quarterly resource for local church elders • october/december 2009

ELDER'S DIGEST

15TH ANNIVERSARY
I am delighted to celebrate with you the fifteenth anniversary of Elder’s Digest and the rich heritage of this magazine. I am reminded how faithful God has been—from the creation of Elder’s Digest magazine to the new and exciting horizons of this international communications ministry.

This magazine was founded by James A. Cress, and its beginning can best be described in his own words: “This magazine is designed to attend to the needs of local church leaders around the world. Through this resource we would like to help elders grow in their skills and abilities as leaders. It is our intention to supply them with good information, practical articles, and life-changing sermons to preach. It is also an expression of recognition from the worldwide church for the wonderful work they are accomplishing.”

This vision became a reality in 1994 when approximately 5,000 copies of Elder’s Digest rolled off of the press and into the hands of local elders and church pastors. The first issue was sent out to every union and conference worldwide as a ‘sample’ issue, to get the word out. In the beginning, the highest subscription count was around 3,000 copies.

Over the next 15 years, Elder’s Digest helped shape the profile of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. Committed to Cress’ original vision, this magazine continues to influence and guide our local church leaders in a variety of areas. It has earned the reputation of being one of the best resources for our elders. Today, about 100,000 magazines are delivered each quarter. This magazine is also printed in different parts of the world and in other languages. When we look back at these editions, more than 200,000 copies are printed each quarter and delivered to more than 100 countries, encompassing all world divisions. What a blessing!

I would like to say a few words of gratitude to the two previous editors of Elder’s Digest. Janes H. Zadany was chosen to be the first editor of Elder’s Digest magazine. A few months later he was replaced by Joel Sarli, who did a wonderful job until his retirement in July 2005. When I see this magazine reaching and blessing thousands of local church leaders and hear how pleased they are with this helpful resource, I praise God for this outstanding literary ministry. God has been so good!

What challenges does Elder’s Digest face in the coming years? In many places of the world, this magazine is not yet available. Many countries are still in need of this magazine. Translation and financial limitations (particularly the high shipping costs) are some of the challenges we face today and as we work to overcome them. I ask that you keep this magazine in your prayers.

Once again, we thank God for His faithfulness. I would also like to thank our church leaders in the world divisions who make this magazine available to elders. And we are especially grateful to you, our readers, who make this ministry an outstanding success.
Isaiah walked through the crowded streets of Jerusalem with a heavy heart. His nation faced great trouble. Storms of war threatened from the north. The young man made his way to the temple and fell prostrate. Before the Lord, he poured out his heart in prayer.

And God answered. He always does.

The veil of the temple seemed to be drawn aside. In vision Isaiah saw the glory of God. In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a very high throne. His long robe filled the Temple. Heavenly creatures of fire stood above him. Each creature had six wings: Two wings to cover its face, two wings to cover its feet, and two wings for flying (Isa. 6:1, 2, 11C). To capture the glory: the high throne, the Person of God, the robe filling the temple, and the heavenly angels.

The dramatic cloth of prayer Isaiah offered as a gift to God was never considered for his own congregation. Our very destiny depends upon the attitude that leaders assume. Differing attitudes prevail, but are not always minorities in terms of peril for the majority who reject upon principle the position and perils of both extremes. It is essential for elders to clearly understand the situation so that they can intelligently and properly protect the congregation.

Elders need the Holy Spirit’s guidance so they will have sound judgment, spiritual discernment, and unswerving fidelity to God’s ever-expanding truth, revealed in His Word and buttressed by the confirming witness of the Spirit of Prophecy. Anything else, or anything less, will prove disastrous. We should not permit ourselves to befoxed into situations that are intolerable and unnecessary, or to be ensnared by the rush of life’s duties to learn about the greatest Life ever lived.

Isaiah saw the Lord. Then he saw himself. What a contrast! We cannot truly see ourselves until we see the Lord. With the building shaking around him and the glory of God almost blinding him, Isaiah cried out in agony. "Oh! no! I will be destroyed, I am not pure, and I lie among people who are not pure, but I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isa. 6:5).

I am reminded of another man who came to the temple—Herod’s temple. "The tax collector standing at a distance, would not even look up to heaven. But he beat on his chest because he was so sad. He said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner' " (Luke 18:13).

God always answers this prayer immediately. The publican was accepted, forgiven, and declared righteous by the Lord Jesus.

An elder’s attitude to truth is a life-and-death issue, both in his leadership and for the congregation. Our very destiny depends upon the attitude that leaders assume. Differing attitudes prevail, affecting their expression in two extremes. These extremes represent a small minority in terms of numbers but are not always minorities in terms of peril for the ones who are related to them.

The first group takes pride in emphasizing its orthodoxy, conservatism, which when stripped of its assuring phraseology, is often just plain reaction; however, harsh the term may sound, these individuals view any change or revision as perilous, mainly because it is different from what they used to know or do.

Some cleverly contrive to portray themselves as the ultimate defenders of the faith, the last stand of loyalty. Either by implication or declaration, they declare all who differ from them to be dangerous innovators. Their penchant is to maintain a status quo which supports their rigid views. They condemn openly or by implication, equally loyal self-sacrificing, truth-loving heralds of this message who differ from them. This group is represented by some independent ministers today. They easily misinterpret and criticize in attacking the leadership of the church.

Dear Elder be perceptive. Don’t fall into the devil’s trap. The Lord Himself is the one who ultimately takes care of His own church. Stay on the side of God’s people and be loyal to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On the other end of the spectrum stands another group, ready to press views of liberal progressivism that are serious, revolutionary, perilous, and disruptive. Some in this group are retired pastors, theology professors, and administrators. A few of them may say, "How can we speak out on what we believe because we are restrained?"

On this side lies the peril of abandondment of our distinctive Advent-movement principles, rooted in Scripture and confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy. This group advocates the acceptance of specious principles that simulate light but contradict or neutralize the soundly based historic positions which have made us a separate people. Such teachings usually touch either the sanctu- ary truth or the Spirit of Prophecy, which constitute the distinctive and separating features of this movement and are a stumbling block to all critics and apostates. Here again we must keep watch and stand by, revealed truth, no matter who the innovator is or what his standing or record may be.

These two groups, each appealing to a partial set of principles of common acknowledged truth, make more difficult the sound, reverent, and loyal stand of the majority who reject upon principle the position and perils of both extremes. It is essential for elders to clearly understand the situation so that they can intelligently and properly protect the congregation.
Douglas Jacobs is a professor of Preaching and Church Ministry at Southern Adventist University, in Collegedale, Tennessee. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in Pakistan, attended High School in India, served as a student missionary in Bangladesh, and has conducted evangelistic meetings in the Philippines, Pakistan, and Honduras. Before joining SPU’s School of Religion in 2002, he served for 26 years as a pastor in the Florida Conference. His Doctor of Ministries studies at Andrews University, explored the theological foundations of the Adventist doctrine of health. He is currently completing his Thesis-Report for a second D. Min. in Homiletics from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary on the subject of preaching to older church members. Dr. Jacobs is married to Lanell and they have two daughters, Janell and Katie. He is passionate about helping pastors and lay members develop their preaching skills. He has conducted preaching seminars for pastors and elders in the United States and Canada.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD?

When you preach, you are sharing God’s Word with God’s people. As Paul told the Thessalonians: “When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:1).

Remember that it was through words that God created our world. What a privilege preachers have to share God’s creative, life-transforming Word!

SHARE A DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL PREACHING.

Adventists are a definition of Biblical preaching in 1st and 2nd commandments. “Then I saw another angel flying in mid air and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth.” When we preach, we are really communicating to others the eternal Gospel, the good news about Salvation.

WHERE DO YOU START WHEN PREPARING A SERMON?

The foundation for any sermon must be a passage or passages from the Bible. The Word of God gives us authority to stand up and speak. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit to help us interpret the Word of God. So I can confidently preach, even if I haven’t taken a class in preaching. If I simply share a message based on a Bible passage which I’ve studied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

BUT HOW DOES ONE DECIDE WHICH BIBLE PASSAGE TO USE?

Recently, I had the opportunity to talk with United States Senate Chaplain and Adventist preacher Dr. Barry Black. He told me, “The starting point of a sermon doesn’t have to be the Bible, but every sermon needs God’s Word as an anchor. Sometimes the precipitating spark of the sermon may be an idea discovered in your pastoral outreach. Then you should find a Bible verse or passage that addresses that need.”

As Chaplain Black suggested, listen to your audience by asking them about their needs. Ask what issues they are facing, what challenges you find in the church, how the families are healing, or what fears the older members of your church are experiencing. Then find biblical passages which answer their questions or concerns. You must also listen to God’s voice when selecting a passage for your sermon. One way I listen to God is by journaling. You don’t have to be a theological professor to do this. Just read the Bible and write down your thoughts. As you read and journal, the Holy Spirit will point you to preaching passages.

AFTER SELECTING A PASSAGE, HOW DO YOU PREPARE THE SERMON? WHAT STEPS SHOULD YOU FOLLOW?

First, read the passage several times, writing down your questions and comments. Ask for their insights and consult available commentaries. Use a free online Bible program like E-Sword (www.e-sword.net) and see what Ellen White has said about your passage (www.whiteestate.org).

Next, look for the passage’s central truth. What is the passage teaching? Why was it included in the Bible? Now comes the hard part: write out the central truth in a single sentence. This will focus your preaching and give it power.

Haddon Robinson, my homiletics professor, suggests using three questions to develop a passage’s one-sentence central truth into the two hundred sentences found in a half-hour sermon. Ask: 1) what in the passage will need to be explained to your listeners, 2) what will need to be proved to them, and 3) what in the passage can be applied to their lives.

When you’ve studied a passage, determined its central theme, and decided what will need explaining, proving, or applying, you are ready to make an outline, find illustrations, and write a sermon manuscript.

YOU MENTIONED SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS. HOW DO YOU ILLUSTRATE YOUR SERMONS?

Avoid illustrations from distant history or from a sermon illustration website. These seldom work because neither you nor the audience has any connection to the illustration. The most effective illustrations picture someone or something which both the preacher and the audience have experienced. The next best illustrations come from what your listeners have experienced.

Good illustrations apply the truth of the sermon to the lives of your listeners. In 2 Kings 6:15, when Elisha’s servant discovers they are surrounded by Syrian soldiers, he says out: “O my Lord, what shall we do?” To illustrate his fear I recently asked a congregation, “Have you felt surrounded with no way of escape? Perhaps you’ve lost your job and your debts threaten to bankrupt you... Or you’ve been diagnosed with an illness that endangers your health... Or Satan is attacking your marriage, your children, or your person-

After connecting my listeners’ fears with the fears of Elisha’s servant, they were ready to hear Elisha’s response as though he were speaking to them: “Don’t be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16).

WHAT TYPE OF SERMON SUBJECTS SHOULD ONE USE?

I believe that the goal of preaching is to heal people from the disease of sin. The Greek word σωτήρ, “to save,” also means, “to heal.” So share messages that offer healing for the sicknesses of your listeners. Such passages which answer their questions or concerns. You must also listen to God’s voice when selecting a passage for your sermon. One way I listen to God is by journaling. You don’t have to be a theological professor to do this. Just read the Bible and write down your thoughts. As you read and journal, the Holy Spirit will point you to preaching passages.

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WHAT DOES PREACHING MEAN TO YOU?
When God called me to preach He gave me the privilege of sharing His truth with others. What I get to share is summed up in the Hebrew word Shalom which means not only peace but wholeness and completeness. This is God's goal for everyone. When I preach, I am sharing God's Shalom with His people. What a wonderful privilege and an awesome responsibility!

WHAT ARE SOME MISTAKES TO AVOID?
Some sermons are merely springboards to launch the preacher's own ideas. The point of the sermon is often not the point of the biblical passage. Or the sermon may not be based on the Bible.

Too many preachers leave out important parts of the passage because they assume the audience is familiar with the Bible. If you preach as if your audience is reading the Bible passage for the first time, your visitors and members will thank you. Remember each sermon should communicate one main idea. You can have a variety of ideas in the sermon but each should be related to your sermon's central truth.

WHICH BOOKS HAVE BEEN INFLUENTIAL FOR YOU?
In general, the church expects that the pastor has an ideal family with perfect kids who are always smiling and cooperative. The pastor is also seen as someone who can answer any question, has an elegant posture, and has no problems or conflicts. Some church members are disappointed when the pastor is depressed or faces personal or family problems. The pastoral family lives as the proverbial fish bowl, with the congregation watching every move they make. It never occurs to church members that they might be the cause of the pastor's worry or failure.

This is why God has instructed us to recognize and value His servants, our spiritual leaders. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). The good news is that as church members, we can make a difference in the pastor's life. Pastor Appreciation Day is a good opportunity to express our love and appreciation for our pastor's ministry and influence in our lives.

THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF ELDER'S DIGEST
To commemorate and celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of Elder's Digest is to recognize the value and virtue that this spiritual resource has brought to the ministry of the elders in our church. It is an excellent tool that has strengthened lay leadership in the churches of the Inter-American Division and is a great supplement to the resources of our union.

Our church is better today because of the influence of this valuable resource over the past 15 years. Inspired vision and leadership gave birth to Elder's Digest.

In our territory, where the multi-church pastorate is a reality, what could speak more powerfully to the needs of a pastor with 23 churches than Elder's Digest with its many features that are spot-on for the moment? Congratulations to the founders and to the present leadership of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference for energizing and sustaining this great resource. From the Ministerial Association of the IAD, we say, "Live on, Elder's Digest; we appreciate your value and prowess. Live on, Elder's Digest; you're a resource of great import. Live on, Elder's Digest; we need you. Live on!" —Békin  B. Ibrahim, Associate Ministerial Secretary, Inter-American Division.

WHAT CAN WE DO?
Protestants usually set apart the month of October as "Pastor Appreciation Month." Just as there is a day on the calendar to celebrate certain professionals, there is also a day to celebrate the person and function of the pastor. As Seventh-day Adventists, we suggest to set apart in our denominational calendar the fourth Sabbath of October as "Pastor Appreciation Day." Moreover, we recognize that appreciation for and recognition of our spiritual leaders is appropriate each and every day of the year.

WHY IS THIS DAY NEEDED?
The nature of the work performed by the pastor and the pastor's family is singular. God has entrusted them with one of the most precious responsibilities: taking care of His flock's spiritual welfare. When a pastor fails to reach this goal, church members are greatly harmed. In this context, the pastoral family has a great responsibility in relation to the church they serve.

In general, the church expects that the pastor has an ideal family with perfect kids who are always smiling and cooperative. The pastor is also seen as someone who can answer any question, has an elegant posture, and has no problems or conflicts. Some church members are disappointed when the pastor is depressed or faces personal or family problems. The pastoral family lives as the proverbial fish bowl, with the congregation watching every move they make. It never occurs to church members that they might be the cause of the pastor's worry or failure.

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Today
I write not as a pastor but as a member of this church, as someone who was born into an Adventist home and who from childhood learned to respect and appreciate the job and the image of the pastor.

WHAT IS PASTOR APPRECIATION DAY?
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WHAT CAN WE DO?
There are at least two ways to celebrate Pastor Appreciation Day. The first way is what members can do individually to pay homage to the pastor: a simple phone call or a card, an invitation to lunch, a special prayer for him/her, a car wash, a small gift, or some words of appreciation.

The second way is to celebrate Pastor Appreciation Day with the congregation. Members can organize some type of public recognition: a special lunch celebration, a gift in the name of the church, a tree planted in honor of the pastor—the sky is the limit!

Doesn't the pastoral family deserve this kind of homage? Take the initiative today, and make plans so that the celebration of Pastor Appreciation Day in our church is a realization of the pastoral ministry established by God to be a blessing to His children.

Jonas Arrais is editor of Elder's Digest.
The life of Jesus is a source of inspiration for many. Ellen G. White says, "When men will show confidence in their fellowmen, they will come much nearer to possessing the mind of Christ." She adds that "Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly in gentleness, meekness and kindliness. These graces are essential; but there is need also of courage, force, energy and perseverance."

ENERGY
To work with youth, a leader must be energetic and in good shape. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was a frail man. But every morning he rose at 4:00 a.m., delivered his first sermon at 5:00 a.m., and was on the road by 6:00 a.m. Every day he traveled 60 or 70 miles on horseback, preaching to anyone who could hear him. At night he sat up writing books or composing hymns by candlelight. In all his 87 years, he never once spared himself, and people admired and followed him because of it.

YOUTH AND THEIR LEADERS
Some time ago, Youth for Christ conducted an organization in New York in youth ministry, releasing findings of an extensive research project in conjunction with Salford State University. The survey focused on the qualities young people most desired in a leader, whether an adult or one of their peers. The study examined 11 desirable and 11 undesirable behaviors that a leader should exhibit. The findings showed that the characteristics young people look for in good leaders are characteristics they see in their parents. Here are some examples of the most important qualities:

- People-oriented programs
- With such an army of workers focused on the qualities young people most desire in a leader, whether an adult or one of their peers, the study examined 11 desirable and 11 undesirable behaviors that a leader should exhibit. The findings showed that the characteristics young people look for in good leaders are characteristics they see in their parents. Here are some examples of the most important qualities:

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- People-oriented programs
- Team-oriented programs
- Patiently we must wait for the opportunity of again bringing the truth home to her heart.

Faith Leaders must believe in the youth and believe that God can help them. They must believe in God in the study. The Word is a lamp, a family, members who take time with their families and with the youth, and are not ashamed of their humble-shepherd faith. Faith means FO scattering All I Take Him. Not only must leaders be in faith in the young people, they must also be in faith in themselves and their ability to help the youth reach their goals.

among the most important qualities listed in the "Youth for Christ survey":

- Patience
- Love
- Understanding as we deal with our youth. We must have faith in their able to do so. When I challenged them to model and observe their parents and other married couples, one youth said afterward that there were no role models in his church to follow.

CONFIDENCE
Hannibal believed he could lead an army of 66,000 men and score a victory over the Romans. That confidence in himself was planted and nurtured by his father, the great Carthaginian Hannibal. That same confidence is needed in young people as they work their way through a period of much in military history.

We see this quality in the life of Jesus. Ellen G. White says that "He honored man with his confidence, and thus placed him on his own. He also says that "When men will show confidence in their fellowmen, they will come much nearer to possessing the mind of Christ."
Congratulations to Elder’s Digest on your fifteen anniversary! We are pleased to join you in celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Elder’s Digest. At the same time, we want to express our appreciation to you as we continue to support the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our respective fields.

First, we should hear from our pulpits messages that will contribute toward grounding our church members in our message and mission. Proclaim the gospel in the context of the end-time message of the Adventist church and under no circumstances allow the pulpit to contribute to doctrinal and theological views from one part of the world to another. Church members with access to the Internet can navigate for hours in an ocean of web pages containing distortions of our message and sensationalist expositions of our eschatology which do not contribute at all to their spiritual development. I am referring to websites of individuals or groups that, while claiming to be Adventist, promote positions that are not representative of our message and mission.

Second, we should avoid church members in one of those places. This will take time, but we should be careful or otherwise our message will be distorted or otherwise misinterpreted.

Furthermore, there are occasions when our pulpit messages are languishing and are almost non-existent. A church that is vibrant and active is a church with clear biblical and doctrinal convictions.

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The Inter-American Division is pleased to join you in celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Elder’s Digest. At the same time, we support most of the Adventist message but there is an interest in promoting our church and the message of our church in the context of the end-time message of the Adventist church and under no circumstances allow the pulpit to contribute to doctrinal and theological views from one part of the world to another. Church members with access to the Internet can navigate for hours in an ocean of web pages containing distortions of our message and sensationalist expositions of our eschatology which do not contribute at all to their spiritual development. I am referring to websites of individuals or groups that, while claiming to be Adventist, promote positions that are not representative of our message and mission.

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The modern systems of communication facilitate the transfer of dysfunctional doctrines and theological views from one part of the world to another. Church members with access to the Internet can navigate for hours in an ocean of web pages containing distortions of our message and sensationalist expositions of our eschatology which do not contribute at all to their spiritual development. I am referring to websites of individuals or groups that, while claiming to be Adventist, promote positions that are not representative of our message and mission.

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**MARKS OF WORLDLINESS**

1 John 2:15-16

The Bible defines worldliness as a con- 
stituency to desire the possession of odd- 
ly things. Worldliness is not limited to the flesh 
(a passion for sensual satisfaction) but of 
the eye (an insatiable desire for the fin- 
things of life). Worldliness relates to the soul 
(abundance, quietness, satisfaction) and 
what we have done. Worldliness is not a 
desire for life (the flesh) but rather the desire 
in life, to do the will of God. It elevates 
people to their own desires, to earth, to 
other people's treasures. Worldliness is 
and peace” (Rom. 8:6-8).

For their affirmation. Paul wrote, “I care 
very little if I am judged by you or by any 
human court; indeed, I do not even judge 
myself. My conscience is clear, but that 
does not make me innocent. It is the Lord 
who judges me” (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

Paul wrote, “Do not lay up for yourself treasures 
on earth where moth and rust destroy 
and where thieves break in and steal. For 
where your treasure is, there will your heart 
be also” (Matt. 6:24).

People are fickle, but God’s love for us 
is constant. “Do you work as unto the Lord 
and not unto men? Or do you serve and not men” (Col. 3:23-24).

The Greek word for pride is 
theraipouia, 
which means to boast of one’s importance 
to the point of it becoming vain glory. It 
is pitiful when people think they are, 
better than they really are. Peopleful people 
set themselves up for disappointment. Pride is an envious opinion about 
self-worth, an “independence.” Paul 
writes to the prideful Corinthians, “If any- 
one thinks he is to stand, let him take heed 
lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12; Petersen 
reads, “God humbles the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Pleasures

Too often human desires dictate our 
hearts. From the time we are young, we are 
encouraged to be our best, to get to the 
top of the class, to be the “best” instead 
of the “bald.” When we become adults, it is 
often difficult for us to be stuck in a job 
where we have not been promoted for many years. It is important to 
remind ourselves what God told Paul in 
1 Corinthians 3:15.

People Pleasing

We all enjoy being around people 
who appreciate us. What is important 
that people may not express it is 
that they are doing. Performance-driven 
people are, therefore, because they 
have not completely trusted in the Lord 
for their affirmation. Paul wrote, “I care 
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signs of hope pointing to the grand finale—the 
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**SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

Titus 2:1-8

Going to the doctor for a checkup is something many people do regularly. They do so to make sure their health is not failing in ways they can't detect on their own. Likewise, we are prone to miss signs of spiritual health if we don't check on it regularly.

In Paul's letter to Timothy and Titus, he sets the stage for how to maintain healthy spiritual health. The word is the “sound.” When the quality of sound doctrine is sound faith, and sound speech, it is telling about healthy doctrine, healthy faith, and healthy speech.

How do we maintain good spiritual health? How do we live so we are spiritually well? This is a very important question on several levels. One current importance is: “There are so many different claims of spirituality in today’s society. How do I know if I’m truly spiritual?”

I. SOUND DOCTRINE

In 1 John 4:1, we read that the first test of good spiritual health is our relationship to sound doctrine. This is the foundation. If our spiritual health is going to be good, it has to be based on the right information.

Consider what the Bible says about sound or healthy doctrine (read Titus 2:2-3; 1 and Titus 1:9). Sound doctrine, then, has an encouraging and uplifting effect. One of the reasons we can trust in the Word of God is because it is full of encouragement and hope. Sound doctrine is healthy and encourages us because it is true and trustworthy.

Some of our spiritual weaknesses are weaknesses because we are pulled down by the discouraging things around us. But our hope can grow when we feed a constant diet of sound doctrine.

On the other hand, false doctrine leads to spiritually unhealthy hearers (1 Tim 1:13). Why are some people spiritually unhealthy? The doctrine they have been following is not sound. We cannot maintain good spiritual health if we are following false teaching. The Word of God issues some of its sharpest warnings in this area (2 Tim 4:3).

II. SOUND FAITH

The second diagnostic test for spiritual health follows logically. The Bible talks about “sound faith” (read Titus 1:10-13). Do you see the connection? Going to the doctor for a checkup is an example with his own life for the young pioneers. Is your faith a living faith? Is it joyful and positive? Do not let any unclean thought come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Eph. 4:28).

Sound faith denotes a spiritual health that is not good. Guzzling health-building, unselfishness, negative words—they don’t build anyone up. They are indicators of our spiritual health.

As someone who studies the Word of God, we should be open to the Holy Spirit and allow His Spirit to change us. The Bible says, “My dear brother, take note of this, everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).

So how do you know if your spiritual health is good? “Sound doctrine” do you listen to it and follow it? “Sound faith” is your life producing fruit? “Sound speech” are you talking correctly? Sound speech are you talking correctly?

Randy L. Harris

**CHURCH PILLARS**

Philippians 4:19

Even a layperson can recognize the importance of pillars in construction. In the spiritual building of the church, there is also a need for strong, substantial pillars.

Are there three pillars? Dedicated ministers, full of responsibility, and committed to the church program. This is like the Christian’s three pillars (Gal. 2:3). Thanks to those faithful men who are full of the Holy Spirit, the primitive church grew until it reached the entire world with the message of Jesus.

I. TODAY’S PILLARS

There is no doubt that more than one pillar is needed to support the church; no one person can be sufficient to support the church. Three pillars are needed to support the church.

A. God will provide power.

If someone feels incapable or lacks courage to witness, God can help (read James 1:5). Have you noticed how faithful God is? He will provide us with the power we need.

1. If someone feels incapable or lacks courage to witness, God can help (read James 1:5).

B. God will provide courage.

When the church is selected for a special mission, few are willing to serve, even knowing what was going on. The question comes, “How was Jesus able to save the people?” The answer is, “He sent His disciples.” We are all called to serve others.

2. If someone feels incapable or lacks courage to witness, God can help (read James 1:5).

C. God will provide wisdom.

If someone feels incapable or lacks wisdom, God can help (read James 1:5).

1. If someone feels incapable or lacks wisdom, God can help (read James 1:5).

II. JEHOVAH JIREH—THE LORD WHO WILL PROVIDE

A. God will provide power.

1. If you feel incapable of becoming a missionary, remember Jesus’ words: “He who believes in me will do the works I am doing” (read John 14:12).

B. God will provide wisdom.

1. If someone feels incapable or lacks wisdom, God can help (read James 1:5).

III. ALL NEEDS SUPPLIED

Have you noticed how faithful God is in His promises? He supplies all our needs. We can be active participants in His church.

1. He who believes in me will do the works I am doing” (read John 14:12).

Conclusion

A man’s health is in his diet. The diet of spiritual health is the Word of God. The diet of physical health is exercise, rest, and proper nutrition. If we eat the wrong things, we may get sick just as if we were eating the wrong things. We can get sick of spiritual health because we are not eating the right things. Spiritual health is like physical health. We need to eat the right things to stay healthy.

Randy L. Harris

Sermon Notes

SERNON 3

ELDER’S DIGEST

18 OCTOBER | DECEMBER 2009

ELDER’S DIGEST

17 OCTOBER | DECEMBER 2009
Many families have Christmas traditions. Sometimes families gather on Christmas Eve or Christmas day to open some or all of their gifts. Some families have a special meal. Others have a birthday cake for Jesus. In some homes the family celebrates the birth of Jesus in December, while in other homes they celebrate the birth of Jesus in January. Yet another family may celebrate Christmas with a special meal on Christmas Eve and a birthday cake for Jesus on Christmas day. Whatever the tradition, it is clear that our Christmas celebrations are often based on Scripture.

The Bible speaks of songs that were sung or spoken by Mary, the angels, and the shepherds. The shepherds sang of Jesus as a child, while the angels announced His birth. The shepherds and angels sang in praise of God because Jesus is God. He is the Son of God. He is the Lord. He is the King. He is the Lord's anointed. He is the one to whom we must respond. Our response should be one of worship and adoration. Our response should be one of praise and thanksgiving. Our response should be one of obedience.

The Magi, having been warned in a dream, did not go back to Herod. Joseph obeyed the angel and took Mary and Baby Jesus to Egypt. Joseph obeyed God; he took Mary as his wife and named the child she delivered as Jesus. This was a significant event in the life of Jesus. This was a significant event in the life of Mary. This was a significant event in the life of Joseph. This was a significant event in the life of the Magi. This was a significant event in the life of the shepherds. This was a significant event in the life of the angels. This was a significant event in the life of the baby Jesus.

The shepherds went to see the baby, that the Lord's angels had told about (Luke 2:15)."
HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDER'S

7 SECRETS FOR TRUE LONGEVITY

HEALTHY DIET

Welcome back to “Healthy Tips for Elders.” In the last issue of Elder’s Digest, we talked about the number one secret for true longevity: regular physical activity. I must re-emphasize its importance. Physicians worldwide often prescribe physical activity to their patients. It’s amazing how science continues to catch up with inspired counsel who stated decades ago “A walk, even in winter, would be more beneficial to the health than all the medicine the doctors may prescribe.”

Also, the American College of Sports Medicine announced the publication of a new book, Exercise is Medicine,1 promoting this principle. If you are not yet physically active on a regular basis, you can start walking today. Better yet, join the North American Division’s physical-activity initiative InStep for Life—“Glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20) and by this number one secret for a long, abundant life.

Now, let us focus on Secret #2: healthy diet. There is plenty of counsel and research on what constitutes a healthy diet. Much information seems contradictory. Some people claim that a healthy diet is a vegan diet. Others promote a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet. Others cite data suggesting we must have some fish since it is a good source of omega 3. What really constitutes a healthy diet?

First, science agrees that eating red meat will contribute to premature death. Recently, the Washington Post reported the results of a major research involving over 500,000 Americans. The study concluded, “Eating red meat increases the chances of dying prematurely, according to the first large study to examine whether regularly eating beef or pork increases mortality.” In this study, researchers found that those who consumed about four ounces of red meat a day [the equivalent of about a small hamburger] were more than 30 percent more likely to die during the 10 years they were followed, mostly from heart disease and cancer. Sausage, cold cuts and other processed meats also increased the risk. “The evidence is clear.”

However, this same article encourages people to consume chicken and fish which according to this study, seems to decrease the risk for premature death.

But looking at previous data from the Adventist Health Study, we see different results. For instance, Adventist men who consumed a vegetarian diet, including eggs and dairy products, had 61 percent fewer heart disease deaths compared to men who ate meat regularly. The greater benefit was for vegetarians who used no meat, fish, milk, or eggs. Compared to the general population, these men were 65 percent less likely to die of heart disease. Because heart disease is the #1 killer worldwide, this finding is significant. But the benefits go beyond heart disease. Adventist vegetarians between 30 and 50 years of age were found to have four times less risk of death from all causes, compared to those who eat meat. This seems to be a great advantage for longevity, doesn’t it? (We need to note that the Adventist Health study continues to report its findings and new results will soon be available.)

It is a mistake to conclude, however, that by staying away from meats and eggs and dairy, you will live a long, healthy life. One can be “vegan” or vegetarian and still have a very unhealthy diet. Many “good” vegetarians regularly indulge in ice cream and desserts, consume high sodium processed meat substitutes, enjoy fried foods and sauces high in saturated fats, and do not eat enough fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, and nuts. If we have a diet high in unhealthy fats and sugars without the life-giving nutrients of plant foods, we may not reap the benefits of a long, productive life for God after all. Phytochemicals, anti-oxidants, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and natural omega 3 fatty acids contained in plant-based foods are shown to be the true contributors to longevity.

Isn’t it time to make healthier choices in your diet? You can start today by remembering that “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

1 Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health, 57.
3 www.InStepforLife.com
4 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/23/AR2009032301626_pf.html
DO YOU HAVE COMPASSION FATIGUE OR JOY IN SERVICE?

COMPASSION FATIGUE

One day, after attending a meeting of Adventist Community Services leaders and church administrators, a leader who was there with me commented that he wished there had been more joy expressed as they gave their presentations, their reports, and shared about their service. There appeared to be a heaviness in the atmosphere, an attitude that it sometimes seemed overwhelming to see God on behalf of others. That comment really hit me and is the catalyst for this article.

In my sometimes hectic life of service, I have occasionally felt this heaviness, this lack of joy. In fact, I recently caught myself praying, the following prayer, even when I was super-shot at the end of a busy work day:

“Lord, sometimes I get so tired serving You and Your people on this planet. This can’t go on. It is too much for me. I am getting regular employment at the General Conference, training, and additional responsibility to care for my in-laws when I’m not working at the GC. And there is the stress of my family, my children’s issues, and nurturing our relationship with my husband, as well as ongoing care in conjunction with my church. And I must spend 30 hours/week studying to be a Certified Senior Advisor and I must finish writing my latest book, and I must... There is no end to it all. Lord—always more than I can handle. It’s too much! Lord, help me—please! Amen.”

This is a strange prayer from someone who is supposed to inspire others to serve God and people. I am reminded constantly that I can’t do it on my own. And sometimes I find my self bending under the load of service. Jesus’ followers have been given the task to do Jesus’ work—which is presented in Luke 4:18—“He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted. . . .”

Luke 4:18. (KJV)

Then there is Psalm 100:2 (NIV), which declares, “Serve the Lord with gladness! Joy and service belong together—like a horse and carriage!”

Many times we have elevated service as an obligation rather than an opportunity. When our hearts are oriented out of balance and out of harmony, the obligation part might overshadow the opportunity part. Joy is hard to come by when we are worn and tired.

JOY IN SERVICE—HOW CAN IT HAPPEN?

To experience joy when serving God and others, our priorities need to be in the following order:

1. God (my inner self must be in order and in tune with God)
2. Family
3. Work/service

Priority #1—God—When He takes the lead in our lives and we have regular devotional time, we can continue the practice of His joyful presence all day as we work side-by-side with Him. Don’t work for Jesus—work with Him. Now, that’s joy!

Priority #2—Family—deserves our quality time. One prominent church leader told me that he took no vacations with his family, and he is reaping the results: his own children felt that God and the church took Daddy from them. Jesus said to His “family”: “Come with me, by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Matt 13:1, KJV). Everything won’t fall apart if we don’t come apart—so you will fall apart. There is no joy in that!

Priority #3—Work/service. Put reasonable boundaries on your service and factor in your relationship with God and your family. With the strength given you from Christ (Phil 4:13)—serve Him with gladness: “With joy!” (Ps 100:2)—with JOY! We need to beware of self-pity. Never indulge the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be, that your efforts are not appreciated, that your work is too difficult. Let the memory of what Christ has endured for us cleanse every murmuring thought. We are treated better than was our Lord.”

There is Psalm 100:2 (NIV), which declares, “Serve the Lord with gladness! Joy and service belong together—like a horse and carriage!”

Exciting Information about Joy and Service

With priorities in place—read and joy, serve God with the whole of your joyful heart! Both joy and service bring many blessings: in their train. God gives us health (Prov 17:22) and strength (Heb 12:10), as does service: “The pleasure of doing good to others imparts a glow to the feelings which flashes to the nerves, quickens the circulation of the blood, and induces mental and physical health.” “Doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver.” When we see evil, we have double benefits!

In WIN! Wellness: Integrated Behavioral Living, John Millard and Wes Youngberg share several examples of the health benefits of joy and service. For example, a study of 3,296 volunteers performing acts of kindness established a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping others and health benefits of joy and service. For example, a study of 3,296 volunteers performing acts of kindness established a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping others and health benefits of joy and service. For example, a study of 3,296 volunteers performing acts of kindness established a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping others and health benefits of joy and service.

“Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God.” After we have absorbed the joy in His presence during our intentional devotional time, we can continue the practice of His joyful presence all day as we work side-by-side with Him. Don’t work for Jesus—work with Him. Now, that’s joy!

One morning for our couple worship, my husband and I read a statement that I knew was especially for me: “We need to become selfish. He is indulging the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be, that your efforts are not appreciated, that your work is too difficult. Let the memory of what Christ has endured for us cleanse every murmuring thought. We are treated better than was our Lord.”

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ADVENTIST PREACHING OFFERS SOLUTION FOR HOLIDAY WORSHIP

Do holidays go unnoticed at your church? Have you walked away from services on a holiday weekend only to be reminded by the CD playing in the car that the whole world was observing the holiday except your small community of believers?

There are several reasons why this could happen. 1) Your church may be one of three or four congregations in the district and this year the pastor was scheduled to be in another church. 2) Your membership is small with limited resources for music and other talents to create unique worship experiences. 3) There may not be anyone in the congregation that feels called to be a lay preacher.

Adventist Preaching’s third Signature Edition is the answer to problems like these. A Collection of Holiday Sermons was designed to offer sermons and dramatic presentations for holidays throughout the entire year. Derek Morris in The Testimony of Melchior plays one of the Magi. His portrayal is prefaced by narration and music and, with the addition of local talent, can be a program for Christmas Eve. There’s even a Communion hymn and a tribute to veterans so local congregations can honor those in the pews who have bravely served our country. Gay Council, director of Adventist Publishing Ministries, presents God and Country, which can be used on Veterans’ Day or Memorial Day.

No longer is it necessary for smaller churches to long for beautifully themed worship services that enhance the worship of larger churches. Through the DVD technology of Adventist Preaching and the generosity of select preachers, all churches can enjoy the same advantages.

The 3-DVD set with a booklet of sermon notes and biographical sketches is a preaching resource for both home and church. However, the sermons by renowned preachers will ensure that your holiday services receive the attention they deserve even when your pastor is away.

So treat yourself to the very best in biblical preaching and join the host congregations as they enjoy what has become a unique bonus of Volume 24—choral excerpts from Handel’s Messiah. With them, lift your eyes towards heaven and glorify the Father by singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving, also a feature of this edition.

A Collection of Holiday Sermons was designed to reflect the spirit of significant days in your community. Check it out and join the host congregations as they enjoy what has become a unique bonus of Volume 24—choral excerpts from Handel’s Messiah.

Do we kneel in prayer? Although statements in the Spirit of Prophecy strongly advocate kneeling in prayer, a number of our religious assemblies have a tendency to ask the congregation to stand for prayer even when there is ample room to kneel. Which is correct?

In any instances there are valid reasons for asking a congregation to remain standing during prayer. But in any discussion of the subject of bodily posture in prayer we may well consider the following statement from Ellen G. White: “Christ’s followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear. The Scriptures teach men how they should approach their Maker—with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator. The psalmist has declared: ‘The Lord is a great God, And a great King above all gods.’ O come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him.

Jesus, our example, ‘kneeled down, and prayed.’ Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too ‘kneel down, and prayed.’ Paul declared, ‘I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In confessing before God the sins of Israel. Ezra knelt. Daniel knelt upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.”

There is a certain relationship between pose of body and mood of spirit. It seems to me that a mood of contrite confession and genuine adoration can find best expression in the soul when one is on bended knee. However, it would be sad indeed if in any of our churches we permitted the question of kneeling versus standing to become the occasion for controversy. In that event, our prayers would likely be all little no matter what our bodily pose.

Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, 48.
HOW TO LEAD YOUR CHURCH TO GROWTH

LEADERSHIP:

The word “vision” has several meanings. “Vision comes from faith and allows a church to be in touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness.”

1. Vision is the church’s main purpose. A church leader needs to have credibility before presenting a “vision,” which is the leader’s perspective on the church’s main purpose. The Bible says, “The vision God gives to a church is not the most believers consider the church more of a meeting place or do something beyond its current abilities to impact the Kingdom. . . . Though these things cannot be seen physically, they must be seen mentally and spiritually if people are to commit themselves to come close to the vision. The Bible says, “The vision God gives to a church is not a plan, but it means to go against powers of nature, and it requires courage to do it. A leader’s major challenge is to mobilize people to do something beyond their current abilities to impact the Kingdom. . . .”

2. Vision is God’s specific plan for a specific church in a specific time. “The vision God gives to a church is not a plan, but it means to go against powers of nature, and it requires courage to do it. A leader’s major challenge is to mobilize people to do something beyond their current abilities to impact the Kingdom. . . .”

3. Vision is the basis for strategy and programs. “The vision God gives to a church is not a plan, but it means to go against powers of nature, and it requires courage to do it. A leader’s major challenge is to mobilize people to do something beyond their current abilities to impact the Kingdom. . . .”

A church leader needs to have credibility before presenting a “vision.” This means that the leader should be able to speak with authority and conviction, not just by words, but by actions as well. The leader should be able to demonstrate that the church is committed to following through on the vision, not just talking about it.

In a brief statement, Ellen G. White reveals her comprehension of a leader’s major challenge: “To understand God’s immediate purpose, so that we may soon be where we want to be—with Jesus, forever.”

Schools of church growth, hundreds of lay people were asked to answer the question, “What is the church’s main purpose?” Less than 25 percent answered “evangelism,” but 90 percent mentioned “relationship” as the key purpose of the church. This shows that a church’s purpose is not just to grow numerically (baptism of members; children); (2) by transfer; or (3) by the conversion of outside people. Make a comparison of the church’s main purpose with the challenge, and people were empowered for ministry. The challenge was a catalyst for growth, not a cause of it.

For a church to fulfill its mission, the elder needs to define the purpose of the church. Less than 25 percent answered “evangelism,” but 90 percent mentioned “relationship” as the key purpose of the church. This shows that a church’s purpose is not just to grow numerically (baptism of members; children); (2) by transfer; or (3) by the conversion of outside people. Make a comparison of the church’s main purpose with the challenge, and people were empowered for ministry. The challenge was a catalyst for growth, not a cause of it.

The church leadership cannot change a church without the church members. The church leadership cannot change a church without the church members. In Acts 6:1-5, we see how the apostles worked. First, they met with the church members and-firefighter who had been injured. Barely opening his eyes, he thanked us with a weak but convincing voice but added, “That’s what we’re here for.” In reality, a firefighter exists not to be harmed but to protect life and property. In doing this, it is necessary to have the courage and spirit of service. A church leader needs to have credibility before presenting a “vision.” This means that the leader should be able to speak with authority and conviction, not just by words, but by actions as well. The leader should be able to demonstrate that the church is committed to following through on the vision, not just talking about it.
The art of speech

PERSUASION IS MORE THAN A TECHNIQUE

Have I therefore become your enemy because
I tell you the truth? . . . I would like to be
present with you now and to change my tone.

Gal. 4:16, 20, NIV

The goal of the messenger is to lead the
public to believe that the message is
truth: the voice of God. Therefore, messengers need
an important communication "favor": the persuasion
proposal. After all, preachers don't want to only pass
on information; they also want to explain doctrine
and convince listeners. That is why they make use of a
series of resources capable of leading listeners to
accept their version as truth. But what is the mystery of
those who, having little knowledge of the language
and no access to the culture, are capable of leading a
multitude of people? "Persuasion" is the answer.

What is persuasion? It is more than simply shar-
ing information; it means to convince someone,
to make someone believe that what you are saying is
the best option. You need to show your audience that your message may
change their lives for the better.

You need to gain their trust, and you will need to
make use of all arguments that reveal your serious-
ness, competence, and trustworthiness. This is called
persuasion.

Persuasion is based on the message and is directly
influenced by three important factors that may help
reach its goals:

1. Credibility of the source. The information has
to come from a source that inspires trust. The source
may be a person, book, newspaper, magazine, the
Internet, etc. For a preacher or elder, the Word of God
is the most trustworthy source.

2. The speaker's reputation. The person intending
to persuade must be interesting and attractive to the
public. The public should desire to be like him or her.
Remember: persuasion doesn't have anything to do
with the beauty of the speaker but with the beauty of
the presentation of what is being said.

3. Attractiveness of the proposal. The proposal
must somehow correspond to the needs of the pub-
lic. The attraction in the speech starts when we point
out facts that are a part of everyone's lives or a reality
to the public we want to reach. When we do that,
we become the listeners' "partner," and that is funda-
mental for persuasion.

Some may think that persuasion is a bad thing,
for it forces a person to make a decision. However,
preachers and elders should never forget that this
technique is to be used with respect, certainty, and
assurance. They should always remember that they
are spokespersons for God.

Once you believe in what you are saying, you
should act accordingly. One of the ways to know
if something is true is to look at the speaker's life.
Therefore, when we look at Paul's life and read his
writings, we are persuaded to change and to live as
he lived.

May we bring many people to Christ through our
efforts!

Alexandra Sampaio is a speech therapist in Belo Horizonte,
Brazil.

As Elders it used to be enough to keep our teens away from premarital sex, drugs,
and secular music, but today's teens have to worry about: sexting, texting, televi-
saphoneting, peer pressure, Facebook, MySpace, poor self-mage, low self-esteem,
anaemia, cutting, "The I-culture," consumerism, bullying, internet porn--the list could
go on forever. Thank God we have a tool to share with our youth that helps them deal
with these issues and presents them with positive teens who are serving God passionately in their
lives and communities.

As an Elder it's your duty to look out for the next generation.
Thank God there's a too! Thank God for insight!
TAKING THE PLEDGE

My congregation lived in denial until the moment our notions of how things “ought to be” were startlingly interrupted when a prominent member offered to lead an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group in our church.

Explaining that she herself needed regular attendance at AA meetings, this church member convinced me to present the concept to our board of elders. Their first response was, “Why? Adventists don’t drink!”

Boldly venturing “where Adventists typically don’t go,” we announced to our members the formation of various 12-step ministry initiatives, including Sunday-morning AA meetings in our facility.

Within six weeks we had welcomed over 200 alcoholics attending “the meetings” and discovered that ours was one of only two locations in a metropolis of four million people where people could attend AA on Sunday morning when most other church facilities were in use. Within six months some of my own members began to trust enough to seek help in their own church home.

Some may ask, as did my elders, if temperance is a fundamental belief of Seventh-day Adventists, why would we need to sponsor AA? And here’s the heart of the challenge. What we believe and how we behave are not always consonant.

It’s time for the Adventist Church to come out of denominational denial. We must seriously address the reality that we have members ranging from teetotalers to occasional social drinkers to falling-down drunk bingers and chronic unrehabilitated alcoholics. They are in my family. They are in my church, and they are in yours as well.

Despite our long temperance heritage of fighting against alcohol, tobacco, and addictive substances, we discover that the battle has come to our schools, our churches, and some of our pastoral families.

And what a heritage we have. Early Adventists stayed at the forefront of the “temperance” movement by preaching against “demon rum” and lobbying for prohibition. Mrs. S.M.I. Henry, cofounder of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), became an Adventist and was strongly supported by the church in her activism. Today’s WCTU world president, Margaret Jackson, is a Seventh-day Adventist in New Zealand.

A century ago, many Adventists strongly supported suffrage so as to register thousands of women who were most likely to support prohibition. Ellen G. White even advocated that Adventists should vote in favor of Sunday blue laws if it meant closing the saloons and taverns for at least one day.

Are we abandoned our heritage? In 1989, Duane McBride published statistics on the drinking habits of North American Adventists. At that time, five percent of those over 65 years of age had consumed wine at least monthly in the previous year, compared with 25 percent of the 18-29 age group. Three years later, the Valueregenesis study confirmed these findings and the trend appears to be ongoing.

Debate if you will—and some do spare no time and energy arguing over the alcoholic content of communion wine or the cardiologic value of moderate consumption—but reality forces us to concede that alcohol use among our membership exists and is increasing. My colleague, Dr. Peter Landless, Associate Director of Health Ministries, states, “On balance, the hypothesis that alcohol consumption improves health is scientifically unfounded. This is especially so when all aspects of alcohol and health are reviewed.”

And rather than berating our members, why not offer them the opportunity to seek help in our own church home. The WCTU, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous, has provided “the meetings” and discovered that ours was one of only two locations in a metropolis of four million where people could attend AA on Sunday morning when most other church facilities were in use.

Within six months, some of my own members began to trust enough to seek help in their own church home.

Some years later, my region’s Adventist denomination asked me to write a book on alcoholism for the denomination’s textbook series. I accepted the assignment with the expectation that my book would be sold to college and academy campuses for not “doing enough to exploit students who drink.” As one correspondent recently demanded, we should applaud those schools which take this challenge seriously

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

Col 3:23

James A. Cress
General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary
What would you give to see them in heaven?

2009 Annual Sacrifice Offering

November 14

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