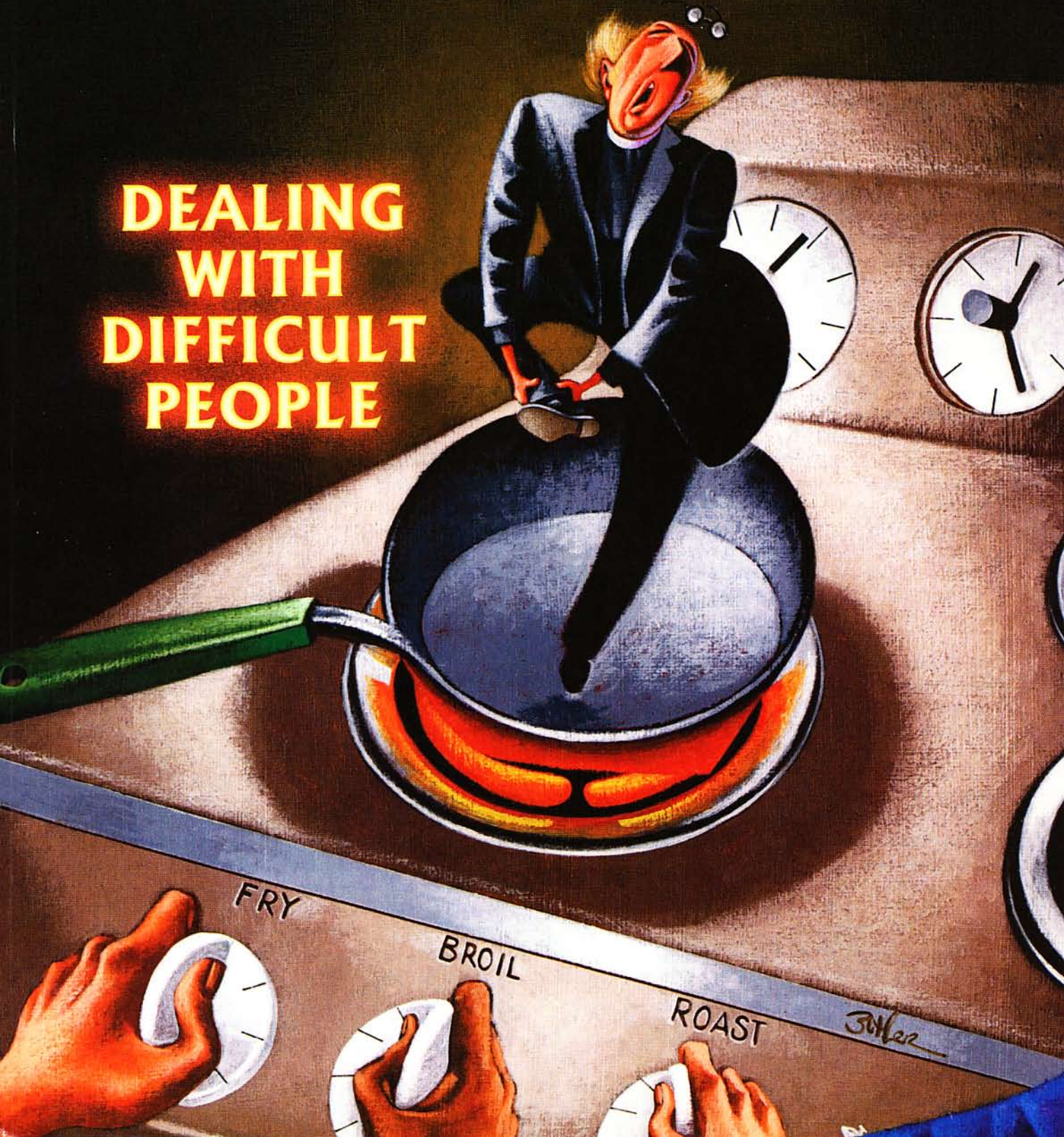


MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

July 2001

**DEALING
WITH
DIFFICULT
PEOPLE**



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I HAD BEGUN TO WONDER IF PASTORAL VISITATION WAS LOST AMONG US.

January 2001 and November 2000 issues

I don't know how to thank you for your magnificent Christian articles on pastoral practice ("How Do We Get Them to Listen?" by Stephen Grunlan, January 2001). I feel very moved by the Christian love in all of them. I frequently identified with the problems (e.g., "In many churches, the majority of members sit in the pews, or do not come at all") and the solutions (e.g., vigorous evangelism keeps a ministry both fighting trim and up to date")

Considering the Seventh-day Adventist background, I thought the issue on Luther (November 2000) to be excellent. Some of the authors obviously found it difficult to express the issues honestly, but they made the effort. The conclusion on page 25 was great: "Perhaps other Christians . . . can look at this attempt by two long-time opponents to speak with one another, rather than shout."

—Michael Butler, Lewisham, Sydney, Australia.

Reflections on a pastoral visit

My pastoral heart beat as one with Chor-Kiat Sim's article "Reflections on a Pastoral Visit" (January 2001). I had begun to wonder if pastoral visitation was lost among us. Somehow I became convinced in my undergraduate theology training and early pastoring that preaching the Word went hand-in-hand with making pastoral visits. The preaching became effective when I walked

through the doors of the listeners' homes. People tended to listen more to my sermons if they felt acquainted with me and had heard me pray for them in their homes. How busy today's pastors are, but is there any more important work than visiting our members and interested visitors where they live?

Three of the five churches I pastored in my ministry were over 1,000 members, but I made time to knock on the door of every member home. A fellow pastor had given me a great tool. He said, "Find a retired person with a friendly telephone voice who is willing to get your visitation appointments for you and give that person blocks of time to be filled with appointments." A hard task was made much easier when I could have visiting appointments on my desk. All I had to do was prayerfully get in my car and go to the doors (often with my wife). Every time I came home joyously weary, I was filled with the knowledge that my Lord had truly used me that day or night to touch people's lives, often in a miraculously timed manner.

—Don Mulvihill, retired pastor, Weimar, California.

Sexual abuse of children in the church

Your article in the March 2001 issue hit very close to home. I couldn't help but remember my own experience as a pastor when a mother shared with me 11 years ago how her second husband had been sexually abusing her daughter from a first marriage.

As I tried my best to help, bringing counsels and encouragement, my church community and I experienced very similar situations of criticisms and guilt as related by the author of this article. What hurt me most was what I now perceived to have been emotional manipulations from the perpetrator who felt we were not dealing with him in a Christian manner.

As I personally tried to help everyone involved in this situation (the teenage daughter, the mother, and the perpetrator), I only sensed that I could not do enough, and things went from bad to worse. At first, we also kept the "secret" away from church leaders and members. This I believe was a mistake that led to all kinds of criticisms and surmising. In the end this situation led me to a period of burnout. There is no doubt in my mind that the pastor involved in the case of sexual abuse can also become a victim if he or she tries on his or her own (without the help of the congregation and law-enforcement) to mediate the consequences of this sin. Thank you for a good journal.

—Name withheld.

I have just finished reading the article in the March 2001 issue on sexual abuse of children in the church. As I read the story I have to admit I was angry. The attempt to cover up such problems alone or in the church is quite typical in many church and school settings. The pastor realized too late that to delay involving the law only caused greater

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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.

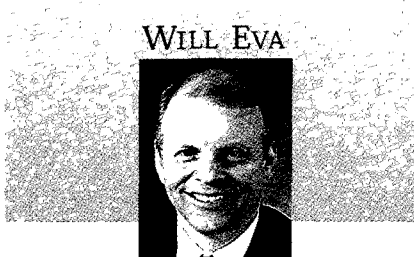
Word power

We all remember the childish chant, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me!"

The truth is, of course, that words can hurt us. Words have power, and we know it. In fact, harsh, cold, scathing words have the power to derail a life; at the same time, well-chosen, properly-timed, and rightly-toned words have the power to mend, transform, and heal lives. Using words in the latter sense, that's the business we are in as pastors. But I wonder . . . Do we actually believe words have this kind of power?

During the last few decades, it seems that we have depreciated the power of words. Surrounded by modern communication venues of every kind, words have been cheapened by their out-and-out commonness. We hear them or read them incessantly. Today we are able to hurl them around via telephone, television, cell phone, radio, cassette tape, video, CD, satellite, email, book, magazine, letter, and in live conversations and speeches made handily possible by the miracles of natty transportation systems, to name a few of the exploding loci that encourage the overuse of mere words. Then, our view of the integrity of our own "word" has encouraged us to use words in increasingly thoughtless, casual, and unfiltered ways, thus devaluing them even more.

Standing in boldest contrast with this easy use of words there is this description: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:6, 9, NIV). "And God said . . . and it was so" are key words in Genesis 1. Similar to the way



our own hands move in response to our thoughts and intentions, the creative authority and power resident in the word of God seems to have functioned at creation. The Bible literally drips with descriptions from prophets and others, such as: "The word of the Lord came to me saying . . ." "But the Lord said to me . . ." It was central to the call of the prophet to proclaim the word of God, fresh from His lips.

Is it truly possible that the very nature of Christian ministry is to be interconnected with such authority? Are we actually "ministers," of such verbal power? After preaching and teaching for many years, I still find that reality shattering. The more I realize the nature and verity of my calling, the more responsible I want to be with the words that I proclaim, for life or death may lie hidden in every phrase. Is there anything worse than a minister who has lost his or her sense of the nature and power of the word of God and thus of Christian ministry?

Luke 4 talks of Jesus returning to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" and of reading Isaiah's scroll that Sabbath: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good

news, to proclaim freedom, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Why does preaching stand in alarming disrepute in many parts of the contemporary world? The answer to this dilemma lies in two things: proclaiming the divine word and doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. This was so for the prophets; it was so for Jesus, who is Himself the living Word come down from God; and it was so for the apostles on that Pentecost day.

We are sowers who go forth to sow. The seed we sow is the word of God (Matt. 13). Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ (Rom. 10). I have been amazed anew in looking again at the proliferation of these kinds of descriptions flooding all of the Bible. What the Bible says about the nature, authority and role of the words of God in human existence is amazing—and inspiring—and empowering.

Again, this is the word that we ministers have especially been called to be affected by ourselves and to proclaim. We must know where and how to find such a word. We must listen carefully to the word as it is given to us, asking that it be repeated, until we are sure we have it. We must get the word as straight from the lips of God Himself as possible. We must know the written and the Living Word. We must keep the word fresh and clear within us as we carry it. We must faithfully deliver the word to the place and to the people to which we have been called. We must utter it clearly, not as our own but because it is His. Then, in the path of our proclamation, there will be faith and healing and true liberty, and the day of great preaching will return. ■

Dealing with difficult people

V. Neil Wyrick

I wish there weren't difficult people. I wish I weren't allergic to the emotional toxin they spread. I wish they didn't sometimes make my mind go in circles and my stomach go to ulcers.

Maybe if I had the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon, I wouldn't be irritated. But since I live in the river of life I must learn to make friends with the crocodiles. I must seek to make rainbows in the midst of other people's thunder.

"It isn't always what you must do but it is always what you must become," a wise old minister once said to me. "Compassion is an empathetic brief exchange of souls."

It has not always been easy to follow his advice. Dealing with DPs (difficult people) takes a great deal of generous understanding. It is much easier to become one ourselves.

One of my congregant's anger seemed to be a living thing. Then I learned that on a terrible, black, bleak day he was convicted of a crime he didn't commit. Later on he was set free. Except he wasn't free. The bars of bitterness still held him. My finding out did not change his behavior. But it changed mine. I became more patient with his outbursts.

DPs come in all shapes

Early in my ministry I asked myself, "When am I most difficult?" When I knew I had gotten that tone in my voice or that look on my face I would remind myself that when

people irritated me, I too could show it. A friend told me once, "Neil, we ministers can be patiently judgmental and that can be as bad or worse than a vocal eruption."

DPs come in all kinds of emotional shapes and sizes. Most are sprinters, not marathon runners. Wait them out until they run out of fuel. "Build on resolve and not regret," cautioned Adlai Stevenson. Some blame and bluster at the top of their lungs. Some sneer softly and drip sarcasm. Others seem innocuous in their complaints but beneath lies a seething anger.

It took me a while to learn to recognize early and handle the problems while they were still manageable. This meant a constant tuning and retuning of my antennae.

I soon found that questions rather than direct statements could smooth the edges of any debate or argument. "Would you please explain?" got the same answer as an argumentative reaction; it just wasn't as heated.

Dialogue

I also noticed that by initiating dialogue I could show concern *and* gain insight. "John, it seems we have been at odds recently." The implication was that things had been better in the past. This was sometimes a stretch but a worthy one. "Is it something I did? Something I said?" I'd then speak of "stumbling blocks," a term which has a better connotation than words such as "problem," "trouble," "difficulty," "disagreement." "What I really meant" (explanation). "I can see how you feel" (understanding). I'd often use "us" and "we."

If verbal dialogue didn't seem immediately appropriate, a written note helped. "Dear John/Jane, I've been thinking a lot about what you said and you have a number of good points (praise). However, I wonder if you've considered (my idea). As your friend and pastor (positive affirmation), I need your friendship and our ability to be able to agree to sometimes disagree. I'd like to sit down and talk. I'll call within the next few days (too long a wait isn't good). I hope we can work out a time to meet soon. Your servant in Christ."

Not all respond as Christian brothers and sisters. Some people really are permanent DPs. At such times when friendship is hopeless, friendliness is not.

I remember with regret a member in one of my churches who had been my friend and became my avowed enemy. I tried dialogue.



V. Neil Wyrick is a retired Presbyterian Minister, Miami, Florida

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He refused. I dropped notes. I received no answer. To this day I do not know why he disliked me. I only know that since I could not put out the fire, I tried not to fan it.

While still in the seminary, I had a small church in a county seat. Before my first Sunday I was warned about one of the elders. I was told he was always an argument waiting to happen. So I met him with fear and trepidation. I was even a little on the defensive every time he opened his mouth. And because I expected the worst from him, before too long I got it. I had not yet learned the old English proverb, "Make not the sauce till you have caught the fish."

Humor

A sense of humor helps. "Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come," counsels the ancient Chinese proverb. Overcome negative feelings toward the DPs of the world with the wisdom of wit. Even if you do not always find spring, it will help you to withstand the winter of their discontent.

An officer in another of my churches was against almost everything. At each meeting he would begin a tirade against something. As his voice rose and his eyes darkened, I would visualize a large bucket of liquid love. In my mind's eye I would pick up that bucket, walk over and slowly pour its entire contents over his head. I imagined watching the liquid love form puddles at his feet. And I would begin to smile inwardly at the ludicrousness of the whole affair.

As I grew older and my experience deepened, I learned that a closed mouth gathers no foot! That is, having less to say gives less chance for one's foot to enter one's mouth! This is why I increasingly sought in all my relationships to soothe problems rather than stir them.

I now know all rumbles cannot be quieted. I truly wish they could be. But I also know I cannot remind myself too often that "when there is a problem, don't be one." ■

The witness of preaching

An interview with Dr. Thomas G. Long

Thomas G. Long
with Derek J.
Morris



Thomas G. Long, Ph.D., is Bandy professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.



Derek J. Morris, D. Min., is senior pastor of the Calimesa, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Thomas G. Long is a distinguished teacher and author in the field of preaching. He taught for many years at Princeton Theological Seminary before assuming his present position as the Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology. He has written and edited numerous books on preaching, including *The Witness of Preaching*, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, and *The Senses of Preaching*. Dr. Long has been recognized as one of the twelve “most effective preachers in the English-speaking world.”

Derek Morris: In your many years of teaching and writing, you have made a compelling case for viewing the Christian preacher as a witness.¹ I wonder if we could begin by exploring that idea.

Thomas Long: Well, I’m attracted to that image for many reasons, not the least of which is that it’s a New Testament image. As such, it has a double meaning: as witness and as martyr. It shows that the stakes are high for preaching the gospel and the risk is great. Anytime we think it’s safe to preach the gospel, we either misunderstand the gospel or we misunderstand the culture because it’s not ever safe to preach the gospel. There are always costs involved and the martyr image makes that clear.

DM: How does this image of the Christian

preacher as a witness affect our understanding of the preacher?

TL: First of all, it makes it clear that the preacher does not stand there with something that she or he has generated out of his or her own mind or competence. One’s witness is always dependent upon something else. One bears witness about something or to something. Second, this image of a witness makes it clear that what is at stake is truth. Witness is a legal term. The person who has seen and experienced something that the public needs to know for the sake of the truth is put on the stand and sworn in and commissioned to do one thing: to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them God. And there is a great penalty for bearing false witness because we, the public, need to know the truth. The culture needs to know the truth about God and humanity, and the witness is telling that truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

DM: That sounds like a solemn responsibility, not one to be taken lightly. How should this call to be a witness affect the preacher?

TL: It should remind the preacher not to fudge the testimony, not to try to make it more palatable, more attractive, more acceptable. Sometimes the truth is hard to hear but our commission is to tell the truth. It also helps us understand this very thorny issue of character, the moral character of the preacher. Sometimes you’ll read in homiletical textbooks that the preacher must, in a sense, be of an exemplary moral character. People don’t believe the message unless the preacher is one, two, or ten notches above the ordinary hearer. And other times, you read that the ethical life of the preacher has no consequence whatsoever. The witness image balances those nicely in the sense that, yes, the preacher must be a morally trustworthy person to the extent that the witness is willing to tell the truth. The totality of the moral life is important, but here it is not the essential issue. The central issue instead is the willingness of the witness, in this one place, not to hedge, not to fudge, to tell the truth about what has been seen and experienced. So those are some of the things that helped me reach out to this witness image as a provocative image for preaching.

DM: You emphasize, in your book *The Witness of Preaching*, that “the witness image carries with it guidance about the rhetorical form of preaching,”² and that “the shape of the witness’s sermon should fit the character of the testimony.”³ How does the content of the testimony affect the form of the sermon?

TL: The problem in homiletics is that our field has a tendency to latch onto a particular form as the solution to our communicational problems. So whether it’s the three-point form or the narrative form or the inductive form—a lot of times you’ll find people in the literature saying that whatever we used to do is passé, what we now need to do is this or that. The witness image rejects a single form as the solution to a communication problem and recognizes that multiple rhetorical forms are available.

You don’t, however, just pick them arbitrarily. You pick the one that is fitting for the kind of testimony you’re giving. Sometimes the prosecuting attorney or the interrogating attorney will say to a witness, “Would you tell your story?” Well, that calls for a narrative form. The witness narrates the experience that embodies the testimony. Other times the prosecutor will want to know about particular facts. What happened here? Was it day or night? Was the car blue or green? And so the communication of specific concrete factual information becomes the chosen rhetorical form. If you look at courtroom testimony, it takes hundreds of different styles, each one fitted to the kind of information that’s being communicated.

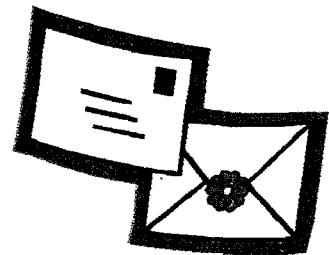
DM: You suggest that “the witness is not a neutral observer.”⁴ Is the witness permitted to share his or her

own experience with the truth as part of the testimony?

TL: Your question is an apt one, and there is a tightrope to walk here. The court is not interested strictly in the interior experiences and feelings of any witness. There is something out there that the witness has seen and experienced and is telling about. So the truth that we’re after is outside of the witness. But in the case of the gospel truth, this is momentous and urgent truth. It’s something like a witness in a court room who has seen a multi-car collision on the highway and though he or she is bearing testimony to something that happened on that interstate that day—in fact that was actually seen by them—it means that they are now personally involved in it. There is no way for a true witness to be detached from what they’ve seen and experienced. This is

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encapsulated in Peter and John's passionate reaction to the order to stop preaching, that is, bearing witness in Jesus' name: "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NIV). So when we are bearing testimony, bearing witness to the gospel, we're always revealing our own involvement in the truth that we are proclaiming.

Does that mean that preachers can only preach things that they have totally experienced? The answer is no. And the best image I know to illustrate that comes from an old Joseph Sittler sermon called, "The View from Mount Nebo," in which he develops the image of Moses on Mt. Nebo looking over into the Promised Land.⁵ He can see it, but he will not experience it. And there are many things in the gospel that the witness can see but that the witness has not, in his or her own personal Christian maturity, fully experienced.

DM: You suggest that the witness of preaching must be viewed as part of "a great and cosmic trial." Does the witness of preaching have cosmic implications?

TL: Yes! Most Christian witness takes place in the context of corporate worship, and corporate worship is never understood theologically as just a little tiny congregation gathered for worship. We're gathered in the great company of saints and when we gather at the Lord's table, we're gathered at that great banquet table. Richard Fenn, who teaches at Princeton, has made the case—and I think it's a compelling one—that the structure of worship in most Christian communities is a kind of mock trial in which the charges are brought against God's people.⁶ Then testimony is brought in, and then the great acquittal, the announcement that in Jesus Christ there is no condemnation. That's good news! It's the good news.

DM: What are the greatest challenges facing a preacher as a witness

at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

TL: Let me point to a couple: one in culture and one inside the church. Out in the culture, we have to negotiate a hearing now everywhere we go. *The New York Times* is not going to do, in the foreseeable future, what it did a century ago, and that is print summaries of the sermons of the great New York preachers. The culture is not automatically interested in what the pulpit or the church has to say. Therefore, in ways that are reconciling and peacemaking on the one hand, while they are disruptive and prophetic on the other, the church

of the church, we should not suspend our vocabulary, our language, our lore, our stories, our gospel—we should teach it.

DM: What closing word of counsel would you give to a preacher who desires to be a faithful witness?

TL: The most important moment in the sermon creation process is what the old rhetoricians called the moment of invention, what the biblical hermeneuticians called the moment of interpretation, and what a homiletician might call the moment of encounter with the text. When a preacher will reserve the time

PREACHING IS DONE, IN A SENSE, AS AN ACTIVE
MINISTRY BY THE PREACHER, BUT THEOLOGICALLY
IT IS DONE AS AN ACT OF THE WHOLE CHURCH.

has to get out there in the public square and negotiate a hearing for the gospel. And that's a terrific challenge.

Inside the church, I have been concerned at the loss of theological and biblical knowledge on the part of the average lay person. Preaching is done, in a sense, as an active ministry by the preacher, but theologically it is done as an act of the whole church; and therefore, preaching is not simply a person who knows something standing up in front of people who don't know something and spilling out information. When we preach the gospel, we preach it to people who have heard the gospel, and it confirms what they have heard and stretches them to a new place, and back and forth it goes. One of the challenges for the preacher in the twenty-first century is to rebuild and refresh the memory of the church. Preachers need to give congregations their Bibles back, to rebuild their theological vocabulary, one brick, one word, one concept, one text at a time. And when seekers come in the door

and energy to dwell long enough, and energetically enough, on the text, so that he or she arrives at that place where the text speaks, then the preacher has something to say. And all the rest of the process is important but not nearly as important as that. If there is not that moment, then all the wonderful illustrations and terrific structures and charismatic personality in the world will not make this an authentic event. Responding to that, I'm really talking about a moment of hearing the voice of God in the text. Then you stand in the pulpit and say, "I just have to tell you what I have seen and heard." ■

1 Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 42-47.

2 *Ibid.*, 46.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 43-51.

6 Richard K. Fenn, *Liturgies and Trials* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), 27; quoted in Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 47.

Pastoring on the postmodern frontline (part 1)

Samir Selmanovic



Samir Selmanovic, Ph.D., is senior pastor of the Church of the Advent Hope, Manhattan, New York.

Last summer I saw a photograph of a white stone bridge crossing over a Florida river. Before Hurricane Mitch, the river flowed beneath the bridge. After the hurricane the direction of the riverbed had completely shifted. A second photograph showed the river flowing parallel to the bridge.

This bridge could serve as a symbol of contemporary Christian ministry, with the hurricane representing postmodernism. The river may be seen as a collection of modern era questions about faith. In the last half-century, the old riverbed, caught in the fallout of the hurricane of postmodernism, has radically changed its course; the bridge, symbolic of the ministry and our attempt to answer important questions, has stayed much the same.

Without a doubt, we must remain committed to speaking the “strange” truth of the gospel. Innovation in itself is not the goal. Yet it is precisely because we want to communicate the unchanging gospel that we need to change. We must change not only our methods but also our understanding of how people think and feel and thus how we are to think as we seek to meet their minds and hearts.

The truth is that in many countries of our world, the culture has not merely changed, it has morphed into a humanity with a worldview radically different from the past. The shift is away from the so-called “modern”

worldview, which began roughly in the sixteenth century and was built on the Enlightenment values of reason, science, control, and conquest. The postmodern worldview questions all the assumptions, claims, and fruits of “modernism.” Because contemporary people are committed to a vastly different way of thinking, a correspondingly different approach must emerge in our ministry to them.

The shift to postmodernism

Modernism began as a freedom movement. It sought to discard the Middle Ages worldview built on authoritarianism, superstition, and oppression. Like the builders of the Tower of Babel, the philosophers and scientists of modernism were no wimps. They thought in new ways. They dreamed of control over knowledge, control over nature, and even control over themselves. This dream trickled down from philosophers and scientists into the daily lives of ordinary people and became dominant in their outlook.

However, after centuries confined to such restricting banks the river of modernity became almost unrecognizable, producing blood and sweat for colonized races through slavery, wars, dictators, ethnic cleansing, urban violence, drugs, poverty, a growing gap between rich and poor, and threatening pollution. While some comfortable citizens in the West have had a hard time seeing the limits and downright evils of modernism, postmodern philosophy and science are rapidly trickling down to all of us, silencing modernism’s chants of control, conquest, and consumption. The backlash to this is what has been called postmodernism.

Entanglement of the church with modernism

No question: postmodernism disturbs many in the contemporary church, and for good reason. It mocks authority, questions moral absolutes, and destabilizes the knowledge that we have accumulated over time. From the biblical perspective, postmodernism is seriously flawed, but so is the modernism that has shaped so much of our thinking. The problem is that we, as Christians, have bathed so long in the stream of modernity that we have learned to think, talk, and accept modernism as an integral part of our faith.

“We can hardly conceive,” wrote Brian

McLaren, "of a postmodern being able to become a Christian without becoming modern first (or immediately after); similarly, we can hardly conceive that our way of seeing Christianity is not the only way, but rather the modern way."¹ One of the best illustrations of this reality is found in the way the missionary movements of the last century largely insisted not only on the acceptance of Christ, but of the modern Western world itself. Modernism used to be "a beast" that intimidated Christians, but over the centuries Christians worked to tame it like a household pet, so that it became peaceful and domesticated in our house as part of the household.

Christians can't pass judgment on modernity because it is so much of who we are, at least in the West! From Constantine onward, the church ceased to be the counter-cultural

movement committed from its inception to turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Instead, it couched itself into the mainstream, first within the Roman Empire, and many centuries later it amalgamated in a similar manner with the modernist dream. The Christian of today comes dangerously close to being the definition of a well-adjusted citizen of the modern world. We have formed our apologetics, structured our theology, and devised our church growth techniques based upon the paradigm of the modernist experiment.

Thus, to relate to people today, we have much that we must learn from the postmodern critique. In preparation for the second part in this two-part series (where we will deal with the practical ministry adjustments that are needed to understand and meet the postmodern mind and heart) here are three conceptual shifts

we need to make to increase our understanding, respect, and compassion for postmodern people.

From triumphalism to humility

One of the early definitions of the postmodern worldview was "incredulity toward grand narratives."² Postmodern philosophers have observed that every human system legitimizes itself and subordinates all other lesser narratives through an authoritative story named the "grand narrative." When first presented, each new grand narrative made sense, but it soon became a tool for power, conquest, and control. For example, as American society celebrated the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus we praised "the grand narrative" of progress. But the party was disrupted by postmoderns insisting that the

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event of 500 years ago began a chronicle of cruelty, oppression, and genocide in America—a large-scale ethnic cleansing (involving the virtual obliteration of many of the peoples then occupying the North American continent). These contemporary critics of modernity mourned, rather than celebrated, the anniversary of such a conquest.

It is becoming easier to understand why postmoderns have abandoned their search for “one true belief system.” They have been burned and disappointed by ideologies, religions, and political ideas, and have ultimately lost trust in humanity itself. In their view, anyone who claims to possess “the ultimate grand narra-

From rationalism to mystery

The modernist dream was to enclose the world within a rational, absolute system that would be true at all places and in all circumstances. Modernists like Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel developed a version of Christianity that explained Christian faith in a logical, self-contained system. Building on Thomas Aquinas, who held that all faculties of humanity are fallen except the intellect, they believed that rational thinking can make sense of God. “A Modern Minister” was one who . . . promised to remove mystery through research, leaving only clean doctrines and sterile principles where there once were questions, pain, wonder, and longing

interest in spirituality. Further, when we look at a biblical text or a life issue that does not seem to fit into our “complete” belief system, we do everything possible to “make it work.” In contrast, postmodernism is not inhibited by the confining walls of rugged rationalism, it opens its doors to mystery, embracing it as an integral part of the life of faith.

Don Hudson writes: “Postmodern thought comes upon the scene to remind us that faith is the dance of presence and absence, grace and tragedy, assurance and doubt. . . . [It] critiques the arrogance of modernism, and in so doing, offers the church one of its greatest opportunities to present the gospel. . . . If modernism at its extreme can result in the triumph of reason over ignorance at best, but at worst the triumph of reason over mystery and faith, then postmodernism can be the invitation to mystery alongside reason and thus fresh opportunity for faith.”⁴

Are we terrified by postmodernism because it reminds us that with all our theological knowledge, organizational structure, and church growth strategizing, we find ourselves without the ability to really control anything? What are the ways we can introduce our faith to postmoderns while embracing their sense of mystery? Would we lose our own faith if we were to admit that we don’t have all the answers? Are we assuming that God can only use “the river of the rational” to reveal Himself? Can we reclaim the rich tradition of Christian mysticism that we were so embarrassed about during the age of modernity?

From objectivism to other ways of knowing

Modernism boasted of its objectivity. The scientific method sought to find the truth by removing all irrelevant factors from the research. But according to postmodernism we always speak from an angle. We learn about the world from maps someone

ARE WE TERRIFIED BY POSTMODERNISM
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tive” lacks either intelligence or humility. For many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, this is disturbing to say the least.

Here are some questions we need to address.

- Can we envision and describe our ministry in a language other than one of conquest and control?
- Can we conceive of ministry as a two-way exchange where we both teach and are taught?
- Is it possible that our present denominational configuration actually serves by acquiring personal or corporate power over others?
- What would be compelling to a postmodern person? Our stories of superiority and triumph or the story of the humility and authenticity of One like Jesus of Nazareth?

. . . Performed in the study, not the lab, and with Greek and Hebrew, not test tubes . . . [he would] tame the wildness of his subjects—God and life—through late Industrial Age know-how. But imagine: Taming God! And life!³

Seventh-day Adventist ministry (which began a mere century and a half ago) developed in the context of the modernist worldview and thus, predictably, relied heavily on proofs, reasoning, and structure. In contrast, the postmodern world is breaking away from an obsession with reason and is equally trusting of ambiguity and mystery. Today many Christian ministers continue to “rationalize” faith, while the vast majority of Western society has lost interest in that approach alone. And when these people don’t listen to us, we incorrectly conclude that they have no

made for us, we study historical records written for us, and we observe life through the glasses of our personal history, personality, and experience. Postmoderns believe that "every point of view is a view from a point" and that any group of people you belong to pressures you to observe reality from their common point.

While this line of reasoning may feel threatening, we must admit that "God's point of view" belongs only to God. While radical postmodernism attacks Christianity by denying objectivity, in reality most postmoderns are just asking for gentleness and humility in these matters. They deeply doubt humanity's ability to understand, to remember, to transmit, and to communicate in an absolutely accurate way. What most postmoderns are rejecting is not absolute truth, but absolute knowledge.

Postmoderns plead with us to consider other ways of knowing besides being "objective." They would agree with Paul (who said: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . [Eph. 1:17,18, NIV; emphasis added]) that there are other valid ways of knowing that modernism dismissed as subjective. While modernism was built on Decartes's maxim "I think, therefore I am," the postmodern would add: "I make choices, therefore I am. I feel, therefore I am. I believe, therefore I am. I experience, therefore I am."

To remain true to the faith revealed to us, we don't have to advocate less than objectivity, truth, and propositions, but more! Jesus' statement "I am the truth" claims that truth is not found in an objective concept or principle, but in a Person (John 14:1-7). And He is an ultimate subject that cannot be compartmentalized and objectified. We can't objectify God who is at heart a relational being. We can acknowledge that this subjectivity in fact is not a bad thing, not an embarrassment to be covered up, it is rather a necessary thing, a reality that

the Bible actually assumes, since it is a "premodern" text.⁵

The opportunity

Postmodernism is not dangerous, not for One "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8, NIV). It is we who have planted ourselves into one period of time. The hurricane of postmodernism has moved the riverbed. The old "bridge of answers" we built so carefully, prayerfully, and methodically, can no longer bring people from disbelief to belief as it used to. The river has moved and a new river now flows wide and deep. Was the church in fact originally called to remain unchangeably a bridge but nevertheless to be a movable or adjustable bridge? We do have innately in the Christian faith, the tools and the materials to reset the bridge of

answers so that it will astonish postmodern seekers. I have experienced it in my ministry in the postmodern culture of downtown Manhattan, and I have found peace with my Adventist faith in this postmodern world. In the next article I want to share with you what I have learned along more applied lines.

The conclusion of this article will appear in the September 2001 issue of *Ministry*. ■

- 1 Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 168.
- 2 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Trans. Bennington and Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, first edition 1979).
- 3 McLaren, 110.
- 4 Don Hudson, "The Dance of Truth: Postmodernism and the Evangelical," *Mars Hill Review*, No. 12, Fall 1998, 12-22.
- 5 Brian McLaren, "Honey, I Woke Up in a Different Universe!: Confessions of a Postmodern Pastor," *Mars Hill Review*, No. 15, Fall 1999, 35-46.

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The shout

Julia Vernon



Julia Vernon is chaplain of the Hospice of Bountiful in Grantsville, Utah.

The gathering had been a spiritual feast. Those of us who were weary with the duties of ministry were revitalized by days of electrifying sermons. Those of us who were still learning about what we had been called to do sat at the feet of the best to absorb their counsel and example.

My congregation was experiencing a problem about women elders. This gathering was a welcome relief from the acrimony, lost friendships, and frayed nerves. On that night, however, I felt overwhelmed and depressed. There were very few women. Most were wives of ministers who were attending. As I looked at all the male faces around me, I wondered what I was doing there. What was my place in God's work?

Now, a woman was in the pulpit. She was rumored to be a powerful preacher. Some applauded her presence, some decried it. All of us waited eagerly to see what she would say. She caught us up in a wonderful vision. She told us, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." I can't remember many of her exact words; but I was spellbound by the picture of ministry she painted. She said God had called her to preach the gospel in all circumstances, wherever she was, whatever was happening around her or to her. She was not ashamed of

the gospel. Nothing would silence her voice from preaching Christ.

It seemed like no one was breathing. We were all caught up together, unified by the breathtaking vision of what our lives could be; never-ending gospel hymns, unstoppable, resounding through the smallest events of our lives, overcoming our greatest obstacles. Even if we had no pulpit, we could preach Jesus Christ. Even if we had no homes, no families, no freedom, we were still Jesus' servants. We would preach His gospel—no matter what.

Then, she came to the climax of that outstanding sermon. "I don't care if I have money or not. I will still preach the gospel. I don't care if I have a home or not, I will still preach the gospel. I don't care if the world looks down on me, I am not ashamed of the gospel. I will still preach the gospel." We all rode together on the crest of that electrifying message.

Then we were shattered. There was a change. Her shout of praise and devotion wavered. She had to push herself through, for she was trying to preach in spite of tears. "I don't care if someone says I shouldn't be a preacher. I don't mind if they ordain me or not. I am not ashamed of the gospel. I will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ."

What a cry! Someone had the right perspective and was shouting it from the pulpit even though it hurt—even though the repercussions might be great. Preaching Christ was what mattered above all else. Shouted through tears from that famous pulpit, in front of hundreds of our best preachers, came the truth: preaching the gospel, not preaching politics, is paramount. Keep faithful to that gospel calling no matter what.

Afterward, people buzzed about it. Her risk and its consequences came home with a vengeance. Some said, "How dare she use the pulpit to make a political statement?" Others asked, "How could she talk about ordaining women when she should have been preaching the gospel?"

The rest of us took home a bit of fire from the altar. Her words echoed in our hearts, giving us perspective and purpose. They made everything clear again. We had our marching orders from our God: "I am not ashamed of the gospel. I will preach it no matter what!" ■

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I doubt I should tell you this . . .

Franke J. Zollman

I doubt that I should reveal to you what I'm about to tell. I've tried to hide it for years. In fact, that is the crux of the problem—I doubt. I fight feelings of self-doubt.

Early in my ministry I went to my hometown to preach. I was ready! I was pumped! The local boy, made good, had come home to wow the home folk. As I waited to get up to speak, the head elder wanted to introduce me. "Do I really need an introduction?" I thought. "We're so happy, today, to have little Frankie Zollman here to present the message of the hour." My balloon popped! My ego was shot! It might not have been that bad for me because preachers need humbling once in a while, but I suddenly felt wet behind the ears again! My problems with self-doubt don't stem from this episode, but the story is illustrative of the problem.

The nature of self-doubt

Many times, over many years, I have stood in the pulpit or sat as the chairman of the board and felt like "little Frankie Zollman." And the questions have haunted me as I've rehearsed them: "Who are you, little Frankie Zollman, to stand up in the pulpit and declare this is what that text means?" "Who are you, little Frankie Zollman, to say that this is the decision the church should make?" "Who are you, little Frankie Zollman . . . ?" The questions describe the doubt that gnaws at my

ability to lead and make decisions. While self-distrust is generally healthy, frequent and extreme episodes of self-doubt can be crippling to one's leadership and effectiveness. They can be paralyzing for the decision maker.

Another way self-doubt exhibited itself in my early preaching ministry can be described as an "out of body" preaching experience. (This isn't supernatural, so read on.) This experience would occur as I was preaching in the pulpit and it seemed to me that I was also watching myself preach—a spectator of my own sermon. While my lips were speaking the words of my sermon and my brain was mostly involved in the preaching, I was also worrying about how I looked, sounded, and if my audience (myself included) was sufficiently impressed. While all preachers want such feedback, preachers cannot become obsessed with how they look and sound to the detriment of the message. In fact, a preacher cannot concentrate on making himself or herself look good and at the same time concentrate on letting God speak through him or her.

So, through the last 25 years, I have looked for ways to deal with the "little Frankie Zollman" syndrome in my own experience of self-doubt and have discovered these insights.

Meeting self doubt

Remember your call to ministry. I did not choose to be a minister. God chose me. Ministry is not my career or job. Ministry is my calling. Since it is by His ordination that I minister, it is by His authority that I lead. This realization has been the most beneficial and freeing to me. When the questions of self doubt arrive, "Who are you, little Frankie Zollman?" the answer is "I am a sinner saved by grace, but also the called of God." The bottom line is simply this: I am a minister today because of God's call.

Realize your gifts. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit has given gifts to each Christian according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11). Since this is true, each of us have gifts to be recognized, realized, and used in ministry. It is important to understand and be able to specify the gifts the Spirit has given to us. To deny them is to deny the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we recognize and realize those gifts, God will open further opportunities for ministry.

Cherish your call to your particular place in ministry. For those who are seeking God's will daily, life does not consist of coincidence. It is



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Elderly parishioners at risk

Richard I. Learned



Richard I. Learned is pastor emeritus of the Good Shepherd Congregation in Meridith, New Hampshire.

It is estimated that one in twenty senior citizens who are under institutional care in the United States have been subjected to abuse of one kind or another. Since many, if not most such senior citizens receive pastoral bedside calls, pastors have a unique opportunity to observe, report, and take appropriate action in such abuse.

In most American states the law is unequivocal. Anyone who suspects that elder abuse is occurring, whether in a facility for the elderly or in a private home, must report it to the authorities. Abuse is seen to be a crime in progress. Yet years of training in keeping confidences might make it difficult for a pastor to inform a public agency about abusive behavior, especially if that behavior involves a church member. It might seem to the pastor that it is better for him or her to counsel both the patient and the care giver. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely that counseling will be of primary assistance when abuse is in progress. First, abuse has to be stopped, and only the designated agency has the ability and authority to do this.

It is sometimes difficult for a pastor to believe that abuse is occurring, and besides, clergy are reluctant to report a situation on the basis of suspicion alone. The possibility of violence usually just isn't considered when visiting a familiar bedside.

I once visited an 87-year-old shut-in. It was my first visit in her home and I failed to hear

what lay behind her statement, "Pastor, I was naughty today."

I asked her what she meant by that. In response, she cited her problem with incontinence. I dismissed it. I did not realize that her stating "I was naughty" was the same as telling me she had been spanked for soiling her clothing.

Reporting elder abuse

Pastors who have reported incidents of elder abuse often have a common complaint: "I reported and nothing happened." That is, there often seems to be no visible result growing out of a report to the authorities. This is often because, in the case of elder abuse, the victims are adults and, unlike cases of child abuse, adult victims must acknowledge the abuse. An article in the *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect* states that: "Adults who have the capacity to make decisions about their lifestyle have a right to choose endangerment over safety."

That is true, but the kind of relationship that exists between professional clergy and the agency should demand a follow-up report. The facts may be confidential but the pastor/reporter needs to know that action has or has not been taken. Pastoral responsibility is to the perpetrator as well as the victim. In the case of a reported elder abuse situation, "We cannot give details," Lynn Koontz of the New Hampshire Protective Services says, "but we can assure you that every report is followed up."

Actually, action that is taken will become known to the pastor if he or she continues to be involved with the family, according to Douglas Richards of the New Hampshire Division of Elderly and Adult Services. "If nothing seems to be happening then the alleged victim did not want anything to happen," he said. He reiterated that reports of suspected abuse are still mandated by law.

Koontz added that in all likelihood professional reporters such as clergy and other service providers would be included in the future care plans for the victim and his/her family.

Developing a pastoral awareness

For clergy there is a more ideal way of reducing elder abuse. That is to work for the prevention of abuse by knowing where the risks are and developing intentional ministry

strategies aimed at those situations. Counseling may not be able to halt abuse in progress but pre-counseling and information can go a long way in preventing it from starting.

In the U.S. many states have risk assessment instruments to discover or predict the probability of abuse happening again in a given situation. The key word is "again." Such an instrument is helpful to clergy, who are aware of particular risk situations and therefore are looking at the possibility or probability of abuse occurring again. In using such instruments, the assessment is more likely to be based on, or to be seen to be based upon a desire to minister rather than a need to implement a legal policy. Such instruments may be obtained through state protective agencies.

Being aware of possible risk, of course, does not mean that abuse is happening. Reports indicate that five percent of the elderly being cared for at home are abuse victims. This means that, adjusting for unreported cases, more than ninety percent of those being cared for by a family member are never abused. Given the violence present in other areas of our society, this is an excellent record. Still, the pastor must be aware.

Risk situations

The following are a few of the life-situations that might place an elderly person at risk, and in which a pastor might be especially vigilant:

Elderly persons living alone. Nearly a third of all elder abuse cases reported present themselves in the form of self-neglect, that is the "abuse" of one's own life. This "abuse" comes when aging people live alone and are unable to care properly for themselves.

Clergy and congregations are in a unique position to detect such situations and to provide social contact for such persons, while still protecting their independence. Church members and designated laymen, such as local church elders, can help by visiting and sensitively assessing the condition of senior citizens living

Observing bruises

If an elderly person has bruises and claims these are the result of a fall, or has such a claim made in their behalf, an observer should note the following:

- 1. Location:** Bruises on the soft inner parts of the body or on the bottom of a foot are difficult to sustain in a fall.
- 2. In a cluster of bruises or bruises resulting from a fall, some may be older than others thus indicating more than one occurrence of bruising.**
- 3. In the case of many people, bruises:**
 - 0 to 2 days old = swollen and tender**
 - 2-5 days old = red or blue**
 - 5-7 days old = yellow**
 - 10-14 days old = brown**
 - 2-4 weeks old = clear**
- 4. In addition to the location and state of the bruises, notice any changes that may be made in the story about the cause of the bruising.**

alone. During such visits, they can check into proper use of medication, cleanliness, and the maintenance of self worth.

One pastor reported that he would visit a parishioner and keep close to an open window throughout the visit. He recognized the spiritual care but failed to see that the odors in the room were a threat to the person's health.

Elderly persons who live alone are by the nature of their situation, more at risk. It only takes a plate of unused food left in a sink, or a medication mislaid or omitted, to start the downward spiral into self-neglect. Elderly persons who live alone should not have to always be alone. Regular visits by pastors and caring, non-judgmental church members can make a difference.

Persons who no longer live alone. This group is largely made up of those who have moved from their own home into the home of an adult child or other relative. While there are always initial reservations on both sides, these arrangements begin with high hopes. The older person may still have physical independence and not be in need of hands-on care. It may also be assumed that the stay in a daughter's home will only be for a few years at the most.

Such stays may well turn out to be longer than anticipated. Over time

health deteriorates and care giving can become a frustrating duty rather than a loving service. The absence of sibling cooperation is often the root of a slow-growing resentment and anger. Abuse can result.

Those who are in the process of making the decision to bring Mom or Dad into their homes should have access to information and counseling. Perhaps a covenantal agreement could be drawn. Promises to "never place Mom in a nursing home" should be avoided. Care givers can become victims, too. Pastors need to be aware of the negative possibilities of such situations.

Elderly with grown children living at home. Grown children living in the homes of aging parents present potential complications. The grown sibling may have either divorced or have never been married and may present their own set of problems. When faced with the role of care giver, many such adult children may not be emotionally equipped to handle it. If there is substance abuse, the possibility for exploitation is further increased. Again, pastoral awareness and sensitivity in such situations is important.

Those entering a new relationship after losing a spouse by death or divorce. When the pastor follows up on the end of a marriage, whether because of

continued on page 21

Putting the Word back in worship

Ed Christian

Why take my Bible to church? I never need it." "My pastor doesn't use the Bible; he just tells stories." Adventists speak of being "a people of the Book." But is that only in name?

In a growing number of churches, the Word of God is not heard or referred to as it used to be. In some churches hearing the Bible in any significant way is rare. Even the best of churches would benefit from Scripture being heard more.

In too many of our churches there is a famine for the Word of God, as well-meaning pastors attempt to substitute non-nutritive sermonettes and stories for dynamic biblical preaching. The result is a growing hunger for the Bible.

How can this hunger be satisfied? One way is to stand up and read the Bible! There are ways of preparing for this reading that will make it clearer and more compelling. These techniques are not difficult to learn or to teach.

One does not have to read the Bible as a Shakespearean actor might, with dramatic emphasis and spectacular diction. The truth is, such a reading draws attention to the reader rather than freeing the Holy Spirit to draw the heart to God. We should avoid what I call a "high church" voice or style of reading, usually identifiable through its formality,

affectedness, and lack of emotion.

It doesn't really matter if someone has a drawl or a twang to their accent. Bass or soprano doesn't matter! What is ideal is that we disappear so that God's Word is heard as directly as possible. It matters that we believe and feel deeply what we are reading.

Which version?

One of the problems with our present multiplicity of Bible versions is the difficulty of following along when someone reads from Scripture. This was not a problem in Jesus' day, of course, because then one person read and the others listened. Because not everyone could read, it was a treat to listen to a reader.

I find that despite the benefits of the audience or congregation reading along in their own Bible, such reading can distract as one underlines or notices differences between versions. Reading along may keep the mind so busy that the Holy Spirit will be prevented from breaking through to a submissive heart. So, it might not be a bad idea to suggest that people close their Bibles and listen.

I like to read from the New American Standard Bible. I like its accuracy, even though the sentences are often long and complex and thus challenging to communicate. I also like its closeness to the King James Version.

The KJV is beautiful, but the language is not the today's language; it is deliberately stately, much more so, it would seem, than the original Greek or Hebrew. The result is that it is difficult not to read it with a "liturgical" voice. Again, this can detract from the effective communication of the meaning and the Spirit.

The New King James Version is a little better. The Revised Standard Version is accurate, but less graceful than most. The New International Version is perhaps a little less literal than those above, but it reads well in public and its language is both contemporary and dignified. If your primary language is not English, the principles implied in this discussion of versions may be helpful in selecting a version best for your congregation.

Preparation

Preparing to communicate the message of the Bible through reading it aloud is not much different from preparing an expository sermon. One needs to know the text just as thoroughly and may share insights and meaning through pause and emphasis, espe-



Ed Christian, Ph.D., teaches English and Bible at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.

cially that which grows out of the effect the passage has had or is having upon you as the reader.

Here are five steps to follow when preparing to read the Bible in public:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the Word, guiding your own soul into truth, helping you to understand the meaning and message of the passage.

2. Read the biblical passages repeatedly until you understand them as completely as possible. Be

wise elude listeners. (b) *Pause*. There are almost always words and phrases in the Bible of such importance that listeners need extra time to process them. It is up to the reader to discover where these pauses are needed. Commas, colons, and periods all indicate pauses of different lengths. These punctuations often give a hint as to where pauses may be effective.

It may be useful to photocopy the chapters you plan to read, then mark the accents and pauses. You might

WHAT IS IDEAL IS THAT WE DISAPPEAR SO THAT GOD'S WORD IS HEARD AS DIRECTLY AS POSSIBLE.

sure you understand the context and the basic background of the text.

3. Identify difficulties in the passage. Note what may be confusing or difficult for you to read in the passage and give extra preparation time to the text with this in mind. Prayer and repetition clarifies what at first seems cloudy or mystifying.

4. Compare your understanding of the biblical chapters you read with what you find in one or two good Bible commentaries or other textual studies.

5. Oral Interpretation. Return to the text and study ways to communicate the meaning simply by the way you read. While reading, a brief explanation of a text may be acceptable, but most of the explaining can be done simply by the way one reads.

Reading with meaning

There are two fundamental elements to reading with meaning: (a) *Emphasis*; that is, accentuating important words or phrases. Sometimes words may be key terms, nouns, or verbs. Sometimes, they may be pronouns or conjunctions such as "and" or "but." The words one accentuates can reveal truths which may other-

highlight in yellow the words you want to accent and place a red slash where a significant pause is needed.

Slow down!

Even if we are called upon to read the Bible publicly without time for preparation, there is one important thing one should remember that by itself can help God's Word live in the minds of the listeners: Slow down.

We tend to read the Bible far too quickly. I tried timing myself while reading aloud from John 18, Isaiah 53, and 1 Corinthians 7. First I tried reading them at the speed they are generally read aloud. I found that my speed varied from 160 to 184 words per minute. Then I read them again, this time at a speed calculated to increase understanding, pausing at appropriate places. This time I read from 102 to 125 words per minute, with the slowest speed coming when I read the poetry in Isaiah.

All this may seem like work, but it certainly is no harder than preparing a good sermon. In it there is genuine blessing and the true work of the Holy Spirit. In it there is power, conviction, and encouragement for the congregation. ■

Elderly parishioners at risk

continued from page 19

death or divorce, there is always need for particular sensitivity and awareness. But, here the pastor should be aware of the risks of exploitation and abuse when new, often euphoric, relationships are begun.

Elderly persons are subject to five basic categories of elder abuse:

- ◆ Physical
- ◆ Emotional
- ◆ Sexual
- ◆ Neglect by others
- ◆ Self-neglect

With every aging person, it is important to be aware of these and to continue to proclaim and share God's love as the ultimate expression of respect and reassurance. In any and all cases, the elderly persons encountered in our ministries are all too often very needful of our particular ministry and esteem, and are almost invariably the most appreciative of all the groups of persons we encounter in our day-to-day ministry. ■

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I have learned

C. Lloyd Wyman



C. Lloyd Wyman, D.Min., is Ministerial Association coordinator for the Pacific Union Conference, Newbury Park, California.

Fifty years ago, I walked across the stage at Walla Walla College and grasped my diploma. Shortly thereafter, my wife Donna and I began pastoral ministry in the Northwestern United States. I entered the ministry with high hopes and the clear sense of a heavenly calling.

I can say, unequivocally, that I have not been disappointed. The ministry has provided me with plenty of challenge, endless opportunities for service, and, most of all, the privilege of leading hundreds of men, women, and children to Jesus Christ and His church. The ministry also taught me things that two generations of preachers in my family before me and a plethora of school work could never have covered.

I have learned . . .

I have learned that, for the most part, people have not changed. They still need to be loved, prayed with, nurtured, and heard. It is the pastor's great privilege to minister to his people in times of crises, to uphold them in their sorrows and celebrate with them in their joys. No one should ever be too old, too sick, or too young to benefit from a pastor's compassionate heart. As Henri Nouwen has so aptly said, "The minister is not called to cheer people up but modestly to remind them that in the midst of pains and tribulations the first sign of the new life can be found and a joy

can be experienced which is hidden in the midst of sadness."¹

I have learned that the minister's family should merit his highest love and concern. If a young minister marries, serving as a pastor makes him no less obligated to be a sensitive, caring and helpful spouse. I have learned that *togetherness in marriage is achieved by the sharing and nurturing of common interests, and participating in the simple art of having real fun together.*

After thirteen full marathons and over fifty half-marathons, I have found that walking together has helped to keep my wife and me close. And if a marriage is blessed with children, the children should become a supreme priority when it comes to daily interests. This is the minister's first mission field. I have never once regretted the hours I spent shooting baskets with my son or the time spent playing table games with my daughter.

I have learned that people in the pew are interested in preaching. Almost without exception, whenever Christian people are asked to list important qualities in a pastor, preaching heads the list. The preacher of God's Word can move and change hearts with the aid of the Holy Spirit. I. H. Evans says "Preaching is not a mere profession, a comfortable, material-providing vocation at which a man can earn an easy livelihood; it is a calling, a work, a service, which exacts toil, sacrifice, study, and higher qualifications than any other vocation."²

I have learned that the minister should value *himself and his body temple* enough to follow good health habits of exercise, rest, and an adequate, balanced diet. Too many pastors have failed in this responsibility and set a poor example for "the saints." One overweight pastor said to me, "Hey, the Lord is coming soon, and He will change me at that time."

I have learned . . .

I have learned that no minister can forsake his personal devotional life and his daily close connection with heaven, at least not without paying a dear price. This daily manna-seeking does not come naturally, but must become an intentional priority if a minister is to have power with God and power with people. At the door of a church where I had just spoken, a person who had spent years in ministry and suffered a moral fall said to me with tears, "Lloyd, be faithful! The happiest years of my

life were spent in the ministry. I'd give everything I possess if I could be there again."

I have learned that a minister must live above reproach because of Whom he represents. He needs to set his heart on becoming a person of high integrity and impeccable honesty in the home, in the church, in the community, and out on the golf course. Honesty with the IRS. Honesty when turning medical reports in to the conference (one clergy person I know tried to move the decimal point over to the right one notch—in this way, a \$30 bill became \$300).

I have learned that it is possible for the minister to be content in whatsoever state or country he may find himself. Moves come and go. Blessed is the person who can throw his heart and soul into his present position and work as if he may be there forever.

I have learned . . .

I have learned that a good pastor can learn how to become a servant-leader in the church, serving with humility and love, and leading by example and vision. He is never hesitant to consider another's viewpoint. He does not rule with a heavy hand or make arbitrary decisions without the benefit of wise counsel from other congregational leaders. He knows full well that the congregation was there before him and will be there after him. Working with them has limitless benefits for the pastor and the congregation.

I have learned that some of the pastor's most satisfying work is to join the Holy Spirit in establishing the Word of God as a final authority in his congregation's heart and to teach them to have confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy. It is essential for them to understand that both of these resources ultimately come from the same Heavenly Origin.

I have learned that there is never a time when courtesy, tact, and a gracious winsome attitude is out of place. We all know the statement: "If we would humble ourselves before

God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is one."³ Every one of these Christian graces should become a part of every successful pastor, a part of his very makeup.

I have learned that destructive criticism works like a cancer to the soul of the one who participates in this activity. There is no place in a minister's life and work for petty sarcasm, condemnation, or disparaging words. Such activity will not assist anyone toward the heavenly kingdom.

I have learned that I am a full-blooded part of the human family, with its frailties and weaknesses. I have made mistakes and have fallen

short in all of the above categories. However, I have learned, best of all, that there is plenty of grace available and abundant forgiveness extended not only to the men and women in the pew, but graciously given to ministers as well.

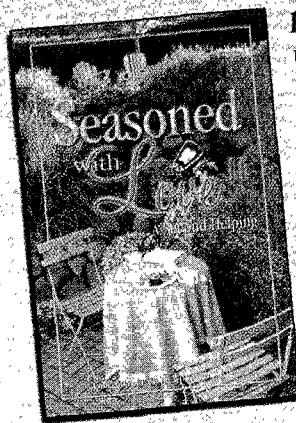
These are some of the lessons I've learned after 50 years in the ministry, things that, as I said, two generations of preachers before, and all the book work, could never teach me.

It has all been well worth it. ■

- 1 Henri Nouwen, *The Living Reminder* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 45.
- 2 I. H. Evans, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald Pub. Assn.), 21.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1909), 9:189.

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Ministerial mendacity

A view from the pew

Ellie Green

Then, in mid-flight over the Atlantic, the windshield of the jet airliner was smashed by the force of the storm and the pilot was sucked out. However, he managed to hold on to a part of the plane until some unknown force—which I believe was God—flipped him back into the cockpit. He was able to continue the flight and land the plane safely in New York.”

Most of the kids were riveted to this story of a miraculous intervention told by our new pastor as part of his sermon. Many of the adults that morning were trying not to laugh. Afterwards, as I shook hands with him at the door, I asked, “Pastor, have you ever flown in a jet?”

“No,” he replied confidently, “I’ve never had the privilege of flying in an airplane, but I have my stories on good authority!”

Over the years I have heard some ministers illustrate their sermons by the use of tall tales and exaggerated circumstances. This tendency is very unsettling. Sometimes it is downright embarrassing. I have always believed that the compromised veracity of the minister that comes with the use of such illustrations, far outweighs any practical spiritual benefit the story may have.

Not all ministers tell tall tales

I’m not speaking of all ministers! I certainly enjoy interesting presentations and there is

certainly nothing wrong with telling a story to illustrate or highlight a sermon point. Nor is there anything wrong, of course, with using parables to bring home a critical lesson. Jesus used both stories and parables to increase the effectiveness of His teaching. But Jesus never presented a story as truth that was an obvious fabrication or exaggeration of the facts.

Thankfully, most ministers would never embellish a story during a sermon. My life has been blessed by these servants of God.

I am concerned about the few prevaricators who give ministry a bad name, causing some to question the veracity of all clergy. James Patterson and Peter Kim¹ report that thirty-two percent of Americans believe they’ve been lied to by a clergyperson while forty-two percent believe that they’ve been lied to by attorneys. This national survey seems to indicate that the *ministry is running only ten percent behind lawyers in America’s veracity ratings*. It is sad that the few are able to tarnish the credibility of hundreds of fine pastors! Surely ministers, of all citizens, should bend over backwards to preserve integrity!

Lying to illustrate truth?

“And I watched while the demon shrieked and whirled around the room. The walls and windows shook.”

It was the third time I had heard this first-person, eyewitness account told by the same charismatic evangelist in various churches during the preceding few years. Each time the telling had been further embellished. It bothered me that my children made fun of this minister’s stories and that any overall effectiveness his message may have had on my family was nullified by his hyperbole.

Since I take very seriously the role of the minister as God’s messenger I had no desire to speak out against this evangelist and, indeed, never mentioned my reactions to his sermon illustrations to anyone. However, one day, while speaking to the conference ministerial secretary about another matter, I casually asked about this evangelist’s penchant for storytelling. Did he think it was a problem? Had anyone complained?

He smiled and replied. “He’s a good man. He does lean toward exaggeration to make his sermon points, but he doesn’t mean any harm by it.” I then asked facetiously, “Does the ministerial credentialing process include a license to lie?” The ministerial secretary replied just as



Ellie Green is president of E. Green and Associates, Indian Trail, North Carolina.

facetiously, "The license includes only the telling of sanctified lies!" We both enjoyed a hearty laugh but the laughter covered a deeper question, one of importance to both the pastor and the worshiper: Is telling a "tall tale" to make a point during the delivery of a sermon justified if it helps to get the point across to the worshipers?

A lying culture

Patterson and Kim report that "lying has become a cultural trait in America. Lying is embedded in our national character. Americans lie about everything—and usually for no good reason." Another researcher, Sissela Bok, claims that people do have good reasons for lying and those reasons are innumerable. She writes that we lie to: coerce, avoid, be tactful, make people feel better, prevent perceived harm, get what we want, get people to like us, appear reasonable, justify, deceive, avoid blame, have power, support the best interests of others, keep up appearances and, of course, for national security.²

I'd like to add to Bok's list: *to make a point during a sermon*, even though I believe most ministers' pulpit fabrications have no malicious intent. I believe that their intent is honorable. It would seem that, in a warped sense, some pastors embellish a story to make a point in the name of the Lord. This is what I call ministerial mendacity! These embellishments somehow become justified in the pulpit when supposedly told with the hope of winning a soul to Christ. What a contradiction!

It seems we Christians, including all ministers, are part of a larger lying culture. Every study on truth-telling indicates that prevarication is now acceptable! Carmen DeSena in her book, *Lies: The Whole Truth*,³ says that in compiling her book she was shocked to discover how much we human beings lie, and to whom. Her research shows that children lie and that they do so for "attention, to avoid chores, out of fear, to control, for approval, but most significantly,

because their parents and other adults teach them to." She points out that people learn to lie very early in life.

In other words, children learn to lie by example. Therefore, it's reasonable to conclude that if children grow up in a church admiring and enjoying the embellished stories of a favorite pastor, they are likely to believe forever that this is an acceptable pulpit and thus conversational practice. Should one of them enter the ministry he or she will see no reason not to perpetuate the practice that was so entertaining during childhood.

OVER THE YEARS I
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The divine perspective on truth-telling

In addition to many pointed biblical passages condemning prevarication, God has preserved numerous accounts of biblical people who believed, for one reason or another, that falsification of facts would serve their best interest. These stories prove that God is serious about the seriousness of the sin of prevarication:

Bold-faced lie: Genesis 4 tells us the story of Cain who brought the wrong sacrifice and then killed Abel in a jealous rage. When God inquired of him, "Where is thy brother?" he replied, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"

The rationalization lie: Knowing that the Pharaoh would covet his

beautiful wife, Abraham reasoned that he was not guilty of falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister since she was, in fact, his half-sister (Gen. 12).

The premeditated lie: The Genesis 27 account of the deliberate lying of Jacob with his mother Rebekah's help, successfully plotted the deception of both Esau and Isaac and is clearly pictured as leading to some of the dominating horrors in Jacob's life.

The circumstantial lie: In 1 Samuel 21 and 22 we read of David's lie to save his own life, but it resulted in the high priest, Ahimelech, losing his!

The greed-based lie: Gehazi coveted the gifts which Elisha refused. For lying about it Elisha pronounced the curse of leprosy on him (2 Kings 5).

The little white lie: In Acts 4, Ananias, held back some of the profit from the sale of his land while claiming that he had given all. Within three hours both he and his wife, Sapphira, were dead.

Scripture makes it clear that God doesn't treat lightly any form of deception. It has also been said that "God requires that truthfulness shall mark his people, even in the greatest peril."⁴ If we are not to lie, even when in danger of losing our lives, how much more truthful should we be when presenting the morning sermon!

The author's view from the pew

As a layperson sitting in the pew, looking up at you in the pulpit, with my Bible open, I expect you to stand in place of God to me and my family.

You see, we desperately need your expert knowledge of divine truth, as revealed in the Word of God. We need you to feed our souls with information and insight from the Word that will help us overcome sin and enable us to walk more closely with God. Then, each week we will be back for another spiritual feast knowing that you have prepared the food in the form of a prayerful, Spirit-filled sermon.

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When writing, it is good to avoid as far as possible the use of any phraseology or allusion that may be mystifying or irrelevant to readers outside a given national culture.

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It's important for us to know that every word that comes out of your mouth during your sermon has come under the scrutiny of God—that the Holy Spirit has inspired it for our good. While we learn from true stories about real people related to your sermon topic we cringe at embellished, frivolous stories because they cause us to lose interest in righteousness. When such stories are related, we tend to focus on the incredible story instead of the underlying message and this keeps us from being brought face to face with our sins and the need to candidly acknowledge them. Without this weekly analysis and confession of our sins we cannot progress in holiness and develop the depth of character to which God calls us.

When you tell a "tall tale" in the pulpit to illustrate a particular point in your sermon it leads us to believe that you can't be trusted in other areas that are critical to our spiritual life. Areas like guiding our children, praying for and anointing our sick, counseling troubled couples contemplating divorce, maintaining our confidences as we share with you our concerns and troubles.

Down deep we really don't want sermons that entertain us. We want to bring friends and family members to our church knowing that they will hear a Christ-centered message that will inspire them to join us in serving Jesus Christ. We know that more and more, as we move toward the end of all things, we are going to face lying wonders of all kinds, and we need you to be a preacher of honor and truth to whom ministerial mendacity of any kind is abhorrent.

We want to be able to say to our friends and family, "If you want to know Jesus, let me introduce you to my pastor." ■

- 1 James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth* (Prentice Hall Press), 1991.
- 2 Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (Pantheon Books, 1978).
- 3 Carmen DeSena, *Lies: The Whole Truth* (Putnam Publishing Group, 1993).
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1913), 656.

Emphasizing the experience

If a belief or practice never makes impact beyond intellectual assent to take root in daily life, we have fallen far short of evangelism's goal for new believers to experience new life in Christ.

The process by which I instruct new or potential believers may be as necessary for their joy in an ongoing relationship with Jesus as the facts which I teach them. Take Sabbath keeping for example.

It is one thing to accurately teach the perpetuity of the seventh-day Sabbath coming to humanity today directly from God's six-day fiat creation and seventh-day of rest through the authenticating testimony of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and, ultimately, Jesus Christ Himself. It is another matter entirely to assist believers in experiencing the benefits of Sabbath keeping for themselves in such a way that they can say with the Psalmist, Taste of the Lord and see that He is good!

In fact, I am so convinced of this necessity to emphasize the benefits of the experience more than the responsibilities of the knowledge about Jesus and His holy day, that my approach centers less on proving something and more on spiritual experimentation to discover the blessing God has in store for those who will, with open minds and hearts, approach the experience of His will.

Jesus envisions us learning by doing which allows His biblical truth to self-authenticate itself in our experiment with and experience of obedience. Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know if my teaching is from God or is merely my own. (John 7:17, NLT).

We should never fear the results of experimentally developing confidence in God's way. Rather, we should seek new and innovative ways to encourage

JAMES A. CRESS



others to taste and see for themselves. The most effective evangelists proclaim eternal truths from God's Word coupled with opportunities for potential believers to experiment with God's will for their personal lives, such as special Sabbath Celebrations built right into the evangelistic program.

Sabbath keeping is an excellent laboratory to see the value of this approach. Rather than asking someone to pledge adherence to an intellectual concept, why not encourage them to experimentally discover the blessing that awaits them in testing God's promised blessings.

Thus, rather than risking that someone might reject what they have tried out for themselves, we actually build faith by providing such opportunities for experimentation. Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.¹

In his book *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck says that learning can be passive or experiential. Experiential learning is more demanding but infinitely more effective. As with other things, the rules of communication and community are best learned experientially.²

Personally, I've discovered great benefit in teaching principles of Sabbath keeping from God's own fourth com-

mandment, but rooted in experimental and experiential discovery in fellowship with others who seek to know and experience the best that Jesus offers. Referencing the fourth commandment, itself, three distinct principles readily present opportunities to experience Sabbath.

1. **Preparation.** The biblical concept of remembering the Sabbath means that the entire week is involved in preparing for a special encounter with our Creator with Friday, the sixth day becoming a special anticipatory day which even bears the name, Preparation Day. Imagine! Our time, priorities, business schedules, leisure pursuits, and even mundane activities become focused on remembering to prepare to meet our God.

2. **Holiness.** Remember the sabbath to keep it holy. Scriptures closely link holiness with worship (O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness) and corporate fellowship (Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together). Experimenting in fellowship with like-minded believers confirms the necessity of communion with our best Friend, Jesus, the Lord of Sabbath.

3. **Rest.** Six days is sufficient to accomplish our own agendas and we need the rest provided by Sabbath, this sanctuary in time. Rather than a legalistic burden, Sabbath keeping envisions, preeminently, a secure rest in Jesus Christ instead of our own works for our salvation, coupled with a rest of our bodies, minds, souls, and families in relationship to the One who declared, If you are heavily burdened, come to Me and I will give you rest. ▣

1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1885), 3:69.

2 M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 84.

Letters

continued from page 3

harm. His candid confession was valuable for all clergy. In the U.S. and other countries child abuse, whether sexual or by other physical means, is a crime and the church has no right to try to ultimately resolve it. Those who attempt to keep such incidents quiet and out of the hands of the authorities are guilty of a crime and subject to arrest and punishment in most U.S. states, if not all. Contrary to the thinking of many pastors, confession of child abuse is not covered by confidentiality laws. Anyone coming into the knowledge of possible or factual child abuse is obligated by law to advise the proper authorities. In the U.S. proper authorities are the local police, sheriff, department of children's service and the district attorney's office.

I spent six years working with the

juvenile court of my county. I have spent the last ten years working as a volunteer chaplain with the local police department. During this time I have seen a large number of cases of child abuse. In too many cases there were those who knew but failed to report what they knew or suspected. As a result the pain and suffering of little children went unchecked until, in some cases, it was too late.

I believe it is high time that we admit that crime does occur in our midst and we must deal with it properly. We must not be like some entities who attempt to cover it up for fear of bad publicity. Nor should we think that we can heal the guilty person of his or her sickness. Most people have a greater respect for those who are not afraid to stand up for right than they do for those who cover up wrong. We would not think of covering up a murder committed by one of our members. Why, then, would we

think to cover up the murder of a child's dignity and the creation of permanent scars on his or her soul?

This does not mean that we stop our attempt to spiritually nurture the suspected offender. That obligation will always need to be met, but our first responsibility is to the victim. Too often we neglect that responsibility.

—Jim Cox, pastor, certified law enforcement chaplain.

Thank you for the article "Sexual Abuse of Children in the Church" in the March 2001 issue of *Ministry*. I am pleased that in recent years we as a church are facing up to the reality that we are not immune from this problem. However, I am distressed that so many of us would rather believe that it does not exist in the church.

As a pastor I have had to face it. Working with my head elder we tried to help the man concerned, but when all of our efforts failed, I took counsel from the conference president and reported the matter to the police. The police prosecuted him and he was found guilty. Even though this was the third time he had been in court over his behavior, the magistrate put him on a good-behavior bond. Some months later he offended again.

May I make a plea for the pastors who have to deal with these problems. I faced some hostility over my handling of the problem and was accused of taking the offender to court, contrary to church-recommended practice. I replied that it was the police who were prosecuting him, not me. Even the parents of one of the boys involved, in a state of denial, turned against me. Our pastors and those trying to protect our children would appreciate the prayers and support of church members.

—Name withheld.

Editorial Comment: It is important to notice the statement under 3 in the side bar accompanying the article, "Sexual Abuse of Children in the Church," where the reader is urged: Inform yourself of the legal situation. In some countries [such as in most states in the United

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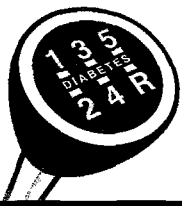
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States of America] you are legally required to report child abuse to the police. Be aware of the legal standing regarding information that is disclosed to you in confidence." Among other things, this requirement could help you in meeting the anger of those who may believe your handling of a given situation is flawed.

The theological value of the Creation account

For nearly thirty years I have been a minister in the Church of Norway (Lutheran), and for many years the Adventist church in our country has been sending me Ministry. Two articles I will never forget. The first one, a long time ago, written by Alden Thompson, made me buy his book *Who Is Afraid of the Old Testament God?*—excellent! And the second one is Greg King's article on the Creation account ("The Theological Value of the Creation Account," March 2001). To me, this was a totally new and very enriching way to read and regard it. Thank you very much!—*Tor-Ole Bjerke, Lillehammer, Norway.*

Greg A. King is undoubtedly correct in pointing out the importance of the theological import of the Creation account in Genesis. He also has a point in explaining the critique of pagan ideas about the origin of the world implied in the biblical account (its rejection of polytheism, rivalry, and other moral imperfections in the Godhead, identification of natural features with divine beings, divine ill-will, and lack of commitment towards mankind, etc.). However, it is also extremely important to observe about his article: (1) The theological value of the Creation account is not exhausted in such a critique of paganism. The theological ideas of Genesis 1-3 are the foundation for the whole biblical worldview and history of salvation. For instance, the creation of man in the image of God is the foundational idea to understand the predicament of mankind after the sin of Adam, the need for redemption, the atoning nature of Christ's death, righteousness by faith, and the features of the eschatological new heavens and new earth. Therefore,



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the biblical account is not only true in what it denies about paganism, but also in that which it affirms about the history of mankind and salvation, past, present, and future. (2) This full theological value depends on the "factual, authentic" nature of the Creation account. Continuing with the previous example, if we were not, in actual fact, created in the image of God, then the whole history of redemption makes little sense. The factual nature of the Creation account also needs to be strenuously affirmed, in the face of countless descriptions of the biblical Creation account which restrict its theological value to the aforementioned critique of paganism make room for a denial of its historical, factual value. —*Aecio Cairus, via email.*

Appreciation

Today I am praising the Lord for directing me to your Web site <www.ministerialassociation.com>. He answers all of our prayers in due time. I am an elder elect at my church, and I so

want to give the Lord my best. The only way to do that is to be educated and prepared. For the past year I have been inquiring about what training opportunities might be available for someone such as myself. . . . My ministerial staff gave me some information, but I was never told about your resources. I have been sitting here in my office writing down the information you have available. I have your toll-free number and will be contacting you to order things for myself and my pastors.

Thank you for being a light in the wilderness.

—*Priscilla L. Harp, Fredericksburg, Virginia.*

Just a note to say how much I appreciate the "new look" in *Ministry*. It takes a lot of doing to do something different in a magazine. The challenge to make it unique and readable is always there, isn't it? Thanks for staying out of the rut and trying to have it readable and interesting. God bless your efforts. ▣

—*Jack Harris, Portland, Oregon.*

SHOP TALK

Bereavement service for infants

As a hospital chaplain, I was approached by the Neonatal and Sudden Infant Death Association to conduct a Mother's Day service for those who had suddenly lost a baby in the previous twelve months. It was to be held in a local park on a point which reached into a bay. The suggestion was made that each parent bring a daisy-like flower to represent the lost child.

There were 13 families present. After a short service, I invited them to the water's edge, giving them four options:

1. They could get a piece of bark, fallen from the nearby trees and place their flower on it, launch it into the water and watch it float away from the shore. This was to provide the opportunity to calmly say their goodbyes.

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2. They could throw the flower into the water and move back. This gesture would allow them to express their anger at the unfairness of their loss.

3. The flower petals could be plucked and thrown slowly, petal by petal into the water. As each petal fell, they would be able to contemplate what might have been and complete any unfinished business in connection with the death of their child.

4. If they felt their healing and grieving was far from over, they were free to wander away from the others to watch the ebbing water. As they held their flower, they were invited to recall what had happened, with the liberty to react with tears or other emotions. It was suggested that they keep the flower and when they felt able, they could come back to this place and release their flower privately on the water.

The Association who organized the service reported appreciation from all the families, who considered they had made great progress in their healing.

—Neville A. Kirkwood, Woorim, Queensland, Australia.

Updating the church library

Upon the death of a church member we purchase a book and place it in the church library in memory of that church member. We try to match the book to the interests or personality of the person who is being remembered. An inscription is placed in the front of the book so that borrowers will be reminded of the person.

Each year, or more often if numbers warrant it, the books are presented within a worship service, with some brief comments about the person(s) being remembered and the book(s) chosen.

The family of the person is especially invited to this worship service, whether

or not they are regular church attenders. Many respond, and it is an extra contact between the church and the family members.

Along with the book memorial, the library gets a book boost, members of the congregation get an effective reminder of the presence of the library, family members have extra contacts with the church through the invitation, the tribute presentation and the return of the book.

—Richard Lawton, Malak, Northern Territories, Australia.

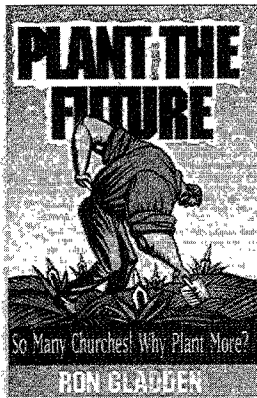
Senior Adult extension classes

Here's a great way to promote the Senior Adult Ministries of your church. It is also a great way to do outreach for the group to grow. Once a week, a special day is set aside for the senior adults to come and choose an elective. Activities might include: current events Bible studies, painting, ceramics, health nutrition, or other crafts and projects. This special two-hour activity program is held weekly at the church facilities. The program begins about 10:00 a.m. and end with lunch or an afternoon activity as well. Highlight of the day is the noon meal where all can fellowship together. This can either be a potluck or a brown-bag lunch, or be catered depending upon the budget. There can be a small fee for the craft supplies used also. An after-lunch social activity can be scheduled for every other week or so, such as a trip to a local tourist site, etc. Sometimes it can be a surprise "Destination Unknown." Volunteer teachers can come from the local group itself or brought in from outside. Plans can be made by the senior adults themselves working under advisement of the pastoral staff. ■

—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas.

NEW BOOKS

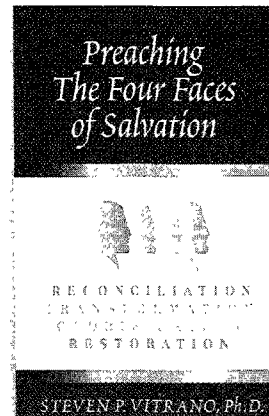
ministry.



Plant the Future

is for frustrated but loyal members who are eager to invest their lives in hastening Jesus return. Want to reignite your own passion for soul winning? Take the author's advice: plant a church! Using an effective, realistic storytelling style, Ron Gladden gets down to the heart of the matter.

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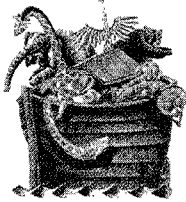
Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation

Righteousness by Faith . . . Steven Vitrano invites us to return to Scripture and explore God's plan of redemption in a more holistic manner. By letting the Bible interpret itself, he uncovers four facets or "faces" of salvation: reconciliation, transformation, glorification, and restoration.

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Helping new members stay on board

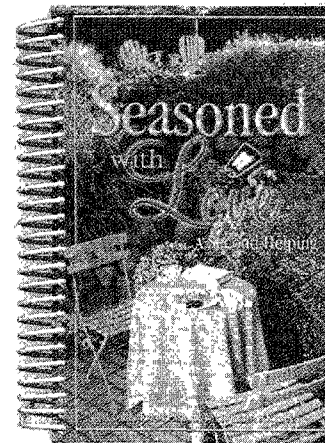


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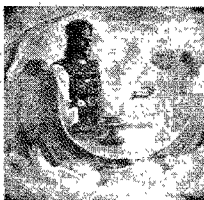


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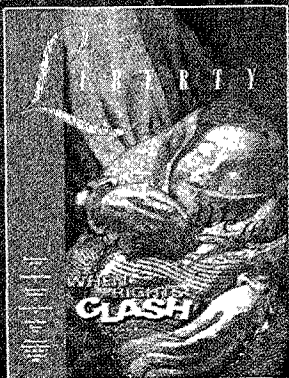
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