"Those who in their preaching pass by the great truths of God's word to speak of minor matters, are not preaching the gospel, but are dealing in idle sophistry. Let not our ministers spend time in the discussion of such matters. Let those who have any questions as to what they should teach, any questions as to the subjects upon which they should dwell, go to the discourses of the great Teacher, and follow His lines of thought. The subjects that Jesus regarded as essential are the subjects that we are to urge home today. We are to encourage our hearers to dwell upon those subjects which are of eternal moment."

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Editorial: Hunting Michael Dorner

You'd think that killing four people, taking hostages and engaging the LAPD in a firefight would be an indefensible act. But strangely, accused (and now deceased) cop killer Michael Dorner has a lot of fans. During the intensive manhunt in California last month, more than 25,000 people came to his defense - and that's just on two Facebook groups. "He killed CORRUPT cops, cops kill INNOCENT people!" said one of Dorner's many fans.(1)

There it is: a modern "justification" for murder. The system is corrupt, so almost anything is right for a little guy who feels he's been wronged.

If this were the only example we've had in recent history of members of the public applauding retaliation against the "system," we could write it off as anomaly. But it isn't. D.B. Cooper is remembered more as a folk-hero than as a criminal hijacker who made off with $200,000 in ransom money. People who suspected that Laurie "Bambi" Bembenek had been framed cheered when she escaped prison and fled to Canada: run, Bambi, run. Back in 2004, Marvin Heemeyer of Granby, Colorado became frustrated with zoning changes that threatened his business, so he fortified a Komatsu bulldozer, installed gunports, destroyed thirteen buildings in less than an hour, and made at least one deliberate attempt to injure or kill police. In spite of the devastation he caused, authorities actually had to destroy Heemeyer's "killdozer" and scatter the pieces to keep his many fans from trying to collect them as memorabilia.

People who lash out against "the system" almost always seem to generate a fan club, even if they're stealing, destroying property or taking lives. Why? Maybe we've watched one too
many little-guy-raging-against-the-powers-that-be movies, and we've come to think of vigilantes as heroes. Maybe Hollywood has romanticized one too many jewel thieves.

Forensic psychiatrist Carole Lieberman attempted to explain the public support that Dorner enjoyed: "People root for Dorner because he's seen as the underdog taking on police corruption and standing up for truth and justice." (2) His death, she suggests, elevates him to the status of martyr in some peoples' minds.

I don't really want to speculate on whether or not - and to what degree - Christopher Dorner may have been wronged by the LAPD. There seems to be enough of a question hanging over his termination to have prompted a re-examination of the case. What evangelists probably ought to notice is the way human dissatisfaction with life on a broken planet continually bubbles to the surface. We're all aware that there's something wrong with this place. Good people suffer. Wicked people prosper. Our dreams and aspirations are routinely dashed to pieces in unjust ways.

We demand that someone explains the existence of evil. More importantly, we want someone to do something about it. Michael Dorner was expressing his frustration with a fallen world in a horrifically unacceptable way, but when people discovered that he had a grievance, they can - at some level - identify with him. We've all been cheated of something. We've all been wronged by someone. And when the Michael Dorners of this world appear to be pushing back, some people cheer. It's wrong, but they do.

"But as for me," the psalmist writes, "my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind." (Psalm 73:2-5, NASB)

We all feel it: our world is absolutely unjust. And we need to remember that whenever we take our message to the public: most people live with a profound sense of helplessness. Is there anybody in charge of this place? Is there any hope that the record will ever be set straight?

Of all people, Seventh-day Adventists are well positioned, from our great controversy perspective, to affirm that there is something wrong with this place. We are also able to show that:

- **Somebody has noticed our pain**: "You have taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8, NASB)

- We are all part of the problem, and yet - by refusing to isolate Himself from our suffering - **God entered our world and suffered alongside of us**, died for us, and now holds out the promise that we can inherit His solution. "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." (Revelation 6:11,12)

- **Somebody is going do something about it**: "And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Psalm 21:4)

The power of our message to reach a frustrated world is revealed in the rest of the psalmist's lament. "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end." (Psalm 73:17)

The answer that people seek is found in the sanctuary. We left Eden with a sense of angst. We still feel helpless - we still know that something is wrong, and somebody needs to do something about it. Some people root for Dorner because he seems to be taking matters into his own hands. Far more people - given a chance to hear the gospel - will root for Christ, who truly did take matters into His own hands.

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In just a few days: Seven Days of Miracles

It's just a matter of days now: an opportunity for every single member in the NAD to focus on reaching an individual for Christ at the same time. You'll want to read the simple manual (it's short and easy - promise!) and download the bookmarks you'll need to help your members participate.

There's still time to get organized, because the program is so *amazingly* simple. It starts this weekend - March 23 - and it's designed to easily and comfortably fit into your Easter season plans. It will give you a powerful opportunity to remind your church that witnessing is simple - fun - and intentional.

[Click here to find out more about Seven Days of Miracles.]

Register now for a FREE Webinar: Preparing Clergy for Retirement

You do not want to miss this incredible **free webinar** scheduled at 1:30 EST, March 19. (that's tomorrow). Del Johnson, Administrator for Adventist Retirement Plans, presents *Preparing Clergy for Retirement*.

An amazing number of us will be retiring in the next ten years. Are you ready? Even if retirement is a little further away, there is no time like the present to start making plans. Your retirement is never as far away as you think it is!

Find more information and [register at our website.](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/...HHXMXak9S4VFAWm8z-pCY5VguHLYGo5aviT4eUMehWV7FLZ3Fma7AjKzR4rvv7Y%3D)

Teaching Braille Through the Fundamentals

Those with physical challenges, such as blindness and deafness, are usually an unreached group of people. Seventh-day Adventists have always championed the cause of “the least of these.” In November 2011, the Pacific Union gave a grant to the Freemont Seventh-day Adventist Church to carry out an educational ministry teaching Braille using our 28 Fundamental Beliefs. This ministry is all the more important since many blind Americans do not read Braille because they lost their sight as adults.

[Click here to read more](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/...HHXMXak9S4VFAWm8z-pCY5VguHLYGo5aviT4eUMehWV7FLZ3Fma7AjKzR4rvv7Y%3D) about Pastor Dexter Thomas' powerful ministry to the blind.

Facebook for Churches

Using Facebook to promote your church and its activities? There's a useful **free guidebook available online** from the good folks at churchjuice.com: Facebook for Churches. It provides all kinds of great tips and suggestions to make you look more inviting to the community. Quickly identify the mistakes you might be making at your church’s Facebook page, and discover the little touches that make it appealing to someone considering a visit to your congregation.

There is a typo in the book, unfortunately. Anybody who finds it will win a free subscription to Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism. :)

The Amaz-ing Resume

Nope, that's not mistake in the title. It really is an Amaz-ing resume, as in
the way it resembles an Amazon page.

A little creativity can go a long way when it comes to getting your message out. If you didn't notice it when it went viral in February, take a look at Phil Dubost's resume, which he posted online as an Amazon product page. After little more than a week, it attracted more than one million visitors.

There are lots of traditional ways to advertise your evangelistic event. But perhaps you have somebody in your church with a sense of fun and the technical know-how to help you advertise in a really creative way. It's inexpensive, and has a lot of publicity potential.

If You're going to Write a Blog, Don't Do This

The internet has made pundits, commentators and editorialists out of most of us. It's easy to make your voice heard; outreach-oriented people salivate over the possibilities. But as easy as it is to communicate online, it's also easy to miscommunicate. Most communication is visual: body language, facial expressions, subtle cues. When you're writing online, a lot of that disappears, and it's all the more important to be conscious of the impressions someone at the receiving end might be receiving. Blogging well will build an audience.

Blogging poorly will also build an audience, but not the way you hope. Check out these six blogging mistakes featured in a recent Mashable article. It's advice aimed at companies, but you'll probably find lots to think about when it comes to your outreach ministry and/or church.

Follow NAD Ministerial on Twitter

If you haven't started following NAD Ministerial on Twitter, you haven't lived! OK, perhaps it's not as earth-shattering as that, but we would love to keep in touch and let you know what we're up to. And it's easy. Just click the link to follow.

@NADpastors

C'mon - you know you want to help!

Remember what it was like when you got started with public evangelism? How challenging it seemed? Then remember how, later on, you discovered that someone had already discovered solutions to some of the problems that plagued you most - years ago?

Someone out there is just getting started. You have already faced a number of challenges, and God has blessed you with ideas to make life easier. Don't let them discover - years from now - that you've already solved some of their biggest problems. Let them discover it now!

Find out how to contribute to the discussion here.

Please write as if you are writing for an audience. We're happy to do some light editing, but if you address it personally to the editors or submit it in the form of bullet points, it's not nearly as useful.

Tools of the Trade: The Question Box

This is certainly nothing new: evangelists have been using question boxes in their public meetings for generations. Some of the braver ones are willing
to field questions live from the floor, but this can devolve into an undesirable situation quickly (see number three below).

So why feature the humble question box? Isn’t it a given that we all use one? Perhaps. But stop for a moment to consider what a powerful tool it really is.

If you’re not using a question box, start doing it. There are a number of benefits it provides to the evangelist:

1. The questions will give you a pretty good feel for your audience. They’ll tell you what people are thinking, and will give you a reality check on how well you’ve been communicating.

2. It allows you to cover subjects you don’t want to spend an entire hour discussing. If you’ve got a lot of guests who are living in common-law relationships, for example, have one of your team members submit a question: “I’ve always heard that Christians believe that living together before marriage is wrong. Do they get that from the Bible?”

3. Using a question box - rather than a live Q & A session - lets you avoid giving airtime to offshoots and extremists. If you have a smaller crowd and you know everybody well, no problem. But in larger crowds, beware that there are always a few people who are willing - no, wishing - for an opportunity to address your audience. If you want to stick with the basics, and avoid theological hobby horses and extremists, the question box will allow you to screen the questions in advance. Unfortunately, there are always some people who love to show a room how much they (don’t) know.

4. It allows you to promote future meetings. Invariably, questions will come up that will be answered later in your evangelistic series. Read the question out loud anyway - indicate what a phenomenal question it is - and give a date when it will be answered. Someone else just did your promotion for you!

5. It’s going to give you an education. Nothing will give you a feel for what’s really important like honest questions from the audience. And you will get questions you simply can’t answer without a lot of Bible study and prayer. The general public will have you spending more time in study than even some of your seminary professors. Be prepared to learn a lot about the Bible and human nature. And you thought you’d be teaching them.

Always establish ground rules for your question box right away, as you’re introducing it to your audience. A couple of good ground rules include:

a) It’s for BIBLE questions. “We’re only going to be answering Bible questions, so stuff that can’t be answered from the Bible doesn’t count. If you ask where I bought my horrible suit, that’s not a Bible question. If you ask why so-and-so said such-and-such, that’s not a Bible question, either. We’re going to keep it to Bible questions.”

b) ”Preachy” questions will not be answered. Sometimes people want to use the question box to preach at someone else in the room. You know, “why do some people wear jewelry when the Bible tells them not to?” You might say, right from the beginning, and with a smile on your face, “I won’t be answering ‘preachy’ questions - if it looks like you’re trying to deliver a message to someone else, we won’t be answering it. Because this is a place where everybody gets to feel great about studying the Bible together. Is that a fair rule?”
Seven Days of Miracles

What if every church member in the Division had an intentional plan to reach out to someone at the same time? Seven Days of Miracles provides that opportunity. Most of our members long to reach another individual for Christ, but for the most part, they wait for something to happen. They wait for God to provide an opportunity.

But what would happen if we all spent an entire week being very intentional about outreach? And what if it was such a simple program that every church member could participate - at his or her own level of ability, and within his or her comfort level?

On March 23, we’re suggesting that every church in the Division set aside ten minutes in the main worship service to encourage church members to think of one person they’d like to reach for Christ. (It can be more, but we’re aiming to have everyone think of at least one.) Once they think of someone, they write the name on a simple card designed to be kept in their Bibles. (The card will be downloadable from the project’s website well in advance: sevendaysofmiracles.com)

Then the church prays - but in a very specific way. “Lord, give me an opportunity to reach out to this person this week in some way. Give me a chance to bless them. By faith, this week - over the next seven days - I choose to believe that You will open that door and give me a chance to do something.”

The project is designed to teach and demonstrate intentionality in witnessing. It’s also designed to build faith as church members find God to be in harmony with their desire to reach out.

For each day over the next week, there will be a suggested activity posted at the website and some words of encouragement. On Sunday, for example, they might simply dedicate time to praying for the individual named on the card, asking God to give them an opportunity to make social contact on Monday. On Monday, they might pick up the phone and invite that person to meet them for lunch, or go for a walk, or something else that is completely social and non-threatening.

On Tuesday, they could thank God for allowing them to make contact, and ask for another opportunity on Wednesday or Thursday - but this time, they’ll make the contact more spiritual. Perhaps they’ll offer to pray with the individual, or share a piece of literature, or invite them to a small group Bible study - or simply mention what a difference God has made in their own lives. Something. Anything.

On the following Sabbath - on March 30 (Easter weekend) - the church sets aside time for members to share how God answered their prayers.

That’s it. It’s simple. Inexpensive. And intentional.

Keep watching www.sevendaysofmiracles.com for more details and resources between now and the project’s launch on March 23.
Teaching Braille through the Fundamentals

By Dexter Thomas

Those with physical challenges such as blindness and deafness are usually an under-reached group of people. Seventh-day Adventists have always championed the cause of "the least of these." In November 2011, the Pacific Union gave a grant to the Freemont Seventh Day Adventist Church to carry out an educational ministry teaching Braille using our 28 Fundamental Beliefs. This ministry is important since many blind Americans do not read Braille because they lost their sights as adults. As director of the program I took the children’s version of The 28 Fundamental Beliefs and I created an abridged Braille version with Braille exercises before each chapter. As a result, blind individuals could improve their Braille literacy and at the same time learn precious biblical truths. We chose the Children’s version of the 28 fundamental beliefs because of its brevity and simplicity.

We advertised our free Braille classes as a fun and exciting learning experience with food, friendship and fellowship. I knew food and fellowship was a great concept because the visually challenged tend to be highly isolated due to mobility issues. Schools for the blind, the National Federation for the Blind, blind camp members, visually challenged persons in the community and Lighthouse for the Blind were targets for advertising - inviting people to attend our "Braille Hangout Club." The food and fellowship not only attracted the visually challenged, but also their caregivers and Freemont church members, creating a warm, non-threatening ministry environment.

I was asked, "Why teach Braille when so many other services offer audio books and other listening materials?" The fact is that listening to a record is not reading. Listening to recorded materials does not teach sentence construction or spelling. Reading Braille is essential to a blind individual’s literacy. While teaching the Braille classes at the Camp for the Blind I met many blind individuals who were blind for over 20 years and had never read Braille before. “I never knew Braille was this easy, in fact it is easier than learning what I was previously taught,” said Mary during her first Braille lessons. Even sighted individuals were excited to learn a new language that was simple and practical.

I watched as hearts were turned, minds were changed and literacy among the blind increased during the Braille reading sessions. An underreached group related the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a group of people who cared for their well-being and educational status in today’s fast-paced world. Visually impaired individuals are used to persons rushing by them. They feel lonely in a sighted world. When we reached out to them we were able to give them confidence and assurance that there are still people in the world who care.

The Braille Fundamentals project allowed our church to be a part of a compassionate ministry to an often-ignored community. When Christ said “the least of these” He was talking about the crippled, blind, deaf, disabled, and poor. Our prayer is that such a ministry will spread throughout Unions as churches partner with the disabled and their families for their wholeness and to give them a foretaste of the unconditional love and acceptance we will all experience in the Earth made new.

Pastor Dexter Thomas is the Assistant Pastor at Beacon Light Seventh-day Adventist church in Oakland, California.
These days it seems like every business — from dentistry to software — has a blog. However, just because everyone has a blog doesn’t mean everyone is doing it right. Whether you’re just launching a blog for your business, or you’ve been blogging for awhile, it’s easy to fall into some blogging bad habits.

As a small business owner, I try to truly embrace the unique opportunity that social media offers. I’ve been experimenting with our company blog for years; here are some lessons I’ve learned along the way, including the mistakes.

1. Mistaking your blog for a promotional platform.

Many small business owners rush to blogging, and to social media in general — they see it as free advertising. However, when your blog posts focus too much on your company, products and services, your blog is no longer useful or credible. Few readers will return to read about why you’re so awesome week after week.

If the bulk of your posts are company or product-centric, you’ll need to change the way you think about your blog. Focus your content so it offers information that’s useful and relevant to whatever your particular community cares about. For example, my company helps small businesses incorporate, file for trademarks and launch their business from a legal perspective. Therefore, we try to cater our topics toward whatever would help small business owners run their companies, from leadership and employee management tips to small business marketing and taxes.

Some experts advise on keeping a 90:10 or 75:25 ratio when it comes to educational vs. promotional content. You don’t necessarily have to stick to some magic equation, as long as you keep your audience’s needs and interests at the forefront of your blog strategy.

2. Not posting consistently.

It’s easy to start a blog, but not so easy to keep it going. A small business blog usually fails due to lack of commitment or resources. A HubSpot report found that companies who blog frequently and consistently benefit the most from their blogging efforts.

Before launching your blog, determine the ideal posting frequency to keep your blog fresh,
for example, once or twice per week. If you need to, scout out your competitor’s blogs to
gauge the average number of posts per week. In an ideal world, you should create a
quarterly editorial plan for your upcoming post topics. And during downtimes, create a
handful of general (non time-sensitive) topics that can be fed into the blog whenever the
schedule gets tight.

3. Not engaging with your readers.

A blog isn’t a press release or static web page where information simply flows from you to
the reader. Social media uniquely provides a direct link to interact with your customers and
community; it would be shame not to take advantage of the opportunity. If you’re fortunate
enough to have engaged readers who comment on your blog posts, be sure to acknowledge
them – whether by thanking them for some kind words, answering a question, providing
further details, or inserting yourself in a conversation.

While everyone will differ on the level of community moderation and control, the following
is true: If you want to encourage engagement, you need to make it easy for your readers to
leave comments. Log-in systems and captcha forms help limit spam or trolls, but they also
make it difficult for the casual reader to leave a comment.

4. Being too SEO-focused.

Blogging can have an amazing impact on your keyword rankings and organic search traffic.
I encourage businesses to develop an SEO strategy for their blogs. Identify the top keywords
for your business and optimize your posts with those keywords. Tools like Scribe or Yoast
can help you with search engine optimization.

However, the most successful business blogs write for humans, not machines. Don’t hire a
poor quality SEO company that churns out posts filled with specific keywords and phrases,
without even thinking whether the content is useful or easy to read. That strategy might
drive visitors to your blog, but those visitors will never stay, read, engage with or share your
content if it’s poor. Keywords don’t create credibility. Write posts that are interesting,
sprinkle in keywords now and then, and your efforts will be rewarded.

5. Not using images the right way.

While many new bloggers focus on the words, images are the best way to grab people’s
attention quickly. In addition, breaking up longer posts with images that illustrate what
you’re talking about will help keep readers interested and combat our limited attention
For many small business blogs, the problem with images boils down to resource allocation. You may expect it to take you one hour to write a post, but only a few minutes to find an image. However, finding the right image is rarely that easy.

Before you begin searching, take a few minutes to think about the main concept, feeling or idea your post is trying to convey. You should always use images that are visually engaging, aesthetically pleasing and relevant to your post. Your image needs to express a concept and not just look like you picked the first stock image that came your way.

In addition, many small businesses run afoul of copyright law and fair use practices by thinking they have the right to use any photo found on the Internet. The best way to steer clear of trouble when selecting images for your blog is to use ones with Creative Commons licensing. You can search for Creative Commons–licensed images on Flickr, on the Creative Commons website or via CC search engines like Compfight or Photo Pin.

6. Not listening to your readers.

Not sure what kind of content appeals to your audience the most? It’s not a mystery: Your blog analytics can provide valuable insight into what types of posts are resonating with readers.

By failing to pay attention to analytics, you’re ignoring valuable information that can take your blog to the next level. Continually track the responses to each blog post. Tinker with different topics, titles and types of posts. Which posts generate the most activity (comments, shares, likes)? Increase the frequency of the most popular.

What are some of the top lessons you have learned with your business blog?

Photo via iStockphoto, Erikona