Bullets whizzed around him, comrades fell wounded on every side, and the rookie soldier panicked and ran toward the rear. As he continued to hurry away from the din of battle, he met an officer who demanded where he was going. The soldier honestly confessed his fears. The officer told him that he had no choice: He must either go back and join in the fight or be charged with desertion and face a firing squad.

"All right, Captain," the soldier said, "I'll go back."

"Wait a minute," the officer said; "I'm not a captain, I'm a general."

"I'm sorry, General," the soldier said. "I didn't know I was that far back."

No doubt many a GI [literally, government issue: American soldier] has wondered why those farthest up the chain of command are the least likely to be up front, leading others into battle. Aren't leaders supposed to lead?

I have taken this illustration verbatim from author Lee Roy Holmes. It goes a long way toward pinpointing the central issue of leadership. My dictionary defines leadership as (1) the office or position of a leader, (2) capacity to lead, and (3) the act or an instance of leading. Elements of all three of these aspects of leadership enter into the makeup of Christian leaders as well as Christian leadership. This issue seeks to explore these twin themes in depth.

We have assembled quite a lineup of contributors this time around. We think you will be delighted with the fresh perspectives that five new authors bring to our discussion. Most of these are representatives of that rather fuzzy classification known as "young people." But don't be alarmed; they know very well what they are talking about. Joining this group of writers is a cadre of five veteran contributors. We are confident that you will appreciate the overall balance of perspective thus achieved.

Let's get straight to the business of highlighting our outstanding lineup, shall we? Samuel Koranteng-Pipim leads off by tackling some tough questions, from which we here extract: "What is the nature of church leadership? Who exercises spiritual leadership in the church? What constitutes the extent and limitation of church leaders' authority? Is leadership qualification gender-neutral? Where do we find a model for church leadership? And what should we do when there are no available or qualified leaders in the church?" He asks whether we are "honestly mistaken" about answers to these questions.

No stranger to this publication, already quoted contributor Lee Roy Holmes next addresses the matter of the influence of popular culture on leadership style. Permit me to borrow one provocative paragraph from the essay we selected: "We have little similarity to our counterparts of yesteryear. Bold preaching against the corrupting influences of the popular culture is seldom heard. We have traded the certain sound of the trumpet for the wavering notes of the Hawaiian guitar. We are paralyzed for fear of being
accused of judging or offending—virtually the only sins our culture condemns."

Next up is a thought-provoking article by Randy Skeete, a study on the power and example of leaders. After listing the attributes of any leader, secular or religious, Skeete reminds us that "a leader of God’s people is one who does the work of a shepherd in the mold of the Chief Shepherd Himself—Jesus Christ."

Another former contributor is Dick O’Ffill, himself a veteran leader in the SDA Church. Let this thought pull you into his no-nonsense account: "How we describe ourselves as leaders reveals the leader we think we are. To think of ourselves as simply leaders is not enough. It is essential that when we talk among ourselves on the subject of leadership we qualify it by adding the words Seventh-day Adventist."

Brian Neumann is a young man who not too long ago abandoned the spiritually bankrupt world of rock/pop music, trading it for an active Christian lifestyle. His own experience lends a great deal of credibility to his warning that "we are not to look at the world around us (Babylon, a fallen neo-pagan, secularized society that has found its way into many denominations that once claimed the 'Bible and the Bible alone' as their standard of faith), and ask, 'How do they do worship? We would like to do it the same way.'" You won’t want to miss his treatment of the controversial topic of leadership and worship.

Over the years contributor Laurel Damsteegt and your humble editor have shared the mutual friendship of Brother Harry Okonski. Mr. Okonski, now a member in Laurel’s church, often asks her when she will write a book on women. He says to her that "when you write it, be sure to say that women can do lots of good things for God. Tell them about Deborah and Hulda and all the women in the Bible that worked mightily for God. Women can do a lot of good for the church, you know." Our readers won’t be disappointed in what Laurel has put down—not in book form yet, but as carefully thought-out musings on women in leadership.

Ready for a fresh perspective by involved youth? Then you won’t want to miss Andrea Oliver’s coverage of how to cultivate young thinkers and doers—not for the far-off future, but for the here and now. Author Oliver poses this question: “What is the key for preparing the young people to fill the role God has created for them?” Her answer on youth and leadership may surprise you.

Do these words sound familiar? "If the cords are drawn much tighter, if the rules are made much finer, if men continue to bind their fellow laborers closer and closer to the commandments of men, many will be stirred by the Spirit of God to break every shackle, and assert their liberty in Christ Jesus. . . . And no human being shall be permitted to prescribe my liberty or entrench upon the perfect freedom of my brethren, without hearing my voice lifted in protest against it." Find out who penned this statement, and why a leader in the self-supporting work, first-time contributor Eugene Prewitt, feels that history is in danger of repeating itself over this issue.

Another new contributor, Justin Kim, weighs in with an “insider’s” look at what works and doesn’t work regarding methods of involving our church’s youth in its work and mission. Of particular interest is his personal testimony as to the true influence of popular youth ministry models upon youth. A young person himself, Pastor Kim’s conclusions may surprise you.

Our issue closes with a stirring personal testimony by the young wife of an English SDA minister. Let Deniza Hush touch your heartstrings and your mind with the story of her complete turnabout in the way she perceived her leadership roles as a ministering woman, wife, mother, and homemaker.

We hope (and pray) that your ideas of what comprises true leadership will be challenged as you read through this entire issue. As always, we wish most of all to AFFIRM the great truths entrusted to the remnant church, and to do so responsibly. We are living in solemn times, and who knoweth whether we are come to center stage of the human drama for just such a time as this? (See Esther 4:14.)
Leadership in the Church:
Are We Honestly Mistaken?

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD

Director, Public Campus Ministries, Michigan Conference
Author, Must We Be Silent? and Editor, Here We Stand

The new buzzword in church circles today is leadership. And the thrust seems to be towards “inclusiveness, balance, and diversity” in spiritual leadership at every level of church administration, from local congregations to the General Conference.

This emphasis on leadership could be a legitimate response to the increasing complexity and challenges facing our growing church. But it could also be a reaction against leadership abuse and incompetence at the different levels of church administration.

In the ongoing discussion, a few seem to be questioning the legitimacy of an exclusive spiritual leadership by elders or pastors of the church. However, for a majority the real issue is “diversity in leadership.” It appears that almost everyone or every interest group wants a piece of the church’s leadership pie. Not surprisingly, there are calls for “bold and creative” leadership in the church.

For example, believing that “giftedness” in performing certain functions automatically qualifies a person as a spiritual leader, some churches are now electing or promoting “praise and worship” leaders, “puppet, clown, and drama” leaders, and other types of “ministry” leaders, and elevating these “gifted” individuals to the level of spiritual leaders of the church.

In the same vein, some churches are also electing youth as “junior elders.” Advocates argue that since young people have many wonderful talents and abilities to be harnessed by the church, appointing them as “junior elders” is the best way to mentor spiritual leaders for tomorrow’s church.

Others, borrowing from the leadership models in today’s megachurches, have embraced certain notions of “anointed and visionary” leadership. In some cases, pastors with dictatorial tendencies have made themselves the sole leaders and CEOs of their local congregations or administrative levels, and are unilaterally or arbitrarily imposing their wills and agendas on the constituencies of the church units to which they have been appointed. Pastors who are more benevolent have practically marginalized the church-appointed board of elders and have replaced it with their own handpicked “leadership facilitators” and “leadership committees,” making these new “leadership teams” the spiritual leaders of the church.

Leadership is also the new banner under which feminist interest groups are now campaigning subtly for their agenda. In the name of “inclusiveness and gender sensitivity or gender diversity” there is a renewed push for “women in leadership”—by which they mean “women elders,” “women pastors,” and “women clergy.” Carefully crafted “women in leadership” seminars, conferences, certification programs, and study materials are being widely promoted to “empower” and “advance” women as “partners in leadership.”

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What many people may not be aware of is that the philosophical fuel driving much of the push for “inclusiveness, balance, and diversity” in spiritual leadership is provided by a widespread ideology called egalitarianism. Radical egalitarianism (or equalitarianism) holds that all human beings are equal, and therefore they ought to be made to be exactly the same in a whole host of spheres. Consequently, they feel that there is no such thing as God-ordained differences. All "roles" are merely stereotypes and must be abolished.

When egalitarian philosophy is applied to discussions on Biblical leadership, advocates claim that anyone should be allowed to serve as a spiritual leader in the church, even if there seem to be Biblical restrictions against such a move. For those who do not know what the Bible actually teaches, when the egalitarian ideology is married to certain interpretations of the Biblical concepts of "equality" and "the priesthood of all believers," the push for “inclusive leadership” can be very seductive.

This article is a Biblical investigation of some key issues in current discussions about leadership. It will address the following specific questions: What is the nature of church leadership? Who exercises spiritual leadership in the church? What constitutes the extent and limitation of church leaders’ authority? Is leadership qualification gender-neutral? Where do we find a model for church leadership? And what should we do when there are no available or qualified leaders in the church?

**Spiritual Leadership**

Church leaders are not CEOs of some business corporations. They are not politicians, comedians, clowns, military dictators, or some new “kids on the church block” seeking to display their wonderful talents or giftedness. This is because church leadership is *spiritual* leadership. It is *pastoral* leadership.

The apostle Peter captures the spiritual work of church leaders by the pregnant phrase “shepherding [pastoring] the flock of God.” He writes: “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples of the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3, emphasis mine).

All the three root words that are used interchangeably in the New Testament for the work of church leaders are found in the above passage: "elders" (*presbuteros*), "overseers" (*episkopos*), and "pastors”/”shepherds” (*poimanos*). Though the emphasis of each word is different, the apostle Peter sees the work of church leaders as being essentially pastoral or “shepherding” God’s flock.

A church leader is to be like the good shepherd described in Psalm 23 and John 10: He wisely leads his flock and provides for all their needs—food and water (when the flock is hungry and thirsty), protection from predators and other harm (when they are in danger), comfort and healing (when they are hurt or wounded), and nurture and discipline (so they will grow healthily and reproduce).

In the same way, elders or pastors are to feed God’s flock (through the sound teaching and preaching of God’s Word). They must protect the flock from predators who seek their harm (i.e., they must protect the church from false teachers and false teachings). Church leaders must comfort those who are hurting and gently use their staff to bring into the fold the sheep that have strayed (church discipline). They must ensure the growth and health of God’s flock (through evangelism and mission). Finally, they must be positive role models or “examples of the flock” (through a life of humility, sacrifice, and selflessness).

The pastoral leadership to which church leaders have been called is best exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the church’s true Head. The apostle Peter rightly describes Him as “the Shepherd [*poimanos*] and Bishop [*episkopos*] of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

**General and Particular Leadership**

We must distinguish between two kinds of leadership exercised by members of the church. We shall refer to these as (a) general leadership and (b) particular/specific leadership.
General Leadership. Here, God calls upon every Christian—pastor and layperson, male and female, old and young—to employ their gifts, talents, and influence to lead others into the Kingdom of God. God equips every member with certain spiritual gifts, enabling them to build up or edify other believers so they can perform the soul-saving mission of the church. The gifts include leadership, administration, nurturing/pastoring, teaching, preaching/evangelism, healing, etc. (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). Within the guidelines set forth in Scripture, every Christian may exercise these gifts wherever they are—at home, at work, in the community, or in the church.

General leadership is about the twofold responsibility entrusted to every Christian to employ their spiritual gifts, talents, and influence to enable other people to worship God aright and to share the Good News of the kingdom. Understood in this sense, every Christian is a leader and has been called to exercise leadership responsibilities.

It is in this context of general leadership that we can legitimately speak about “giftedness, diversity, and inclusiveness” in leadership. When God’s work needs to be done in the church, everyone (especially those who have the know-how, gifts, and abilities) must rise up and lead out.

Everyone should perform those leadership responsibilities, even though they may not hold positions as elders or pastors.

Particular/Specific Leadership. This pertains to God’s call upon specific individuals to exercise a particular leadership function in the church, namely the role of elders or pastors. The extent of the leadership authority of the elders/pastors is indicated by the names and designations given them in Scripture.

Sometimes, they are referred to as presbuteroi (elders or presbyters). This Greek designation is the word used by the Jews for civil magistrates or judges. Understood in this sense, the elder or pastor can be seen as a church magistrate who has the ability to govern. Another word used for the elder or pastor is episkopoi (bishops or overseers). This word was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for a civil or military ruler. Thus, the term also suggests a governing authority. Other designations for the elder or pastor are hegoumenoi (rulers; see Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24), and poimenes or shepherds (see Ephesians 4:11)—terms that suggest leadership or oversight functions.

Relationship Between the Two. The distinction between particular leadership exercised by elders/pastors and general leadership exercised by all believers is indicated by various instructions in the New Testament that charge the elders/pastors to not only “teach,” “beseech,” and “exhort,” but also to “reprove” (elenchein) and “rebuke” (epitimaein). Such authority suggests that the elder/pastor is not just to offer advice or opinions that could be accepted or rejected according as the members shall “feel.” They are to exercise a unique teaching authority (1 Timothy 3:2; cf. 2:12).

This last point is further emphasized by instructions given church members regarding their attitude to leaders of the church. Members are to “obey (peisthesthe) them that rule over you,” “submit (hupeikete) yourselves, for they watch over your souls as they that must give account,” and “submit (hupotassesthe) yourselves to such.”

The words used in all these instances strongly suggest that indeed, the office of elder/pastor is invested with a special leadership authority, unlike any other office in the church. Indeed, the Scriptures teach that being models of the Christian faith, elders/pastors are to be esteemed “very highly” and are to be “counted worthy of double honor” (1 Thessalonians 5:13; 1 Timothy 5:17).

Illustration: The Priesthood of All Believers. An insightful illustration of the distinction between general leadership (exercised by every believer) and particular/specific leadership (exercised by elders/pastors) is found in the Biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers. This teaching states that Christians are part of a priesthood because every believer has direct access to God through Christ without any need for other intermediaries (cf. Hebrews 10:19-22).

The New Testament doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Peter 2:5, 9-12) also recognizes that the church is a worshipping community (a priestly people called to offer “spiritual sacrifices” of praise and prayer) and also a witnessing community (a missionary people called to declare the “praises of Him
Who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light"). Consequently, every church member—whether new or old convert, man or woman, clergy or laity—has been called to a general leadership in the life and soulwinning ministry of the church.

But it should be carefully noted that it does not follow from the Biblical teaching of “the priesthood of all believers” that every church member may perform an identical function in the church. This point is made clear in both the New and the Old Testaments (1 Peter 2:5, 9-12; cf. Exodus 19:5, 6). For example, the New Testament itself establishes what the qualities of an elder or pastor should be (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). As we shall later show, some of these criteria seem to rule out certain persons (such as new converts and women), despite the fact that their godly character and “giftedness” qualifies them as general leaders.

Similarly, in the Old Testament, there was a “priesthood of all believers.” God declared to the people of Israel, “Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Yet, no women served as priests in the Old Testament. Not even all males served as priests, but only those from the tribe of Levi. And whereas all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests. Only the family of Aaron and his male descendants were assigned this responsibility.

A clear example of the relationship between these two kinds of leadership—general and particular—is Nehemiah and Ezra, respectively. Though Nehemiah was a new arrival in Jerusalem, and though he possessed and exercised his “giftedness” as an effective general leader in building the city of Jerusalem, he understood that he was not priest. Hence, he deferred to Ezra in matters pertaining to the particular spiritual functions of priests (see Nehemiah 8, 9; cf. 6:10-14).

In the same way, whereas all Christians (regardless of gender or the time of their conversion) have been called to general leadership, not all of them may be called to the particular leadership roles of elder or pastor. In other words, the fact that every church member possesses general leadership skills that should be exercised in the life and soulwinning ministry of the church does not overthrow the Biblical teaching for the necessity of elders/pastors. The priesthood of all believers does not suggest that every church member is qualified to be an elder/pastor.

Leadership in the Church

While in a general sense every Christian is a leader, in the Bible spiritual leadership of the church is specifically entrusted to a team comprising elders/pastors. The church was not run by a single elder or pastor (whether benevolent or autocratic) or by some so-called “leadership facilitators,” “leadership committees,” or some other form of “ministry leaders.” The New Testament consistently teaches that a plurality or board of elders was responsible for the spiritual leadership of the churches.

Elders and Pastors: No Distinction. Notice that even though today we make a distinction between elders and pastors (overseers), in the Bible the two terms are essentially the same office of church leadership (see note below).

The Greek terms for elder/presbyter (presbuteros) and overseer/bishop (episkopos) are used interchangeably in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3). The same qualifications are required for both of these offices (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). And both perform the same work of shepherding the flock (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). Thus we may conclude that “if presbyters [elders] and bishops [overseers] are known by the same names—if they are required to possess the same qualifications, and if they do actually discharge the same duties, then what higher evidence can we expect or desire of their equality and identity?”

Perhaps I should mention, parenthetically, that since the Bible makes no distinction between elder and pastor, the arbitrary and politically motivated decision in our church to let women serve as elders but not as pastors is not a Biblically legitimate practice. If it is right for women to serve as local elders, it is equally valid for them to serve as pastors. But by the same token, if women cannot legitimately be appointed to serve as pastors, it is also un-Biblical to appoint them to serve as elders. The real issue, then, is whether the Biblical criteria for choosing elders/pastors are gender-neutral.
Board of Elders. Contrary to contemporary practice, the "church board" that administered the spiritual affairs during New Testament times was composed of elders. Unlike today, the spiritual influence of the New Testament board of elders was not neutralized by the "votes" of other church board members who may or may not have had the spiritual maturity and qualifications expected of elders.

Thus, the church in Jerusalem had a plurality (board) of elders (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18). Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in churches throughout Asia Minor (14:23). The church at Ephesus, founded by Paul, and later led by Timothy, had a plurality of elders (20:17; Ephesians 5:17). Paul instructed Titus to ordain elders in the churches on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). In the Epistle of James, a general epistle, James instructed that those who were seriously ill should call for the elders of the church to pray that they would be healed.

In short, the very idea of an elder throughout the Bible implies the idea of a board of elders composed of several elders. When the word "elder" is in the singular, it refers to the office of elder in a generic sense (1 Timothy 5:19) or to a specific elder such as Peter (1 Peter 5:1) or John (2 John 1; 3 John 1).

Duties of Elders. As the primary spiritual leaders of the church, a New Testament board of elders had numerous duties. The elders/pastors were to pay careful attention to themselves by setting a godly example and overseeing and caring for the church (Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). They gave instruction in sound doctrine and refuted those who taught error (1 Timothy 3:1, 2; Titus 1:5, 9). They settled theological disputes (Acts 15). They were instrumental in the selection and ordination of others to office (Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14). They gave themselves to prayer and the preaching of God's Word (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17). They prayed for the sick (James 5:14). They ruled or exercised ecclesiastical authority, leading the churches to exercise church discipline to erring members (Matthew 18:15-17; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13). And they administered the ordinances of the church (e.g., baptism and Communion service; cf. Matthew 28:19, 20).

It is these spiritual duties (of organizing the members for Christian fellowship, worship, and exhortation, of administering divine ordinances, and proclaiming the Gospel) that the apostle Peter summarized in 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders [presbuteros] who are among you I exhort, . . . : Shepherd [the root-verb poimano means "to pastor"] the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers [episkopos], not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples of the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3, emphasis mine).

Authority of Elders/Pastors. The authority of elders/pastors to perform their spiritual duties is authority from Christ, delegated to them by the entire church—all the believers who "are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:4, NIV). If such an authority is not to be abused, it must be exercised within the limits imposed by Christ, the church's Head, and by Scripture, the church's only rule of faith. The authority of elders/pastors has at least four characteristics:

1. Delegated Authority. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and the Source of all the church's authority. He defines the purpose of the church's existence, and He provides the spiritual resources—the spiritual gifts—necessary for the church to perform its mission (Ephesians 4:7-13; 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-8). Through His Holy Spirit, Christ remains present and active in the church, exercising His authority and rule over it. So the authority of the church which elders and pastors exercise on its behalf is a delegated authority from Jesus Christ. Elders and ministers can legitimately exercise their authority only "in His name" (Mark 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 4:5). In every situation and on every issue, the church must always defer the final decision to Him Who authorizes it and Whom it must simply serve. Any exercise of church authority apart from Christ and His will constitutes a usurpation of Christ's delegated authority.

2. Declarative Authority. The authority of the church is declarative, not enactive; that is, the church cannot use its own wisdom and discretion to legislate (enact) for itself doctrines, practices, or policies that conflict with previously uttered words of Christ in Scripture. When Jesus commissioned the Twelve, the nucleus of the New Testament church, saying, "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you" (John 20:21, RSV), He was mandating them to communicate (declare) His teaching to the church accurately. Scriptural authority, consisting of the Old Testament writings and the writings of the commissioned apostles, was to be normative in the church through all ages.

Since the Scriptures clearly express the authority and will of Christ, the church's Head, the authority
which elders/pastors exercise on the church's behalf must always stay within the bounds set by Christ Himself in His written Word. Whenever church leaders enact doctrines and practices in conflict with the Scriptures, the exercise of such authority by elders or pastors constitutes a usurpation of the authority of Christ.

3. Spiritual Authority. Because the church exists to glorify God and save souls for His kingdom, and because the means to accomplish this mission is spiritual, the authority exercised by elders/pastors is spiritual, not civil or temporal. At His trial before Pilate, Christ proclaimed clearly that His kingdom was not of this world. It could not be upheld by the sword but only by the authority and force of truth (John 18:36, 37). Consequently, He instructed His disciples not to exercise their authority in the same way as temporal authorities do (Matthew 20:20-28).

From the above passages, we gather that the authority of the church, invested in elders/pastors, is a spiritual authority. It is grounded in the truth that Jesus came to reveal. Whenever elders or pastors become lords or slaves of any temporal authority (political, ideological, cultural, etc.), they have usurped Christ’s authority.

4. Edifying Authority. The authority invested in elders/pastors is to be exercised for the sole purpose of building up those within the church, the believers who “are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4, NIV).

In 2 Corinthians 10:8, and again in chapter 13:10, Paul stated that the authority which the Lord gave him in the church is “for building you up, not for tearing you down” (NIV). The authority of church elders/pastors is therefore edifying, intended to build up the church. Church leaders’ authority, at whatever level, is for the express purpose of accomplishing the redemptive work of Christ in the lives of church members. It is intended to promote the spiritual good of the people; its end is salvation.15

In addition to church authority being for the “edification” of the church, Paul added that it is “not for tearing you down.” This second expression is a most emphatic protest against the abuse of church authority. Whenever elders or pastors exercise authority in a domineering, despotic, coercive, or dictatorial manner so that they frustrate the saving ministry of Christ in His church, their actions constitute a usurpation of Christ’s authority.

Qualification of Elders. Given the fact that church leadership is essentially a spiritual or pastoral function, it should come as no surprise that the Bible offers spiritual criteria (not “giftedness” or “diversity”) as prerequisites for those serving in the office of elder/pastor. The apostle Paul writes: “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer [episkopos], he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the Devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the Devil’s trap” (1 Timothy 3:1-7, NIV; cf. Titus 1:5-9).

Notice that besides the general characteristics that are expected of all Christians (e.g., being above reproach, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, etc.), some characteristics specifically deal with the leader’s standing within the church (e.g., “able to teach,” “not a recent convert,” and a “good reputation with outsiders”). Finally, certain characteristics pertain to the leader’s family life (e.g., “husband of one wife,” “manages his own family well,” and “his children obey him with proper respect”).

We can make three important observations from the above qualities of an elder. First, God places high priority on godly character for church leaders—not a so-called “giftedness in leadership.” We all know that sometimes those with the most wonderful talents and “gifts” are not godly, and hence do not qualify to be spiritual leaders of the church.

Second, the Bible also makes spiritual maturity a necessary requirement for church leadership. Since some of the characteristics emphasize ability to teach, the importance of not being a novice (new convert), and a demonstration of an impeccable reputation to outsiders there seem to be “spiritual age”
limitations on those who can serve as elders or pastors. If this is indeed the case, then the Bible seems
to raise some serious questions about the practice in some quarters of appointing youth as "junior elders." We must find a Biblically better way to mentor the youth to be spiritual leaders.  

Third, the requirement that the elder should evidence certain proven abilities in the home suggests that there is a link between spiritual leadership in the home and spiritual leadership in the church. This fact, as we shall see in the next sections, seem to make gender an issue in the spiritual leadership of the church. If this observation can be established Biblically, then it would seem that the current push for "gender inclusiveness" and "women in leadership" is not only misdirected, but also the practice of appointing "women elders" and "women pastors" or "women clergy" is at the very least an honest mistake.

Is Eldership Gender-Inclusive?

Contrary to what egalitarian theologians teach, the New Testament teaches that the office of elder/pastor should be filled not just by human beings of either gender, but exclusively by males. Thus, leadership in the church is neither gender-neutral nor "gender-inclusive."

In discussing the qualities for elders/pastors, the New Testament writers made clear that such an officeholder should be a man, not a woman. If they had believed that any person could qualify, irrespective of gender, they would have used the generic term anthropos, a word that refers to human beings, male or female, without regard to gender. Instead, they employed the specific term aner/andros, a word that means a male person as distinct from a woman (see Acts 8:12; 1 Timothy 2:12), a person capable of being called a husband (see Matthew 1:16; John 4:16; Romans 7:2; Titus 1:6).

The apostle Paul instructed that an elder must fulfill certain qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-6; Titus 1:5-9). Among these, an elder/bishop "must be . . . the husband (aner/andros) of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). This expression literally translates as a “man of one woman,” or “one-woman-man,” meaning "a male of one woman." In other words, the elder or pastor should be a man, not a woman.

An additional point underscores this gender restriction in the qualities of an elder—namely, the elder should be able to exercise spiritual leadership in his home. He is one who “must manage his own family well” (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, NIV; Titus 1:6). Since the Bible entrusts to men the primary function of spiritual leadership in the home, this requirement calls into question the notion of "women elders" or "women pastors."

If we believe that the apostle Paul was inspired when he twice wrote that an elder or pastor should be a male (aner, see 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), this particular gender qualification for the office suggests that there is an underlying theological reason. When this gender qualification is understood in light of God’s Creation arrangement, it is clear that Paul’s prescription that an elder be a male (aner) is not arbitrary.

The Creation Origin of Spiritual Leadership

The debate over “gender-inclusive” leadership has to do with whether the spiritual leadership structure in the home and in the church is simply based on “equality” and “giftedness” (without regard to gender), or whether it is rooted in God’s Creation arrangement regarding male-female role differentiations.

The compelling evidence from Scripture is that at Creation, God created men and women as equals. But within the equal partnership, God also instituted functional role differentiation between Adam and Eve, and established principles to govern the relationship between men and women. The man was called upon to exercise leadership responsibilities over the family (the principle of headship), and the woman was to assist the man in this role (the principle of submission). This arrangement for home governance is the model upon which church leadership is patterned. The theological term used to explain this Biblical teaching is headship.

Biblical Headship. The theological term headship simply means that within the loving relationship of male-female equality and complementarity, God calls upon men to be the leaders and representative
heads of their families, and He holds them accountable if they refuse to shoulder spiritual leadership responsibilities.

But in a subtle attack on this Biblical teaching, advocates of “inclusiveness and balance in spiritual leadership” are attempting to get rid of male-female role distinctions in the name of “full equality,” “equal partnership,” or even “shared responsibilities.” Others misinterpret Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:28 (in Christ there is “neither male nor female”) to argue that functional role differentiation between male and female began at the Fall, and that in Christ such a distinction is no longer valid in the church, if not in the home.  

Before looking at the evidence against this gender-inclusive view of spiritual leadership, I must point out that we should not speak of “full equality,” “equal partnership,” or even “shared responsibilities” without stating unambiguously that to act as “equal and joint partners” does not mean to act identically. Individuals in a relationship can be equal and yet have different roles. They can act “jointly” and yet not act identically; they may “share” duties but not bear the same responsibilities. As we shall show in the next paragraphs, in the partnership of male-female equality, God still calls upon men to exercise spiritual leadership in both the home and the church.

Evidence From the Bible. Contrary to the views of egalitarian feminism and some well-meaning church scholars and administrators, the headship principle originated at Creation, not at the Fall. There are at least five Biblical reasons to believe that functional role differentiation between men and women originated at Creation, not the Fall:

(1) God expressed His intended arrangement for the family relationship by creating Adam first, then Eve. Man was created before woman for a reason. For example, Paul wrote, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:12, 13, NIV). Paul again emphasizes the order of Creation in his teachings about “head coverings.” He wrote: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man, neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 11:8). Whatever a person may say about the meaning of the two passages, this much is clear: Man was created before woman for a reason. The Genesis account shows that at Creation God called upon the man to be the representative head and leader of the family (both home and church).

(2) God gave Adam directions for the first pair regarding custody of the Garden and the dangers of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16, 17). This charge to Adam called him to spiritual leadership.

(3) God instructed that in marriage it is the man who must act, leaving dependence on father and mother to be united with his wife (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5), and that in the marriage relationship the woman’s role is to complement the man’s in his duties (Genesis 2:18, 23, 24). In this instruction, God charged the man with the responsibility of lovingly providing for and protecting the woman (cf. Ephesians 5:25, 28-31; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6).

(4) Although Eve first disobeyed, it was only after Adam had joined in the rebellion that the eyes of both of them were opened (Genesis 3:4-7). More significantly, after the Fall, God first addressed Adam, holding him accountable for eating the forbidden fruit: “Where art thou? . . . Hast thou eaten of the tree . . . ?” (Genesis 3:9-12; cf. 3:17: “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree. . .”). It appears inexplicable for God, Who in His omniscience already knew what had happened, to act in this way if Adam had not been given headship in the Eden relationship.

(5) Despite the fact that the woman initiated the rebellion, it is Adam, not Eve, nor even both of them, who is blamed for our Fall (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22), which suggests that as the spiritual head in the partnership of their equal relationship, Adam was the representative head of the family.

If Biblical headship did not exist at Creation, it would be difficult to explain why Adam (not Eve) is repeatedly held responsible for the entrance of sin and death into the world, even though it was Eve who sinned first (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22).

Evidence From the Spirit of Prophecy. The writings of Ellen G. White also make it clear that prior to the Fall, God had already enjoined upon Adam and Eve different roles, each with their “assigned spheres.”
Prior to the Fall, Eve's submission was freely and spontaneously expressed. But after the Fall, the Lord had to make explicit the "law" she had, perhaps, been obeying unconsciously.20

"Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband's side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God's plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which He has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59, emphasis added).

A parallel statement of Ellen White (in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 483, 484) brings together the role distinctions before the Fall and the subjection of Eve after the Fall. Mrs. White taught that male and female were created equal, neither superior nor inferior to the other. But because Eve chose to abandon her God-assigned role, God's curse enjoined her to subject herself to her husband.21

Despite the abuse of God's Creation arrangement for role relations in the home, Ellen G. White writes that "Heaven's ideal of this sacred [marriage] relation" is one in which the man is the head of the home. This kind of relationship is "what God designed it should be" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 64, 65).

Moreover, because "the husband is the head of the family, as Christ is the Head of the church," she writes, "any course which the wife may pursue to lessen his influence and lead him to come down from that dignified, responsible position is displeasing to God" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 307).

At a time of rampant divorces, sometimes because each party seeks to be the "head," we need to call attention to God's Creation arrangement of male-female role distinctions. And at a time of increasing homosexual demands for marital rights, we need to say unambiguously that men were not created equal with women personally or even physically as candidates to be spouses of other men. Failure to respect these role distinctions would open a welcome door for those who seek to nullify the Biblical case for divinely instituted role differences and monogamous heterosexual relationships.

**The Pattern for Church Leadership**

God did not leave it up to the 21st-century church to shop for leadership models from business corporations, the entertainment or sports industry, or certain megachurches. Instead, He provided the home government as the model upon which church leadership is to be patterned. And this home government, as we noted earlier, is based on God's Creation arrangement of role differentiation.

The church is not just another social institution; it is a worshipping community—a group of people who relate to God through a faith relationship in Christ. Thus the church, in both the Old and the New Testament, exists whenever and wherever "two or three have gathered in My [Christ's] name" (Matthew 18:20). Rightly understood, the worshipping household is a miniature model of the church. In this "home church" the man, assisted by his wife, exercises the primary function of spiritual leader.

Even before Jesus Christ established the New Testament church (Matthew 16:18, 19), the church was already in existence in Old Testament times. Israel, with its priests and ceremonial system of worship, was "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). But long before the Exodus brought Israel the opportunity to be "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), the church existed in the homes, wherever "two or three . . . gathered together in My name" (Matthew 18:20).

"God had a church when Adam and Eve and Abel accepted and hailed with joy the good news that Jesus was their Redeemer. These realized as fully then as we realize now the promise of the presence of God in their midst. Wherever Enoch found one or two who were willing to hear the message he had for them, Jesus joined with them in their worship of God. In Enoch's day there were some among the wicked inhabitants of Earth who believed. The Lord never yet has left His faithful few without His presence nor the world without a witness" (*Ellen G. White, The Upward Look*, p. 228).
1. **Spiritual Leadership in the Home.** The Bible teaches that in the "home church" both fathers and mothers are to exercise leadership in nurturing, training, disciplining, and teaching their children. As Ellen G. White put it, "In ordinary life the family was both a school and a church, the parents being the instructors in secular and in religious lines" (*Education*, p. 41).

But while "every family is a church, over which the parents preside. . . . the father and mother as priest and teacher [respectively] of the family" (White, *Child Guidance*, p. 549), it is the man who, assisted by the woman, assumes the ultimate leadership role in the household family. In other words, within the general leadership of both parents, it is the man who exercised the specific/particular leadership of spiritual leader in the home.

We see this illustrated in Ephesians 6:1-4, where after discussing the shared responsibility of parents in training their children, Paul shifts the focus to fathers, and charges them regarding the training of the children: "Children, obey your parents. . . . And, ye fathers, . . . bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Note the same shift from parents to fathers in Colossians 3:20, 21.)

The Bible describes the nature of male headship not as domination, control, or the wielding of "power," but rather as leadership in: self-giving love (Ephesians 5:25), sacrificial service (1 Peter 3:7; cf. Mark 10:42-44), sound management or governorship (1 Timothy 3:4, 5), ensuring the well-being of and providing for the home (1 Timothy 5:8), and discipline and instruction (Deuteronomy 6:7; Ephesians 6:4)—that is, leadership as "lawmaker and priest" (White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 212).

This kind of male headship, which is best exemplified by Christ (Ephesians 5), can only be demonstrated by those who are "in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

2. **Relationship Between Home and Church Leadership.** The frequent correspondence between home and church found in Scripture (e.g., Acts 2:46; 5:42; 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35; cf. Philippians 4:22) suggests that, indeed, the church is not only "the household of God" (1 Timothy 3:15, RSV), but "a household is a little church" and "a church is a large household."23 Furthermore, the numerous Bible references to the church as the family of God24 suggest that the relationship of male and female in the church is to be modeled after the home family, of which the Eden home was the prototype.25

The Pastoral Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, the very books which describe the qualities of an elder/pastor, view the church as the family of God, thus establishing the family structure as the model for church structure: "If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, RSV; cf. Titus 1:6).

Ellen White also understood the home as the pattern for the church, with a distinct role assigned to each of the parents. "Some households have a little church in their home. . . . As parents faithfully do their duty in the family, restraining, correcting, advising, counseling, guiding, the father as a priest of the household, the mother as a home missionary, they are filling the sphere God would have them fill. By faithfully doing their duty in the home, they are multiplying agencies for doing good outside the home. They are becoming better fitted to labor in the church. By training their little flock discreetly, binding their children to themselves and to God, fathers and mothers become laborers together with God" (*Lift Him Up*, p. 253, emphasis added).

The description of the church as "the household of God" (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19) and the patterning of church authority after the headship arrangement in the home reveal the high estimation God places on the home family. "In the home the foundation is laid for the prosperity of the church. The influences that rule in the home life are carried into the church life; therefore, church duties should first begin in the home" (White, *My Life Today*, p. 284). "Every family in the home life should be a church, a beautiful symbol of the church of God in Heaven" (White, *Child Guidance*, p. 480).

Not only is the model of authority in the church patterned after the home; the home government likewise is patterned after the church. Ellen G. White wrote, "The rules and regulations of the home life must be in strict accordance with a 'Thus saith the Lord.' The rules God has given for the government of His church are the rules parents are to follow in the church in the home. It is God’s design that there shall be perfect order in the families on Earth, preparatory to their union with the family in Heaven. Upon
the discipline and training received in the home depends the usefulness of men and women in the church and in the world" (The Signs of the Times, September 25, 1901, emphasis added).

Thus, contrary to what some creative church scholars and administrators are suggesting, the writings of Ellen G. White and the practice of early Adventists do not support any alternative model of spiritual leadership that allows women to be the spiritual heads in the home or church families. 

3. Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Gifts. When correctly understood, the Biblical teaching on spiritual gifts is in full harmony with the Bible’s call upon men to exercise spiritual leadership in the home (as husbands/fathers) and in the church (as elders/pastors). This is because the same Holy Spirit Who imparts the spiritual gifts is the same Person Who inspired the Holy Scriptures to regulate how the spiritual gifts are to be exercised.

As we pointed out in our discussion of general and specific leadership, the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit calls and empowers both men and women with various spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-13). The gifts include teaching, administration, nurturing/pastoring, evangelism, etc.—gifts that are also essential to the spiritual leadership work of elders/pastors. Notice, however, that the possession of these gifts does not necessarily qualify a person to serve as elder or pastor. Each of these spiritual gifts should be exercised within the boundaries prescribed in Scripture.

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, but they are also regulated by the Holy Scriptures. The same Holy Spirit Who calls and empowers men and women with gifts for ministry also apportions gifts to each “as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4). It was this same Holy Spirit Who twice inspired the apostle Paul to write that, in addition to godly character and spiritual maturity, those aspiring to the leadership role of elder or pastor must be males (aner/andros: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6).

"Since it was the Spirit of God That inspired the Bible, [and since] it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the Word" (The Great Controversy, p. vii), the Spirit cannot call a woman to the spiritual leadership role of elder or pastor which He has instructed through His written Word can only be filled by males. In other words, the Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself by calling a female to an office from which she is excluded by the same Spirit’s instruction in the written Word. This truth explains why there is no evidence in the Bible of any woman serving in the spiritual leadership role as priest, apostle, or elder/pastor.

There were many godly, spiritually mature, and spiritually gifted women who fulfilled vital roles of ministry in the New Testament. For example Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, was “highly favored by the Lord.” Besides Mary and Martha, a number of other women, including Joanna and Susanna, supported Jesus with their own means (Luke 8:2, 3). Tabitha ministered to the needy (Acts 9:36). Other women, including Lydia, Phoebe, Lois, and Eunice, distinguished themselves in fulfilling the mission of the church (Acts 16:3, 14, 15; 18:26; 21:8, 9; Romans 16:1-4, 12). Of these, many were Paul’s co-workers in ministry.

Paul calls Phoebe “a servant of the church” and a “sucorcer of many, and of myself also” (Romans 16:1, 2); Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis all "worked very hard in the Lord” (Romans 16:6, 12); Euodia and Syntyche were women "who have contended at my side in the cause of the Gospel" (Philippians 4:3, RSV); and Junia, who suffered imprisonment with Paul, received commendation as someone “of note among the apostles” (Romans 16:7). And yet, none of these godly and spiritually gifted women served as elder/pastor.

The Bible also mentions the upscale businesswoman Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15, 40), evidently someone whose abilities in commerce and administration selling costly goods put her in touch with nobility and royalty. Similarly, Priscilla was evidently well educated and a capable teacher, since she “expounded to” Apollos, an “eloquent man” who was already "instructed in the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:24-26). Yet not even well-educated Priscilla, or successful, professional Lydia, or any other accomplished woman, was permitted to exercise the spiritual leadership roles as elders/pastors.

In short, while spiritual gifts such as knowledge, teaching, wisdom, administration, nurturing/pastoring, evangelism, etc., may be essential to the work of spiritual leadership in the home and in the church, and while the gifts are not conferred only upon husbands/fathers or elders/pastors, the possession of these spiritual gifts alone does not necessarily qualify a person as elder or pastor. There are clear Biblical
instructions regarding how these gifts or abilities should be exercised in both the home and the church.

The reason why women were forbidden to serve as elders/pastors was not inadequate education, a lack of teaching or administrative ability or some other spiritual gifts. Paul instead pointed to the Creation arrangement, stating that “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8). Adam carried the special right and responsibility of leadership which belonged to the “firstborn” in a family (cf. Colossians 1:15-18). God, in His sovereign wisdom, has delegated this “firstborn” responsibility of spiritual leadership in the home and in the church to qualified men.

**The Call for Godly Men**

When Satan tempted our first parents, he wanted to lead them into thinking that they could be “like God” (Genesis 3:5). To do so, he suggested to Eve that she could attain a higher role than that which God had assigned her at Creation. Thus, Eve took the first step in her quest to be like God when she usurped the man’s headship role.

By directing his temptation to Eve instead of Adam, who had been given the leadership responsibility concerning the dangers of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16, 17), Satan struck at the headship principle governing the relationships between men and women; and he succeeded in disrupting the harmony our first parents enjoyed in God’s arrangement.

Both of our parents were responsible for the Fall—Adam by failing to exercise his responsibility to protect his wife and guide her to obey God, and Eve by usurping Adam’s headship. Adam was reckless, and Eve was restless.

Since that time, men, who are expected to exercise the spiritual headship function in both the home and the church, have been reckless. In place of providing caring, sacrificial male leadership, many men attempt either to dominate women or to escape responsibility. Also, instead of women assisting or supporting the men, modern Eves have been restless. In place of a loving submission or a noble cooperation, they have sought to usurp men’s leadership, or they adopt a servile submission.

The result is that today, gender roles have become a cage from which both men and women want freedom. Could this fact be the reason behind the diminishing role of men in the home and in the church and the ongoing push for “gender-inclusive” leadership? If so, we may find a solution in response to the heart-searching questions God posed after the Fall of Adam and Eve. To Adam, God said, “Where are you?” and to Eve, He said, “What is this you have done?” (Genesis 3:9, 13).

God is still calling men in the cool of the day, “Where are you?” Let every man answer, “Here am I,” not shirking their spiritual leadership in the home and in the church. And let every woman respond to God’s question (“What is this you have done?”), without abandoning their Heaven-appointed supportive roles for spiritual leadership roles that God has not assigned them.

**What If There Are No Available Leaders?**

There are exceptional situations where there are no qualified males to exercise spiritual leadership in the homes and the churches. Also, men in leadership sometimes default in offering godly and exemplary leadership. What should we do when this kind of situation arises?

1. The distinction between general and specific/particular leadership suggests that in instances where there are no qualified males to lead the homes and the churches, godly females can be called upon to exercise their gifts and influence as general leaders. But when they do so, their action does not make them husbands or fathers in the home, nor elders/pastors in the church. As such, they shouldn’t be called husbands/fathers or elders/pastors. Biblically, the notion of “women husbands/fathers” and “women elders/pastors” makes these expressions oxymorons—combinations of contradictory or incongruous words, as in the phrase “pregnant man”!

2. The pattern of home government can also help us know how to deal with the unusual church situations (i.e., when there are no qualified men to provide sound leadership). A widowed or divorced woman may
have to earn the living, discipline the children, and get the lawn mower fixed—responsibilities her husband had largely carried. But in doing these things she does not become a man or start to call herself a husband or a father. Furthermore, her singleness may be only temporary until she has another husband to fulfill some of those roles. Likewise, women in unusual church situations may have to provide general leadership for a time, but this does not require that they be appointed or commissioned as elders or pastors.

3. The unique leadership of Deborah as prophet and judge in Israel is probably the best model of how women can exercise their leadership gifts in the absence of capable men (Judges 4:4ff.). God-fearing Deborah rose up and did something to arrest a serious situation. But notice how she did it. Whereas other judges led Israel into victory in battle, God told Deborah that Barak was to do this (vv. 6, 7). Significantly, she was the only judge in the book of Judges who had no military function. She does not assert leadership for herself, but she gives priority to a man—even though the man is reluctant to go to battle without her (v. 8). The failure of Barak to exercise his leadership is rebuked when he is told that the glory of that day would go to a woman—and not even Deborah, but Jael (vv. 9, 17-25.). Deborah’s “attitude and demeanor were such that she was not asserting her leadership. Instead, she handed over the leadership, contrary to the pattern of all the judges, to a man.”

Deborah is a noble example of the godly “mothers in Israel” who humbly exercised their general leadership gifts at a time when the appointed men were defaulting in their particular responsibilities. Her supporting ministry contrasts sharply with those of Jezebel, Athaliah, and our contemporary feminists—women who attempt to usurp God-given spiritual authority entrusted to men.

4. The relationship of Ellen G. White and her husband James White provides another fitting example for us. Though she was a true prophet and thus exhibited undeniable “giftedness,” and although as a prophet she was a leader in her own right, she never saw herself as husband (in the home) or elder or pastor (in the church). She always deferred spiritual leadership to her husband James.

If any woman was so spiritually gifted as to qualify for appointment as elder or pastor, it was Ellen G. White. If any woman was so effective in her ministry as a teacher, preacher, and soulwinner as to qualify for the role of elder or pastor, it was Ellen G. White. If any Adventist was so “justice-inspired,” “sensitive,” and “caring” (and with demonstrable evidence of other fruits of the Spirit) as to be commissioned as elder or pastor, it was Ellen G. White. If any Adventist was so prolific an author and so gifted a leader as to be elected to serve as elder or pastor, it was Ellen G. White. If any spiritual woman had the “right” as elder or pastor to baptize others or administer the divine ordinances of the church, it was Ellen G. White. And if any woman could legitimately claim the title of Elder or Pastor, it was Ellen G. White.

But during her later years, Mrs. White was known mostly as “Sister White” and affectionately as “Mother White.” She was never known as “Elder White” or “Pastor Ellen.” Every church member knew that “Elder White” was either her husband James, or her son W.C. White.

Could it really be that we are ethically and theologically more enlightened than Ellen G. White? Or is it perhaps that we do not view the Bible as she did? Whatever our response is, this much can be said: The subtle and not-so-subtle campaign by some determined church scholars, administrators, local pastors, and vocal interest groups for “gender-inclusive” leadership, though perhaps well-meaning, is clearly wrongheaded.

**Conclusion: Are We Honestly Mistaken?**

This article is a theological response to the new thrust towards “inclusiveness, balance, and diversity” in spiritual leadership at every level of church administration, from local congregations to the General Conference. Our study leads us to the following seven conclusions:

1. Church leadership is essentially a spiritual and pastoral leadership.

2. Though all are called to perform general leadership responsibilities, the Bible entrusts particular
leadership obligations to elders/pastors. (The terms “elder” and “pastor” are synonymous in the Bible, referring to the work of spiritual leadership.)

3. It is the board of elders that is invested with authority to exercise spiritual leadership in the church. The characteristics of their authority (as delegated, declarative, spiritual, and edifying authority) set limits upon their authority and indicate when they are abusing or usurping their divine mandates.

4. The Biblical criteria for elders/pastors suggest that individuals appointed to this office must be godly, spiritually mature, and spiritual leaders in their homes.

5. In both the home and in the church, spiritual leadership is not gender-neutral; from the moment of Creation, God called upon godly men to exercise leadership responsibilities.

6. God has provided the home government as the model for church leadership, since “a household is a little church” and “a church is a large household.” Spiritual gifts should be exercised within the boundaries set forth in Scripture, including God’s Creation arrangement that makes men the spiritual heads of the home and the church.

7. In unusual and exceptional situations where there are no available or qualified leaders in the church, godly and gifted women can step in and offer general leadership. But their timely work does not mean that they should be called elders or pastors.

If, indeed, the conclusions above are Scripturally valid, then those of us who are pushing some contrary models of “inclusiveness, balance, and diversity” in church leadership are simply honestly mistaken. “True faith consists in doing just what God has enjoined, not manufacturing things He has not enjoined” (White, That I May Know Him, p. 226).

There are only two responses available to us when we who are honestly mistaken are presented with the Biblical truth about spiritual leadership in the church: Either we will cease to be mistaken (if we love and obey the truth) or we will cease to be honest (if we despise and reject the truth). This is what is at stake in the way we relate to the Biblically compromising practice of appointing women as elders or pastors. God will overlook, and will even forgive, our honest mistakes when we don’t know the truth. But He will not deal kindly with our dishonesty if, after having known the truth, we choose to believe a lie and live in error (see John 3:19; Acts 17:30, 31; James 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12).

NOTES

1 When liberal-feminist groups in the church seek to make women “full partners at all levels of the church,” what they mean is that the church should place women in leadership roles by ordaining them as elders and pastors. However, because the term “women’s ordination” raises a red flag, the new phrase is “women in leadership.” For example, the Mission Statement of a liberal-feminist group in the church, the Association of Adventist Women, states: “The Association of Adventist Women seeks to develop and promote women as leaders in Seventh-day Adventist organizations, congregations, and communities.” The same point is emphasized again when it tries to style itself as an “international” association: “The mission of the International Association of Adventist Women is to foster the participation of women in varied leadership roles in Seventh-day Adventist organizations, congregations, and communities.” Notice that the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) was begun as a committee of the Association of Adventist Forums (the liberal organization that publishes Spectrum magazine), and has since 1981 been operating as an independent entity. Among other things, the status of the Association of Adventist Women as an independent organization has had the advantage of masking its liberal-feminist agenda. Besides its activities as an association, the Association of Adventist Women has spawned several separate entities, all of which embrace the pro-ordination agenda. The General Conference Ministerial directors, the North American Division Women’s Ministries department, and the Women’s Resource Center, a pro-ordination center at La Sierra University, are also promoting the mission of the Association of Adventist Women. All three entities are working closely with one another to advance the agenda for women’s ordination. For more on this and a documentation of the strategies of AAW, see my article “To Ordain or Not To Ordain: The Campaign for Women’s Ordination,” available on the ADVENTISTS AFFIRM Web site, http://www.adventistsaffirm.org/article.php?id=145.
Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:4; 20:18-35; 21:18; James 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17-19; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5. It is probably in this sense that the apostles John and Peter refer to themselves as "elders" (see 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17. Christ Himself is referred to as the "Bishop [episkopos] of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2.

Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 16:16. The word "submit" (hupotassessthe) is the same word used concerning Christ's submission to His earthly parents, and also the kind of obedience due civil authorities (see Luke 2:51, Romans 13:1, 5).

"This new order, the priesthood of all believers," according to Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . , p. 143, "means that each church member has a responsibility to minister to others in the name of God, and can communicate directly with Him without any human intermediary. It emphasizes the interdependence of church members, as well as their independence. This priesthood makes no qualitative distinction between clergy and laity, although it leaves room for a difference in function between these roles" (emphasis mine).

It is sometimes suggested that there were a few non-Levites who, on occasion, performed priestly functions: Gideon (Judges 6:24-26), Manoah of Dan (Judges 13:19), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:9), David (2 Samuel 6:13-17), Elijah (1 Kings 18:23, 37, 38). A careful study of these specific instances may offer some Biblically consistent explanations. For example, since Samuel was Ekanah's son, he too was a Levite (1 Chronicles 6:27, 28, 33, 34; cf. Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 569). On David's apparent offer of sacrifices, it appears from 1 Chronicles 15ff. and Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 706, 707, that David did not offer the sacrifices himself but simply paid for and directed them. It is in this sense that he is credited with offering the sacrifices. Regarding Elijah, we have no evidence from Scripture about whether or not he was a Levite. Without other information, we may have to assume that he was a Levite living in Gilead (1 Kings 17:1). With respect to Gideon, Ellen White makes it clear that though God in this one instance specifically directed him to offer the sacrifice, it was wrong for Gideon to have "concluded he had been appointed to officiate as a priest" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 547; cf. p. 555); the same may apply to Manoah of Dan (Judges 13:19). In any event, even if it can be shown that the above Old Testament characters were all non-Levites and that they actually performed priestly functions, these exceptions only prove the validity of an established rule that only Levites could serve as priests. The phenomenon of "exceptions" to the normal order must always be recognized. But when humans initiated those exceptions instead of God, there were disastrous consequences. See, for example, Korah (Numbers 16:3-7), Saul (1 Samuel 13:8-14), Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:31-13:5; 13:33, 34), and Uzzah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21).


The New Testament uses the English term "pastor" only once, in Ephesians 4:11. The same Greek word is translated "shepherd" elsewhere in the New Testament. As a shepherd, the pastor has the care and oversight of the flock. For the convenience of using our contemporary terms, in this study we have frequently used "pastor" as a substitute for "bishop" or "overseer." The book of 1 Peter brings all the terms together: pastor (shepherd), elder (presbyter), and bishop (overseer). "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd (poimen = pastor) and Bishop (episkopos = overseer) of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). "The elders (presbuteros) which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder . . . : Feed (poimano, to tend as a shepherd) the flock of God, taking the oversight (episkopeo) thereof. . . . And when the Chief Shepherd (archipoiyem) shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:1-4). The elders are commissioned to stand as overseers, functioning as pastors/shepherds to the flock. Though we may divide some of the responsibilities today, these functions belong basically to one office.


In response to pressure from a relatively small but influential group that had been pushing for women's ordination during the past thirty or more years, church leaders at the 1975 Spring Council meeting approved the Biblically compromising practice of ordaining women as local elders in the North American Division if "the greatest discretion and caution" were exercised. Later, they succeeded in persuading church leaders at the Fall 1984 Annual Council meeting to reaffirm and expand the 1975
decision, voting to "advise each division that it is free to make provisions as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local elders." Emboldened by their success in influencing church leaders to allow "women elders," pro-ordination advocates then proceeded to urge the world church in General Conference session to ordain women as pastors, at least in divisions favorable to it. However, at the General Conference sessions both in 1990 (Indianapolis) and 1995 (Utrecht), the representatives of the world church overwhelmingly rejected the pleas to ordain women into the Gospel ministry. The votes were 1,173 to 377 (in 1990) and 1,481 to 673 (in 1995). But the arbitrary and politically inspired decision to let women serve as local elders "if the greatest discretion and caution" are exercised is still the official policy.

Questions are sometimes raised as to whether when "elders" are mentioned for multiple cities (e.g., Crete [Titus 1:5] or Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch [Acts 14:21-23]) the plural in the text refers to multiple elders in each city or church. As far as we can ascertain from the Bible, no church had only one elder, but all had a plurality of elders. Thus, the most natural meaning is that a board (plurality) of elders was appointed in every church (Acts 14:23) or in every city (Titus 1:5).

Thus, when Paul admonished the Corinthians to exercise their authority in disfellowshipping a member, his hope was that such an action might result in the individual's being "saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5).

See, for example, the excellent article by Andrea Oliver in this issue of the magazine. Notice also the following insightful statement by Ellen G. White: "Ministerial labor should not be entrusted to boys, neither should the work of giving Bible readings be entrusted to young girls, because they offer their services and are willing to take responsible positions, while they are wanting in religious experience and lack a thorough education and training. Those who are young in the work should have the help of such as have had experience and understand the manner of working. Missionary operations are constantly embarrassed for want of workers of the right class of mind—workers who have devotion and piety that will correctly represent our faith" (Counsels to Patents, Teachers, and Students, p. 500).

The word aner (translated "man" in the English translations) means a male of the human race. Therefore, the Greek phrase, mias [of one] gunakos [woman] andra [man], literally translates as a "man of one woman," or "one-woman-man," meaning "a male of one woman." When used of the marriage relation it may be translated "husband of one wife" (KJV) or "husband of but one wife" (NIV). Because in this passage the words for "man" and "woman" do not have the definite article, the construction in the Greek emphasizes character or nature. Thus, "one can translate, 'one-wife sort of a husband,' or 'a one-woman sort of a man.' . . . Since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife." (See Kenneth S. Wuest, The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], p. 53.) Also, because the word "one" (mias) is positioned at the beginning of the phrase in the Greek, it appears to emphasize this monogamous relationship. Thus, the phrase "husband of one wife," is calling for monogamous fidelity—that is to say, an elder must be "faithful to his one wife" (NEB). For an excellent summary of the various interpretations of this text, see Ronald A.G. du Preez, Polygamy in the Bible with Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Missiology (DMin project dissertation, Andrews University, 1993), pp. 266-277. Some have questioned whether Paul's instruction requires that the elder or pastor be married. While most likely the congregational leaders were married, two lines of Scriptural evidence suggest that marriage was not an inflexible requirement. First, the apostle Paul himself seems not to have been married during his ministry (see 1 Corinthians 7:7, 8). Second, he recommends the unmarried state to those who can accept it, so that they may be "anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord" (v. 32; see vv. 25-35). These considerations lend support to the idea that we may understand 1 Timothy 3:2 as referring to a "one-woman kind of man," one who, if married, is faithful to his one wife.

The effort by some to see the "aged women" (presbutidas) of Titus 2:3 as referring to women elders
misdirected for two reasons. First, the usual word for elder is *presbuteros* (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22ff.; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5); the word refers to older men but also to those holding the office of elder. If Paul had intended to speak of “women elders” he could easily have used the corresponding feminine form, *presbutera,* though no office of “woman elder” is attested. Second, the context of Titus 2 makes it clear that Paul is not addressing those holding the office of elder but rather the different groups of people in the church: “aged men” (v. 2, *presbutas,* plural from *presbutes,* not from *presbuteros*), “aged women” (v. 3), “young women” (vv. 4, 5), “young men” (v. 6), and “servants” (v. 9). Having addressed “aged men” in verse 2 (cf. Luke 1:18; Philemon 9), Paul employs a related word, *presbutidas,* in verse 3 for “aged women,” making it clear that he was speaking about older women and not “women elders.” Hence the reinterpretation is invalid. The only kind of elder the apostle Paul recognized is the person who, among other things, is the “husband of one wife” (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2). The idea of a “woman elder” is thus an oxymoron.

19For a discussion of how liberal-feminism misinterprets Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:27, 28 (“in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, but you are all one in Christ Jesus”), see my article in *Must We Be Silent?: Issues Dividing Our Church* (Ann Arbor: Berean Books, 2001), pp. 137-159, 193-198. A slightly modified version of the article is available on the ADVENTISTS AFFIRM Web site as "Feminism’s ‘New Light’ on Galatians 3:28: What Kind of Equality Does the Bible Teach?" See http://adventistsaffirm.org/article.php?id=141.

20The perfect harmony that existed in Eden before the Fall may perhaps be likened to the harmony in Heaven before the fall of Satan, when “So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. . . . And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35). Though God’s law governed everyone, “When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109). The angels responded freely and spontaneously to God. They seem to have been almost unconscious of a “law” to obey God or to worship Christ. These things were their delight. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 35-37.)

21Mrs. White wrote: “She was perfectly happy in her Eden home by her husband’s side; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered that there was a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily life duties in accordance with God’s plan. . . . A neglect on the part of woman to follow God’s plan in her creation, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility. When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting. But after Eve’s sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 483, 484).


24See Vern Sheridan Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pp. 233-236, for the various expressions used in the Bible to refer to the church as God’s family.

25Ephesians 5:22, 23; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34, 35; 1 Timothy 2:11-3:1-5.

26For more on this, see my online article "Early Adventist History and the Ministry of Women:
27 A Closer Look at Recent Reinterpretations of Adventist History,” available at http://adventistsaffirm.org/article.php?id=146. See also my “Misleading and Erroneous Claims Regarding Early Adventist History,” in my Must We Be Silent?, pp. 251-270.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:28-30, people with the gift of tongues (i.e., the miraculous ability to speak foreign languages) were told not to use it in public when there was no one to interpret, and prophets were told to stop prophesying when others had a revelation. In the same way if women have gifts of teaching, administration, evangelism, or nurturing/pastoring, etc., God wants them to exercise these gifts in the home and in the church within the guidelines given in Scripture.

28 Paul’s description of Christ in Colossians 1:15-18, RSV, as “the Firstborn of all creation,” “the Head of the body, the church” suggests His preeminent authority. His headship and authority are tied in with His being the “firstborn.” Paul’s use of “firstborn” language to express the headship and authority of Christ suggests that he attached the same meaning to Adam’s being “first formed.” If this be the case, it indicates that Paul saw in the priority of Adam’s creation the establishment of his right and responsibility as the head of the first home, the first church. This may explain why Adam is presented as the one who brought death into the world, and Christ, the second Adam, as the One Who brought life (Romans 5:12-21).


30 See Laurel Damsteegt’s “Women in Leadership: Musings on Some Mothers in Israel,” in this issue of the magazine.
Leadership in Praise and Worship: Learning From Past Mistakes

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The world of the professional rock/pop music industry was my life and existence for 16 years. I worked in South Africa and Europe as a composer, live performer, and session musician, and, for a time, was signed to the company Polydor Records in Hamburg, Germany. Thankfully though, the Lord, by His grace, finally brought me to my senses and rescued me from a situation that nearly cost me not only my temporal, but also eternal life.

From the day I gave my life to Jesus, I began intensive research into the language of music—from a musicological, physiological, psychological, and Biblical perspective. The issue of music and worship became the focus of my study, and soon a ministry developed that now takes me to countries around the world, where I share a Bible-centered understanding of this vital issue.

After many years of dealing first-hand with so many different issues connected to the music and worship controversy, I have come to some very basic conclusions as to what the underlying problems are—particularly from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. I will briefly summarize—not in a particular order of priority:

1. Worship, in the contemporary, “user-friendly” environment, has become more about pleasing man than God; thus, we have lost the prime focus of worship.
2. Because of the desire to “please ourselves” we have no desire anymore to correctly interpret the Scriptures on the topic of worship (a small collection of assorted texts that refer to drums, dancing, clapping, and the raising of hands has become the basis for our doctrine/teaching on this issue).
3. Many have developed a remarkable aversion to the Bible’s and Ellen White’s many clear, unambiguous statements on what God expects from us in the worship we bring to Him.
4. In a desperate attempt to attract and retain their unconverted youth and the “unchurched,” some in church leadership (from the loftiest positions down to the lay worship leader) have dared to receive instruction from the “broken cisterns” of Egypt.

As a result of the above factors, an increasing number of leaders are adopting all kinds of questionable practices in their worship and evangelistic services, creating much confusion, division, and bewilderment in many local churches, camp meetings and youth events.

The worship paradigm shift of the present age, and the apostasy that has often followed in its wake, is not something new. This has happened since the earliest days of man’s fall into sin; the Scriptures are replete with example after example. Amazingly, six thousand years down the line, it would appear that we still have not learned from history. But learn we must. For Mrs. Ellen G. White has warned us: “Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in...
which it is conducted. *God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed*” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 38, emphasis mine).

In light of the above counsel, perhaps some examples from Seventh-day Adventist history and the Bible might help to illustrate how easy it is for Satan to trap worship leaders into repeating past mistakes. We shall begin by first looking at the holy purpose of music.

**The Holy Purpose of Music**

Seventh-day Adventists have received abundant counsels from Ellen G. White regarding the purpose of worship music and where models of such music can be found.

She wrote: "Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God." ¹ In contrast to music found in a world where the strongest impulse is to employ music "to exalt self, instead of using it to glorify God," she counsels that "we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs." ²

A study of Mrs. White’s writings reveals that in music patterned after the heavenly choirs, the singing must be in “clear, soft tones,” “not with harshness and shrillness that offend the ear,” “not loud singing,” but “clear intonation,” “correct pronunciation,” and “distinct utterance.”³ Such music ought to have "beauty, pathos, and power."⁴

Good singing, she emphasized, is "subdued and melodious," like the music of the birds.⁵ Dramatic, operatic style is out of place.⁶ "Sharp, rasping voices" are likewise inappropriate.⁷ Thus, the voices of those singing need to be "modulated, softened, and subdued." Heavenly melodies are described as “cheerful, yet solemn,” but "not funeral tones."⁸

Mrs. White encouraged the tasteful use of musical instruments; however, she was emphatic that it is better never to have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to create “a bedlam of noise” that shocks the senses and perverts the worship. “The Holy Spirit never reveals [Himself] in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise."⁹

She stressed that music suited to the stage was foreign to the worship context. Forced or strained vocal deliveries that emphasize loudness, along with undignified, unrefined gestures and "acting attitudes," are out of keeping with the worship atmosphere of Heaven. The "softer," "finer," "sweeter," "more silvery strains" are "more like angel music," whereas opposite attributes tend to be driven by self-centered "love of praise."¹⁰

**Prophecy About Adventist Worship Music**

Sadly, instead of patterning our worship music on the heavenly choir, Sister White prophesied that shortly before the coming of Christ, leaders will import worldly patterns for our worship services—just as it happened at an infamous Indiana camp meeting in her day. She wrote: "The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit" (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 36, emphasis mine).

It was in connection with the above warning and counsel that Sister White spoke about history repeating itself in the future on the issue of music. In a November 1, 1903 letter, addressed to A.G. Daniells, the then-General Conference president, she wrote: ¹¹

Although many Adventists are familiar with Sister White’s warning and counsel regarding the Indiana camp meeting, very few are aware of what led to the events that occurred there, and what aspects of this occurrence would be repeated in our day.

“Praise and Worship Movement” in Early Adventism
There can be no doubt that, in some way or other, past events will be replayed and a departure from God’s plan will be experienced. It is also certain, that un-Biblical worship and music—as experienced in the “praise and worship” movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—will have a role to play in these recurrences.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century a growing number of Seventh-day Adventists became convinced that the church was very close to experiencing the outpouring of the “latter rain.” R.W. Schwarz, the Adventist historian who authored *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (subtitled as “Denominational History Textbook for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes”), summed up those events. He wrote that the convictions concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were “closely tied to the renewed emphasis on righteousness by faith that followed the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis. A.F. Ballenger, a popular speaker on the camp meeting circuit, did much to increase this expectation through his powerful sermon ‘Receive Ye the Holy Ghost.’”

S.S. Davis, who was deeply impressed by Ballenger’s sermon, had been having contact with a “number of Pentecostal Christians. He was deeply impressed by their enthusiasm, remarking to a fellow Adventist worker ‘they have the "spirit"; we have the truth, and if we had the "spirit" as they have, with the truth we could do things.’”

Davis had an opportunity to “do things” when in November 1898 he was appointed Indiana Conference revivalist. With the support of conference president R.S. Donnell, Davis got together a worship team that began traveling around the state. They used a variety of musical instruments to “heighten the effect of their emotional appeals. Listeners were encouraged to raise their hands to Heaven, to shout and clap in their quest for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”

It is interesting to notice how the whole movement unfolded: (1) the idea was inspired by another Christian group (in this case the Pentecostal churches); (2) the motivation was to bring “the Spirit” into the Adventist Church and promote “spiritual revival”; (3) this new way of worship was actively promoted by appointed church leadership and their worship teams; (4) a variety of musical instruments was employed to “heighten the effect of emotional appeals” (e.g., raising the hands, shouting, and clapping in a quest for the Spirit’s anointing).

Could it be that in our contemporary “praise and worship” practices, we are again following the same course—repeating a history that has been repeated as far back as the time of Old Testament Israel and before?

Let’s take a closer look at the events and the warnings given by Ellen White concerning this nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement. The events are recorded in a number of different places in her writings, thus indicating that it was not just an issue of passing consideration. The following is the essence of the statement as it appears in *Selected Messages*, book two: “The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation.

Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.”

It is of no small significance to note that Ellen White does not say that these future projections are her own opinion. She makes it clear that this was a revelation from God. It is also clear that God showed her that these events would be repeated at the end—“just before the close of probation.” What we need to do is to try and understand the musical character of these Indiana demonstrations. After all, Ellen White’s concept of confusion and noise, through the medium of music, may be very different from ours.

As we have shown earlier, Sister White was not opposed to the use of musical instruments per se. It was *the way in which the music was conducted* at the Indiana camp meeting that should be of concern to us. Ellen White wrote that we would “better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings.” Defective music served as a catalyst.

Elder S.N. Haskell described the instruments and music in this way: “They have an organ, one bass viol,
three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum, and perhaps other instruments which I have not mentioned. They are as much trained in their musical line as any Salvation Army choir that you ever heard. In fact, their revival effort is simply a complete copy of the Salvation Army method. . . ."17

The “band members” that played at this meeting were not just a group of amateur instrumentalists, bashing and clanging away in disorganized cacophony. They were trained and copied the musical style used by the Salvation Army. Compare any average Christian rock band of today with the music of a turn-of-the-century Salvation Army choir, and it would have to be stated that what Haskell heard was relatively tame by comparison—in volume and intensity. One can only imagine what Haskell would have described if he had heard and seen some of our amplified contemporary Christian worship rock bands. Today, with amplification, we are able to far exceed the levels of a nineteenth-century Salvation Army-style ensemble.

The question of whether or not—in the musical sense—we may be copying or exceeding the Indiana manifestations is, in light of what many others and I have witnessed, an established fact. If Ellen White described Indiana’s music as being “a bedlam of noise,” used by “satanic agencies,” then what would she say about what our desensitized twenty-first-century minds consider as music worthy of being presented to a Holy God?

Ellen White spoke of music and activities accompanying a false end-time “supposed revival," and said that the “senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions.” 20

Of course it was impossible, at the time, to picture how it would all unfold in the future. It would be very difficult to inspire Seventh-day Adventists to blatantly adopt musical and other concepts directly from the secular world—especially after the painful experiences of the Indiana apostasy.

But, it might be easier to influence some of the other Protestant denominations to absorb strange worship customs and then, through them, tempt Adventists to adopt what appears to be effective, Spirit-filled worship and missionary strategy. Let’s not forget that it was Pentecostal-style worship that so impressed S.S. Davis that he decided to bring it into Adventist camp meetings.

In ancient Israel Satan compromised God’s people by encouraging them to adopt the worship methods of their pagan neighbors. What did the enemy do when he could not get Balaam to curse the Israelites? Balaam saw that if he (a religious ally, a “prophet of God”) could convince them that the celebrations of the Midianites were not that bad, then they might just take the bait and be “delighted with the music.” 21

Is there any reason we should be immune from the same tactics today?

Warnings and Lessons From Ancient Israel

From the earliest indications given in Scripture, it can be clearly ascertained that God gave instructions—set the parameters—for how worship to Him was to be conducted. This is an incontrovertible fact. The record of the Scriptures also reveals the disaster and pain that resulted when mankind decided to ignore God’s order and followed their own inferior worship plan.

In Genesis 4 we read the account of Cain and Abel, and how an issue of worship became a catalyst in the very first murder that ever took place. Cain knew what God’s worship plan was, but he began to rationalize the Lord’s instruction. After all, he was a farmer who planted fruit. He was not a shepherd like his brother Abel. “Surely,” he might have reasoned, “God will accept an offering that is more in line with my situation.”

So, when the time came for the next offering to be given, Cain brought the harvest of his crops. Abel, as instructed, brought the “firstlings of his flock” (Genesis 4:3, 4). God showed that He accepted Abel’s offering but not Cain’s. Cain became angry and God tried to reason with him—to give him a chance. He told Cain that if he had done the right thing (followed the divine plan), then his sacrifice would have been accepted. He warned Cain that if he did not do the right thing, sin lay at the door. Cain chose not to listen. He argued with his brother, rose up against him, and, as the saying goes, the rest is history.
(Genesis 4:5-8).

The story of the golden calf (Exodus 32) is another example of man choosing to do it in his and not God’s way. The results of that saga were equally as disastrous. These two prime examples, among many others, clearly indicate the dangers of departing from God’s plan.

One of the clearest warnings given in Scripture regarding worship to God can be found in Deuteronomy, chapter 12. Here God made it very plain that there should be a distinction between the way in which the pagans worshipped their gods and how His people should worship Him: “Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (vv. 30-32).

The point is abundantly clear, and its application, in principle, to our present time is also more than apparent. Simply put, we are not to look at the world around us (Babylon, a fallen neo-pagan, secularized society that has found its way into many denominations that once claimed the “Bible and the Bible alone” as their standard of faith), and ask, “How do they do worship? We would like to do it the same way.” The Israelites made that mistake on a number of occasions, Davis and his Pentecostal-inspired “holy flesh” worship team made the same mistake at the turn of the nineteenth century, and we are making the same mistake in our present age.

God told the Israelites that they were to observe everything that He had commanded them. The matter of worship was not left up to the individual and his personal preference. The worship principles that we are to take from the Scriptures, as a guide for our praise and worship today, should be gleaned from the worship concepts practiced in the earthly sanctuary—which was a copy of the heavenly plan. This thought was most effectually expressed when Ellen White wrote: "From the sacredness which was attached to the earthly sanctuary, Christians may learn how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people. . . . The reverence which the people had anciently for the sanctuary, where they met with God in sacred service, has largely passed away. Nevertheless God Himself gave the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature.”

God was not trying to get His people to reflect the temporal/earthly in their worship. He was trying to lift them high above it, bringing them closer to the heavenly. He was the One Who gave the order for the worship plan knowing that man, in his fallen sinful condition, could not properly comprehend the significance of coming to worship in the presence of a holy God.

1 Chronicles 23:2-5 tells us about the divisions of the Levites (the priestly tribe). In verse 5 we read that 4,000 Levites were chosen to be musicians in the house of the Lord. On the surface it may seem a rather ordinary thing to do, to delegate the musicians for worship; we do this today. It’s just one of those things that is needed to have more effectual leadership and musicality in song and praise. But here, in this commission for 4,000 musicians, we see no common consideration; and I am not referring to the fact that there was such a large number chosen. More specifically, I am referring to the origin of these musicians.

The 4,000 musicians that were chosen were from the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe—men who were deeply committed to God. This concept has a very significant bearing on God’s modern-day Israel, that “royal priesthood” and “peculiar people” carrying out an important mission in the closing hours of this world’s history—a people who should endeavor to stay unspotted from the evil in the world around them.

If our worship music, as God’s modern-day Israel, is not carried out in spiritual commitment and obedience to God, then it is a dead, empty form, regardless of how active and vibrant (spirited) it may appear from the outside. It is possible to have all the signs of outward action, even favorable statistics in numbers, but still, within, to be as dead as a heap of dry bones.

God does not see the way that man sees. It is not enough that we simply direct our worship music towards God. We also want to make sure, as the Biblical musicians did, that our music is pleasing to...
God: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord . . ." (Psalm 19:14; see also Psalm 104:33, 34 and Romans 12:1).

Some Closing Remarks

False revivals are often promoted by leaders who have departed from the light God has given. They became people-pleasers, giving in to the demands of a culture of worship that focuses more on the demands of the creature than the Creator.

This present generation is controlled by the overriding desire to satisfy self; passion has become the standard that controls their lives (2 Timothy 3:1-5). They speak of being culturally relevant, but if there would be anything in any culture, past or present, that would not satisfy their desires, they would reject it just as readily as they reject anything else that does not suit their fallen taste.

Note on Author

*This article is excerpted from Brian S. Neumann, Stop—Before It Is Too Late, and is available through Amazing Discoveries (see the Web site, www.amazingdiscoveries.org).

NOTES

1 Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 594.
2 Ibid.
3 White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, pp. 143, 144.
4 White, Gospel Workers, p. 325.
5 White, Evangelism, p. 510.
6 Ibid.
7 White, Evangelism, pp. 507, 508.
8 Ibid.
9 White, Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 36.
10 White, Ms. 5, 1874, in Selected Messages, bk. 3, p. 335.
11 White, Letter 238, November 1, 1903, in Publishing Ministry, p. 175, emphasis mine.
13 Ibid., emphasis mine.
14 Ibid., emphasis mine.
15 White, Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 36, emphasis mine.
16 Ibid., emphasis mine.
18 White, Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 36, emphasis mine.
20 White, Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 36, emphasis mine.
22 White, Child Guidance, p. 540, emphasis mine.
Tomorrow's Today's Leaders: Cultivating Young Thinkers and Doers

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With the climax of the great controversy just before us, we can expect that the best is yet to come. The most compelling arguments have yet to be made for the Gospel; the most earnest appeals have yet to be uttered; the most persuasive examples of godliness have yet to be lived out. The greatest exhibitions of love, faith, commitment, and truehearted service have yet to be rendered to the Master by His people. But who will lead in these things? As God had Moses, Elijah, and Nehemiah in times past, He surely must have leaders for today.

I propose that the prolific leaders who will seal up the Gospel work are the youth right in front of us. They are regular Annie and Andrew Adventist, or perhaps they are unconverted and backslidden now. Wherever they are, when God gets hold of them, there will be no stopping them.

But the question remains, What will it take for our young people to get from here to there? What is the key for preparing the young people to fill the role God has created for them? An important, yet neglected, part of the answer lies in the book *Education*: “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character.”

The youth are individuals to whom God has bestowed special gifts for their own times. We must help them cultivate the power to think—power to think their own thoughts, to evaluate the merits of others’ thoughts, and to think outside of the box to find solutions to the problems facing the church and the world today. We also must help them cultivate the power to do—power to execute the visions they dream up, skill to accomplish the tasks they lay out, and wisdom to focus their energies judiciously, without growing weary with too many responsibilities.

Both thinking *and* doing are critical, for what good is a vision that stays in one’s mind? Or what value is there to ability that is not directed by purpose? The two must work hand in hand, and when they do, the possibilities are limitless.

This article is written from the perspective of a young person who has grappled mentally and experientially with the challenges facing our new generation of leaders. I have chosen to address some of the barriers young people encounter to developing the power of thinking and doing, that we may better help the youth meet them. The work of training up young leaders is a united, cooperative effort. Both young *and* old are important. The wisdom and experience of yesteryear should guide the energy and potential of today.

This article is a humble plea for help and guidance from the experienced leaders and role models who...
have gone before us. It is a challenge to those who have neglected their part. It is an expression of appreciation to those who have helped pave the way for the next—and, prayerfully, final—generation of young leaders. And it is an injunction to us all to invest in our young people, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

I. Barriers to Thinking

Gandhi, the leader of the Indian independence movement, once said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” The exhortation implies that before one can live out change, he first must think about what change he wants to see. In other words, the power to think necessarily precedes the power to do, for how will one know what to do unless he first considers what should be done? Thinking about change is no mean task. It requires an informed understanding of the current state of things, thorough and honest evaluation, wisdom to craft appropriate solutions, and the ability to count the cost of implementing those solutions.

The challenges facing the world today call for young men and women who have cultivated the power to think. These global challenges comprise both spiritual and secular considerations. Questions of faith and duty cry for attention, as do social problems such as poverty, hunger, racism, and human rights. God’s youth, endowed with talents from above, should be encouraged to devise both spiritual and secular solutions, as did Joseph and Daniel, their forerunners.

Many obstacles obstruct the development of this power of thought in our young people. This first section of this article will explore a few of those challenges so that we may be better prepared to help the youth meet them.

Challenge No. 1: No Time to Think

We are told that the purpose of true education is to “train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” Many institutions of higher learning espouse similar goals of training their young people to think critically and analytically, to teach students how to think instead of what to think. Yet this profession does not always correspond with the reality. The workload at these schools is often so overwhelming, the demands so great, the stress so wearisome, and the pressure to succeed so intense, that students simply do not have time to think. In today’s academic setting, one has to fight for time to ponder the great issues facing the world. Often there is only time to memorize and regurgitate the ideas of dead people in textbooks, leaving independent thought by the wayside. In some circles, the prevailing sentiment is that there is no good idea unless it has been thought of before. It is ancestor worship in a new form.

What are the results of such a routine? “The continual worry is wearing out the life forces.” The danger is that the reasoning powers will atrophy for lack of use and give way to acquiescence and apathy. Spirituality suffers as young people neglect time for self-examination, prayer, Bible study, and witnessing. Youth grow content to allow pastors, professors, politicians, and movie stars to do their thinking for them. They no longer ask, Does this make sense? Do I agree with this? Is it Biblical? Is there a better way?

All of this is not to discourage the youth from pursuing higher education, for there certainly is a place for it. Instead, we should admonish them to remember the Source and purpose of all true education and to make time for contemplating the important things. As God’s character is dwelt upon, “the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God.”

Challenge No. 2: Intemperate Living

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Challenge No. 2: Intemperate Living
Through temperance, Daniel and his associates rose to the heights of intellectual greatness so that it was said of them that "in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." God honored these youths' habits of temperance by crowning them with "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom." Similarly, young people today may become men and women of superior intellect by honoring the same immutable principles.

The work of cultivating a generation of leaders who have power to think and do is inextricably linked with the health message. But I fear that we do not rightly appreciate the role of temperance in the preparation of young, godly leaders. In fact, it appears at times that we have come to accept intemperance as the norm, sometimes glorifying it as a mark of true dedication. As medals of honor on a military officer's uniform, so have sleeplessness, overwork, and poor health become the badges of leadership. But how much more useful might God's youth be if they cultivated healthful habits?

"Blessed art thou, O land, when . . . thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!" The relation of diet to intellectual development should be given far more attention than it has received. Mental confusion and dullness are often the result of errors in diet.

"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep." The importance of regularity in the time for eating and sleeping should not be overlooked. . . . It is essential, especially in youth, that sleep should be regular and abundant.

"Unless the physical powers are kept in health by active exercise, the mental powers cannot long be used to their highest capacity." Right physical habits promote mental superiority. Intellectual power, physical strength, and longevity depend upon immutable laws.

"Our first duty toward God and our fellow beings is that of self-development. Every faculty with which the Creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable. Hence that time is spent to good account which is directed to the establishment and preservation of sound physical and mental health. We cannot afford to dwarf or cripple a single function of mind or body by overwork or by abuse of any part of the living machinery. As surely as we do this, we must suffer the consequences.

Through healthful habits, youth may develop the mental capabilities needed to address the complex problems of today, and the examples of our leaders are crucial for reinforcing those habits. "The observance of temperance and regularity in all things has a wonderful power. . . . The power of self-control thus acquired will be found one of the most valuable of equipments for grappling successfully with the stern duties and realities that await every human being.

Challenge No. 3: Thinking About the Wrong Things

Paul admonished the young Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts." This injunction finds particular relevance in our age of pervasive sensuality. Hollywood, sitcoms, and worldly music are doing their insidious work of unfitting young people for the exalted positions God would have them fill. Many young minds ripe with potential are degenerating under the influence of things as overtly objectionable as pornography and as seemingly innocent as daydreaming. The noble powers of the mind are dwarfed and enfeebled by lack of exercise on themes that are worthy of their contemplation. This in turn has an effect on the character, "for as [one] thinketh in his heart, so is he."

The Bible calls all, including youth, to fix their minds on things above. Said the apostle, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there
be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."21 Here, Paul provides the litmus test for suitable themes upon which to meditate: the true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and things of good report.

While contemplation of holy things will protect the youth against mental and moral depravity, it will also help them develop wisdom surpassing all worldly intellect. Such wisdom is needed in the generation of young leaders who will herald Christ’s soon return. Said King David, “Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.”22

Youth may possess the ability to outthink their enemies, teachers, and those advanced in years simply by contemplating God’s Word. The Scriptures possess a marvelous power to enlighten: “There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God’s Word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.”23

Adults may encourage young people to meditate on themes worthy of their contemplation by doing so themselves. Instead of exhorting young people to be better Bible students while themselves absorbing worldly music, television, and activities, adults may lead the youth to a better way through the power of a godly example. The seeds of such an approach will surely bear fruit in a wiser, nobler, and more conscientious class of youth.

II. Barriers to Doing

In addition to the power to think, it is also important that young people develop the power to do. Each age has had its own class of “doers”—men and women who have changed history through their words, writings, and conduct. Religious and secular movements alike have done much to revolutionize thinking and confront long-practiced injustices. The Protestant Reformation and early Advent movement are religious milestones, the impact of which reverberates through history to the present. The civil rights movement in the United States, the protest against military juntas in Argentina, and the pro-democracy movement in China are among the many secular movements emblazoned on the pages of history.

A common thread throughout these events is the active role of the youth. Young people have often been the catalyst and powerhouse for change—their daring, radical commitment challenging, and often toppling, the status quo.

At the end of time, should our situation be any different? We are told: “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin!”24

The Lord is preparing a people to take the three angels’ messages to the whole world in this generation, and the youth will be among those to finish the work. Yet in this critical work, Satan assures that every movement is met with friction. As in the law of physics, every action produces an equal and opposite reaction. The purpose of the following section is to explore some of the obstacles to the development of the power to do, and how we might help young people meet them.

Challenge No. 1: Lack of Mentorship and Role Modeling
Mentorship is a Biblically-endorsed principle, and there are many examples of it in Scripture. Paul mentored Timothy, Naomi mentored Ruth, and Christ mentored the disciples. The need for godly mentors is no less today. In our wicked world, we need godly men to teach younger males how to be God-fearing, courageous, humble leaders. We also need spiritual women to teach young ladies the value of being holy females in a world that calls them to be wholly feminist. To teach young women to be masters of circumstance without being either masculine or emasculating, yet womanly without being wimps, requires the insight of virtuous female role models. To avoid temptation, men should mentor men, and women should mentor women.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of godly mentors. Many adults who have been in the church long enough to be mentors are spiritual babes themselves. They are in need of mentors. In some cases the tables are turned, and godly young people must be role models for backslidden adults.

Spiritual men and women, qualified by wisdom and experience, should take young people under their wings. They should point them to Jesus and teach them the lessons of their own failings and successes. By so doing, they can help mold a new generation of leaders. Many youth would go far if they only had a caring adult who believed in them, guided them, persevered with them, and prayed for them.

Challenge No. 2: Not Knowing What to Do

Many young people would enter God’s service if they only knew where and how to direct their energies. They need a cause, something worth pouring their whole lives into. They need purpose to add meaning to their lives. To be a part of something greater than themselves provides a cure for inaction.

Of all people, Seventh-day Adventists, called to be the bearers of the final message of mercy to a perishing world, should recognize that they have a cause worth living and dying for. If youth are inspired with this vision and internalize it as their own, we can expect the work on Earth to close shortly. For this to happen, we must remind youth that their greatest purpose is not to make money, to get degrees, or to increase possessions. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so is their true purpose infinitely greater than these temporal things.

“He gives ‘to every man his work.’ Each has his place in the eternal plan of Heaven. Each is to work in cooperation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on Earth where we are to work for God.”

“God looks into the tiny seed that He Himself has formed and sees wrapped within it the beautiful flower, the shrub, or the lofty, wide-spreading tree. So does He see the possibilities in every human being. We are here for a purpose. God has given us His plan for our life, and He desires us to reach the highest standard of development.”

Challenge No. 3: Fear of Doing

Christ has a high calling for His young workers. With the great harvest before them and numerous opportunities to exercise their talents, there is also danger of overwork. In other words, knowing what to do can also be hindered by having too much to do. Young people should be encouraged to spend quality time in prayer, seeking help from God to distinguish between those tasks He has called them to take up, and those He has not.
Youth are often highly self-conscious, subject to peer pressure, and concerned with what others think of them. Taking a bold stand for God can be unpopular and intimidating. Being active in the Lord's service often brings opposition, and making decisions for Christ sometimes results in rejection by friends and family.

Nonetheless, young leaders facing opposition and uncertainty should be encouraged by God’s enduring words to Ezekiel: "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."27

History shows that when young people have been infused with boldness and tenacity, they are unstoppable. During the 1960s, young people in the United States endured beatings, insults, and death for civil rights. In the 1970s and early '80s, many students were “disappeared” and were tortured to death for protesting the totalitarian regimes of South America. In 1989, young intellectuals participated in pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and died in the notorious massacre that year. Countless other examples exist of young people who braved the torrent of opposition for principles they held dear.

With the cause of all causes to vindicate, God’s young leaders today can rely on their Heavenly Father to help them cultivate courage to work for Him. They are admonished: "Christ’s ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God."28 God has promised to take care of them. Said the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"29 When surrounded by the Syrian host, Elisha comforted his young companion saying, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."30 And the Lord Himself exhorted Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."31 All of Heaven is on our side: "The family of Heaven and the family of Earth are one."32 Therefore, the youth may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."33

Adventist young people today may also draw courage from the courageous young people who went before them: "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as Leader. We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."34

As God’s youth stand for Him, He stands for them; as they work for Him, He works for them.

* * * *

Our young people are not the leaders of tomorrow; they are the leaders of today. Heaven has charged them with the awesome responsibility of taking the final message of mercy to a dying world. In these final hours of Earth’s history, they may bear weighty responsibilities, lead in enterprise, and influence character as they develop the all-important power to think and do.

May God help us all to unite in the work of training this army of young people to take the three angels’ messages to the whole world, that we may see Christ come in this generation.

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, _Education_, p. 17.
3. White, _Education_, p. 17.
5. See White, _Selected Messages_, bk. 3, pp. 231-234.
7 Daniel 1:20.
8 Daniel 1:17.
9 Ecclesiastes 10:17.
10 White, *Education*, p. 204.
11 Psalm 127:2.
13 Ibid., p. 207.
14 White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 29.
17 2 Timothy 2:22.
21 Philippians 4:8.
22 Psalm 119:98-100.
29 Romans 8:31.
30 2 Kings 6:16.
31 Joshua 1:9.
34 White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196, emphasis added.