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Twenty-seven fundamentals in search of a theology

The insightful article “Twenty-Seven Fundamentals in Search of a Theology,” by George Knight (February 2001), highlighted some points, either misunderstood or still obscure to many people. To provide an illustrative relationship between the various fundamentals, he provided several models, then chose to discard the “string-of-beads,” seeming to prefer the hierarchical, hub-in-a-wheel, or the foundational models. None of these preferred models, however, seems to provide for the important points made earlier in the article, that is, that not all fundamentals are equal. Someone has asked. It seems to me that the string, passing through the center of each bead tying together all the fundamentals, is the love of God. As with a string, it is made up of various strands, such as: God’s plan to rescue fallen man, the incarnation and the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, the gift of the Holy Spirit, etc. Whether large or small, each bead is of value only as the “string” of God’s love is in its heart. For me the string-of-beads model best illustrates the important points the article seeks to explain.

—Ron Taylor, retired pastor, Victoria Point, Queensland, Australia.

This article presented a true picture of how many members view Bible doctrines. This reminds me of what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: “You worship, you know not what.” That this has become true for many Adventists is sad. . . . Early Adventist leaders did not have this problem. They saw fulfilled prophecy, and the proclamation of the third angel’s message as the reason for and the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. It was God’s final and unifying message for earth. The Review and Herald stated its purpose: “. . . a simple and clear exposition of those great and sanctifying truths embraced in the message of the third angel, viz: the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (vol. 1, no. 1). . . . I agree that it is not our doctrines that are the problem, it is the way they are usually presented. When our presentation is viewed as rules to follow, which if we follow, we will be rewarded with eternal life, we do an injustice to God’s truth. They are important to the saving fellowship we have with Christ. They shield us from error and sin. We come to Him, learn of Him, taking His yoke we find rest, peace, hope, and joy—eternity is ours. We give a true witness to Him.

—David Manzano, Harriman, Tennessee.

I appreciated very much George Knight’s reflection about the 27 fundamental beliefs. I would like to translate this into Italian and publish it in the SDA Italian church magazine, Il Messaggero Adventista.

—Giuseppe Marrazzo, pastor, Falciani, Impruneta, Italy.

Knight’s article provided no practical answers. The book Seventh-day Adventists Believe sets the 27 fundamentals in excellent theological order: (1-5) Who is God? (6-7) What is man? (8-10) The problems separating the two parties; (11-17) The Church’s privileges and commission; (18-22) Belief in practice; and (23-27) final triumph.

—W. F. Taylor, pastor, Langley, Australia.

It is ironic that the main point made by George Knight is contradicted by your cover through no fault of your own. Knight makes the point that the Fundamentals are not equal and he proves his point by diagraming salvation first, doctrines second, and lifestyle third. But the symbol the Church has chosen to identify itself, shows doctrines first and salvation second. You have to really look hard to find salvation illustrated. The Cross is minuscule compared with the flames of the Spirit. . . . Symbols are important because they tell our values. Judging by this symbol, the gospel has still not made it to first place in Adventist theology and practice. I applaud Knight’s emphasis but wonder how many years it will take for our denomination to recognize and stress this distinction.

—J. David Newman, pastor, Damascus, Maryland.

I agree with George Knight’s view that our 27 fundamentals are of varied importance and each of them should cluster around the central truth of Christ’s saving grace. I also agree that there will always be room for improvement in their written expression. However, I think that George is too critical.

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The timeless gospel

Only in the God of love do “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Only in His goodness every meaningful want is met, ever so freely and yet so lavishly, and every wholesome possibility, finite and infinite is realized, ever so completely. This is in essence the transcendent and timeless gospel of which everything, from the center out to the circumference, is the person and personhood of God. Accordingly, to exclude God from the gospel is to steal its life. To relegate God to a being who may be summed up in a verbal phrase, calling it the gospel, is to undermine both God and His message.

In the plurality of the meanings and usages of the term gospel, the potential for serious tensions do arise between an emphasis on the person of God as the subject of the gospel versus the emphasis on the verbal message as a major medium for expressing the gospel. The etymological root of the term gospel is the Anglo-Saxon word god-spell, meaning a story from or about a god. Subsequently, the meaning and usage of the term as “good news” or “glad tidings” became popular. However, in the definition and practice of the gospel, the message must never take precedence over the person of God. For it must always be understood that the gospel is more incarnational—“and the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14)—than it is verbal; it is more personal, than it is credal—the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col.1:27).

Moreover, relationally speaking, the message of the gospel is to the person of God what the mirror is to the person whose image it reflects. The person and the image may be logically interdependent but they are by no means interchangeable. The image is predicated on the person and not the person on the image. Similarly, the verbal representation of the gospel is predicated on the gospel as the person of God. The converse, however, cannot be true. Accordingly, any tendency to elevate the reflection of God in the message of the gospel above the encounter with the person of God will result in spiritual frustration and inevitable loss. Nothing and nobody but God in His person is to be the be-all and the end-all of the gospel, and in no other way can the gospel be authentically defined and presented but in the person and personhood of God.

So it is that the message of the gospel speaks of love only because God is love; of goodness only because God is good; of omnipotence, omniscience, immanence, holiness, mercy, justice, and life, only because God is all these and infinitely more. God Himself is the good news, the timeless good news, the timeless best news. This God was the gospel that David identified in the twenty-third psalm. In the psalm David’s spirit ascends above the wretched clouds of hopelessness, helplessness, and powerlessness, occasioned by his own sin and guilt, to the ultimate heights of fulfillment. “The Lord is my Shepherd” he trumpets, therefore “I shall not want.” He expresses from his own experience the universal and timeless truth of the all-sufficiency of God for all. In God every fallen and unfallen being alike derives existence, well-being, and well-doing. This is the timeless gospel, the converse of which is essentially the denial and displacing of God as the only One in whom all live and move and have their being. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17).

David concludes his best known psalm on a triumphant note, as all those who truly experience the gospel will affirm. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23:6). David points both to the timelessness and the timeliness of the gospel as it is expressed in God’s eternal goodness and in His redemptive mercy. In this context the timelessness of the gospel is matched only by the timeliness of its redemptive application as it comes through grace to fallen and needy humankind. Therefore, let us claim the gospel. From this wretched world every want may readily disappear. And in each heart there needs to be no lingering fear or despair. But to the world God must first its Shepherd become, and to His goodness and mercy each heart must say welcome.

The timeless gospel is the timeless God timely fitted to freely satisfy our every wholesome need and to realize forever all of our God-gifted possibilities. Let us by grace live the gospel, the life of God. And as part of living that life, let us proclaim Him as we evangelize the world of our time. 

Secularism: Then and now

Mark A. Finley

The Western secular world presents a formidable challenge to evangelism. Today traditional approaches generally produce meager results. It is becoming increasingly difficult to draw sizeable crowds to hear the message of the gospel. Methods that once worked are no longer effective.

This situation confronts us with serious questions, one of the most important being, How do we reach secular minds with our message?

Ancient secularism

The challenge of secularism is not as unique to our time and culture as we may think. The first century reveals characteristics strikingly in common with today’s humanistic, secular culture. It is reassuring to see that many contemporary societies are strikingly similar to the one in which the early church had great success as it proclaimed the gospel.

In his book *Caesar And Christ*, Will Durant claims that in the first century prostitution flourished, abortion was commonplace, and homosexuality was rampant. That society was saturated with the desire for physical pleasure. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, commented, “They vomit to eat and eat to vomit.” Packed Roman theaters defiled the crowd’s favorite actors and actresses. The stars of the stage became the idols of society. Singers and dancers by the thousands entertained multi-

tudes. Horse races and sporting events mesmerized the masses. The Roman population in general regarded human life with astonishing indifference. When Titus dedicated the temple, as part of the ceremony he reenacted a major battle. As part of the drama thousands were actually killed simply to entertain crowds. Roman prize fighters, with their three and one-half-inch thick metal knuckles, not only fought to unconsciousness but on occasion to the death. Possessions became the gods of many.

Nevertheless, even in this hedonistic, humanistic, materialistic, and secular world, the gospel of Christ made massive inroads, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts of the Spirit

The book of Acts is a vivid chronicle of the Spirit’s power penetrating this secular society. In Acts 1:8 Jesus gave this promise, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

In Acts 2, Scripture describes the effects of Spirit-filled preaching meeting the needs of secular hearts. Three thousand were baptized in a day. Acts 2:41 says, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” In Acts 4:4 Scripture records that “many of them which heard the word believed; and the number . . . was about five thousand.” Acts 6 discusses the rapid growth of the church and a reorganization to facilitate the growth. Even “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)

Acts 8 reveals cross-cultural growth. Philip, imbued by the Spirit, touches the heart of an Ethiopian eunuch, and God opens the door to the continent of Africa. In Acts 10 and 11 cross-cultural growth continues when Peter reaches out to Cornelius. At almost the same time another door is opened for the gospel in Rome. Acts 20 points out that the disciples were so compelled by the Spirit that (verse 20) they “taught publicly, and from house to house.” The barriers inhibiting the gospel came tumbling down. The gospel was taken from city to city, from country to country, from continent to continent.
Keys to success

A brief look at the factors contributing to the spread of the gospel gives the reasons for this incredible success. The disciples themselves were led to genuine repentance, a spiritual revival and a corresponding reformation. They had a unified purpose and a single-minded objective to win souls. They were constantly aware of the necessity of intercessory prayer. The Holy Spirit enlarged the thinking of the disciples enabling them to be open to cross-cultural possibilities for evangelism. They preached the Word in both private and public settings, and their ministry was accompanied by supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles. They believed that God had called them to proclaim His message everywhere, and no power on earth or hell could stop it. Such was the power of the Spirit in their ministry.

Today's secular mind

Without the aid of the Holy Spirit our attempts to win souls will be fruitless. At the same time, we can pray, we can witness, and we minister under His guidance, but we need to understand the mind-frame of those souls we seek to win. Ministers need to understand some of the underlying assumptions that permeate the secular world before they attempt to change it. There is no question that Darwinian evolution and its successors have permeated all aspects of life today. These theories have played a powerful part in forming many of the contours of the modern secular mind.

Of course, these views totally dismiss the thought that we are created by an infinite, personal, caring God. A fuzzy understanding of origins leads into murky waters when it comes to the meaning of life. Such views tell us that if we are no more than advanced animals, we are not worth much. Thus, in a society saturated with evolutionary thought patterns, is it any wonder that self-esteem is low? How can existence have any meaning if I am here simply by accident?

Does Adventism have any message for the thousands who have imbibed these kinds of worldviews? Of course.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that our world was created by God. We understand that order and design in the universe indicate a Maker. We believe that randomness is incapable of explaining the complex phenomena of the universe. Beyond this, we affirm that the intelligent personal life on planet Earth as it manifests itself could not have been produced by the unintelligent and impersonal. Therefore, we believe that this world was made by a God who is Himself the ideal of intelligence, the essence of love, and the grand Designer—a God who is infinite, yet personal.

What does this in turn say to men and women filled with despair and hopelessness? It says we are worth something because we have been made by this God. Adventists say to the secular person, “You are created uniquely in the image of God. You are a person of value—valuable because you are you and no one is more you than you. You are irreplaceable.” Adventists say, “God thought you were so valuable that when human beings fell away from Him, He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for them.”

The Christian faith is simply not a system of ethical values and moral philosophy. It is a message of a loving Creator who immensely values the creatures He made. He values them so much that when they sinned, He could not bear the thought of losing them. He redeemed them Himself, revealing His love on a cross. This is a message universal in time and location, and it speaks to the contemporary needs of men and women with increasing relevance.

With our awe-inspiring, hopeful doctrine of the Second Advent added to this, we confidently shout to a hopeless world—hope is on the way! Christ is coming again soon to put an end to sorrow, suffering, sickness, and sin. Death will soon surrender to a glorious new tomorrow. The message of Adventism is not merely relevant to an agrarian society living in America in the nineteenth century. It speaks to the needs of society today. It ministers to men and women who ask the basic questions of life—Where did I come from? Why am I here? and Where am I going? Adventism answers, “You were created by God. You were redeemed by Christ. And your ultimate destiny is to be at home with God in heaven forever.”

Approaches to the contemporary mind

What, then, are some possible approaches to the secular mind?

To begin, it takes people to win people. Secular people are not won by programs but by loving people who graciously develop interpersonal relationships with them. Usually, human beings respond to kindness. Genuine friendship breaks down prejudice. One thing is certain, we will not win anyone to Christ by trying to out-argue them. Every human being has felt needs. These needs cause the individual to search for a source of help. The need for better health, stress reduction, a happier marriage, a more satisfying job, friendship, forgiveness, and freedom from guilt are a few of the common felt needs rampant among us today.

According to A Summary Of Qualitative Research Of The Unchurched published by Religion In American Life Incorporated, secular people have four basic negative attitudes toward the church. First, they say the church is too critical. The distance between what the church teaches and how it lives manipulates and people are told how to live. Third, the church is hypocritical. The distance between what the church teaches and how it lives that teaching is simply too great. There is a discrepancy between words and actions. The church is more like a social club and secular people say they don’t want to be a part of it. Finally,
many contemporary unchurched people believe the church is not relevant. It has not kept up with the changing world. Secular people have a feeling of boredom and detachment during religious services.

It is interesting to note, however, that this same research indicates that many would consider attending church if they could discuss their religious doubts openly, if they could find a church that was seriously concerned about working for the betterment of society, or where there was the kind of spiritual proclamation which spoke to their inner needs and which offered a solid religious education program that would implant moral values in their youth and children.

**Jesus’ methods**

When Jesus spoke to people, He reached out to where they were. He always began by lovingly ministering to people’s actual needs. The gospel of John is in fact a case study in how Jesus met these inner spiritual needs. In John 1:38, Jesus noticed two men following Him and asked them this question, “What seek ye?” Jesus is always asking that question—What are you seeking? What’s deep within you? What are you looking for?

Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus answers the “What seek ye?” question. He attempts to discover what people need and then attempts to meet that need. At the wedding feast of Cana (John 2), the host of the wedding was socially embarrassed. Jesus met those social needs by turning water to wine. In John 3, Nicodemus had spiritual needs. Formal religion was not satisfying his heart, and Jesus met this need by sharing the necessity of inner spiritual rebirth. The woman at the well (John 4) had specific emotional and spiritual needs. The man by the Pool of Bethesda and the hungry multitude in John 5 and 6 had physical needs for healing and food. Jesus met those needs. By caring for those concerns, Jesus broke down fear and prejudice. As barriers of
opposition crumble, hearts and minds open to the gospel.

The church is God's people equipped to serve and to lovingly meet needs everywhere in Jesus' name. As church members look out of themselves and reach out to men and women in secular society who are their friends, neighbors, and working associates, hearts will indeed melt. Sensitivity to the heartaches, longings, and concerns of others will produce positive results. Demonstrating a genuine interest in others is a God-given method of winning hearts that is not often recognized for what it can do. And as church members with the unique gifts that God has given them reach out there will be an explosion of interest in Bible truth.

Look for opportunities. When we

**SECULAR PEOPLE ARE NOT WON BY PROGRAMS BUT BY LOVING PEOPLE WHO GRACIOUSLY DEVELOP INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM.**

look for open doors of opportunity to share what Jesus personally means to us, hearts and minds will be touched with the gospel. Since secular people desire the "real" as opposed to the "artificial," they are attracted to a Christianity that is authenticated in the lives of believers. No one can argue with what Christ has done for you personally. If Christ has made a difference in your life, the genuineness of your experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts. I have found it particularly helpful to simply share the plan of salvation in the context of your own experience with Him will touch secular hearts.

*I have seen the Holy Spirit break hardened humanistic hearts through a simple presentation of the plan of salvation. A debating spirit evokes the spirit of debate. Arguments from the mind meet resistance from skeptical minds. A message of God's grace from a loving heart will touch hearts.*

**Different strokes, different folks**

No one approach is singularly designed to reach every individual. Some secular people respond better to a different approach. They feel that the Bible lacks intellectual substance. They lack confidence in its integrity. Sharing some of the great Bible prophecies of the evidence of the truthfulness of the Bible will at times touch hearts. The prophecies of Daniel are especially designed by God to build confidence in the reliability of Scripture. Old Testament prophesies regarding Jesus as the Messiah are especially appealing. His birthplace in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14), His family lineage (Gen. 49:19), as well as events surrounding the Crucifixion outlined in Zechariah 13, Psalm 22, and others, brings great confidence to secular people that Jesus is more than a good man. He's more than an ethical philosopher, and indeed the divine Son of God.

Understanding some prophecies regarding the rise and fall of nations throughout the Old Testament is convincing evidence for some secular minds. Prophecies like those of the Persian king, Cyrus, named 150 years before His birth (Isa. 44:28; 45:1, 2) or the destruction of Tyre and Sidon (Ezek. 26:1-4, 19-21) and the desolation of Egypt (Ezek. 19:1-9), all establish reliability in Scripture as a divinely inspired document.

As intimated earlier, there are many people who believe that evolution is fact. They believe that a belief in Scripture negates the so-called facts of science. It's almost impossible to accept a Christianity, which their minds convince them is not true. They reason, "If the Genesis account is wrong, how can I have confidence in any other portions of Scripture? If the human race is evolving to higher states of advancement, why do we need a Savior? Doesn't religion only produce the neurosis of guilt?" There are times I have found it helpful to approach some of these select individuals from a scientific perspective. Evolution is not a proven fact but a speculative hypothesis, one filled with its own set of contradictions and problems. Indeed, there are times when some, if confronted with the thought that evolution is theory and not fact and that it takes faith to be an evolutionist as well as a creationist, will begin thinking seriously about evolution's underlying assumptions.

**Conclusion**

We may rest in the fact that it is God's desire to win lost people to our Lord. The power of the Holy Spirit is far greater than all the hellish forces opposed to the gospel in the world. Filled with the Holy Spirit, armed with the spiritual weapons of prayer, the Word and a genuine love for souls, the last generation will see Pentecost again, yet this time in even more abundant measures. Thousands will be converted. The light of the gospel will illuminate the dark corners of this earth. The bastions will fall. Truth will penetrate the remotest corners. Some of the world's hardest hearts will open to the gospel. Thousands of voices will proclaim the everlasting gospel. Through the voices and lives of God's people, on the printed page, over radio and television, through mass media and electronic genius, the Word of God will go forth. The work on earth will triumph in a blaze of glory! 

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A few years back my wife Karen and I went to Hawaii for a little rest and relaxation. Fortunately we have friends there, Steve and Chris Boyl, who welcomed us to their beautiful home near Kona. Steve is a building contractor but his real passion is fishing. He owns a little fishing boat and is always ready to use it. Though I don’t eat the fish we catch, I do enjoy the sun and the water. I must also say that after numerous fishing excursions with Steve and his friends, I understand better than ever why Jesus said that if we followed Him, He would make us “fishers of men.”

No matter how busy Steve is with numerous building projects and deadlines, he always has enough time to go fishing. It’s as though his construction work only serves to support his fishing addiction. Every Christian should be a fish-a-holic! Whatever our career, it should serve the purpose of our soul-winning endeavors. Paul made tents so he could have funds to save more souls.

A real fisherman does not give up easily. When on Steve’s boat, if we were unsuccessful in one place, we went to another. Some days the catch was bigger than others, but Steve always refused to return empty. He would continue until he caught something. If only we were so dedicated in catching “men.”

A fishing boat is a tool, not an ornament
Steve’s boat has caught tons of fish but will never win a beauty contest. It looks more like a floating toolbox. Twenty-five feet of fiberglass built around a large icebox for fish, that’s about it (along with a motor, one chair for the captain, and a live bait chamber under it). Not even a primitive bathroom could be found on board! Every aspect of the vessel was designed with one purpose in mind—to catch fish. But even though Steve’s boat isn’t a beauty, he is not too proud to make the most of modern technology as he outfits it. He uses fish radar, hydraulic reels, and sophisticated lures.

I believe this should be the pattern for our churches. All our programs and plans should revolve around the goal of reaching people. We should be willing to use everything from satellite to video if it reaches people. Too many churches are not much more than luxury liners built for the comfort, convenience and entertainment of a shipload of passengers rather than a productive crew of fishermen. As Paul Harvey once said; “We have been called to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium.”

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30).

You must go where the fish are
Sometimes when we were out with Steve, we had to slowly plow through the ocean for long hours to reach a spot where the fish were. It would have been much safer and cleaner to have left the boat and its trailer on dry land so we could simply fish from the shore, but the big fish were far out in the deep water. We cannot allow our churches to become exclusive clubs that shut out the needy world, in an effort to be insulated from the contamination and uncomfortable, demanding needs of real people. We must be willing to go after the fish where they are, and to bring them in. The world is hungering for truth; we must go to where these hungry people are.

While out in the deep water, it was fairly common for sharks, barracuda, or other predators to show up when we started catching fish. Sometimes they would eat our prize just before we pulled it into the boat. A skillful devil, seeking whom he may devour, always
knows when to come around—just as people are making their decision to come to Christ. Because we knew there were some formidable sea monsters under the boat, we never got in the water ourselves. We do not reach sinners by joining them in their situations.

Sometimes to locate fish, you must look up
I was always impressed by Steve’s uncanny ability to find the fish in a trackless ocean. One simple way he did this was to watch the birds. A flock of gulls or other sea birds working the water often meant schools of small fish below, and where small fish were, usually bigger fish were not far away. In the same way, when fishing for men, we will often need to look up searching for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some of the places the Spirit leads may at first look very unpromising, but where He leads there are often fish of all sizes.

“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

Fish are attracted to the light
For some reason we always caught the most fish at night. I know how Peter must have felt when he said, “we fished all night. . . .” But unlike Peter’s fruitless night fishing, we always caught plenty during our nights out. After sundown we would drop a waterproof light into the sea off the back of the boat. Soon we could see thousands of creatures, big and small, swarming around our light. One night we accidentally unplugged the light. When we discovered the problem and plugged the cord back in, all our fish were gone. They had moved to a neighboring boat where the light was still burning.

If the light of Jesus is shining through us, people will be attracted to where we are. People struggling in darkness come to light as surely as do the fish of the sea or the moths that are beckoned by a porch light on a dark night. I know what Jesus meant when He said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Keeping that light burning brightly will attract people to Christ.

Different methods catch different fish
Another basic lesson I learned from Steve’s fishing was that each species of fish is caught with different bait and varying techniques. For marlin we used a pole. When it came to large tuna it was a hand line along with particular bait fish. The marlin were near the surface while the big tuna were down deep. Fishing with a pole or a line is like having one-on-one studies with a searching soul. On the other hand, a net is more like public evangelism.

One rule applied to all fish: you can not force them into the boat. You must wait until they stop fighting to reel them in or you will break the line. On my last fishing trip, in the middle of the night I caught a 25-pound Alua with a 15-pound test line, but it took 20 minutes. In the same way, when catching “men” one needs a tender touch and special patience or the line will break and the fish will get away.

One of the best ways to catch a fish is with a fresh fish. Many times Steve would take a small fish he had just caught, put a hook in it, and throw it back out in an effort to catch a bigger one. New converts with their first love are often the most enthusiastic to tell their friends and family about Jesus. To reach different kinds of individuals, God uses all kinds of people with a variety of gifts to reach a diverse spectrum of souls. Everybody can be used by God in some capacity to reach someone.

If fishermen work together, they catch more fish
On one trip out we hooked a 300-pound marlin. There were four of us and we landed that trophy only by working together. Steve steered the boat, Jerry pulled the line and kept it out of the motor, Joe shot at the incoming sharks, took pictures and helped me work the reel. It took all four of us to lift the monster into the boat and we all rejoiced on our way back to shore!

The Bible tells us that when Peter followed Jesus’ instruction and dropped his net one more time after the fruitless night of fishing, not only was his boat filled but he called for John and James to assist. As a result, both boats were filled to overflowing.

“So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink” (Luke 5:7). If God’s people would lay aside competitive pride and work together in saving souls we could accomplish so much more. Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

Fishermen are notorious for telling colorful, often exaggerated stories of their adventures and exploits. Someone once said; “If Jesus could make a crew of fishermen honest, there is hope for everyone.” The truth is that “humble” fishermen everywhere quiver with excitement every time they have an opportunity to tell the story of their adventures, and especially as they relay the accounts of how they have made their largest catches.

How much better it will be for the fishers of men when, through the ages of eternity, we will be able to tell our stories with beaming faces.

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

There are still plenty of fish in the sea. We must have more fishermen.
**Reaching the cities**

**A person-to-person approach**

Evangelism is my life’s passion. Specifically, evangelism that seeks to reach the cities. Come with me to Rio de Janeiro, perhaps one of the most pagan cities of the world. Prostitution, drugs, and violence seem to dominate the city. A great metropolis, indulging itself in sin, day in and day out. Yet, when we began an evangelistic campaign recently in the heart of that city, more than 35,000 people jammed the Apoteose Square, to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

How is it possible that people in this sprawling city of almost ten million, would want to come to a public place to hear about Jesus Christ? They work, running from one place to another at a feverish pace. They are attracted by the lights, the shows, the Internet, television, and every conceivable attraction, but there are still many who are hungry and thirsty and searching.

Visit Lima, the capital of Peru, with a population of 7 million. Last May our evangelistic crusade maintained an average attendance of 45,000 and ended in a baptism of 27,100. That’s significant. More than fifty percent of those who came to hear chose to accept Jesus!

The stories of Lima and Rio can be repeated almost anywhere: New York, Mexico City, Manila, Los Angeles, Calcutta, or any other world metropolis. From my experience in urban evangelism, let me mention some principles that can be implemented as we reach out to the cities with the power of the gospel.

**Understanding the human context**

People who live in today’s mega cities are sad, lonely, filled with fear and anxiety. They live packed into large “skyrises” and yet they scarcely know each other. They are always on the run, not knowing sometimes, where they are going. Whoever stops is overrun by those who come from behind. The strongest and quickest survive, leaving the rest in a valley of despair. There is no time for anything, and if by chance there should be some free time, this is completely taken by the media, which has placed itself in charge of forming the individual’s opinion of life and the world. Generally, this opinion is full of the relativism and materialism that characterize the period in which we live.

This context of meaninglessness has produced the individual of our time: the secular human. Such a person doesn’t deny the existence of God, but to them God is usually nothing more than a casual detail. He does not affect the individual’s life, decisions, or conduct. He is just an energy that can be manipulated. God is there to use, not use, or just vaguely shelve away.

Today’s secular person is bombarded by market forces from all sides. Along with this there are mesmerizing political realities, every kind of religious system, from ideologies to consumer goods, from philosophies of nothingness to the gadgets of the virtual world.

So, traffic on the avenues of the modern mind is in a communication jam. To survive, people have learned to defend themselves by selecting the messages they would allow to enter their consciousness. Thus people do not listen to what we want to say. They accept only what they want to hear.

How, then, do we evangelize these modern human beings, entrenched in the city, completely oblivious to the great issues of God, life, and human destiny? Yes, some can be reached by television and radio, but most will just change the channel every time a religious program appears. Others could attend anti-stress courses or stop smoking plans, but many of them will disappear from the auditorium at the time the Bible study begins. Literature evangelism will open many doors. Seventh-day Adventist schools have also developed an important role in establishing contact with the people in the large cities. All these means are necessary and important. But the question is: Where should we invest our
financial and human resources if we want to successfully evangelize the large multitudes who live in the great metropolitan centers?

Invest in person-to-person evangelism

In Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Sao Paulo, Montevideo, Santiago, Buenos Aires, and other large cities throughout the world, where I have had the opportunity to preach, we have seen, tested, and confirmed that the best means to reach people today is through other human beings. We have already affirmed that the individual from the large cities is a solitary being in spite of living in the midst of a multitude of people.

Deep inside them is a great emptiness from which they cannot free themselves. They can deny it, they can pretend that they do not feel it, they can disguise it, but loneliness consumes them day and night. Friendships derived in social clubs, parties, and public places are empty and superficial. People need to feel accepted and loved as individuals, and not just used. They need to know that someone is interested in their struggles and conflicts. They need a true friend. Christians should understand these emotional essentials and authentically come close to these lonely individuals and present them to the Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of His family.

With this in mind, in the large cities of South America where we hold evangelism, one of the first things we teach each Christian is to assume their role as an individual missionary. We make each member conscious that they need to seek out people and become friends with them. For the spoken gospel to be successful, it is necessary that it be presented by someone in whose life the gospel has been made flesh. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14).

This incarnational principle is the secret to evangelism. God sent His message to the world not only in the spoken and the written form, but also through human flesh. The Word was made flesh and became present among us. The Word came to the intellectual Nicodemus, sought out the sinful Samaritan woman, touched the leper Simon, and reached the publican Matthew. As a result, all these people believed not only a simple religious concept or a theological concept, but in Someone in whose life the message had come to life.

For this reason, I never hold an evangelistic campaign in a city where the church has not been made aware and agreed to their individual missionary function. We spend time and money reviving, inspiring, training, and equipping the church. For example, the administration of the South American Division in 1998 increased the budget for equipping lay members by 25 percent over the allotment in 1997. In 1999 this amount was increased again by 57 percent. Last year this amount has almost doubled yet again. This is because it has been proven that the best method of preparation for an evangelistic crusade is friendship evangelism—each member seeking a friend, relative, neighbor, or workmate, speaking with them about Jesus, and later studying the Bible with them. Statistics show us that nobody can establish contact with the modern human being better than the individual church member.

In 1992 we employed a research firm to survey major Brazilian cities. The first question asked of people on the streets was, "Have you ever heard of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If yes, how did they hear of the Church first: Through (1) a medical institution; (2) a school, academy, or university; (3) a radio or TV program; (4) a book or magazine; (5) a stranger who knocked on your door; (6) a friend, neighbor, or a relative.

Seventy-one percent of those who had heard of the Seventh-day Adventist Church said that it was through a friend, neighbor, or relative. This means that only 29 percent had knowledge of the Church through all the other means combined.

Another survey among baptized members of the Church revealed almost the same result: 70 percent heard of Seventh-day Adventists for the first time through a friend, neighbor, or relative; 30 percent through other means. Many of us can confirm this fact in our own experience.

This is why in my evangelistic campaigns I do not spend much money in advertising. Each member who has studied the Bible with a friend is in charge of taking that friend to the stadium when the public meetings convene. When I make my altar call, I say "Help your friend to come to the front, embrace your friend, congratulate your friend, accompany your friend to baptism and then care for him or her throughout his or her life because your dear friend is a spiritual child." What I mean is that the new...
convert is not bonded to the evangelist, but is bonded to the friend who helped him or her reach Jesus.

My crusades do not last for weeks. At the most they last eight nights. But they are nights of decision. Very few people today will attend a campaign that goes on for 45 nights, but anyone can make plans for a week-long period to accompany their friend to a stadium.

You may ask “How is it possible to present all the message in only one week?” It is important to remember that, as mentioned, the message and the doctrinal teachings have already been presented by the friend in small home study groups. So when the crusade comes, people are already prepared and only need to make a decision. The week of evangelism is just a week of decision or harvest.

In Peru, for example, long before the crusade began, church members were involved in Bible studies with 120,000 people. When the crusade itself began, more than 50,000 of those who finished the Bible course attended. Thus it was that finally 27,100 made their decision to be baptized.

Reaching the upper class

One significant challenge of urban evangelism is reaching the upper classes. We have an intimidating perception that the rich and powerful do not want anything to do with the gospel. This is simply not so. These people are just as lonely and emotionally in need as anyone else. They too have problems in their homes; their marriage seeks focus, their children need help. But they would hardly open their doors to a stranger with a Bible on a Saturday afternoon or attend an evangelistic campaign after hearing a radio ad.

How, then, can we reach the upper classes? Is it possible that in our churches there may be members who belong to this class? Do they not have friends, relatives, neighbors, and workmates?

Joao Apolinario is a successful businessman in Sao Paulo. He invited friends to his home once a week for social get-togethers. But what began as cordial fellowship eventually turned into a Bible study group. Later, when a harvest campaign was held, Apolinario took his friends to the meetings. Of the 16 in the group, 13 were already baptized, one of them a bank director. Today the bank director and his wife are studying the Bible with their other friends.

Dr. Clayton Rossi, a church member in Brazil and a former Attorney General, was the friend of a high ranking government minister of Brazil. They had studied together at the same university and shared a friendship since their youth. However, Dr. Rossi had never spoken to his friend about Jesus. One day he attended a seminar on evangelism and began to understand his role as a personal missionary. He realized that he alone could best share his faith with the minister, because he was his personal friend and could reach through the official barriers of someone in the position of his friend. A few weeks after they began to study together, the minister wrote this to the Adventist Review in Brazil. “My friend, Clayton, invited me to watch a television program the other day. I was never interested in religious matters, but when Sunday arrived, more because of consideration for my friend than because of interest in the program, I turned on the TV and when the program was over, I thought, ‘If Clayton has something so marvelous, why has he kept it to himself for such a long time?’”

Since then, Clayton has passed away. But today this former government minister continues studying the Bible and daily reading a morning devotional. It would not be a surprise if one day he would announce his desire for baptism.

But, isn’t the minister a friend of the senator and the senator, in turn, a friend of the governor, and the governor a friend of the president? Of course! The gospel must be preached by testimony. That’s the divine plan.

One by one, friend to friend, relative to relative, neighbor to neighbor. Then, the evangelist comes to harvest the results.

The challenge

When I was a teenager, Billy Graham conducted an evangelistic campaign in the Lima National Stadium. My older brother and I went to hear him speak. As I saw 35,000 people listening to the message, I asked myself, “Aren’t we the church of the end time? Don’t we have a complete message? Then why are we satisfied with filling a tent with only 1,000 people? Why are we not capable of filling a stadium like this one?” From that day on I felt the Holy Spirit disturbing me, and years later God gave me the opportunity to work with young people. One day I challenged them. I taught them to seek out their friends and study the Bible with them. Then I challenged them to take their friends to the Ibirapuera Gymnasium in Sao Paulo, and for the first time in South America, we saw thousands of people together in a stadium to attend an evangelistic crusade.

Evangelizing large cities will always be a challenge for the Church. But after all these years, I have concluded that the most powerful element we have to win the large cities is the member of the church who is transformed into a disciple.

The Great Commission does not command simply to go, baptize, or teach. Four verbs dominate Matthew 28:18: go, make, baptize, and teach. Of these, the Greek wording puts only one verb in the imperative: make. The imperative of the Great Commission is to make new disciples. Each disciple is to be involved in the mission of making new disciples. An evangelistic crusade cannot exist effectively without the work of individual Christians.

That’s the challenge of evangelism—the challenge of reaching the urban masses. We must meet that challenge. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.
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Pastor-led public evangelism

Wesley McDonald

During the early days of the Advent movement (the mid to late 1800s) a man would give proof of his ministry by raising up a church. Later, in the 1930s, when my father-in-law began his ministry, a man had to hold an evangelistic crusade his first year and have at least one baptism to be retained in the ministry. Times have changed, and not necessarily for the better. We cannot afford to forget the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:5, “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

The local pastor who wishes to enter into the area of pastor-led evangelism but feels intimidated may remember that God does not always call to the ministry those who are qualified, but He will qualify those whom He calls, as they follow His call in faith and humility. The waters of the Jordan River did not part for the Israelites until the priests stepped into the water in faith and obedience. Pastors can by all means have successful crusades, by the grace of God. This article will look at some of the key principles for making that happen.

Preparing the way

“No by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). No matter how much money we spend, what method of advertising we use, or how well we preach, the ultimate determination of how many finally come to Christ and to baptism is under the control of the Holy Spirit. If there are barriers to the Holy Spirit in our own lives or in the life of the congregation, the Spirit will not be able to work as He might and the results will not be what they could be. In our indulgent society, it takes determined prayer, study, and courage to remove our own barriers and also to lead our congregations in the removal of theirs.

Long before a public crusade begins, there should be a permanent, ongoing, spiritual visitation program of all members (not just those who attend regularly) as well as those who were once members but have since been removed. Lay involvement in this visiting initiative is vital. The lay leaders need to learn to care for the flock. Pastors come and go but lay leaders stay. Besides, the pastor can’t do it all.

Pre-crusade ministries such as a Discover Bible School, a vegetarian cooking school, or a stop smoking seminar, to name a few that are possible, should be conducted. These will go a long way in helping break fertile ground for the upcoming harvest.

The vision

We must not place any limits on God. It is our privilege to have great vision. In all of this we can pray, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen. 32:26). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). We must also make sure the church is praying.

In some areas, use a team of regular student colporteurs in the target area about three to four months before the crusade. The colporteurs can also obtain Discover Bible School leads. Bring in a Bible worker or two to work with what leads the colporteurs find. Retain the Bible workers for a good period of time after the crusade to help work with interests. Use the Bible workers to train members and the new converts in witnessing and giving Bible studies. This kind of planning could also be used in planting new churches.

The crusade

It is often best to choose a neutral hall if possible. If we target the upper classes we will not neglect the lower ones. Holding our meetings in our churches may reduce our attendance by as much as two-thirds in some places. Many people will go further if they hear the message from the Bible without the
issue of denominational bias. Jesus warned some of those whom He healed not to reveal who performed the miracle; otherwise, because of the prejudice of the scribes and Pharisees, His work would have been cut short in some places if the one healed proclaimed who healed him.

In many regions, mailing handbills to every residential mailbox in the target area remains the single most effective means of advertising. Newspaper advertising will enhance the effect of the handbills and should be especially considered if the town is small and has a local paper. If possible, arrange for your ad to be placed on page three (so it’s noticed immediately when someone opens the paper). Make the ad as large as can be afforded. Place it several times before the crusade begins.

Choose a thoughtful sequence for the topics presented. “By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel’s message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be.” This can be easily done by writing the verses of the three angels’ messages in order. For example, it is not appropriate to talk about the Sabbath before someone is converted to the Lord of the Sabbath.

Finally, and most importantly, bathe every presentation with the blood of Christ; otherwise all we have is an informative discourse without converting power. “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers—Christ and His righteousness—let this be our platform, the very life of our faith—Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘it is the third angel’s message in verity.’”

Reaping the harvest
Visit the people who come to the meetings. Many decisions can be obtained only in quiet privacy of the homes of the people. Some people simply will not decide in public. Through visiting in the homes we may uncover barriers which we could never see in the meeting hall. What we discover in the homes of people will often influence how we present certain topics as we preach.

Baptism is a symbol of dying to the old order and its ways of sin, being buried and raised up to newness in Christ. Just as an undertaker is not supposed to bury a person who has not died, a minister should not bury a person in baptism until evidence of death to sin and new life in Christ is revealed. Baptism is not in itself a magic cure. Death to sin must occur. Baptism however, should not be unduly delayed.

These are a few tried pointers that I have found helpful. Of course, every situation demands various adjustments. However we do it there’s a tremendous sense of fulfillment in evangelism. It is always true that evangelism energizes us as pastors and feeds our people even more than conventional preaching can do it. Everyone is blessed. Pastors are...
Reaching the unchurched

Peter Roennfeldt

On a flight from London to Warsaw, I fell into conversation with the young man seated beside me. Over the next hour or so I learned about his work as a physician. We discussed politics, sports, the economy, lifestyle issues. Finally, he asked, “And, what do you do?”

I told him of my work as a pastor, equipping pastors and supporting initiatives to relate the Christian faith to modern people. Finally, I asked him, “Tell me, are spiritual issues important to you? Are you a person of faith? A Christian perhaps?”

“You know, I have never even thought about that,” he said. “I guess I should think about faith and the spiritual dimension of life. But I have never given church or Christianity any thought at all.”

That statement characterizes the experience of many unchurched people and clearly illustrates the challenge that we must relate to in sharing the gospel with unchurched, post-Christian, postmodern people. This article will focus on reaching these people; those living in communities that were once considered to be Christian but no longer are.

The challenge

Our world is very different to that which, and from which, J. N. Andrews sailed 126 years ago. At the end of the nineteenth century the future of the Church in western lands looked promising. “At the beginning of [the twentieth century], it was possible for European and American Christians of every persuasion to look back on the previous century with some satisfaction.”

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, western societies (including large portions of the United States), to a great extent, are alienated from the church and indifferent to the gospel. Today, the majority are “extraordinarily ignorant of the barest outlines of . . . Christianity.” Many unchurched people have not given Christianity any thought at all. Michael Green puts it bluntly, “It doesn’t enter their minds.”

A number of factors have eroded the impact of Christianity. An awareness of these factors may alert us as to how to work for and win unchurched people to Christ. These factors include:

1. The alienation of the masses by competing and secular ideologies. Five hundred years ago the Renaissance informed the masses that the church’s worldview was not the only one, and the seeds of pluralism and secularism were sown. The Reformation broke the ecclesiastical stranglehold of the church. The Bible was read and much of church dogma was discredited. Nationalism shattered Europe. Science challenged the church’s prescientific assumptions of the universe, and the climate was right for Enlightenment to elevate human reason and progress. The industrial revolution spawned urbanization, breaking family ties, challenging traditional values and further alienating the masses from Creation and the values of the gospel. The Christian story of the descent of humanity was replaced by the secular story of ascent.

These developments and competing ideologies have pushed the church from center-stage.

2. The destruction of faith through war. War separates people from their normal work and church life. Church attendance in Europe decreased following the outbreak of World War I, and many did not resume church life after that war. The downward slide continues. Christian nations at war with each other (each claiming that God is on their side), the tragedy of sectarian violence and religious-ethnic cleansing, and the readiness of Christian nations to use their military power do nothing to commend Christianity as a faith that can heal hurting people.
But, more than that, the horrors of "total war" destroy faith. A young professional said to me recently, "It is difficult to believe that it is God answering the prayers of affluent Christians today when He couldn't hear the cries of the children in the death camps. I have a lot of difficulty with prayer!"

3. The challenge of other religions and rising nationalism. The "other major world religions have not just disappeared as the Christian gospel has been proclaimed. On the contrary, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam have undergone an unexpected renewal during the past eighty years."

Spirituality is not entirely absent among the unchurched, even though most people today do not adhere to or order their lives by Christian understandings. If pressed, many (about 39 percent in Europe) acknowledge some belief in God, although their understandings of God are rarely shaped by biblical concepts. More and more unchurched people are attracted to other world religions or to neo-pagan "spiritualities" and philosophies. Whereas in the nineteenth century Christianity was seen as the religion of colonialism from the west, in the last half of the twentieth century other religions have represented emerging nationalism.

4. The negative perceptions of the church and distrust of all things institutional. Many people have painful stories of how the church failed them or their ancestors at the most sensitive times. Real or imagined, the causes of resentment seem endless. Of course, some don't like the way the Church challenges sin. But, it is tragic that so many perceive the Church to be uncaring, arrogant, abusive, hierarchical, and lacking justice and equality. Also, there is the perception that the Church is divided against itself, with so many denominations and so many off-shoots trying to reform the reformers.

Add to these negative perceptions the cynicism towards all things institutional: we should not be surprised to find Christianity's relevance being questioned.

5. Worldviews that most find more attractive than Christianity. Our generation has been shaped by four major forces: postmodernism; broken, blended, and busy families; modern technology; and disillusionment. Postmodernism advocates that there is no one, universal answer. All truth is relative. Diametrically opposed truths can coexist. People have learned to live with contradictions and disillusionment. They don't believe there is absolute truth—nor do they perceive that there is an answer.

T IS BUILT AROUND THE IDEA OF INVITING
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Most have settled on a mix of worldviews that is more attractive than Christianity.

Most unchurched people are not impressed by our institutional medical work or school systems. They don't know or care about ADRA. They are not interested in church or in God. They don't view their lives as empty, but as normal. They're just interested in living life day by day. These are the unchurched that I speak of.

We must face the challenge squarely. With large numbers being baptized in some parts of the world, we can easily gloss over this challenge and the lack of response from the post-Christian, postmodern millions. Some suggest that if we adopted the models of South or Central America, or pastoral staffing levels of Africa or the Pacific regions, then we would see the growth in the west that is seen in those places. However, I have seen a person responsible for 250-plus baptisms per year in one country move to a secular city like Melbourne, Australia—and there (even with a vibrant church) struggle to baptize 10 to 15 per year. Evangelists baptize hundreds in Romania but avoid the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.

It's difficult for us to be open about this challenge, for we want to see and report growth. Although many of us live as a sub-culture among the unchurched, we may not be entirely aware of the enormity of the challenge. Even the moderate success we enjoy in evangelism comes from first generation immigrants who come to predominantly unchurched cultures.

The unchurched present us with one of the most challenging mission fields—with their widespread unbelief, apathy, and hostility towards Christianity. Observers perceive that a totally new approach is needed. "Not a better-organized church but a different church; a mission church," says Martin Robinson.

Now, with this challenge before us, what are the possibilities for the future? There are initiatives within the Christian community and Adventism that are worth noting. Some of these could give us a guide to future possibilities.

The Alpha initiative

This initiative, developed by Nicky Gumbel, came out of Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church in London. It is basic Christianity, simply introducing God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Why has it attracted millions and why have Adventist pastors and members been able to use it successfully in leading unchurched people to Jesus? Observe how it works.

• It is built around the idea of
inviting unchurched people to a friend’s home for food, fellowship, fun, and spiritual/Bible discovery in small groups.
- It doesn’t rush people. It gives eleven weeks for unchurched people to mix with Christian friends while they learn some basics about Jesus.
- It provides an opportunity for unchurched people to experience God. The seventh weekend is spent away together to relate to God. This is extremely important, for truth today is what people experience, not just what we say to be truth.
- It leads unchurched people gently to talk through their questions, doubts, fears, and negative perceptions, even as it provides an environment for people to be introduced to the Bible.
- It is personal. To attend an Alpha group, unchurched people don’t go out to a program; they go next door to see friends.
- It is perceived to be Christian rather than denominational. Although some groups use Gumbel’s video presentations, there is no suggestion that he is a front for a particular denomination. Nor is it seen as the scheme of some little known foreign religious sect. Unchurched people don’t trust denominations or institutions, and they don’t want to get caught by crackpots!
- It takes advantage of a mass media campaign (with billboards, television, and newspaper advertising), but it is built on trained friends next door.
- It has the drawing power that is always associated with the sharing of the gospel.

Some raise the objection, “It is not Adventist!” This is followed by the question, “Do we need an Adventist version?” Those Adventists who are using it would answer, “No. It presents basic Christianity, and we can build on this initiative that is reaching many unchurched people.”

New church plants that identify with their communities

There are spontaneous church plants where dedicated members and perhaps a visionary pastor simply move out of an existing church and start another worship service. There is also a need for strategic church planting where a clear strategy is followed to establish a church that will become part of the life of the unchurched community. This is consistent with the incarnational ministry of Jesus to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and with Paul’s testimony that he was prepared to be as all things to all people in order to win some for Jesus (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

We need some church plants that reflect some of our existing churches. However, if we are going to reach unchurched people, we need to accept church plants that are radically different from the existing churches. Let me describe a couple of these church plants.

1. The Café Church in Copenhagen, Denmark, is reaching unchurched people. Five years ago three or four friends were sharing and praying, and endeavoring to reach former Adventists. After two years of ministry the three or four had grown to four or five. Then their focus changed. They decided to share their faith with unchurched friends. There are now 65 to 70 worshiping each Sabbath—15 to 20 former members, about 15 having a Christian background, and 30 to 35 unchurched people.

They researched their target group, and found that the environment in which the group is most comfortable is a café. So they prepared a room as an up-market, downtown café, complete with professional band (keyboard, drums, guitar, and saxophone). They invited friends to Saturday night café, talking around the tables with coffee and cake, providing music and secular entertainment.

When asked about the venue, the friends were told this was also where they discussed spiritual and topical issues on Saturday afternoons. (Note: 10:00 o’clock on Saturday morning is not prime time for this target group!) Unchurched friends were invited, and they started to come.

Some Adventists looking on ask, “When will these people attend a real church?” But, this is real church!

2. Southside Community Church in Brisbane, Australia, is reaching the unchurched. Six years ago Pastor Ken Houllston, his family, and a core of about fifteen people planted this Adventist Church with a vision to reach unchurched people. The church has now grown to about 220 worshippers. Because of the commitment to relate in a relevant way to the community, it has attracted some former members and worshippers from other churches.

Ken has worked to establish an Adventist church that is so significant that the community will pay them to stay. Recently when they moved into their second facility since starting the church, the unchurched community and business leaders provided AU$300,000 and supplies to outfit the building.

Community leaders testify that
the drug abuse level and the crime rate in this city has declined since Southside Community Church began. The warehouse—which is their church—is the center for indoor football, a professional rock-climbing wall, and where you drop in to play pool. It is the community youth drop-in-center, where youth go to find counseling, support, and safe-housing. This church is where some unchurched university students do work experience as community social workers. Many of the staff—receptionists, ministry leaders, and personnel—are unchurched people.

Some Adventists looking on say, "But when will it become a real Adventist church?" But, this is a real Adventist church—reaching the unchurched.

**Refocused churches with a strategy**

One quality marks every church that is reaching the unchurched: a strategy to reach lost people! These churches study the unchurched people of their communities. They determine the path that most unchurched people may walk if they were to come to faith and discipleship. They list the steps that people may take, and they position their churches on those steps.

Ellen White describes the five-step strategy that Jesus followed: "The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"19

It may be at steps four or five (after two to three years of fellowship with an Adventist Christian) that an unchurched person may attend church. Therefore, the churches that are committed to sharing faith with the unchurched will prioritize ministries and programs that position themselves on the path at steps one to three, so as to establish contact with many unchurched people.

Jesus was on the path where the unchurched walked. It is not easy to get out and onto this path. But the following provide a context that unchurched people can understand, be challenged by and respond to, and experience.

1. **An embodied apologetic: the Word made flesh.** Unchurched people don’t trust institutions, but they can understand a local church that works in changing lives and communities.12

2. **Authentic friendship and narrative evangelism.** Unchurched people respond to genuine care and concern.31 They also relate to narrative evangelism—sharing with them our relationship with Jesus and His Spirit, rather than just confronting them with doctrinal truth. Narrative evangelism shares how God’s story has called into question our story and changed the course of our lives.14

3. **Experience and involvement.** Few unchurched people respond to the confrontational approach to evangelism or church. Such evangelism is seen as manipulative. Give people time to understand and experience the basics of Christianity.

4. **Something new and creative.** Informality, contemporary styles of music, participation in direction and planning, an opportunity to make a difference, leaders who listen, choices and options, encouragement and involvement—these are the syntax of the language that unchurched people understand. Church traditions or structures of the past do not really matter.

5. **Christians who act Christianly.**

**Insights for the future**

We need to support new and innovative approaches, for reaching the unchurched is like reaching into an unknown culture for most Christians. Ellen White wrote, "The people of every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, and so introduce the truth that they may do them good. They must be able to understand and meet their wants."21

Reaching the unchurched has implications for all of us:

- Don’t ignore the local church.
- Encourage and support innovative methods at local-church level.
- Expect each local church to be different—sometimes radically so.
- View evangelistic small groups as essential to the life of each Adventist.
- Cultivate a culture of church planting.
- Expect all churches (and pastors) to support church planting.
- Reach the unchurched by friends, not by program or technology.
- Remember personal work is absolutely vital.
- Emphasize the power of prayer and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for a revival of the biblical “every believer a minister” concept.
- Use user-friendly buildings (warehouses, offices, and homes) as worship/outreach centers, rather than church-type buildings.
- Build a model church that is both biblical (Acts 2:42-47) and culturally relevant to the unchurched.
- Speak to the questions of the unchurched.

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1 Martin Robinson, To Win the West (East Sussex: Monarch, 1996), 37.
4 Ibid., 32.
5 Robinson, 65.
6 Ibid., 39.
7 Ibid., 73.
8 Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, Inside the Soul of a New Generation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 41-70.
9 Robinson, 58.
10 Ibid., 63.
13 Christian A. Schwarz, Natural Church Development (British Church Growth Assn., 1996), 36.
14 Ford, 229, 230.
Editorial note: In Part I of this two-part series Pastor Mhando described the inspiring results he has had in doing public evangelism on three continents. In this final part he identifies and describes five principles that he sees to be critical to the kind of success he has described.

As we move toward the end, says Ellen White, “some methods used in the work will be different from the methods used in the past, but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism.” Whatever may have been your former practice, it is not necessary to repeat it again and again in the same way. God would have new and untried methods followed. “Let every worker in the Master’s vineyard study, plan, devise methods to reach people where they are. We must do something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention.”

In planning for my crusades, I have taken these counsels seriously, and tried to be an innovative and effective communicator of the gospel story. I found the following five principles helpful in providing an evangelistic explosion in my ministry.

Mobilize every member to revival and prayer
Sharing the gospel cannot be effective unless we spend a lot of time in prayer, meditation, and the study of God’s Word. Three hours a day alone with God is a minimum for me. Along with myself, I want my evangelistic team and church members to have a similar experience. Unless we wake up, we can never see miracles of genuine conversion. We cannot mobilize a sick church to evangelize.

The cry of John Wesley needs to be our cry: “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they are clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of God on earth.”

I also invite all those who attend my meetings to join me in fasting and praying every Wednesday throughout the five weeks of the crusade. They pray for the evangelist, themselves and the city. Every night, before I begin preaching, I remind the team of the power of prayer. I request all to pray for me as I preach, and this they do sincerely. This kind of revival among our people will always bring results. This transforms the preacher, the congregation and the community.

Make the crusade people-oriented
When I am invited to conduct a crusade, I inform the coordinators in advance that they need not set any budget for handbills. Every member will be my handbill. One month before I arrive, every member is to make a list of 20 people—friends, neighbors, and family members—and invite them to the meetings. Then everyone who attends is encouraged to invite at least two others the following day.

Since no handbills have been distributed, every member feels accountable and responsible to spread the news of what is happening. This people-to-people contact has been an important element of success in my crusades. This is not to say that I do not make use of banners, posters, radio, television, and newspapers. But these communication tools are used to foster public awareness. Research indicates that almost 80 percent of the people who come to Christ and are baptized have responded because a relative or friend has invited them.

Make sure of total participation
Prior to the crusade, create an awareness in every church member that God has given us the city, and that it is the responsibility of every individual church member to play a part to completely conquer it for Christ. My...
slogan is “every member mobilization and every person reached.”

I consider my presence in every city an opportunity to mobilize and train every member to be a soul winner. If the city has a total of 3,000 church members, my goal is to have 3,000 trained preachers after the crusade is over, all qualified to win souls, to train and encourage the new members to do likewise.

Did you know that one out of four people we meet would come to Christ if someone would just explain the gospel to them? So, with much prayer and love for Christ, I mobilize all to reach all. To make total participation a serious business, all my crusades are “Field Schools of Evangelism” for both lay members and pastors. I spend two hours, twice every week, teaching the lay preachers. The presence of pastors at these events helps in mobilization and motivation.

To these classes I also invite those who make decisions. The new members are my greatest tools in soul winning. They have relatives and friends. I baptized one 17-year-old girl in Tanzania. Before the end of the crusade, eight of her friends and relatives had been baptized.

Home visitation is an important aspect of total mobilization and training. I spend at least three hours a day, four days a week in home visitation with lay leaders and pastors. This gives them on-the-job experience in leading people to decision. There is power when the evangelist does house-to-house visitation. How can I encourage others to visit unless I also do it?

Dream big dreams, set bold goals

The quality of my relationship with God can be evaluated by the kind of goals I set for myself in evangelism. When I am truly God’s partner, I can afford to think and plan big. How can I think small when “there is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his life and lives a life wholly consecrated to God”? I am therefore unapologetically numbers-conscious, though that, of course, is not my only concern. Numbers count with me, and therefore I count numbers. As I evangelize it is important to me to know how many souls accept the lordship of my Savior Jesus Christ, and how many I am training to win souls. My God is apparently interested in numbers also. The book of Acts is a numbers book. I no longer feel guilty when I mention numbers, count numbers, or set high numerical goals in my ministry.

When God dreams His dreams through us, He takes responsibility for making these dreams happen. God even fulfills His promise to go beyond our expectations and dreams (Eph. 3:20). My task is to dream big, and then stand and see my God give results beyond my dreams.

Two other factors also help in achieving big dreams. First, I share my dreams with others. When others take ownership of my goals and dreams, and begin to pray and work with me, great things happen. Second, when I go into a city, I aim to reach the entire city and I work hard to achieve that goal. The rest I leave to God. When I have prayed and done all I can, and in the end I baptize only one, I can still rejoice in God.

When I set high goals in soul winning, God provides other blessings as well. Reports from Texas and Tanzania where I have conducted crusades in the last two or three years indicate that their tithes and offerings have grown three times since we ended these crusades. I hope this is happening in other places as well. We can surely expect the Savior’s ample blessings as we prioritize what He considers most important. When we mind His business, He minds ours.

Preach for decisions

I have decided never to preach a sermon without making an appeal. I consider all my meetings to be reaping crusades. I take for granted that other evangelists, pastors, and lay members have already done the planting and I am there to reap the harvest. I realize that “many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.” I also consider that the Lord has called me as His ambassador to move, persuade, convince, beg, beseech, and compel (Acts 17:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:11, 18-20; 6:2; Luke 14:16-24). I preach for decisions. Hence the time for the altar call is a serious time. People make serious decisions every night.

At the very beginning of the sermon, I make an announcement regarding the appeal, and thus prepare the whole congregation for the call that will come later. I ask the congregation to be praying for the hundreds who will make decisions. This paves the way for the Holy Spirit to work in mighty ways.

Just before I begin the appeal, I ask the pastors, their spouses and all the church elders to come forward to shake hands or give hugs to the hundreds who will be making decisions for Christ and baptism. Then I ask the members who have their relatives and friends making decisions to come forward and stand by their side, thus assuring them of their prayer and support. This involves everyone. Hundreds make decisions because they know someone will be there to support and love them.

Public evangelism still works when conducted according to the divine plan. As we put these elements into practice we can count on a rewarding harvest for Christ.

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3 Ibid., 123.
6 Walter Bleecker, Leading a Person to Christ (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here’s Life Press, 1999), 16.
Why should we plant churches in the city?

Chad Carlton

I don’t know how to plant churches in the city. I have had absolutely no experience. I am merely a seminary student with just two years of pastoral experience. How could I even think about such a challenge? And yet I want to try it.


It’s time for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to focus more particularly on urban ministry, to emphasize once again the great needs of the cities. It’s not that we have never done anything in cities before or that nothing is going on now. It is just that our focus needs to change if we are ever going to match the challenge of massive urbanization taking place worldwide.

Missiologist Roger Greenway says, “In view of the rapid growth of cities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the internationalization of cities in Europe and North America, it is no exaggeration to call cities the new frontier of Christian missions.” Seventh-day Adventists must focus on cities if we are going to faithfully fulfill the gospel commission.

But how should the Church reach these sprawling giants for Christ? In brief, new churches need to be planted. Russell Burrill has shown that Adventism began as a church-planting movement and needs to regain that focus. Indeed, the most productive evangelistic strategy is planting churches. Groups of disciples must be formed to provide fellowship, equipping, edification, and ministry training so that the work of Christ can be moved forward.

Postmodernism and the cities

The need for urban evangelism becomes more acute in the face of the challenge of postmodernism. Postmodernism is not a minor philosophical curiosity or a passing phenomenon. It is the most significant thing to strike Western Civilization since the Enlightenment. Postmodernism looks at the world, reality and meaning in a fundamentally different way.

Postmodernism is open to all things spiritual. People have probably not been this open to the spiritual world since the Middle Ages. Although the postmodernist looks at spirituality in terms of the concerns of the present, we can take advantage of such aspirations. We need to plant Adventist churches of biblical integrity that demonstrate to postmodern urbanites the true spiritual understanding of the universe—in the context of a Creator-Father God who is even bigger than the God placed in today’s rational box. We need churches that are able to show people convincingly that the Bible answers their questions relating to humanity’s past, present, and future—the very answers postmoderns are seeking.

Perhaps the greatest felt need of postmodern urbanites manifests itself in the arena of relationships. Understanding this, we should plant churches that value authentic biblical community and highlight it as an asset. Church members should see themselves as ministers willing to do the sometimes difficult but meaningful work of entering into people’s lives. They should spend time in building relationships with struggling people, sharing their traumas and celebrating their joys.

But this can only happen if we are willing to actually go where the people are. That means we should plant churches where people are and encourage members to live in their midst, work with them and enter into meaningful relationships with them. Only then will the postmodern urbanite be willing to listen to the gospel. Only then will the secularized city dweller even consider embracing the alternative of Jesus Christ. They must see the power of the gospel demonstrated in the lives of Christians who are truly their friends. “To be effective and successful in urban ministry, the worker must build genuine credibility.
This can be achieved only through involvement with people individually and communally.  

Ellen White and the Cities

Toward the end of her life, Ellen White increasingly became burdened with the dilemma of the cities. She wrote numerous letters encouraging church leaders to work in the major metropolitan expanses. At one point she became so disturbed with the lack of emphasis being placed on cities that she refused to grant the General Conference President an interview! This is especially significant because of the respect she held for church leadership. She became increasingly aware that the church needed to make major adjustments in order to change the way it had been doing things.

In 1906 she wrote, “The cities must be worked. The millions living in these congested centers are to hear the third angel’s message. This work should have been developed rapidly during the past few years.” In later years she continued to feel that the efforts being focused on the cities were still inadequate. “At the present time there is not a thousandth part being done in working the cities, that should be done, and that would be done if men and women would do their whole duty.” She said, “I appeal to our brethren who have heard the message for many years. It is time to wake up the watchmen. I have expended my strength in giving the messages the Lord has given me. The burden of the needs of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die.”

The Focus of the Church

Does the church today view the cities of the world with the same priority and significance? Are we willing to give our lives for the cause of the cities? Did Mrs. White’s words bring about the results she longed for? Did the Adventist Church become a church focused on warning the cities? Sadly, our priorities have not shifted that easily.

It is true that Ellen White argued strongly for country living. She is, of course correct in saying that such a setting is ideal. But it is also crucial that missionaries willing to risk the dangers, move into the cities to build credible relationships, communities of faith and churches that will reach the urban person who would otherwise never hear the gospel in the setting of the three angels’ messages.

Many are currently working in and for the cities. Global Mission has designed creative programs to boost the work in unreached urban areas. Many churches already exist in these areas. African-American, Hispanic, and ethnic congregations are growing rapidly in some North American cities. Recent Net Evangelism efforts have targeted major metropolitan areas. While appreciating these efforts it is time to do more to intentionally plant new churches in the metropolitan areas.

God sent Jonah to warn Nineveh that it would soon be destroyed. Jonah resisted this call. God is sending us to the cities again today. What is our response?

2 Russell Burrill, Rekindling A Lost Passion (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Research Center, 1999), 245-246.
3 Greenway and Monisma, 249.
6 Ibid., 29.
7 Ibid., 34.

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You might well say that Sumanajoti Thero is the “unlikeliest” of missionaries. He was the chief monk of a Buddhist temple. From his teen years, he had been interested in people. They were his “mission” and he sought for himself a role of service. In time he became one of the most influential monks in his region.

Establishing relationships is near the essence of Christian mission and ministry. My friendship with this Buddhist monk and his “witness” have fashioned an outstanding and illuminating experience in my life as a missionary. Our story illustrates what lies at the center of what makes successful evangelism and mission.

We became friends, though we were by all means unlikely partners. He, the Buddhist monk, and I, the Adventist Christian pastor, were different in many ways: in religion, in culture, and in age. But we shared a common interest in the welfare of the villagers around us, and we respected each other for our spiritual commitment. This personal respect for and recognition of each other bonded us together.

As we traveled together to various parts of the country, our relationship grew, and we shared our common interests with each other. One day when he was coming home from a week-long stay in the hospital, I invited Sumanajoti to stay with us for a few days to “recuperate” before returning to his busy place at the temple. He agreed. I brought him home that evening along with two of his junior monks. They stayed with us for four days.

This visit provided us an opportunity to involve them in our daily activities, including worship. Soon they “discovered” the health and Bible courses we had intentionally placed in their way. Thus seeds were planted.

**Handling the prejudice**

Soon after, Sumanajoti proposed that we should change the inaccurate picture many in the community had about our Adventist school, and work toward removing the hostility the village had toward Christianity. The monk had a plan. He wanted me to invite the key leaders of the village for a meal at our school—actually at our home.

We invited 12 leaders. As soon as our invitation letters reached them, they sought the advice of my friend, the chief monk. They had never been invited to the school before. Was this a trap or a plot?

We brought them to our campus and gave the group a tour of our school. Many of them had never been on the campus during the school’s 32-year history. They were impressed with our work program as being part of our educational system.

As the guests came into our house, I washed the feet of the monk, Sumanajoti. This custom, so well known from the time of Jesus, still thrives in many parts of the East. My act of hospitality provided a message: We as Christians knew how to be respectful.

After a pleasant meal, it was time to talk. Everyone had something nice to say about what they saw and what they had experienced. Sumanajoti just listened. Finally it was time for him to speak. “I have been your leader for many years,” he began. “Most of you I have known from childhood and early youth. All of you come for special occasions to my temple. We have talked together about many things in life.” He paused, and as he surveyed his people one by one, they wondered what would come next.

“You have said nice things about this place,” he continued. “But this is not what you are saying in our village when you speak about this school.”

Silence fell over the group. Embarrassed looks went around. But the monk continued with his remarks, indicating that this was not
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I was led with Sumanajoti into the residence of the temple. There on an elaborate mahogany couch sat the chief monk. “So you are a missionary?” was his first question to me. “Yes,” I said.

“Is it right that you are here in this country to make Christians out of Buddhists?”

I sensed that this was going to be more of an arraignment than a “get-acquainted” session. But what was I to tell him? I was called not only to be the Adventist Pastor and Bible teacher at our school, but also to “organize and supervise the evangelistic work in the area.”

At that moment, a short, silent prayer was all I had time to manage. But I was not the only one who talked to God that afternoon. The prayer of my friend, the monk Sumanajoti, undoubtedly sounded as sweet in the ears of God that day as that of the most eloquent preacher in Adventism. As I stood there with shaking knees and nervous voice, I believe God fulfilled His promise to give us words to witness for Him.

For two hours that afternoon I tried to explain to this monk that I could hardly make a Christian out of a Buddhist, because that work was not in the hands of human beings, but in the hands of God. For two hours I shared with him what it meant to be a Christian. All that time it did not dawn on me to ask him who he was. It was only at the end of the session, after his whole attitude had changed, that I dared to ask.

He told me that he was the chief monk of one of the three orders of monks in that country. In fact, his order was the most prestigious of the three. When I learned that, I praised God, not only for giving me the opportunity but the words to share in such a situation.

All this was made possible by my monk friend, Sumanajoti Thero, for it was he who wanted to share; it was he who opened the door for us to do so.

When we left that country, Sumanajoti and I kept in close contact with each other. After a year I received an unexpected telex informing us that the chief monk at the temple complex we had visited was ill and that he wanted to see us one more time. Unfortunately I could not afford to go immediately because school was back in session. Knowing what I know now, we should have gone anyway.

The impact of showing respect

Three weeks later we received a large bulky envelope. Inside it, we found a second envelope. In the envelope was a letter that explained that though he had held out as long as possible, the monk had finally died. He had wanted me to speak at his funeral.

The letter also stated that in a second envelope was a part of his cremated ashes. His successor and his disciples realized that the deceased monk was close to our family, and they felt that part of his remains should stay with us. I have returned to that country a number of times and the remaining monks still treat me as their brother. Showing respect opens minds and hearts!

The ashes of the monk that were sent to us are now resting in a small sandalwood box in our home. No, we don’t worship that box. We handle it with respect. But who knows how many others have received a glimpse of Jesus because of my friend Sumanajoti and because of the willingness of the chief monk at the temple to take risks as he shared what he did before he died?

And what of us? God has given us a great opportunity to be involved in preparing the world for the imminent coming of Jesus by proclaiming the Good News to the people around us.

While we may rejoice with all our hearts that God can use a Samaritan woman and a Buddhist monk—the unlikeliest missionaries of all—the question still confronts us: Have we caught such a vision of God and Jesus that we too will be moved to share our faith?
ical of their current format and attributes too much blame to it. His description of them, that they are “like a string of beads with each bead having the same size and weight” and his acceptance of the view that there wasn’t even a string connecting the 27 fundamental beads doesn’t stand up to a fresh scrutiny. First, his view that the way the 27 are set out “indicates no priorities” is incorrect. It is generally conceded that with any belief line-up those at the top of the list would set the tone for the other beliefs.

Knight suggests that “in a hierarchical model of Christian theology, Christ and the cross are at the very Apex.” But the 27 fundamentals actually do a reasonable job of bringing this perspective.

Having set the gospel tone in the first ten fundamentals, the other seventeen then discuss doctrine and lifestyle always in the context of the gospel. So I would suggest to George that there is a common thread.

Contrary to what George says, different weight is lent to the present model of the 27 fundamentals and there is a thread running through them, and that thread is Christ. There is room for improvement sure, but even if George comes up with a better model which is accepted by the world church, it will not solve the ever-present problems of legalism, incorrect perspectives, and pettiness, which have always existed in every church era.

What is presently needed is a wholehearted acceptance and preaching of all our present 27 fundamentals with Christ as their center. (George agrees.) I don’t think remodeling the 27 fundamentals is the answer. There is enough gospel priority in them to do the task.

—Jack Lange, pastor, Maitland, New South Wales, Australia.

**Editorial comment:** In publishing the article, “27 Fundamentals in Search of a Theology,” it was George Knight’s intention and that of Ministry to encourage an embracing of Adventist faith that palpably proclaims and lives out the long-standing vision so well expressed in the following: “The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which mean little; they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living center” (Selected Messages, 2:87).

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**Pastor-led public evangelism**

continued from page 17

shepherds, and the shepherd’s task is to be sure the ninety and nine are left in safety and then to go out and search for the lost sheep.

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1 See my article entitled “Church Growth and Church Discipline” in the April 2000 issue of Ministry magazine.
What a wonderful concept! Many conferences and local churches select a special time of the year to emphasize the importance of the pastor to the local congregation. Pastors should clip this article and read it to their elders and church boards. I’m eager to see Adventists more widely experience the blessing of affirming and expressing tangible appreciation for their own pastor.

Local congregations might select a specific day or even an entire month suggested and coordinated by the union or division to express gratitude for God’s work through the pastoral leaders assigned to the local churches. This is also an appropriate time to remember the inclusive ministry of the pastoral family.

In my own church, we typically choose the anniversary of our pastor’s arrival to acknowledge his ministry in our midst. Typically we organize a special part of the worship service to pray for the pastor, thank him verbally and with an appropriate gift of gratitude. One year we arranged for the pastor and his family to enjoy a three-day holiday away from the pressures of the job courtesy of their members. Other years we have provided him with a book, video, or other professional tool which will enhance his ministry and increase his joy in service. The process of expressing gratitude to God for pastoral leadership is far more important than a specific gift. For pastors with young children, a congregation might want to coordinate child-care one night a week to allow the pastor and spouse some free time together.

Perhaps no other job requires as much selfless sacrifice as pastoral ministry—not only that of the pastor, but also every member of the pastoral family. In fact, recognition of this important reality is why the General Conference instituted its ministry to pastoral spouses and children through Shepherdess International. Today that emphasis is expanded in virtually every division through the leadership of the Ministerial Association’s entity, Shepherdess International.

As a PK (pastor’s kid) myself, I can reflect on both strong and weak points of pastoral families. Special opportunities and benefits come to pastoral families as well as significant challenges. First, a significant benefit to pastoral families is the sense of mission which the entire family can experience as they work together to hasten Jesus’ coming. Ministry, after all, is not just a career. It is a calling for every believer which includes, of course, the pastor’s family. By viewing ministry as the “family’s work” rather than just the parent’s career, each person in the pastoral family can experience joy in the baptisms of converts, earnest labor for souls, and personal satisfaction in the lives of members who grow and mature. For example, my own love for personal Bible studies and evangelistic visitation came because even as a pre-schooler my dad took me with him on his “pastoral assignments.” I was assigned simple tasks such as operating the filmstrip projector, praying for and with those who were studying, or participating in repeating a verse of Scripture. I firmly believed that I was “giving Bible studies” myself and that participation developed a life-long desire to do personal evangelism.

As second benefit that comes to pastoral families is an expanded world view. When weekly mission stories and daily devotions focus on the advance of the gospel in faraway places or the ventures of missionaries in challenging circumstances, those brave souls become family members for whom we pray and the needs of the mission work become projects for which we willingly give. As a child, I listened intently to great missionaries such as Eric B. Hare or Josephine Cunnington Edwards and declared to anyone who would listen that I was personal friends with these noteworthy heroes. When my mother’s sister married a man whose last name was the same as my hero from the Voice of Prophecy, I called my new uncle “Elder” Richards and could not grasp that he was not part of H. M. S. Richards’ own family. I was astounded that he did not even know that great man and assured him that I could arrange an introduction at the next camp meeting. Long before the church ever asked me to travel internationally on an assignment, I had eagerly sought to know more about Africa, Asia, South America, because that is where my heroes ministered. I was much more familiar with names like Kata Rhangaso from the Solomon Islands or the Stahls from South America than I was with any sports or entertainment personalities.

Likewise, pastoral families have opportunities for travel and fellowship with others in similar circumstances.
Wise administrators have learned the value of including pastoral spouses and children in professional meetings. In addition to appropriate seminars on issues of interest to pastoral spouses or age-appropriate programming for PKs, just the opportunity for interaction and fellowship with those whose life assignments are similar to your own will increase both mission comprehension and ministry satisfaction for the pastoral families.

Financial challenges often may seem overwhelming for pastoral families. A benefit of that reality, however, is the necessity for PKs to earn some extra money, either to contribute to a special activity for the family or to pay some of their own educational or recreational expenses. A strong work ethic is easier to develop in the seemingly harsh light of limited resources. I remember that in fourth grade I accepted the assignment to serve as janitor for our church facility. My Father was careful to see that I earned my money and when it was time to receive my pay, I was proud to report to the treasurer that I had completed my work.

Another benefit is the binding cohesiveness of common purpose, sometimes at the sacrifice of proximity to other relatives. You might feel somewhat isolated to be far from your extended family, but these same challenges can bind together a family who recognizes that they are on the frontlines together and must support each others endeavors. Parents who strategize ways to emphasize family fun, projects, outings, and special occasions will grow ever closer together.

Frequent relocation adds to the challenges. Typically, pastoral families move farther away from their kin rather than closer to the hometowns of their relatives. As a PK, I never experienced the constant proximity of extended family members. We traveled to “visit” grandparents or cousins. Sharon, on the other hand, grew up in a small town with both sets of grandparents as well as several cousins, aunts, and uncles, nearby. Holidays always involved the whole family, and impromptu family occasions occurred several times per month. When pastoral families are not located near to their own relatives, sensitive members of the local congregation can “grandparent” PKs with eternal consequences for their efforts.

Reasonable expectations for PKs let them be appreciated as individuals and understood as normal, active children. Expressions such as, “you must set an example” not only should be avoided, but actually stifle the spirit. The steps of child development, the challenges of adolescence, and the process of maturing physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually should be the interest of the whole church family.

Above all else, congregations can strengthen pastoral homes by affirming leadership, emphasizing the value of pastoral ministry, and encouraging all youngsters, including PKs to model Jesus’ own caring ministry.

Books for today that will shape your tomorrow

**Matters of Life and Death**

**The Great Compromise**

**How to Think About the End Time**

Available at your local ABC, 1-800-765-6955, or online: AdventistBookCenter.com
A Bold New Vision
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**Plant the Word**
Begin new Bible Schools in countries where there are none.

**Preach the Word**
Conduct evangelistic series around the world each year, with simultaneous meetings by Lonnie Melashenko and lay teams from NAD.

**Preserve the Word**
Follow up persons who make decisions through radio broadcasts and Bible study materials.

### Schedule:

- **June 2001**
  - Mwanza, Tanzania

- **October 2001**
  - Caracas, Venezuela

- **January 2002**
  - Cayman Islands

- **Spring 2002**
  - Jakarta, Indonesia

- **Fall 2002**
  - North America

- **2003 and beyond**
  - Watch for details!

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