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On divorce and remarriage

Ministry is to be commended for a timely discussion on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The debates at the General Conference in Toronto demonstrated the topic’s importance. Somewhat surprising is the slant in your articles (April 2001), that divorce is negative/sinful/bad, except... While explanations of the so-called exception clause in Matthew 5 and 19 vary somewhat, exegetes generally agree that Jesus’ intention is not to justify divorce. The overall testimony of the New Testament is clear: divorce is wrong. It means a promise, a covenant, has been broken, and a failure must be admitted. Thus the issue of divorce cannot be, under what circumstances may divorce still be permissible, but: how do we deal with sin and failure. How can we live in a broken world where at times we cannot simply choose between good and bad but only between bad and worse? The issue of divorce then is a soteriological question, which involves both spouses (not just one “guilty” party) as well as the church (failure may well be attributed to the church, for not having cared enough for a marriage). Only if we recognize our failure, healing can begin.

—Andreas Bochmann, pastoral counselor, Neuenhagen, Germany.

Most divorces are not a matter of convenience. There is a great deal of painful erosion, anguish, and pain involved. I often feel that in theological analysis and presentation, the underlying hermeneutics view humans mainly in the context of soteriology and eschatology as ontological and moral beings to the virtual exclusion of viewing human in the context of biblical anthropology as creature (psychophysical being)—fully and legitimately. It not only determines but, in fact, reveals our basic presuppositional attitudes in our approach to the biblical text.

As Ekkehard: Mueller alluded, we need to do careful exegesis of the pertinent marriage/divorce texts. That requires textual, grammatical, syntactical, historico-cultural, anthropological, literary, and theological analysis. Then comes the work of systematic and pastoral theology.

The traditional and current Adventist position on Jesus’ “divorce ruling” is greatly misunderstood. I am left with the horrible feeling that everyday human beings, who are suffering spousal abandonment, abuse, and endangerment, are being doctrinally “criminalized” if they attempt to escape the oppressive marriage bonds. Theologically, this state of affairs casts the loving God as a sadistical demon.

—Hans Killius, chaplain, UVMC Health System, Troy, Ohio.

Keith Burton’s excellent article brought back memories when, as a minister of a new pastorate, I had to deal with a couple seeking divorce. The challenge was finding biblical grounds for terminating the relationship, and there weren’t any. That led to some heartfelt, serious study into the passages in which Jesus addresses this complex issue. Like Burton I concluded that divorce is not an option for Christian couples. True, per-

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Giving that doesn’t get even

SHARON CRESS

It’s that time again—the season of festivity our parishioners look forward to with great expectation. However, for some of us experienced in years of pastoral ministry, the days ahead come filled with a keen sense of dread, duty, and despair because of everything that we know must be accomplished. From years of experience, we quickly translate Christmas and the surrounding holidays into the reality of pageants, programs, promotional, pop-in guests, and pressure.

These next few weeks will bring out the best behavior in many of our members, but it also has a tendency to unleash the worst in pent-up frustrations. This season of celebration and blessings has mixed with it all the human ingredients that can rapidly deteriorate into days filled with stress and strain. So, what to do?

We’ve all memorized the famous verse “It is more blessed to give than receive” and as clergy families we are fortunate because we regularly experience the joy that comes in service to others. It carries its own special brand of satisfaction. But too often we have not allowed ourselves to experience the whole verse—frequently it is very difficult and uncomfortable for us as pastoral families to “receive.” To let someone minister to us. To let someone bestow upon us random acts of kindness and generosity. We are so tuned in to being the “caregivers” that we forget that it might be not just acceptable, but, necessary, for us to be “recipients.”

My friend, Cathy, gently reminded me of this a few weeks ago when I was determined to repay her for a generous favor, “Why don’t you just let somebody do something nice for you?” she frustratingly asked. It was my wake-up call.

The culture and society in which we live has managed to put a price tag on everything—and the Christmas season only floodlights the problem into almost unbearable proportions for pastoral families.

We find ourselves applying retail dollars to things that should never carry a price tag. We let business language provide the metaphors for human interaction. We bemoan being in debt and in the same breath we talk about owing favors. Owing favors? Now really, if it is a true gift from a Christ-like heart, there is nothing owed. Nothing to repay.

Almost every ministry family has experienced that helpless feeling of being on the receiving end of a pseudo-gift— you know the kind—given with the express intention of getting us hooked. Then we become cynical. It is a bad habit—and I’ve found myself regularly falling into it—converting kindnesses into equivalents I feel compelled to reconcile as if I were exchanging currency at a bank for an extended itinerary.

We keep track of kind acts. We are afraid we are running up a bill. Whether it is accepting a ride to the market, receiving a plate of home-baked cookies, allowing the neighbor to shovel our driveway, or the traditional “exchange of cards” we have become much too aware of the costs and benefits of personal interactions and the tedious bookkeeping of trying to keep them “even.” Sadly, we shun some genuine human relationships and gifts of kindness because we are afraid they come with strings attached. Blessings are thrown away as disposable.

And so, here it is Christmas again. We are all going to be involved in a lot of “giving.” Our time. Our talent. Our treasure. And there is a good possibility we will experience the seeds of self-pity and bitterness when the season is over if we haven’t taken a moment to let someone bestow upon us some extravagant gesture of good-will.

Have you seen the face of a grateful person—not someone grateful for what you have done for them, but a person filled with the love of Jesus who is grateful just to be able to do something nice for you—is there a price tag on that?

If we allow into our Christian ministry the for-profit values that the business world runs on, there is a good possibility we will forget all the wonderful values that should never be translated into financial terms.

Jesus gave us the ultimate gift 2,000 years ago. It is the very reason we celebrate today. Tragically, some cynical and dysfunctional people are still frantically trying to repay that gift by keeping score of their good works and calculating their way into His kingdom—trying to get even with Jesus for His unselfish gift of salvation.

It may seem uncomfortable. It may seem foreign to our service-oriented view of ministry. But just try it once. Experiment with simply savoring that extraordinary moment of being on the receiving end of a human blessing without a thought of reciprocation. You might just realize that not only are you receiving a blessing but you are giving someone else a chance to experience the magnanimous joy of giving. Now that’s a Merry Christmas!
Today pastoral ministry is more demanding, stressful, and lonely than ever. Pastors find themselves more isolated from their people. Either ministers maintain a professional distance from members or they are placed on a pedestal by a well-meaning congregation. In either case, there is a sense of being isolated, watched, analyzed, critiqued. This sense of isolation and scrutiny can carry over to the pastor’s spouse.

Both the pastor and his or her spouse often feel disconnected and in the cold. This kind of disconnection can deprive the pastoral couple of emotional nourishment and the personal feedback so necessary for wholesome growth in life, marriage, and ministry.

A readily available source of encouragement and nourishment for the pastoral couple is themselves. Before they are a ministerial team, the pastoral couple are partners in marriage. This partnership provides an enormous fountain of strength for both of them. I call this the mirror in the parsonage.

Let’s examine what it means for a husband and wife in ministry to be mirrors to each other and how to facilitate self-understanding and personal growth through dialogue.

Self-understanding and the pastoral couple

The base for the male-female relationship is outlined in the Bible. It is as applicable to the pastor and the pastoral spouse as it is to anyone. A pastoral couple is first of all a partnership in marriage—a husband and a wife. Only then are they to be seen, or see themselves as “shepherd” and “shepherdess.” The couple must place their husband-wife relationship distinctly before their professional responsibility.

The pastor must clearly understand that he is not first of all his wife’s pastor and then her husband. A wife must equally realize that she is her husband’s spouse first, before she relates to him or sees him in any other light. There must be no room for platitudes and pedestals in their relationship with one another.

Their first obligation is to love, to cherish, and to be available to each other with an undying commitment to their own marriage. It is important that ministry flow out of their togetherness and not vice versa. The pastoral marriage is first of all an interaction of ordinary persons, even though it takes place in an extraordinary setting.

Genesis tells us that “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27, NKJV). Humankind as male and female together reflect the divine image more fully than either male or female apart from one another. Man by himself lacks certain characteristics that help to portray the image of his Maker. Woman by herself lacks other characteristics that are a reflection of God. It takes both genders together to adequately reveal the image of God (see Gen. 1:26; 5:1).

Adam and Eve were not one in their separateness, but one in their married state. Two distinct human beings become one. Are they a unit or a unity? In one sense they are a unit—one whole; and in another sense they are a unity—two coordinated components that function in relation each to the other.

In the marriage relationship husband and wife bring together two components of humanity. This relationship demands that they discover themselves in the context of the other. Each acts as a mirror to the other.

Each a mirror for the other

A mirror is an object in which we can see a reflection of ourselves. Generally we use a mirror to see parts of ourselves that we have no other way of seeing, or to view ourselves from a perspective we do or cannot normally see. We use a mirror after we have done our best to
put ourselves in a desirable condition. We also use a mirror because we have a sneaking suspicion that despite our best efforts at self-improvement, something might not be as it should be. We are concerned that someone may see something about us that we are unable to discern. So we refer to a mirror to obtain a second opinion about our appearance.

The mirror provides an objective affirmation that we are OK—that we are now what we have tried to make ourselves. The mirror removes our self-doubt and affirms our acceptability, thus enabling us to serve the world without undue self-doubt or distraction. A mirror may likewise reveal something to us that we had not previously been able to perceive. We can then go about correcting or adjusting ourselves accordingly.

In the same way a healthy marriage relationship provides a unique setting in which spouses can serve as mirrors for each other. We all have blind spots in our self-view. There are weaknesses, mannerisms, or idiosyncrasies that reduce our effectiveness. But because these are so much a part of us and have been for so long, we are often unaware of them. Friends and associates may never mention our weaknesses to us. They want to spare us the pain of rejection or self-doubt. They do not want to use the mirror to correct or adjust us. We all need self-correction and adjustment.

In my life as a pastor I have very frequently been able to see myself through the eyes of my wife and companion. She has led me to notice and become sensitive to the needs of certain persons—needs that I had been blind to. She has often helped me to polish up ways to communicate in the pulpit. She has helped me to select my clothing to suit certain occasions. At times I have seen my thoughts more clearly as they became reflected in her responses. Sometimes I do not agree with what I see in the mirror, but I am glad she is there. My ministry has been enriched by my loving mirror.

**The pastor a mirror for the pastoral spouse**

On other occasions I am privileged to act as my wife’s mirror. Angeline appreciates my genuine comments on her dress, and she tells me that my comments reassure her more than does the mirror on the bedroom wall. Recently we were in a store where she was trying on a new dress. She said, “If you are happy with how it fits me, I will not need to check in the mirror.” That put some pressure on me to be an adequate mirror.

When Angeline is going to give a talk she wants me to hear her ideas and share my evaluation. Many times I have no significant new ideas to share with her, but as she bounces her ideas off on me, she clarifies her own thinking, and can make her presentations with a greater degree of confidence. This works in a reciprocal way for both of us. We both need and benefit from the human mirror that the other is in our ministry.

**Dealing with self-doubt**

A mirror helps us deal with our self-doubt. Angeline likes to accompany me to speaking appointments whenever she can. That in itself is an affirmation. After the presentation members of the audience generally tell me how much they enjoyed the presentation. But rarely do they tell me where I could improve. However, Angeline expresses her appreciation, and shares with me specific points which appealed to her. She also tells me what she noticed in audience response, and if there are areas that may not have been so clear.

I derive from such mirroring a sense of self-acceptance and confidence. After her input I often go back to a presentation and rework it, and the presentation becomes richer and better.

Receiving criticism is often the lot of people in the parsonage. In most instances criticisms are directed at one or the other member of the ministerial couple. When this happens some pain and self-doubt may result.

We pastors may focus disproportionately on a particular criticism someone has voiced. If we allow it, the criticism can become a source of continuing pain so that our whole ministry becomes jaded. Successes may be overlooked, and opportunities for growth and improvement missed. Our sense of failure may become overwhelming. We may even wonder if there still is a role for us in the ministry. Such self-doubt can bring us into deep despair and pose a threat to our whole ministry, and even our life. At such times, we especially need our spouses as mirrors to help restore perspective and balance.

Self-doubt may afflict us in the areas of our appearance or performance. Society places heavy and often unrealistic demands in these two areas. But what really counts is the opinion of the significant persons in our human network. To a married person, the spouse is that most significant other. We can live with rejection at work or from our parental home...
and still cope with life. But lack of acceptance by a spouse can be devastating. When a spouse mirrors unconditional acceptance of the mate, it makes a whole world of difference.

**How best to effect a mirror relationship**

How best can pastoral couples initiate this mirror relationship? Actual settings in which the mirror reflection might be useful are numerous and will vary from couple to couple. What is important is the application of the dynamic concept of mirroring. Here are some useful guidelines.

1. **Keep communication channels open.** When communication breaks down, the mirror image is distorted. Demanding schedules and duties often remove meaningful communication from our priorities. There simply is no substitute for intimate, personal communication. And the only way to maintain communication is by communicating. Effective communication in the parsonage is more important than effective preaching from the pulpit.

2. **Agree to become mirrors to one another.** Effective mirroring requires maturity of both the mirror and the one who is mirrored. Each member of the pastoral couple needs to agree consciously to be a mutual mirror. A spoken agreement helps to make it easier for the mirror to take the initiative in revealing to us some area that needs attention. Quality time in focused dialogue helps a couple along the pathway of correlative growth.

3. **Develop a team spirit.** The pastor and the pastoral spouse are one team, not competitors. The success of one is the success of each and of both. When a part of the team fails, the whole team loses. It is only reasonable that as teammates we help one another to be the best players we can be. As we dialogue candidly, openly, and lovingly, we reach heights of growth as a team which we would not have reached in our separateness.

4. **Set the atmosphere for mirroring.** If I do not stand in a proper position in relation to the mirror, I will not see my reflection in it. Each spouse needs to possess an agreeable and approachable disposition in relation to the other. Perhaps we need frequent periods of quality time away from the limelight of ministry.

We need to come apart by ourselves and reflect. We must understand ourselves in terms of who we are. Who we are is more important than what we do. In fact what we do flows out of who we are. We need time to be us—just us—not us in relation to the members or other recipients of our ministry. We need time to relax and be truly human.

5. **Be loving and honest with each other.** Out of respect for us, as we have said, our church members may not mirror back to us areas we need to work on. After all, members are often “distant” friends. As a pastoral couple we may not have “close” friends who can be open with us. There is often a very great distance between the parish and the parsonage. The pastoral couple must of necessity be the closest of friends to each other. And in the setting of that close friendship they must be lovingly honest.

6. **Focus on the positive.** To grow in a pleasant atmosphere of approval and encouragement is easier than in an arid climate of criticism. We need to mirror one another’s areas of strength and growth. Even when negatives must be mentioned let it be in the setting of positives. Focus on small gains and minor victories. Encourage little dreams and dim possibilities.

Not only are we in the process of becoming what we think we are; we are in the process of becoming who we are told we are. Words are powerful for good or evil. Focus on what you hope by the grace of God your spouse will become, and mirror that prospective image constantly.

7. **Spend time together before the Great Mirror—Jesus Christ.** By beholding Him we are changed into His likeness from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Beholding Him together as spouses in ministry opens many perspectives for us. When we see each other in Christ, and Christ in each other, we can more easily serve as mirrors to each other. This involves coming to God together both as His children and as His servants. It includes seeking to discover His will and embarking on the adventure of active obedience to Him.

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The Nebuchadnezzar narratives
Lessons in global leadership

Because we participate in a movement that seeks to proclaim “the eternal gospel” to “every nation and tribe and language and people” (Rev. 14:6), our church needs to develop leaders who can provide the global leadership for such a task. Increasingly, we must think of ourselves as global leaders; that is, leaders able to lead locally in the context of a global movement. So where do we turn for lessons in global leadership? Let’s try the Nebuchadnezzar narratives in Daniel chapters 1 and 2.

Daniel 1

With its initial words, the book of Daniel portrays Nebuchadnezzar as both “king of Babylon” and military leader. “In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it” (verse 1). However, no sooner are Nebuchadnezzar’s title and military prowess announced than Daniel turns to a central theme of the book: “The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power” (verse 2). Nebuchadnezzar’s leadership is bounded by divine sovereignty. Already we learn a lesson in global leadership: the need to acknowledge the God of the globe.

As the story unfolds, we learn that Nebuchadnezzar is also a strategic planner, deeply involved in the details of his realm. The strategic plan of Babylon involved training indigenous leaders. Nebuchadnezzar sketches out the lineage, qualifications, curriculum, diet, and eventual placement of the leaders-in-training (verses 3-5, 10, 18-20). He then delegates these matters to Ashpenaz, his “palace master,” giving him both the authority and duty to perform what he directs—and he holds Ashpenaz accountable for fulfilling these tasks. At the end of the training, the king personally conducts oral and comprehensive examinations (verses 18-20). Ashpenaz, though, feels accountable all along. To the Hebrews’ request for abstinence he responds, “I am afraid of my lord the king . . . If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king” (verse 10).

Without endorsing such violent consequences, we may learn from Nebuchadnezzar’s positive leadership qualities. Vision casting. Delegation. Accountability. These are marks of capable leadership in any era.

What if Nebuchadnezzar had done his work more indulgently? What if he had not cast the vision of training gifted candidates? What if he had failed to appoint a truly capable “palace master”? What if Nebuchadnezzar had left the results entirely up to the palace master with no timetable and no accountability? Would the quality of the four Hebrew candidates have been nurtured and known? Perhaps not. God’s agenda is advanced by the excellence of Nebuchadnezzar’s leadership.

This story is challenging for those involved in selecting and training church leaders. We often talk of attracting “the best and the brightest.” Nebuchadnezzar “attracts” these candidates by force.

While we would not adopt wholesale Nebuchadnezzar’s benchmarks for his hostages, the qualifications he insisted they have are interesting. He insisted on the highest standards. They had to: (1) Have the right lineage (verse 3); (2) Be physically perfect and handsome; (3) Have reached a high level of intellectual attainment; and (4) Be “competent to serve in the king’s palace” (verse 4). Nebuchadnezzar’s list does evoke important questions.

Should the candidates recruited for the High King’s palace, be less qualified than the conscripts of Babylon? It was Nebuchadnezzar who set the criteria for his candidates and we must look to our King for a different set of qualifications. We want to recruit and train
the candidates that He has chosen. Who are they? What are their qualifications? How do we access His choices?

Learning leadership from Daniel

If we can learn leadership lessons from the tarnished example of Nebuchadnezzar, we can surely turn to the unsullied one of Daniel and his friends. What can they teach us about leadership? At first, they hardly seem to be leaders. Everything happens to them—captivity, conscription, renaming, education. Their lives are planned tightly. There seems little chance to lead when you are so busy following. The opportunity comes, though, in a moment of crisis. Daniel and his friends cannot accept the “daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine” (verse 5). Caught in a pattern as passive captives, they could easily have succumbed, accepting the king’s diet as a mark of God’s judgment upon them and their nation. Instead, these four exercise leadership that would prove global in its influence.

Daniel serves as lead negotiator. He goes first to palace master Ashpenaz and requests permission to be exempt from the royal fare. As we have seen, Ashpenaz turns aside the request, citing his own fear of the king. Daniel, leading from below, is persistent. He goes down a notch on the organizational ladder and makes his request of the palace guard whom Ashpenaz had appointed. This time he offers a more detailed proposal, vegetables to eat and water to drink for ten days. And Daniel’s persistence pays off. The guard agrees. The test is on and ten days later the Hebrew four are in great health. The guard, knowing now that there is no risk to his neck, continues “to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables” (verse 16).

These four young men personify an essential element of leadership: integrity. As someone put it: “Integrity is everything. It requires scourging moral courage, magnetized by a fervor to an ideal. The complete person is a union of unwavering integrity, pulsating energy, and uncompromising determination. And the greatest of these is integrity. . . . Integrity demands unchanging principles, rigorous standards, unshakable discipline, towering dedication. Always. A devotion to what is right and honest and just.”

God adds His blessing to the persistent loyalty of the four friends. Because they were willing to lead from below, they are blessed with knowledge and skill and with the chance to lead from above. They are stationed in the king’s court with the opportunity to exercise global leadership on the basis of a reputation as the wisest advisors in the realm (verses 19, 20).

Daniel 2

At the outset of chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar appears at his worst as a leader. He is personally troubled and looks to his underlings for help. When they are unable to recall his dream, he responds viciously: “This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins” (verse 5). After two more exchanges, Nebuchadnezzar’s temper really flares. He flies “into a violent rage” and commands “that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed” (verse 12).

One could argue that Nebuchadnezzar is being authentic. In transparent fashion, he displays his rage. However, there are moments in a leader’s experience where other values trump that of authenticity. This is such a case. We could offer the excuse that Nebuchadnezzar is simply reflecting the customary leadership techniques of his time, when kings were expected to be demagogues. All such explanations and excuses aside, Nebuchadnezzar leaves us nothing to emulate.

Daniel, however, does offer something. He reassures Nebuchadnezzar of God’s interest in him. The “God in heaven” has, through Daniel, “disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days” (verse 28). God has revealed this to Daniel, not out of any merit on his part, “but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind” (verse 30).

The antidote for the poison of selfish egotism and rage seems to be a fresh understanding of the love and

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December 2001  MINISTRY 9
Pastors and evangelists in the Michigan Conference are using evangelistic handbills designed for direct mail and door-to-door distribution. The David Asscherick, ASI sponsored series conducted in Grand Rapids, Michigan, resulted in a new church being established. The handbills were designed and printed by The Hamblin Company.

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concern of God. When tempted to lash out at those we lead, what we really need is to worship afresh the God who loves us. In the knowledge of His individual concern for us, we are equipped to face troubling thoughts and difficult challenges without wreaking havoc on those who follow.

As in chapter 1, Daniel and his three friends offer a striking and positive example of global leadership. The king has ordered the execution of “all the wise men of Babylon” (verse 12). Arioch, the king’s chief executioner, searches for Daniel and his companions, so that he may execute them also. Of the quartet, he finds Daniel first. Daniel asks Arioch a calming question, “‘Why is the decree of the king so urgent?’” (verse 15). On hearing Arioch’s narrative of events, Daniel heads straight for the palace and requests “that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation” (verse 16).

Here we learn something very important about Daniel’s leadership style—it is collaborative. With the reprieve granted, Daniel heads home to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and tells them to “seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery” (verses 17, 18). We should always remember that Daniel’s band is a prayer band. As is so poignantly displayed in Daniel chapter 6, Daniel’s leadership is rooted in prayer. And here we see that it is rooted in shared prayer. This little community of faith—this house church—is crucial to Daniel as leader.

When the mystery is revealed to Daniel in a night vision, he gives credit, again in prayer, to his companions: “‘To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and power, and have now revealed to me what we asked of you, for you have revealed to us what the king ordered’” (verse 23). When Daniel is handsomely rewarded for offering the dream and its interpretation, he has one request—that the other three share in the honor (verse 49). Daniel receives the vision, but he gives credit where credit is due—to his prayerful companions.

**Collaboration and acknowledgment**

In *The Code Book* Simon Singh traces the science of cryptography from ancient to modern times. Singh relates a story which evokes this vignette from Daniel. In the 1970s, an unlikely team of three people had been drawn together around a seemingly arcane problem: “Before two people can exchange a secret (an encrypted message) they must already share a secret (the key).” The team focused on the problem of “key distribution,” how to communicate the “key” in an efficient manner that does not risk secrecy. Whitfield Diffie, Martin Hellman, and Ralph Merkle, working together at Stanford University, made progress.

The real breakthrough, though, came to Hellman in a “vision of the night.” Working through the night on his inspired calculations, he waited until the next morning to call Diffie and Merkle. He would later say, “‘The muse whispered to me, but we all laid the foundations together.’” The discovery was dubbed “the Diffie-Hellman-Merkle key exchange scheme” and yielded “the greatest cryptographic achievement since the invention of the monoalphabetic cipher, over two thousand years ago,” allowing secure communication and transactions over the Internet.

The Diffie-Hellman-Merkle team worked on problems of encryption—how to secretly encode a message. Daniel and his colleagues were confronted with a problem of revelation, the need to know the king’s dream, and one of decryption, how to interpret it once known. Problems of encryption and decryption are like all difficult issues—they are best solved if the need to know the king’s dream, and one of decryption, how to interpret it once known. Problems of encryption and decryption are like all difficult issues—they are best solved if told to me the dream that I have seen” (verse 17). The team focused on the problem of “key distribution,” how to communicate the “key” in an efficient manner that does not risk secrecy.

When Daniel is handsomely rewarded for offering the dream and its interpretation, he has one request—that the other three share in the honor (verse 49). Daniel receives the vision, but he gives credit where credit is due—to his prayerful companions.

**Collaboration and acknowledgment**

In *The Code Book* Simon Singh traces the science of cryptography from ancient to modern times. Singh relates a story which evokes this vignette from Daniel. In the 1970s, an unlikely team of three people had been drawn together around a seemingly arcane problem: “Before two people can exchange a secret (an encrypted message) they must already share a secret (the key).” The team focused on the problem of “key distribution,” how to communicate the “key” in an efficient manner that does not risk secrecy. Whitfield Diffie, Martin Hellman, and Ralph Merkle, working together at Stanford University, made progress.

The real breakthrough, though, came to Hellman in a “vision of the night.” Working through the night on his inspired calculations, he waited until the next morning to call Diffie and Merkle. He would later say, “‘The muse whispered to me, but we all laid the foundations together.’” The discovery was dubbed “the Diffie-Hellman-Merkle key exchange scheme” and yielded “the greatest cryptographic achievement since the invention of the monoalphabetic cipher, over two thousand years ago,” allowing secure communication and transactions over the Internet.

The Diffie-Hellman-Merkle team worked on problems of encryption—how to secretly encode a message. Daniel and his colleagues were confronted with a problem of revelation, the need to know the king’s dream, and one of decryption, how to interpret it once known. Problems of encryption and decryption are like all difficult issues—they are best solved by a team of collaborators. And credit must be given where credit is due. The breakthrough may come to one, but the credit should be shared by all who have invested themselves in the solution. So here in Daniel 2 we are able to identify two characteristics of excellent leadership: collaboration and acknowledgment.

To reach the highest standard of excellence in global leadership, we must take an additional step. Ultimate credit must go to the One who grants every true breakthrough and inspires every true revelation. When Daniel is ushered in to the expectant monarch, Nebuchadnezzar asks, “‘Are you able to tell me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?’” Daniel replies, “‘No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can show to the king the mystery that the king is asking, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days’” (verses 26-28). God is the Giver of every true gift. Human leaders should not take credit for that which is divine.

**Conclusions**

In these ancient narratives, we learn important principles of leadership. We learn to emulate the king’s excellence while avoiding his demagoguery. And we learn to follow the fine example of four Hebrew men in persistent, prayerful, collaborative leadership exercised with integrity. These leaders lived at the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the kingdom of the golden head. We seek to lead in the time of the toes—the divided kingdoms which succeeded the Roman Empire. These ancient leadership lessons are durable and able to inform the lives of believing leaders “from head to toe.”

The most important lesson of all for global leaders may be this: There is a God in heaven who nurtures the leadership gifts of those who turn to Him.

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1. All Bible quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. Jerold Panas, Integrity is Everything (Chicago: Jerold Panas, Linzy & Partners).
4. Ibid., 254.
5. Ibid., 267.
6. Ibid., 252.
Galatia’s perverted gospel (part 2)

Editorial note: This is the final part of a two-article series dealing with the essence of Paul’s concern as he wrote to the Christian churches of Galatia.

The most subtle of heresies is the concept that we are saved by a combination of what God has done for us in Jesus, and what we must do for God. It is a “Jesus plus obedience” plan of salvation, and Paul aggressively attacks it as a perversion of the gospel. The fearful fact is that this heresy, which flourished in Galatia, has never really left us. We struggle to settle, once and for all, that our obedience makes no contribution to our personal justification before God.

The role of law

If our obedience does not set us right with God, what is the function of the law? In Galatians 3:19 Paul makes three points about the law’s purpose.

“It was added [to the Abrahamic covenant] because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come” (3:19, NIV). In this context, “because of” is a statement of purpose rather than of outcome. That is, the law was added for the purpose of confirming sin as sin. The law was given to make a clear, judicial statement about sin. It states the problem; it does not provide the solution to the problem.

Thus, “if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law” (3:21). But there is no law that brings obedience or life. The law Paul speaks of, as it is, is absolutely holy and right but it cannot and it does not convey righteousness. The reason for this limitation is not in the law, but a disabled humanity, who are “the . . . prisoner of sin” (3:22). Instead, it is by the law that we have been or are held in prison, “locked up until faith should be revealed” (3:23).

What then is (or was) the role of law? It “was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (3:24). The law is like a strict supervisor who, stick in hand, escorts a mischievous and irresponsible child to school and there sits behind him to discipline him and keep him focused.

In all three points, the law serves a negative function: it points out our sins, it holds us prisoner, and it waves the rod over us. In both a historical and a personal, experiential sense, the law maintains this negative role until the promised Seed comes. “Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law” (3:25). With the arrival of Christ in history, and our coming to Him personally, our relationship to the law changes from negative to positive. Under this new covenant, into which we enter through Christ, the law is written into our new hearts.

Slave or son?

The change in status for those who are in Christ rather than merely obedient to the law, is from slave to blood child (son). This is a highly significant distinction. Two people are part of the same household and acknowledge the same head of the house. One is a slave, the other a son. What each is in relation to the head of the house determines the fundamental nature of their relationship to the master.

There is a key contrast between the state of a slave and the state of a son; the state of a person under law and one who is in Christ.

The heart of the contrast lies in the difference between bondage and freedom. The Christians in Galatia placed themselves in a slave-master relationship with God by imposing rules and restrictions on themselves, “observing special days and months and seasons and years!” (4:10). Paul ascribes this to spiritual immaturity. A young child, he says, “is no different from a slave, although he
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owns the whole estate” (4:1). A child is under strict rules and directives. He or she has very little freedom to operate by personal initiative. Likewise, an immature Christian has a preference for clear guidelines and rules, with no gray areas, by which he or she regulates his or her behavior and life. In this way one may be like a slave in God's house.

In contrast, a son has rights and relationships in the household that a slave does not have. “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (4:6, 7). A person who lives under bondage can never experience the fullness of sonship. Every favor has to be earned, every task dutifully performed—not in joy but as an obligation. The relationship with the master is always tentative, never certain.

The Galatian believers had fallen into this unhappy condition of bondage to “weak and miserable principles,” relating to God by way of mere obedience to rules and regulations. “What has happened to all your joy?” Paul asks them (4:15). A son is not without rules, but his relationship with his father is not based on them. The right to be called sons of God is due to the redeeming work of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit received by faith (4:5, 6).

**Choose your mother**

The story of Hagar and Sarah provides Paul with an illustration of the distinction between the true gospel and a perverted gospel, the state and standing of a slave versus a son.

Hagar represents human solutions calculated and initiated to attain divine ideals. Instead of waiting on God to fulfill His promise, Abraham and Sarah eventually embarked on a “God-helps-those-who-help-themselves” course of action.

Given the obvious natural barriers, Abraham could not see how God could fulfill His promise to give him a son. So he took his slave Hagar into his tent and Ishmael was born. Thus Hagar and Ishmael have come to stand forever as symbolic of the futile consequences that occur in the lives of those who, not being able to see how God can possibly fulfill His promises, try to combine human effort with faith in order to bring God’s promises into reality.

Paul goes on to make telling contrasts between Abraham’s two boys.

First, “his son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise” (4:23). The one birth was by mere human process, the other a miracle.

Second, “the women represent two covenants” (4:24), the one associated with Mount Sinai and the city of Jerusalem, whose children were in fact in bondage to the Romans; the other linked to the New Jerusalem, the mother of the free.

Third, “the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit” (4:29). There remained a parallel trend of persecution by the Judaizers against Paul and his gospel.

He quotes Sarah’s words from Genesis: “‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son’” (Gal. 4:30). Hagar’s son was born of bondage. She was not intended to be the mother of Abraham’s children. Just so, the law was never intended to give birth; because of our sinfulness, it can only engender bondage. Only when we are born again by a miraculous act of God through His Spirit, do we become heirs of salvation; true sons and daughters, acting with genuine freedom and responsibility as full members of God’s nuclear family.

Paul views circumcision as the sign of bondage among the Galatian Christians. He points out that it was introduced to Abraham and his descendants, not as an option, but as a divine command. It was to be the sign of the covenant which made Israel God’s chosen people. It stood as a sign and “seal of the righteousness that he [Abraham] had by faith,” even prior to being circumcised (Rom. 4:11).

Yet Paul says that now circumcision is a nonissue: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value” (Gal. 5:6). More than that, it actually has a negative value. “Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all” (5:2).

**The way of law or the way of Christ?**

The choice is between the way of legal obedience or the way of Christ; you cannot have them both! The negative value of circumcision is in what it signifies: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (5:4).

Again, in contrast to the way of law, Christ has set us free, even though this freedom has boundaries. So “do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love” (5:13).

Paul should never be understood to be discarding the law when he debunks the misuse of law as a saving mechanism. The release we have in Christ includes liberation from the futility of the subtle optimism onto which we hold when we bring up our contributions as a reason for acceptance and standing with God. Christ, through the Holy Spirit frees us from the tyranny of our sinful natures by dealing effectively with both our guilt and our moral weakness. He frees us, not to become libertines, but to be joyous and obedient children of God, constructive and contributing members of His inmost family.

The alternative to liberty developing into licence is to embrace the way of love. The demands of love go far deeper than the letter of the law, but they do not replace its specific commands. Love carries out the law and goes even further than expected. Law
keeping meets a minimum requirement and emphasizes avoidance of wrong. Love goes to any length in serving, giving, doing, and obeying. It does not merely avoid wrong; it does good. “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (5:14). The life and behavior of the mature Christian is superior to the immature way of legal obedience as Christ Himself is superior to the written code.

The behavior of one who is free in Christ is moderated by the Spirit. Having listed the fruit of the Spirit, in contrast to the deeds of the sinful nature, Paul states: “Against such things there is no law” (5:23). The deeds of the sinful nature are condemned by the law; the life of the Spirit-filled believer is approved by the law. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature with its passions and desires” (5:24).

Furthermore, “A man reaps what he sows” (6:7). Paul links this principle of life to ultimate outcomes. If we sow to please the sinful nature, we will reap destruction because the sinful nature is destined to destruction. If we sow to please the Spirit, we will reap eternal life because He is the Source of life.

**The cross our boast**

In his final word to the Galatian Christians and to us, Paul draws the line between himself and the law-oriented circumcision band. The latter miss the point of true Christian faith on a number of counts.

Theirs is a religion of externals. “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised” (6:12). They wish to boast of measurable attainments in matters which they elevate into the arena of essential Christianity. They are adept at quoting Scripture to bear out their concern for the old way, but their focus is wrong. “They want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh” (6:13). The truth is that “not even those who are circumcised obey the law” (6:13). With all their talk of perfect law keeping, they cannot point to a single example among themselves of someone actually doing what they claim.

Paul will boast of one thing only: the cross of Christ. If we are going to boast at all, let it be of His accomplishments for our salvation. We do not boast about what we are doing for Him, but about what He has done for us. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation” (6:15).

There is much we can do for ourselves, but we cannot change our hearts. What counts with God is that which He alone has and can do for us. It is in this that we put our faith and make our boast.
Why liberals and conservatives have difficulty talking to each other

Herbert E. Douglass

I don’t want dry doctrine, just give me Jesus.” “Traditional hymns don’t do anything for me. Give me contemporary music; it speaks to my soul.” “Ordain women? I don’t know how that can even be contemplated when one considers the clear biblical evidence against it!”

And so the debates, myriads of them, swirl and persist.

Is there a way to lower the volume and minimize theological and behavioral differences in our churches?

Why do well-intentioned conversations break down so quickly, whether at the dinner table or in the open forum? It matters not what the general area of discussion is, whether the arts, music, ethics, law, education, economics, epistemology, politics, or even architecture. But particularly theology...!

Generally, the cause is not stubbornness or meanness—although such may be the result.

Conflicting paradigms

At the heart of the problem, intellectually at least, is the fact that few realize that behind every viewpoint is a presupposition based on a conceptual paradigm. This paradigm sets the fundamental architecture of each viewpoint as well as the limits of what can be conceded. Further (unfortunately, often unknown to the conversants), the paradigm determines the definition of words that both parties freely use, which explains why both sides can listen to a speaker and conclude that he or she is supporting “their” side. Both use a common language without a common understanding.

Whether conservatives or liberals (we are using these two terms merely for illustrative purposes, knowing that other labels would also be useful), each group, working within its paradigm, sincerely believes their opponent’s viewpoint is dangerous. Why? Because they see their counterpart’s position as deficient in something very precious and very real to them—and “that something,” they feel, must be protected at all costs. And they are both right!

The typical solution for the friendly “peacemaker” is to appeal to “unity” and to search for “balance” as if truth is a mean between two errors or a compromise between two extremes. And, because most people shy from public confrontation, “peacemaking unifiers” fall back on the cop-out language of “tensions,” “paradoxes,” and “antinomies” as if truth is finally elusive, even contradictory.

The real problem is not the so-called “paradoxes of truth” but conflicting paradigms—as well as knee-jerk thinking that everything has to be discussed with either/or categories. Such a conclusion is unwarranted. For millennia such determinations have torpedoed every attempt to find constructive solutions to serious differences. In every church, for example, such mind-sets have guaranteed division and debate—and the emotional fallout can never be measured or healed until the way we think is radically changed. For example, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists (Reformed), Methodists, Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists to name a few, all have traditional, distinct paradigms separating them, even though they share the common language of the Bible to explain their differences.

The holy “and”

Instead of the “either/or” straightjacket, we must use the holy “and.” That is, when thoughtful people see the global nature of truth (in whatever thought areas) both sides see the treasures that the “other side” will not surrender. And they work at transcending the manmade moats that wrong paradigms have created so that the treasures of both “sides” are reset in a position that preserves the integrity of former “assailants.” Again and
again, the “and” proves to be truth’s way of seeing and saying it correctly!

The easiest way I have discovered of suggesting a solution to the problem of conflicting “truths” is to employ the ellipse principle. The ellipse is an interesting geometric device which must have two foci, each in proper relationship to the other. Some machinery and engines work on this principle. Pushing one foci so that it no longer has the correct relationship to the other destroys the ellipse—and the machinery!

Water, or H₂O, is a good illustration of these things. Hydrogen and oxygen by themselves are very important, but without their proper interactive and proportional union, water does not exist. The question of whether hydrogen or oxygen is more important becomes meaningless when one needs water to drink. The truth about water is that water does not exist unless both hydrogen and oxygen are understood as equally essential and are present in their proper balance.

The same is true for components in the ellipse of truth, regardless of the subject. For example, when the ellipse of truth regarding righteousness by faith and the purpose of the gospel is understood, arguments over the relative importance of justification and sanctification in the salvation process are as irrelevant as the relative importance of hydrogen and oxygen in the making of water. Without the ellipse, two “sides” remain two circles confronting each other in a typical stalemate.

“Objectivism and subjectivism”

Misunderstanding the inclusive, proportional, and elliptical nature of truth lies at the base of almost all epistemological, theological, and philosophical controversies. The “two sides” in such controversies are generally known as “objectivism” and “subjectivism.” For example, human history is a study in oscillation between those who have emphasized
one focus or the other in the objective/subjective ellipse.

Every thought area (such as music, law, or theology) has drawn great battle lines because one exponent dwells too much on the subjective focus rather than giving appropriate weight to the objective focus, and vice versa. Both sides are right in what they affirm but wrong in what they deny. The age-old result: overemphasizing one's own circle of truth makes one virtually incapable of recognizing even the obvious in a counterpart's circle, when it threatens a cherished position. What is worse, too many times those in conflicting circles rush too eagerly to deny or question the integrity of the other.

Note how prevailing this age-old seesawing of opposing philosophies and theologies affects us today:

Education—content-centered versus student-centered;
Politics—free enterprise (individualism) versus socialism (collectivism);
Graphic Art—imitation of reality versus expressionism;
Ethics/Law—moral or constitutional absolutists versus cultural relativists;
Economics—free trade versus Keynesian;
Epistemology—Idealism versus Naturalism;
Religion—transcendence (revelation) versus immanence (reason, feeling, intuition).

In theology especially, note the objectivism/subjectivism antithesis in key thinkers such as Barth/Bultmann and Hegel/Kierkegaard, and in colossal standoffs such as in the case of fundamentalism versus modernism. And the list could go on!

Every difference of opinion within Christianity can be explained as an overemphasis on one focus or the other in the ellipse of truth. Every thought conflict within the Church today has the same problem. The solution to all such differences lies in seeing truth as an ellipse with two equally important foci that must be constructively and proportionately related to one another.

Using typical religious language, conservatives form the “objectivist” circle and liberals, the “subjectivist” circle. Each circle emphasizes something correct, timely, and needed. Even as water is not formed until the circles of hydrogen and oxygen are reformed as an “ellipse,” so the partial truths represented by conservatives or liberals do not set forth the full picture of truth until they are both cast within the ellipse of truth.

**Key words for conservatives and liberals**

Key words (or concepts) for religious conservatives (for which they will fight to the death) are: transcendence, authority, law, structure, orthodoxy, certainty, absolutes, grace—all good words to hold on to. But the historic weakness of conservatives is

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often a misunderstanding of the character of the transcendent God. They often emphasize authority at the expense of human responsibility and freedom. Because of these misunderstandings, faith all too easily becomes a form of mental assent to doctrine. The result too often is human passivity in the salvation process, which ironically is itself an irritant to the religious conservative.

Key words (or concepts) for liberals (for which they also will fight to the death) are: immanence, freedom, responsibility, reason, flexibility, meaning, relevance, and personal faith—also good words to hold on to. The historic weakness of liberalism is rooted in its subjectivity.

Pietists, mystics, and rationalists (and whoever else puts human autonomy “in front” of divinely revealed truths) base their security either on reason, feeling, intuition, or historical research. Absolutes are rarely appealed to. “It must make sense to me” is often heard—and by all means this is a wish not to be overlooked.

In our day, these historic distinctions get blurred when both conservatives and liberals no longer ask, “Is it true?” but rather, “Does it work?” Pragmatic experientialism poses the question, “What is there in it for me?” rather than the more biblical, “What am I going to do about it?”

How does the ellipse of truth help us through our conventional tensions? On many occasions, Ellen White puts these confrontations into proper perspective as she appeals to both traditional conservatives and liberals to see the answers within the purpose of the gospel as framed in the great controversy theme. She understood well the historic standoff between these two circles. They were profoundly present in the Church of her time.

Transcending the weakness of conservatives and liberals

Ellen White pointed out how both conservatives and liberals alike fail to see how the ellipse of truth transcends the weakness of both conservatives and liberals: “The progress of reform depends upon a clear recognition of fundamental truth. While, on the one hand, danger lurks in a narrow philosophy and a hard, cold orthodoxy, on the other hand there is great danger in a careless liberalism. The foundation of all enduring reform is the law of God. We are to present in clear, distinct lines the need of obeying this law. . . . One of the most deplorable effects of the original apostasy was the loss of man’s power of self-control. Only as this power is regained, can there be real progress. . . . Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be effected. Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without. . . . Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood.”1

“Hard, cold orthodoxy” and “careless liberalism” are the end results of placing truth in two circles rather than letting truth be truth, combined in its elliptical form. Note how Ellen White transcended these two circles by uniting the biblical concepts of divine authority and personal responsibility, basic ingredients in the great controversy paradigm.

Understanding the purpose of the gospel as restoration (Rom. 1:9; 8:29) helped her to unite God’s grace with man’s response of faith.2 In this exchange, the objective, external Word saying, “This truth is for you,” meets the subjective response of a person saying, “This truth is for me.”

In other words, when someone emphasizes the Bible as “truth,” even as doctrinal correctness, without an equal emphasis on personal meaning, relevance, and character change, we know that the ellipse has separated into two distinct, even separate, circles. On the other hand, when one appeals primarily to reason or feeling as the test of truth, we also know that the ellipse has become two circles. And thus the gospel is blurred, whichever circle is emphasized!

The ellipse of salvation truth, seeking the restoration of human beings as the purpose of the gospel, binds together the objective will of God and the subjective “Yes” of a responsible (able-to respond), reasonable person. Even as water cannot be divided between hydrogen and oxygen and remain water, so the objective and subjective elements of salvation cannot be divided and yet remain “salvation.”

This union provides both doctrinal security and heart assurance so that Seventh-day Adventists don’t need to fall back into the theological arguments that are so generally divisive. We are not left with an either/or choice. We understand the ellipse present in how Christ provides salvation, uniting His objective gift of a sacrificial atonement with the subjective regenerating work of His Spirit: “Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.”3

A clear presentation of full-orbed truth in these conflicting areas of thought is exactly what honest truth-seekers will recognize. We live in a day when all the thought tensions of the past are hitting the minds of young and old everywhere in ways that no other generation has had to face.

We are constantly bombarded with either/or choices in a relativistic environment where full-bodied, conflicting information is available. Perhaps Truth has never had a better opportunity to be seen in contrast with the anemic substitutes that have been current for so long among us.

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2 ———, Education (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1903), 125 (Ftd. 75) “The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole Book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God.”
The personal touch of hospital visitation

Eric Segawa

My mother was dying of acute leukemia. I knew she was not going to pull through. I sat on her bed, thinking of the complexities of life; so staggering when they are so personal. I sat helpless, hopeless as I had throughout her suffering. But even in that valley of the shadow of death, I found encouragement and comfort in two people: a 22-year-old, tall and skinny medical intern and my pastor.

I remember the intern not for what he did or said, but for the hope and sunshine he brought through his presence and his pleasant words. The pastor brought a professional and spiritual touch that was so consoling. To them, my mom was important and worthy of every attention they could give.

Over the span of nine months, I watched my mom live and die in the hospital, a drama watched by countless families every day. As a pastor and hospital chaplain I know that God can cure anyone, but as a son I wasn’t praying for a medical miracle. I was praying for hope and God gave me that hope through the ministry of the intern and the pastor.

Although hospital visitation is not as publicly impressive as the preaching event, it is a ministry that people need. Pastors and lay people with compassion, competency, and time are excellent ministers of this hope. Not even the most skilled of medical personnel can provide this. Yet hospital visitation on the part of pastors is becoming a neglected art. There are three possible reasons for this: low priority, lack of practical skill, and fear.

Priority of visitation

Low priority is a result of seeing visitation as a ministry of low significance and visibility. That which directly affects more people, we theologically conclude, is best for the kingdom. But Jesus defined priority not in terms of visibility or popularity, but in terms of individual care and compassion. For example, in the midst of a vast crowd thronging around Jesus, the Master focused His attention on a dead girl and a woman suffering from 12 years of bleeding (Luke 8:41-56).

In spite of the popularity and the publicity that the crowd promised, Jesus paused to care for the needs of the individuals, and bring comfort and healing to them. To Him, ministry to the individual is as important, if not more important, than ministry to the crowds.

Jesus’ priority was on the needs of people, whether many or few, close or far away, sick, dead, or already healed. Our priorities as pastors become distorted when we only concentrate on getting the most out of our time rather than shepherding the flock that is under our care (1 Peter 5:2).

Skills in visitation

In addition to giving priority to visitation, a pastor should have practical skills to make the ministry effective. Such skills include simple matters such as respecting the patient as well as the hospital.

Before we visit someone in the hospital, we should call the hospital to ensure that the patient is still there. We need to make sure we respect the atmosphere of the hospital. Patients have a keen sense of smell and may be averse to strong fragrances. Even the clothing we wear during a visit may send a wrong message. We should wash our hands before we see a patient, and wash our hands after we leave.

Before we walk into the room, we need to be sure of the name of the patient and that of the nurse attending. We can make our visit personal by calling them by their names.

When you get to the room, read the signs on the outside of the door and adhere to hospital policy concerning gloves, masks, or other instructions. Knock before entering, and open the door gently. Respect the patient. If you shake the patient’s hand, be aware that
there may be IV needles or it may be awkward for the patient to shake hands. Be prepared for the smells in a hospital room.

Even if you stay only a few seconds, make sure that the patient senses you care. Sitting down, a gentle touch, a caring word, a thoughtful prayer, or just a smile may convey a soothing and comforting ministry.

Be careful not to ask inconvenient questions. There is no need to preach. Listen. Let the patient tell you what's going on. Patients often want your presence more than your answers. Be quick to listen, slow to speak.

If the patient cannot talk, you may not want to talk much either. The patient may not have the energy to listen. A gesture of care or a smile would convey your concern just as much as many words. If the patient is trying to tell you something that you cannot discern, guess what he or she is trying to say and respond in an encouraging way.

Your hands can often proclaim the gospel more profoundly than the best of your sermons. As you pray, hold the patient's hand, if that is desirable. Concentrate on the patient and not on yourself. Do not hurry and make the patient feel like a burden to your busy schedule. Listen and pray.

**Fear of visitation**

For some pastors, hospital visitation can be an experience of fear. I once visited a hospital to minister to a couple whose only child was lying brain dead in the Intensive Care Unit. Although the father tried to compose himself, the mother was broken. The situation got worse when the grandparents came in. Here was the life of a little child, hanging in a balance, with little hope. What do you say to parents and grandparents whose dreams were all built around this child? I had no words to share; even praying seemed difficult. I was struck with fear myself.

Such fear is not the fear of the incompetent, or of the intellectually weak, or of the emotionally weary. Such fear comes to remind us that we are not in control. I can repeat Romans 8:28, but that is no consolation for the immediate situation.

As pastors we need to accept that fear arising from such desperate situations as medicine for our egos. In such a situation we may be silent and honest, and allow our fear to show how human we are and how we, too, share the journey of the suffering ones.

Seeing God through the pastor's humanity brings hope in even the most wretched circumstance. The hospital can remind us that there is no greater experience than to be a very human pastor called to reflect the character of God. Being a pastor in the hospital means that we are the personal touch of the presence of God for people who need God more than eloquence.

**Letters continued from page 3**

Sons should not remain in abusive relationships, and separation (not divorce) may be called for, but irreconcilable differences is not a biblical reason for annulling a marriage, nor should it be encouraged. Adultery does not fit either, since Jesus never used the term and it was punishable by death. It's not a blessing when Jesus says, "Because of the hardness of your hearts" you have a bill of divorcement.

Sadly, we as a church have fallen victim to loose grounds for divorce. All too often we rationalize reasons for divorce, not placing them upon the biblical standard of evaluation. Thus we now have a language voted at the last General Conference session, and is being considered for adoption into the Church Manual that is less clear and allows for wider latitude as to reasons one can separate from one's spouse. Burton's article gives us clear-cut, solid, biblical guidelines that should be adopted as the language of the Church Manual.

—Kevin James, pastor, Ogden, Utah

**Editorial note:** Ministry is planning additional articles on this question in upcoming issues. These future articles will look at the matter of divorce and remarriage from other points of view. We hope this range of discussion, published intermittently, will contribute to our overall discussion as the Church moves toward decisions on these issues at its next General Conference session in 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri.

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**Letters continued from page 3**
With more than 156,000 Seventh-day Adventist students on secular college and university campuses worldwide, the church faces a Macedonian call to develop a credible program to meet the spiritual needs of this growing constituency of intellectuals and scholars.

What this means is that more campus chaplains are needed to minister to these students. But does the Church have the needed resources in terms of personnel and finance? I think it does.

Seventh-day Adventist chaplains ministering on secular campuses are among a new breed, born of necessity and called upon to serve in a highly specialized ministry. For this reason, these chaplains should have certain basic qualifications and understand the nature of their work in order to be effective in their ministry.

**The chaplain’s qualifications**

The Seventh-day Adventist chaplain should:

* Be a dedicated Christian, committed to the practice of an exemplary Adventist lifestyle.
* Have adequate academic preparation, preferably ministerial training from a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning.
* Be conversant with the peculiar challenges that face young people attending secular universities.
* Be comfortable and competent in an academic environment.
* Have good communication skills and speak the students’ language.
* Have good interpersonal skills and be a good mixer.

* Lead by example, modeling sound leadership and moral values.

**The chaplain’s work**

The work of a campus chaplain is done primarily on campus. In general, the chaplain’s functions are to:

* Serve as a spiritual leader on the campus. Chaplains have the responsibility of preaching, nurturing, and caring for the spiritual and social well-being of students.
* Provide counseling and guidance as needed by the student.
* Help in the organization and leadership of student groups on campuses.
* Assist in the planning and coordinating of programs designed to enrich the spiritual and social life of the student.
* Serve when and where necessary as an advocate of students, particularly for the Adventist student, in areas such as scheduled Sabbath examinations.
* Promote an environment conducive to open, honest dialogue on spiritual, doctrinal, and Church-related issues.

* Encourage and foster a healthy relationship and positive attitude toward the Church and its leadership.

**The chaplain’s program**

Campuses are like people. They each have their own peculiarities. Therefore, chaplains are faced with the challenge of developing programs to best meet the unique needs of their particular campuses.

The chaplain’s program should be:

* Christ-centered, so as to encourage salvation in Christ as the way of life for a young person.
* Bible-based, so as to ensure spiritual nurture and a strong commitment to biblical truth and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
* Mission-oriented, to enlist students in bringing their friends to Christ.
* Intellectually stimulating, so as to challenge the student to achieve academic excellence.
* Socially meaningful, to provide wholesome socialization.
* Culturally relevant to the country, region, and campus.

**An exciting ministry**

If you desire a ministry where your creativity will be challenged, worship forms can be tested, new ideas for ministry experimented with, and, if you are not afraid of questions that will stretch your intellectual, spiritual, and theological horizons, then campus ministry might be the place for you.

W. Ray Ricketts is chaplain of Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.
There is another world out there that even pastors know little about. It is the world of the deaf. This world has its own unique culture and its own visual language: Sign Language. The deaf often have their own clubs and advocacy groups, and occasionally, their own churches.

It is difficult to touch this world with the gospel. In North America, only an estimated 6-7 percent of the two million deaf attend church. Around the world there are an estimated 50-75 million who are deaf. In many countries the deaf receive very little education, and in some world cultures, the deaf are kept largely out of sight.

Work for the deaf in churches

Many denominations have an organized ministry with deaf people. In the 1800s the Lutheran Church chose to make deaf ministry a part of their mission field. Thus, traditionally, Lutherans have not required deaf churches to be fully self-sustaining. Other churches with a notable work include: the Catholic Church, Pentecostal and Baptist Churches, the Church of Christ, Mormons, United Methodists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Most denominations have some work, but because it is so challenging, many have little organized work except for an occasional interpreter.

A number of groups have worked aggressively to take the gospel to the deaf outside North America. The Bob Rumball Evangelical Deaf Center in Toronto, Canada, is one of numerous groups that have established work in many foreign countries.

The Independent Baptists are developing work in Inter-America. Seventh-day Adventists have two full-time pioneer workers in India, including a small school for children. They also have some work in Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Japan, Mexico, and Brazil.

Why is the percentage of actively Christian deaf so low? If a church does not have any deaf naturally coming through their doors, they are unlikely to organize for deaf ministry. And if a church doesn’t meet their special needs, few, if any deaf will come.

Some churches have laypeople who have learned sign language well, and are a bridge from the deaf group to the church. Where there is only an outside paid interpreter, the work will seldom flourish, and the church may find it difficult to keep on funding the $50-$100 needed per morning.

Why is deaf ministry so difficult? Deaf ministry requires the church to bridge into another culture where there is often distrust of the hearing. For centuries the deaf have been controlled and even manipulated by those who can hear.

There is often a degree of fear in the hearing who don’t know how to bridge the communication and cultural gap to the world of the deaf. Because their first language is sign language, the average North American deaf person reads at a fourth- or fifth-grade level. This means that the church’s printed materials usually present barriers for the deaf.

Communicating with the deaf

Do all deaf people sign? No. Deaf people fit into one of three basic groups. First are those we have already described—the deaf who are part of the deaf culture and use some form of sign language in their communication (there are about 70 different sign languages around the world). Second, there are a group of oral deaf who speak and read lips well enough to get by in a hearing world. A large third group are those who may have spent most of their lives in the hearing world but then, either through sickness or aging, have become profoundly deaf. These people usually fail to acquire the key to the deaf world: signing. These tend to slip into a lonely and isolated world of their own.
To communicate effectively with deaf people, the following guidelines may be helpful:

- Look straight at the deaf person, speak clearly, but don’t needlessly shout and embarrass them.
- Learn the deaf person’s name, and/or the “sign” for their name.
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf person while talking, or signing.
- If needed, don’t be afraid to write back and forth. Many deaf people must do this all the time.
- Be sure to include deaf people in group conversation. They don’t like being left out any more than anyone else.
- Don’t cover your mouth when speaking, or turn another way and keep talking. The deaf need to watch your mouth.
- Don’t refer to the deaf as “Deaf and Dumb,” “Deafies,” or as disabled. The best way is just to refer to them as “Deaf.” Some terms are highly offensive to the deaf.

- Don’t treat the deaf as if they are on a lower level—like children, incapable of thinking or acting normally. They can’t hear, but their minds work very well. Treat them as equals.
- Don’t stare at the deaf, or ridicule them. They are sensitive to social graces.
- Don’t try to be overhelpful. Be natural, and watch for unoffensive ways to help.

**Improving our ministry for the deaf**

How can pastors work for deaf people? The most important help is an attitude of true love that treats a deaf person as an equal. We must help the deaf to help themselves without simply feeling sorry for them or doing everything for them.

It can be helpful to do some reading on deaf ministry and to visit a deaf club with someone who is deaf. One may also go to another church where there is a strong ministry to the deaf. See what they are doing that might work in your church.

Find out what your own denomination is doing and what tools for deaf ministry are available. One of the fastest ways to see what resources are available worldwide is to go to your favorite Internet search engine and just type in “deaf ministry.”

Setting up a new work can be challenging. Not every church will be successful, but when God presents a need, He will supply those who can meet that need. Find out if anyone in the congregation already has some inclination for the work. Many relatives of the deaf have taken one or more signing classes. Others may work with deaf children in schools and elsewhere. Those who already have a head start, and who have a special love for the deaf, will usually be the ones who will start and stick with the long-term effort required.

The deaf resent ministries that are
here today and gone tomorrow. Deaf ministry is definitely one of the most difficult ministries because it must be adapted to every part of the church’s ministry, and that among a hard-to-reach people group.

Because this ministry is so challenging, when key individuals are found for it, we must support them. Train them to become fully qualified in sign language. Some will become signing helpers who can befriend the deaf one-to-one. A few may reach the level where they can interpret.

Interpreting for the deaf is challenging work. Not only must church interpreters simultaneously put your sermon (and everything else) into a visual language, but they must simplify the wording. Occasionally, concepts need to be explained to people who, because of their handicap, may find it challenging to think in the abstract. At times, interpreters may have to stop and explain a word, then quickly listen to catch up. It is helpful for interpreters to have an outline of the pastor’s sermon (plus other elements from the service) before the service starts.

Unique challenges for pastors of the deaf

Because most denominations have very few full-time pastors for the deaf, it is often difficult for these few to find places to transfer as a full-time pastor to another deaf congregation. This is even more problematic if the pastor is deaf. Such a minister cannot ever change to a hearing church, or even pastor both deaf and hearing people. Because they are constant advocates for deaf people in a church world that seldom understands the real needs of the deaf, it is easy for pastors of the deaf to slowly develop a sour or critical attitude. Hearing church leaders need to understand this, and give special help and support to these pastors.

All denominations have the responsibility to provide an organized special ministry to the deaf. The United States and other governments
are making ever more stringent requirements for closed captioning TV programs. Denominations need to caption their video and television productions. (Focus on the Family has chosen to caption all their video productions, and the It Is Written telecast is closed captioned in the U.S.A.)

In North America the deaf in the Adventist Church are partly served through Adventist Deaf Ministries, working in close connection with the Multi-Lingual Department of the North American Division. A new broadcast quality 26-program Bible Study series in sign language has been produced on video. The presenter, Pastor David Trexler, is deaf. Also, a new 12-tract color doctrinal series was just written for the deaf (see sidebar for details). There are three full-time pastors (two deaf), and several part-time and lay pastors.

One of my favorite writers once said, “I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of our character.”

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**Seventh-day Adventist Deaf Services through:**
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Adventist Deaf Ministries offers:
- A newsletter for SDA Deaf Ministry
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- Deaf Ministry Awareness Seminars
- A limited supply of sign language coloring books for children including an Easy Reading edition of Story of Redemption and 12 Amazing Facts Tracts.
- A mail Bible Correspondence course, “God’s Way”
- A book on how to develop a ministry with the deaf: Working Together: Deaf and Hearing
- A resource center Internet Web site: www.deafadventist.org

**Two other SDA Deaf Ministry Web Sites**
Canadian Deaf Ministries ................. www.tagne.org/deafministry
A panorama of salvation in Easy English ........ www.tagne.org/theater

**Other Christian and general deaf resources**
Deaf Missions ................................ www.deafmissions.com
Deaf Video Communications (deaf videos for loan) .... www.deafvideo.com
Baptist Signed Videos ..................... www.multimediaevangelism.org
Canadian Hearing Association ............. www.chs.ca
National Association of the Deaf ........ www.nad.org
Gallaudet University ....................... www.gallaudet.edu

**Deaf Ministry India**
Maharashtra Deaf Fellowship of India ........ www.societyforthedeaf.org

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Evangelistic opportunities in media

James A. Cress

Taking the denomination’s name to the public is part of the evangelistic arm of the Church. There is power in the name of our church. “The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front and will convict the inquiring mind.”

Keeping the Seventh-day Adventist name before the public through public media or personal relationships developed by members in various civic organizations creates awareness, credibility, and trust—all foundational for evangelism.

Offering specific guidelines for accomplishing this objective, Cindy Kurtzhals, Communications Director for the Florida Conference, notes that each time the name Seventh-day Adventist is mentioned in an article, spot, or program, the content of the message can give hope to the reader, listener, or believer. Most importantly, it provides the Holy Spirit another opportunity to work on the heart.

When adapting Kurtzhals’ useful tips, remember to use the Church’s name fully and correctly—a hyphen between “Seventh” and lower case “day.” Avoid initials, SDA, which convey no powerful message and may even connote negative or internal jargon meanings.

Publish community oriented events. Three Florida churches each created a concert series and an effective print and electronic media advertising campaign. Guests have drawn closer to the Adventist Church or accepted their Lord because of these methods. For example, the 69-member Lady Lake church brought in extra seating because 175 people attended their concert series in cooperation with the Lake County Organ Association.

Write opinion newspaper articles. These op-ed articles typically appear opposite the editorial page providing opportunity to share an Adventist point of view. Such articles can give positive exposure as well as sharing the Adventist hope. Build an ongoing relationship with editors and they, in turn, can call you with a request for information or another article.

Provide news media coverage for major Church evangelistic events. Prior to Net ’96 a systematic effort was launched and carried out by local church communication directors under the leadership of the Florida Conference communication director. Coverage was achieved in local/regional newspapers, radio and television talk shows which resulted in some members of the media attending.

Issue news releases for standardized events like school openings, camp meetings, or seminars, or for services that benefit the community, such as providing furniture and clothes for a family burned out of their home, hosting a blood drive, or operating a thrift store that sells items at a nominal cost.

Invite media reporters to attend events such as “Breathe Free Plan to Stop Smoking.” Thus they can report on the program and their successes or challenges.

Purchase advertising on various media outlets to promote a positive image of your church or to inform the community about regular worship services or special events. Amazingly, small investments in paid advertising can bring dramatic results. View advertising as an investment, rather than an expense. Make certain your church can readily be found in telephone directories (both white and yellow pages), local newspapers, hotel listings, and community guides. Try reaching newcomers with paid ads in real-estate magazines or become a sponsor for community “welcome neighbor” programs.

Target your audience. Try focused spots in Arts and Entertainment features for one year or provide denominationally produced programs for cable channels or radio stations. Seventh-day Adventist radio or television programs can be placed on the air. Air time costs less on cable television and community access channels. For example, one Florida church paid just $15.00 per spot for their evangelistic campaign and their spots were broadcast during Larry King Live on CNN.

Contact radio and television talk shows with short, thought-filled ideas. Hosts are always searching for articulate, interesting guests; and you might be included in their recurring lineup.

Join a civic or special interest hobby organization, such as: Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions Club, Press Club, Ministerial Association, computer groups, stamp clubs, etc.

Effectively publicize what you are already doing well. For example, Pathfinders have collected canned and nonperishable goods for families in need during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons for more than fifty years.
The Boy Scouts of America have done likewise for less than a decade, but have received much publicity, which Adventists could have experienced if they had asked for coverage by submitting news releases or producing public service announcements. Some TV stations will even assist you in producing a public service announcement.

Remember your media contacts at holidays or appropriate times of the year. Expressing appreciation makes others eager to help your activities become more successful.

Install and maintain informational and directional signs. This is smart evangelistic strategy. If people cannot find you easily, they will likely move on to some other location which is more clearly identified. Remember to consistently maintain any sign or facility that represents the Church. Avoid allowing poor quality, deterioration, or lack of maintenance to define the message you wish to convey.

Sponsor features such as Healthwise, a camera-ready newspaper column about health prepared by the General Conference Health Ministries Department and available through the General Conference Communication Department for a nominal fee. This resource provides 13 columns at a time for delivery to local newspapers on a quarterly basis. Newspapers can rearrange the layout but must include the copyright, which indicates that the content is produced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Create your own church's special event in conjunction with community issues. For example, churches in New York City recently remained open for prayer, counseling, and rest during the crisis there. Partner with other community organizations by including all hosting groups in your publicity.  

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It was one of my visitation days. I rang the doorbell and waited. The door opened and the voice inside suddenly said “Boo.” I was surprised. The church member quickly apologized and invited me in, with the explanation that opening the door and seeing a minister there so surprised her that the word “boo” involuntarily slipped out. She said that although she had been a church member for 14 years, this was the first time she had been visited by a pastor.

We must proclaim the Word of truth through which people are brought into the household of faith. We must also put forth every effort to reclaim those who have stopped attending church, and retain our members through a living, dynamic nurture.

Laying it on the line
Most of us realize that in North America (and in other parts of the world), our active church membership is much less than our book membership. And too many of us are not seriously concerned about nonchurch-attending members. Often, if church attendance appears good, both pastors and members seem satisfied and don’t seem to miss the absent members, especially in the deeply personal kind of way that makes a difference.

I’m convinced that pastoral and member visitation in the homes of our people, or the lack of it, has a significant impact on the progress or decline of our ministry. Visitation also affects the actual spiritual condition of our members. Yet this is one aspect of pastoral and church ministry that is seriously neglected.

To lay it on the line, the ratio of church attendance to church membership in our churches would not be as low as it is if our pastors, associate and assistant, along with our church members, were carrying on a concerted, aggressive visitation program.

I live in the Los Angeles area. It has been reported that there could be as many as 40,000 former Seventh-day Adventists living here. The accuracy of that number can be questioned but undoubtedly there are large numbers of former Seventh-day Adventists living in many major cities and in small cities, villages, and hamlets in North America and elsewhere.

If we visited estranged members . . .
We might have a significant impact on reducing those numbers of former and absentee members if every Seventh-day Adventist church became involved in a strong, spirit-filled, love-oriented visitation program.

This kind of visitation program is one type of evangelism that can be carried on nationally and would not cost much money. If this visitation were enthusiastically entered into for six months in North America, on a concerted basis, the results would be exciting. Once the results were seen, many conferences and churches would make it an ongoing function of ministry.

This familiar statement is before us: “[The minister’s] work is not merely to stand in the desk. It is just begun there. He should enter the different families, and carry Christ there, carry his sermons there, carry them out in his actions and words. As he visits a family, he should inquire into their condition . . . He should talk with all the members of the flock; with the parents, to learn their standing; and with the children, to learn theirs.”

Why not initiate a well-planned, six-month program of concerted visitation of those in your church or district who have become estranged and stopped coming to church? Obtain their names, organize and instruct visitation teams of two with pastors leading the way. Call on the missing ones. Listen to them and find ways to reach their hearts. From there, the sky’s the limit.


Major C. White, formerly the executive secretary of the Pacific Union Conference, is retired and lives in Compton, California.
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