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BEYOND BLESSINGS²

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Interpreting Ellen G. White's writings

Gerhard Pfandl makes two very important points at the beginning of his article, "Interpreting the Writings of Ellen G. White" (December 2015).

First, he acknowledges that her authority is not the same as Scripture even though the inspirational source is indeed of the same quality as the inspired writers of Scripture. This distinction is often misunderstood. For those who emphasize the writings of Ellen White, there is a tendency to use them authoritatively. In my reading of Ellen White's writings, she seems to indicate her role is more pastoral than authoritative. Using her writings as authority often diminishes

their pastoral value and leads many to ignore her valuable council.

Second, he affirms that, "Ellen White frequently used Scripture homiletically." Many times when people, misunderstanding her homiletical use, have insisted to me that she is the "inspired commentary," so her use must be definitive for the exegesis of a particular passage of Scripture. I believe this misuse of Ellen White's use of Scripture can lead people to distorted and ill-informed understandings of the Bible. They feel that any interpretation of Scripture that doesn't use exactly the same interpretation for a passage of Scripture as Ellen White did is not worthy of consideration. Sound exegesis and careful scriptural interpretation can easily be dismissed.

I wish that these points could be effectively spread throughout the membership through Sabbath School lessons and other means of communication. If they were better understood, Ellen White's writings could be better appreciated for what they are and less frequently abused.

—Michael L. McMillan, Loma Linda, California, United States

Biblical spirituality

Thank you for Jon Dybdahl's article ("Spirituality: Biblical and Nonbiblical—Part 1 of 2") in the October 2015 issue. We have been long overdue for a reasonable and balanced treatment of this topic. Finally we have one from an official Adventist publication!

—Ken Curtis, email

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Transitions

Not every book you pick up is worth reading, but occasionally you find one that shapes your thinking. For me, one of those books was *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* by William Bridges. The book is in its third edition, now published under the title *Managing Transitions: Making The Most of Change*.¹

Bridges divides transitions into three stages:

- the pain of ending
- the neutral zone
- the new beginning

All transitions involve loss of some kind. Sometimes those losses are intentional and productive. For example, you might choose to get married or move from one pastoral assignment to another. But even those positive and intentional changes involve loss. If you get married, you lose some autonomy. If you accept a new pastoral assignment, you will be separated from church members you have come to love.

Some transitions are imposed upon you. A loved one dies. You lose your job. You are diagnosed with a terminal illness. You don't intentionally choose any of these painful occurrences, but you are compelled to deal with them; they are an unavoidable part of life. King Solomon reminds us, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccles. 3:1).² What follows is a list of transitions: birth/death, planting/reaping, gaining/losing. Because they are inevitable, it is unproductive to waste energy trying to avoid them. Recognize the change and choose to handle it in a healthy way.

All shifts in life involve a time of disorientation—what Bridges calls


the neutral zone. Because changes have occurred, you might feel a loss of equilibrium—disoriented or displaced. Such feelings are normal. There is a tendency to resist even necessary and healthy transitions because this neutral zone can be awkward. For example, a person might feel the desire to go back to an unhealthy relationship just because it is strange to be single again. But retreat may not be your best option. When making my way through a neutral zone, I have found this word of counsel from the apostle Paul to be most encouraging: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7).

Moving courageously from the pain of ending through the neutral zone leads to a new beginning. Transitions are times of great opportunity. These changes will take time and require additional effort, but if managed in a healthy way, they offer unique opportunities to grow. Many of us have found comfort in the words of the psalmist David: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

Our *Ministry* team is currently in the midst of a major transition. Our esteemed associate editor, Willie Hucks, has accepted a teaching position at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. For the past ten years, Dr. Hucks has served as a valuable member of the *Ministry* team. His frequent contributions to the journal, such as editorials, editor's

*The One
who has led
you this far
will not leave
you now.*

blogs, and articles, have blessed many pastors around the world. We are currently experiencing the pain of ending. Though this transition will take several months, we are already feeling a sense of loss. We solicit your prayers for Dr. Hucks and his family as they make this transition. Please also pray for the *Ministry* team as we make our way through the neutral zone toward a new beginning.

Perhaps you are in the midst of major transition yourself, either self-imposed or thrust upon you like an uninvited guest. In the midst of it, remember that no matter how painful things might seem at the moment or how disorienting your present environment might appear, new opportunities lie just around the corner. Be strong and of good courage. The One who has led you this far will not leave you now. 

¹ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most Of Change* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2009).

² All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version.

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Building transformational communities

The apostle John records a voice from heaven crying “come out from her, my people” (Rev. 18:4, LEB), referring to Babylon. It would seem, then, that to prepare for the return of Jesus, we must deliver this message.

But what does it mean to call people out of Babylon? Understanding one aspect of the Old Testament background of this call may provide a fresh and compelling insight that can help focus our pastoral calling within an eschatological movement.

The call to “come out”

The call to “come out” of Babylon in Revelation 18:4 alludes to a number of Old Testament passages.¹ Isaiah declares this message while looking toward a future Babylonian exile, and Jeremiah speaks it while God’s people are still in captivity. However, Zechariah’s call, about 520 B.C., comes once a remnant has already returned to Jerusalem. This timing may be helpful for understanding how Revelation 18 provides a foundation for the remnant’s mission before Jesus returns.

As the time of the Babylonian exile came to a close, Cyrus believed God chose him to fulfill the words spoken through Jeremiah to restore the temple. Cyrus issued a decree for any willing persons to return to Jerusalem for that purpose (Ezra 1:1–4). Zerubbabel led a remnant back

to Jerusalem, but after just a year of opposition by the surrounding people, the remnant became discouraged with the rebuilding program and resigned themselves to staying at home. After 15 years of inaction, God spoke through Haggai, part of the remnant himself, to the timid materialists in Jerusalem, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” (Hag. 1:4, ESV).

About two months later, Zechariah, also part of this remnant, addressed those in Jerusalem, but then, facing their relatives still living in Babylon, cried, “‘Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven,’ declares the LORD. ‘Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Daughter Babylon!’” (Zech. 2:6, 7).²

But why does Zechariah call to the remnant’s relatives to leave Babylon? It is quite clear that God is going to bring judgment on Babylon, and the lingering Jews would not want to be caught up in that destruction. However, the wider context of the story is the call to those in Babylon to join their relatives in Jerusalem. The call to join the remnant was a call to help in the specific purpose that inspired the remnant to leave Babylon in the first place—to restore the temple (Ezra 1:3). The restoration of God’s sanctuary was the primary, driving motivation for the remnant originally leaving Babylon.

In other words, Zechariah’s call to “come out” of Babylon was actually a call to “come in”—into a community that was defined as a remnant because of their devotion to the cause of restoring the place of God’s personal presence on the earth. This call was urgent due to imminent judgment on Babylon, but perhaps more importantly, as Haggai indicated, the call was urgent because of the need for the remnant to recapture their temple-rebuilding mission, which had been let adrift for so many years.

A three-fold calling

Zechariah’s call may be considered to consist of three parts. First, a call to come out of Babylon. Second, a call to join the remnant at the ruins of God’s temple. Third, a call to participate in the process of restoring God’s temple—the place of God’s personal presence—that His glory could again be revealed across the earth.

This three-fold pattern in Zechariah³ is also seen in 2 Corinthians 6:14–18. Paul refers to the Old Testament call to come out of Babylon to urge his readers in restoring purity in their lives (2 Cor. 6:17) because “we are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor. 6:16).

Again, the context of Revelation 18:4 suggests this pattern. A call to “come out” of Babylon did exist so that the people would not “share in her sins.” Within the broader story of

Revelation, while these people are preparing to enter into the eternal New Jerusalem in order to live in the presence of God and the Lamb, who are its temple (Rev. 21:22), the context suggests a dynamic that Paul describes. As the people of God “contemplate the Lord’s glory,” now at first hand, they are entering into an *eternal* process where God is reflected through them “with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).

While these parallels stress the urgency of “coming out,” contextually the “coming out” and the “coming in” are merely prerequisites to the main focus: entering into a process of rebuilding the place of God’s presence so that His glory may be increasingly revealed.

Temples are places of transformation

While temples are places where God personally reconnects in relationship with His disconnected people (Exod. 25:8), they are significantly places of transformation. David relates his single-minded desire to see God in His temple: “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). While the temple was the place where David met with God, there were going to be inevitable consequences to “gaze on the beauty of the Lord.” Again, alluding to Moses’ encounter with God on Sinai, Paul spells this out, “We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Rebuilding enables reflection

So unless God’s temple was rebuilt by the remnant in Jerusalem, God and His people would remain disconnected. And without intimate connection, reflecting their God in the world—to be holy as He was holy (Lev. 11:44; 20:26; 1 Pet. 1:16)—would

be impossible. But God assured His people of the link between their future restoration in holiness, His sanctuary, and their witness to His glory. “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever” (Ezek. 37:27, 28).

Rebuilding humans

While we have noted that people are transformed in God’s presence, what specifically is to be re-created when God lives within us corporately and individually as His temples (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20)? Paul explains that it is God’s image in us, for “we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). Genesis states that God’s own image provided the blueprint for human creation (Gen. 1:27). That means that God’s image defines what it means to be human.⁴ Consequently, God’s image provides us with the blueprint for human re-creation.

After the Fall, Paul describes how “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). This glory of Jesus in us remains at the very heart of God’s purposes as Heaven works for the salvation of humanity—that deformed humans “be conformed to the image of his Son,” (Rom. 8:29).

This purpose of God naturally flows over into the mission of God’s ministers and, therefore, of God’s church and church members. Paul illustrates this through his own example. He shares with the Galatians that this purpose of God compels him to minister, even “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). Then, when writing to the Colossians, Paul describes how the members of God’s community, who have been raised with Christ and have put to death the old self, “have put on the new self, which

is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col. 3:10).

Questions for establishing transformational communities

I have suggested that the call to come out of Babylon in Revelation 18:4 infers a foundational call to swell the ranks of the remnant who are devoted to restoring the image of God in broken human beings, that God’s glory is increasingly revealed through them across the earth. Now let me reflect on three sets of application questions for prioritizing the work of building transformational communities.

Questions as pastors and teachers of transformational communities. First, our desire for the transformation of others. I remember attending one of the first pastors’ meetings of my ministry. We were divided into groups to discuss our concern for lost people. The overwhelming consensus of my group was that none of us really were that concerned. So I am forced to look into Paul’s mirror of Galatians 4:19 and ask myself, do I really care for broken people? Am I willing to endure “the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in [others]”? (Gal. 4:19).

Second, our desire to gaze on the beauty of the Lord for ourselves. Having passed the official halfway point in my ministry, I realize how extremely task oriented I am. But my ability to pursue transformation in others is completely dependent on a personal daily encounter with Jesus. I can easily be motivated and focused to prepare a sermon or write an article, but do I genuinely treasure the beauty of the Lord above all other things (Ps. 27:4)—so much so, that I am increasingly longing to spend time in His presence?

Questions for the mission of transformational communities. Third, keeping the prophetic vision a priority. As we have noted, calling people out of Babylon is a call to “come in.” But the “coming in” is for the purpose of rebuilding people in the image of God so that God’s own glory is revealed. However, as Scot McKnight

suggests, modern evangelicalism has largely embraced a culture focused on attaining personal salvation rather than a culture of ongoing discipleship, partly due to a historical overemphasis on justification.⁵ Consequently, our churches may inadvertently emphasize baptism as *arrival* rather than baptism as a *departure* into joining God's mission to restore others in the image of Christ.⁶ So, how do we ensure that our churches are characterized and known as transformational communities where there is a continuous devotion to discipling people to become sanctuaries of God? How do we foster a community vision where devotion to revealing the image of God in our lives "with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18) moves far beyond a satisfaction with simply adding more members?

Fourth, fostering unity and harmony in mission. Sometimes we may see tensions in our churches between those who believe that our prophetic ministry is defined primarily as identifying Babylon or explaining the books of Daniel and Revelation and others who see this approach as old-fashioned and irrelevant at a time when the basics of Christianity are unknown. I would suggest that this polarization is not between a right and wrong approach but is actually the work of Satan to destabilize God's people. What we need is a synthesis of the approaches rather than a battle between them. So, in the context of what we have explored, when living in cultures that are increasingly post-Christian, and even anti-Christian, how do we nurture a harmonious prophetic ministry that unashamedly continues the eschatological mandate passed on to us by our pioneers while addressing the needs of people who do not even know whether there is a God?

Fifth, the need to develop partnerships for broader ministry. As pastors, we were generally trained in theology, yet the restoration of people in God's image requires an approach that addresses damage to mind, body, and spirit. Moreover, I would suggest that it is not simply a matter of having those

three types of ministries existing within a church but about working together in a coordinated way. Consequently, how can we develop partnerships where, together, we provide a wholistic ministry where individuals are being restored in all facets of the image of God?

Questions for individuals of transformational communities. Sixth, guarding against elitism. As we have noted, success is not defined merely by someone "coming out," or even "coming in," but by a person entering into the transformational process. One challenge is that defining people as "out" or "in" can breed a destructive form of elitism. In view of the fact that the remnant's prophetic call to leave Babylon addresses their own relatives, with the expectation that many will indeed leave because they are excited to become part of a transformational community, how can we guard from seeing ourselves as part of an elite group rather than servants in an astonishing and ever-expanding mission to reveal God's glory throughout the earth?

Seventh, establishing a clear vision and action plan for members of the transformational community. Being transformed into the image of God "with ever-increasing glory" does not happen by accident or randomly, but there are certain key components that fit together in order. Just as there are basic sequential processes when building a house—you do not put on the roof before you build the walls—so there are basic operating processes as people are restored in the image of God.


Therefore, as members of transformational communities, can we clearly articulate the spiritual dynamics of transformation? Indeed, if the image of God was the blueprint for human creation, do we even know what that image of God is so that it can be the blueprint for nurturing human recreation—both for ourselves and for those for whom we minister?

Conclusion

From what we have considered, the mission of the remnant before Jesus

returns may be shaped by the three components related to the process of calling people out of Babylon in Revelation 18:4. That is, calling others to (a) "come out" of where they are—outside of God's personal presence, (b) "come in" to a community devoted to restoring people as temples of God—that God may personally dwell within them, and then (c) actively participate in an eternal journey of reformation and transformation of self and others so that God's image is revealed "with ever-increasing glory."

Ellen White describes these themes of sanctuary, rebuilding, and transformation to reveal the glory of God in the context of God's purposes for deformed human beings: "From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again his temple."⁷

I would suggest that as we become coworkers with Jesus in this purpose to prepare people for His return, the identity and purpose of the remnant is both clarified and strengthened as we unite around such a prophetic movement to restore broken people into God's own image. Indeed, I believe this is the most significant enterprise a human being, or a church, could possibly imagine. 

1 See Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6; Isaiah 48:20; 52:11.

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is from the New International Version.

3 The need to leave Babylon and the tragedy of a broken temple is also seen in Jeremiah 51:45, 51.

4 See J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press), 2005.

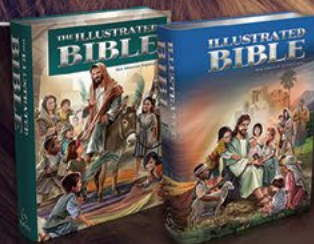
5 See Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

6 See Jesus' own example in Luke 3, 4.

7 Ellen G. White, "A Habitation for the Spirit," *Review and Herald*, December 31, 1908, 8.

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Safary Wa-Mbaleka, EdD, PhD, is associate professor of education, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.



Adventists *in* politico-military strife *and* violence

Just returning home after church service, I heard a knock at the door. Like any hospitable follower of Jesus, I rushed to the door to open it for the guest. Unfortunately, this was a group of unwanted guests. A dozen rebels stood there, looking for the university vehicle. They wanted to “borrow” the vehicle as part of their fight against the government army. This was no longer just “a rumor of war.” It *was* war, and I was facing it head on.

I have not been the only one facing war, either.

From Africa to Europe, the Americas to Asia, war dominates. And, as Adventists, we have not been spared of it either. Adventists need, therefore, practical guidance as to how to live spiritually in time of war. And though this article will look at how war has impacted the church in Central Africa, it can help all Adventists who face the unique challenges that war brings, regardless of where they live.

Genocide in Rwanda

The most shocking event in Africa in recent history was the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. All the demons were unleashed on that beautiful nation. People brutally killed their neighbors. Children were murdered. Christians killed other Christians. It was total chaos that no one can ever understand.

My wife was a missionary at our Adventist university in Rwanda when

the genocide began. She saw people killed in her backyard. She recalled the challenge that foreign missionaries, her colleagues, faced whenever people came to hide in their houses. There were no guidelines on whether or not one should allow innocent people to hide, an action that could also endanger the lives of those missionaries. Though easy to reason that it is good to do the right thing, the reality may be difficult when it could cost you and your family their lives. The stories of Corrie ten Boom and others who faced the same dilemma during World War II lead one to understand that this issue is quite complex.¹ That is not a new dilemma, and there are no easy answers.

The war that started in Rwanda has had some disastrous ramifications with other armed conflicts in Central Africa. The challenges discussed in this article come from interviews with church pastors, district leaders, active and former conference presidents, and university administrators. From these interviews, it became clear that there are issues tied to war in Central Africa that need immediate attention, not just in Africa, but anywhere our people face the challenges that accompany war.

Spiritual challenges

One pastor told of his experience when, on the way to church, rebels killed his mother and some of his children right in front of him. *Some of the rebels were actually attending his*

church! At the time of the interview, several years after the incident, he had not received any appropriate counseling or other assistance to help him and his family deal with the issue. Many cases around the world today are similar. Church members and pastors do not know how to react to such situations.

A district pastor recounted the heinous strategies that rebels use to terrorize citizens in Central Africa. They rape women in public. Raped women are ostracized in their respective communities. Some men are forced to commit incest to preserve their own lives. And such victims are marginalized. Different pastors and church leaders struggle with whether or not rape and incest victims should be disfellowshipped. Some think that both are victims only and should not be disciplined. Others believe that the man should be excommunicated because he should have chosen death over incest. Still others believe that both should be removed from church books. The church does not have a clear standard on what to do in situations like this. Additionally, in most cases, the church does not have services available to help people who have been traumatized like this.

Socioeconomic challenges

Because of the unceasing conflicts, many people live in extreme poverty. They end up in refugee or internally

displaced camps for anywhere from weeks to years. Lack of sustained economic activities leads to famine, health problems, and security risks as people try to survive.

Pastors run for their lives together with their church members. Yet pastors depend heavily on members' tithes and offerings. During war, tithes and offerings are rare because everyone lives in a survival mode. Knowing the struggle of the church members, the church pastor is unable to encourage more tithes and offerings from the members, who are so unimaginably impoverished.

Due to the extreme poverty, many people are malnourished. Basic sanitation measures are unavailable. This easily causes communicable diseases to spread and possibly end in death. The church at large in the region is not financially in a position to deal with such socioeconomic challenges on such a large scale.

Facing violence and looting

Meanwhile, young Christians are sometimes enticed or forced to join rebel groups. Some are taken as sex

slaves. Innocent children are made into soldiers. Anyone unwilling to cooperate is tortured to "teach a lesson to the rest of the people." Everyone lives in fear. Unfortunately, in some cases, undisciplined government soldiers sometimes commit similar atrocities.

One pastor told the story of holding an evangelistic meeting where some rebels agreed to be baptized. He could not tell them to give up their rebel activities before being baptized because such a statement would draw rage from the rebel leaders. He never knew what to do and had no one to counsel him on what to do under such circumstances. Church leaders who were asked about this situation were not able to give a common answer; they were divided about what to do.

One pastor told of situations where rebels control a territory. They cut the communities off from the rest of the country. After they loot merchandise from other cities, they bring it to their territory to sell in order to fund their rebellion. Buying something looted contributes to sustaining the rebel's activities. On the other hand, if someone tries to get out of that territory

in order to buy from other cities, that person puts his or her own life at risk.

In two cases, rebels asked some Adventists to carry loot for them on Sabbath. In one case, the Adventists refused but miraculously their lives were spared. In another case, Adventists refused and were shot dead. This has led some Adventists to simply give in to avoid being killed.

At times rebels who are church members bring their tithes and offerings from loot that they have pillaged. Some pastors believe that all riches belong to God, and that no one should be in a position to reject a sinner's tithe and offering. Others believe that tithes and offerings from what has been pillaged should not be accepted. This begs one to wonder whether (a) it is possible to come up with some general guidelines for such issues or (b) if the church should continue to be silent on these matters.

Adventists fighting

Some Christians join rebels for the safety of their ethnic group. Some are regular church members and even hold church positions. On Sabbath,

Mission vision

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

You may have had the experience of getting a new pair of glasses and suddenly your eyes are opened to seeing things like the birds in the trees that you could not see with your old glasses. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes upon His disciples, their eyes will be opened to become His missionaries in their home town, their nation, nearby nations, and the whole world.

This verse suggests that, when it comes to mission, the Holy Spirit helps us see and respond to needs we may have missed before. My husband, who recently got another pair of glasses just for computer use, calls this multifocal mission vision. To do different tasks well, we often need glasses to help us see at every distance. Just so, to do mission, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us see and respond to the mission needs at home, in our nation, in nearby nations, and in the whole world.

When our mission vision becomes constricted to only home mission, foreign mission, or any one place or people in between, we need to ask the Holy Spirit

to give us new glasses. Holy Spirit power in mission means we will not lose sight of our mission at home as well as our responsibility for mission to every person on earth.

Lord, please give us multifocal mission vision!

—David Trim, PhD, serves as director, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

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they believe that they must continue assuming their position as church officers. They do not see any wrongdoing because they consider their roles in fighting as self-defense.

The Adventist's official position on combatants in war is that an Adventist member should never bear arms for the purposes of killing. From the early history of the Adventist Church, the church has upheld a noncombatancy position. President Ted N. C. Wilson recently reiterated this noncombatancy position in an August 2014 *Adventist World* article.² In the same article, however, he makes it clear that "the decision as to whether or not to serve in the military and bear arms is left to the conscience of the individual," although he added that "the church does not encourage people to join the military for reasons that include the biblical concept of noncombatancy, the difficulty to obtain full Sabbath observance, and other challenges." Elder Wilson emphasized that "regardless of the decision the individual makes, the church is committed to ministering and providing pastoral care and support to all of its members, including those serving in the military, and to their families." This position is in line with Gary R. Councell's recommendation about men and women who serve in the military.³

This position makes sense in nations where everyone is required to serve in the military. But what about those who join rebel groups whose purpose is to terrorize innocent people and cause desolation? The church may need to be more specific in regard to the question of military service, but it must be done from a global perspective, rather than just from the perspective of North America.

Recommendations

Some local Adventists in Central Africa complain that it is uncommon for the church to speak against evil, oppression, and genocide. This is partially due to the apolitical status of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

However, from the Bible it is clear that one of the roles of the prophets was to speak to kings whenever they oppressed their own people.

In August 2014, Elder Wilson made a statement against the persecution in Syria and Iraq.⁴ A similar statement was issued a few years ago when one rebel leader in Central Africa claimed to be an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church dissociated itself from him and condemned his actions. This helped preserve the positive image of the church and most likely saved the lives of Adventists in that region.

Because the world, at large, is at war and things are not getting any better, it seems more and more important to create new departments at the local conferences, unions, and divisions to deal with issues related to war victims. This department could help address socioeconomic issues of our church members more effectively, and deal with their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. This could also be useful in getting help in a much more effective and efficient way to war victims. The church organization is the shepherd of church members. It must develop better ways to deal with the pressing needs of millions of people affected directly with war because a third of the world is currently at war.

Church leadership could set up special committees to address spiritual and ecclesiastical issues pertaining to the work of the church in war zones. Many ethical issues, some of which are unknown to the general church public, need very specific guidelines to help church pastors and leaders deal effectively with these challenges. Tough decisions should not be left to the sole judgment of the local pastor; this practice has left church members confused. They have found that the same issue is addressed differently by Adventist pastors in different villages, cities, regions, or countries. The church needs to set clear guidelines for some of the issues presented here.

The church should design specific training programs for members and leaders in war zones. Such seminars could help them deal with violence, emotional trauma, socioeconomic needs, health and moral issues, and, most important, spirituality during the time of war. These resources could help Adventists deal better with their personal and spiritual lives. Of course, such training programs would have to be adapted to the laws of each nation.

In our seminaries, where deemed necessary and appropriate, we could include courses or lectures on how to minister to people in war zones. When I recently spoke at an Adventist seminary forum, more than half of the students could easily identify with the issues of war. They were all surprised that we do not have any course to prepare them for the problems associated with war.

Whether we see World War III or not, the world is going through global turmoil that requires global measures from the church. Now is the time to start the discussion on this important matter that affects millions of people. We have a moral obligation to protect and defend the weak, innocent, and helpless. This is a strong biblical principle from both the Old and New Testaments. No matter the war situation that we may find ourselves in, we must defend this biblical principle, especially when the weak, innocent, and helpless are our own church members. ☒

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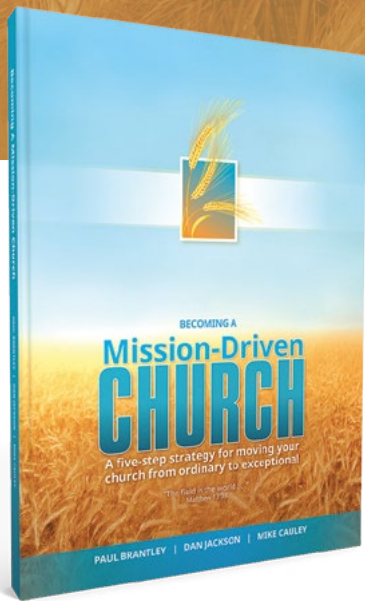
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Expanding our understanding of present truth

A phrase that kept emerging in my college denominational history classes was *present truth*. This phrase seemed to embody a set of biblical understandings that, while not new, emerged with greater clarity. Early Adventist preachers and writers appeared to sense their *raison d'être* in proclaiming these understandings. But more than a century has passed since the time that such truths were “present.” Has the time come to ask whether we might need to articulate broader “present truth”?

This is not to turn away from the biblical theology that Adventists cherish, but I sense a lessening of interest in today’s audiences in our cherished understandings of God’s law, the Sabbath, sanctuary understandings, and even the great controversy. Those who understand the times tell us that we are now living in a postmodern world, where those who sit in the pews, never mind those who never enter church premises, have lessening interest in theological orthodoxies.

What does the church have to say today that is “present truth,” relevant to modern people? An increasing number seem to say that we should be focusing on a central theme of Scripture: doing justice. This growing chorus of Christians in general and Adventists in particular are pointing to issues of justice as critical for twenty-first

century agendas. The concern especially acknowledges that most Christians in the developed countries have a sacred responsibility both to those marginalized and unjustly treated in their own communities and to those in the majority, or the developing world. The prophetic word is coming from evangelical Christian thought leaders, our own Adventist community, and even Pope Francis: “How I would love a Church which is poor and for the poor,” he stated shortly after his election.¹

Issues of justice

How can we ignore the estimated 870 million people, one person in eight, suffering from chronic undernourishment?² Can we ignore the 783 million people who lack access to improved water sources and 2.5 billion people who have no improved sanitation?³

Perhaps, like me, you learned in school about William Wilberforce and believe that slavery was abolished. But slavery did not end with abolition in the nineteenth century; the practice continues in every country in the world. From women forced into prostitution to children forced to work in sweatshops to entire families forced to work for nothing to pay off generational debts, the illegal practice blights our contemporary world. About 21 million men, women, and children around the world are in a form of slavery.⁴ Thus, Adventists can not only recognize the

importance of rest for ourselves, we can also see the issue as one of justice for all.

As one who grew up in a world coming to grips with the end of the colonial era, I was immersed in, and yet strangely oblivious to, issues of racism and multiculturalism. Our denomination had its roots in the United States of America, and our pioneers struggled to articulate a just approach within that culture. Some have argued that although we can be pleased with many things, we nonetheless occasionally failed to rid ourselves of racist approaches.⁵ Many of our church communities have growing ethnic and cultural mixes: how do we find respect and tolerance for all and yet preserve a comfortable community for each individual? Can we share these conversations in our meetings? And then share our lessons learned with a broader audience?

We look for personal safety and protection, but a United Nations statistical report compiled from government sources showed that more than 250,000 cases of rape or attempted rape are recorded by police annually. The reported data covered just 65 countries.⁶ And this is only the beginning of a tragedy that many countries and cultures do not report nor address in law or enforcement. We cannot take over the proper role of the authorities in law and order, but we can (especially

if we live in a democratic environment) advocate, seek to protect, and assist the desperate people who are victims of trafficking and smuggling, many of whom endure unimaginable hardships in their bid for a better life.

Two key theological emphases

Given our distinctive denominational name, let us review the two key theological emphases embodied there. We may be in for a surprise on how they impact this issue.

1. Seventh-day Adventists rightly call people back to an experience and appreciation of the Sabbath. But, while finding proof in such texts as Isaiah 58:13, 14, do we forget to read the whole chapter, with its clarion call to justice and compassion? Is it possible that we are more focused on “not breaking the Sabbath” than on “doing good on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:12)? Ellen G. White frequently referred to Isaiah 58 as the “message for this time, to be given over and over again,” and “of the highest importance.”⁷ Even the Sabbath commandment itself contains a call for justice: “no work [for] . . . your son, daughter, or slaves—whether men or women—or your cattle or your house guests” (Exod. 20:10, TLB).⁸

2. As we consider the proclamation for the universe-impacting event of the First Advent, what might we have expected? Prophecy analysis, sacrificial system decoding, and timeline proclamation? Standing at a similar point in the salvation timeline proclaiming the *Second* Advent, should we not also embrace and share God’s values of justice and mercy?⁹

Good news

After noting so much bad news, there is good news to report, both in thought and action.

I was surprised to learn that more than 2,000 verses throughout the Old and New Testaments focus on poverty and justice, underscoring that this has always been at the core of salvation history, and Christ’s ministry in particular. If you want to see this visually, pick

up a copy of *The Poverty and Justice Bible*,¹⁰ and as you review its pages, you see that highlighted texts focusing on poverty and justice appear all the way through. As a minister charged with sharing and preaching the Word, do your presentations embrace this major cross-cutting theme? Being aware of this emphasis can help you see stories and presentations in a whole new light. Take, for example, my favorite story of the widow’s oil jar in 2 Kings 4:1–7. In that delightful story you can explore issues of slavery, engagement, gender, and personal finance, as well as the wonder of God’s (literally!) overflowing blessings.

A poignant and forthright series of essays is captured in *Do Justice: Our Call to Faithful Living*,¹¹ in which prominent Adventist thinkers and theologians are calling the church, especially the Adventist Church, to a thorough engagement on issues of justice. These essays call for recognition that humanitarian action and concern for justice should be at the heart of Adventist theology and history (although not always with undivided focus).

These concerns are being articulated with increasing clarity by evangelical authors. My colleagues and I have been challenged and blessed by Richard Stearns’s book *The Hole in Our Gospel*.¹² While his presentation inevitably draws attention to the ministry with which he is associated, his analysis of Old and New Testament passages (not to mention his dramatic personal story) captivates our attention and resonates with our own understanding. From a different organization, Jim Martin’s *The Just Church* presents not only a theology but also practical steps for helping your church engage in justice issues.¹³ Have you already engaged your church, or are you thinking about it? Take time to read practical counsel with a biblically based framework in *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert.¹⁴ Those more academically inclined may wish to dig into Wagner Kuhn’s *Redemption and Transformation*.¹⁵

The obvious difference

I wish to highlight the obvious difference being made by the Adventist Church in more than 120 countries through the ministry of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). According to the 2013 annual report, ADRA touched the lives of more than 21 million people through more than a thousand projects valued at almost US\$138 million! While we in the ADRA network have a specific professional responsibility to be engaged, how much better if our actions flowed from the determination and engagement of all our members and leaders? Other denominations have similar faith-based agencies engaged in the same mission. In Canada, many of us work together cooperatively through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (a partnership of 15 churches and church-based agencies representing 30 denominations).¹⁶ In such consortia, Adventists engage with and, in turn, are blessed by other Christian missions.

This is new but not new. Dorcas societies in nineteenth-century America were copied by Adventists in 1874. Galvanized by the needs of others, members organized food and clothes for those in need. From earliest times Adventists understood that helping in the name and spirit of Jesus meant to meet needs, irrespective of creed, class, nationality, or ethnic origin. Gradually Dorcas societies became known as Adventist Community Services, and men, as well as women, have become involved. The Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service (SAWS) was organized in recognition that Adventists needed to respond to world needs, not just those of their local communities. And ultimately a passion for excellence in Christian response helped our leaders to morph SAWS into ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. Those of us involved with the agency from the beginning may have previously seen ourselves as involved in something “good” yet somehow almost peripheral to doctrinal

primacy. But more and more I sense that all of these responses stem from Christ's central mission, touching the heart of humanity with compassion and offering just solutions to urgent needs. While in the early years of ADRA there may have been some temptation for the agency to veer off on a professional but undenominational track, I have sensed in recent years a determination by both ecclesiastical and agency leaders around the world to ensure ADRA's prime role in church ministry to the wider world.

Waypoints

As a church pastor sensing the imperative of this "present truth," what are some of the waypoints ahead?

1. Prayerfully consider this potentially new paradigm, a way of thinking that sees justice ministry as central, not as peripheral. Delve into the biblical mandate, using resources such as those given above. Look for points of intersection with young people and those who do not regularly attend. You may find that this aspect of "present truth" grabs their attention and helps them see the church as relevant and compelling.

2. Invite your local church(es) to engage with ministries of justice and compassion locally. I am impressed, for instance, by how the Aldergrove Adventist Church (British Columbia, Canada) incorporates specific ministries to those struggling to survive with programs such as extreme home repair, single moms' oil change, and a breakfast club to provide nutritious meals for needy school children.¹⁷ Again, invite young people and occasional attendees to engage in these programs. We can also affirm those engaged in more traditional Dorcas, or community service, activities. Justice for all? That could be a powerful motivator.


3. Have a few individuals share publically their journey in understanding biblical justice issues and conclude with your own reflection and

challenge. Give reading assignments to good presenters in your congregation (such as from the suggestions given above) and have them make brief presentations for the 13 weeks of the quarter in the main service, calling it something like "Justice Gems."

4. Reflect on how acts of justice and compassion best integrate with the mandate to extend God's invitation to a life of faith. Those involved with any organized Christian ministry or charity know that regulation and legal considerations often appear to hinder what is perceived as necessary Christian witness or evangelism. This perplexing issue has often divided thoughtful Christians and their leaders from those in frontline organizations. But I have come to believe that with more good will and dialogue, we can achieve all of the mandates embodied in Matthew 28:19, 20.

5. Encourage members to actively support the ADRA office in your country. Some pastors, I have found, tend to see their responsibilities solely at the personal or church-community level. But we need to see our parish as including the whole community in which we live, and the global village that we inhabit, for the first time in the history of our planet. That extended community is now beeping at us from our smartphones, crying to us from the radio, and pleading from the news bulletins on the television. Faith-based ministries need prayer support.¹⁸ I believe the success that church agencies enjoy by securing significant government and other grants comes from divine intervention.

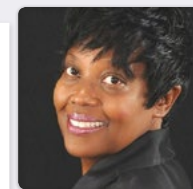
Expanding our understanding of "present truth"?

The time has come to renew our commitment to making a significant impact on the world, the global village in which we live. This is not new. Our pioneers showed us the way. But with God's help, we can engage our church and society like never before. 

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- 2 "Globally Almost 870 Million Chronically Undernourished – New Hunger Report," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, October 9, 2012, www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/161819/icode/.
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- 8 Emphasis mine.
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- 13 Jim Martin, *The Just Church: Becoming a Risk-Taking, Justice-Seeking, Disciple-Making Congregation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012).
- 14 Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009, 2012).
- 15 Wagner Kuhn, *Redemption and Transformation Through Relief and Development: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives of God's Holistic Gospel* (Berrien Springs, MI: Dept. of World Mission, Andrews University, 2013).
- 16 Canadian Foodgrains Bank, <http://foodgrainsbank.ca>.
- 17 AOK (Acts of Kindness), www.aokaldergrove.org.
- 18 In Canada we invite people to become "prayers angels," to be engaged with us in our triumphs and challenges. (<http://adra.ca/PrayerAngel>). Other offices have similar programs (www.adra.org/site/PageNavigator/involved/prayer_requests.html).

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Practical lessons from the woman with the issue of blood

While studying the Bible story of the woman with the issue of blood, I was reminded of a familiar cultural marker: a griot. In many cultural communities, griots are the people who tell and testify of the tales of a tribe—social, cultural, historical, and spiritual. They often represent one of the tribe’s narrative legacies or prevailing ideas as well as one of its pedagogical models.

The woman with the issue of blood serves as a griot. In addition to being an example of a curative text, her body is a testimonial healing narrative that has served as a therapeutic faith modality in the lives of Christian believers. Many believers, living in contemporary culture from a myriad of cultural communities, have garnered practical life lessons from this woman’s story of healing and restoration.

There are three practical lessons from the woman with the issue of blood that may benefit the sick person seeking healing—be it psychological, physical, or social.

Lesson one: The Holy Spirit leads one to healing

The woman with the issue of blood was led by the Holy Spirit to position herself for healing. Like the protagonist

in a story, she stirs the narrative into being when she journeys out of her house to find healing. One could say the woman’s Holy Spirit-activated exploration into her own healing resembles what the novelist Ralph Ellison identifies as “the autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically.”¹ She does not bemoan her sickness of bleeding. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she moves quietly, inspirationally, and passionately. Her following the leading of the God who carries her in the direction of Jesus exemplifies her faith; yet, no verbal announcement that she is a believer in Jesus was said.

Her actions speak of her belief. Indeed, her actions are evangelistic in that she moves beyond her own weak body. The lyricism in this text rests in the quiet revolutionary practice of this sick woman whose weak, disenfranchised body is the authentic voice of this text. Her body as voice, prayer, protest against sickness, an evangelistic model, and justification drags itself gracefully into the crowd (i.e., community) in search of healing. The text does not indicate that she intentionally or rudely bumps into the other people in the crowd or speaks; she simply “came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch’d” (Luke 8:44, KJV). She is bleeding, and she belongs to what the

activist Angela Davis identifies in her text *Blues Legacies* as “an outsider:”² “If a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean” (Lev. 15:19, 20). One must understand that she carries a psychological, physical, and spiritual weariness, weariness with social implications; it is unyielding because her bleeding is unyielding. Although she is weary, the woman moves through the crowd with a grief-stricken hopefulness that pushes her beyond the temporal reality of her physical condition. Ellen G. White suggests that this woman has a “soul hunger and living faith.”³ Her walk into the crowd to find the Jesus she heard would heal her is a performance of protest against the issue that has betrayed her body. As she moves to transcend her condition, I can imagine, like many Christians, she may have sung that hymn of healing:

“The Great Physician now is near,
The sympathizing Jesus;
He speaks the drooping heart to cheer,
Oh, hear the voice of Jesus!”⁴
This woman heard the voice of Jesus as He called her into healing

and thus was determined not to be enslaved by her physical condition. She was not willing to accept her physical condition and, in fact, intentionally attempts to be a member of her community. One must remember this: she goes out into the community, a community, including the disciples, that does not come looking for her. It is, indeed, important to note that the woman's community does not seem to notice, sense, or embrace her existence. The members of her community do not realize this: the unclean woman is pressing on them; therefore, like her, they are unclean. Sometimes

an encounter with [Jesus]. Although she thinks it will be a quick, unnoticed, one-way meeting, she soon learns that Jesus engages those who encounter him, especially one who draws power from him."⁶

This story suggests the participatory aspect of the healing experience: "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed" (Mark 5: 22). Therefore, she is found "swimming through the crowd . . . She touches people, bringing them in contact with blood. All are drawn into an unexpected orbit around the holy mystery of life because of her desperate desire to become ordinary

bus segregation was ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in December of 1956. Desperate, this woman was so desperate that her pain—the bleeding—became her purpose. Her purpose was to be healed. Her body is a symbol of justification; it is "revelatory"; the touch, not her speech, causes a biological alteration: "And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' " (Mark 5:30, NKJV). This woman seeks to birth a new text by merging her infirmed body with the cloak of Jesus

It is, indeed, important to note that the woman's community does not seem to notice, sense, or embrace her existence.

there are people in the Christian community who are like ghosts. They are not seen; yet, they are great examples of the evangelistic thirst and fearlessness a Christian community needs to embrace in order to be healed.

Lesson two: Participation in the healing act is important

The sick person must be a participant in his or her healing. Mark suggests the woman moves through a crowd that does not know she exists (Mark 5:25–28).

This woman is on the outside; she has, in the contemporary sense, been "othered." To be "othered" means to live, suggests American human rights activist Virginia Durr, "outside the magic circle."⁵ And yet, she is not willing to being on the outside as her identity. She "deliberately orchestrates

again."⁷ As an outsider, she lives in a state of paradoxical invisibility, an invisibility that ultimately empowers her to touch the clothes of Jesus. In the contemporary sense, what this means is Jesus' bodyguards—the disciples—do not know who is in their presence. She does not announce her infirmed body. She moves through the crowd because of what she has heard about Jesus. She has one objective—to touch Jesus so that she can be healed. She is desperate.

I was trying to understand and visualize what it means to be desperate. I thought about some Christian African American historical foreparents. It was 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. My historical foreparents were tired of bus segregation, so for 381 days they stretched their consciousness up toward the sky and gathered the strength to walk until

Christ. This woman had hope. Hope energized her to get out of her house, and go into the crowd because Jesus was in the crowd. That woman, my sister in Christ, went out into the crowd—weak. I kept asking myself, *What drove her?* My answer: She is trapped in a promise.

Lesson three: Illnesses and challenges can draw people to Christ

Sometimes illnesses, the challenges in a Christian's life, are the avenues by which we find healing. When the believer becomes trapped in a promise that God has imparted into the spirit, the believer is fueled with an expectation that provides strength to one who may be physically, psychologically, or spiritually weak. This woman was trapped in the promise of healing.


The consciousness of the Comforter, I imagine, the Holy Spirit, available to each and every believer, spoke to her; she heard, and listened. Although she lived in the *not yet* of being healed, God, in His grace and mercy, empowered this woman and her weak body to leave her house, to go out into the crowd to find Jesus. The result: the restoration of the woman's womb, her healing, and a pedagogical testimony for the contemporary believer on possible steps involved in finding healing.

Implication for contemporary society

The woman with the issue of blood was trapped in the promise of healing. She went to what many call "ground level" to receive the promise of healing. That is a lesson for the Christian believer about the healing

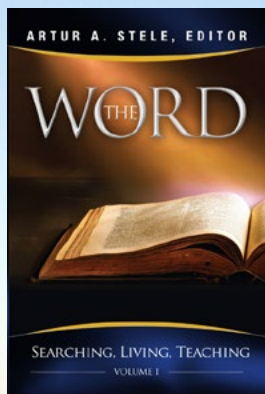
God offers each one of us. If, moreover, the woman with the issue of blood lived in contemporary society, I would say she is a woman who lived with a bold, authentic purpose. Although she journeyed out into the crowd so that she could see and touch Jesus, she was not concerned about the crowd. If she were, she would not have gone out because bona fide bleeding women knew they were "unclean" and should not be among people. She focused on the target of healing: Jesus.

A powerful message exists in this evangelistic performance act for the believer who reads this story, and that is this: a healing emerges when a sick person is psychologically healthy enough to recognize illness and becomes determined enough to crawl into the presence of God and touch the bottom of His garment. By going to the bottom, the woman with

the issue of blood was able to get up. She was healed. There is irony in this healing moment: it was not the touching that actually healed the woman. It was, says Jesus Christ, the touch of "faith that . . . made [her] whole" (Luke 8:48). 

- 1 Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1953).
- 2 Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 123.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 347.
- 4 William Hunter, "The Great Physician Now Is Near," Hymnal.net, accessed December 17, 2015, www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/990.
- 5 Virginia Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 1985).
- 6 Robin Gallaher Branch, "A Study of the Woman in the Crowd and Her Desperate Courage (Mark 5:21–43)," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47, no. 1 (2013): 3, dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v47i1.649.
- 7 Richard W. Swanson, "Moving Bodies and Translating Scripture: Interpretation and Incarnation," *Word & World* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 274.

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The three angels' messages and world religions

God sees the more than seven billion people on earth. They are not a sea of nameless faces to Him. He loves each individual better than we love our own children. Millions do not even know that God exists; there are hundreds of languages in which no prayers have ever been uttered in the name of Jesus. God will not let earth's history end this way. He promises that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).¹

The gospel that God wants to communicate has been summarized in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. This truth can be seen in His passionately global focus of their introduction. "I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6). Every *nation*, *tongue*, and *tribe* includes half a billion Buddhists, 1 billion Hindus, 14 million Jews, 1.6 billion Muslims, and many millions more in traditional and folk religions.²

Seventh-day Adventists have long considered the three angels' messages to be at the heart of their movement. Most think about these messages as primarily a call to the now 2.2 billion Christians, Protestants, and Catholics to return to forgotten truths in the

Bible. Revelation 14:6–12, however, clearly reveals that God's intended audience includes every person, in every ethnicity and religion. In response to God's love and with a desire to see Jesus return, we need to carefully consider what these truths mean to non-Christians and how we can best communicate them.

The message of the first angel of Revelation 14

The first angel's message says, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev. 14:7). This message connects closely to truths emphasized in the Jewish and the Muslim scriptures. God is portrayed in the Torah and the Quran as the Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. Dedicated Muslims emphasize the importance of worshiping the One True God and call people to fully surrender to the One who will judge the world. Committed Jews seek to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy because of their belief in Creation and the Ten Commandments. In our conversations with Jews and Muslims, we should emphasize these important similarities. We share a deep concern that the world, including many Christians, has turned to idolatry, evolution, and the worship of nature and self instead of the Creator God.

The first angel's message makes it clear that there is something worth fearing in the fact that God continues to judge the world. He knows everything, keeps track of everything, and will repay everything. Seventh-day Adventists teach that we are currently in the time of the final judgment. While no one needs to fear God's heart, each should fear His holiness enough to turn away from every sin.³

This emphasis on judgment connects to significant parts of the Buddhist and Hindu beliefs in karma. "Do good and receive good. Do bad and receive bad," is the most frequent phrase I have heard throughout my service in Asia. The majority believes there will be a judgment for what they have done, with consequences they will receive in this life, heaven, hell, and the next reincarnation.

Many from these Eastern religions are not attracted to Christianity because it appears significantly less moral than their own religion. They see many who do not take sin seriously yet claim God's forgiveness. The materialism, immorality, and violence of "Christian" countries affirm this negative perception. When Seventh-day Adventists value the various aspects of God's law and seek purity of mind, speech, and action, thoughtful Buddhists and Hindus look on them with respect and admiration.

“‘Fear God, give glory to Him, and worship Him,’” certainly does not match all the beliefs of the world religions. I have walked along the Ganges River in India and seen the devotion, giving of glory, and worship to many gods at various shrines. I have watched in Thailand how our call to depend on a personal God for salvation completely contrasted with the Buddhists’ reliance on their own actions and meditation. I know that many people worldwide will respect Jesus as prophet, miracle worker, or enlightened teacher; but they argue against Him as the eternal God and the only source of salvation.

The reality is that every Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian has a sinful, self-centered heart that is not naturally inclined to give glory only to God. Nevertheless, our duty and privilege include leading them to both the death of self and a relationship of honor with the Creator and Redeemer.

I have seen the excitement and joy of a Buddhist taxi driver as he learned for the first time about the Creator of the world, his true Father. I have watched the tears flow down the face of a child-trafficker as he realized there was forgiveness in Christ, even for him. The everlasting gospel is definitely for every nation, tribe, tongue, and people of every world religion!

However, how we share this everlasting gospel is crucial. Words must be full of love and backed by characters of integrity. There is a reason that this first angel’s message follows the description of the 144,000. They have their Father’s name on their forehead, totally devoted, following Jesus wherever He goes. The Bible describes God’s glory as His goodness, graciousness, and compassion shining out of the hearts of His people in whatever they eat, drink, or do.⁴

The Seventh-day Adventist end-time lifestyle is attractive to thinking people of world religions. Jews appreciate our Sabbath keeping. Muslims are happily surprised at our stance against alcohol and eating pork. Hindus value the healthfulness of vegetarianism,

along with the importance of nonviolence. Buddhists respect the emphasis to turn from materialism in our call to simplicity and generosity seen in our tithing practices and even in our removal of jewelry.

The true Christian who is able to forgive his or her enemy, be faithful to his or her spouse, stop drinking or smoking, and live consistently a life of unselfishness is an amazing sight to anyone of any world religion. Such a group will lead many to give glory to God for His power to change lives.

The message of the second angel of Revelation 14

The message of the second angel of Revelation 14 is a clear warning that something has fallen apart and cannot be trusted: “‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’” (Rev. 14:8). Why is this solemn message something that must be shared with not only Christians but also people of world religions? The angel who explained the mystery of Babylon made it clear when he said, “‘the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues’” (Rev. 17:15).

John carefully describes Babylon in that same chapter. Many Bible students throughout the centuries have identified Babylon as the corrupted Christian church, specifically Roman Catholicism. The wine is described as her intoxicating doctrines that have taken the focus off of the all-sufficient Jesus. These are beliefs such as the ability of priests to forgive sins, the necessity of specific ceremonies for salvation such as mass, the infallibility of the pope as a mouthpiece for God, and the helpfulness of prayers to dead saints.

Many also see the phrase “she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath” as a description of the long years of persecution when the Roman Catholic Church put to death millions of heretics.⁵

What does this have to do with the world religions? When we talk about the failures of Christianity in comparison to the beauty of Jesus, it opens the eyes of our Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim friends to the failures and inadequacy of all religions. They can easily see the mistakes of their own systems in this reflection. Many are troubled when they walk past ornately decorated religious buildings that rise high above filthy, disease-ridden slums. They are grieved by the sexual falls among their priests, monks, and other clergy. They recognize that their people’s own history is full of religious violence and hateful prejudice. And there is a growing disgust and hatred toward the mixing of religion and politics that results in intolerance and bloodshed. By talking about these things, we can help people differentiate between religion’s failures and Christ.

I have heard people say, “All religions are good. They all teach people to be good.” Religions have pointed out what is good and what is bad; people know they should not kill or steal, cheat on their spouses or lie. The problem is that they do it anyway. Religion and knowledge, in general, are not enough to clean the heart from selfishness, let alone atone for past sins. Babylon and all religions are *fallen* in their ability to save.

In the context of a loving friendship and with a view to something better, we can give our friends in the various world religions God’s call to “come out from among them and be separate” so He can be a Father to them (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

The message of the third angel of Revelation 14

The third angel’s message follows with an even more intense warning that is about the beast, his image, and his mark. Seventh-day Adventists have shown from Revelation 13 a clear connection between this final beast of prophecy and the United States of America (USA). The Bible predicted that a new country would rise in the late 1700s and start in a fairly

deserted place but grow to become a world superpower. At first it would be freedom-loving and peaceful like a lamb, but later it would speak like a dragon. According to the prediction, eventually America will swing from promoting freedom to enforcing a certain way of worship. The prophecy warns everyone to not be part of those “who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9–11, NASB).

How is this message relevant to our witness among people of the world religions? When I share this prophecy, people quickly recognize that the USA has risen to huge global influence in a short time. They see its impact around the world both politically and economically. Not only that, many see the detrimental effect of the multimillion dollar movies that have translated violence, immorality, and spiritualism into so many languages. The influence from movies, games, and music is instantly available through the Internet, leading people, especially the young people of almost every city, to look and sound amazingly similar as the world is swept into a culture of rebellion and careless living.

It is important to share this part of the third angel’s message because it warns about what will come and serves to disassociate the problems of present-day Christianity from the true Jesus and His genuine followers. The message ends with a focus on a people who have truly embraced the gospel. They “are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). This is the gospel, the message of righteousness by faith, in which God gives both forgiveness of sins and a new life filled with the commandment-keeping presence of Jesus.

I have seen understanding and respect shine in the eyes of Buddhist monks as I shared how the true gospel includes both mercy and the death of self, leading to purity and compassion. I have watched them convert under the influence of a godly, Christian family.

Steps for sharing the message

These three angels’ messages can be shared with friends of the various world religions in a variety of practical ways. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has devoted significant energy, thought, and money in the Adventist Mission Global Study Centers to learn more effective ways to share God’s love with Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, the postmodern and secular, and the multitudes in the cities. Much can be gained from the handbooks, models, and resources they have produced.⁶

Here I simply want to share four easy steps that I have found to be a blessing to people of any religion when I reach out.⁷

1. Listen. You do not have to be an expert on any world religion to share Christ. What matters is knowing what the person in front of you believes and needs. Be a good friend and listen well, and you will know the next steps to care and share God’s love.

2. Affirm similarities. Talk about the values you share in common. Help each other live out those qualities in real day-to-day life. Cook healthful food with a Hindu, serve the poor with a Buddhist, keep the Sabbath with a Jew, and pray with a Muslim. Do not rush to discuss your differences. Let them see their important values in you, your Bible, and your God.


3. Share differences through stories. It is much more fun to tell stories than it is to argue. Debates close hearts. Stories open and transform them. Share your own testimony; it is the most powerful tool you have. This means not only your conversion but various answers to prayer, especially changes in your character and home. Prayerfully watch for opportunities, and plant these joyful seeds often.

Bible stories and parables are also very useful. Jesus never taught without a story. You can easily say, “That reminds me of an ancient story that I really like . . .” God will use His Word to give them understanding.

4. Lead to an experience. Everybody must test and see for themselves whether they are going to believe. You do not need to wait until they are ready to give their hearts to Jesus to ask them for a decision. Little decisions are great steps. You might say, “May I pray for your troubled teenager?” I have never had anyone refuse my offer to pray. God delights in doing miracles to lead people to have faith in Him.

You could say, “Would you like to try memorizing this scripture that helped my relationship with my wife?” God’s Word is full of counsel in every important area of life. Invite them to try out little texts frequently.

You could even invite someone to join you in worship, “Would you like to experience a Sabbath with my family this weekend? We’ll spend the afternoon in nature. This has really helped us grow close together and has helped my stress level too.” They may not know who God is, but the love and the lessons they learn may soon lead them to the Creator.

These three angels’ messages truly best sum up God’s final message of love for everybody, of every religion. Revelation 14 ends with a vivid picture of what will happen when we choose to share these truths. One group will reject His love and become ripe in evil like wine grapes. The other group will respond and receive Christ’s righteousness, becoming ripe in His beauty like wheat for an eternal harvest to the glory and joy of God. 

1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version.

2 Pew Research Center, “The Global Religious Landscape,” December 18, 2012, www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/ (accessed December 22, 2015).

3 See Exodus 20:20; Matthew 10:28–31; Hebrews 10:26–31.

4 See Exodus 33:17; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

5 This is viewed in connection with a similar interpretation of Daniel 7 and 8’s little horn power.

6 To access these resources, visit www.adventistmission.org.

7 For further training in these steps and other cross-cultural mission concepts, visit www.reachtheworldnextdoor.com.

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Larry Yeagley is a retired pastor, chaplain, and author residing in Gentry, Arkansas, United States.



Energy depletion

I'm really looking for someone to take care of the minutiae of ministry." The senior pastor was serious as he handed me a predetermined list of an associate's duties. I saw it as a freeway to energy depletion. He made no room for creativity. Without the opportunity for creativity and innovation, my energy would soon be spent. Energy depletion can happen when a pastor's priorities are set by another. Unrealistic self-imposed goals can do the same.

Ministry loses meaning when a pastor is expected to operate lockstep with others. Try as one might, there are few returns for his or her efforts. Fatigue takes over. The very thought of embracing a prepackaged program kills motivation.

I soon learned to adapt such a program to prevent energy depletion. What follows are some of what I have learned.

Take a break

We know the cliché: *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*. I take the liberty to alter it. *All work and no play makes Jack a former pastor*. Depletion of energy and meaning can destroy marriages and families. When the pastor is on the go morning and night, negative consequences are inescapable.

I worked in psychiatric units for years. Psychiatrists asked me to meet with pastor-fathers who they determined contributed to depression in their children. I visited fathers who sacrificed children for the sake of church

work. I met with clergy wives who were sick and tired of being clergy widows. I met with missionaries' children who hated the church for robbing them of a relationship with their parent. All work and no play is, indeed, costly.

Learning to set boundaries is crucial. The pastor may receive criticism for taking time out for family. Courage to meet such criticism is a sign of strong leadership. The pastor wisely communicates his or her priorities early, even at the interview with a pastoral search committee.

My friend listened to a search committee listing all their expectations. As they rambled on and on, he drew something on a blank sheet of paper. When they finished, he held a Superman insignia on his chest. That may have been extreme, but the committee heard the message. Of course, he was not invited to be their pastor.

I was called to be the ministerial director of a large conference. I indicated that I would write my own job description because I would be ministering to pastors and their families. I was told that my duty would include several unrelated roles. I declined the invitation because depletion of energy was written all over their job description.

When a church asks a pastor to be their errand boy, time for sermon preparation vanishes. My role model, H. M. S. Richards Sr., spoke in 1957 at a lectureship named in his honor. He told his audience that preaching the gospel was the single most vital role of a pastor. He suggested that we religiously guard

the mornings for study and sermon preparation. He urged us to read, read, read, and preach from the overflow. When this is not practiced, preaching is nothing more than the depletion of energy and becomes an unrewarding task filled with guilt, guilt from robbing the collective time of a congregation.

Taking a break is the sign of an effective pastor. Make no apologies. The moving van employees loaded our belongings for the trip to our next church. They loaded a canoe, Ping-Pong table, bicycles, and assorted fun-related items. One man asked me when I had time to work. I let him know that time out helped me work more efficiently.

Health club memberships can be a good investment. Colleges and universities often provide pastors with access to their fitness centers. YMCA and YWCA facilities are open to pastors, and some of these places offer personal trainers. This is an excellent way to take a break.

Affirmation

I became the chaplain of Battle Creek Adventist Hospital, and every week the administrator stopped by my office. In glowing terms, he expressed appreciation for my work. He asked me to be a member of the administrative committee. He trusted me to advise him in professional and personal matters. Every day I came to work energized.

My interest in developing a community hospice was met with enthusiasm. He paid for my trip to the first American hospice and the first National Hospice Association conference. Developing a

hospice, in those early days, brought opposition. He stood shoulder to shoulder with me through the difficulties. He expressed gratitude for my work in the presence of my colleagues. Working every day energized me.

On the negative side, I recall moving to a new state and church. During the seven-year tenure, only one person from the headquarters visited me. I received one phone call, a request to assume responsibility for a second congregation. One congregation built

affirmation. When needed, a person was given a few days off *with pay*.

One pastor told me he sometimes has several funerals in a week. With no affirmation and time to grieve, he can suffer from energy depletion. This is where planned support for clergy from headquarters plays a crucial role.

My farmer-neighbor works his land with horses. I watched him preparing the soil for planting wheat. Four large horses were pulling the harrow while four fresh horses were resting under a

terminally ill people and their grieving families. I can take no credit; I was simply a living reminder of Jesus.

A young pastor came to my office at the hospital. He dared not share his predicament with the leader of his church conference, and he was planning to leave the ministry. He did not know his children well; his marriage was beginning to wobble. He was not feeling well physically. Instead of managing his time, he was burning the candle at both ends.

Learning to set boundaries is crucial. The pastor may receive criticism for taking time out for family. Courage to meet such criticism is a sign of strong leadership.

a new church, but nobody from headquarters came to see it.

The difficulties of my work wore on my spirit; I felt alone. Without the strength of the Lord I would have been unable to minister to the church members. I had little support to energize me.

Some would think that expecting affirmation is selfishness. I know only that affirmation has made it possible for me to enter into the pain of others. I have been able to stand by the side of others because someone has stood by my side. The apostle Paul talked about comforting others with the comfort we have received from God (2 Cor. 1:4). Keep yourself open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit asking you to give appreciation to others around you.

My 30 years working in hospices taught me the necessity of affirmation. When staff members become attached to a patient, they grieve when a death happens. Without sufficient affirmation, they leave hospice employment. We prevented this by having regular support meetings for staff. We sat in a circle while each person received comfort and

shade tree. Periodically the horses pulling the harrow were spelled with the rested horses. The farmer's son patted the weary horses and rubbed them. If eight horses needed some tender loving care, why not pastors?

Self-inflicted depletion of energy

Be careful of self-inflicted exhaustion. When I began my hospital ministry, I ran from one patient to another. I desperately desired to bring healing to the mental sufferers. After a few weeks my energy was seriously dwindling; I had to do something. I stood in the parking lot, looked at the hospital, and told God *I'm going home now. I am trusting You to take care of all my ill patients*. I learned that God was by their side long before I met them; I simply fell in step with what God had already begun. I learned that I was not in charge; it took me months to apply that realization, but it was worth the struggle.

As a result of avoiding self-inflicted energy loss, I was able to spend more than three decades ministering to

Together we totaled his work hours. Each hour was of his own choosing. I pushed him to painfully reduce his time to no more than 50 hours a week. While it was a difficult exercise, it was freeing. He returned months later to tell me he was enjoying his work.¹

I hear much talk about pressure from leaders. A pastor has the option of caving in to that pressure or constructing a reasonable schedule. Cave in and dislike your work, or set your own priorities and have a long and enjoyable ministry.

The example of Jesus

Reading the synoptic gospels could give one the idea that Jesus was a candidate for burnout. Remember, His activities over a three-year period were condensed into a relatively small compendium. His life was not *all work and no play*.

Jesus took His disciples away from the crowds for energy renewal; He cherished time alone, probably early in the morning. Pastors must make time for personal reflection and relaxation. Your method will be unique.

Our home was in the country surrounded by farms. I filled my pockets with unshelled peanuts. As I leisurely tramped the dirt roads, I shelled and ate peanuts. Red-winged blackbirds swooped down at my head to protect their nests. I fed fresh grass to my neighbor's Clydesdale horses and stroked their heads as they reached over the fence. When snow covered the surrounding fields, I cross-country skied. Occasionally pheasants and quail took flight in front of me. I had no guilt, for I was following Jesus' example.

Working alone

There may be no solution to working alone. Working two by two would be ideal, but church administrators consistently told me finances would not permit. I needed a sounding board; I needed peer advice and friendship. Rather than attempting to change a system set in cement, I found ways to receive encouragement.

Ministerial alliances are priceless resources. Pastors of many denominations work alone. They cherish the chance to fellowship with other pastors. Planning community service and joint worship provides a time to get acquainted. I found many opportunities to work together.

A Catholic priest taught at a Catholic nursing school. He was not very comfortable teaching the death and dying segment of a class. For several years I taught that unit. A Church of Christ pastor teamed with me to conduct a bereavement support group in his church and in the city 50 miles away. A Methodist pastor referred grieving parishioners to me for grief counseling. We were brothers and sisters in Christ.

The work of counseling

Pastors can easily be swamped by counseling.² Church members trust pastors to keep confidence, but they also like the no-fee arrangement in most churches. If a pastor cannot say No, she or he can find their energy depleted.

A pastor should be knowledgeable about mental health problems,

but very few are equipped to move a parishioner quickly to solution. Guiding an individual in spiritual development is understandable, but any other type of counseling can detract from the main role of a pastor. A wide referral base and being acquainted with the professionals on that list can go a long way toward preventing depletion of energy.

The art of delegation

A wise parishioner called me Mr. Do It All. She was being helpful. She was right. At that point in time I thought I had to be in charge of everything. Success hinged on my direction. What a mistake!

There were professional people in that church who had leadership skills that surpassed mine. They needed to be involved in their church. Easier said than done. Some members did not trust their fellow members to lead. They mistakenly believed nothing was done well unless the pastor was in charge, and changing this mind-set must be done slowly and with pastoral communication. I learned this the hard way.

In order for me to study the Bible with a couple on Tuesday evening, I asked the head elder to chair the Tuesday evening board meeting. The head deacon disrupted the meeting and openly questioned the elder's right to lead. I was picking up the pieces for months.

Ideally, what Eugene Peterson called "running the church" is the responsibility of the church members.³ This releases the pastor to care for the spiritual needs of the members, an important part of energy stewardship.

An evaluation

Conference administrators, eager to bring success to their territory, become experts at program development. Seldom do they bring pastors into their counsel. Not all programs are suitable for a given church, but the pastor is expected to implement the program.

Both local church and conference programs sometimes are financed for

years without evaluating their effectiveness in accomplishing the overall mission of the church. The pastors must decide whether the program is suitable for their congregations. Trying to implement an ineffective program is a factor in energy depletion.

Pastors should communicate with administrators regarding any program developed without their input. At the same time, they must discuss their plans that are designed to meet the local situations.

When a pastor's office was moved from the old building to the new one, we made a sad discovery. Buried in a back cupboard were a dozen program guide books still in shrink wrap. The pastors had quietly ignored the programs instead of communicating with the program developers. With communication, any program can be adapted to a given area.

Conclusion

Energy depletion, sometimes called burnout, should not be dismissed by either pastors or administrators. I know this from my own experience; I am sure many others do as well. Prevention advances the mission of the church, and this ensures the health of pastor and family. Prevention may necessitate discontinuing a few long-held practices. The world will not end if a pastor, in danger of burnout, makes the necessary adjustments and is supported by both the leadership and the church. Prevention definitely requires becoming serious about the mental health of pastors. Pastors need to take a stand. A burned-out, worn-out, energy-depleted preacher is of use to no one. ❑

- 1 In my book, *Touched by Fire: Igniting a Passion for Ministry to Others* (Ringgold, GA: TEACH Services, Inc., Pub., 2012), I emphasize the importance of a pastor's setting his or her own agenda. If a pastor does not set priorities, they will be set by another.
- 2 For more information on the role of pastor as counselor, see Curtis J. VanderWaal, Andrea Opei, and Edwin I. Hernandez, "Pastors as Gatekeepers: Congregational Encounters With Mental Health and Substance Abuse Issues," *Ministry*, April 2015, 10–13.
- 3 Eugene H. Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 217.

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The Open Door: Inspiring and Miraculous Stories From Youth Evangelists

compiled by Kamil Metz, Silver Spring, MD: Publishing Ministries Department of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2014.

Every member a missionary!” has been a personal motto of my ministry. However, turning that motto into a reality can be challenging. Many members are mildly anxious or even terrified by the thought of outreach and door-to-door witnessing. That is why the book by Kamil Metz, *The Open Door*, is worth reading and sharing with your members. This book contains a collection of inspiring, real-life experiences from student literature evangelists. Each vignette is short, with vivid details and spiritual applications woven into them in a way that does not feel preachy or judgmental. Just a few chapters will convince you that God is at work and faith-sharing opportunities

as a teenager but did not know how to reconnect with her faith. She asked God to send her an Adventist and was surprised when one knocked on her door.

There are also several intriguing angel stories, such as when Cauvin

providence. It seems that Metz follows a “less is more” approach, and you certainly do not feel that he is attempting to add to the drama by fictionalizing details. Where possible, he uses the actual names of student evangelists and the people they met. The layout is also simple. The stories are arranged thematically into ten sections, such as “The Great Controversy” and “God’s Timing,” but each story stands on its own. The stories are told in a simple, down-to-earth fashion that can be enjoyed by old and young alike.

I chose to read the book as part of our family worship. Not only do our children love hearing the stories, it has helped increase their desire to fulfill the



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can be found behind many doors in your neighborhood.

There is the story of Sophia, who wanted to take her life and told God, “If You are really real and want to know me, You will send someone to me or my life ends tomorrow.” The next day, a colporteur knocked on her door and shared just the book Sophia needed. And there is Pat, who had once attended an Adventist church

Moreau was offered water at a door. Although he was alone, the couple in the home returned with two water bottles. “Here’s one for you, and here’s one for your big friend.” When Cauvin went to the next house, a large man once again handed him two water bottles, including one for his “big friend.”

The book does not try to explain the miraculous experiences or signs of

Great Commission. At the end of one reading, my youngest stated emphatically, “Daddy, I want to be a missionary some day!” Now, if only our members could catch that same vision—perhaps this book will help them do just that.

—Reviewed by Alan Parker, DTh, professor of religion and director of the Pierson Institute of Evangelism and World Missions, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States.

► Newbold Students Distribute Aid at French Refugee Camp

Bracknell, United Kingdom—A group of ten people traveled from Newbold College to volunteer at the migrant refugee camp in Dunkirk, France, on Sunday, November 29, 2015.

“We are reminded daily in the news and via social media of the awful plight of the migrant refugees fleeing their homes to seek safety,” stated Pastor **Alastair Agbaje**, Newbold chaplain. “Our purpose was to reach out in a practical way to a group of people who are in desperate need of food, clothes, and other aid.”

The team, which included seven students, distributed goods that had been donated for the trip, including sleeping bags, clothing, towels, blankets, toiletries, and food, to some of the approximately 2,000 migrants currently living in the camp at Dunkirk.

“The camp is almost literally on our doorstep, just a two-hour ferry ride away, and this was a big motivation in terms of our decision to help out,” said Pastor Agbaje.

“The moment I heard Newbold was looking into working with ADRA France to give aid to one of the refugee camps, I practically begged to go,” said **Sharon Louise**, Newbold student chaplain, and one of the student volunteers who participated in the trip. “Something about the thought of all those people walking for days, weeks, or even months to find safety had been haunting me. The



Photo credit: Sharon Louise

reality of the camp was worse than can be put into words.”

The camp at Dunkirk was established with just 60 migrants, and the numbers are now near 2,000. “I was encouraged by the number of donations we received for this trip,” said Agbaje. “When my next-door neighbor heard I would be traveling to the camp, he donated £200 of goods, including sleeping bags, waterproof clothing, and fruit, and has pledged further

support for our next planned trip. This highlighted to me that community want to get involved.”

To contribute financially to the migrant crisis, visit adra.org.uk/projects/emergencies. To donate goods or get involved with Newbold’s next trip to the camp in 2016, contact Pastor Agbaje at aagbaje@newbold.ac.uk. This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it. [tedNEWS]

► Seventh-day Adventists reaffirm commitment to preserving the environment.

Encourage all members to be good stewards

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—As world leaders gathered in Paris for the 21st United Nations Climate

Change Conference November/December 2015, the Seventh-day Adventist Church supported and applauded the efforts of these leaders to come to an agreement to stem the deterioration of our earth due to climate change.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has long supported responsible stewardship of all God has created and reinforces its belief that we all need to be responsible for the resources He has given us. As early as 1995 the



Photo credit: iStock, 2015

church issued an official statement on the environment. The statement reads as follows:

“Seventh-day Adventists believe that humankind was created in the image of God, thus representing God as His stewards, to rule the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way.

“Unfortunately, corruption and exploitation have been brought into the management of the human domain of responsibility. Increasingly, men and women have been involved in a megalomaniacal destruction of the earth’s resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental disarray, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue, it is clear from the accumulated evidence that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the depletion of the protective mantle of ozone, the massive destruction of the American forests, and the so-called greenhouse effect, are all threatening the earth’s eco-system.

“These problems are largely due to human selfishness and the egocentric pursuit of getting more and more

through ever-increasing production, unlimited consumption, and depletion of nonrenewable resources. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind’s greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship within the divine boundaries of creation.

“Seventh-day Adventists advocate a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism, goods-getting, and production of waste. We call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world’s resources, reevaluation of one’s needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.”

We support the efforts of world leaders and all humankind to protect and respect that which has been created by God and entrusted to us. [ANN Staff]

Welcome to the Family

By Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

Welcome to the Family will help you integrate newly-baptized members into the local congregation. It involves inviting the entire church to attend one program per week over a period of six weeks.

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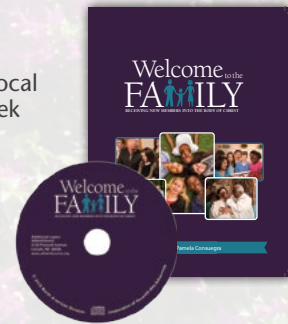
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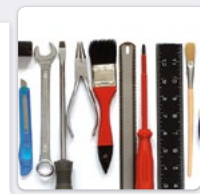
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S. Joseph Kidder, DMin, serves as professor of Christian ministry, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Using social media for evangelism

All major organizations now use social media for customer service, brand awareness, marketing, sales, research, and more. The level of influence and engagement that an organization can have through social media is infinite. Therefore, your own church's social media platform needs to be timely and relevant. There are many of these kinds of media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Each of these sites has several opportunities for witnessing and evangelism.

What is social media?

Social media creates highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.

Consider social media not only as a two-way engagement but as something that can include millions of people. You can easily have one video on YouTube and soon have over one million people commenting on that video. Most people in the world can upload a video.

Why is this important?

- If Facebook were a country, it would be the third -largest country in the world. There are more than 500 million users on Facebook.
- YouTube is the second-largest search engine in the world. More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month.

The mission of Christ is to evangelize the world. An effective way to do this is through social media when you do it professionally and with a loving heart.

Tips to get you started

You cannot do all the things suggested below. Choose what works best for you.

1. Create a social media committee. There should be representatives from each church group: youth, parents, worship, among others.
2. Find out whether there are any active bloggers/tweeters/Facebookers already in the church. They will be your best resource.
3. Define your goals. Is it to increase the numbers in the youth group, increase Sabbath attendance, start a small group ministry, promote an event, or attract more seekers to the church? Then build your social media accordingly.
4. Create a Web site. Your Web site could be focused on healthy living, prayer, or evangelism. If you have no Website building skills, there are various Web sites that you can use to help you build one, or they will do it for you. Weebly.com is a good free resource.

Take the time to update the church calendar online with links to events (such as Vacation Bible School, special concerts, community outreach) and the weekly bulletin. Have something that will grab the attention of both seekers and non-seekers, such as local interest items that are relevant to your church and the community. Just listing the worship times and directions to the church is not enough. People want to be part of an active church. Be sure to stay away from using denominational jargon. Always be up-to-date and learn from what others are doing.
5. Create a Facebook fan page—the perfect place to evangelize. Post pictures of all kinds of activities your church has become engaged in.
6. Create a church blog. I have seen blogs with full Bible studies series including stories and applications. Others have posted thoughts

addressing some of today's issues. Keep it simple and fun, and engage the whole church, if possible. That way the load does not fall on only a few people. WordPress is a resource for creating free blogs.

Link the church's Web site to the blog so that people who are interested in what they are reading can easily find out how to contact you and your church.

7. Create a Twitter account. Many youth leaders told me that Twitter is the best way to communicate with the youth and young adults. It also can direct traffic to your blog and Web sites.
8. Create Flickr and Instagram accounts. This allows everyone to upload pictures and video of church-related activities. It will show the true life of the church. Anyone can take pictures/videos to be uploaded onto Flickr and Instagram.
9. Create a YouTube channel. Record the sermons and then upload them. An interesting way of using the channel is to ask members for testimonies. Many will be inspired by how God is acting in the everyday lives of church members.
10. Start live-streaming. You can begin a radio station on the air or the Internet. It is very effective with minimal costs. I was preaching in a church with about 200 people in attendance and was told that there were another 400 computers streaming the event. Get some computer savvy people and start expanding your ministry.

Social media is all about relationships, community, and content. The church has a great opportunity to tell others that "God is near; in Christ there is salvation, hope, and new life."

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Origins Exhibit

Our museum-quality exhibit offers an understanding of origins from a creationist worldview. Consider the intricacy of the cell, the relationship between the Geologic Column and biblical flood, and the significance of beauty in nature. For more information, visit southern.edu/faithandscience.

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Origins Curriculum Materials

The Origins Institute at Southern has created videos, articles, and PowerPoint files that cover the scientific process, geologic column, biology, and origins 101. These learning aids are available free online for educators and laypeople alike. For more information, visit southern.edu/originsresources.

JOIN US IN ISRAEL

Archaeology Dig, Summer 2016

Join School of Religion professors Michael Hasel, PhD, and Martin Klingbeil, DLitt, for an archaeology dig and sightseeing June 15 through July 24. The \$5,985 package includes airfare, lodging, breakfasts and dinner, transportation, entrance fees, and 6 hours of tuition credit. Registration deadline is March 15. For more information, visit southern.edu/lachish.

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