Ellen White: Supporting, Seldom Seen

By Dan Martella

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experienced a parent extending their arms to give me their child to hold in front of a congregation, and my knowledge from book reading couldn't fully prepare me for this real life, real ministry experience.

Stories We Tell: Terrorists in Churches
By Dan Jarrard

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches. They have been identified as: Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Fightin, Bin Complainin, and Bin Missin. Their leader, Lucifer Bin Workin, trained these groups to destroy the Body of Christ. The plan is to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy.

450 NAD Pastors Eligible for Retirement

A diverse group of thought leaders from the NAD were assembled September 6-8 to address the need for a comprehensive plan for the development of pastors. They were reminded of the imperative of this task when they looked at the demographic data revealing that 450
Adventist clergy in the NAD are already eligible for retirement and for the next several years over a hundred more will be added to their ranks every year.  Read More

JOIN THE DISCUSSION ON FACEBOOK

Let's Talk About Prop-Enhanced Preaching

Last Sabbath one of our local church elders participated in the message delivery by assuming the character of Dr. Otto V. Grunkenkleiner, complete with white lab coat, marking pens in his pocket, and a thick German accent. He shared with us how the Holy Spirit is like the wind - we cannot see Him, but we can see the evidence of His work. To help us catch the drift, Grunkenkleiner pulled out an electric leaf blower. Duct taped to the end of the leaf blower was a paint roller handle with a roll of toilet paper on it. When he turned on the leaf blower, ribbons of toilet paper went flying out over the congregation. The kids loved it. So did the adults. And the lesson hit home.

In a future issue of Best Practices we would like to feature your best ideas for prop-enhanced preaching. Write us your favorite prop-enhanced preaching idea in 100 - 300 words, and send with it your picture and title. Deadline: October 15.
Ideas, Events, Resources, Announcements

I Believe Study Guides - Second-hand faith and hand-me-down morals can only take us so far. At some point we either abandon that which was passed down to us, or we re-examine it, study the evidence for ourselves, adjust our thinking, and make it our own. It's painful to watch grown adults try to squeeze their lives into someone else's beliefs and attempt to defend something they don't really believe. Eventually we must each face the questions: "Who am I?" and, "What do I believe?"

I Believe features articles and stories by Christian author, David B. Smith, for you to ponder and explore. These are excellent study guides that can be used individually, or in small groups, Sabbath School classes and other discussion-oriented settings (PDF study sheets are available to print out). Each study covers one of the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Adventist church, but does so in a fresh new way.

inSpire 2014 Writing Contest - You are invited to participate in the inSpire 2014 Writing Contest. We want to shine the light on creative writing that has inspirational value and can turn readers' hearts to God. We know there are a lot of great writers out there and we're eager to read what you've written. This event is sponsored by Pacific Union Conference Church Support Services, but is open to Seventh-day Adventist church members throughout the North American Division. Submissions will be accepted from September 16 - October 27, 2014.
Previous resource links:

- Ministry Magazine
- Six Excellent Reasons to Talk About Money From the Pulpit
- Millennial Matrix
- Help! I'm an Overwhelmed Leader
- Adventist WestPoint
- 9 Tips to Improve Your Church's Welcome Segment

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Ministry Partners

Ellen White: Supporting, Seldom Seen

By Dan Martella

My first year college Greek class was filled with young ministerial students who were eager to step into their pulpits and wow folks with their command of the biblical languages. Knowing that real-life people in our churches are far more interested in the practical encouragement found in Scripture, our professor wisely brought our “heads in the clouds” class back down to earth when he said, “When you preach, use the Greek like a good pair of underwear — Supporting, but not seen.”

Through the years I have found this pulpit ministry insight to not only hold true with the Greek, but with the writings of Ellen White as well. The “Red Books” are chock full of inspired insights that shed light on the biblical passages and brighten the path in our walk with Jesus. My personal journey with Jesus has been blessed by this gift, and my preaching ministry has delivered deeper, richer veins of golden truth through the insights gained from the writings of this dear woman. And yet I seldom quote her in my sermons.

Why? Because I am a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who believes that ultimate authority for what we preach and teach is found in the Bible. The Bible is the written Word of God. An infallible revelation of His will. The standard of character. The authoritative revealer of doctrine.[i] That is why the apostle Paul tells us to “preach the Word,”[ii] and why Ellen White tells us that “the words of the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be heard from the pulpit.”[iii]

I am also a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who has a profound respect and gratitude for the gift Ellen White’s writings still bring to the life and ministry of our church today. I believe that this requires a proper and balanced understanding of the relationship shared between the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. We have always believed that Ellen White’s writings are “a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light (the Bible).”[iv] When our sermons strike that kind of balance, Adventist preachers not only affirm the gift of light seen in the writings of Ellen White, they affirm the even greater light found in the Word of God.

Lastly, I am a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who is committed to the mission of the church. We are not here just to talk to ourselves – we are here to win our friends for Jesus Christ. Every ministry of the church – even the Sabbath morning worship services – finds its meaning and purpose as we meet people where they are and lead them to the foot of the Cross. Every Sabbath I know that there will be non-Adventist guests in my church – People who are unchurched. People who belong to other faiths. People who have never heard of Ellen White. People who wonder what Adventists are all about. People who wonder if we are truly Jesus-following, Bible-teaching Christians. If I frequently quote Ellen White as a source of authority for what I have to say, my guests are likely to question the integrity of our church’s message. If I preach Christ from the Scriptures, with uncited insights from Ellen White’s writings tucked into my sermon, then my guests are more likely to embrace the relevance of our Christ-centered message.

In his book, Feed My Sheep, H.M.S. Richards tells the story of the time when he was a little boy and Ellen White showed up unannounced at the church his father pastored. Out of respect for the prophet, the young pastor offered...
her the pulpit. Knowing that God had given Pastor Richards a message for the people, Ellen White declined the invitation and took her place in the congregation.

After the worship service the preacher and the prophet fell into conversation. “Your sermon helped me spiritually; it blessed me,” she told him. Then she added, “If you keep preaching as you do, your voice so high and strained, you’ll die in a few years.” Over the next 15 minutes she taught him more about public speaking than he had learned in all of his homiletics courses at Battle Creek College.

The young pastor had one more thing to ask the prophet – “Sister White,” he said, “I’d like to ask you how to use your writings in my public work. I hear one man say this, another that. Some men bring in a pile of those red books this high. Some men read quotations. Some men do this, some men do that. What should we do? How should we use your writings in our public work?”

The prophet answered wisely, "When you decide to preach on a subject, go to the Bible and study that subject thoroughly. Read everything the Bible says on the subject and anything in connection with it. Study it thoroughly and exhaustively from the Bible. Then go to these writings that the Lord has given to me and read everything on that subject and see if there are not some rays of light focused on those scriptures. Then (and here's the important part of it) go to the people and preach the message to them out of the Bible." [v]

Ellen White's writings directly conclude the matter by telling us, "The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word ... Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God."

[v]

Is there a place for the writings of Ellen White in our preaching? You bet! Often supporting, seldom seen.

[ii] 2Timothy 4:2
Ministry Partners

Making Ellen White Teen-Friendly

By Cindy Tutsch

“I asked my Bible class how they felt about Ellen White, and all I heard were groans and arghhhhs!”

An academy Bible teacher was describing the reaction of the teens at his school to the name Ellen White. “So,” the teacher continued, “I asked my students to unpack their response. ‘Why do you feel this way about Ellen White? What Ellen White books have you read? What experience have you had with her writings that have given you these negative feelings?’

Ultimately, the class admitted that their perceptions were based largely on what they had heard others say about Ellen White, and not on their own personal experience reading her writings. At this point, the teacher suggested that the class study together Ellen White’s book *The Desire of Ages* in order to make an informed evaluation based on their own experience.

The outcome? Students discovered that Ellen White’s book on the life of Christ had immediate relevance in their spiritual life. Many students began marking and underlining their copies and were eager to discuss their favorite citations in class discussion.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church holds that the writings of Ellen White pass the biblical tests of confession in Christ and are in harmony with Scripture.[i] Adventists believe Ellen White communicates messages from God through her writings for the edification, encouragement, and consolation of the church. Thus, it is important that teens understand that her writings are a gift from God that can help Christians know Jesus and experience His love, obeying His teachings out of a response to God’s wonderful grace.

So, how do we introduce teens to the writings of Ellen White?

**Encourage Participation** – First, don’t underestimate kids’ ability to appreciate Ellen White’s writings, when presented in a way that allows them to participate. Recently, I brought a group of children ages 10 – 13 together to read and discuss Ellen White’s first vision, found on pages 13 – 20 of *Early Writings*. I gave each child their own beautiful copy of the book and invited them by turn to read a paragraph aloud. During the reading, anyone could raise a question or make a comment about what they were hearing. There was so much discussion I ultimately had to limit the group to one comment per paragraph so we could finish the six pages in one afternoon![ii]

**Tell Stories** – Everyone enjoys a good story! Consider telling stories about Ellen White to your youth group. If you need resources for stories about Ellen White and Adventist heritage, check out the plethora of offerings at the Adventist Book Center, either in-store or online. Did you know, for instance, that Ellen White allowed the students living in her home to have a weekly pillow fight? Or that her shortest vision concerned the whereabouts of a hairnet stolen by one of her boarders? (http://visionary4kids.org/?p=331) Or that the last of Ellen White’s 2,000 visions focused on God’s great love for the youth and His desire that they be saved in His kingdom?

**Organize Field Trips** – The NAD Ellen G. White Research Centers, found at Andrews University, Oakwood
University, and Loma Linda University, have artifacts, pictures, and memorabilia about Ellen White, her writings, and her contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Consider organizing a field trip to one of those centers with the youth of your school or your church. If you live in the northeast part of North America, perhaps you could plan an excursion that includes a visit to the White Estate at the General Conference, where your teens can lift a Bible that Ellen White held in vision, see a large wall mural of her first vision, and other artifacts about her life. Or visit Elmshaven, Ellen White’s northern California home near Pacific Union College, or Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan, or take a podcast tour to Adventist heritage sites in the northeastern United States, hosted by 11-year-old Kaili Kimbrow.[iii]

Bring Them Home at the End of the Day
What would be your response as a pastor to the suggestion that you allow the teens of your church youth group, or even your own family, to state their feelings, positive and negative, about Ellen White? Before your hackles rise too high, consider this instructive citation from the pen of Ellen White: “The youth should have a chance to give expression to their feelings.”[iv]

But let’s not stop after we have allowed our teens “to give expression to their feelings.” Let’s lead them on to “test and see” for themselves, to evaluate Ellen White’s personal spiritual benefit to them, not on the basis of others’ opinions, but from their own experience. By encouraging the students to read, journal, underline, and discuss the spiritual concepts found in Ellen White’s writings, many students I have known have experienced a complete transformation of attitudes toward the gift of prophecy.

Teaching our children to appreciate God’s prophetic word takes effort, creativity, persistence, gentleness, patience, and tenacity. But it will be worth it all when parents, teachers, and pastors see “the crown, the robe, and the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed.”[v]

Cindy Tutsch is a retired associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She currently serves as an evangelism consultant to the Columbia Union Conference.

Additional Resources
Some teens really struggle to read and understand the nineteenth-century language that Ellen White uses. To help communicate successfully with youthful readers, the Ellen G. White Estate has worked with selected authors and editors to publish a number of Ellen White books in con-temporary language. Sentences and paragraphs have been condensed and language modernized. But every effort has been made to be faithful to the content, ideas, and principles set forth by Ellen White. In no case has the thought been changed. These adaptations are not intended to take the place of the original publications. But by introducing teens to Ellen White in language that they can understand, it is hoped that young readers will find her writings so compelling, interesting, and inspiring that they will ultimately explore the deep spiritual treasures found in her standard writings.

The White Estate has posted audio versions of nearly 50 of Ellen White’s standard and adapted books that teens can download free to their MP3 players. These audiobooks can be accessed at http://bit.ly/1kAgVmt. A phone app of all of Ellen White’s writings can be downloaded from the App Store / Google Play.

Ellen G. White Print Books in English Suitable for Teens – available at ABCs or online

- Messiah by Jerry Thomas (an adaptation of The Desire of Ages)
- A Call to Stand Apart (a footnoted adaptation of selected EGW writings on the topics of salvation, relationships, wellness, social justice, careers, and the authority of Scripture) The adapted version is not available online.
- **The Beginning of the End** (an adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*). It is the first volume in a five-book series known traditionally as the Conflict of the Ages Series.
- **Royalty and Ruin** (an adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, with biblical texts from the NKJV)
- **Humble Hero** (an adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*).
- **Unlikely Leaders** (an adaptation of *Acts of the Apostles*).
- **Love under Fire** (an adaptation of *The Great Controversy*).

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Child Dedication

A Legacy of Hope
By Ivan L. Williams, Sr.

I still remember it like it was yesterday. I was serving as a pastor right out of college in my first church as a single twenty-one year old. I had never conducted a child dedication before. I was nervous and anxious about the service, but particularly about holding the baby girl up before the family and praying over her. I had never experienced a parent extending their arms to give me their child to hold in front of a congregation, and my knowledge from book reading couldn’t fully prepare me for this real life, real ministry experience.

While conducting my first child dedication service it struck me; this was a deeply meaningful service that would be remembered and cherished by the parents, grandparents, godparents[1], extended family and friends for the rest of their lives. Before this experience, however, I hadn’t really given it real depth of thought; after all, I was young and single with no children. But after conducting the service and spending time in fellowship with the family of the baby, I was left with a deep impression or conviction about the service in my first year of ministry. My conviction was simply a realization that this service was a legacy of hope for the parents and supporting participants.

As a pastor, I have come to believe this legacy of hope is born out of the simple faith of the parents who bring their child to the Lord in a public way, and who involve family and friends in their commitment to give their child a strong spiritual foundation. It is also born out of following the biblical tradition of godly parents in scripture bringing their children to the Lord, (1 Sam. 1:11, 27, 28 and Luke 2:22-24), and also from a real hopeful expectancy that the child will grow up to have an amazing impact on the world in which they have been birthed.

I have never dedicated a child where parent(s) haven’t had real hope and optimism about their child’s future. Many desire and project through the child’s dedication service the fulfillment of Solomon’s wise words so their children won’t ultimately depart from their parental and Godly teaching. Other parents even place all hope for the future of the family in this dedication of the child. Whatever the nuances, purposes, or intents of the parents may be, children are to be dedicated to God.

Foundations in Biblical Principles

1. God is the Creator of all children. Psalm 139:13, 14
2. Jesus died for all children. John 3:16
4. Jesus admonished adults to become like children to enter heaven, and condemned those who mistreated or caused children to stumble. Matthew 18:1-6

Since all children are precious to God, our practice should reflect this principle.

Spirit of Prophecy References
Let ministers take little children in their arms and bless them.--The mothers that brought their children to Jesus, did well. Remember the text, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Let mothers now lead their children to Christ. Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them.

Review and Herald March 24, 1896. (Pastoral Ministry p. 167.1

Baby Jesus was dedicated at the temple.--The priest went through the ceremony of his official work. He took the child in his arms, and held it up before the altar. After handing it back to its mother, he inscribed the name "Jesus" on the roll of the firstborn.

Desire of Ages p. 52, Pastoral Ministry p. 167

Hannah dedicated her child to God from birth.--The burden which she could share with no earthly friend she cast upon God. Earnestly she pleaded that He would take away her reproach and grants her the precious gift of a son to nurture and train for Him. And she made a solemn vow that if her request were granted; she would dedicate her child to God, even from its birth.

Patriarchs & Prophets p. 570. Pastoral Ministry p. 167

Hannah and her husband, in an act of worship, confirmed the dedication of their child.--In her prayer, Hannah had made a vow that if her request were granted, she would dedicate her child to the service of God. This vow she made known to her husband, and he confirmed it in a solemn act of worship, before leaving Shiloh.

Parents should give their children to the Lord.--Parents, give your children to the Lord, and ever keep it before their minds that they belong to Him, that they are lambs of Christ's flock, watched over by the true Shepherd. Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord; and it is said of him, "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words [the Lord's words through Samuel] fall to the ground."

Signs of the Times Oct. 27, 1881, Pastoral Ministry p. 167, 168

Finally, in the journey of ministry some questions have arisen regarding the dedication of children not born into an Edenic type family (father and mother who are married to each other.) This may include questions about the dedication of children:

- Born out of wedlock
- Born through the process of artificial insemination to a single parent
- Adopted by extended family (such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc.)
- Or Foster children

These questions usually arise out of adult issues like parental lifestyle, modern complex family issues, and congregational or leadership preferences. However, neither the Bible, nor the Spirit of Prophecy stipulates a different dedication for children born out of wedlock. Children born out of wedlock can be a sensitive issue for the
church, and it should be handled with the care of Jesus so as to win the parent(s).

The child’s dedication should not be used as a means to address the adult/parental choices, and the preparation for the dedication can be a teaching moment for the parent(s). The service is a God-given opportunity to build bridges, foster relationships, and possibly even rekindle a waning love for God. The service also provides an opportunity for the congregation to witness and participate in the bestowing of God’s grace. Erring in grace, spiritual judgment, and the lack of relational intentionality has caused many to only have a view of the church through the eyes of bitterness and misunderstanding. The more complex and broken the family becomes, the more prayer and family relationship intentionality is needed in this service.

Another principle that guides our practice is implied in the following statement from the *SDA Minister’s Handbook* regarding the request of non-members to have their child(ren) dedicated:

> At times some who are not members of the church may be moved to seek this service of dedication for their children. Because of this request and perhaps through this service, they may be brought into fellowship with the congregation.

*SDA Minister’s Handbook* p. 186

We can conclude that child dedication services can be a way of reaching families in and outside of the church as they seek to dedicate themselves to raising their child(ren) according to the values of God’s kingdom. Surely we should desire to support them on this spiritual journey to give them a legacy of hope.

For more information please refer to:
The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* p.185-188.
The *Seventh-day Adventist Elder’s Handbook* p.162-164.

[1] Godparents are spiritual guardians chosen by the parents to take an interest in the child's upbringing, personal and spiritual development.
By Dan Jarrard

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches. They have been identified as: Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Fightin, Bin Complainin, and Bin Missin.

Their leader, Lucifer Bin Workin, trained these groups to destroy the Body of Christ. The plan is to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy.

However, there have been reports of a sixth group. A tiny cell known by the name Bin Prayin is actually the only effective counter terrorism force in the church. Unlike other terrorist cells, the Bin Prayin team does not blend in with whoever and whatever comes along.

Bin Prayin does whatever is needed to uplift and encourage the Body of Christ. We have noticed that the Bin Prayin cell group has different characteristics than the others. They have Bin Watchin, Bin Waitin, Bin Fastin, and Bin Longin for their Master, Jesus Christ to return.

NO CHURCH IS EXEMPT.

(However, you can spot them if you Bin Lookin and Bin Goin)

Dan Jarrard is speaker/director for Message of Hope Ministries in Athens, Alabama. This story has been adapted from a piece written by Dennis Smart, a retired Episcopal clergyman.
A diverse group of thought leaders from the NAD were assembled for three days to address the need for a comprehensive plan for the development of pastors. They were reminded of the imperative of this task when they looked at the demographic data revealing that 450 Adventist clergy in the NAD are already eligible for retirement and for the next several years over a hundred more will be added to their ranks every year.

“If the projections are correct we will soon need to double the number of new hires every year to keep up with attrition,” said Dave Gemmell, Associate Director of the NAD. “This presents us with a unique opportunity to study our current development system and see if there are ways that we can increase the quantity and quality of pastors.”

The summit focused mostly on the development of pastors leading up to ordination including recruiting, undergraduate and graduate education, and internships. Thought leaders consisted of eight administrators, fourteen educators, five pastors and seven ministerial leaders. The large group was divided up into six small groups populated with diversity. Each group worked through their individual journey in ministry, reflected on an immense amount of data, and then made recommendations to the larger group for prioritization. Next the large group was broken down into three affinity groups consisting of educators, administrators, and pastors and ministerial leaders. Their assignment was to take the ideas and turn them into actionable recommendations.

Attendee Craig Carr commented “It was my privilege to be involved in this ground-shaking endeavor and it will continue to be my prayer that tangible, relevant initiatives become ground-breaking in scope and effectiveness across our division.”
Some of the ideas included:

- The formation of a pastoral council to address pastoral development
- Ministerial to develop guidelines for young people to gain experience in ministry through taskforce positions
- A taskforce to develop a strategy for pastoral recruitment
- A blue ribbon committee to study ways to improve the effectiveness of the praxis experiences in M. Div. program and NADEI
- BMTE to look at the efficacy and practicality of giving pastors a year or two of field experience before they go to the seminary.
- To establish a council of educators and ministerial leaders to coordinate learning outcomes of ministerial students.
- To develop on-line courses for those pre-M.Div. students who have not taken theology degrees at one of our colleges or universities to fulfill their prerequisites for the M. Div. program

"Although this summit had no formal authority to act we believe these recommendations will be seriously considered by the various bodies, wrote Dan Jackson, President of the NAD."
6 Excellent Reasons to Talk About Money From the Pulpit

If you don’t want the church to teach about money because it’s “none of their business,” you should change the way you see it.

As a pastor, I’m well aware of how many people have the assumption that “all pastors want to talk about is money.” The funny thing is, after 20 years in ministry and communicating regularly with thousands of pastors, I can firmly assert that talking about money is one of our least favorite things to do, especially in our culture where personal finances are very ... personal.

But the Apostle Paul wrote to a younger pastor in Ephesus named Timothy once and told him to “teach and urge these things ... there is great gain in godliness with contentment ... but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation ... for the love of money is the root of all evil. ... As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches” (1 Timothy 5:2-17 ESV).

In other words, good doctrine (which literally means “teaching”) demands that we address the issue of money. Here are several reasons why the church NEEDS to talk about finances ...

- Money is a gift from God to be managed for a season, not an earned commodity to be consumed for pleasure alone.
- How we use money is a matter of worship—it demonstrates our values and what is important to us.
- It’s pretty obvious people NEED help in this area—we’re strapped and stressed because of terrible management.
- Generosity is a key value of the Christian life, for the church and for the individual Christian.
- Money needs to serve the needs of man and the causes of justice, rather than man serving under the tyranny of money.
- Money makes missions happen, which is God’s chief business and area of concern—the spread of the gospel deserves to be resourced.

If you don’t want the church to teach about money because it’s “none of their business,” you should change the way you see it. Nobody in the church (at least not my church) wants to see your budget or bank statements. We simply want to help people get healthy financially and become generous with our resources so that everyone experiences God’s blessings. In other words, my church doesn’t want something from you, we want something for you.

- Print Version

Brandon Cox is Lead Pastor of Grace Hills Church, a new church plant in northwest Arkansas. He also serves as Editor and Community Facilitator for Pastors.com and Rick Warren's Pastor's Toolbox and was formerly a Pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. In his spare time, he offers consultation to church leaders about communication, branding, and social media. He and his wife, Angie, live with their two awesome kids in
Bentonville, Arkansas.

More from Brandon Cox or visit Brandon at http://brandonacox.com/
Help! I'm an Overwhelmed Leader

Five steps to take when you feel swamped.

As a leader, there have been numerous times when I have been in over my head with the challenges and opportunities I was facing. God seems to call me to huge tasks.

I suspect if you’re a leader, you understand. I think He does that to many people! It keeps us humble. And dependent—on Him!

Regardless of how comfortable a leader may be in his or her position, there are times when …

- The leader has no answers …
- He or she has exhausted every bit of knowledge gained …
- The current strategies don’t seem to work anymore …
- The situation is beyond the current plans and systems …
- People are complaining …
- It seems you’re on a treadmill—getting nowhere …
- Some days, you leave thinking you accomplished nothing—maybe even most days.

Ever been there? Did you think someone was talking to me about you?

When the leader doesn’t know what to do and/or doesn’t have a clue what to do next, here are some suggestions:

Admit—The first step is to be honest with where you are currently as a leader. Pretending to know the answers when you don’t know them will not solve the problem. Most of the time, the people you are leading already know your inadequacies. Come clean. You’re overwhelmed. No shame. All of us have been there at times.

Pause—It's OK to take a break to clear your head. It could be an afternoon, a day or a week, but sometimes you just need to get away from the situation long enough to gain a fresh perspective. I often disappear from the office Thursday afternoons on especially difficult weeks. I may take a long run, mow my grass, pray or read. The busier the season—the more overwhelmed I feel—the more I need to pause. I know it sounds counterproductive. It's not. At all. It's life-giving.

Seek help—Find a mentor who has walked where you are currently walking. I have several older men I call when I'm maxed out with stress. There is a benefit in surrounding yourself with people smarter than you about a matter. This is the time for the believer to rely more than ever on his or her faith; trusting that the God who called them to the task will be faithful to complete it (1 Thess 5:24).

Learn—Leaders should always be teachable. Again, assuming or pretending to have all the answers only slows or curtails projects and is quickly discovered by others. Stretch yourself and learn something new. Read. Definitely be
reading. Attend a conference. Listen to some TED talks or sermons from pastors you admire. Feed your mind. It needs some new energies.

**Improve**—Make better checklists each day. Spend more time planning. Learn to better delegate. I always say, you have to get better before you can get bigger. As you learn improvements needed, be willing to change. The tighter you hold onto methods that aren’t working, the longer you’ll delay moving forward. Push through the overwhelming period and become a stronger, more capable and better leader. You can do it!

Do you need help? Are you overwhelmed? Start the process toward getting better.

I’m pulling for you—and I’ll trade you a prayer!

- **Print Version**

Ron Edmondson is a pastor and church leader passionate about planting churches, helping established churches thrive, and assisting pastors and those in ministry think through leadership, strategy and life. Ron has over 20 years business experience, mostly as a self-employed business owner, and he’s been helping church grow vocationally for over 10 years.

*More from Ron Edmondson* or visit Ron at [http://www.ronedmondson.com/](http://www.ronedmondson.com/)
9 Tips to Improve Your Church’s Welcome Segment

How can you make your welcome segment excellent, intentional, strategic and short?

How much attention do you give the welcome segment in your church service?

If you are like most churches, the answer is little to none. It’s only a few minutes anyway. How much time should we spend planning something so short and insignificant? And isn’t a “welcome” just a transitional element so the band or choir can get ready?

You might be shocked to see how much time at Watermarke Church we spend evaluating the welcome. It is only a three-minute segment of our 60-minute service, but like every facet of our service, we desire it to be excellent, intentional and strategic.

We discuss every phrase we use. We evaluate the energy we bring. We consider how our words might be heard or interpreted by guests and non-Christians.

In some ways, communicating a three-minute welcome at Watermarke is as stressful as the 35-minute message!

Here’s a quick “welcome” in action: WATCH HERE. Come back after you watch so I can explain what you just saw!

The welcome is a difficult element in the service. Part of the problem is the allotted time. We typically allow three minutes. We are sticklers about time, so when a three-minute segment runs six minutes, it impacts ALL the programming in the church (the babies know exactly when the service was supposed to end!). The other issue is the amount of information we hope to communicate. There’s information for guests, announcements and more.

So how can you make your welcome segment excellent, intentional, strategic and short? Here are a few tips from our process:

1. Manage the time.

Staying within the time limit is important. If we allow the welcome segment to run long, it pushes the entire service long. If that doesn’t bother you, just spend a week in the baby room. They know exactly when the hour is up, and their meltdowns are timed perfectly!

If you run long in the service, it hurts other ministries.

The overall church experience is only as good as the interdependent segments of your service.

2. Be intentional welcoming guests.

Remember, every week there are guests in your audience, and they probably do not know much about your church or what will happen in your service.
At Watermarke, every week I specifically welcome our guests, repeat our mission and tell them what to expect.

3. Preemptively answer their questions.

Most guests (and every man) wants to know: How long will this last? Don’t make them wonder the entire service—tell them up front.

People want to know who is leading singing. They want to know what the message will be about. They want to know who YOU are.

We try to anticipate their questions and provide answers up front so they can relax and enjoy the remainder of their time at Watermarke.

I’m AMAZED by the number of churches who don’t do this! Don’t be one of them! Tell people what to expect.

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Gavin Adams believes the local church is the most important organization on the planet and he is helping to transform them into places unchurched people love to attend. As the Lead Pastor of Watermarke Church, (a campus of North Point Ministries), Watermarke has grown from 400 to 4000 attendees in five years. A student of leadership, communication, church, and faith, Gavin shares his discoveries through speaking and consulting. Follow him at @Gavin_Adams and at gavinadams.com.

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