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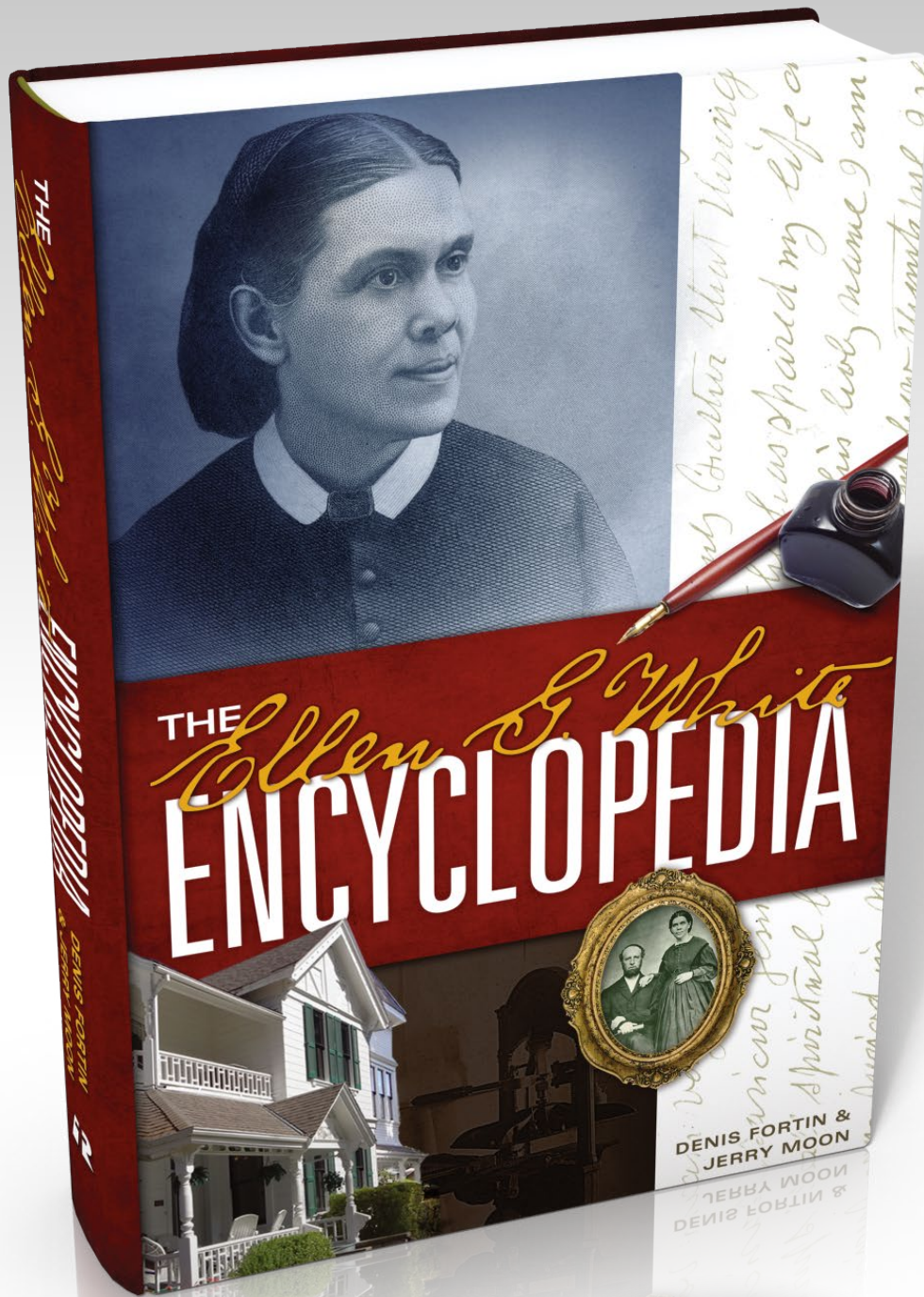
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Regarding "Of Nails and Donkeys" by Kenley D. Hall in the October 2013 of Ministry, three citations were inadvertently left out. Please see the corrected article on our Web Site at www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2013/10/of-nails-and-donkeys.

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“We need good heart religion that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ.”

Restoration for fallen ministers?

In David Solomon’s article “Does God Believe in Restoration? Part 2” (October 2013), the author seems to imply that if the church would “begin practicing the grace that we preach” and move forward that [it] would begin to reemploy and recredential pastors who have had a moral fall.

The article refers to Ellen White’s Manuscript Release 449, “Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who Have Violated the Seventh Commandment.”* However, the message of the article seems to [be] contrary to Ellen White’s counsel in that manuscript. It is a collection of various counsels given to ministers who had moral falls. Here is a summary of Ellen White’s counsel answering the question “Can ministers be restored?”

First, restored to a right relationship with God, the joy of salvation, a right spirit, and the hope of eternal life in Jesus? Yes, if there is genuine repentance.

Second, restored to their families and marriage, to church membership,

and/or to volunteer ministry for the Lord and His church? It varies by the situation; there is no hard and fast rule (5a).

Finally, restored credentials and church employment as a gospel minister paid from the tithe? No. For example, “in no case entrust to them the guardianship of souls” (2). “I was very reluctant to say a word to discourage you. . . . I thought when your credentials were not renewed you would quietly settle down and be willing to be retired” (5c). “If you can save your own soul by a humble penitent life, that is the greatest work you can do” (13). “These debasing sins have not been handled with firmness and decision” (22). “[I]t would not be possible to give you credentials as a shepherd, recommending you to the confidence of the people, because knowing your course of action, if you should in any way be overcome, the Lord would make the conference guilty of the sin of which you are guilty” (23). “If the man is willing and desirous of coming to Europe on his own responsibility, perhaps that would be wisdom” (27). “Come here to Australia. . . . Come here

on your own responsibility. You will have means, if you sell your farm, to bring you here” (31).

As we seek to restore fallen ministers to the Lord and His service (as volunteers), we need to take to heart this important counsel. “We need good heart religion that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ. We must bring them in contact with the sin-pardoning Saviour” (29).

* Ellen G. White, Manuscript Release 449: “Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who Have Violated the Seventh Commandment,” Ellen G. White Estate, drc.whiteestate.org/read.php?id=16324.

Dan Serns, Richardson, Texas, United States

I write with a resounding Yes! in answer to the question “Does God Believe in Restoration? Part 1” (August 2013), even before the continuation with part 2 in a later edition. Perhaps the real question is, Does the Adventist Church leadership believe in restoration?

History recounts that there was one, a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who, Spirit-led by God, ministered to a Brother V, a repentant minister who had broken the seventh commandment. Rather than advocate that he be fired, Ellen White graciously ministered God’s understanding and compassion to this fallen brother with these words: “[R]edeeming the past errors of your life, God will accept you. . . . God is merciful; He pities our weakness; He forgives our transgressions; and, if we will only live humble and penitent, if we will cease from evil and do well, the Lord will approve. May He teach you and work for you.”† Graciously reflecting the character of her Savior, in the same letter she then suggests that Brother V

Continued on page 9



Seedtime and harvest

I recently learned some important lessons about farming. In the past, I have spent most of my time thinking about what I want to grow—or more specifically, what I want to eat once harvesttime arrives. A skilled farmer has a different perspective. First, the soil is tested. Then vital questions are asked: Do I plant something that will grow well in this soil, or do I take the time to develop the soil in order to grow a different crop?

I hope the application to ministry is clear. How often have I tried to plant a church in a community without paying any attention to the condition of the soil? When was the last time I asked what type of church would grow well in this particular soil, rather than insisting on the type of church I wanted to plant?

Peter Roennfeldt has devoted a lifetime of ministry to the vital work of church planting. His lead article in this issue of *Ministry* challenges us to go back to our roots as a church-planting movement. Our primary mission, as pastors, should not be to babysit churches that already exist but rather to disciple lay leaders to care for existing churches while we train and support other lay leaders in the process of planting new churches.


One of the best ways to grow a vibrant church is through small groups. Ted Hamilton has taught a dynamic small-group Bible study for many years. In his article titled “Growing in Grace: The Transforming Power of Sabbath School,” he explores the essential components of a life-changing small group. Apply the principles outlined in this article, and you will also witness remarkable growth and an abundant harvest in your small-group ministry.

Melak Alemayehu brings the theme of seedtime and harvest to a personal

level in his article titled “Abundant and Abiding Fruit Bearing.” He gleans important lessons from the teaching of Jesus about the Vine and the branches. He reminds each one of us that we can experience a bountiful harvest in our own lives through a living connection with Jesus.

We have received a significant amount of feedback regarding the series “Does God Believe in Restoration?” The author, writing under the pseudonym of David Solomon, challenges us to reevaluate our response to moral failure by a Christian leader. Some critics are quick to proclaim, “You reap what you sow! You have experienced a moral failure. You’re out of the ministry!” But does an opportunity for a new beginning ever exist? Can a field still yield a good crop after a dismal crop failure?

Jesus shared some important insights about seedtime and harvest at Jacob’s well on the outskirts of Sychar: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both . . . may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps’” (John 4:35–37, NKJV). Whether you are currently involved in sowing or reaping, may the articles in this month’s issue be used by God to bless you spiritually, intellectually, and professionally.

We wish you God’s richest blessings during this Advent season. As you reflect upon the outpouring of God’s love to our broken planet, may your life be blessed beyond measure. 



Left to right:
Melynie Tooley,
Derek J. Morris,
John Feezer IV,
Willie E. Hucks II,
Sheryl Beck

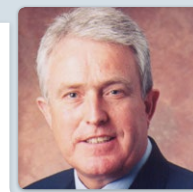
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Peter Roennfeldt, retired pastor and evangelist, lives in Caroline Springs, Victoria, Australia.



Cultivating church planting in your territory

After three years in ministry, I was called to be a district leader and evangelist in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The city had three churches and a small group at the leper facility on a harbor island. With the young pastors and members, we devised a plan of regular public evangelism around the city—in marketplaces, schools, squatter settlements, church buildings, and on university campuses. At the end of four years, the plan resulted in 14 new churches.

While such an approach is rarely effective in Western territories today, research shows that new churches reach new people, and only those conferences planting new churches grow.¹ Secular postmodern societies pose new challenges, but there is growing interest by district and regional pastors and conference and union leaders in cultivating and multiplying new churches in their territories or countries. Having assisted in developing a division-wide church-planting strategy as well as multiple conference and union plans, some questions need to be raised: What processes have been followed? What lessons have we learned? What are some of the traps and keys to a process?

Beginning a process in postmodern societies

To illustrate the principles in this article, I draw on the experiences of

four fields, each with a highly secular postmodern society where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has experienced decline but church planting is opening new vistas: the Belgium-Luxembourg Conference (BLC), in the early stages; the Western Australian Conference (WA), seven to nine years along this path; the South England Conference (SEC), with over 60 new plants in eight years; and the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC), now ten to twelve years into planting churches.

An environment of encouragement and innovative mission

Leaders play a key role in church planting, providing an environment of affirmation, encouragement, and movement thinking. WA president Glenn Townend, who has planted Adventist churches during his ministry, has positioned planting as mainstream Adventism in his conference. “Along with personal ministries, prayer ministry, our school system, age care, youth activities, etc., church planting is what we do to renew Adventism as a movement in Western Australia,” Townend says. The past and current NUC presidents participate in the annual evangelism festival, affirming church planting is “what we do,” and teaching seminars and workshops to encourage and equip new planting teams. They affirm diverse initiatives

by members and pastors to reach new people with the message of Adventism. “We have learned the value of consistent union leader support,” says Rudy Dingjan, NUC church planting coordinator for ten years. To address concerns about church planting, the NUC also published *Growing Pains*, a newsletter sent to all members with the Sabbath School quarterlies, in which Dingjan and the presidents responded to questions and criticisms. Leaders play an important role in reminding members and pastors that Adventism began as a church-planting movement.

Be highly intentional, but low key

Church planting starts with prayer, revitalization, discipleship, and the affirmation of members and pastors who experiment with fresh approaches to sharing faith with friends and communities—not with high-profile strategic plans and numeric goal setting. While the process is intentional, a wide number of people need to be involved in conversations to shape the journey.

Pastors know their districts, are working to involve members in mission, and must be involved in the dialogue about a developing church-growth or church-planting process. In the BLC, Reinder Bruinsma, the interim president, and his fellow administrators involved all pastors in discussing

their concerns, fears, and hopes. Then the leaders, together with an experienced facilitator of church-planting teams, visited pastors with key local church leaders in their local areas. This involved hours of visitation, listening, and exploring mission initiatives and potential plants. Pastors who were found to be experimenting were invited to share their experiences with fellow pastors.

Elders and personal ministries leaders from the whole conference, together with their pastors, spent a full Sabbath with their BLC leaders and guest speakers from similar cultural regions, discussing the possibilities of church planting for mission. Case

and offices, and some who are frustrated and/or are in conflict with their churches whose passion for mission in their communities was reignited by the growing vision of church growth and planting across their countries. BLC leaders with district pastors visited each for two to three hours, answering questions and concerns, building bridges of reconciliation and trust, fanning each spark of mission interest, and developing a plan of further equipping and support for these potential plants.

Some essentials in the process

Major objections need to be addressed. Dingjan identified three

- Involving lay members as planters. They know and are connected to their target communities and have a deep passion to share their faith with their friends. Young adults plant to reach their friends and are integral to most church plants.
- Pastors serve as coaches of the church-planting teams, not controlling, but resourcing, equipping, and encouraging. They are equipped and affirmed in their new role of fostering the ministry of their members, rather than doing the ministry solo. In the NUC, each plant has a district pastor as their coach, and pastors are involved in training. Some now care for two or three



Church planting starts with prayer, revitalization, discipleship, and the affirmation of members and pastors who experiment with fresh approaches to sharing faith with friends and communities.

studies provided inspiration and ideas; questions and concerns were aired and addressed. Meanwhile, all local churches received video and written materials on the developing vision.

Potential planters and plants began to surface through further visitation of pastors and churches. Pastors and members in the BLC, along with leaders, began identifying potential planting projects—families reaching their communities, ethnic and language groups, young adults, older people relating to the kids next door, business people initiating ministries from factories

objections to church planting when this was first introduced in the Netherlands: (1) it cannot be done in Europe, (2) it will cost too much, and (3) it will burn out already overburdened pastors. These were addressed by the following:

- Church-planting study tours to visit church plants in similar cultures, observing that it can be done, and that secular postmoderns are coming to the faith. Conference and union leaders, pastors, and laypeople (including many young people) participated.

established churches as well as coach two or three church plants. This new paradigm takes pressure off overburdened pastors.

Mission is the reason for planting, not alternate worship services. The variety of people planting together with the many communities and people groups being reached will result in a wide variety of styles of worship gatherings, but church planting is not a group of members starting a different worship service. Jesus commissioned disciples to make disciples, and this is where

church planting starts (Matt. 28:18–20). Potential teams need equipping in the discipleship process Jesus used and to learn how to lead people to Jesus in our postmodern context.

Church planting is a spiritual journey. Every potential planting team is encouraged to read the book of Acts systematically, praying through each chapter and identifying lessons for their plant. This book contains the primary manual for all church planters. In this context, the teams learn to pray in a variety of ways and depend upon the Holy Spirit's leading. Teams are also encouraged to become involved in missional activities immediately—not to wait until they have finished training, and begin working through a church-planting manual or conversation guide.²

Keep it simple and low cost. Most church planting in the Western world is now kept simple and low budget. Members are planting churches. Conferences and unions spend funds on equipping but to visit, develop friendships, or disciple people in their homes does not cost money. Aristotle Vontzalidis, SEC church growth and planting coordinator, says the SEC has shifted the focus from pastor-planted churches to lay members planting. In the SEC, they have fostered simple churches. Based upon teams of members, this is small and inexpensive but very effective. Because it is member based, they reduce the activities and complexity to what full-time professionals, workers, or business people can handle. As people become disciples, they gather in homes, low-cost community facilities, cafés, or school or university lecture rooms. If community programs are needed, the wider community is invited to fund the initiatives. A basic principle is that the harvesters and the funds for church plants are in the harvest!

Variety is expected

Planting churches might be easier to manage if all church plants looked the same as existing churches. However, that will not be the case. Planters think

differently, their communities are diverse, and the Holy Spirit leads. Some plants develop strategically, while others are more spontaneous. Like most existing churches in the global north, some will reflect modernity while others will represent the multiculturalism and diversity of post-Christendom forms. Some may use classic models of outreach, such as public evangelism and seminars, while most will use more relational approaches to engage their communities. There will be a variety of types of church plants, all under the umbrella of Adventism: community, café, simple, satellite, traditional, kids churches, and house church plants. Some will be structured; others, not so structured. “This church plant is proving very effective in engaging families in its local community,” says Aristotle Vontzalidis. “They have also started a very successful community Heart Café evening every couple of months.”

Support systems are needed

Church plants flourish with good support systems, such as the following:

Annual exchange summits. Those interested in learning about church planting are invited to attend a training summit, bringing at least four people for each potential team. Prayer times (usually one and a half hours daily), worships, plenary sessions, and workshops and seminars are used to equip and inspire. Much of the teaching is done through case studies. All teams who have started planting are invited to share their stories as part of the equipping of other teams. This also provides an environment for assessing their journeys. Each team receives encouragement to equip and bring another team of church planters the next year.

Conference or union planting coordinator. This point person should recognize the importance of being involved in church planting, not simply a departmental person with the added responsibility of church planting. Passionate about evangelism and discipleship, and able and willing to foster

different approaches, this person works closely with conference and union leadership—planning summits, study tours, coordinating the role of coaches, providing resources, networking, and encouraging.

Coaching and visits. Regular coaching visits and an annual visit to each plant by the coordinator and a conference or union leader are extremely helpful. During these visits, questions are answered and planters are affirmed as team members in mission. Through such close contact, conference and union personnel can also address any independent or congregational tendencies usually arising through frustration or a lack of communication. Every couple of years, the SEC and NUC have also involved an experienced church planter and consultant to visit 15–20 plants a week with their coordinator and president, focusing the planting teams on their mission and addressing specific issues on which they seek help. This is an intense but appreciated process.

Visits to existing churches. During these visits, the president, church-planting coordinator, and guest consultant can also visit with the leadership or board of established churches. Together with their pastors, they can be encouraged to become hubs of church planting, fostering a network of plants in their district.

News and resources. The stories of plants are shared through blogs, regular email newsletters, and conference and union papers, providing outreach and ministry ideas for planters. But, watch the language. To say, “It is easier to give birth (to a new church) than to raise the dead (an established church)” is judgmental and offensive to faithful members in existing churches. Church planters can offend in their enthusiasm.

Twinning. Some church plants in the NUC and SEC have twinned by supporting each other, sharing weekend retreats, visiting, and sharing in mission. This voluntary arrangement has proven to be very supportive.

Mini-exchanges or summits. In addition to an annual church-planting

summit, the WA has initiated minisummits in some regional centers. Three to five teams are equipped in each region, and members of established churches benefit from discipleship training and a better understanding of new churches in their districts.

Without intentional equipping, support, and multiplying systems, significant church planting does not happen. Even once ten to twenty new churches have been planted, the energies in a conference or union may be easily diverted to maintenance. These support systems need to be fostered and refreshed year after year.

Allow a conference and/or union church-planting process to develop

A conference and/or union vision document develops from dialogue. Begin with simple broad strokes, a commitment to prayer, and renewing Adventism as a movement. Foster an ongoing prayer focus that continues year after year, not just a day, week, month, or even a year of prayer. Affirm innovative approaches to mission, and encourage participation in mission in other fields.

To see church planting multiply across a territory, do the following:

- Do not present a completed strategic plan to pastors and churches to launch the process. Start low key,


conservative, and develop the plan together.

- Do not set numeric goals, such as the number of new churches, within ten years. Such do not motivate the pastors or planters in Western environments.
- Do not prescribe the methods that will be used. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead members and pastors to use what God has placed in their hands, and be surprised.
- Do not ask planters to present definitive plans before they can start. These plans will evolve. They cannot determine the direction of their mission before they start.

It is a process. This does not mean no plan exists. Each conference or union needs simple guidelines that are affirmed before a group is recognized as a church-planting project, including a clear mission focus, a cooperative spirit, a developing plan (developed by the team working through a church-planting manual or conversation guide), team leaders or a group affirmed by the planting coordinator and president, an assigned coach, a financial plan (including the return of tithe to the conference or union), and a safe-places plan for children and vulnerable people. Each conference or union needs a clear process of affirming projects and informing them when they are recognized as a group, a

plant, and what is expected for them to be accepted as a sister church.³

Conclusion

Adventism began as a church-planting movement in the West.⁴ We cannot extrapolate directly from the early years, but for each year in the 1870s, one new Adventist church was planted for every two ordained pastors; in the 1880s, one new church each year for every five or six ordained pastors; and in the 1890s, one church each year for every four ordained pastors. At the 1870s rate of planting, the BLC with 10 ordained pastors would be planting 5 churches each year; the NUC, 13; the WA with 35 ordained pastors in their territory, 17 or 18; and the SEC with 83 pastors, about 40 new churches each year. The leaders of the BLC, NUC, WA, and SEC are committed to seeing Adventism as a movement in their fields again. 

1 These Western territories are North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.
 2 Peter Roennfeldt, *Planting Churches That Multiply: Conversation Guide*, New Church Life, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.newchurchlife.com/wp-content/uploads/Planting-Churches-that-Multiply-20111.pdf> and Peter Roennfeldt, *Church Planting: New Churches for New People*, New Church Life, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.newchurchlife.com/wp-content/uploads/New-Churches-for-New-People-07.pdf>.
 3 In most Western fields, the status of church company does not fit a church plant, for it is not an isolated group of believers and, very early, it has trained leaders.
 4 See Russell Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1999).

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LETTERS

Continued from page 4



relocate to England where, “We want missionaries whom God can work with and bless.”

Can we do anything other than follow this example of true Christian compassion?

[†] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 203.

Steve Cinzio, *Logan Village, Queensland, Australia*

Thank you for the series “Does God Believe in Restoration?” I experienced a moral fall after serving as a pastor for 30 years. When I read the article, I felt like I was reading my own story, except for the conclusion. I lost everything four years ago and have not yet experienced restoration. I am so happy that the author got a second chance.

At times, I wonder if that is in God’s will for me, but regardless, I was blessed with reconciliation and restoration of [my] relationship with Him. In my heart, I know His sovereign grace and will for me is very good. Truly, I miss being a pastor, but what I needed to learn was far more important.

Stuart S., *Washington State, United States*

Theodore N. Levterov is director of the Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States.



Seventh-day Adventists and health: Celebrating 150 years of the Adventist health message

The year 2013 marks 150 years since the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist health message. On June 6, 1863, in Otsego, Michigan, God revealed through Ellen G. White that Adventists should begin to pay attention to their health and lifestyle. This first major vision on health transformed the Seventh-day Adventist Church to become a leading entity in health and health science around the world.

Health in nineteenth-century America

Health practices at the beginning of the nineteenth century in America were deplorable and far from what we consider normal today. Rennie Schoepflin notes, “In the early nineteenth century, American patients and physicians shared a common understanding of health and sickness that contrasts sharply with that of most Americans today.”¹ Doctors and nurses had little or no education. Tobacco and other deadly drugs were used for medicine, and patients were bled to death. One in six infants died before reaching their first birthday. The average life

expectancy was about midthirties. Little or nothing was known about nutrition as “fruits and vegetables were largely avoided.” Much was also to be desired about hygiene. Some reports claim that the average American at that time seldom or never took a bath during their entire lifetime.²

In this context, health reformers began to appear and appeal for new ways of healthful living. Sylvester Graham, for example, came up with his new Graham diet, teaching people new eating habits. Dr. James C. Jackson established a water-cure institution near Dansville, New York, to heal patients through water and other natural methods.³

Initial Sabbatarian attitudes toward health in the 1850s

The majority of Sabbatarian Adventists and their leaders in the 1850s, however, were not interested in health since they were busy preaching the “present truth.” By 1851, the Sabbatarians gave priority to certain theological doctrines that defined who they were, and they were excited

to share their faith with others.⁴ When some believers, for instance, began to ask if eating pork was not healthy, James White replied that dealing with such health issues “will only distract the flock of God, and lead the minds of the brethren from the importance of the present work of God among the remnant.”⁵ Ellen White supported her husband. She wrote in 1858, nearly five years before she received the health vision of 1863:

I saw that your views concerning swine’s flesh would prove no injury if you have them to yourselves; but in your judgment and opinion you have made this question a test, and your actions have plainly shown your faith in this matter. If God requires His people to abstain from swine’s flesh, He will convict them on the matter. . . . If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine’s flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty.⁶

But Adventists were forced into the health discussion because of practical

concerns. While they were preaching the present truth, they were suffering and dying from unhealthy lifestyle habits. In fact, Adventism faced the threat of possible collapse because its spiritual leaders did not pay attention to their health.

By the 1860s, for example, James White's health was failing as he was suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally. Ellen White noted how he dwelt upon "unpleasant memories" from the past that caused him deep emotional distress. He was also upset with those working for him, was easily angered, and had an unforgiving spirit. A lot of her 1863 vision on health, therefore, was directed toward James White and his lifestyle.⁷ By 1865, he suffered his first paralytic stroke because of overwork and exhaustion.

J. N. Andrews, who became the first official missionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, also reflected on his health habits at that time:

"I was kept from the use of tobacco, and from even tasting strong drink; but I learned almost nothing of the evils of unwholesome food. . . . I supposed old cheese was good to aid digestion! Do not smile at my folly; unless my memory is at fault, I had learned this out of 'standard medical works.' As to mince-pie and sausage, I had no thought that these were unwholesome, unless too highly seasoned, or, as it was termed, 'made too rich.' Hot biscuit and butter, doughnuts, pork in every form, pickles, preserves, tea, coffee, etc., were all in common use. Of ventilation I understood almost nothing. . . .

"When I entered the Christian ministry, at the age of twenty-one, I did not enjoy firm health. . . .

". . . Had I understood the laws of life in the right use of food, and in the principles of hygiene generally, I could have gone longer than I did in the exhausting labor which I attempted to sustain. But, in short,

my story is this: In less than five years I was utterly prostrated. My voice was destroyed, I supposed permanently; my eyesight was considerably injured; I could not rest by day, and I could not sleep well at night."⁸

J. N. Loughborough, the first historian of the movement, also described part of his diet. "I was a great lover of animal flesh as food," he wrote. "I wanted fat pork fried for breakfast, boiled meat for dinner, cold slices of ham or beef for supper. One of my sweetest morsels was bread well soaked in pork gravy."⁹ Obviously, Seventh-day Adventism and its leaders needed a turning point.

1863 and onwards


It was in this context that God reminded the Adventists of the importance of health through a vision that Ellen White received in June 1863. Ellen White wrote,

I saw that now we should take special care of the health God has given us, for our work was not yet done. . . . The work God requires of us will not shut us away from caring for our health. The more perfect our health, the more perfect will be our labor. . . . I saw that it was a sacred duty to attend to our health, and arouse others to their duty. . . . We have a duty to speak, to come out against intemperance of every kind—intemperance in working, in eating, in drinking, and in drugging—and then to point them to God's great medicine, pure, soft water—for diseases, for health, for cleanliness, and for a luxury.¹⁰

The message from God was simple: health is important and Seventh-day Adventists must begin to pay attention to it.

This simple idea would turn Adventism around and transform the movement in gradually becoming a leading promoter of health and

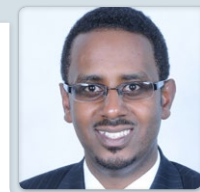
healthful living. As a result, Seventh-day Adventists would build their first medical institution—the Western Health Reform Institute—in 1866. Later, it became the renowned Battle Creek Sanitarium. The same year, they also began their first health periodical—the *Health Reformer*. Young Adventists, including John H. Kellogg, were also encouraged to get medical education. Later, in 1905, through the visionary leadership of Ellen White and the help of John A. Burden, Adventists bought the property for what would become Loma Linda Sanitarium in Loma Linda, California.¹¹ In 1906, they also started the Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists (Loma Linda University).

Today, Seventh-day Adventists have the largest Protestant health system in the world, with more than 500 institutions in 65 countries. Notably, their holistic approach to health has made Adventist contributions to health science and health education unique in the twenty-first century. But everything started with the simple message from God 150 years ago: health is important. Today, Adventism continues to proclaim the same simple message, helping people live better and healthier lives around the world. 

1 Rennie B. Schoepflin, "Health and Health Care," in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987), 143.
 2 George R. Knight, *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), 29–41.
 3 *Ibid.*, 34–36.
 4 The list included the doctrines of the Second Coming, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, and spiritual gifts.
 5 James White, "Swine's Flesh," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 23, 1854, 140.
 6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 1:206, 207; emphasis in original.
 7 Ellen G. White, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," Manuscript 1, 1863.
 8 J. N. Andrews, quoted in Ellen G. White and James White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Pub. Co., 1890), 262, 263.
 9 J. N. Loughborough, "Waymarks in the History of the Health Reform Movement," *Gospel of Health*, October 1899, 175.
 10 Ellen G. White, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," Manuscript 1, 1863.
 11 John A. Burden was a Seventh-day Adventist minister who was instrumental in negotiating and buying the property for Loma Linda University. He also acted as the general administrator of the Loma Linda Sanitarium from 1905 to 1915.

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Abundant *and* abiding fruit bearing

In His upper-room discourse (John 15), Jesus uses the image of a vine to teach the secrets of fruit bearing. He talks about the possibility of bearing abundant (v. 5) and abiding fruit (v. 16), in which the former pinpoints the quantity of fruit and the latter its quality.

In this discourse, what is Jesus saying to us about bearing abundant and abiding fruit, and why is it important?

Essential, but not optional

Fruit bearing has to do primarily with fulfilling the mission of Christ through carrying out His work of redemption in our words and deeds. Bruce Milne cautions us on “the danger of detaching” this fascinating imagery of a fruit-bearing Vine from its larger context and our tendency to interpret it by concentrating “solely on our inward relationship with the Lord.” However, “[i]ts real thrust is the renewal of the mission of Israel through Jesus the Messiah and the disciple community.”¹

Fruit bearing is essential, not optional. This can be seen throughout this passage in Jesus’ emphasis on fruit bearing (vv. 2, 4, 5, 8, 16). Furthermore, Jesus depicts the fatality of fruitlessness when He warns, “He [the Father] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit” (v. 2).² As Andrew Murray succinctly puts it, “Just as entirely as Christ became the True Vine with the one object, you have been made a Branch too, with the one object of bearing

fruit for the salvation of men. The Vine and the Branch are equally under the unchangeable law of fruitbearing as the one reason of their being. Christ and the believer, the Heavenly Vine and the Branch, have equally their place in the world exclusively for one purpose, to carry God’s saving love to men.”³

Hence, this work of sharing God’s saving love should not be relegated to just pastors or renowned evangelists. As ministers, we need to refocus and redirect our efforts to impress our members with the importance of this truth. Though fruitlessness may not be an offense that requires being removed from the church books, it will certainly lead to losing the salvation of our souls. “The branch can maintain its connection with the living vine only on condition that it bear fruit.”⁴

Here is the first truth: fruit bearing is essential, not optional. Only when we all understand how crucial it is that we carry out God’s purpose of reaching the lost world will we start bearing the requisite fruit.

Focusing on the glory of God

Glorifying God comprises the ultimate goal of fruit bearing. Jesus declares, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit” (v. 8). Here is the second vital truth: fruit bearing is not about us but about God, His mission, and His glory. It is not our invention but His mission, and its completion should bring glory to Him

and Him alone. Failing to recognize this leads to disappointment. In fact, could it be because we fail to give glory to God for the results in our evangelistic efforts that our fruits are not as abundant and abiding as they should be? Do we often scrutinize our motives as we engage in the work of saving others?

Leonard Ravenhill, in his classic work *Why Revival Tarries*, identified stealing the glory that belongs to God as one of the reasons why revival tarries. “Away with all fleshly backslapping and platform flattery! Away with this exalting of ‘My radio program,’ ‘My church,’ ‘My books!’ Oh, the sickening parade of flesh in our pulpits: ‘We are greatly privileged, etc.’ Speakers (who are there really *by grace alone*) accept all this, nay—even expect it! The fact is that when we have listened to most of these men, we would not have known they were great if they had not been announced so!”⁵

However, when we fix our eyes on the glory of God and share the spirit of Jesus, who says, “I do not accept praise from men,” we will put ourselves in the right position to experience a life of abundant and abiding fruit bearing (John 5:41).

Abiding in Jesus

Fruit bearing is an outgrowth of abiding in Jesus. This is the third key truth from this teaching of Jesus about the Vine and the branches. The word *abide*, as it refers to our relationship with the True Vine, Jesus, is mentioned

seven times in John 15:1–16.⁶ This affirms the fact that *abiding* is the watchword capping all the secrets for successful fruit bearing. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (v. 5, NKJV). Thus, one may have either a life of much fruit or no fruit at all. And the distinguishing factor between the two is the abiding. So, what is this abiding? To get a clearer understanding of this crucial concept, let us investigate its foundation, enhancement, maintenance, evidence, and privilege.

Its foundation. The imagery of the Vine that portrays a close connection with its branch depicts the believer’s relationship with Jesus. In particular, when we note how Jesus paralleled abiding in Him with abiding in His love (v. 10), we realize that divine love is the foundation and the essence of this abiding. Jesus declares, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (v. 9). Ellen White comments on this verse: “He keeps us in connection with him as he is in connection with the Father. What possibilities, what strength, there are in that promise! Why do we not believe it? If there are hindrances in our way, and if we meet with difficulties, let us not give up in despair, but keep fast hold of the promises.”⁷ Moreover, He is the Initiator of this relationship, for He says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (v. 16). And the greatness of His love was revealed through the offer He made, laying down His life, giving it out to be possessed by His friends (vv. 13–15). This is what abiding is all about; abiding is responding to His love.

Its enhancement. Like other relationships, abiding in Jesus also has room for growing deeper. Jesus says, “[E]very branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (v. 2). Notice also that God’s primary means of pruning is His Word (v. 3). As we keep on listening to His words, we will receive illumination and direction on how to avoid any distractions, even if they are for good causes. Consequently, we will deepen our abiding, which in turn causes

fruit to abound. Ellen White observes, “Many misunderstand the object for which they were created. They do not realize that they were placed here to bless humanity and glorify God, rather than to enjoy and glorify self. God is constantly pruning his people, cutting off profuse, spreading branches, that they may bear fruit to his glory, and not produce leaves only.”⁸

Its maintenance. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (v. 10, NKJV). A spirit of disobedience creates discord, and ultimately destroys

will pour out “his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5). In defining this love, Ellen White writes, “Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a wellspring that never fails.”⁹ Love is the ultimate fulfillment of all God’s commandments, including the mission He has given us. When this love is demonstrated in the lives of the believers, abundant and abiding fruit will surface and the world will know that they are the disciples of Jesus

Fruit bearing has to do primarily with fulfilling the mission of Christ through carrying out His work of redemption in our words and deeds.

any relationship. Thus, though God is the Initiator and Enhancer of this abiding in Jesus, its maintenance requires a life of obedience motivated by love. Early Christians manifested this obedience and proclaimed boldly, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” (Rom. 8:35). “For Christ’s love compels us. . . . Those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Its evidence. Abiding in Christ, which is equated with abiding in His love, manifests itself in loving one another with the same love He demonstrated. Jesus plainly states, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). When we abide in Christ as a branch abides in the vine, He

(John 13:35). Thus, “Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. . . . When we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.”¹⁰

Its privilege. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7, NKJV). Abiding has this tremendous privilege of giving access to the heavenly storehouse and securing whatever is needed for fruit bearing. Notice that the promise is posed with a prior condition. The promise is binding only if we abide in Him. And the reason why the branch abides in the Vine is to bear fruit. Therefore, this privilege of asking and getting from heaven should

be understood in the context of fulfilling the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With this clear understanding of the promise, believers should be encouraged to engage in earnest intercessory prayer, and this prayer should be done with a loving heart for perishing souls. In explaining the connection between the love that we need to have for the lost and the claiming of this promise, Murray writes, “[W]e cannot appropriate the promise without a life given up for men. Many try to take the promise, and then look round for what they can ask. This is not the way; but the very opposite. Get the heart burdened with the need of souls, and the command to save them, and the power will come to claim the promise.”¹¹

Scripture says that we should recognize the necessity of praying to God to send more workers to carry out the mission of saving souls (Matt. 9:35–38). We can also learn from Paul’s prayer requests that we need to pray to be given words so that we proclaim

the message “clearly” (Col. 4:3, 4), “fearlessly” (Eph. 6:19), and “rapidly” (2 Thess. 3:1). Thus, abundant and abiding fruit bearing is unattainable without prevailing in a persistent intercessory prayer. “In the work of mission, the church advances on its knees.”¹²

Conclusion

Bearing abundant and abiding fruit is not wishful thinking but a possibility because the Vine, Jesus Christ, and the Gardener, His Father, have provided everything. A true disciple of Jesus is only a branch who can do nothing apart from Him. Hence, as a branch rests on the vine before it bears any fruit, we also need to rest on our all-sufficient Lord.

- 1 Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!* (The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 220.
- 2 All Scripture passages, unless otherwise stated, are from the New International Version.
- 3 Andrew Murray, *The Mystery of the True Vine* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1898), 32.
- 4 Ellen G. White, “The True Vine,” *Review and Herald*, September 20, 1881.
- 5 Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1959), 60, 61; emphasis in original.
- 6 *Abide* occurs two times in vv. 4 and 10 and once in vv. 5–7.
- 7 White, *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1985), 316.
- 8 White, “Christ the True Vine,” *Sign of the Times*, March 10, 1887.
- 9 White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995), 181.
- 10 White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 641.
- 11 Murray, *The Mystery of the True Vine*, 90.
- 12 Milne, *The Message of John*, 222.



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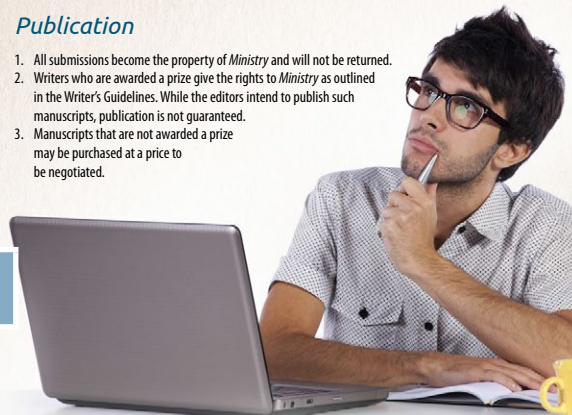
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The seven heads of the beast in Revelation 17

In past months, the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of his successor, Pope Francis, preoccupied the news media and Internet. The news sparked a renewed interest in the enigmatic prophecy of Revelation 17:9–11 among students of Bible prophecy, resulting in some creative interpretive proposals.

Revelation 17 vividly describes a beast with seven heads (v. 3). Subsequently, an interpreting angel explains to John the revelator that these heads represent seven consecutive kings: five have fallen, the sixth is, and the seventh king is yet to come (v. 10). When he comes, he will remain only for a short time. Along with an eighth king, the whole beast will go to destruction (v. 11).

During the last several decades, some Adventist interpreters have associated these seven heads/kings with the seven successive popes since 1929—the year in which the Lateran Treaty recognized Vatican City as an independent sovereign state. For some time, John Paul II, pontiff from 1978 to 2005, had been regarded as the last pope. However, his death prompted a reinterpretation of this prophecy. The fact that Benedict XVI is the seventh elected pope since 1929 and his pontificate lasted for only a relatively short period of time (some eight years), has led some to associate him with the seventh king; thus, the newly elected Pope Francis is viewed as the last pope in the office before the end comes.

Where have such ideas come from? Unfortunately, they have not been derived from careful study of the biblical text, but rather from past and current news headlines that have been twisted into fictitious and sensational biblical predictions. Historical facts and biblical texts were creatively intertwined in order to fit an established interpretation, which is unfortunately not supported by textual evidence.

In reality, the view that the healing of the papal deadly wound occurred in 1929 is only an assumption rather than a historical fact. The act of granting the papacy a small, independently sovereign state can hardly be viewed as the fulfillment of this prophecy, whose scope is worldwide, as described in Revelation 13:11–18. While the year 1929 may have marked the beginning of the healing of the deadly wound, the fact that 84 years have passed since the Lateran Treaty contradicts any evidence that supports the view that the papal deadly wound has been healed.

Furthermore, the application of the “short time” of the rule of the seventh king to the eight-year rule of Benedict XVI ignores the even shorter pontificate of John Paul I, who ruled for only 34 days before he died in 1978 (Rev. 17:10, NKJV). Many other such inconsistencies render this adaptation of the biblical prophecy as spurious and inconclusive.

Therefore, I invite you to join me in a closer look at Revelation 17:9–11 in an effort to discover the meaning that God intended for this enigmatic passage.

The prostitute riding the beast

Revelation 17 is delineated into two parts: (1) the vision (17:1–6a), in which John the revelator observes a woman who is depicted as a prostitute riding the beast; and (2) the audition (17:6b–18), in which the interpreting angel explains to John the meaning of the vision of the prostitute and the beast that carries her.

In the vision, John is invited to witness the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, seductively deceiving the inhabitants of the earth (vv. 1, 2). This woman is subsequently identified as “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots” (v. 5).¹ In the Hebrew Scriptures, a prostitute symbolically refers to God’s people in their apostasy (Isa. 1:21; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16; 23; Hosea 3; 4). The portrayal of the prostitute in Revelation 17 shows that she represents an entity that was once faithful to God before aligning herself with the end-time opponent of God and His faithful remnant. Babylon is thus a corporate name for an end-time apostate entity.

Note that the prostitute is first referenced to as sitting on “many waters” (v. 1); however, when John actually sees her, she is seen as sitting on a scarlet beast (v. 3). This should not come as a surprise due to such a literary feature occurring regularly in the book (see Rev. 5:5, 6). Therefore, the waters and the beast are two symbols that represent the same reality. According to

Revelation 17:5, the waters upon which the prostitute was seen symbolize the civil, secular, and political powers of the world. Jeremiah 51:13 shows that “many waters” refers to the Euphrates River. Just as the ancient Babylon depended on the Euphrates River for its existence, so will the end-time Babylon depend on the civil, secular, and political powers of the world to enforce its plans and purposes.

Furthermore, the beast stands as a symbol of a political power or system. That the prostitute Babylon sits (or rides) on the beast shows that this religious system will have control over these worldwide political powers at the end of time. Thus, the prophecy shows us that at the end of time, there will be a religious-political union when the political powers of the earth will unite with the end-time apostate religious system named Babylon.

The three phases of the beast

In the second part of the chapter, John is described as greatly astonished when he sees the prostitute. He recognizes in her the woman that had fled into the wilderness in order to escape the persecution of the dragon during the prophetic 1,260-day period of the Middle Ages (Rev. 12:13, 14). In response to John’s astonishment, the interpreting angel promises to disclose the “‘mystery’” of the prostitute and of the scarlet beast that carries her as well as their function at the time of the end (Rev. 17:7).

John describes the beast as the one that “‘was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss’” (v. 8). This identification of the beast brings to mind the divine title “‘who was and who is and who is to come’” (Rev. 4:8). Thus, this title identifies the beast as a parody of God. However, this tripartite formula also shows that the beast has passed through three phases of existence. This, in turn, links the scarlet beast of Revelation 17 with the sea beast of Revelation 13 (cf. Rev. 13:1 with 17:3).²

First, the beast “was.” In other words, this beast existed in the past.

The “was” phase of the beast refers to its activities during the prophetic period of 1,260 days or years (Rev. 13:5). The year A.D. 538 marked the beginning of this prophetic period when the church of western Europe, led by the Roman papacy, established itself as an ecclesiastical power and dominated the Western world throughout the Middle Ages. In our time characterized by religious tolerance, such statements can be regarded as harsh and unfair; but the present reality cannot erase the historical facts.

Furthermore, the beast came into its “is not” phase of existence in 1798 when, as a result of the events of the French Revolution, it sustained its deadly wound (Rev. 13:3). This brought an end to the church’s oppressive political power. The beast disappeared for some time from the world’s scene, yet it survived.

Third, with the healing of the deadly wound, the beast will resurrect to life in full satanic rage against God’s faithful people. The prophecy thus shows that the religious-political oppressive system that dominated the world during the Middle Ages will be revived at the time of the end and will dominate the world as it did in the past. This revival of the beast will fill the inhabitants of the world with awe and admiration (Rev. 13:8; 17:8b).

Therefore, Revelation 17 clearly describes the sea beast of Revelation 13 at the time when its deadly wound has been healed. Upon this resurrected beast, John sees the end-time prostitute Babylon sitting. Thus, the end-time religious system that will play a key role in the final conflict is a continuation of the religious-political power that harmed and oppressed God’s people during the prophetic 1,260-day period of the Middle Ages.

Revelation thus tells us that religion will once again dominate and control politics as it did in the past, albeit for a short time. However, there is a noticeable difference between its power during the medieval period and the time of the end. While the sea beast, representing the medieval

church, was a religious-political power, the scarlet beast is exclusively a political power. These two are distinct at the end of time.

The seven heads of the beast

This brings us to our key passage of Revelation 17:9–11: “‘Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.’”

The text opens with a call for “wisdom” as a prerequisite to understanding the meaning of the heads of the beast. The wisdom that John calls for here is the same wisdom that was spoken of in connection with the number of the beast (Rev. 13:18). This wisdom refers to spiritual discernment that can only be imparted by the Holy Spirit, rather than through brilliant mental and intellectual ability (James 1:5). Only through this divinely imparted wisdom will the faithful be able to discern the true character of this end-time satanic power.

Moving forward, we may see that the beast has seven heads like the red dragon (or Satan) of Revelation 12:3. The existence of the beast remains inseparable from its heads. Throughout history, the beast has solely ruled and been active through the agency of its heads. When one of the heads receives a deadly blow, the whole beast dies (cf. Rev. 13:12–14). This brings us to a need for a closer look as to what these heads represent.

“‘The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits’” (Rev. 17:9). We see a new symbol added here. At first, we were told that the woman sat on “‘many waters’” (v. 1), and then, on the scarlet beast (v. 3); now, the angel explains that she actually sits on seven mountains. The waters, the beast, and the mountains are different symbols for the civic,

secular, and political powers (cf. v. 15) that will provide popular support to Babylon as the end-time apostate religious system. We must keep in mind that Revelation does not deal with individual personalities, whether past or present, but rather with systems and world powers—whether political or religious.

The Greek word *oros* means “mountain,” not “hill,” as some translators suggest in order to show that the city of Rome, situated on seven hills, is in view here. However, since the seven mountains in Revelation 17 are successive, they cannot be interpreted in a literal manner. In the Old Testament, mountains often represent world powers or empires (Jer. 51:25; Ezek. 35:2–5; Dan. 2:35). For instance, the kingdom of Judah in the Old Testament is often referred to as Mount Zion (Ps. 48:1–3; Isa. 29:8).

The angel clearly does not refer to literal mountains since he immediately explains to John that these seven mountains actually represent “seven kings” (Rev. 17:10). However, these cannot be interpreted as individual kings, for at least three reasons. First of all, we have established that Revelation does not deal with individual personalities but systems. Second, these seven kings are equated with the seven mountains—a symbol of kingdoms or empires. Third, in the Old Testament, “kings” is another expression for kingdoms or empires (Dan. 2:37–39; 7:17).

The seven heads as successive empires

Based on biblical evidence, the interpretation that makes the most sense is that the seven mountains, upon which the prostitute Babylon sits, stand for the seven successive empires that dominated the world throughout history and through which Satan worked to oppose God.³ These empires possessed common traits of religious-political governance and coercion, which they used to cause harm and persecute God’s people.

As the angel further explains to John from his time’s perspective,

five of these kingdoms have fallen, one is, and the seventh one would appear sometime in the future. As previously explained, this cryptic text has generated numerous speculative interpretations, primarily due to the interpreters’ failure to note that the meaning of these successive kingdoms was explained to John in the context of his own time—not ours. Nowhere in the text does it indicate that John was transported to another time; the angel simply explains to him what he had already seen previously in the vision.

Therefore, the key to decoding the meaning of these seven heads lies in the sixth kingdom, which is described as “is.” This “is” refers to John’s time. John lived in the time of the sixth head—the Roman Empire. The five that had fallen were thus the empires that ruled the world and caused harm to God’s people prior to the time of John: (1) Egypt was the world power that enslaved and oppressed Israel, seeking to destroy her; (2) Assyria destroyed and scattered the ten tribes of Israel; (3) Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and exiled Judah; (4) Persia almost annihilated the Jews at the time of Esther; (5) Greece oppressed and tried to destroy the Jews through Antiochus Epiphanes. The seventh kingdom that “has not yet come” refers to the medieval papacy that, from John’s time perspective, would be manifested in the future from John’s time—after the fall of the Roman Empire.

The angel further explained that the scarlet beast itself is a part of the phase of the eighth head, the world power that is to come at the time of the end. Yet, it is one of the previously noted seven heads. Although this eighth head is one of the previous seven, it is considered a new power. Which of the seven? Most likely the seventh head, which previously experienced the deadly wound but comes back to life after its wound has healed.

This seventh power will reappear as the eighth head at the end of time and will exercise the same authority as it did during the Middle Ages. During the time of the eighth head, the scarlet

beast carries the prostitute Babylon. We now live in the era of the seventh head, for the eighth head has not yet gained its power. However, it will appear on the world scene at the time of the end and will impose its rule on the inhabitants of the earth.

“He must remain a short time”

Current misinterpretations of this phrase have construed the phrase to mean that the seventh pope will rule for a short amount of time. The Greek adjectival word for the temporal phrase “a short time” used here is *oligon*, which means “a short time” or “a little while.” This word is different from *micron*, used in Revelation to indicate shortness of time (see Rev. 6:11; 20:3). In contrast, *oligon* does not indicate a length of time but is rather used in a qualitative sense. For instance, Revelation 12:12 states that having been cast out of heaven, Satan realizes that he has only “a short time [*oligon kairon*].” This “short time” does not refer to a length of time for it has been thousands of years since Satan’s expulsion from heaven—another way of saying that Satan’s time is limited, just as a person sentenced to death realizes that he or she only has “a short time” despite the fact that the execution may take place many years later.

This same meaning for the Greek word *oligon* is also found in Revelation 17:10. That the seventh power must remain for a short time does not point to the length of time—a short period of existence; rather, it is a different way of stating that the existence of this power is determined by God (“it must remain”) and that it will come to its end, as is in the case of Satan in Revelation 12:12. The seventh power will receive a deadly wound: an event that took place with the events of the French Revolution in 1798.

Conclusion


This brief analysis shows that the seven successive heads of the beast of Revelation 17 represent the seven kingdoms or empires that existed in

history rather than individual kings: five were in existence prior to the time of John, the sixth was Rome (according to John's time), and the seventh was the medieval papacy that was to come in the future from John's perspective. Such an understanding is based on careful textual analysis, founded upon the principles of biblical hermeneutics. The idea that the seven heads refer to individual kings, which are to represent the seven popes since 1929, is not in agreement with the text. Such an interpretation is speculative and superimposed upon the biblical text.

Revelation itself gives a warning against adding or removing from the words of the prophecy of the book (Rev. 22:18, 19). The book of Revelation is the word of God given by Christ (Rev. 1:2). Tampering with the prophecies of Revelation carries far-reaching

consequences—eternal loss. To those who add to the prophetic words of the book, God will add to them the plagues described in the book. This warning does not refer to a tampering with the actual words of Revelation—as if some concept of verbal inspiration was at stake. Adding to the words of Revelation's prophecies has to do with distorting and misinterpreting the prophecies of Revelation to suit one's own purposes. This also has to do with enforcing speculative ideas and views not warranted by the text. We must stay with what John clearly states in the text and shun any speculations not warranted by the text.

In dealing with the prophecies of Revelation, we must let the Bible interpret itself. We must be careful not to speculate beyond what the prophecy has revealed to us. Any interpretation

based on headline news or current events for the purpose of date setting and popular excitement is speculative and subjective. Such interpretations never result in the strengthening of our faith in prophecy; in actuality, they weaken our confidence in it. When understood properly, the prophecies of Revelation have practical purposes: to teach us how to live today and prepare us for the future. A right understanding of prophecy will also inspire and motivate us to try to reach others with the gospel message. 

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- 1 Unless otherwise noted, scripture references are from the NASB.
 - 2 For a different view, see Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion (Part I)," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10, no. 1 (2007): 38–40.
 - 3 William Johnson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory Over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 17.

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David Solomon is a pseudonym.

Does God believe in restoration? Part 3

I concluded part 2 of this series on restoration by affirming that the entire church needs to begin practicing the grace that we preach. Restoration must be possible. We must not automatically cut off those pastors who have experienced a moral lapse. Am I suggesting that every pastor in every situation be restored? No. Several factors might disallow a clergy person from restoration to pastoral ministry. If a law of the land has been violated, such as the laws against child abuse or child pornography, this would place a person's chance of restoration in jeopardy. If the offense has been such that restoration of trust is almost impossible, that would preclude a return to ministry. People cannot lead unless they have the confidence of those to whom they minister. The following guidelines might be followed for a possible return to active ministry.

1. There needs to be evidence of genuine repentance.
2. Sufficient time for healing and recovery is essential.
3. A restoration process should be designed that fits the particular person's needs and situation. If the person is married, counseling should be provided for both the pastor and the spouse. It should be a given that when a minister has violated a parishioner's trust, the conference should provide counseling for that family as well.
4. The person should have someone to whom he or she becomes accountable.
5. In some situations, where the sin is not public and will not become public, one might be able to continue to serve in ministry.
6. Rebaptism may be in order for some.
7. Where temptation or addiction to pornography is the issue, it would be helpful for a pastor to be involved with an addiction recovery group and certainly to obtain a porn blocker for his or her computer. It would be helpful for him or her to have the spouse and someone else as accountability partners.
8. A pastor must have the respect of those whom he or she is going to pastor.
9. Where a pastor's ministry is well known, it may be difficult for his or her ministry to ever be effective again. Here again, the question is not whether he or she can be forgiven but whether the pastor can be trusted by the parishioners.
10. Moving a pastor to another area may make it possible to minister again in some cases, but there are significant risks, particularly if his or her moral lapse is likely to be discovered or is unresolved in the church where he or she served when it occurred.
11. Finally, individuals who have wisdom and are acquainted with

the case and with restoration procedures should evaluate each circumstance and situation. Policies have been developed by the Pacific Union Conference, Southeastern California Conference, and the Alberta Conference, as well as other Protestant churches, that could inform us as a whole as we seek a more balanced approach to helping pastors who have significant temptations or failure.

Practical helps

Focus. Lack of focus in ministry is often the hazard that brings about discouragement or burnout. In one of the conferences where I served, it was my privilege to attend a seminar that helped me understand how my gifts, life experiences, and God-given vision and dreams fit together so that I could become who God has designed me to be and accomplish what He called me to do. Such a program needs to be implemented in every union and conference.

Every pastor needs a coach. Life coaching has become a contemporary phenomenon. Florida and other conferences are catching the vision of how a coach can help a pastor reach his or her potential. How is coaching different? Instead of a top-down approach to pastoring, a coach helps a pastor understand more fully what God is calling him or her to be through skillful questions. Rather than someone in an

office directing a person's ministry, which may often be inappropriate for his or her particular skills or position, a coach meets regularly with a person by phone and holds the pastor to the personal goals that the pastor has set for himself or herself.

Professional coaching may cost around 1,000 dollars a year or more, but conferences could train their more experienced pastors to be coaches. The tyranny of the urgent tends to destroy many leaders, so the benefits of being coached are worth the investment of the pastor or conference for personal or corporate health and growth.

Confidants. At present, most conferences do not have a "safe" person

ministries. At present, we have the possibility of contacting the Ministry Care Line at Kettering Health Network if our employing entity is a member, and this is a start; but more difficult challenges need ongoing support or counseling. Because schools benefit from counselors and ongoing professional support, so would unions, conferences, and pastors.

Pastoral satisfaction survey. Many pastors are in distress; the dropout rate in ministry is high. An anonymous pastoral satisfaction survey could help church leadership identify what is happening in ministry on the front lines. In addition, such an instrument could help a pastor see his or her potential

discussions of sex were taboo for the church. We need to get out of the dark ages; this is the age of the Internet and Internet pornography. Perhaps the church could explore the possibility of developing a pastoral sexual addiction recovery program. Some organizations send pastors and their spouses to a retreat center for personal or spiritual growth. These centers offer an extended weekend, or even a week of extensive programming and counseling. I believe that such a center needs to have qualified personnel gifted in dealing with sexual intimacy issues.

The Adventist Church should invest in such a center. A short list of some other denominational centers



It would be helpful for each union and conference to have a person who serves as the pastor's pastor.

for a struggling pastor to confide in. Without this kind of person, and with 70 percent of pastors feeling as if they do not have a close friend in ministry, problems tend to be repressed.¹ Currently, many ministerial secretaries either are evangelism coordinators or are directly involved in the hiring process. In either case, many pastors do not feel comfortable opening their lives to someone who is perceived either to be their boss or who has a personal agenda for baptisms. Unless this situation is remedied on a conference level, wounded pastors will rarely seek help. They will continue to medicate themselves with their addiction, all of which will weaken their

vulnerability to sexual addiction or a moral fall. If things are not going well in the bedroom, or if a pastor feels distress in the district, he or she may be more vulnerable. A survey could reveal a troubled marriage or a sexual addiction. It could also uncover a greater self-awareness that could lead a person to seek help early on. If the problem lies hidden, escape is less likely.

Resources. With 46 percent of pastors reporting sexual difficulty in marriage, the church must do a better job of providing resource materials and professional counsel.² If the marriage is failing in the bedroom, the temptation toward pornography or an affair increases. In the past,

is provided in the resource section. In addition, it would be helpful for each union and conference to have a person who serves as the pastor's pastor rather than as the evangelism coordinator. This person should be skilled in knowing how to help pastors with marital issues. Furthermore, the glaring problem of keeping marriages sexually healthy needs to be freely discussed and more completely addressed in workers' meetings and men's and women's ministry settings. The Adventist Church spends millions of dollars in lawsuits arising from pastors who are hurting and who let their hurt destroy their own lives and those of their families and parishioners.

What if the church were to invest these dollars in processes to identify and remedy the problem?

Great lovers. In the research mentioned earlier, busyness in ministry was listed as a problem for 80 percent of pastors.³ When we come to the end of our lives, most of us will not regret that we did not spend enough time ministering to others. Most will say they wished they had spent more time with the family. The busyness often leads to “absent though present” when with our spouses. It is easy to be in the house but not *at* home.

Finally, the apostle Paul implored couples to take care of one another’s sexual needs (1 Cor. 7:1–5). He says that this is a marital duty. Research indicates that healthy sexual relations tend to lengthen life and increase happiness. The marriage bed is sacred (undefiled), and one needs to make sure that the “sacred” is happening (Heb. 13:4). If marital intimacy and great sex are not happening in the pastor’s home, they are likely to happen somewhere else. Do not let the need to be intimate lie festering while you seek to pleasure yourself on the Internet or with someone in the church. Having an affair with a church member is sexual abuse, plain and simple, and courts will likely award large sums to the victim. If there are unmet needs in the bedroom, pastors need to stop hiding and denying their own intimacy issues, seek professional help, even a sex therapist, if needed. Often, because pastors have nowhere to turn, they tend to let marital difficulties fester until it is too late. Taking care of this issue is a *must* for avoiding sexual impurity. If health issues are part of the problem or if obesity is an issue, seek help. If there are wounds too deep to deal with alone, find a skilled counselor. Do not let it go.

The numbers speak for themselves; but we are not dealing with numbers here—we are dealing with fellow human beings, fellow Seventh-day Adventist ministers who are hurting and need help. As a church, we must be willing to provide the help.

Resources

The following resources are available for those who want to be informed about this vital topic or for those who silently struggle alone with their pain and shame.

Books:

- Anderson, Bernie. *Breaking the Silence: A Pastor Goes Public About His Battle With Pornography*. Pittsburgh, PA: Autumn House, 2007. This is the story of an Adventist minister who struggled with a pornography addiction.
- Benyei, Candace R. *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets, and the Abuse of Power*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998.
- Bissell, David. “Restoring Fallen Pastors.” DMin diss., Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2005. This is promoted on the North American Division Ministerial Web site at [www.nadministerial.org/site/1/docs/Ministerial Director Files/webinars/Ministerial Directors Webinars/Doctoral Diss - Restoring Fallen Pastors.pdf](http://www.nadministerial.org/site/1/docs/Ministerial_Director_Files/webinars/Ministerial_Directors_Webinars/Doctoral_Diss_-_Restoring_Fallen_Pastors.pdf)
- Gungor, Mark. *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.
- Hayford, Jack W. *Restoring Fallen Leaders*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988. A small book on restoring fallen pastors.
- Kendrick, Stephen, and Alex Kendrick. *The Love Dare*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2008. The first section is great for couples whose marriages are strained. Read in connection with the movie *Fireproof*.
- Kennedy, Eugene. *The Unhealed Wound*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001.
- Laaser, Mark R., and Ralph H. Earle Jr. *The Pornography Trap: A Resource for Ministry Leaders*. 2nd ed. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2012. This offers help for pornography addicts.
- McDonald, Gordon. *When Men Think Private Thoughts*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997. A book on lust and sexual issues.

Schaumburg, Harry W. *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997. A book about love and intimacy issues.

White, Ellen G. Manuscript Release 449: “Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who Have Violated the Seventh Commandment.” Ellen G. White Estate. Accessed August 19, 2013. <http://drc.whiteestate.org/read.php?id=16324>.

White, Ellen G. Manuscript Release 448: “The Spirit of Prophecy and Adultery, Divorce, Remarriage, and Church Membership.” Ellen G. White Estate. Accessed August 19, 2013. <http://drc.whiteestate.org/files/3971.pdf>.

A few videos, Web sites, marriage seminars, and retreat centers:

Gary Smalley’s *Freedom Begins Here* is an encouraging video dealing with pornography addiction. Bernie Anderson is a featured guest. This video is an excellent documentary to show to men in the church or to give to couples who may be struggling with one partner having a pornography or sexual addiction. It can be purchased at Amazon.com or freedombeginshere.org/collections/dvds-books.

Gary Smalley Ministries: Seminars, books, videos, etc., at www.smalley.cc.

Mark Gungor’s *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage* videos, marriage materials, and seminars to strengthen marriage are available at www.laughyourway.com. These materials help with pornography and sexual addiction.

Marriage Fitness: A free eHelp recommended by many counselors and marriage therapists. Visit www.marriagemax.com.

Pastor Retreat Centers: This Web site provides a list of centers around the country. See www.my-pastor.com/pastor-retreat-centers.html for more information.

Weekend to Remember: A marriage support seminar that comes to many

U.S. cities. Visit www.familylife.com/WEEKEND for more information.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter: The Marriage Encounter seminar weekends have been around for a long time. See www.wwme.org.

Programs or Web Sites specifically for those who struggle with sexual addiction:

Adventist Recovery Ministries: A general recovery program for many types of addictions. This program is helpful for those with addictions that are less stigmatized. Sexual addicts may be uncomfortable attending such a group; therefore, in a large church, it may be easier to have those who are sexually addicted to meet in a separate group for a portion of the program. Visit www.adventistrecovery.org.

Dr. David Bissell presented a Webinar on May 15, 2012, for ministerial secretaries and pastors on the subject of helping pastors who struggle with moral purity. The Webinar can be accessed under “Min Directors,” then “Ministerial Director’s Best Practices Webinar,” at www.nadministerial.org.

Celebrate Recovery: This is a broad addiction recovery program. A kit for the church can be purchased from Amazon.com.

Free porn blockers: First, use your own wireless router; second, the Google toolbar; third, use an Internet search engine to look for the phrase “porn blockers.”

Mark Gungor resources: These help in finding freedom from pornography and sexual addiction; visit www.laughyourway.com/resources/sexual-addiction.

Recovery Connection: Another resource that is often available at large churches. See www.recoveryconnection.org/sex-addiction.

Sexaholics Anonymous: A 12-step program for those who are sexually addicted; it is offered in most large cities. Visit www.sa.org.

Sex Addicts Anonymous: A 12-step program for sexual addicts, available in large cities. See <http://saa-recovery.org>.

xxxchurch.com: This Web site has a great deal of information about overcoming an addiction to pornography. It includes information about Internet porn blockers that can help you block or monitor questionable sites.

1 “Surveys of Pastors—Shocking Stats,” Smoldering Wick, accessed August 19, 2013, <http://smolderingwickministries.org/2008/12/surveys-of-pastors-shocking-stats/>.
 2 Ibid.
 3 Ibid.

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Ted Hamilton, MD, is vice president for medical mission, Adventist Health System, Altamonte Springs, Florida, United States.



Growing in grace: The transforming power of Sabbath School

When we think of the apostle Peter, the first occupation that comes to mind is not likely to be teacher, but in the closing words of his second epistle, Peter succinctly provides some of the best and most practical counsel in Scripture for teachers of God's Word.

Peter writes, "[B]eloved, . . . be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:17, 18, NASB).

The fundamental purpose of these classes is to fulfill Peter's admonition to avoid error and help people grow into spiritual maturity. And our privilege and responsibility as pastors, teachers, and leaders is to facilitate a process that affords compelling engagement with the living Word of God. How can we know if we are accomplishing our goal?

I asked those who attend my Bible study week after week to relate their stories and share what Bible study means to them. "Tell me a story," I asked my Bible study class, "about an outstanding Sabbath School experience that made you want to keep coming back. Can you identify specific influences that contributed to this special

experience? What three wishes do you have for Sabbath School class?"

They told me their stories. Each story is real, although the names have been changed. Each story differs; each experience retains its own character and flavor. But when considered in the whole, the responses present a remarkable consistency. Four distinctive elements take definitive shape and rise to the top as major contributing factors to a rich and meaningful Bible study experience. Dynamic, growing Sabbath School classes provide, in substantial measure, all four of these elements—instruction, inclusion, investment, and inspiration.

Instruction

"Good teaching," Lawton explained, "expanded my outlook on the times that Christ lived, the terrain, customs, and culture, and how it all plays a part in interpreting Christ's parables and understanding the 'Man' Christ while continuing to worship the 'God' Christ."¹ Margaret agrees, "We seek to understand what was happening historically, including the cultures and lifestyles of the cities to which Paul wrote. This has helped me understand the stories more clearly." Esther relates, "Beyond the very basic Bible stories, I really have no in-depth background. . . . I am

soaking this up like a sponge . . . to feel so welcomed to come, listen, and learn is really wonderful."

Sabbath School is school. It is about conveying information, transferring knowledge, providing context, broadening experience, and deepening understanding. Sabbath School is about history and geography, culture and context, time lines and genealogies, personalities and politics. If we want to make sense of Scripture, we are compelled to convey the historical record, to teach the facts, to get the story straight.

But the primary goal of Sabbath School is not acquiring knowledge merely for the sake of knowledge. The Bible is God's Word. Scripture turns mere history into a revelation story; bare geography into a landscape illuminated by the handiwork and fingerprints of the Creator; culture and context into a stage upon which the great controversy plays out through the lives of real people in all their faith and frailty. The goal of Sabbath School is to tell the basic story as clearly, reliably, and honestly as it can be told, and then—enabled, enlightened, and empowered by the Holy Spirit—to tell the revelation story of God's sovereignty, providence, power, and grace. The Spirit-anointed task of the teacher of Scripture is to bring souls into a true and living encounter

with spiritual reality through a vibrant, living faith.

This dual responsibility of reliable instruction and faithful revelation requires diligent preparation on the part of the Bible study leader. I have found the following processes helpful.

1. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit at the outset; pray for clear thinking, enlightened understanding, freedom of expression, and sensitivity and grace in preparation.
2. Study the Scripture. Read the assigned passage until it becomes familiar and conversant. Read the preceding and following verses. Read corresponding passages from other parts of Scripture. A valuable and efficient resource is www.BibleGateway.com, a free, online concordance.
3. Access ancillary resources: Bible commentaries, dictionaries, atlases, and histories.
4. Organize your thoughts. Write them down. Begin with the scriptural passage, establish the framework and context, identify the moral and/or spiritual issue, follow with a compelling question, be prepared to guide the discussion, and finish with a practical spiritual application designed to engage hearts.
5. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in presentation that the truth may be told about God, Jesus may be uplifted, and love and grace may be nurtured among the participants.

Inclusion

“I have appreciated the fellowship,” wrote Cynthia, a single person, “casual invitations to lunch, the potlucks, and the get-acquainted routines at the beginning of class; there is a welcoming tone of friendliness and appreciation for each person as individuals. I no longer envy others who seem to have a circle of friends for now, I, too, feel I have it all.” Jonathan agrees, “The Sabbath School group has been very friendly and inviting and made us feel welcome.” Lindsay added, “I didn’t feel I had roots in our church until attending Sabbath School.”

There is an undeniable social element to the attraction of the Bible study class. From its roots, Christianity was not a solitary pastime. Jesus said, “Follow Me” at least a dozen times in forming His closest group of followers. Way back at the very beginning of it all, He created us as social creatures, acknowledging, “‘It is not good for the man to be alone,’ ” and it was His creative initiative that remedied humanity’s lonely state (Gen. 2:18, NASB).

Sabbath School is a place to become acquainted, appreciate differences, and practice community. Lindsay wrote, “I absolutely love the racial, cultural, spiritual, and political diversity of our class . . . it offers so much perspective outside my own.” Varying viewpoints and opinions provide a healthy balancing element to Bible study. Testing one’s biases in the forum of a kind and vigorous debate has a way of smoothing rough ideological edges, and generating mutual respect and appreciation.

Participation is the Sabbath School “coin of the realm.” Discussion, dialogue, and debate stimulate new insights and spiritual growth. Knowledge can be acquired passively, by reading and listening, but wisdom and insight require active engagement with others, getting acquainted, respecting others, and observing boundaries. “At our class,” Sheila said, “you are accepted just as you are; people are allowed to speak freely and express opinions without being crushed. You are welcomed and loved.”

As we assemble in the presence of Jesus and come to know the Father through the power of the Spirit, we become friends with each other. Just before walking out of the upper room toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the 11 remaining disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father, I have made known to you” (John 15:15, NIV).

Investment

If our Sabbath School class went away, if we just closed the doors, and

we all went our separate ways, would anyone care? What difference are we making in the lives of those around us? Are we investing our time, money, talents, and resources in a manner that contributes to the good of others, our friends, our communities, our world?

Mary Beth has experienced this kind of investment in her own life. She was unemployed and struggling. She says that “prayer and support from my Sabbath School class enabled me to keep my faith.” Just when her financial well went completely dry, the class collected an offering “that meant more than anyone could imagine. God truly uses angels among us,” she said. “It is a blessing to be able to be part of a small group in such a large church that gives a sense of belonging and family.”

Following a heartbreaking family tragedy, Frank said, “We found a class that quietly, compassionately, and lovingly drew us into their friendship and fellowship as we healed. We’ve never left that class.”

A recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* reports on research, concluding that “Strong social support correlates with an astonishing number of desirable outcomes.” One study found that “social support was the greatest predictor of happiness during periods of high stress.” The author continues that the benefits of social support derive not only from support *received*, but “even more important to sustained happiness and engagement was the amount of social support *provided*.”²²

“Our class is open, dynamic, and practical, but what really sets it apart is the Harley Hat.” Mike explains, “It started one Sabbath when one of our group suggested we take up an offering to assist someone in need. A guy who rides his Harley to class literally passed the hat and the Harley Hat idea was born. It’s been amazing! Over the years, clothing has been purchased, medical bills paid, appliances installed, and at least one automobile purchased. Overall it’s the best Sabbath School experience I’ve ever had.”

One of Lindsay’s “three wishes” is that “our class takes on a quarterly

mission in our community.” She has agreed to lead that initiative and has offered a variety of suggestions, such as the Second Harvest Food Bank, Operation Christmas Child, and Salvation Army.

So Sabbath School is an effective vehicle for teaching and learning, socialization, and service, for both each other and our community. But more than that, Sabbath School, at its best, is life changing.

Inspiration

In addition to learning and fellowship, Connie’s three wishes for Sabbath School include “personal spiritual growth.” Mary Beth acknowledges “the willingness of the class to reach out and trust God’s prompting to help change my life and be a part of a renewed faith to depend totally on God.”

Change and growth do not happen overnight. The process may seem almost imperceptibly slow. There are often growing pains, as new insights call us to new challenges in life, and new obstacles emerge. The apostle Paul calls us to “[a]lways be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other,

making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love” (Eph. 4:2, NLT). Our job does not include changing each other, but to love, forgive, and encourage each other. God’s Holy Spirit is the all-powerful and totally reliable Agent for growth and change in our lives.


Sabbath School affords opportunities for sharing stories of God’s providence, mercy, and love. Brenda was particularly touched by one teacher’s willingness to be open and transparent. “She told her story,” Brenda recalls. “She was honest, insightful, and vulnerable. She wept as she shared her story; so did many of us. It was hopeful to know her struggle, and to see God’s hand at work. I loved to get a glimpse into her heart, and hear how God’s grace had gotten through.”

Sometimes a grace-filled moment takes us by surprise. For Emily, it came at the end of class, with only a few people remaining. “As we closed,” Emily said, “we stood for prayer. We gathered in close, with arms around each other, each of us prayed, one after the other. Each of us was quite open in our thoughts with God and expressed our desires to be the hands, the feet, the eyes, the vessel, to bring others to

Him. Such a secure, connected feeling in those few moments!”

Conclusion

Things happen in the safety of a small group of trusting friends that are unlikely to happen when sitting alone in a pew, engaged in the one-way conversation of a formal sermon. When we learn together, share together, work together, and pray together, things—relational, life-changing things—happen that are not as likely to in other settings. Instruction is invigorating, enlightening headwork; inclusion is open, embracing arms; investment is hands gifted in service; inspiration is lives changed into the likeness of our Creator and hearts growing in loving friendship with God.

We bring our heads, arms, hands, and hearts—ourselves—to the sanctuary of Sabbath School week after week that we might together “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and in the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18, NASB). 

¹ The names used have been changed.

² Shawn Achor, “Positive Intelligence,” *Harvard Business Review*, January/February 2012, 100–102.

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A traveling man

Revival is a powerful thing. It changes lives. It can even change nations. In spite of what we read about the first religious settlements in North America, by the early 1700s, daily life had become not just secular but a difficult challenge for many. Enter George Whitefield—an English preacher whose own life had been turned around by a powerful religious conversion. At Oxford University, he joined the Holy Club together with John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. Whitefield began to preach revival.

Whitefield eventually came to the New World to preach. The more formal churches often refused him access to their pulpits, so he took to the open air. Thousands came to hear him preach a message of their need of Christ and duty to dedicate all to the Lord. He traveled all over the colonies until an overwhelming majority had heard him preach. A great revival of primitive godliness broke out, and this became known as the Great Awakening. By 1740, the religious life of an entire society had changed.

Historians give many reasons for the American Revolution of only a generation later. However, the essential morality of the colonies can be identified as resulting from the Great Awakening. “No king but God” was not just motivation for civil disobedience to wicked laws from England, but the seed for a continuing concept of religious freedom as a cherished right because God’s claims upon man are transcendent.

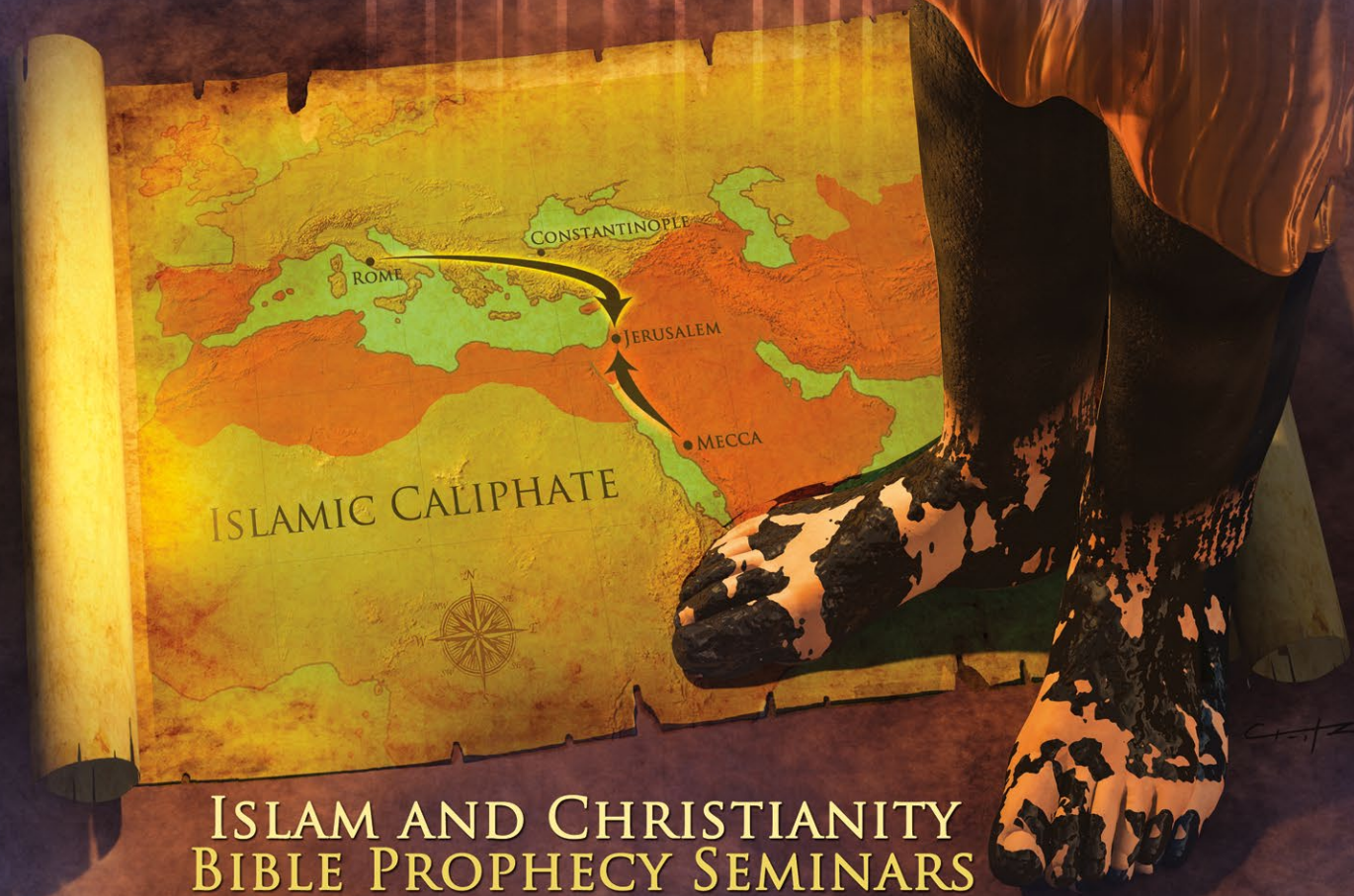
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DANIEL 11

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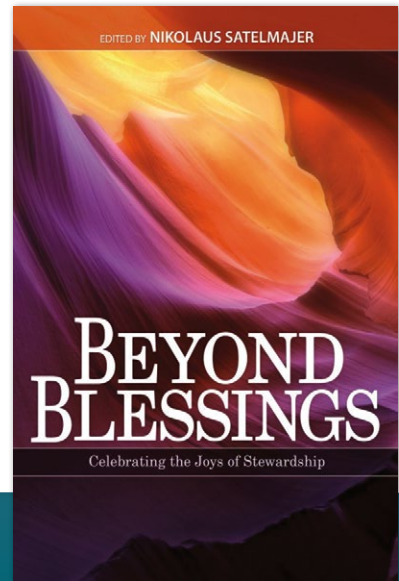
Beyond Blessings

edited by Nikolaus Satelmajer, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2013.

Beyond Blessings contains a collection of winning stewardship essays as a result from a stewardship contest held in the North American Division. The authors are 12 people from backgrounds as diverse as a PhD candidate, church pastors, and conference stewardship and trust services directors. Each essay focuses on a specific passage of Scripture. Readers will notice sections of exegesis or a fleshing out of the Bible's verses, application to today's life, stories from current life, and references to contemporary authors.

The chapter titled "Guaranteed Returns" looks at Malachi 3, James 1, Luke 6, and Mark 10. The description also contains a lengthy story from the author's life, and includes a great illustration of God providing in difficult times.

In another chapter, Elijah's story in Scripture is evaluated. "Trusting God" reviews 1 Kings 17, finding that Elijah's early years as a prophet were spent building his trust in God's providing for him at Kerith and Zarephath. This story encapsulates a fascinating study of how God leads and grows people of faith.



You will find Beyond Blessings

useful for sermon ideas. Each

*chapter could form the **beginning of a sermon** or*


***provide great stories and quotes** for a sermon*

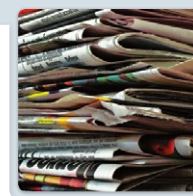
*but can also serve as a **devotional book.***

The chapter titled "Where Your Heart Belongs" includes interesting explanations of moths and rust and thieves, but this chapter also draws distinctions between heaven and earth and an outline for a sermon on Matthew 6:19–21.

The collection fills a nice niche on the bookshelf of the pastor. You will find *Beyond Blessings* useful for sermon ideas. Each chapter could form the beginning of a sermon or provide great stories and quotes for a sermon but can also serve as a devotional

book. The chapters are short, and the reading easy. The entire book could be read in an afternoon, but the lessons can be applied in many ways.

—Reviewed by Kermit Netteburg, senior pastor, Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Beltsville, Maryland, United States. 



► Female pastors in ministry in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) and Pacific Adventist University (PAU) hosted the first Women in Pastoral Ministry Conference in Papua New Guinea, September 13–16, 2013. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has the largest number of women in pastoral ministry at any time in its history. The conference provided an opportunity for the female pastors and female dormitory deans from various secondary schools and tertiary institutions throughout the country to share and explore the joys and frustrations of pastoral ministry and design a network system to provide ongoing support.

PNGUM invited a few speakers to share their insights and wisdom. **Rebecca Liu** shared her life story as she struggled to go from a communist and evolutionist background to how she became a full-time Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, southwestern China, since




Presenters Robyn Stanley (Australia) and Rebekah Liu (China) with two national attendees.

1989. **Robyn Stanley**, who currently works as an assistant pastor at Lilydale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Melbourne, Australia, shared insights on the call to ministry and how to reclaim inactive church members. **Peter and Ruth Oli**, a pastoral team, shared insights from an administrative point of view on how the church

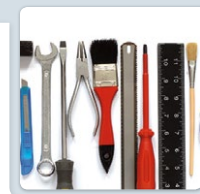
family can enhance the role of women in pastoral ministry. **Leigh and Barbara Rice**, another pastoral team, shared the keys to effective ministry and how to connect and share with people. **Nancy Enopa**, a minister in PNG, shared on the transition from being a single pastor to a married pastor and how to be effective in each role.

Leeroy Elisha, currently a lecturer at PAU, provided the keys to growing a personal spirituality. **David Thiele**, dean of the School of Theology at PAU, provided an academic discourse on the ordination of women from a theological and biblical perspective. Dr. Thiele was excited to meet with the female pastors as he taught all of them at either Sonoma Adventist College or Pacific Adventist University. His wife, **Jillian Thiele**, rejoiced in the success of the former students. “The church is in good hands with these incredibly gifted pastors,” Jillian said.

The theme, “To Be a Spirit-Filled Church, Always Growing, and Leading and Excelling in All Areas of Our Ministry,” was certainly fulfilled at the conference. [Jillian Thiele] 



Attendees pray for the presenters Robyn Stanley (Australia) and Rebekah Liu (China)



Miroslav Pujic, DMin, is the Ministry to Postmoderns director for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Hertsfordshire, England.

Meaning makers *for* postmoderns

In his book *Cat's Cradle*, author Kurt Vonnegut relates a different Creation story than the one we are used to. Man is made out of the mud and asks God the question, “What is the *purpose* of all this?”

“Everything must have a purpose?” God supposedly replies.

“Certainly,” says man.

So God says, “Then I leave it to you to think of one for all this.” Then God goes away.¹

This portrays a vivid image of our postmodern time. However, while postmoderns may not so readily agree with previously accepted ideas regarding life and existence, they still are looking for meaning and purpose. Their questioning of previous explanations is part of the notion that truth is far more open and subjective. This means that some declaration that begins, “As we all know,” or “Nobody questions” will be rejected or ignored.

Consequently, when seeking to connect with postmoderns, we need to change the way we approach such ideas as the meaning of life and our purpose in this world. It is not enough to repeat ideas we have grown up with. In a sense, this is both a challenge and an opportunity, because it also gives us the chance to think outside the box and realize that answers can be given on many levels.

Jean-Paul Sartre comments, “Life has no meaning *a priori*. . . . It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.”² While we may want to argue at one level, we do give meaning to life. We discover our life's meaning and purpose and, by our actions, create meaning in our lives and in the lives of others.

So, we now need to take on the role of meaning makers. Accepting this challenge requires us to be honest in our approach, recognizing we cannot appeal to authorities, but connect through stories and images, particularly from popular culture. We also need to start from scratch rather than assuming any set of givens and not suggest we have all the answers, but ask good questions to develop common ground.

We can help share our ideas of meaning and purpose in life by demonstration rather than declaration, seeking to become a friend and influence others through the way we ourselves live. This personal authenticity is fundamental; if it all comes across as propaganda, then whatever message we are trying to convey will certainly fail.

For these reasons, we find it helpful to point to the experiential ideas that Jesus so often spoke. He said that He came to give people life to the full (John 10:10). He spoke of setting people free (John 8:31, 32; Acts 13:38, 39). He told people not to worry about the material things of life (Matt. 5). He explained that eternal life was not in books but in Himself (John 5:39). When the disciples wanted to see God the Father, He said, “‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’ ” (John 14:9, NIV).


Tell your own personal experience of God—how He lives actively in your own life, what He means to you, and how knowing Him gives you meaning and purpose. Link this to the story of Nicodemus. This educated man came to Jesus at night looking for meaning in his own life. Nicodemus tells Jesus how much he thinks of Him while acknowledging that Jesus was a great spiritual Teacher.

But Jesus does not respond to this. He tells Nicodemus very directly he has to be reborn. Jesus is not afraid to confront the deeper question very directly. In his search for meaning, Nicodemus has to recognize his need and that no philosophical concepts are going to answer his fundamental questions. Nicodemus tries to argue, taking the idea literally. But Jesus shows He wants to engage at the most important and spiritually personal level. In the end, He says, “‘For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him’ ” (John 3:16, 17, NLT).

This brings the meaning of life into sharpest focus. We are *given* meaning and purpose, and as we understand this, we can show others their shared value in the eyes of each other and of God.

As we understand we are meaning makers, we share with God in helping others see their vital meaning and purpose in this world. But as Jesus has shown us, the focus of meaning is on God. “In the beginning, God.” In the end, God.

Question: Can you identify with becoming a meaning maker in your community?

Ancient wisdom: “ ‘This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ’ ” (John 17:3, NLT). 

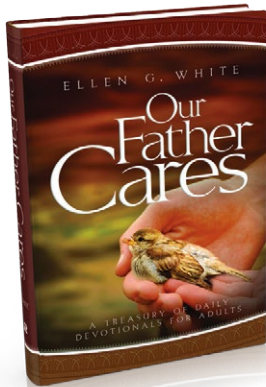
¹ Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2010), eBook edition, 265.

² “Jean-Paul Sartre,” Wikiquote, accessed October 16, 2013, http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre.

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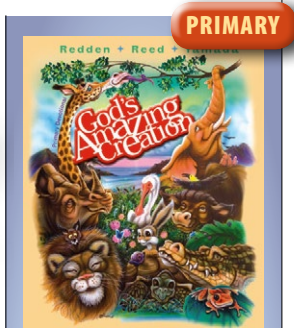
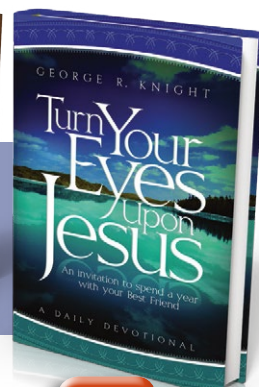
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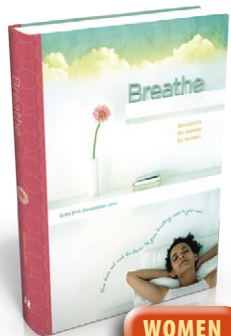
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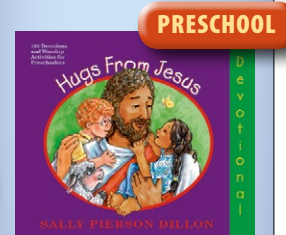
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