unconscious appeal is usually to some deep insecurity: a fear that one is inadequate, socially unacceptable, or not attractive to members of the opposite sex. Such ads treat the viewers as merely consumers and assume that their only goal in life is the accumulation of material goods. The pastor must listen carefully to what these voices of the culture say and do not say.

### Bringing it all together in the sermon

After the preacher has exegeted both the text and the congregation, how does he unite the two in a sermon? How does the preacher decide what aspect of the situation in the congregation should be addressed when preaching from a particular verse? This task has been described as "placing the 'map' of biblical reality over the 'map' of the present."

When I was a boy, I enjoyed building model airplanes. In those days, before plastic, we made many models out of blocks of balsa wood. While the blueprints for these had end, side, and top views of the airplane, that was not enough to guide us in shaping the parts of the plane, especially its body. So the plans also included full-sized drawings of cross-sections of the body. These drawings, called templates, could be cut out and held to the particular point on the plane's body to find out if it had been shaped properly.

It seems that biblical passages—both narratives and abstract passages that imply narrative situation—are templates that reveal the shapes of situations from God's perspective. Thus what we need to do when we are deciding how to apply a text to the life of our people is to sort through the situations in the congregation that we have exegeted until we find the one that has the shape of the one in the text. Then we can transfer what we learn from the text to the present.

Through this method, the Scripture can meaningfully coincide with the most specific needs of our people, even thousands of years after the text was written. ■

# What to Do If Your Church Member Has a Conflict Between Religious Practice and Child Custody

## STEPS TO ACTION

- 1.** Determine the grounds for the dispute. For your NAD PARL Department to provide assistance, the custody case must involve a challenge to religious practice. (For example: Whether the child will go to an Adventist or public school; vegetarian diet restrictions; Sabbath observance problems, etc.)
- 2.** Get *all* the facts. Be supportive.
- 3.** Determine whether your church member practices his/her religion in harmony with all church doctrines and beliefs.
- 4.** Call your local conference or union PARL department, and:
  - a. Provide the church member's name, address, and phone numbers.
  - b. Describe the church member's specific concerns.
  - c. Indicate the current status of your church member's case:
    - (1) If in court, where?
    - (2) Results of any previous litigation.
    - (3) Name, address, and phone number of church member's legal counsel.
    - (4) Are relevant legal documents available?
    - (5) When and where can the PARL director talk to the member?
- 5.** Don't make promises to your church member.
- 6.** Counsel your church member to avoid unnecessary confrontation and not to be antagonistic toward authorities.

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*Presented by the North American Division Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department and Liberty Magazine.*

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# LIGHT AT THE END

**M**om, I'm scared." The agonized words tumbled out of Tara Lipinski shortly before her figure-skating competition in the 1998 Olympics in Japan. This 15-year-old American skater needed her mother's reassurance.



*Philip Samaan is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guides, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

"It's OK to be scared," said her mother. "But you can do it."

Tara went on to win, the youngest gold medalist ever in the history of Olympic figure skating.

Later, when watching a rerun of her final performance, I was not the least anxious about her final triumph. I was experiencing the "thrill of victory" for her, even though she, her parents, and fans were anxious and unsure during the event itself. I *already knew* the final outcome; they did not.

## Triumph assured

As pastors, we already know the final outcome of the spiritual race in the great controversy. In the throes of anguish and of darkness, there is good news for us and our members. The light at the end of the tunnel shines brightly. Our Redeemer has already run the race and won the victory for us. Now He is running life's road with us and will be awaiting us at the end with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

Thus, we, the undershepherds of the Great Shepherd, must join the apostles Paul and Peter not only in knowing what it means to believe in Christ but also to suffer for Christ: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29). "But rejoice to the extent that you

partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13). The pilgrims on heaven's highway persevere in suffering for the joy that is set before them, the joy that culminates in glory, because we know the outcome of the great controversy between good and evil; we know that triumph is assured; we know that at the end of this rugged road a rich reward awaits.

If the prospect of a loved one coming to visit fills us with joyous anticipation in the midst of suffering, how exceedingly more should the coming of our beloved Lord? Suffering must always be viewed from the perspective of His divine sustenance. We must never allow the strain and stress of ministry to eclipse the future glory. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). The glorious prospect set before us surmounts our present suffering and transforms it into transcendent joy.

## The signature of Christ

Brennan Manning depicts the scandal of the cross as the *Signature of Jesus*. This signature is eternally etched in His blood and carried on His heart. It is indelibly traced upon every soul that seeks to follow Him. It is *imperative* for us, ministers of the gospel, to be like Christ. For we do not merely partake of His salvation but also participate



in His suffering. His condescension and crucifixion leads us to deny ourselves daily, carry our crosses, and follow Him.

The cross propels us to experience radical discipleship, which must include being humiliated for Christ's sake. This is risky and dangerous business, for in doing this the bloody signature of our Lord is traced upon the soul of every one of His followers. When the crucified and risen Lord becomes our life, we share not only in His joy, victory, and exaltation but also in His sorrow, struggle, and humiliation. The humiliation of sharing in Christ's suffering in this world will culminate in the exaltation of His glory in the world to come. The beautiful crown awaiting us above emerges from bearing the bloody cross below. Carrying the cross here contains more honor than wearing the crown there. "Of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is *the most weighty trust and the highest honor*."<sup>1</sup> Suffering with Christ brands us with His indelible mark, a badge of honor to be worn before the whole universe for all eternity.

Living the signature of Jesus liberates us from the bondage of needing the praise and applause of the world and releases us into the embrace of seeking to please God. In the final analysis *His* pleasure and approval is what matters. It is *His* words, "Well done," that count. When we are struck by the stark reality that absolutely nobody and nothing can ultimately help us, then we are at last seized with the liberating and unmistakable conviction that *God is enough*.

### Trusting in Christ

Why do our trusted friends or church members sometimes disappoint us? Perhaps we are leaning more on them than on Christ? "We are prone to look to fellow men for sympathy and uplifting, instead of looking to Jesus. In His mercy and faithfulness God *often permits* those in whom we place confidence to *fail us*, in order that we may learn the folly of trusting in man and making flesh our arm. Let us trust fully, humbly, unselfishly in God."<sup>2</sup>

When we ask God to humble us, we have to mean it. Then He allows circumstances to humiliate us, thrusting any residue of

pride in the dust and tearing to shreds the fabric of our self-trust so that we may finally learn to place our full trust in Him. When we ask Him to help us to pray, we must be serious. Then He allows trials to bring us down to our knees in intense prayer, unable to leave Him until He blesses us. When we ask for a sturdy faith and a salient character, we must mean business. Then He proceeds to pull down all our human props and crutches so that in desperation we may hold on to His mighty arm, crying out, Lord save us or we perish!

This is the stuff tenacity is made of. It is clinging to Christ, not out of resignation but out of recognition that He is a Winner. If Jesus Himself held on to His Father amidst the darkness, how much more we need to hold on to Him in our own darkness? He is able to sympathize with us because He was constantly confronted with the forces of darkness. But He would never give up, for He knew that His cause is righteous and victorious. To Him persevering spelled prevailing. "As the world's Redeemer, Christ was *constantly confronted with apparent failure*. He seemed to do little of the work which He longed to do in uplifting and saving. . . . But He would not be discouraged. . . . He knew that *truth would finally triumph* in the contest with evil."<sup>3</sup>

### Living by faith

It has been said, "Seeing is believing." In the spiritual realm we know that it's more like "Believing is seeing." That's why Jesus told Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). When we long to live in the brilliance of His light, He allows us to plunge into the darkness of night so that we may live by faith and not by sight. When our way is hedged by darkness, when we stare at a moonless and starless night, when we are enveloped by dark clouds shielding God's presence from us, then we finally learn to testify, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job. 13:15), and to sing, "When darkness seems to veil His face, I rest on His unchanging grace." We finally learn that sometimes, in the profoundest way, God's silence *is* His answer.

Jesus experienced His Father's deafening silence on the cross. He could not see His Father's face. "The withdrawal of

the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man." Moreover, He "could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror."<sup>4</sup> But He knew in Whom He had believed, and by faith, not by sight, He gained the victory. In His agony He cried out with a loud voice only to hear no answer: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). Indeed, He was forsaken so that we may never be forsaken. Yet His implicit trust in God came through—despite His sense of being forsaken—for again He cried out: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Only the Son of God ever plunged into such an abyss. No human was ever summoned to drink such a bitter cup nor came close to such utter abandonment. We can see a light at the end of the tunnel; He could not. His perfect faith is what we desperately need to inspire and fortify our struggling faith. Our faith riveted to His faith pierces through the darkest night to discern the light beyond, learning to trust ever more in the unseen and ever less in the seen.

Tara Lipinski, in her undivided concentration on winning an Olympic gold medal, endured untold hardships, ridding herself of any hindrance that may have impeded her progress. If this child endured so admirably in order to win a mutable gold medal, how much more are we to endure so that we may win the crown of everlasting life. We are called to "run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1, 2). ■

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 225. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>2</sup> ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 486. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>3</sup> ———, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 514, 515. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, 753.



The perennial debate of inspiration and scriptural authority is heating up once again in Adventist circles. This decade has produced two major treatments

of this topic in the Adventist Church: Alden Thompson's *Inspiration* (Review and Herald, 1991), and Samuel Korentang-Pippim's *Receiving the Word* (Berean Books, 1996). I would like to examine their approaches briefly and suggest a third approach.

Both Thompson and Pippim build thought-provoking cases based on a wide range of evidence. Pippim's book is a well-footnoted, broad-ranging polemic defending a "high view" of Scripture. Thompson takes a candid look at the evidence, using an inductive, bottom-up approach. I enjoyed the biographical anecdotes of interaction with students and was impressed with Thompson's long catalog of scriptural anomalies. Thompson proposes that Scripture is more a casebook than a code book; i.e., "Do it like this," rather than "Do this." This insight, it seems to me, is both helpful and potentially dangerous if carried too far.

There is one dialogue in Thompson's book that concerns me. When asked how to interpret Paul's counsel about women in the church, Thompson replies, "Paul's counsel reflected the culture of his day, not an enduring principle. . . . That was Paul's logic, not necessarily God's" (98).

#### Cultural conditioning?

I have no strong convictions either way on the question of ordination of women. My concern is by what authority do we dismiss passages of Scripture that run counter to modern cultural norms? If we accept Scripture selectively, apart from the guidance of a later inspired writer, then we must have a standard higher than the

## The Bible: inspiration and authority

T I M C R O S B Y

Bible by which we can judge it. Thus Scripture as it stands is no longer supreme. Instead, we may come to favor some reduced digest of Scripture that conforms to our prejudices. In some circles, for example, the "canon within the canon" tends to be Romans and Galatians and the doctrine of justification. In other circles it seems to be the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the prodigal son. In a principle-based theology, the standard may become some selected essence extracted from the culturally conditioned husks by our own supposedly infallible logic. Thus, instead of whole-wheat theology, we achieve at last the pure white flour of palatable truth, which leads to spiritual malnutrition and death.

What are the limits of this methodology? What happens if we apply the casebook-or-code book approach to the Ten Commandments? In a principle-based approach, the exact day of the week in the fourth commandment may not remain important: Under this methodology we may conclude that one day in seven is enough.

Were the prophets culturally conditioned? Of course, but *so are we*. The difference between our bias and their bias is that they wrote under a recognized divine inspiration. Under the culturecentric assumption that our mores are superior, that "newer is truer," Scripture will always be interpreted to support whatever cause is politically correct at the moment. Only the Spirit of the ages, as mediated through Scripture, can deliver us from our "marriage" to the spirit of our own age.

This is not to say that every single command of Scripture applies to us today. Five times in the New Testament Christians are commanded without qualification to greet one another with a kiss. Since Pippim categorically rejects the cultural conditioning argument, are we to assume he does a lot of kissing?

#### Deductive and inductive logic

I recognize that the two preceding paragraphs stand in tension with one another. One reason is that the first one uses inductive logic, while the second one is deductive. This is part of the problem. Systematic theologians (Pippim) tend to use deductive logic, while biblical scholars (Thompson) tend to use inductive logic. To oversimplify, the systematician starts with the forest; the biblical scholar with the trees. The systematician takes the self-descriptive statements of Scripture, such as "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and proceeds to deduce what a book inspired by God should look like. The biblical scholar surveys the phenomenology of Scripture to find out how the Holy Spirit actually works. The systematician looks at the blueprint; the biblical scholar examines the building, delving for structural integrity. There are dangers both ways. If the biblical scholar sometimes forgets the big picture, the theologian sometimes forces the evidence into a procrustean bed (i.e., forces the facts to fit the theory). Maps of the forest are very useful, but down in the trenches of the text, the terrain doesn't always follow the map.

It is to Pippim's credit that he does address many specific problem texts, unlike some writers on the subject of inspiration. Unfortunately, not all problem passages are as pliable as the ones that Pippim selects to solve, and not all of his solutions are convincing. Both books, for example, have enlightening discussions of the problem of the large numbers of the Exodus, but each writer largely ignores the evidence for the other side. Pippim

praises the Old Testament chronological system established by Edwin R. Thiele, yet more than a dozen Ellen White chronological statements covering the period of the kings are discordant with Thiele's new and better chronology.

Pippim would have us believe that prophets are exempt from even trivial mistakes, such as giving a wrong reference for a quotation from Scripture. Yet this occurs twice in the New Testament (Matt. 27:9, 10; Mark 1:2) and several times in the writings of Ellen White. Pippim attempts to explain away the problem but ignores the Ellen White passages, where his explanations do not work. Simple honesty requires that we admit that a prophet can have a faulty memory, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 1:14-16. The author of Hebrews twice cites a text of Scripture whose reference he cannot recall (Heb. 2:6; 4:4). Evidently God can use imperfect people—which gives me hope that perhaps He can use me.

Let's put some typical deductive logic under the microscope. Consider the following syllogism:

God does not err.  
The Bible is God's Word.  
Hence the Bible is inerrant.

This seems plausible. Let's compare another syllogism:

God does not need to sleep.  
Jesus is God.  
Hence Jesus did not need to sleep.

Obviously our top-down, deductive logic has somehow led us astray, for Jesus did need sleep (Mark 4:38).

#### The historical-critical method

For Pippim, the problem is the historical-critical method. It seems to me that this is something of a red herring; it merely provides a convenient way of labeling those with whom we do not agree. All New Testament scholars selectively use Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, written by historical-critical scholars. It is the presuppositions, not the tools, that determine the conclusion. The historical-grammatical method, which Pippim

advocates, is essentially the historical-critical method with conservative presuppositions. The essential processes (e.g., ascertaining the meaning of a word or phrase by finding other occurrences in contemporary literature) do not change. Thus the Rio document, "Methods of Bible Study," voted at the 1986 Annual Council, wisely urges Adventists "to avoid relying on *the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the*

**T***he systematician*

*takes the self-descriptive statements of Scripture. . . . The biblical scholar surveys the phenomenology of Scripture. . . . The systematician looks at the blueprint; the scholar examines the building. . . . There are dangers both ways.*

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historical-critical method," not the method itself.

Pippim mentions source and redaction criticism as historical-critical processes to be avoided. Source criticism is an investigation into the author's sources, and redaction criticism seeks to find out how the author edited those sources. These techniques are highly speculative unless the actual sources are extant. If the sources are available, the techniques do have some value.

For example, Raymond Dillard's introduction to Chronicles in the conservative *NIV Study Bible* points out that the Chronicler omitted from his narrative virtually all of the embarrassing episodes found in his major source

(Samuel/Kings), thus turning David and Solomon into idealized kings. The troubles and sins of David and Solomon are all removed for the incident of the census, where the instigator is changed from God to Satan. This simple statement of fact is a redaction-critical conclusion (theological value: Think of this as an example of how God sees us after we are forgiven).

Example two: Anyone who spends ten minutes perusing a synopsis of the Gospels can see that each of the Gospel writers edited (redacted) the words of Jesus in different ways.

Example three: Robert Olson, conservative Adventist scholar and former director of the White Estate, authored an outstanding shelf document (which the Review and Herald Publishing Association hopes to publish in an upcoming volume) in which he lays the basis for a source-critical and redaction-critical approach to the book *The Desire of Ages*. This document is an education in how inspiration works, as it catalogs Ellen White's written requests to her assistants for various sources as she wrote, etc.

This suggests an antidote to any overly rigid theory of inspiration. We have a contemporary model, a modern prophet whose writings and whose sources are still extant today. No one familiar with recent scholarship regarding Ellen White would claim the sort of prophetic impeccability that Pippim claims for inspired writers.

And just here is my main objection to Pippim's system. It is a bridge too far. The recent history of the church is littered with the debris of well-known individuals who started from just such an ultra-conservative position and then stumbled over the difficulties they found in the inspired writings that weren't supposed to be there. It is as dangerous to claim too much for the Bible as to claim too little. The shibboleth of absolute inerrancy cannot be maintained and will ultimately result in disillusionment.

Since I am uncomfortable with aspects of both Thompson's and Pippim's positions, permit me to suggest a third alternative.

### Another approach

There are two very different ways of understanding a person. One approach is the analytical, anatomical approach of the physician. Another quite different approach is that of the affectionate friend. Likewise, there is more than one legitimate way to approach Scripture: the critical analysis of the scholar is as valid as the reverential synthesis of the witness.

The two approaches yield rather different insights. A simple reading of my love letters to my wife would reveal more about my character than a chemical analysis, though the chemical analysis might be of some value if the authenticity of the letter were in question.

The mysteries of love, like the mysteries of inspiration, resist analysis; yet on one level, romantic love does involve a chemical reaction in the brain—a chemical also found in chocolate. Of course, love is more than just a chemical in the brain. Likewise, Scripture is more than ancient literature: it is the Word of God. Scripture as God's Word, like God's Word Incarnate, is not partly divine and partly human; it is *wholly divine and wholly human*. This is crucial. The following thought experiment may help to clarify some of the implications of this.

Suppose a modern surgeon were to operate on the body of Jesus. Would this surgeon have to invent new and special surgical tools and techniques to use on the body of Jesus because of His divinity? Of course not. He would simply use the best surgical tools available.

Would the surgeon ever come to a point, as he cut ever deeper, where he would exclaim, "Why, this is God!?" Of course not. Jesus was wholly human. His body contained the same organs as ours, composed of the same elements found in dirt. The idea that we peel back the layers of the onion until we arrive at the essence is largely a myth. The essence lies, not on a sublevel, but on a metalevel.

Would such exploratory surgery enable us to truly understand Jesus? Of course not. It might shed light on His medical condition but not on His

personality or the mystery of His divinity. We do not access the spiritual on the merely anatomical level.

Likewise, on the purely grammatical level of Scripture, we do not access the supernatural. Spelling, for example, is not revealed (the word *Jerusalem* is spelled one way in John and another in Revelation). When subjected to various types of literary analysis, the Bible yields results that do not differ greatly from that of other contemporary literature (conventional literary forms, use of sources, stylistic variety, etc.), just as the rainbow, when analyzed by the physicist, turns out to be mundane physics. But this is only true on a mechanical level. On a higher level the rainbow has special meaning (Gen. 9:12-16).

Likewise, on the message level, the Bible has an effect on readers that is quite different from all other literature, for it has been invested with the power of God. It changes lives, breaks hearts, and mends people. We have empirical evidence of the truth of its claims.

Jesus is God in spite of the fact that He was made like us in every respect (Heb. 2:17, RSV). While on earth He surrendered His divine attributes, such as omnipresence and even omniscience (Matt. 24:36; Mark 5:30), so that He had to learn through suffering (Heb. 5:8) and shared common human frailties such as hunger, fatigue, elimination, weakness (2 Cor. 13:4) and mortality. Likewise, the Bible is God's Word in spite of its "weaknesses." We have this treasure in jars of clay (2 Cor. 4:7). We know in part, and we prophesy in part (1 Cor. 13:9). When God inspired imperfect men to write, He placed His blessing on their labors, imparted information where necessary, and infused what they wrote with His power. Scripture is the classic case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Dissecting and analyzing the parts is an interesting diversion, but trusting in the whole—treating the text as it stands as God's message to us—brings life.

### The Bible—the final authority

In politics, nobody argues that the

Constitution is perfect; nevertheless, it is the final word. The Bible should hold an even higher place in the church than the Constitution holds in the life of a country. It would be a tragedy if we were to ascribe even less authority to the Scriptures than Americans do to a purely human document. The Bible must be the final authority for Christian belief and practice. If there are lower-level anomalies, they should never be used as an excuse to disregard scriptural commands.

In seeking to understand the ways of God, the scientific analysis of Scripture is just as legitimate as the scientific study of nature. Nevertheless, *this is not our mission*. God has called us primarily to proclaim the word, not to analyze or defend it. When proclaimed with authority, it is self-authenticating and life-changing. Sometimes our theology needs tweaking, so biblical scholarship is just as necessary as automechanics. But it would be a crucial mistake to stop driving our cars and spend all our time analyzing them. Cars are for going, not knowing. The church needs a few theo-mechanics who enjoy a bit of exegetical grease under the nails, but it needs more drivers if it hopes to get where it wants to go.

In conclusion, we can have both the candor of Thompson and the militant faith of Pippim. We can recognize the imperfections of the earthen vessels in which we have this perfect treasure yet retain a deep reverence for the plenary authority of Scripture as the power of God unto salvation, a double-edged sword that "penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12). Let's spend less time inspecting the blade and more time fighting—and I don't mean infighting. We do not judge Scripture; Scripture judges us. God's blessing rests on the one "that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa. 66:2, RSV). And as long as we submit with reverent humility to God's Word, even where it pinches, we cannot fail. ■

*Tim Crosby, D.Min., is editor-at-large at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

# CAST THE NET THE INCLUSIVE WAY

**N**o question about it! With NET '98 coming upon us on October 9, 1998, many youth and young adults want to be involved in the coordinating, working, and follow-up of this great crusade.



*Ron Whitehead is the director of the North American Center for Youth Evangelism.*

Youth and young adults want to be part of this event, but often they withdraw themselves. Either they are not used to such programs, or they have never been given an opportunity to participate. As spiritual leaders, pastors need to challenge their youth to get involved. Here are some fascinating facts about youth/young adult evangelism:

1. *It is needed.* Eighty percent of all youth workers say that evangelism is one of their top three values; yet few youth workers actually know how to involve youth in evangelism.

2. *It's time.* Seventy-five percent of all people who become Christians do so before their eighteenth birthday.

3. *It matters to God.* Matthew 28:18 commands each of us to go and make disciples of all nations. That includes youth.

4. *It's been proven.* An army of youth rightly trained and furnished . . .

Here are some ways and events through which to involve youth and young adults in evangelism.

#### **Holding seminars**

According to a recent survey, the top three New Year's resolutions are to: (1) stop smoking; (2) lose weight; and (3) become

financially secure. These are topics that attract the interest of a large number of young people. So why not involve the youth in seminars that will help other youth and young adults?

*Stop smoking seminars.* Smoking is making a comeback in teens and Xers. This provides a viable avenue by which you may introduce them to your church community. Recommended resource: Breathe Free Director's Kit, Item 15230, \$69.95. Health Connection 800-548-8700. This resource has a built-in support system. The participants go through the process in small groups. Match them up one-by-one with church members, and continue afterward with small group meetings once a week, going through the 12 Steps for seekers. *12 Steps—The Path to Wholeness*, \$4.95, Serendipity House; 800-525-9563.

*Weight loss seminar.* You could teach this seminar. Your teens can assist you and mingle with the guests. For follow-up, have your teens volunteers in pairs to exercise (walk or jog) with the guests on a regular basis. Resource: Abundant Living Weight Management Seminar, Item 15400, \$24.95; 800-548-8700.

*Money management seminar.* Present the ABCs of financial freedom, by Gordon

Botting. Two-video seminar set and leader's guide, \$69.95, AdventSource; 800-328-0525. Participant's workbook, \$4.95.

### Meeting youth needs

Your youth can be involved in meeting several felt needs of children, youth, and adults. Here are some ideas:

*Parents' night out.* The Foster Memorial Adventist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, gives community parents a free night once a month from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The church sends a letter to all the parents with children up to 12 years old. The letter encourages the parents to tell their neighbors about the program. The parents

are invited to bring the children and leave them in the church for an exciting program, geared to each age group. This is not a simple baby-sitting program but one that has a spiritual and evangelistic element in it. The program usually takes the following format: worship (15 minutes), dinner, group games and crafts (divided by age). For more information on this type of ministry, contact Summer Ministries, AdventSource, \$19.95; 800-328-0525.

*Basketball renovations.* In Benton Harbor, Michigan, two young adults decided to make some friends in the community by hitting the basketball court. This particular court was located in a park

that had been overrun by drug dealers and gangs. The court sparkled in the sunlight from a coating of broken glass. The nets had been torn down months earlier. The young volunteers brought a broom, some duct tape, and a couple of nets. As they began sweeping off the court and assembling the nets, young people started coming out to play. Some friendships were born that day that may last for eternity.

*Holy Spirit van.* Load up a van with food, drink, blankets, jumper cables, money, your Bible, a rope, flowers, umbrellas, and such items as may be used to aid a stranger. Have your group in the van and take turns praying for the Holy Spirit to lead you where you can be of best help. After prayer, begin driving, keeping your hearts and eyes open for that opportunity to reach out in love and service. The idea was first tried out by Danny Hernandez, chaplain, Forest Lake Academy; 407-862-8411.

*Service projects.* Develop local humanitarian and service projects. Young people admire community organizations that "walk the walk" locally. Being involved in Habitat for Humanity, local homeless shelters, and other community service action opportunities in your region will be a natural arena in which you get to know prebelieving Xers as you work hand in hand with them. To learn more about developing your own service projects or to become involved in mission trips, contact Fred Cornforth, director of Service Station (an Adventist support ministry) at 800-617-2498 or fred@servicestation.org.

*Ministry to single parents.* Understand the needs of single parents in your community and develop ministries to address those needs. Auto servicing ministry, affordable child care, parenting seminars, cooking for baby classes—these are all examples of how you can provide support for a whole cohort of Xers and Boomers. To learn more about developing needs-based outreach to your community, contact the Adventist Center for Creative Ministry, 800-272-4664 or Adventist PlusLine 800-SDA-PLUS.

### Spiritual ministries

Outreach is not limited only to meeting the social and personal needs of people. Out

*Continued on page 28*

## NET '98: From metaphor to reality

NET '98. Nothing like this has ever happened before. Three angels flying in the midst of heaven is about to move from metaphor to reality. A global satellite evangelistic series is about to span the earth to reach all cultures and age groups in 40 languages. Beginning October 9, 1998, NET '98 will broadcast over the earth for five weeks, and stations around the world will downlink the Advent message for millions of listeners. That's a big challenge! Who and where are the evangelists and television producers equal to it? Humanly speaking, there are none, anywhere.

Yet, by the grace of God, the "foolishness of preaching" can be "all things to all people" when it is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel of Jesus Christ and the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14 will be among the subjects preached during NET '98.

NET '98 is evangelism all-inclusive. It will reach out to children. It will speak to youth. It will challenge young adults. In all cases, NET '98 will address the critical issues facing every person living on earth. It will invite people everywhere to become better acquainted with the God of their origin and the God of their destiny. It calls for every child, youth, and young adult to

be personally involved in reaching out to other children and youth through NET '98.

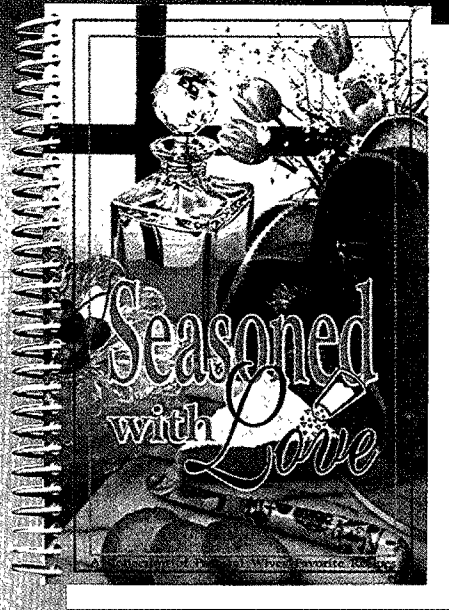
The North American Division Center for Youth Evangelism has commissioned a child evangelism materials package that will be available to churches for use during NET '98. The materials are designed for children 4-11 and designed to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. Let's make this the best and the most widely aired initiative ever made to reach our children.

The Youth Evangelism Center, under the direction of Ron Whitehead, is also active in preparing for evangelism among youth and young adults. Working with a team of youth and young adults, the center is getting materials ready to alert and inform youth and young adults about their potential involvement in NET '98.

As pastors, you can do three things to make NET '98 a very significant evangelistic thrust in your community. Know what it is. Become familiar with the materials available. Involve your church fully. The Lord of the harvest will do the rest. ■

*Cyril Miller is vice president for evangelism, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.*

# From the Ministerial Association...



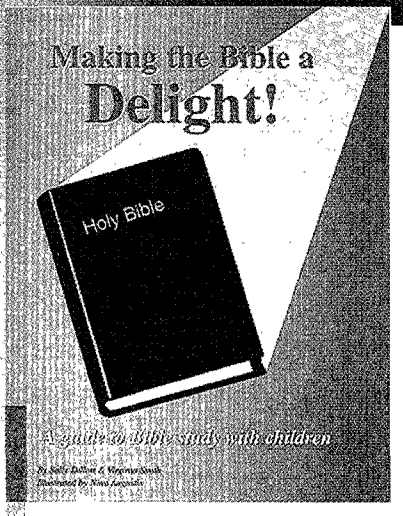
A collection of pastoral wives' favorite recipes, this wonderful cookbook is filled with everything from appetizers to breads to beverages to cookies and candies—all meatless and from all over the world.

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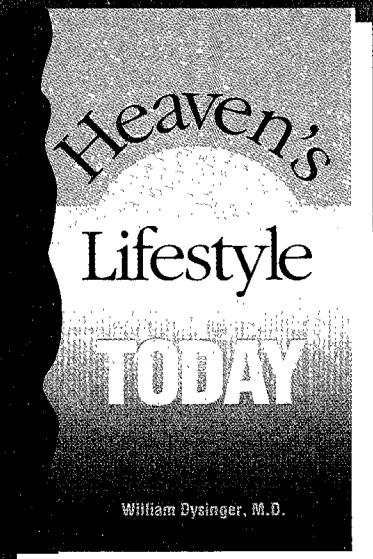


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**P**reacher's Kids (PKs) are special people! As a PK myself, I can describe benefits and challenges of growing up in a pastoral

family from my own experience.

Because both my brothers and Sharon's sister have pastoral families with PKs as well, we have observed their progress in raising three nieces and a nephew, all delightful and clever.

As we discuss these benefits and challenges, we will put God's priority first. The minister's first mission field is his own home and family.

"The minister's duties lie around him, nigh and afar off; but his first duty is to his children. He should not become so engrossed with his outside duties as to neglect the instruction which his children need. He may look upon his home duties as of lesser importance, but in reality they lie at the very foundation."<sup>1</sup>

"Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first. In the day of final reckoning, God will inquire what he did to win to Christ those whom he took the responsibility of bringing into the world. Great good done for others cannot cancel the debt that he owes to God to care for his own children."<sup>2</sup>

Did you get the importance of this admonition? There is nothing more important you can or will accomplish than making certain the upbringing of your children will help them choose for Jesus Christ and delight in the things of His kingdom. Any other accomplishments you may achieve, failing this first priority, will ultimately be dross.

#### **PKs have special opportunities**

Often we too easily focus on the challenges that pastoral families, and PKs in particular, encounter without reminding ourselves of the real benefits that come

## ***PKs are special too!***

JAMES A. CRESS

from growing up in the pastor's home.

For example, there is probably no other profession in which kids experience as much involvement in their parents' work than the children of pastors. Most children grow accustomed to seeing their parents leave home to go to work with little realization of what that parent actually does.

Because most church issues typically intrude the pastoral family, this is not so for PKs. Usually they are more aware of church problems, politics, plans, and projects than almost anyone else in the church.

And there is little use in trying to keep a secret from a PK. As a child I once knew that a debate was raging in the congregation about the discipline of an adulterous member. My parents earnestly attempted to shield our young ears from the details but were amazed when my brother and I informed them of discussions and details that were more up-to-date than the latest information they possessed.

So whether for good or ill, and most of it is beneficial, your children will become intimately involved in your ministry. In fact, the experience of growing up in a pastoral family typically gives a decided professional advantage to PKs who later become ministers because they have already seen many problems and possibilities addressed as they matured.

Among other advantages for PKs are the opportunities for travel to new and exciting places: camp meetings, summer camps, pastoral meetings, etc., along with experiencing special events and encountering friends who share similar experiences. As a result, PKs often grow up with a wider worldview than those who never encounter such experiences.

Leadership development is an integral part of maturity for most PKs as they first view their pastoral parents planning projects, resolving problems, conducting Bible studies, or helping people. Remember that real-life education occurs more by observation than by instruction.

#### **PKs also have special challenges**

Perhaps the greatest challenge I have experienced or observed in other pastoral families are unrealistic expectations of children just because they are PKs. Some of these expectations come from the church members, while others are imposed by well-meaning parents who want their children to be perfect. In fact, even PKs, themselves, can adopt unrealistic expectations for themselves.

A favorite cartoon of ours shows a pastoral dog, similar to our Yorkshire Terrier, Dexter, leaving the house with instructions from the pastor who says, "Now remember, Fido, you are the pastor's dog, and everyone will be observing your behavior."

Short tenure and frequent moves pose another challenge for some PKs. Within the same pastoral family there may be children who readily adapt to new environments, thrive on new experiences, and never seem frustrated or hampered by times of transition, while other PKs experience real trauma at the loss of friends, schools, familiar routines, and a totally new environment. I have admired many pastoral families who carefully process upcoming transfers with their children to the extent that the whole transition becomes a family adventure more than just a relocation.

Since such processing takes time, it is important to remember another big challenge that PKs face if they have an absentee pastoral parent. As my colleague, Children's Ministries Director Virginia Smith, says, "It is easy to become so engrossed in 'the Lord's work' that we fail to do the Lord's first work in ministering to our own families." The wise pastor will make certain to schedule quality and



quantity time to interact with the PKs whom God has entrusted. You can never recoup the missed opportunities that occurred while you were in a committee or making one more visit. Remember, pastors and pastoral families need the renewing experience of foot washing and the healing promised in Malachi.

**Good things are happening for PKs**

The Eastern Africa Division sponsors an exciting new program designed especially for PKs. According to Saustin Mfunne, director of this special program and editor of a newsletter just for PKs, this is the first division in the world that has come up with a comprehensive constitution in addressing the PKs' needs. He says, "I am looking for ways to boost PKs in my division."

Rocky Mountain Conference has hosted several "workers meeting" retreats

designed especially for PKs.

The Caribbean Union publishes a color magazine aimed at the teens and preteen PKs in their field and featuring the activities and plans the PKs design themselves.

Virginia Smith and Sharon Cress are searching for ways to more effectively minister to PKs everywhere. Recently, Virginia's department joint-ventured with the Ministerial Association to publish a book, *Making the Bible a Delight*, designed especially to help pastoral families create a love and study of the Scriptures for their children—PKs or membership (see ad on p. 23).

**Special Toronto 2000 PK opportunity**

With this issue, the Ministerial Association announces an exciting opportunity just for PKs around the

world to use their most creative talents in a variety of competition categories.

Winners will be selected and appropriately rewarded in each union around the world. The winning entry in each category from each union will be forwarded to the General Conference Ministerial Association, where one grand prize PK winner for each category will win a free trip for themselves and their parents to the World Ministers Council at Toronto in 2000. Check out the contest rules on page 26 and get your PKs to win you a free trip to the GC precession!

PKs are really special to the Ministerial Association as well as to your own family! ■

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 204.

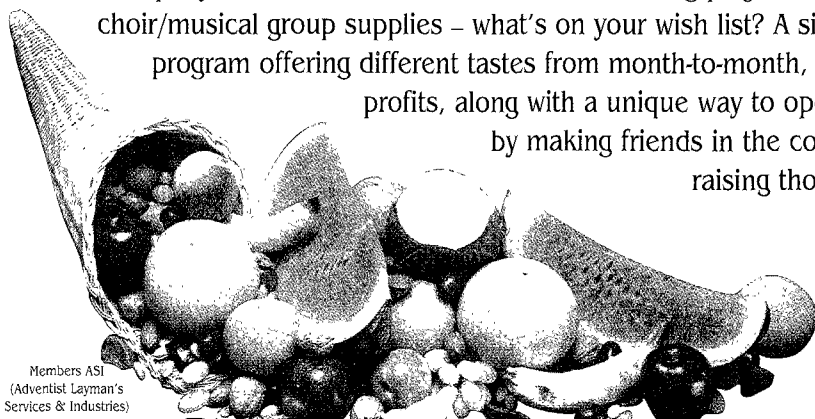
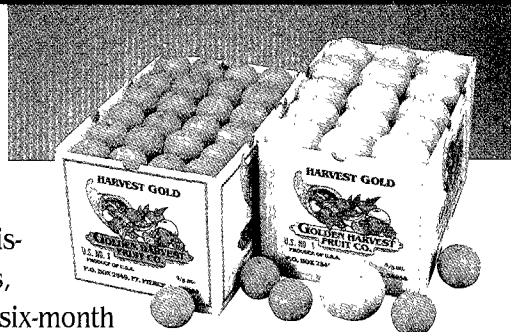
<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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you will go **FREE**  
and take your parents as well!

One winner in each category will win a free trip (travel, accommodations, food, registration) for themselves and their pastoral parents to the General Conference pre-session, World Ministers Council at Toronto, Canada, in June, 2000.

### PK Contest Guidelines

Note: Follow instructions. Entries which do not follow the guidelines will not be considered.

#### Contest Theme: "The Way of the Cross Leads Home"

1. Only PKs (preacher's kids) born *during or after* 1983 qualify. Contestant's parent(s) must be full-time Adventist ministry employees, such as a pastor, chaplain, departmental director, Bible instructor, administrator, or Bible teacher in a secondary or higher educational institution.
2. Every entry must use the theme "The Way of the Cross Leads Home."
3. Entry deadline is April 1, 1999. Entries received after that date will not be considered. Ship to: PK Contest, GC Ministerial Association, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA.
4. For judging purposes, your name *must not* appear on your entry. Instead, include a separate paper with your name, birth date, address, parent's name, division and union, and telephone number if available.
5. PKs must create the entry without parental or other help and must submit original entries, not copies.
6. Pack all entries carefully for shipping. Damaged entries cannot be considered.
7. All entries become property of the General Conference and will be displayed at the Toronto World Ministers Council. No entries can be returned.
8. Only one entry allowed per category per contestant.

### Contest Categories

Each entry must follow the theme:  
"The Way of the Cross Leads Home"

#### Art (for *Ministry* magazine cover)

- Art must be in color and original work of the PK.
- Size minimum 8 x 10.5 inches (20 x 27 cm), maximum 11 x 16 inches (28 x 41 cm).
- Allow room in artwork for the *Ministry* magazine title logo. See magazine cover.

#### Cartoon

- The cartoon must be a single line drawing or a series of no more than four related line drawings which tell a story. (Ink on 4 x 5 inch (10 x 13 cm) card. No pencil drawings.)
- Mount each drawing on 8.5 x 11 inch (26.6 x 28 cm) card stock paper.

#### Banners & Flags

- Must follow theme by script or representation.
- Make from handmade or commercial cloth.
- Use paint, thread, fabric, stain, and similar materials.
- Minimum size one yard (about one meter) long and wide and maximum 3 yards (3 meters) long or wide including border.

#### Recitation/Memorization

- Choose one passage: Isaiah 52:9-53:12; Luke 23:33-24:9; Romans 5:1-21.
- Use any recognized version of Scripture in the language of your choice.
- Recitation from memory, without prompting. Your entry will be judged on memorization of the passage and your ability to hold the listener's attention.
- Submit on audio cassette.

#### Article

- In the article, respond to one or two of these questions: How does the fact that Jesus left heaven,

became a human, and die like a criminal make a difference in your life? How does it affect your thinking, actions, and goals?

What does Jesus' sacrifice tell you about God, who He is, what He's like?

How does Jesus' life and death help you understand sin? How does this help you relate to other people, especially those who disagree with you?

How does Jesus' life and death here give you hope and guide you "home"?

- Don't use many quotations from any source. Use one more personal stories to illustrate your ideas.
- Length between 750 and 1,000 words.
- Type or hand-print with double-spacing.
- Use the title, "The Way of the Cross Leads Home: What it Means to Me."
- You may talk about your ideas with friends, family, teachers, or pastors. They may give suggestions, correct grammar or spelling but not write, revise, or rewrite.
- Tell your story. Not someone else's and not one from the Bible.

#### Stitchery

- Except for ideas, the entire entry must be your work.
- Types of stitchery eligible: crochet, embroidery, crew embroidery, quilting, knitting, applique, and needlepoint.
- Size minimum 4 x 4 inches (10 x 10 cm) maximum 2 4 feet (61 x 122 cm).
- Materials must be native to your country.
- Your entry will be judged on originality, use of material, how it captures the theme, and neatness.

## GC Ministerial Association recognizes lifelong commitment to evangelism



Three individuals were honored by the General Conference Ministerial Association at the Voice of Prophecy's annual "West Point of Evangelism" council, December 1997. Pictured are Lonnie and Jeanne Melashenko and Kenneth Cox of the VOP team; Don Gray, who, along with his wife

Marjorie, were honored for a lifelong commitment to evangelism and team ministry; C. Dale Brusett, who was honored for his career-long service in public evangelism; C. Lloyd Wyman, coordinator of the Evangelism Council, and Sharon and Jim Cress of the Ministerial Association. ■

## Former first secretary of the communist party takes a leap from atheism to Adventism

For years Vladimir Samorodkin was the first secretary of the Communist Party of Nizhni Novgorod in the former Soviet Union. This important industrial province, called Gorki during Stalin's time, produced MIG fighter jets, nuclear submarines, and Volga motor cars. So important was Gorki that it was a "closed city" for foreigners.

Vladimir Samorodkin played an important and powerful role in the success of the province. He controlled the lives of million of Soviet workers who toiled for the world domination of Marxism. And the party rewarded him adequately: he had a fine apartment, a country dacha, admission to hard-currency stores, and the respect of the party faithful.

But beneath the veneer of success, Vladimir was a troubled man. While immersed from childhood in atheistic dogma, he was uncomfortable with the idea that, at best, he was a first cousin to the ape. World problems—hunger, pollution, war—seemed to have no solution in spite of the Communist propaganda to the contrary.

Then came the coup of '91 when Yeltsin

faced the tanks in Moscow. As communism crumbled, Samorodkin resigned as first secretary of Gorki. Soon he found employment as a private businessman, but he never found that peace of mind that dodged him all his life. His old questions continued to distress him, until a Saturday afternoon during the latter part of 1997.

Sitting in his living room, Vladimir



turned on his TV. Suddenly he was confronted by the Carter Report. Pastor Carter, the pastor of the Community Adventist Fellowship Church in Glendale, California, was speaking about the evidences for Christ and His Word. Vladimir could hardly wait for the next

## In India, a new church is born

Twenty-nine people were baptized in Rajole, North Andra Section, Southern Asia Division, at the end of a five-week long campaign, ending on December 18, 1997. The last two weeks of the campaign were led by John M. Fowler (center, seated), consulting editor of *Ministry*. In a nearby satellite campaign, another 71 were



baptized. More baptisms are expected. These believers come from different communities and varied faiths to constitute the first Adventist Church in Rajole town. Plans are afoot to purchase land and build a worship place. ■

Saturday to come. He eagerly listened to compelling evidence of historical facts that demonstrate the reliability of the Bible. For the first time in his life, he was being asked to believe, not on the basis of blind faith, but on the evidence of facts that could be seen and even touched. Biblical archaeology eased open a crack in his mind, and he was ready to investigate further. He continued to view the Carter Report week after week, and finally called the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nizhni Novgorod. Bible studies followed, and with his wife Valentina, he accepted Christ as his Saviour and the great truths of the three angels' messages.

A few weeks ago, the former first secretary of Gorky's communist party, along with his wife, took the leap Marx to Jesus, from atheism to Adventism. They now have joy and peace, knowing that they are not accidents in a cosmos, but children of a living God, saved by the blood of Jesus. ■

## Cast the net the inclusive way

Continued from page 22

there in the community there are many suffering from a spiritual want. There is a spiritual need, and they would love to have your young people meet that need. Here are some ideas:

**Bible studies.** Invite teens to give Bible studies in the homes of persons contacted through door-to-door surveys, mass mailing of Bible study offers, newspaper ads, *It Is Written* or *Voice of Prophecy* follow-ups, literature evangelist contacts, former Adventists, *Signs* or *Message* magazine recipients, persons who have attended health-related seminars, or children from the local Adventist school who would like to receive Bible studies in preparation for baptism. Contact the pastor for your leads.

**Big brother/sister Bible program.** One powerful and proven method of Bible study is to follow up on non-Adventist primary and junior age children who have attended Adventist VBS programs. Suggested approach: "Hi, Mrs. Jones. My name is Cindy, and I am the leader of our church's youth group. Susie attended the VBS this past summer at the Auburn City Adventist Church, and I thought she might enjoy our big brother/big sister Bible program.

"Here's how it works: A couple of teens come to your home for about half an hour

every Tuesday night. They bring a book of Bible lesson guides (*Good News for Kids*, Marge Gray, 1989, \$5.95; 800-765-6955) that has games, puzzles, and questions about important subjects like heaven, angels, and honesty. Everyone looks up the answers together from the Bible. It's been really nice for our youth group to do something positive for the community, and the kids have really enjoyed having Christian high school friends. Is this something you think Susie would like?"

When the teens go to the home, they take stickers and Bible games or short videos. They encourage the children to finish the lesson on their own during the week. If they do, there's time for a Bible game, and of course, almost all kids love to get stickers on their lessons. Sometimes the parents ask for studies too!

### Visual outreach

People remember about five to ten percent of what they hear but 50 percent of what they see and hear. Here are some resources for starting visual outreach ministries:

**Puppet outreach.** Start a puppet outreach at the county fair, public schools, youth group meetings, etc. For more information, call Go Tell Productions (SDA) 313-487-9760; International Festival of Christian Puppetry and Ventriloquism, One-Way Street, Inc., P.O. Box 5077, Englewood, CO 80155-5077; phone 303-790-1188; fax 303-7900-2159; email: sales@onewaystreet.com; Fellowship of Christian Puppeteers, c/o Sherry Patterson, 6813 Ciro Court, Citrus Heights, CA 95621, 510-634-0495.

**Drama ministry.** Another great way to use the creative arts to reach and involve Xers is through drama. Perform for schools, local churches, detention centers, and in public areas (e.g., street theater). To learn more about drama ministry, contact Maria Rodriguez msager@mpa.candler.nc.us), a former director of the Destiny Drama Company.

**TV ministry:** Plug into your local cable public access channel and broadcast an almost-free teenage talk show that shares Christ. For more information, contact Hilda Torres at 301-680-6412 or 74532. 2404@compuserve.com

### And there's more

The sky's the limit for what you and your youth can do in missionary outreach. Here are some more ideas:

- At one of your youth meetings, have the youth go through newspapers to find people in need. Maybe someone has died or someone's house has burned down. Your youth can send a comforting card or take some food and clothing. Such activities can keep your youth focused on real missionary work of helping people in need.

- Contact a local community service agency or hospital volunteer department and see if they need people to mow lawns, paint houses, help people move, etc.

- Hold a worship service in a local park that is totally youth-led. Ask young people to invite their unchurched friends.

- Have your youth go door to door giving out flowers to mothers on Mother's Day or pens to men for Father's Day. Distribute soda or juice at the local beach, park, or bike path. Place a sticker on each can with the name, phone number, and address of your church and include an inspiring quote.

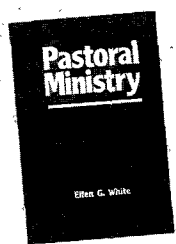
### Child evangelism

A lively troupe of children have been at work performing for the video portion of the NET '98 child evangelism materials package. Joel Thompson is directing the productions. Print materials are also under way. Donna Habenicht, professor of Educational Psychology at Andrews University, is overseeing the full package, with a team of individuals experienced in NET and other child evangelism. Dr. Habenicht is the author of "How to Teach Children in Sabbath School" and "How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus."

The children's materials package will be offered to churches through Seminars Unlimited. Entitled "Come, Meet Jesus," the materials are for children ages 4-7 and 8-11.

### Get involved

That much for materials and programs. But they are of no use unless you and your youth and your church members get involved. Prepare now for NET '98. When the time strikes, your church will be ready for the greatest electronic evangelistic thrust our church has ever launched. ■



The compilers of *Pastoral Ministry* have woven a fine tapestry of Ellen White's writings on the joys, challenges,

and trials of the local church pastor. The topics range from the minister's personal devotional life to ministerial ethics, health, and time management. Also available in Spanish.

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## Letters

Continued from p. 3

declares us to be "clean" or "healed." I am sure any therapist worth his salt can imagine the frustration our therapist felt when he was pressed for such answers, including (against his professional confidentiality) to reveal exactly what "dysfunction" might have been discussed!

What a sad misconception that hurts not only the victim but also, more than likely, the many clergy in the field (including administrators!), who could be blessed by just such an experience but who would never initiate it because of how it is perceived.—Anonymous.

### Hermeneutics and the development of the canon

In my article titled "Hermeneutics and the Development of the Canon" (January, 1998) there are two important points (obscured in the editorial process) I would like to clarify: one, that a "closed" canon is a theological construct for which there is no internal biblical support; and two, that the canon demonstrates dynamic growth, that it expanded, it grew, as the result of prophetic additions. I would welcome and am open to dialogue on these issues.—Luis F. Acosta, pastor, Lynwood Bilingual SDA Church, 2042 Atlantida Drive, Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4845; E-mail thecoast@pcmagic.net

### Appreciation

I register my sincere thankfulness to you for constantly sending me the bimonthly issue of *Ministry*. Since I began receiving the magazine, I have gained a new light and a better dimension for my service from it. It is a great source of learning and encouragement for my ministry. Please continue to send. Thank you once again, and may God continue to use you for his glory.—Rev. Jonah Odama, Africa Christian Ministries, Masindi, Uganda. ■

## Thirsty for a Word

Continued from p. 4

impressing people, lending what may well be a certain power to the minister. However, in themselves they do not have the capacity to authentically transform

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and convince the deep elements of the human soul where it really counts.

So it seems to me that our backs are to the wall. Nothing but the real thing will do anymore. God has brought us to the place where any sort of pretense simply will not cut it and where a Spiritless life, ministry, and proclamation is increasingly being exposed as inadequate to face the eschatological day to which the church has come. I think this place against the wall is close to the place God brought Paul as he called him out of his aging religious system. It is this drawing out of Paul that gave him the courage to leave the hollowness of the old and embrace the living reality of the new. He expressed it this way: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:7, 8, RSV).

The theme of this issue is the pastor and the Bible. It is spreading the Word.

And the words are waiting. We will find and know them if we seek them out as the practical, everyday passion of our life and ministry. They have the seeds of new being in them. In the final analysis, it is of course the definitive Word of the Cross we are called to spread, first through our life and then in our proclamation. Let us uncompromisingly dedicate an unequivocal and significant part of our every day to excavating the Bible. Let's embrace it with a new passion and prowess both on a personal and professional level—the fabulous essence of the Book and its revelation. Let's love the Bible and purpose to give it, and above all, the Word Himself, the worthy place of primacy in our life and preaching. ■

<sup>1</sup> Laurens van der Post, *A Walk With a White Bushman* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 273.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## SHOPTALK

### Taking "go" literally

Getting tired of trying to motivate your members to witness? Can't seem to move them off the pews? Well, here's a thought.

A few Sabbath's ago, here's what I did. With 250 people in attendance, I shortened the order of service so that it would last less than 30 minutes. My sermon was titled "Go." (It lasted less than 10 minutes.) For my introduction, I quoted Matthew 28:10. For the body, I stressed that the commission does not say "come" or "wait until they beat down the church doors." I shared with them how hard it is to convince people to go out and tangibly share their faith. So, I told them, I will now remove their excuses. They were told that since they have allocated the morning, up until 12 noon, to God, since they had no other plans and no place to go, there was no excuse not to be part of our "living sermon."

They were then given three pieces of literature (per family) and instructed to go into some neighborhood after church and pass out these three pieces. For the

conclusion, I told them a special Vespers was planned that evening for us to come together and share our experiences (75 came back with exciting reports). I had the benediction, gathered my family, and we left the church at 11:20 a.m.

The following week I discovered through a survey that 88 percent of the people distributed their literature. Since then, we can hardly keep literature in our rack.—Ron Priest, pastor, Norfolk SDA Church, Virginia.

### Teaching family life in the church

The family is the nucleus from which all people emanate. Families provide tribes, clans, villages, and states. The church also depends on the family. Family counseling is one of the roles of a pastor. If he can succeed here, he can in any other area. The following are methods a pastor can use to teach family life in the local church.

- a. Love your family.
- b. Have good plans for family-life programs.
- c. Be diversified. In teaching family life in the church we should reach all classes represented: adults, youth, singles, widows, and widowers.

d. Communicate family-life programs with your members.

e. Prepare church members for family-life seminars. Create a need for family-life teachings in the church.

f. Don't try to answer all the questions yourself. Let your members respond, because many are more competent.

g. Keep time. Some wives have unbelieving husbands, and some of the attendants might be committed with other business. Give them enough and release them in time. This will motivate them to attend the next time.

h. Have good materials. Prepare teachers well.

i. Listen to the Spirit's voice in handling family life. Have a prayer day for family life.

Using the above list, a pastor can succeed in teaching family life in the church.—Pastor Stephen Kemei Arap Chomu, Western Kenya Field.

### In-house sharing magazine

Many members of our church have had marvelous spiritual experiences, but often they are shy about standing up and sharing before a crowd. Thus Sharing Magazine was formed in our local church. Church members share poems or short accounts of answered prayers. Even children and teenagers can contribute to this locally inspirational, xeroxed booklet. Many teens are great at artwork for the cover also. We all grow stronger in the Lord when we obediently witness for Him!—Rev. Douglas Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas.

### \$25 for your ideas

Send us your suggestion about how pastors can make ministry more effective or less stressful. If we publish it, we will send you \$25. If your idea promotes a product or service, we'll be glad to consider it for publication but won't pay you \$25. Send ideas to *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. To receive payment, all U.S. citizens must include Social Security number. ■

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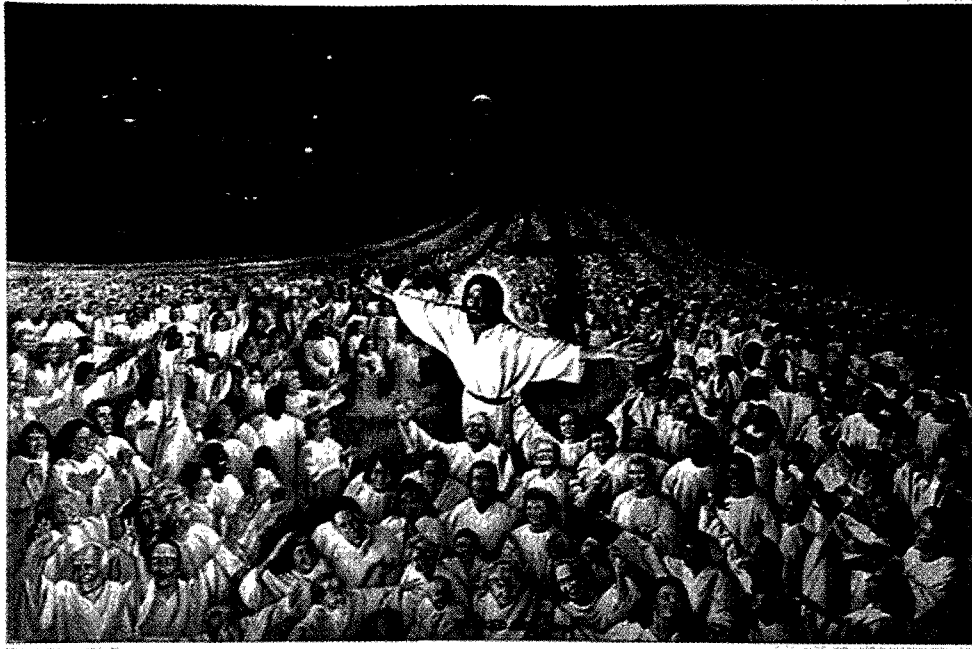
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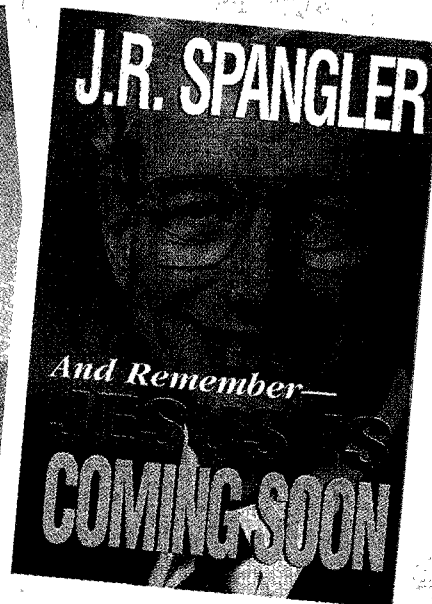
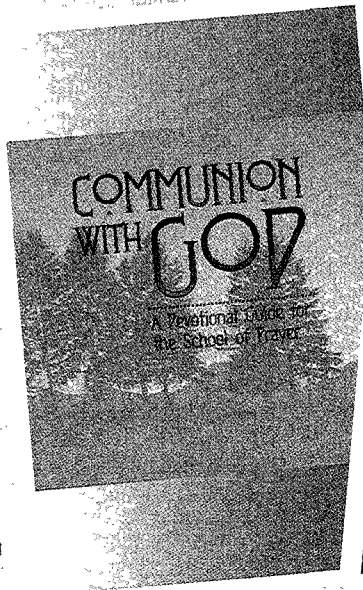


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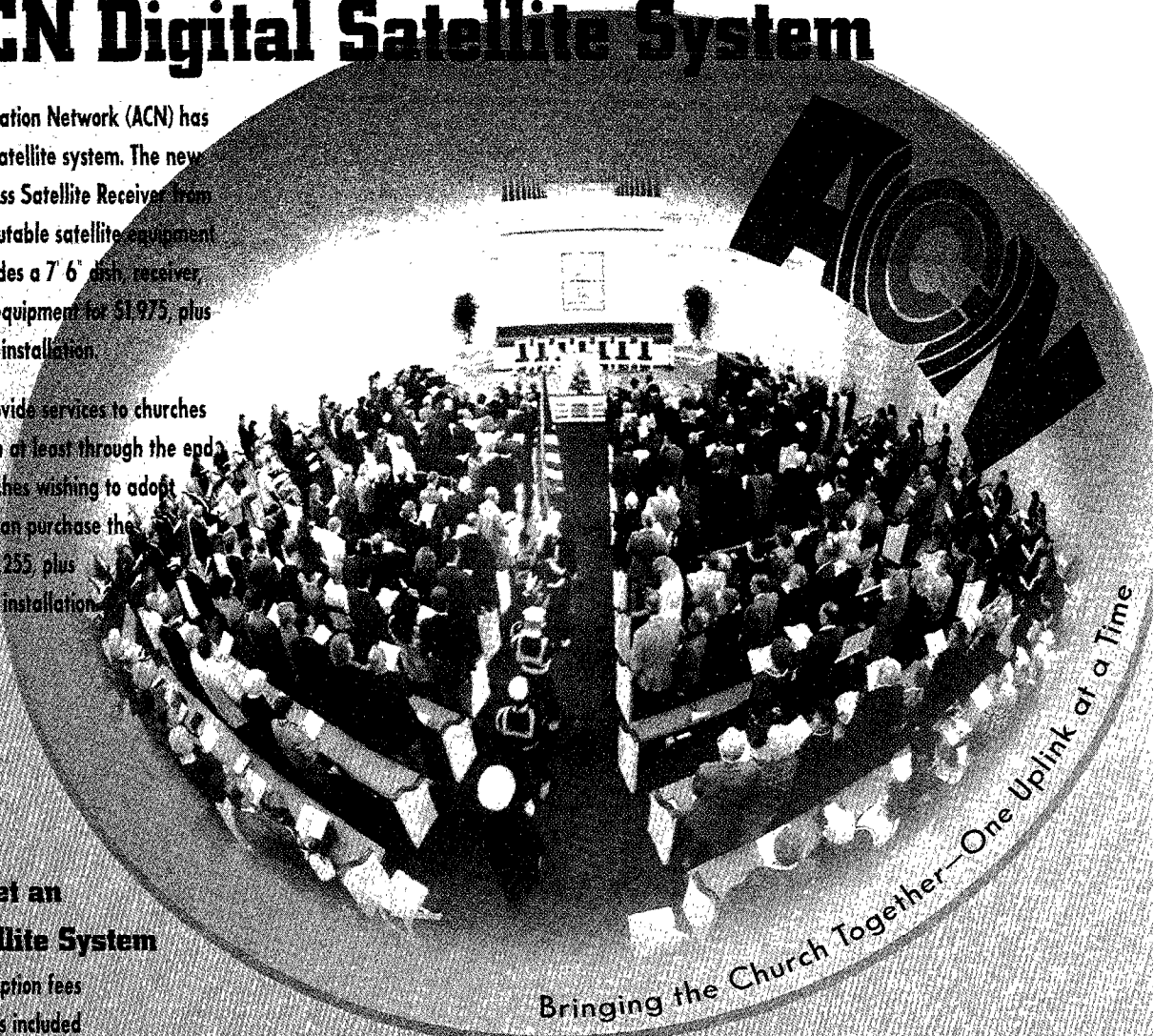
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# Introducing the ACN Digital Satellite System

The Adventist Communication Network (ACN) has adopted a new digital satellite system. The new package uses the Business Satellite Receiver from Scientific Atlanta, a reputable satellite equipment manufacturer, and includes a 7' 6" dish, receiver, automation, and other equipment for \$1,975, plus shipping, handling, and installation.

ACN will continue to provide services to churches using the analog system at least through the end of the year 2000. Churches wishing to adopt an ACN digital system can purchase the upgrade package for \$1,255, plus shipping, handling, and installation.



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