Cobwebs on the Communion Table?
A biblical theology of drinking

Roger S. Evans in “A Biblical Theology of Drinking,” (July 1993) quite correctly emphasizes that drinking, not drunkenness, concerns Bible writers. Evans presents insights in the article but seems to have fallen into a trap. He has “assumed” that our understanding of the word “wine” is exactly the same as that of the writers of the Bible and that the original translators of the Bible had an understanding that agreed with the meaning that the ancient writers had.

Evans comments that “consistency demands that we cannot make oinos fermented in one passage and unfermented in another just to fit our preconceived notions.” This is a popular modern concept, but oinos is a generic word and does therefore cover both fermented and unfermented wines.

The writers of the Bible lived very closely with the grape and consequently developed many words to describe the vine and its product, while we are left trying to comprehend all those words with our limited vocabulary. The Romans also had a variety of words to convey the different kinds of drink made from the grape. History confirms that nonalcoholic drinks were popular.

The statement by Evans that “grape juice can naturally ferment whether one wants it or not” needs correction. As Chaptal, an eminent French chemist said, “Nature never forms spirituous liquors, she rots the grape from the branch; but it is art which converts the juice into (alcoholic) wine.” Exacting conditions must be met before grape juice can be transformed into wine with alcoholic content. For further information, see Bible Wines, Or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients, William Patton, Signal Press, Evanston, Illinois.

Evans’ belief that alcoholic drinks were universally used is contradicted by writers of those days. The Mishna states that the Jews were in the habit of using boiled wine.

While Patton’s work is not modern—one could wish that someone would update it—yet it has helpful information. His section on the wine used at the Last Supper itself makes its purchase well worthwhile.—Lester N. Hawkes, pastor, Blenheim Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Zealand.

Though I am not a Seventh-day Adventist, I greatly appreciate the helpful articles in Ministry. However, in the July 1993 issue Roger Evans writes about the use of wine in Scripture and completely ignores John 2, where Jesus made more than 100 gallons for a wedding celebration. Is there a reason for that omission? Please explain.—Paul G. Hansen, Oakhurst, California.

Yes, please see the November 1993 letters column for Roger Evans’ response to previous letters.—Eds.

It was so refreshing to read the candid article on wine by Roger Evans. He says, “I cannot make the texts say something simply because that is what I want them to say.” I commend him for this and commend you for publishing the article.

Several statements say the same as Proverbs 23:21. “The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.” If we say the condemnation of the drunkard means we should use no wine, then to be consistent, the condemnation of the glutton should mean we should use no food.

I would like to have the temerity to ask Jesus why, at the wedding at Cana, He didn’t turn the water into lemonade. And when His disciples saw Him on the shore, “They saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it . . .” (John 21:9, NIV). Why wasn’t He warming up potatoes and scrambled eggs?

The best support I have heard of the no-wine stand is that this was a special restriction for John the Baptist, who announced Christ’s first coming, so it behooves us who announce His second coming to follow a no-wine policy. We all know moderation does not work for many unfortunates in food or drink. I heard this thought not from Adventist leaders but from a wise local church elder.

So those announcing the Second Advent can boldly follow a no-wine policy, but they should not try to enforce it for all the Israelites and not twist the Bible to say what they want it to say.—Gustave H. Hoehn, Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Lessons from Waco

There are cultists in all churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist. Whenever the laity pay slavish devotion to the leadership and blindly follow, and are even encouraged to do so, then a church needs to be called a cult and its members cultists.—Mary Jane Eaklor, Penrose, Colorado.

The funeral—obligation or opportunity?

Douglas Janssen’s experience with funerals (September 1993) illustrates the effectiveness of pastors with “large ears” and big hearts. Attentive and reflective listening skills are often lacking among pastors. Hidden religious agendas often block the pastor’s ability to hear people’s pain. Unfortunately, people go away uncomforted—to be left alone to struggle with the pain and the questions.

We as pastors are called to reflect the character of a sensitive and caring God who is ever present to comfort and strengthen.

God meets us where we are—we need to meet people where they are, as the good Pastor Janssen has

(Continued on page 27)
Preaching is one task that no minister can escape. Preaching is the single most important task a preacher must perform: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, NIV). Every preacher wants to be a better preacher.

This year we will be publishing 12 articles on preaching. We commissioned the first four, but the last eight we want to come directly from our readers. We want to know how you research and write your sermons. We advertised in our August and October issues for articles on preparing sermons.

Our first article in the series, "Expository Preaching," is written by Floyd Bresee, former secretary of the Ministerial Association. He lays a solid and exciting foundation. Let us keep preaching the Word.

Our feature article is written by our associate editor, John Fowler. "Cobwebs on the Communion Table?" will both challenge and inspire your thinking. "Gezer and the Bible" reports on the latest exciting discoveries in Palestine. Death is always a tragedy, but how do you minister to parents who have lost a child? Victor Parachin in "Living With Dying" provides solid counsel on how to help parents through the grieving process.

Pastor Clifford Jones covers a topic that every pastor wrestles with—time. "Maximizing Our Time" shows us how to manage this unrenewable resource. This is a splendid article with which to begin the new year.

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Editorial

Credibility: gaining and losing it

J. David Newman

I ntegrity is the most precious resource a leader can possess. Without it, one’s influence is greatly diminished, if not destroyed. A leader with a fistful of credibility can surmount almost any obstacle. Without credibility, most of his or her influence will vanish like snow on a warm spring day.

The World Survey Commission report given at the 1993 Annual Council of Seventh-day Adventists in Bangalore, India, described a credibility gap between church leaders and some members. This survey of 18,484 members worldwide (52 percent of whom hold local church leadership positions) revealed a confidence level of 69 percent in conference leaders and 68 percent in the leadership of union conferences or missions. That left nearly one third of them with misgivings about their leaders.

Local pastors fared a little better, with 78 percent expressing confidence in their leadership. However, 22 percent still lacked confidence in their pastor’s leadership. The survey identified “the need for increased openness, disclosure, and accountability by church organizations and leaders” if this gap is to be closed.

In a new book, Credibility—How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It, authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner report on the extensive research conducted on the key characteristics people want from their leaders. The number one quality desired is honesty. Leaders must be truthful, ethical, and trustworthy (p. 14).

The second most important characteristic of credible leaders is that they be forward-looking, setting and defining the vision (p. 15). Inspiring ranks third. People desire leaders who are dynamic, uplifting, enthusiastic, positive, and optimistic (p. 16). They also want leaders to be competent (fourth)—capable and effective (p. 17).

Integrity

The Bible also mandates honesty: “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (Prov. 10:9).* Without integrity, how can one be trustworthy?

Peter reminds us to “be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2,3).

As pastors, we want the very best for the people we lead. Sometimes we may be tempted to withhold certain facts because we feel the maturity level of the congregation is not high enough. Or we may slant the truth just enough to procure the kind of decision we want. As long as people do not discover what we know, we are safe—but what happens when they find out? Are they pleased with our decisions? Do they applaud our approval of their maturity?

Ellen White, in commenting on the words of Jesus that our “Yes” be “Yes” and our “No” be “No,” says: “Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And ‘whatsoever is more than’ truth ‘is of the evil one.’

“Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan.”

Jesus’ integrity

Jesus is the greatest leader this world has ever seen. Millions have sacrificed life itself for Him. His integrity was indisputable. When the religious hurled every charge they could invent against Him, even Pilate sensed the hollowness of their accusations. He wished desperately to release Jesus, but he was a leader who did not have the integrity and courage to administer justice. To save his own skin, he perverted justice.

Why have people followed Jesus even to death? Because He is the “way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Because He is the only person who lived a sinless life from birth to death. Because only He can save us from our sins. Because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Because God loves us “with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). And love begets love.

At the conclusion of Christ’s sermon on the mount, the people “were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt 7:28, 29). What made Jesus so powerful and so credible? No one ever lived as Jesus lived. The purity of His character shone like a beacon. There was no deceit, no hidden agendas, no cover-ups, no partial truths in His MINISTRY/JANUARY/1994
life. Jesus lived for others not for Himself. The ultimate proof of His caring, of His integrity, was the sacrifice of His own life.

Solutions

The World Survey Commission suggested three ways to improve credibility:

1. Openness—People want leaders to be candid, straightforward, and frank. If there is a problem, admit it. Since no person or organization is perfect, why be so shy about acknowledging imperfections?

I once pastored a church that took up a collection for every imaginable expense. I invited the conference stewardship director to conduct a weekend series on giving, financial planning, and wise management. He presented to the church board a combined budget plan that would obviate the need to keep passing the plate. I was astonished when they rejected the idea and clung to the status quo.

In fact, I was so angry at what I perceived to be their ignorance and stupidity that I prepared a special sermon for the next Sabbath: "When the Church Board Voted 10 to 2 Against God." And my text was taken from the passage recounting the experience of the 12 spies who searched the Promised Land and came back with a split report.

I did not win any converts from that sermon. I just alienated people. It took me some time to come to my senses. Later I apologized to the board and to the congregation. Not until I was willing to be open, vulnerable, and contrite could I restore my credibility. Openness means being awake to new ideas, new ways of doing things, listening to alternate points of view, and most important, saying sorry when needed.

2. Disclosure—A certain committee was asked to authorize several hundred thousand dollars to hire a particular firm. The members were most reluctant to vote this money and were moving toward a no vote when the presenter disclosed that the firm had already been hired and was busy at work. The presenter was embarrassed; the committee members were angry. How much better if the presenter had been candid from the beginning.

After a cover-up is exposed, people wonder what other things might have been kept back. They suspect that they may have voted for other items that in reality already were decided.

Just before I became secretary of the Ohio Conference, we hired a new principal for one of our academies. He came with high recommendations and an impressive résumé. He oozed energy and ideas. However, before the end of the school year he developed an illicit relationship with one of the faculty and had to be dismissed. He left his wife and departed for Florida. There he was strangled to death by the husband of another woman with whom he was having an affair.

After his dismissal we discovered that similar problems had plagued him at the two previous academies at which he had worked. His references contained no hint of any problems. Had there been full disclosure, we probably would not have hired him. You can see why the World Survey Commission report stresses the need for more disclosure by church leaders at all levels to increase credibility.

3. Accountability—Church members sometimes feel that pastors are really not accountable to them; it is the conference that hires the pastor, not the local church. One way to bridge that gap is to give regular reports to the members on how time is spent. In addition, conducting an annual evaluation of the pastor by local church leaders helps foster dialogue and a certain level of accountability.

Conference presidents face the issue of accountability at every constituency meeting. Once again, if their administration has been characterized by openness and disclosure, they have no problem letting their constituents hold them accountable.

It is perhaps harder for organizations to be open and accountable than it is for individuals. If an organization reveals a mistake, it may expose itself to lawsuits. It also is difficult for a committee that believes it was led by the Lord to admit that just maybe it did not hear the Lord correctly.

Hans Kung tells the following story: "One day during a session of the Second Vatican Council, one bishop passed another a note, which then made the round. The message read: 'Senatus non errat, et si errat, non corrigit ne videatur errasse'" ("the Senate does not make mistakes, and if it does, it does not correct them, lest it should seem to have erred").

Ministry printed a cover (August 1990) that gave offense to many people. In retrospect, we should not have used that particular painting. We had commissioned it because we wanted a striking portrayal of Christ's second coming that was different from the traditional pictures. Unfortunately, it offended more people than it blessed. And for that we are sorry. We hope we learned from that experience.

Openness in the Bible

The Bible contains a history of the sins and problems of its heroes. Both the Old and New Testaments report problems with individuals and organizations, even religious ones. Paul says, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body" (Eph. 4:25).

Paul likens the immature church to one taken in by "the cunning and craftiness of men" but says the mature church should be able to speak "the truth in love" and "grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (verses 4:14, 15).

Ultimately, staying with the truth is always the best policy. Jesus said: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Truth is the essence of credibility. And credible leaders are truthful leaders.

* All Bible references are from the New International Version.

Feelings of failure

Martin Weber

As a young pastor I looked forward to the fellowship of workers’ meetings but often drove away depressed. I compared myself with my peers, measuring who had the most baptisms and the biggest church. I felt like a failure and wished I could leave my three tiny flocks in exchange for greener pastures.

So much for being a good shepherd. Lord, have mercy!

What makes us crave “bigger and better” things? Pride plays a part, but often it’s mingled with a nobler motive. We want to be all we can be for God; unless we see potential for that in present circumstances, we may pray for a “promotion”—as if God might send Elijah’s chariot of fire to whisk us away from Raccoon Hollow and deposit us in Pleasant Valley, where we might do something significant for Him.

Well, shouldn’t we expect that a ministry at its maximum will win fame for God’s name? Not necessarily.

Meet Noble Alexander. From all human appearances, my good friend has an insignificant ministry, pastoring a couple of small churches in New England. But Noble does this by choice, having turned down an offer to become a conference departmental leader. Despite the absence of human honor, this dear brother is the most remarkable person I’ve ever met. For 22 years he remained faithful in Communist dungeons, tortured for Jesus. He exudes an amazing joy in the Lord and the presence of the Spirit.* Noble may never be a mover and shaker in the church, but he doesn’t need any human promotion.

Nor do the rest of us. God is unimpressed by human titles, talents, or achievements. After all, He is more talented and accomplished than we are. He also has a higher position than any of us. But in His high and holy heaven, something on earth will always catch His notice: “a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:4).* Faithful pastors mingle such meekness with the courage to do things God’s way instead of their own way—or someone else’s way. For this humble integrity they may suffer like John the Baptist, scorned by human wisdom but “great in the sight of the Lord” (Luke 1:15).

Mitey ministry

From the widow and her mitey offering we get another glimpse of what God values. That poor woman would be shunned at a fund-raising banquet, but Heaven judged her pitance as more significant than gifts of surplus gold. The widow symbolizes those millions of lay members who quietly go about their Father’s business day by day, unnoticed by people but valued by Him. She also represents thousands of faithful pastors who labor in the shadows, passed up for promotions. Sometimes they just lack the pizzazz and political aspirations that others have, or they may lack outstanding talent. Certainly God wants us to hone our skills and efficiency, but one’s purpose in perfecting talents might be selfish and ego-driven. God may bless that pastor anyway, even though Christ is preached from vain motives (see Phil. 1:15-18). Such a sinister minister, though praised by man and permitted success by God, may wake up too late, a lost soul.

Many leaders deserve their sterling reputation, but other famous soul winners appear so infatuated with themselves that Christ seems crowded out. They may speak with the tongues of angels and thus captivate the masses, but their families and coworkers are not impressed. Nor, I suppose, is God. We cannot judge, nor can we measure true success in ourselves or in others.

Recently a friend conducted evangelistic meetings in our locality. He advertised, he prayed, he preached. All for nothing, by human standards. Zero baptism. Immediately afterward he went to another part of the world, held the same meetings, and baptized 900. Same man, same message; vastly different results. Was this man a failure or a success?

Let’s not waste time wondering about it. How much better simply to go about God’s business, doing our best in faith and leaving results to Him. “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (Col. 3:23). We may fail to fulfill some of the plans people have for our ministry. At that point it helps to remember that God has not called us to be “successful” but to be faithful. Faithful to our Lord, faithful to our spouse, faithful to our children, and then faithful to our flock.

Grandiose plans

Are you stuck in Raccoon Hollow?

(Continued on page 28)
Expository Preaching

W. Floyd Bresee

Do you want more fire in your preaching? This twelve-part series will help light the flame.

Effective preaching has humanity within it and divinity behind it. The humanity within comes from a study of human nature in general and your own congregation in particular. The divinity behind comes largely from a perpetual, persistent exposition of Bible truth—expository preaching.

What is expository preaching?
Expository preaching is typically defined in terms of the length of the Bible passage used. Andrew Blackwood’s definition: “Expository preaching means that the light for any sermon comes mainly from a Bible passage longer than two or three consecutive verses.” The passage is often a Bible paragraph or chapter, sometimes an entire book. The most valid definition, however, would deal less with the length of the passage treated and more with the manner of treatment.

Our definition of expository preaching in its strictest, most narrow sense: Expository preaching is preaching based on a significant Bible passage so that the sermon’s principal lessons originate in Scripture and are applied to a present human need. In its broadest sense, expository preaching is simply biblical preaching.

What expository preaching isn’t
It isn’t springboarding. Our perpetual temptation is to use the Bible as a springboard from which to jump into a discussion of our own thoughts. The Scripture is adjusted to fit our thinking, rather than our thinking adjusted to fit the Scripture. We use the Bible as a sermon resource, but it is not the sermon’s real source.

It isn’t lecturing, if lecturing means including everything in the passage in detail. It isn’t a verse-by-verse commentary on an entire passage, nor is it a word study. It isn’t giving a lot of facts with no more unifying purpose than a page from the dictionary. Rather, it must focus on one principal proposition found in the passage and either omit or pass lightly over everything else.

It isn’t just teaching. Expository preaching emphatically includes teaching, but it is teaching not for the sake of knowledge alone but for the sake of using that knowledge to move the listener’s will to do the will of God. G. Campbell Morgan emphasized, “All preaching . . . has one aim; that namely of the capture of the central citadel of Mansoul, the will. The intellect and the emotions are highways of approach, and both should be employed. The one thing of which we need to be constantly reminding ourselves is that we have never accomplished the real end of preaching until we have reached the will, and constrained it.”

Variations
We can define expository preaching in its broadest sense as genuinely Bible-based preaching; textual, biographical, or topical sermons, if truly biblical, could be considered variations of expository preaching. The topical approach, although fraught with the obvious danger of lifting texts out of context, is almost essential to doctrinal preaching. To learn the whole truth on any subject, the whole Bible needs to be studied. If topical preaching is belittled, doctrinal preaching will likely be neglected.

Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., is a former secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Why expository preaching?

Central to our job description. Jesus began His public ministry in Nazareth by preaching from Scripture (Luke 4:16-22). The 12 apostles refused to let other important church work detract them from their primary responsibility, saying, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. . . . But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-4).* Paul gave young Timothy his ministerial assignment: “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2). That is the preacher’s charge.

But the frustrated, overworked pastor asks, “If I spend my time specializing in biblical preaching, how will the work of the church ever get done?” Fortunately, the preacher who follows the Bible plan of preaching the Word will inspire more members to follow the Bible plan of every member performing some ministry for the church.

Brings authority and power. Merrill Unger warns, “To an alarming extent the glory is departing from the pulpit of the twentieth century. The basic reason for this ominous condition is obvious. That which imparts the glory has been taken away from the center of so much of our modern preaching and placed on the periphery. The Word of God has been denied the throne and given a subordinate place. Human eloquence, men’s philosophies, Christian ethics, social betterment, cultural progress, and many other subjects good and proper in their place, have captured the center of interest and have been enthroned in the average pulpit in the place of the Word of God.”

Meets human needs. The modern worshiper sits beneath your pulpit needling deliverance from the penalty and power of sin, a meaning to human existence, a sense of personal significance, security, guidelines for personal conduct, and hope for the future. No other book can hold a candle to the Bible in meeting these needs. But go into the pulpit always to meet a human need, not merely to explain a Bible passage.

Provides inexhaustible material. As a beginning minister I lived with the horrifying fear that I’d run out of anything worth saying after a few weeks in my first pulpit. And I did. But necessity forced me to discover that the Bible contains a well of material that never runs dry.

Approach your Bible with the reverent faith that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NIV). Study it diligently, and you’ll possess an ever-increasing store of thrilling and heartwarming truth crying out to be preached. Check on yourself, and you’ll likely find that the only time you have nothing to preach is when you haven’t been spending regular, disciplined time with your Bible.

Encourages a balanced theology. No preacher is as perfectly balanced as is the Bible. We all have our hobby-horses and pet theories. The closer we stay to getting our sermons from Scripture, the more balanced they will be and the more balanced our listeners will become.

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). You want to help your people build faith? Then let them hear the Word of God.

Awakens members’ interest in Bible study. The unfortunate fact is, too many churchgoers seldom open a Bible at home. Biblical preaching helps your people rediscover the Bible. It’s contagious. A love for the Book in the pulpit will produce a love for the Book in the pew.

Helps preacher grow. I. H. Evans says of the Bible, “We may see in it only a little light at first, but as we read it and study it and meditate upon it, we see more and more in it. Every time we come back to it, there is more light and still more, until by and by this word blazes out in a great manifestation of spiritual light.”

Spurgeon exclaimed, “I do not know how my soul would have been kept alive if it had not been for the searching of Scripture which preaching has involved.”

How to prepare an expository sermon

1. Select your passage.

Keep a list. As you read the Scriptures in private devotions or as you prepare other sermons, passages will constantly be striking you as worthy of future sermons. Write each down in a list or journal, along with how the passage has moved you and what you might teach from it.

Study your people’s needs. Henry Ward Beecher insisted, “You will very soon come, in your parish life, to the habit of thinking more about your people and what you shall do for them than about your sermons and what you shall talk about.”

Seek balance. It saves time and encourages balance to have a tentative preaching plan a year in advance. Include both Old and New Testament, both Gospels and Epistles.

2. Pray your mind open to the passage.

As you open your Bible, pray for objectivity, that your study will lead to exposition, not imposition; exegesis (bringing out), not eisegesis (putting in). Pray that the Holy Spirit who gave the Scripture will interpret it to you for the sake of your people.

3. Determine your purpose in preaching the passage.

What need do you hope to meet? Before you start on a trip, it’s necessary to know where you’re going.

4. Study your passage.

Study. It’s hard work. That’s the real reason we do so little of it. We spend most of our time with the easier “busy work” of ministry to appease our conscience for not taking time to do the hard work of study. If that’s your temptation, write above your desk in large letters, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). Don’t be discouraged with yourself if you find study and sermon preparation difficult. Become concerned only if you find it easy to speak without having anything worth saying.

Macro study. First, look at the large picture in your passage. Try to see it as a unit. Grasp its meaning as a whole. Read it rapidly several times. What is its emphasis? Who is speaking? To whom? What is the context: that which is written before and after? What is the social, religious, political setting?
**Micro study.** Now, study verse by verse. Watch for special persons and significant words. Look these words up in the Greek or Hebrew if possible. Compare how each is translated in different Bible versions. Read what Bible commentaries say about your passage.

**Take two kinds of notes.** First, material notes; notes of material you might use in your sermon. Have available small pieces of paper in abundance. I’ll illustrate by calling these 3 x 5s, the size I’ve often used. This note paper should be inexpensive enough so you’ll feel free to use it liberally. Write on a separate 3 x 5 every idea that comes to you, be it brilliant or mundane. Most you’ll eventually discard, but at this juncture you don’t know which.

Second, take organizational notes on a large work sheet. Never settle on your sermon outline until you’ve gathered your sermon material. Otherwise the material you gather may not fit the outline you’ve chosen. On the other hand, nothing is more frustrating in sermon preparation than to finish your research, have a lot of good material, and not the slightest notion of how to put it together as a sermon. The solution: each time you write down an idea on your 3 x 5s ask yourself what outline this might fit into. When your research is finished, your work sheet will have any number of possible outlines. Cross out, change, and combine. Your goal is to have an outline in mind by the time you’ve finished your research. And since it came out of the material you’ve written down, your outline will fit your material.

At the same time you’re scribbling possible outlines, be scratching down on your worksheet possible themes. This is especially important in expository preaching. Most passages go in several directions, and you mustn’t try to include them all. Otherwise you’ll end up with several sermonettes strung together like a chain of islands with nothing linking them together. The theme or proposition solves this problem. It is the gist of the entire sermon in a sentence. Everything else in the sermon is simply an amplification of that one central lesson. Introduce your theme near the beginning, repeat it at intervals throughout your sermon, and your chances are pretty good of sending it home with your people.

John Henry Jowett emphasized, "No sermon is ready for preaching, not ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as a crystal. I find the getting of that sentence the hardest, the most exacting, and the most fruitful labor in my study." 6

Fill your work sheet with possible themes as you study. By the time you’ve finished your research, your theme should be evident.

5. **Find Christ in your passage.**

Throughout this process be looking for what your passage teaches about Christ. As the story goes, the old British pastor didn’t like the young preacher’s sermon. “What’s wrong with it?” the young man complained. “No Christ,” the older minister retorted. “But there was no Christ in the passage.” “Listen, young fellow, from every hamlet in England there’s a road that leads to London. All you have to do is find it.” From every passage of Scripture there’s a road that leads to Calvary. Make it your business to find it.

Both Jesus and the Bible are called Word. Throughout this process be looking for what your passage teaches about Christ. As the story goes, the old British pastor didn’t like the young preacher’s sermon. “What’s wrong with it?” the young man complained. “No Christ,” the older minister retorted. “But there was no Christ in the passage.” “Listen, young fellow, from every hamlet in England there’s a road that leads to London. All you have to do is find it.” From every passage of Scripture there’s a road that leads to Calvary. Make it your business to find it.

Both Jesus and the Bible are called Word, indicating their intimate relationship. The Bible consistently and centrally reveals Jesus, who said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

6. **Incubate your passage.**

One of the best secrets I know for preparing a practical expository sermon is to start early in the week. By Monday or Tuesday your basic Bible research should be finished. You have your theme and tentative outline. You know what your passage says: now you must find the best way to apply it to your people. Let your passage incubate somewhere between the conscious and subconscious of your mind. The Bible calls it “musing”: “My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned then I spoke with my tongue” (Ps. 39:3).

Live the message of your passage throughout your week before you preach it to your people. Don’t interpret it for others until it has interpreted you. Walk your message around the streets of your city and into the homes of your members. The warp of your message should come out of your passage, but the woof should come out of your congregation and community.

Keep your sermon in mind as you chair committees, work at the church, and live with your family. Let it incubate as you drive, walk, talk with friends, and even as you sleep. My wife got so tired of my waking her in the night as I scrounged for light, pen, and paper to write down my latest thought, that she bought me a lighted pad that still sets beside my bed.

A dozen times a day ask, “How could this sermon meet that need?” “Would this experience illustrate what I want to teach?” Dare to imagine. Look for things that illustrate. Sermon applications that grow out of your community fit your community. Illustrations that grow out of your congregation move your congregation.

7. **Organize your passage.**

Every sermon has three parts (introduction, body, and conclusion), whether you plan it that way or not.

**Body.** By this juncture you have settled on your theme and outline. Organize the body first. In organizing the accompanying sermon, The Good Shepherd, I would first put on my desk 3 x 5s containing each of the thoughts that now appear in bold type in this sermon outline. Then I would lay under each the 3 x 5s containing material that fits that section of the sermon.

Now comes the hardest part. Ruthlessly eliminate material that doesn’t quite fit your theme or doesn’t measure up to your standards. You should probably begin with two or three times as much material as you can use. Good material that doesn’t perfectly fit your present theme can be filed for later use. Three advantages of the 3 x 5s become apparent at this juncture: you can organize quickly without any recopying, you can omit material easily, and you can more precisely control your sermon length. I’ve learned that 20 3 x 5s will produce for me a 30-minute sermon.

**Introduction.** No part of your sermon is as important as your introduction and conclusion. They should be prepared the most carefully. However,
they must be prepared last. You cannot introduce until you know what you’re introducing. You cannot conclude until you know what you’re concluding.

The basic purposes of your introduction are to attract attention to your subject and to present your theme. Some feel it is more clever to introduce the theme later in the sermon, but preachers should learn from the psychology of advertising: put first what you most want people to remember, and repeat it often if you expect them to remember it.

Conclusion. Preaching a sermon is like flying an airplane. The chief test comes at the end. The conclusion should briefly summarize what has been said, then climax with an appeal to the will of hearers that will cause them to act.

Now prepare your delivery. Whether it be by manuscript, notes, or memory, deliver your sermon, not so much in the way most comfortable for you, but in whatever way makes it most effective for your listeners. File your 3 x 5s away so you will have ready access to your original research if you want to revise the sermon to be used again.

8. Preach your passage.


And when the sermon is ended, may your listeners be able to say of you, as they did of Jesus, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32, KJV).

The Good Shepherd

Floyd Bresee

Sermon Theme: You can depend on the Good Shepherd.

Introduction


Body

Good Shepherd removes need for fear.

Psalm 23:2—“He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters.”

Sheep fear water—poor swimmers in wool coat. Shepherd removes fear by creating quiet pool in mountain stream.

We fear world conditions, economic disaster, being unloved, old age, sickness, death. Good Shepherd understands and removes need for every fear you’ll ever face.

Good Shepherd’s way pays. Verse 3—“He leads me in the paths of righteousness.”

Shepherd, leaving fold, doesn’t lead sheep to wide wadi that goes downhill and ends in box canyon. Takes them up the mountain path. It’s steep, but it goes where the grass is.

Christianity a climb. Supreme goal of life not comfort, but character. Good Shepherd asks follow Him uphill, but “paths of righteousness” take us where we really want to be.

Good Shepherd with us in trial.

Verse 4—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.”

Night, but never alone. Promise isn’t no valleys, shadows, or death; but that we need never face them alone. My wife locks doors and windows at night when I’m gone, not when I’m home. Fear not night, but night alone.

Christianity not windbreak, but foundation. Matthew 7:24. Just as much rain, flood, wind on one house as other. Difference? House on rock something solid stand on.

Shepherd personal attention to those who hurt. Verse 5—“You anoint my head with oil.” End day shepherd rodded sheep entering fold. Oil on wounded head. Everybody here hurt by somebody, somewhere, sometime. Good Shepherd is here to heal that hurt.

Good Shepherd brings happiness. Verse 5—“My cup runs over.” Some sheep not tired, but throw selves down in fold, exhausted. Shepherd holds cup water, sheep thrusts muzzle deep as cup runs over, refreshed. You may not be hurt, but life last week almost too much. Good Shepherd offers water of life. Drink deeply. Be refreshed. Verse 6—“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” Happy. How can life be bad if following Good Shepherd?

Conclusion

One hundred eighteen words KJV, Psalm 23; 117 are certain: removes fear, His way pays, with us in trial, brings happiness. Only one uncertain word, “The Lord is my shepherd.” Is He? I challenge you to practice total dependence on Good Shepherd this week in every decision, problem, pain, pleasure. Resolve before leaving service, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

* Bible quotes are from the New King James Version unless otherwise stipulated.


*Bible texts are from the New King James Version.
An exciting discovery sheds new light on an old site.

David Merling and Randall W. Younker

During a recent excavation in Israel, archaeologists unearthed important new evidence that sheds light on biblical events. The site of their discoveries is Tel Gezer, a 30-acre mound at the base of the foothills 15 miles west of Jerusalem. Because of its strategic location, Gezer became a powerful city in antiquity and is mentioned many times in the Bible. It is also cited in various Egyptian inscriptions, including those from the Late Bronze Age pharaohs Thutmose III, Thutmose IV, and Merneptah.

From the Bible we learn that the ancient inhabitants of Gezer suffered defeat from the conquering Israelites, but were difficult to control. The Bible records that Horam, king of Gezer, sought to support his ally the king of Lachish against the advance of the Israelites, only to be killed and his entire army destroyed (Joshua 10:33). Despite this devastating loss, the people of Gezer managed to maintain their independence. When the Israelite tribes divided Canaan among themselves, Gezer was assigned to the tribe of Ephraim (Joshua 16:3) and later allotted to the priestly family of Kohath (Joshua 21:21). The Canaanite city of Gezer was not destroyed, but its inhabitants became forced laborers for the Israelites (Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:29, 30). Probably the defenseless inhabitants, having lost their king and army, sued for peace (Deut. 20:10, 11).

Gezer, however, was only tentatively in Israel’s domain. During the ongoing warfare between the Israelites and Philistines, Gezer was a border/buffer city (2 Sam. 5:25; 1 Chron. 14:16; 20:4). Not until the time of King Solomon was Gezer finally under the full control of the Israelites. First Kings 9:16 records that Solomon’s Egyptian wife received the city of Gezer as a dowry from her father, Pharaoh, king of Egypt. This gift prompted Solomon to rebuild Gezer (verse 17).

Early excavations

Because of its large size, strategic location, and biblical connections, Tel Gezer (ancient Gezer) has figured prominently in the archaeological reconstruction of Old Testament Israel. Excavations at this site began in 1902 under R.A.S. Macalister, sponsored by the Palestine Exploration Fund. The seven-year expedition was the largest and most important archaeological excavation in Palestine up to that time.1 Macalister employed as many as 200 workers year-round from sunrise to sunset, except for an occasional pause caused by outbreaks of malaria and cholera.2 His strategy was to dig to bedrock in 10-meter wide swatches spanning the width of the tell. He began at the eastern end of Tel Gezer and worked west. As Macalister’s workers trenched across the mound, they dumped the newly excavated dirt into the previously dug trench, in effect turning the site upside down—a practice quite unacceptable by today’s standards.

Nevertheless, Macalister uncov-
erred many interesting and helpful discoveries. He found portions of an outer city wall, 10 large monoliths, the famous “Gezer Calendar,” and a large water shaft on the magnitude of those discovered at Gibeon, Hazor, and Megiddo; he also directed some creative research on ancient winepresses. However, with so many workers and Macalister their only supervisor, the end result of the excavation was, by modern standards, an archaeological disaster. The major problem with Macalister’s work was that one archaeologist could not properly direct or interpret such a large undertaking. To his credit, Macalister published his finds in three large volumes. Unfortunately, they are difficult to use because of their many faulty interpretations and incorrect dates.

In 1934 new excavations began under A. Rowe, but these were limited to only one season, with little material from Bible times uncovered. In 1964, recognizing the historical importance of Gezer, G. E. Wright, professor of archaeology at Harvard University, began a new series of excavations there. After the first two seasons the excavations came under the direction of William G. Dever (1966-1971); Wright continued as adviser to the project. In the 1972-1973 season J. D. Seger directed the project, with H. D. Lance as associate. The archaeological work during these excavations was some of the most important conducted during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite having to work around Macalister’s dumps, the Gezer team managed to greatly clarify the archaeological history of Gezer.

**Lingering questions**

The Gezer project was completed in 1973; however, to solve lingering archaeological questions, two additional seasons were undertaken (1984 and 1990). Specifically, the remaining questions deal with the dating of the “Outer Wall,” which surrounds the city, and the dating of the gate area, commonly referred to as the “Solomonic gate.” To understand the results of the 1990 season, one needs to understand some of the following current archaeological issues.

For many years archaeologists have deduced from both archaeological and biblical evidence that certain cities had monumental architecture built by King Solomon. According to 1 Kings 9:15: “Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the Lord, his own house, the Millo, or interpret such a large undertaking. To his credit, Macalister published his finds in three large volumes. Unfortunately, they are difficult to use because of their many faulty interpretations and incorrect dates.

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**The usefulness of a relative chronology, however, is its association with an “absolute” date or starting point.**

William Dever writes: “Yet I cannot imagine that the founding of the United Monarchy, and especially the reign of Solomon, will have left virtually no discernible traces in the archaeological record. And make no mistake about it: the implication of moving Hazor X, Megiddo VA/IVB, and Gezer VIII [these numbers represent the Solomonic strata, i.e., the red-slipped pottery] all down into the ninth century B. C. is precisely [his emphasis] that.”

Archaeologists have discovered that different historic periods were distinguished by distinctive styles of pottery. By finding similar pottery at different archaeological sites, archaeologists are able to develop a “relative” chronology. The usefulness of a relative chronology, however, is its association with an “absolute” date or starting point.

The key to the controversy of the dating of the red-slipped pottery is the interpretation of the excavations at Samaria. Unfortunately, Kathleen Kenyon’s interpretation of the finds at Samaria have been disputed ever since they were first published. Kenyon assumed that Samaria was unoccupied from the early third millennium B.C. until Omri began construction around 880 B.C. Since she found this same red-slipped pottery beneath Omri’s building activity, she assumed it dated to the time of Omri. The practical result of dating this red-slipped ware to the time of Omri would be the redating of all Solomonic strata to the time of Omri. Kenyon’s conclusions were almost immediately...
disputed by G. Ernest Wright and other scholars. They interpreted the pottery from Samaria as evidence of an earlier settlement on the site. 16 We determined to clarify the relationship between Gezer’s Solomonic gate and the red-slipped pottery, and perhaps, find evidence to clarify the larger question of archaeological evidence for the reign of King Solomon.

The other major issue facing the 1990 excavation team was the question of the date of Gezer’s “Outer Wall.” A number of archaeologists have recently concluded that few, if any, cities during the Late Bronze Age had outer city walls. 17 Despite the reports of both Macalister and Dever that a Late Bronze Age wall was indeed found at Gezer, its dating is disputed. 18

Discovering an earthquake

To attempt to clarify both questions, Seventh-day Adventist archaeologists and students under the direction of William G. Dever, mentioned previously, who is professor of archaeology at the University of Arizona, and Randall W. Younker, director of the Institute of Archaeology at Andrews University, excavated for five weeks. In addition, during the last few days of the dig a surprising discovery was unearthed that appears to corroborate an earthquake mentioned in the Bible. Dever and Younker divided the excavation team into two crews. Dever led a detachment of students on the southern edge of the tel in investigating Field III, the Solomonic gate, while Younker and his workers opened a series of probes to the north in Field XI. According to Macalister’s plans of this latter area, he had uncovered the Late Bronze Age Outer Wall and found some towers he speculated Solomon had later built into the wall. Our group hoped to locate both features.

In Field III the preliminary job was the cleaning of the gate complex, which was visible but overgrown with weeds. Since the six-chambered gate at Gezer is one of the best preserved in the country, we decided to excavate immediately next to the gate on the east side, thus preserving the gate while at the same time allowing the excavators to determine the relationship of the gate foundation and the red-slipped ware. By the end of the summer, Field III had yielded excellent results. It has now been clearly shown that the Solomonic gate was indeed founded in a stratum characterized by the red-slipped ware. 19 Below the foundation of the gate, and at the same time the red-slipped ware dominated, we discovered a destruction layer with obvious burned debris that correlates with the Bible account of the capture and burning of Gezer by the Pharaoh of Egypt, who then gave Gezer to his daughter, the wife of Solomon (1 Kings 9:16).

In Field XI the primary responsibilities were to remove the dump left by Macalister, then locate, determine, and date each building phase of the Outer Wall and its towers. The work in Field XI went slowly and, especially at the beginning of the season, was a disappointing process. The most difficult task was locating the Outer Wall at a point where a tower was also located. We decided to find one of the large buildings that Macalister had drawn and expand to the Outer Wall and tower. We quickly discovered, to our excitement, several ashlar stones, possible evidence of Solomonic building technique. 21

Unfortunately, the foundation of the wall and tower was discovered after only a few courses. The evidence suggested that this section of the wall had been built, or at the least rebuilt, during the Hellenistic Period (at least 600 years after Solomon’s time).

A new probe

We then decided to open a new probe along the inner face of the Outer Wall, a little farther to the east. This new probe produced an impressive eighth-century B.C. wall. Excavation revealed that the very foundation stones of the wall had been split from bedrock to the top of the exposed wall. In addition, the upper course of the wall had fallen inward, while the lower courses tilted outward. This generated much discussion among the staff, with some of the native Californians arguing that this appeared to be evidence of an earthquake. Other visiting scholars agreed with this interpretation. They believe this leaning wall is the best evidence thus far recovered for the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1.

Despite that exciting discovery, the excavation team was clearly frustrated. With only a few days of the excavation remaining, it seemed that the critics were right. We had found no evidence for a Solomonic or Late Bronze Age city wall.

Because it was possible that the earlier wall had been dismantled to the point we had begun excavating, we decided to try one more probe. Again the eighth-century wall was quickly exposed. Below that we found evidence of a tenth-century wall, from the time of Solomon! But still no Late Bronze wall. Although we were happy to discover evidence of the eighth-century earthquake and were pleased that we had found the Solomonic wall, we were puzzled by the lack of evidence of the Late Bronze Age.

(Continued on page 28)
Cobwebs on our cover is an artist’s creation. But can they move from fiction to reality? They can, and that is one of the persistent dangers of religious experience. When time and tradition erode the primary meaning of a spiritual symbol, when rite replaces reality, when shadows brush aside substance, when routine creates its own relic, cobwebs take over. Such a danger is particularly potent in symbols that touch relationships and challenge lifestyle.

The Communion table is one such symbol. Observe its creation. Watch its place in the apostolic church. Read the interpretation given by the Holy Spirit to the Corinthian church. You can’t escape noticing the crucial role it has in understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. The command “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24, 25)* carries with it a corollary of purpose: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (verse 26). The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is in itself a proclamation: that God’s redemptive activity is so unique that neither the dust of tradition nor the cobweb of life’s preoccupations may be allowed to turn it into a mythology or a ritual relic. As Barclay so pointedly remarks, “The Lord’s Supper is the permanent dramatic pronouncement of the unchanging divine action in Jesus Christ.”¹

Thus the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine are faith’s perpetual symbol to proclaim the reality of the cross until He comes. The moment the death of Jesus ceases to be central to the faith and proclamation of the Christian, the moment the cross ceases to define the Christian life, relationship, and hope—at that moment the cobwebs take over.

To prevent that moment from happening in the life of an individual or a congregation is the responsibility of proclamation at and about the Lord’s table. Come then, let the table of the Lord continue to proclaim the Lord’s death as God’s gracious provision for our redemption, relationship, and restoration.

The Lord’s Supper and redemption

Jesus founded the Lord’s Supper in the context of the Passover feast. The Passover setting underscores human impotence on the one hand and God’s gracious activity on the other. It was impossible for Israel to free itself from bondage. Liberation came from God as a gift of His love and grace, and this is the lesson Israel was to teach its children from generation to generation. When Jewish children asked the meaning of the Passover meal, their parents’ answer was a confession of the dynamic of God’s grace: “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he slew the Egyptians but spared our houses” (Ex. 12:27).
Just as the liberation of Israel was so rooted in history by a redeeming act of God, so is the liberation of humanity grounded in the historic event of the cross. Indeed, Jesus is our “Paschal lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7), and His Last Supper is “a proclaiming act wherein the community in faith gives expression to the glorious and decisive significance of the death of Christ.”  

Not to lose the reality of the cross in theology or proclamation or personal experience is one reason for the command “Do this in remembrance of me.” The Supper is a reminder that “on the night when he was betrayed” (1 Cor. 11:23), on the night He was taken to Pilate and the priests, on the night before He was crucified, Jesus gave a solemn message to His disciples that they need to remember that the bread and the wine are symbols of His body about to be broken and His blood about to be shed for the remission of sins (see Matt. 26:28). The broken body and the shed blood were not acts of a martyr suffering and dying for the vindication of his life or faith. Jesus was not a Lincoln dying for the preservation of a people and a concept; He was not a Gandhi dying for the emergence of a nation. Jesus was God’s redemptive activity for the problem of sin. Lest we forget that, Jesus ordained the Lord’s Supper and commanded that it be kept until He returns. Any indifference or negligence on this account is reprehensible, as Berkouwer rightly warns: “The slightest neglect of the Supper must therefore be condemned, for therein the community of believers loses its connection with the past (the death of Christ) as well as its outlook on the fulfillment.”

Jesus’ assertion that His blood was to be “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28) is crucial for the experience and appreciation of salvation. For one thing, it speaks about sin. Sin is real. Sin is costly. Sin’s grip is so immense and deadly that forgiveness of sin and freedom from its power and guilt are impossible without the “precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19). This truth about sin needs to be said again and again because we live in a world that denies the reality of sin or remains indifferent to it. Vivekananda, the Hindu philosopher, once said that “it is a sin to call a man a sinner. It is a standing libel on human nature.” That may well be the view of many today—from the materialist who defines life’s occupation in terms of possession to the philosophic humanist who captures life’s pursuit in terms of self-fulfillment. But not at the table of the Lord. There we are confronted with the diabolical nature of sin, which can be confronted only by that blood “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

Further, participation in the Lord’s Supper is a confession that Jesus died for our sins, and that without His death there could be no forgiveness. The bread and the cup remind us that “in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us” (Eph. 1:7, 8). We are also reminded that it is our sins that drove Jesus to the cross. As Paul states, “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” and “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6, 8). There is no escape from proclaiming the “once for all” (see Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 10:10) sacrificial and substitutionary nature of the death of Jesus. We are not saved by Christ the good man, by Christ the God-man, by Christ the great teacher, or by Christ the impeccable example. We are saved by Christ of the cross: “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With his stripes we are healed.’” Any doctrine or practice or profession that diminishes or detracts from the centrality of the cross cannot come from the One who said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this . . . in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:25).

The Lord’s Supper and relationships

The second proclamation at and around the table is directly related to the redemption experience. The cross of Jesus brought about not only the forgiveness and redemption of sinners but also the reconciliation of sinners. Through Christ God “has reconciled us to himself” (2 Cor. 5:18). As sinners we were at rebellion with God. Our thoughts were not His thoughts. Our actions were in opposition to His will. We were prodigals running away from home. We were under God’s condemnation. But “while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom. 5:10).

The vertical reconciliation makes possible the horizontal. In bridging the void between God and humanity, and in effecting reconciliation between the two by destroying the enmity of sin, Christ has created a new relationship in which the spirit of slavery yields to the spirit of freedom. Paul argues that all who have experienced that transition have become children of God (see Rom. 8:13-15). Thus the cross gives birth to a new family, with its members reconciled to God and reconciled with each other.

It is the vision of this reconciled family that must dominate the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. I say must because that is the Master’s ideal and command and our weak-
ness and goal. In the midst of denial and betrayal, in the midst of open debate and selfish ambitions as to who should be the greatest, in the midst of disciples who were not prepared for the cross, Jesus established the table of fellowship. Sharing a meal is in itself a powerful Eastern symbol of togetherness, family, and unity. The Master took this symbol and gave it a spiritual force by making it represent the reconciling mission for which He bore the cross.

Reconciled relationship and a united fellowship are the most visible demonstration of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Cullmann passionately points out, “The community assembled for the Lord’s Supper becomes . . . the community of those who have been crucified and have risen with Christ, i.e., the community of those who have received the ‘remission of sins.’” The early church understood this clearly when they celebrated the bread and the wine in their fellowship meetings: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The Jew and the Gentile, the male and the female, the free and the slave, came together in one Spirit, worshipping the Lord at the table. And there they discovered the family of God.

“Because there is one bread,” Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). We need not see any mystic insight in this passage. Participation in the bread and the wine does not perform the miracle of unity. But if what the bread and the wine symbolize—i.e., the death of Jesus for our sins—becomes our passionate preoccupation in thought and act, in living and relating, in work and worship, in reaching in and reaching out, then the oneness of the Communion will indeed become a reality. For it is through the cross that the “dividing wall of hostility” comes tumbling down and that we are no longer strangers and sojourners, but . . .

“Let a man examine himself,” says the apostle, “and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Cor. 11:28, 29). Doesn’t such self-examination before coming to the Lord’s table include not only our relation to God but also our relation to the body of Christ, which is His people? To cherish sin in our hearts while taking part in the emblems is not cheating God, but cheating ourselves from the redemptive grace and forgiving power of God. To sit at the Lord’s table and at the same time discriminate against another human being because of color, caste, race, gender, or whatever is to desecrate the meaning of fellowship that the table represents. Estranged relationship is Satan’s anthem of doubt on the power of the gospel to reconcile.

The inner meaning is to remember that the table is no one’s private property. Nor is it the property of a denomination. It is the table of the Lord. Those who sit at that table are the guests of the Lord. And no guest has the right to discriminate against another. Instead, guests must examine only themselves as to their relationship with the Lord and with each other. Let all who accept the Lord come before the table.

Paul’s call to self-examination does not imply that the unready
should stay away from the table, but rather that they should retrace their path to the "night when He was betrayed." Life placed in relationship to that night cannot remain neutral: while Judas must go, Peter can weep and come back.

Jesus Himself provided an opportunity for self-examination by washing the disciples' feet. In taking the towel, Jesus introduced a new dynamic to human structure and relations: fulfillment comes not from power but service; leadership derives its authority not from position but servanthood; transformation begins not with the throne but with the cross. To live is to die. And so Jesus commanded: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example" (John 13:14, 15).

"Be like Me," Jesus seems to be saying; "serve like Me; love like Me; live like Me." It is not enough to take the title of deacon or elder or pastor or bishop or president. Take the towel instead, and then the bread and the wine. The order is important. Without the self-denial involved in taking up the towel, there could be no Supper. Without becoming a servant, there could be no ministry. Without being a reconciler, there could be no discipleship.

When that kind of self-scrutiny takes hold of us, we will be ready to absorb the true meaning of the words of the Lord: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:54-56). These words recorded by John may not be parallel to the words of the Lord's Supper about eating the bread and drinking the wine, but together they speak of an intimate relationship that defines discipleship. The characterization is neither mystical nor mystical, but existential, affecting the lifestyle of Christians here and now, setting an unalterable standard for discipleship. "To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him... What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated." 7

Such an absolute appropriation of Jesus in our lives, symbolically expressed in the bread and the wine, leads us to affirm that we are His and He is ours until He comes.

**The Lord's Supper and restoration**

As He concluded the Supper, Jesus made a vow: "I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Both these statements give to the Lord's Supper an eschatological thrust. As Jeremias notes, "Through the appropriation of the forgiveness of sins the disciples become the redeemed community of the end-time." 8 This community of faith must ever be conscious of living and witnessing in the interval between the historical event of the cross and the eschatological coming of the Lord. With an experience firmly rooted in the cross and the cross alone, the community anticipates the return of Christ, who "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28).

Between the rooting and the ultimate restoration stands the link: the Lord's Supper. The Supper thus links history, existence, and hope by constantly pointing to us the One who was, who is, and who is to come. This One came in time and space, and died on a day in history for us.

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*All Scripture passages are from the Revised Standard Version.


3 Ibid., p. 192.


7 White, p. 389.

How do we minister to parents who have lost a child?

Victor M. Parachin

Four years after he lost his 25-year-old son in a mountaineering accident, Nicholas Wolterstorff wrote *A Lament for a Son*, an eloquent statement on the emotional pain a parent experiences at the death of a child. The book captures the philosophical turmoil of the grieving parent:

"It's so wrong, so profoundly wrong, for a child to die before its parents. It's hard enough to bury our parents. But that we expect. Our parents belong to our past, our children belong to our future. We do not visualize our future without them. How can I bury my son, my future, one of the next in line? He was meant to bury me!"

The United States Census Bureau reports that nearly 100,000 children and youth under 24 die every year from illness, accident, and suicide. The death of a child impacts family integrity and unity. It is estimated that up to 70 percent of parents suffer serious marital problems when a child dies.

Parents who lose children need the compassionate guidance of their clergy, funeral directors, churches, family, and friends. Here are six strategies to minister to grieving parents.

1. **Encourage the parents to find friendly listeners.** Bereaved parents do not need empty platitudes, such as: "You'll get over it," "Time will heal," "It happened for the best," "This too shall pass," "You can have other children." Such remarks, while not necessarily false, may hurt the bereaved more than they help. They block emotional release and interfere with the grieving process. The bereaved need people who are genuinely interested in them, and who will listen to their pain and share their hurts.

   Robert DiGiulio, who lost his wife and daughter in a car accident, speaks of the importance of such relationships in moments of crises. He writes in his *Losing Someone Close*: "Treasure your relationships. I know that many people who lose someone very close feel abandoned and alone as if they have no one or nothing to live for. The only solace I can offer, the only advice I can give, is to really make an effort to reach out to other people. Find people to laugh and cry and share with. They will help you to mend your shattered life. My family and my friends have been priceless. I have thrived, not on their words of sympathy, but simply on the fact that they have been there for me."

2. **Show that grief and faith do coexist.** Gently remind grieving parents that their feeling of sorrow is not an indication of lack of faith. The truth is that grief and faith teach each other: while faith cushions the blow of bereavement, grief often deepens the experience of faith.

   This interaction of faith and grief is reflected in the experience of a
family that lost a 23-year-old daughter. The family expressed their initial struggle through a searching question: “We knew we could survive. Could we, however, survive in a way that would do credit to our God, our faith, and our daughter?”

Much later the family expressed their feelings in a statement of faith: “We are better Christians now that she has died, for we have learned something about how others also suffer. The power we have to communicate the comfort that comes from God has increased. We are more useful to God than we were because we are able to speak of the comfort He offers the wounded.”

3. Encourage the bereaved to join a support group. There is possibly no greater source of consolation and support for bereaved parents than that of a support group made up of other fathers and mothers who have lost children. The pain of child loss is so deep that it cannot be understood and analyzed; only shared and supported.

Beverley Raphael, an Australian psychiatrist, in one of the most definitive books on grief, The Anatomy of Bereavement, affirms the power of a support group over therapy: “Professional support may be reasonable, although there is much to suggest that professionals find this area a painful one also. The greatest support often comes from sharing with other parents experiencing the same crisis.”

4. Lead the bereaved to tap faith resources. Virginia is a troubled mother. Six of her sons died one after the other, all victims of muscular dystrophy. She was a carrier of the disease but did not know it. While muscular dystrophy can lay dormant for as many as five generations, it can erupt suddenly in one generation as in Virginia’s family.

A local news reporter asked Virginia how she managed to deal with the death of six sons. To a casual observer her answer could appear trite. But given the magnitude of her losses, Virginia’s remarks demonstrate the power of her Christian faith: “It was prayer,” she replied. “If ever any hate or anger was about to creep in, I began my prayers, and these feelings just burned away like fire. I always looked at it like this: if Jesus carried His cross, I should carry mine.”

“Religion,” writes Rabbi Harold Kushner in Who Needs God?, “is first and foremost a way of seeing. It can’t change the facts about the world we live in, but it can change the way we see those facts, and that in itself can often make a real difference.”

5. Professional counseling may be needed. Not every bereaved parent will need professional help, but some will need a skilled counselor if other informal support is not available. The case of a minister shows how necessary professional counseling may become to get over the process of grief. This minister experienced devastating isolation after the death of his son. To begin with, he was almost stoic. He officiated at his son’s funeral, saying, “I couldn’t imagine anyone else doing it.” But during the weeks that followed he found the pain unbearable. He says: “As a minister we were expected to have the faith and strength to overcome our grief, but as parents our grief was just as strong. We were expected to be much stronger and more full of faith than we were. I cried every day for six months. For a week the phone never stopped ringing after our son died, then it never rang. I thought I’d go crazy, and felt like screaming in the silence.”

Recognizing that his emotional state was deteriorating rapidly, he wisely sought the help of a professional.

6. Prepare the bereaved for special days. After the death of his son, Nicholas Wolterstorff discovered: “The worst days now are holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, birthdays, weddings, Days meant as festivals of happiness and joy now are days of tears. The gap is too great between day and heart.”

Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and death anniversaries can also be painful. The pastor and the church can help the bereaved manage such difficult days. Being a friend to the bereaved to help them talk or cry is a good start. Encourage the parents to do something in memory of their child—give a pie, a book, a bouquet of flowers, or pay a visit to someone lonely or in need.

We are created to heal. Healing sometimes takes a long time, but it will take place. One mother, five years after her seven-year-old son died, says: “I can now look at his picture and not cry. Believe it or not, life does get better.”

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**Bereavement support resources**

The following organizations will provide information specifically for bereaved parents about support groups. They also provide helpful literature. Call or write, sending a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

- **The Compassionate Friends**, Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522. (708-990-0010)
  - **Candledusters**, 1312 18th St., NW., Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20036. (1-800-366-2223)
  - **Share**, St. Elizabeth Hospital, 211 S. 3rd, Belleville, IL 62222. (618-234-2415)
  - **National SIDS Foundation**, 10500 Little Patuxent, Suite 420, Columbia, MD 21044. (1-800-221-SIDS)
Maximizing our time

Along with other techniques, the Pareto Principle can enhance the accomplishments of your ministry.

A well-known church leader used to enjoy telling Oakwood College students about a conversation he overheard his young son having with a friend. Asked what his father did for work, his son responded matter-of-factly, “Oh, nothing. My dad just preaches and teaches.”

Many lay members suffer similar confusion about how pastors spend their time. And the truth is that sometimes we are confused ourselves. There is much more we can be doing—and much frustration we can be avoiding—if we know how to make the best use of our time.

Pastors attending the 1989 Annual Ministers’ Conference at Oakwood were asked to list the three things they most needed help with. Time management topped the list.1 Effective time management begins by asking three fundamental questions:

1. “How do I currently use my time?”
2. “What are my goals?”
3. “How do I plan to accomplish my goals?”

Keeping a time log

We cannot begin to manage our time more effectively unless we know how we have been spending it. Thus the first step in time management is keeping a record of time spent over a specific span. Using a form similar to the accompanying chart, log everything you do for the next week or two.

Once your time log is completed, assess the percentage of time spent in each activity. Then ask some hard questions. Are you really in control of your time? Are all your activities in the “must do” category, or can a few be eliminated? Can you achieve acceptable results by devoting less time to certain things?

Goal setting and prioritizing

The next step in time management is establishing clearly defined goals. Most people drift through life without any specific goals before them, reacting to whatever is placed before them by people, events, or things. The goals you list should be your own, and they should be realistic, concrete, and achievable. Additionally, they should have a time frame.

So go ahead and make an exhaustive list of your goals. Next, categorize your list under the headings “personal” and “vocational.” Then decide which goals are definitely im-

R. Clifford Jones is senior pastor of the Hanson Place Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brooklyn, New York.

Most people drift through life without any specific goals before them.
important, moderately important, and which are not really important. The very important goals become your A list, the moderately important your B list, and the unimportant your C list.

This accomplished, compare your stated priorities with your time log to see whether you have been focusing on what's really important. Obviously, you have some adjusting to do if your days are cluttered with B or C activities.

**Daily activities**

Important in time management is prioritizing daily activities. Plan your day in advance—preferably the night before—and then rank every duty according to its importance in fulfilling your goals. Every day include at least one activity that will help you realize your lifetime or long-term goals.

Begin each morning by performing the most important task. This provides a sense of achievement that will inspire you for the rest of the day.

**The Pareto Principle**

Effective time management can never be accomplished without giving attention to the Pareto Principle. Named after an Italian economist-sociologist, the Pareto Principle states that "the significant items in a given group normally constitute a relatively small portion of the total items in the group." Out of this thinking came the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of value, benefits, or growth usually comes from 20 percent of items or participants. The remaining 20 percent of value is derived from the other 80 percent of your list.

The Pareto Principle has numerous and significant implications for every phase of life. Faced with a long list of things to do in any given day, most people tackle the simplest or easiest first, forgetting that 80 percent of value will come from doing just 20 percent of the things on the list. In other words, doing the two or three most important items on your list will probably help you realize 80 percent of potential value or benefits.

**Two ways to beat procrastination**

One of the most insidious pitfalls that plague us in managing our time is procrastination. This problem, according to Burke and Yuen, is "not just a bad habit but a way of expressing internal conflict and protecting a vulnerable sense of self-esteem." Procrastination poses serious problems for ministers who often have to perform functions they wish they did not have to, such as calling members who have been opposing everything they have been trying to do, visiting the sick in hospitals, preparing sermons. I know of a few pastors who habitually prepare their sermons Sabbath morning.

How can chronic procrastination be overcome? Bliss suggests some coping mechanisms, among them the salami technique and the balance sheet method.

The salami method entails slicing up tasks into small, manageable parts. For example, you have been postponing calling that problem member, imagining that the experience will be unpleasant. You can beat procrastination by slicing up your task into the following segments: (1) write down the member's number; (2) set a time to make the call; (3) decide what to say; and (4) at the appointed time place the call. Doing an unpleasant task in incremental stages like this makes it easier to do.

The balance sheet method calls for listing on one side of a paper all the reasons you have been putting off the task and on the other side all the benefits you will gain by completing it. Your reasons for putting off the task will probably be lame excuses, such as "I don't feel like it" or "It's boring." On the other hand, the list of benefits will usually be longer and more compelling. Not the least of these benefits is the sense of relief and satisfaction received when an unpleasant and difficult task is accomplished.

**Time—a valuable resource**

Few resources at the pastor's disposal are as valuable as time. And everybody has the same 24 hours in each day in which to accomplish our goals. When we master the art of time management, both our churches and our families will benefit tremendously.

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1 Annual Ministers' Conference, Oakwood College, "Responses to Questionnaire," 1989.
2 Edwin C. Bliss, *Getting Things Done* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), p. 120.
4 Bliss, p. 131.
Evaluation—whose opinion counts?

James A. Cress

How am I doing?" Everywhere he went Ed Koch would question his constituents. As a politician the former mayor of New York City wanted instant feedback from the people who mattered most—the ones who would vote for him.

Pastors also need feedback from the people who matter most—the ones who vote with their attendance, financial support, and ministering activities. However, there are few jobs in which it is harder to measure progress or to get accurate feedback than pastoral ministry. Furthermore, one of the least reliable methods of seeking realistic input is to ask some parishioners, "How am I doing?" Depending upon whose input you seek, the answers will vary. You are seldom as great as your strongest supporters will affirm and you are seldom as bad as your loudest detractors will decry.

If we surround ourselves only with those who affirm our ministry, we may not get accurate evaluation. Likewise, if naysayers are the only voices we hear, it is easy to become discouraged or to conclude that we are ineffective.

So whose opinions count?

What is God’s opinion?

Pastors must first seek to place their lives and ministry in harmony with God’s will and to maintain a keen sense of His approval! Determine that you will follow His lead. Henrietta Mears says, “To be successful in God’s work is to fall in line with His will and to do it His way. All that is pleasing to Him will be a success.”

What do your leaders say?

After making sure of your compliance with God’s will, seek the counsel of your administrators. One of the best pieces of advice I received as a young pastor was, “If you wonder how to proceed in any situation, call your president.” This doesn’t mean that administrators are perfect or always have the best solutions. But it does mean that if you seek and follow their counsel, they can and will support you. Try never to place your supervisors in the position of hearing about difficult matters that you have failed to discuss with them.

Are local leaders with you?

Trusting the elected leadership of the congregation is essential for pastoral effectiveness just as trust for the pastor by laity leadership is essential for effective church growth. More often than not, elders and church officers are selected because the congregation values their leadership and trusts their judgment. Wise pastors will recognize that their pastoral tenure will eventually conclude while their members will live with decisions far into the future.

Consult with your leaders and then motivate them to act upon the decisions they have made. Some of the most delicate issues are best resolved when local church leaders have participated in decision-making and then are expected to implement the course of action that they have designed.

Members vote regularly

A pastor must have vision and set the pace. Your church will seldom exceed your expectations for what they can accomplish, so set a higher standard for soulwinning, financial goals, attendance and spirituality. Encourage your members to reach beyond what they think they can do. Measurable progress will follow as you raise their vision of what can be accomplished.

Spouses have loving wisdom

Don’t ignore the input of your partner in marriage and ministry. Sometimes in the stress of too-busy schedules and too-long days, a spouse’s evaluation can sound like criticism and might be discarded as nagging. Take time to listen to the messages your family members give. They love you and want to see your ministry succeed. Initiate opportunities to spend a quiet evening with your partner reflecting on the course of your ministry. You will receive profound insights that will benefit you immensely.

Find a friend

A trusted pastoral colleague knows the burdens you carry and shares the same kinds of challenges you face. A friend often sees your point of view but is able to maintain a “one-step-away” objectivity that places the most difficult matters in a different perspective.

Whom to ignore

While every member deserves a voice, remember that some individuals thrive on recreational griping. Chronic complainers believe they have failed to do their duty until they find fault. Nothing you do will please them, and accommodations you make to their complaints will seldom earn their support. Such sideline umpires are typically uninvolved in church programs or evangelistic endeavors. Carefully evaluate your own attitudes but recognize that a murmuring multitude has always dogged the steps of spiritual leaders. Focus on finding God’s will and building your leaders’ support and then move forward in confidence.
Ministry Reports

Euro-Asia Division appoints ministerial secretary

James A. Cress

He was born in Estonia, where his father was a minister. He graduated from Tartu University, studying general linguistics and cultural anthropology. During the socialistic regime he directed an “underground” seminary in Estonia for ministers and prospective ministers. He was multivocational, functioning wherever needed as a pastor, teacher, vice president, translator, and publishing director. Beyond that, for 12 years he was a researcher for the Soviet Union Academy of Sciences, conducting seven expeditions in the far north of Siberia. In 1989 he organized Seventh-day Adventist work in Lithuania, and between 1990 and the present he has been a professor, librarian, and dean of pastoral education at Zaokski Seminary near Moscow.

Who is this multilingual, multicultural, multieducational man of all seasons? Heikki Silvet, newly appointed ministerial secretary of the Euro-Asia Division.

He takes up this position in a division that enjoys unprecedented growth in membership but lacks a sufficient number of trained ministers for all the new churches. He will face the challenge of providing continuing education for working ministers as well as finding new ways to recruit ministers and local lay elders.

“I see as one of the major tasks at the present moment,” reflects Silvet, “to balance the needs for workers with an academic background with the needs for workers with a more practical direction.” He intends utilizing academically qualified General Conference personnel, including members of the Ministerial Association and Biblical Research Institute, along with the programs of Griggs University, the newly established collegiate division of Home Study International.

We thank God for Heikki Silvet and invite your prayers on his behalf as he assumes his new responsibilities.

Bible conferences

Nearly 1,000 pastors from central Europe attended continuing education Bible conferences last year. Marienhohe Seminary near Darmstadt hosted the largest of the three conferences, involving pastors from all German-speaking unions. Not since World War II had pastors from the German unions participated in such mutual study and fellowship.

The other two conferences took place on campuses in Prague and in Collonges, France. All presentations from the three conferences will be published in German and French editions of a book entitled Symposium on Adventist Ecclesiology.

Other continuing education projects are planned for this year.

Preaching to the Secular Mind

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Uncovering the Mystery of MPD: Its Shocking Origins, Its Surprising Cure

MPD (multiple personality disturbance), considered a rare condition in past years, is a far more common response to abuse than we once thought. Any pastor who does counseling needs to be aware of it. James G. Friesen has written from a Christian perspective an excellent book for understanding and treating MPD. Having said this, I also find this a troubling book—not so much for its content as for the unreflective manner in which the author presumes satanic ritual abuse to exist. I am concerned that an otherwise sensitive and skilled presentation of the origins and treatment of MPD will be discounted by an overemphasis on devil worship.

I make this judgment even though I know Friesen well and respect his insights and methods. As noted on the book jacket, I endorsed his combination of sound clinical psychology and spiritual deliverance. I read his book in manuscript form and felt it encompassed much of what Friesen had been teaching our graduate students at Fuller. However, in reading the book for this review, I experienced the author as so eager to introduce us to the reality of the occult that his work shows an unevenness. This unevenness does a disservice to the seriousness of the topic as well as to the author’s competent treatment suggestions.

We need reminding that real evil exists, and that children often have only their abilities to disassociate in the midst of overwhelming trauma. I am convinced, however, that the proclivity for evil actions existing in many otherwise normal parents can become unmanageable when they are severely stressed. Therefore to attribute more than a minor role to satanic involve-

ment deflects our thinking from common causes.

Friesen’s treatment suggestions apply more to trained mental health workers than pastors, but his book can help pastors recognize MPD and make an appropriate referral. The counselors to whom pastors make their referrals also need to read this book. Friesen’s thoughtful models, his warning about quick fixes, his recommendations about group support, and his sensitive treatment processes are the best in the field. The goal of therapy is the fusion of alter egos into a life-fulfilling single self. As the author notes, this takes time and skill. The inclusion of spiritual resources to help MPD clients gain the strength to face their past trauma and reaffirm their own worth is one of the best statements of how to integrate clinical awareness and religious faith available in mental health literature.

Multiple Personality Disturbance is far more common than we once thought. Pastors who counsel need to be aware of it.

I recommend this book for pastors who can put the material about satanic involvement in perspective, and who want to become more perceptive about the internal dynamics of reactions to abuse among many who come to them for counseling. The only problems I do not see addressed by Friesen are the questions of repressed memories and the legal obligation of mental health professionals to report abuse.

Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching

Paul Scott Wilson gives detailed yet flexible guidelines for each stage of sermon preparation. His book shows how preachers can release creativity that "reconciles heart and head, body and mind, in discerning God’s purpose." To Wilson, the sermon is an art form dedicated to revealing God’s word for today. While insisting on the primacy of the Bible in preaching, the author contends that the sermon must in equal proportion address contemporary needs in everyday terms. "Prophetic and pastoral preaching begins in listening to and working with our people through the week."

Wilson explains how words can kindle the imagination and suggests questions to ask if a text seems to lack preaching possibilities. Skipping the story stage in exposition, he says, puts a fire extinguisher to the hearer’s imagination before it has sparked!

Although some arguments seem long and vague, I found most of Wilson’s material fascinating and useful. In each of my several readings of this book I found new and practical concepts.


While reading the Bible, have you ever thought: “I’ve seen this so many times I’ve got it memorized but what does it mean”? Sometimes nebulous theological terms can become trite and irrelevant, making Bible reading a duty rather than something anticipated. The Message intends to remedy such boredom. NavPress does not exaggerate in proclaiming it “the New Testament like you’ve never read it before.” This fresh, contemporary version deserves a five-star rating.

Never before has the Bible come to life so vividly in everyday language, inspiring new insight and enthusiasm. Peterson transforms the original Greek into language that is as familiar to us today as the original was to the early church.

The author, having served as a pastor for 29 years and a teacher or lecturer at 24 seminars, is a professor of
spiritual theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He noticed that students seemed unable to grasp the real meanings of biblical words, thus missing their relevance. So, beginning with portions of Galatians, he wrote straight from the Greek without consulting English translations. Students began listening with new enthusiasm.

Of Peterson’s 14 books, *The Message* might be his crowning work. As with other paraphrases and even translations, there can be problems with subjective interpretation. These, however, seem few, making *The Message* suitable for secular friends, new converts, and all church members.

**Preaching Resources**


This valuable resource showcases the expertise of successful preachers such as Calvin Miller, Joel Gregory, Lloyd John Ogilvie, James W. Cox, Elizabeth Achtemeier, Thomas Long, James Earl Massey, Sidney Greidanus, John Killinger, and 40 others. This is not a book of sermons but a textbook of preaching taught by the best of the best.

Psalm 119, Thomas Manton, 1990, 482 pages (in three volumes), US$79.95, hardcover.

Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord, John Brown, 1990, 740 pages (in three volumes), US$74.95, hardcover.


All three are available from The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; and P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013.

Fortunately, more publishers today are providing pastors with the wisdom of the past. The Banner of Truth Trust brings back the works of Manton, an outstanding Puritan preacher of the seventeenth century. His exposition of Psalm 119, first printed in 1680, constitutes an encyclopedia of practical Christian living.

John Brown (1784-1858) of Edinburgh published many of his expositions, but this work remains of special value. It explains the teachings and sayings of Jesus that focus attention on Himself.

Hodge was a professor in systematic theology at Princeton Seminary from 1877 to 1886. His lectures form a simple and practical handbook of traditional evangelical doctrine.


Solid in theology and biblical in approach, Hamilton’s volume is a primer for preachers. He approaches homiletics in three parts: understanding the task, developing technique, and utilizing homiletical treasury. Three appendices deal with variety in preaching, sermon preparation, and illustrations.

To sharpen preaching skills, Bailey gives eight models for interpreting and proclaiming the biblical text. He bases each of the eight on recent research in a variety of fields such as biblical studies, philosophy, theology, history, sociology, literature, homiletics, and communication theory. The author provides a full sermon for each of his models, along with a text analysis and explanation of methodology.

Preaching From the Inside Out, Charles B. Bugg, Broadman, Nashville, 1992, 144 pages, US$14.99, paper. Foreword by Dr. Fred B. Craddock, Candler School of Theology, Emory University. In this conversational book, Professor Bugg talks to his students about preaching. His advice is sound, witty, and practical.


The power sermon promoted in this book uses 11 steps to maximize exegetical accuracy, relevance, clarity, and style: (1) What is the sermon about? (2) What does the rest of the Bible say about my subject? (3) Where is the sermon going? (4) How do I get started? (5) How do I keep from missing a turn? (6) What do I do when I arrive at my destination? (7) How do I keep the trip interesting and enjoyable? (8) How can I make sure the style is right for the trip? (9) How do I pace myself to arrive on time? (10) Can I remember the way, or must I keep glancing at the map? (11) Do I have to go the same way every time?

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The Recovery Bible is a day-by-day guide connecting Twelve-Step programs with the principles of God’s Word, encouraging communion with God through prayer, study, and meditation.

Ministry Resources for Children
Building a Great Children’s Ministry, Evelyn Johnson and Bobbie Bower, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1992, $10.95, paper.

This valuable addition to Lyle E. Schaller’s Creative Leadership series understands today’s children, the teaching/learning process, and how to choose effective materials.

1,001 Wonderful Wonders: Activities for All Children, Anne Rogovin, Abingdon, Nashville, 1992, 208 pages, US$12.95, paper.

In an era of TV and video games, this volume explores ways to develop in children a love for the world of nature.


The theme of this delightful book is the Creation story. Written in simple language, it teaches preschoolers about the world and the God who made it.


Fifty Bible people—well known or obscure—are featured in these unique object lessons. Designed to help prepare the children’s sermon, this book offers creative and attention-getting material.


Contains ideas you probably have not thought of to lengthen the attention span of children at church.


Do you need help in preparing meetings for preteen-agers? This book comes complete with ice breakers, Bible studies, handouts you can photocopy, and even snack ideas.

Letters
From page 2

learned to do.

May God enlarge our hearts and ears and close our mouths long enough between sermons to meet the real world and reflect the real Jesus.—Chaplain Jim Brassard, director of pastoral care, Parkview Memorial Hospital, Brunswick, Maine.

Lurking legalism and liberalism
Martin Weber’s “Lurking Legalism and Liberalism” (May 1993) caught me by surprise and made me think. I consider myself a liberal, but certainly not a libertine. I would rather say that liberals maximize grace and interpret law through it. They see the new covenant (grace) as the fulfillment of the old (law). I realize this is a very simplified response.

To follow Exodus 20:8-11 is next to impossible today. Who would be the equivalent of a manservant? Wouldn’t it be anyone that you pay for a product or service rendered on that day? Does that mean that our places of worship should not be heated, cooled, or illuminated on the Sabbath? We may not pay our utility bills on the Sabbath, but we utilize services that require people to work on the Sabbath. Or if we have a serious injury or illness on the Sabbath, won’t we seek assistance? The list of people we pay to work for us on the Sabbath could be quite long, even to the foreigner who makes the cloth for our clothing on the Sabbath. And let us not be wobble-headed in our thinking that the worship leader doesn’t work.

Is it possible to keep God’s law in our world today? Do we become legalists if we try or liberals if we don’t? If we look upon grace as the fulfillment of the law, we know that every day is the Lord’s day and worship God in it. That doesn’t answer the question of working on the Lord’s day. It doesn’t answer the question of what happens if we labor or cause someone to labor on the Lord’s day. But it may point in the direction of keeping each day holy. And if I try my best to keep it holy, I will let God sort out all the other things.

No wonder we are tempted with legalism. Our lives would be much simpler. We wouldn’t have to trust God or think.

I enjoy your magazine and read it regularly.—Paul S. Powell, United Methodist Church, Bismarck, Missouri.

Ministry appreciated
I am a United Methodist clergy who has had the privilege of receiving Ministry (PREACH edition) for the past several years free of charge. I have found the articles helpful in many ways. I was especially impressed with the May 1993 issue, particularly the article by Roland R. Hegstad, “To Heal the Walking Wounded”; Martin Weber’s “Lurking Legalism and Liberalism”; and “Statement I—Guidelines on Abortion.”

I am retired for nearly four years but have been serving a small-town, small-membership church. I continually search for ways by which I could become a more effective pastor. Ministry has helped considerably along these lines.

It suddenly occurred to me that instead of just being grateful and acting upon what I have learned from Ministry, I ought to show my appreciation in more tangible ways and send a token gift to help support your ministry to nonsubscribers. Enclosed, please find my check for $50.—Reverend Charles E. Cowell, Jr., Bartlesville, Oklahoma.
Feelings of failure
From page 6

low? Then make friends with the raccoons! Take good care of them. “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil. 4:11).

In his younger years Paul ambitiously climbed the ecclesiastical ladder. He later testified: “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous” (Gal. 1:14, NIV). “But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things... as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him” (Phil. 3:7-9). Shall we likewise satisfy ourselves with simply having Christ, relinquishing our grandiose plans and ambitions?

I confess that I once aspired to be some kind of VIP (very important pastor) in heaven. I imagined Jesus escorting me about the Holy City introducing to me all the people I helped find salvation, as angels watched respectfully. I’m learning now that all celestial glory will go to the Lamb. None of it will go to me. How silly to seek recognition beyond Christ’s accomplishments already imputed to us by grace! “Therefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours: whether... the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

When we lose our career ambitions for Christ’s sake, our ministry is transformed. We don’t worry about what people are thinking; we just love them and meet their needs. We rejoice in the successes of fellow pastors, no longer rivals but comrades in Christ. Priorities are reordered, motives purified. Fueled by gratitude for grace, we remain busily involved in ministry, but we no longer neglect our families for the sake of impressing members or conference leaders. We labor in love—love for God and love for people—without which we are clanging cymbals. The fruit of the Spirit replaces human hay and stubble (see 1 Cor. 3:10-14). We rest in the Lord as we labor for Him.

Working for the Lord is serious business, but we can’t take success or failure too seriously. Just today a pastor criticized my book on social issues, accusing me of venturing beyond my expertise. I agreed he might be correct; sometimes in wanting to be helpful I try to contribute more than I’m able to offer. What a relief not to feel threatened at the suggestion of failure!

Recently I heard an evangelist just back from Russia relate what God had done through him. I was thrilled that people found Christ through this good brother, but also I felt like a failure, not having seen many souls saved lately in my ministry. Then it dawned on me: Maybe I can’t talk about what Jesus did through me in Russia, but I can proclaim what He did for me at Calvary!

Amen? That’s the real good news in which we must live and move and have our ministry. Therein we find true success.

Gezer and the Bible
From page 13

Still, the base of this tenth-century wall was unusual in that it appeared to have been built with a dirt foundation. We decided to dig below the base of this wall to check its footing. Within a few minutes on the following day, another course of stone began to appear. It was offset from the wall above by about 64 centimeters, indicating it was a separate wall. When the excavation season was complete, we had found seven courses of a Late Bronze Age II city wall. Its date was confirmed by 27 buckets of pure thirteenth century B.C. pottery, which was excavated to the bedrock foundation. Gezer was indeed a walled city during the Late Bronze Age!

Scriptural record vindicated
To sum up the 1990 excavation season at Tel Gezer, we can say that while the issue of the relationship between the red-slipped Iron I pottery and Solomon may not be settled in everyone’s mind, it is now certain that Gezer’s Iron Age gate was built and the city itself rebuilt when the earliest red-slipped pottery was prevalent, that it was built shortly after a major fiery destruction, and the rebuilding of the city was a major construction project. Certainly the Bible’s account of a destruction of Gezer by an Egyptian pharaoh and its rebuilding by Solomon harmonizes with this evidence.

It now also appears that we have excellent evidence for a Late Bronze Age wall at Gezer. This new information will have an impact on the current and future understanding of the Canaanite Late Bronze Age. Future interpretations of the Late Bronze Age must deal with the reality that some of those cities were defended by walls.

Finally, the evidence of the eighth century earthquake most certainly highlights the statement of Amos 1:1. A few weeks of work at an old site provided much new light!

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3 Large standing stones used for cultic purposes.
4 For convenience, these excavations will be referred to as a unit under the combined title “Dever.”
6 The question raised about the building of the Solomonic gates has again risen to the more generic, current title of “six-chambered” gates. In this article “Solomonic gates” and “six-chambered gates” are used interchangeably. The capitalization of “Outer Wall” follows the final reports of Dever and Macalister and refers to a specific outer wall. Dever originally referred to this wall as “Wall 9011,” but adapted the general term “Outer Wall” (W. G. Dever, H. D.
Seger, American Schools of Oriental Research. 211 13 Strata are contemporary layers of archaeological remains.

10 Although the majority of scholars continue to accept the tenth century dating of this pottery, the issue has continued in question. An entire issue of a recent Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 277/278 (February/May): 23-70. The earliest phase was a red-slipped pottery with no burnishing, dated to the early to middle tenth century B.C. It was followed by a red-slipped pottery that had been hand burnished, middle to late tenth century B.C. The final sequence of development was a red-slipped pottery that was wheel burnished, late tenth century to early ninth century B.C. In this article, whenever “red-slipped” pottery is mentioned, it refers to “red-slipped, unburnished.”

9 “Strata” are contemporary layers of archaeological remains.

11 Holiday, BASOR 277/278:233.

12 “Relative chronology” means that as archaeologists discover similar pottery fragments at different sites they assume that the two occupation layers at each site are of the same age or historic period.

13 Certain archaeological sites and/or historic dates are pivotal for interpreting a “relative” chronology. In other words, for a “relative” chronology to be useful, one must have a few “absolute” events or dates with which the “relative” chronology can be associated. In this case, the building of Samaria by Omri (1 Kings 15:23, 24, 29) is the closes dateable event. Kenyon wrote of Samaria: “Archaeologically it has the importance that, as we have a fixed date for its foundation, we can establish very closely the chronology of the pottery and other objects found associated with its first phase” (Kathleen M. Kenyon, Archaeology in the Holy Land 5th ed. [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985], p. 260). Since the founding of Samaria is the closest “absolute” date, the interpretation of the archaeological finds there are fundamentally crucial for interpreting the relative chronology a century on either side of that event.

14 Although Kenyon was not the chief excavator at the 1931-1935 Samaria excavations, she was a participant and assumed a major role in its publications.

15 Kenyon, p. 260.


17 Conservative Bible scholars would place the Israelite conquest of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age.

18 Early Iron Age red-slipped pottery has been seen as an evolution of three phases (John S. Holladay, “Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer,” Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 277/278 [February/May]: 23-70). The earliest phase was a red-slipped pottery with no burnishing, dated to the early to middle tenth century B.C. It was followed by a red-slipped pottery that had been hand burnished, middle to late tenth century B.C. The final sequence of development was a red-slipped pottery that was wheel burnished, late tenth century to early ninth century B.C. In this article, whenever “red-slipped” pottery is mentioned, it refers to “red-slipped, unburnished.”

19 We believe that the recent articles by Lawrence Stager and John Holladay in BASOR, 277/278, now more than ever, confirm the Solomonic (tenth century) date of the red-slip ware.

20 Macalister referred to this building as “the residence of the governor” (p. 206) while in more recent articles it has been called the “Egyptian residency.” (See Itamar Singer, “An Egyptian Governor’s Residency” at Gezer?” Tel Aviv 13 (1986); Aren M. Maeir, “Remarks on a Supposed ‘Egyptian Residency’ at Gezer,” Tel Aviv 15, 16 (1988, 1989): 65-67; and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “An Egyptian ‘Governors Residency’ at Gezer? Another Suggestion,” Tel Aviv 15, 16 (1988-1989): 69-76.)

21 Ashlars are finely hewn rectangular blocks of stone.
Reaching Muslims for Christ

Finding a bridge to communicate faith to Muslims is a delicate venture. A new 62-page booklet, The Qur’an Is Right When It Says . . . , tactfully but without compromise employs the Islamic scriptures to acquaint Muslims with Christian faith. Available in English, Arabic, and Turkish. The price for a package of 10 is US$20 plus postage of $5, surface mail. Airmail postage for a 10-pack is $50; less in greater quantities. Prepaid orders only, checks payable to Sylvain Romain, c/o South German Union, Acik Kapi, Postfach 4260, 73760 Ostfildern, Germany.

Need some supplies?
Nonprofit organizations are being sought as recipients for new supplies and equipment donated by American corporations. NAEIR, the country’s largest gifts in-kind organization, received a record $91 million worth of donated products in the past fiscal year. Available items include office supplies, computer software and accessories, tools, building supplies, janitorial goods, paper products, personal care items, clothing, books, toys, and games, wall covering, and teaching materials. Qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofits pay $645 annual dues, plus shipping and handling to cover NAEIR’s overhead. According to NAEIR, its average member receives $7,000 worth of new goods a year, selecting what they need from 300-page catalogs, issued every 10 weeks. A computerized allocation system assures fair distribution of the merchandise, and a money-back guarantee protects all first-year members. Nonprofit directors can get a free information packet on this 16-year-old program by phoning 1-800-562-0955 or writing: NAEIR, Dept. NL-8, 560 McClure Street, Galesburg, IL 61401.

Getting to know them
Learning where all the members of your new church live can be difficult and frustrating. On the first Sabbath in my new church, I put a blank half sheet in the bulletin and asked members to draw a map from the church to their house. In addition, I asked them to include their address, phone number, a good time to visit, and whether they would like a call first or just have me drop in. The congregation placed the maps in the offering plates, and I filed them for immediate use.—Dean Tupper, Spokane, Washington.

Tennis, anyone?
Nothing is more helpful than to have a regular time each day set aside for recreation, whether it be walking, jogging, tennis, golf, etc. Concentration during this time takes a break from church work.

My church board allowed me as their pastor to take enough time each afternoon to play tennis, if I did not have a wedding, funeral, or emergency. At age 72 I’m still following the same exercise program whenever possible.—David F. Conrad, Oneonta, Alabama.

Increasing their faith
Pastors interested in helping church members to “re redeem the time” through daily attention to God’s Word may want to try the following. We have recently begun the “Faith Comes by Hearing” concept in our church district, which involves members in “listening to” the New Testament in 30 days.

The basic concept is to preach on the importance of knowing God’s Word and then present “Faith Comes by Hearing” as a way to fulfill the divine mandate. For information, contact Tony Homet, Hosannah Ministry, 2421 Aztec Road Northeast, Albuquerque, NM 87107 or call (800) 545-6552.—Paul Fisher, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

Managing stress
Stress energy can be useful—but only if properly applied. Think of stress as something to be budgeted—as you would budget your money.

Overspending: fighting stubbornly for your point of view, even when you know that what you say won’t make any difference. Underspending: ignoring signs of trouble until they reach crisis proportions. What to do: decide which things are really important and focus your stress energy on them.—Dan Tohline, Jonesboro, Louisiana.

Funeral idea
I’ve found it helpful in preparing a funeral sermon to request from the family the Bible of the deceased and gain their consent to use it during the service. Reverb erently leafing through it quickly reveals some of the most meaningful passages to the one gone to his or her rest. This simplifies preparing the funeral sermon.—Edward Niemann, Williamsburg, Kentucky.

CPE residencies available
Kettering Medical Center in Ohio will offer five positions ($15,000) in a one-year residency of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) beginning August 29, 1994.

The program is designed for improving pastoral care and counseling skills for parish ministry, or obtaining certification in specialized ministry such as hospital chaplaincy. Prerequisites are a seminary degree (preferably Master of Divinity) and at least one unit of basic CPE. Applications may be submitted through March 1. For information and application forms, contact Chaplain Henry Uy, Kettering Medical Center, 3535 Southern Boulevard, Kettering, Ohio 45429. Phone (513) 296-7240.
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