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I n your April 2001 issue, there was a letter to the editor emphasizing that God has already been vindicated by Christ’s “finished work” on Calvary, and needs no further vindication by His people. In fact, it was said that to even teach such a thing “turns the plan of redemption on its head.” You responded with a “Well said.”

I heartily agree that we need to emphasize more the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice. The inestimable gift given on Calvary is the foundation of our Hope as Christians. It is unquestionably the only sacrifice that will ever be needed for the salvation of the human race. However, as a church that (correctly) claims the Bible as our only creed, I believe that we must avoid the temptation to be “men-pleasers” by denying the abundance of Scripture to prove it. His one request to His Father was for us to be with Him where He is (John 17:24; 14:3), and He promised to come back for us (John 14:1-3). If all was “finished” at Calvary, why hasn’t He come yet? Are there more important things on His mind? Can it be said of our merciful Savior that He, like the ancient god Baal, may be too busy, or on a long journey, or perhaps sleeping (1 Kings 18:27)? This is an inevitable conclusion to what some are calling the “finished” atonement.

Paul makes it clear that there is a work yet to be accomplished. In that great declaration of righteousness by faith to the Galatians, he declares, “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect [i.e., complete, finished] by the flesh” (Gal. 3:3)? He declares of his own experience that Christ’s work in him is not yet finished (Phil. 3:12-14). In Ephesians 3:10, he declares that the primary purpose of his preaching the gospel was “to the intent that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places.” The clear implication is that the powers in heavenly places, at least at the writing of this epistle many years after Calvary, did not then understand the manifold wisdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul further clarifies this point by telling us that the onlooking universe is watching us. . . .

—Mark Howard, pastor, Fredericktown, Ohio.

Editorial Note: We must state that, for reasons of limited space, we have not included all of this well-crafted letter. However, allow us to again frustratingly say to this letter, “Well said.” We say this because this issue is not simply a question of either/or, but of both/and, as long as we observe the following important distinction:

A distinction, though not a separation, needs to be drawn between what or who alone is able to and therefore ultimately does effectively “vindicate” the character of God—namely, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, through His living, dying, rising again, and ascending to the right hand of God; and what or who makes only an important demonstration of the holiness, effectiveness and justice of God’s government, and thus His character—namely, the community of God’s children who effectively live for God in this world through faith and by the Holy Spirit, and who thus, in the face of false accusations against God, give evidence before the universe that God’s government is just and effective in the actual lives of the people among whom it operates.

We think that a careful re-reading of the whole biblical testimony definitely justifies this important differentiation of role in the vindication of God.

Further, while in parts of her work, Mrs. White may seem to say otherwise, we believe that when all her writing is combined, she stands by the same crucial distinction between the roles of the perfect Christ and His imperfect people in vindicating or warranting the love, justice and holiness of God and His government. After all, how could imperfect, finite people actually or ultimately by themselves vindicate or justify a perfect, infinite God? On the other hand, how could the evidence of God’s work present in the lives of His children be left out of the verification or validation of God’s ways when there are questions about Him circulating in the universe?

One other thought should be expressed. It seems we Christians do have a way of down-playing the full and infinitely potent effect of the life and death of Jesus, as exposed in the Bible. When this is done, we easily become

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here is a strong element of mystery in love. And in hate. Hate may be easier to explain, especially when we feel it toward someone who has threatened, humiliated, or violated us. But it is more difficult to understand why we simply dislike someone; why we have that dark desire to demean, ignore, hurt, or suppress them when we could treat them with equity and respect.

Why do we become angry with people when their trespass does not deserve the intensity of the wrath we feel?

We may do this when, for example, someone cuts in front of us as we're driving down a busy road or standing in a supermarket line. Our anger balloons into proportions far beyond the dimensions of their misdemeanor. It is all too easy for me to reduce someone whom I hardly know to the status of an inferior on the basis of one infraction. I may label them as "an angry person" simply because I have witnessed one display of irritation on their part.

Perhaps our most mystifying feelings of dislike are for classes, nations, races, and tribes of people other than our own. In many cases there is little reason for these feelings and they may be socially and culturally ingrained by years of inherited antipathy, based on very little that's substantive when it comes to our own personal experience with these people.

The truth is that the "suffering" most difficult—if not impossible—to forgive is that which we have exaggerated or imagined. The most obstinate negatives that we harbor against others, the emotions that lodge with the greatest stubbornness in our souls, are those we virtually pretend into existence. These are the ones we artificially magnify beyond their actual proportions.

They are the offenses that we have embroidered into a large patchwork quilt that at suitable moments we deftly gather around ourselves in an aggrieved flourish of offendedness. We do this (largely out of habit) to demonstrate our displeasure against someone or some group. It is this quilt that is most difficult to drop, largely because we have so laboriously fabricated it and because there is so much fantasized fear behind that fabrication.

Over time we may subtly amass these overstated offenses until we feel we have an airtight case against the persons or groups we have come to dislike. Again, it is the exaggeration itself that makes our dislikes difficult to eradicate. A person can come to grips with something real, but not so easily with something imagined.

This tendency to embellish is particularly common among the more privileged peoples of our world, as they judge those who, in their eyes, lack giftedness or proper development. The inadequate behaviors that are fancied to grow out of the "lack" in their racial, cultural, or national counterparts, is exaggerated into violations large enough to justify devaluing, rejecting, and demeaning them, even if they are fellow Christians.

The superiority of the "privileged" is perceived to be much greater than it is in reality, and the offenses of those "lacking" far more egregious than they are in fact.

So, where do we go?

In this issue of Ministry John Fowler has exposed a vitally important approach to this hugely relevant issue (see the cover article, "1 + 1 = 1: The impossible possibility"). John's article is a truly Christian, magnificently biblical reflection on these things. It is so much more than the run-of-the-mill political reactionism all too common on all sides these days, even in the church. This article transcends these approaches and touches both our heads and our hearts.

The challenge, especially for today's pastor, is to actually use the divine principles exposed in this article. It is to translate them, by the Holy Spirit, into daily acts of worship, repentance, and ongoing renewal as we face the shadows of anger, hatred, and prejudice that we find within our own souls. The full extent of the challenge is to truly love and actually do something tangible in ourselves and our congregations to turn the tide where we are.
1 + 1 = 1:
The impossible possibility

John M. Fowler

One plus one equals one? Impossible? Not so when it comes to human relationships infused with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 7 pictures thousands in one; a scene of ultimate togetherness: “There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white” (Rev. 7:9).

“Who are these?” wonders one of the 24 elders. The answer does not identify the people according to nationality, race, color, gender, status, tribe, caste, or any of the frontiers we are so accustomed to on this earth. The answer is simple, but profound: “These are they who . . . have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

Washed in the blood of the Lamb is the anchor of Christian unity. Any person who harms this fellowship by bringing any other factor to define Christian togetherness cannot be a Christian. Someone else might define human relations in terms of superiority or inferiority, exclusivism, or inclusivism, but a Christian has no such option. Someone else might exploit another human being or crush an entire group by using the tactics of racism, gender, nationalism, tribalism, economics, caste, religion, or color, but a Christian must not . . . cannot.

For the Christian approach to inter-human relations is based not on what humans can achieve but what God has created, made possible, and mandated.

Human relationships: What God has ordained

The Bible begins with what God has ordained for human relatedness: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). How could Christians claiming a common origin in the creative activity of God assert the superiority of one over the other and destroy the possibility of a common fellowship and togetherness?

How can Adventists who keep the Sabbath as a memorial of God’s creative act practice activities that deny the commonness of humanity? The Genesis Creation passage does not deny differences between people; indeed it affirms such differences such as the obvious one between male and female. Since the Fall has marred the image of God and imposed its own alienation not only between God and humans, but between humans. Sin has negatively accentuated such differences as color, gender, caste, nationality, creed, or tribe. But the challenge of accepting God as Creator is to reject these differences and affirm the commonality of humanity.

Paul spoke of this original commonness in his sermon in Athens: “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26). We cannot escape the significance of this statement made to a Gentile audience. It affirms that the Creator-God of the Christian is no local deity of a cult, but the Sovereign of the universe. He has ordained that we share a common blood and a common origin.

Human relationships: What God has made possible

The entrance of sin marred God’s ideal of oneness for humanity. God’s question to Cain, “Where is your brother?” was indeed a projection that henceforth wherever sin reigns, so will division: between God and humans, and between people and people.

But God did not leave humanity without an effective remedy for such dividedness. For “when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son . . . born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so
that we might receive adoption as children" (Gal. 4:4, 5).
The “we” of “we might receive adoption” cuts across all barriers and frontiers. The Son has come to make us all children of God, giving us the common privilege to approach God as “Abba, Father.” The Holy Spirit has preserved for us in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament instance after instance that stresses the fact that division within the human family is alien to Christian ethos. We observe this in the genealogy of Jesus, in how Jesus related to people, and in some of the foundational principles of His kingdom.

The genealogy of Jesus. The Jews were fond of preserving their pedigrees and set great value on purity of lineage. A priest was expected to produce a pure pedigree back to Aaron; his wife to at least five generations. To such a pedigree-conscious people, Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus that proclaims the Savior to be not a parochial messiah, but a universal redeemer whose mission is to restore the original design of the Creator. Matthew mentions four names in the ancestry of Jesus: Bathsheba, a Hittite; Ruth, a Moabitic; Tamar and Rahab, Canaanites—all women, all Gentiles, and all sinners. Bethlehem's crib affirms that biblical anthropology prefers no male or female, no Jew or Gentile, but only God's children.

Jesus and people. The ministry of Jesus brought Him in touch with the entire spectrum of society. The rich young ruler or the leper down the street, Nicodemus or the Syrophoenician woman, the Pharisee, or the Greeks; it did not make any difference to the Master. In fact, throughout His ministry He was breaking down walls that divided people.

Kinship barrier was knocked down when Jesus defined His brother, sister, and mother as “whoever does the will of my Father” (Matt. 12:50). Jesus looked beyond flesh and blood, and placed both of them at the altar of divine priority.

Political barriers were removed by Jesus. Among the Twelve were Simon the Zealot who belonged to a party that considered it an honor to kill a Roman and a privilege to murder a Jewish collaborator. Yet Jesus expected Simon to accept Matthew the tax collector, a Roman collaborator.

Occupational barriers came tumbling down when Jesus chose simple fishermen as His disciples and later called a Pharisee of the Pharisees to be His apostle to the Gentile world!

Class barriers were dealt with when Jesus sought out Zacchaeus, received the anointing from an alienated Mary, talked to Nicodemus, and mingled with publicans and sinners. Jesus broke down the wall between sinner and saint, the evil and the righteous. He didn't do this by persuading the saint to participate in the lifestyle of the sinner, or by asking that righteousness be minimized or by ignoring the seriousness of evil. Instead he did it by obeying the dictates of love, that per chance the dying may find life, the sick may discover healing, the sinner may respond to the Savior.

Caste and prejudice were knocked out around the wall of Samaria. The Samaritan woman had three things against her: she was a woman, she was a sinner, and she was a Samaritan. But Jesus broke down each of these walls of caste and prejudice and showed that “no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men.”

Racial barriers had no place in Christ’s ministry. William Barclay points out that the wall between Jews and Gentiles was so formidable that “the daughter of an Israelite may not assist a Gentile woman in childbirth since she would be assisting to bring to birth a child for idolatry.” And yet in Phoenicia Jesus healed a Gentile woman's daughter at the verge of death (Matt. 15:21-28).

Jesus' ministry to Phoenicia had the “wider purpose” of warning every generation of Christians to be aware that “the spirit which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile is still active. . . . Caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character. In His sight the souls of all men are of equal value. . . . Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live.”

National barriers were removed when Jesus responded to the need of the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-13). Jesus showed a willingness not only to heal the servant, but also to step into the centurion’s home—something no “good” Jew would have done. Or witness the compassion He showed to the Greeks (John 12:20-30). To Jesus entering a Gentile home or touching a Gentile was anything but a source of defilement. Need was His command; compassion was His attitude, and total healing His objective. Nothing else mattered.

Jesus and His kingdom. Not only in the way He related with people, but also in the establishment of His kingdom, Jesus revealed His new order of human relations based on the worth of the individual as seen through God's eyes. This comes through, among other things, in His prescription of the new commandment, His establishment of the Lord's Supper, His cross, and His great commission.

The new commandment. When
Jesus speaks of His new commandment of love (John 13:34), the newness does not refer to love, but the object of love. People always loved, but they loved the lovable, their own. But Jesus introduced a new factor: “Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.” That is to say, just as indiscriminate, as universal, as sacrificial, and as complete as Jesus’ love is, so should our love be. The new love erects no barrier; it is inclusive. On that quality of love “hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).

The command to love our neighbor leaves no room for modification. We do not select whom we love; we are called upon to love all. As children of one Father, we are expected to love each other. In the parable of the good Samaritan, “Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.”

True neighborly love penetrates well beyond the color of the skin and confronts the humanness of the person; it refuses to take shelter under caste but contributes to the enrichment of the soul; it rescues the dignity of a person from the prejudices of dehumanization; it delivers human destiny from the philosophic holocaust of thing-ism. In effect true love sees in each face the image of God—potential, latent, or real.

The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. “Because there is one bread,” Paul wrote to Corinthians, “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). The bread and the wine are the symbols of the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus that brought about reconciliation—vertical and horizontal. A reconciled relationship and a united fellowship are the most visible demonstration of the power of the blood of Jesus. The concept of God’s family, including His prodigal children who need our love and our reaching out, can be seen at the Lord’s Table. To sit at that Table and at the same time discriminate against another human being is a desecration of the heart and soul of the gospel, or of what it means to be family—God’s family. It is diametrically opposed to the nature of God and the transcendent yet practical quality of His love.

The Cross. The Cross, as God’s instrument of redemption and reconciliation, brings back what was lost in Eden: the restoration of the image of God with, among other things, the reality of human togetherness and unity. At the foot of the cross, the ground is level: The entire humanity stands as one in sin and one in the possibility of redemption.

Through the Cross, God “was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). “The Cross is God’s best picture of himself; . . . It is the place where God comes to grips with the forces that violate his love; it becomes the place where he draws men [humanity] into harmony with the love and the purposes that flow from it. . . . The reconciliation of man to man, through the reconciliation of man to God, releases the healing power of God into this anxious, broken, and bitter world. Only redeemed men [and women] can reconcile.”

The Cross challenges us to a new perspective in life: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view” (2 Cor. 5:16). The Cross initiated a new value system. The post-Fall factors of looking at a person from a human point of view—race, gender, color, language, caste, tribe, culture, money, position, or status—have been done away with at Calvary. The Christian enters into a new world of values that flow out of the Cross.

This new creation of Christ demands that every member of the community of faith live by only one basic rule of interpersonal reality: love, as expressed in the living Christ.
As Schaeffer so eloquently states, “Love—and the unity it attests—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.”

The Great Commission. Both the Great Commission (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8) and the message of Revelation 14:6-12 envision the creation of a world family. Evangelism is Christ’s antidote for prejudice within the church. Where there is a strong evangelistic program and an eagerness to bring people to Jesus Christ, there will be a universal feeling for men and women of every kind. True evangelists see the whole world as their parish, and do not recognize frontiers and restrictions that divide communities. Peter must go to Cornelius, Paul must go to Antioch, Philip must rush to Samaria, Philemon must take Onesimus. The blood of Christ is the ink with which the covenant of brotherhood is written, and the evangelist extends that covenant to take the world for Jesus.

**Human relationships: What God has mandated**

Nowhere is the mandate of God for the unity of His people, without respect to any factor of prejudice or pride, so forcefully argued as where Paul writes to the Ephesian fellowshipping. The church has been given the charge to maintain unity and dignity in that multicultural mosaic called the body of Christ (see also 1 Cor. 12:12, 20).

In Ephesians, Paul muses in wonder upon the nature of the church, “consisting of Jews and Gentiles, Asiatics and Europeans, slaves and freemen—all symbols of a disrupted world that was to be restored to unity in Christ.” This minister notes the destruction of “the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14, RSV) by the Man of the Cross.

That historic truth overwhelms him with such an indescribable sense of joy that he considers it as nothing less than the work of the entire Godhead. Indeed in the extraordinary conclusion of Ephesians 2, Paul calls to witness the names of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as architects of the marvelous unity that must characterize the Christian church, made up of people of every hue.

For his part, Paul calls that unity a “mystery,” and uses this word seven times (Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9) to underline the divine nature of it. The mystery, says Paul, is that “the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). Conceived in the mind of God, completed by the reconciling ministry of Christ, this mystery of a new humanity without any dividing walls is every Christian’s privilege and challenge. The mystery demands of us three things.

First, it should make us aware of the oneness of the Christian fellowship. Paul argues in Ephesians 2 and 3 that out of two, the Jew and the Gentile, Christ has made one. The gospel equation is $1 + 1 = 1$. That is untenable in mathematics or logic, but in this the mystery of the gospel transcends mathematics and logic. This gospel is a mystery and realistically expects the impossible. This mystery empowers the creation of the new humanity that must accept the indivisibility of the human person. “There is no longer Jew or Greek . . . there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

Second, the mystery should make us aware that while differences may exist among people, these differences must not be allowed to diminish the worth and dignity of any individual. Bigotry is anti-Christian and hence is an unacceptable conduct in one who claims to live by the gospel.

Finally, the power of the mystery should so permeate our own inner selves that all our relationships will be governed by its dynamic. Paul’s words must become the anchor of our privilege and the challenge of our ministry: “Of this gospel I was made a minister” (Eph. 3:7, RSV) and when it comes to proclaiming and living this gospel, one of one kind plus one of another always simply equals one. 

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1. Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version.
5. Ibid., 503.
During the last 25 years the scholarly world has been interested in the study of the rituals performed in connection with the Israelite tabernacle. Linguistic and theological studies have contributed to a better understanding of the book of Leviticus and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

Interestingly, some scholars have used Genesis 1–3 to gain insights into the theology of the Israelite sanctuary. They have been able to identify a number of interesting connections between the narrative describing the building of the Israelite sanctuary (Exod. 25–31) and the Creation account in Genesis 1–2:3. This article will summarize the results of those studies from an Adventist perspective. In our next article (appearing in April), we will examine the results of similar studies made on Genesis 2:4–3:24.

When it comes to Genesis 1, most of the parallels between the Genesis Creation account and the building of the Israelite sanctuary are based on the use of the number “seven” in the story of the building of the tabernacle, but there are also some linguistic parallels that will require our attention.

Parallels

1. Six days plus a seventh day. According to Exodus 24:15–17, Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive instruction for the building of the sanctuary, waited for six days and on the seventh day the Lord spoke to him from the theophanic cloud. The sequence of six days and a seventh day is the same we find in Genesis. It is uncertain whether the seventh day in this case was a Sabbath, but the reference to six and seven days suggests a connection between the two narratives. In both cases the seventh day provided the time during which there is a special meeting between God and humans.

2. Seven divine speeches. God gave Moses instructions concerning the building of the sanctuary through seven speeches introduced by the phrase “The Lord said to Moses” (25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12). The seventh speech brings the instructions for the building of the sanctuary to a close with a call to keep the Sabbath (31:13, 17). “From the context the inference would appear to be that just as God rested after creating the world so must Israel after constructing the sanctuary.” In the Creation narrative in Genesis, God spoke during seven days and rested on the seventh day. It seems that it is that pattern that is being followed in the building of the tabernacle.

3. Seven and the construction of the tabernacle. While the instructions to build the sanctuary ended with a discussion on the Sabbath, the narrative of the actual construction begins with a reference to the Sabbath commandment (35:1–3). The building of a sacred sanctuary does not justify violating the sanctity of the Sabbath. Sacred time is more important for the Lord than the building of sacred space. Yet, both are important (Lev. 19:30; 26:2).

Seven is also important in Exodus 40:17–33. The phrase “as the Lord commanded [Moses]” is used seven times in 40:17–33 to describe the actual building of the sanctuary. It is in obedience to God and following His specific instructions that the sanctuary is progressively built. The emphasis on seven suggests a movement from nothing to a completed creation or construction.

4. Linguistic parallels. There are some terminological parallels between Genesis 1–2:3 and the building of the sanctuary: (a) God saw everything He had made and behold it was very good (Gen. 1:31); Moses saw all the work and behold, they had done it (Exod. 39:43). (b) Genesis states that the heavens and the earth were finished (Gen. 2:1, 2); after the building of the sanctuary it is stated that “all
the work on the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting was finished” (Exod. 39:32; 40:33). (c) God finished His creative work and blessed the seventh day (Gen. 2:3); Moses finished the tabernacle and blessed the people (39:43).

During Creation week God “separated” light “from” darkness, water from water, day from night (Gen. 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18). After Genesis 1 the phrase “between . . . to separate” is used again in the setting of the tabernacle. A veil was to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy (Exod. 26:33) and the priests were to separate or distinguish from or between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean ( Lev. 10:10). The emphasis is on the fact “that the creator-God is a God of order.”

5. Presence of the Spirit of God. The “Spirit of God” is mentioned in both the Creation narrative and in the construction of the tabernacle.6 In Genesis 41:38 Pharaoh uses the phrase the “spirit of G/god(s),” but he most probably had in mind his own gods. Therefore, the next biblical reference to the Spirit of God, after Genesis 1:1, is found in Exodus 31:3. God enabled certain individuals to build the sanctuary by filling them with His Spirit (31:3; 35:31).

Significance of the parallels

1. New encounter with God. The sequence of six days leading to a seventh day points to the fact that God and humans can again enjoy permanent fellowship. God descended to the space where humans were located. The six days of Creation culminated in permanent fellowship between God and humans and the same was again available at the sanctuary. At the end of Creation week the Sabbath was instituted; at the end of the building of the sanctuary the sanctity of the Sabbath was reaffirmed and the tabernacle was inaugurated. In both cases something holy came into existence. One was a sanctuary in time, the other a sanctuary in space. The realm of existence of the creature was filled in a special way with the sanctifying presence of the Creator.

2. New orderly creation. Creation and the sanctuary came into existence through the divine word. God gave the commands and as a result of the divine speaking the tabernacle was built. The seven speeches find their counterpart in the seven times that the completion formula—“as the Lord commanded [Moses]”—is used during the building of the tabernacle.

God’s act of creation seems to serve as a model for the building of the tabernacle. Both, Creation and sanctuary, “are the products of the divine command. Just as the creation through the word of God meant that the creation was completed precisely according to the will of God, so also the completion of the tabernacle according to a heavenly ‘pattern’ (25:9, 40) meant that it corresponded exactly to the divine will.”

There was progression and order in Creation and in the building of the sanctuary. One element followed the other, their specific functions were established and consequently something new came into existence.

3. New creation and the Spirit: He who was present in Genesis 1 was also active in the building of the tabernacle and the result was harmony, aesthetic balance, elegance, beauty. The intricate craftsmanship of those used by the Spirit “mirrors God’s own work. The precious metals with which they work take up the very products of God’s beautiful creation and give new shape to that beauty within the creation.”

4. New creation in a world of sin: The sanctuary creation was located in a world of disruption and uncleanness. God’s original creation was “very good.” The sanctuary itself was also very good, but it was built in the midst of a world characterized by chaos and rebellion. In this creation the Lord was separating vying elements from one other.

In the tabernacle the act of separation was motivated by a different concern than in the case of Genesis 1. Disruption/disorder, absent in Genesis 1–2, and harmony and order, present there, were assigned to different spheres. There were now two main realms of existence: the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean. God’s people were placed in the realm of the holy.

In the construction of the tabernacle God was reestablishing the original harmony described in Genesis 1–2 by excluding the elements of disruption and uncleanness from His presence and from the life of His people. That order was established and maintained “through the careful observation of categorical divisions, through the recognition and maintenance of boundaries.” God was now dwelling among His people and this “constitutes the beginnings of God’s bringing creation back to what it was originally intended to be.”

The order reestablished in the Israelite sanctuary was to reach cosmic dimensions. It would appear that the theology of Genesis 1, found in the passages dealing with the construction of the sanctuary, points “to a perception and understanding of that institution as a symbol [the sanctuary] that is connected with, though not necessarily grounded in, cosmico
gony." The fact that the construction of the sanctuary was finished at the beginning of a new year (Exod. 40:17), "underscores the idea that a new era in the life of the people has begun and the cosmogonic association of the Tabernacle is thereby strengthened."12

We could suggest that "the tabernacle is a realization of God's created order in history."13 But this blessing should not be limited to Israel alone because "this microcosm of creation is the beginning of a macrocosmic effort on God's part. In and through his people, God's presence is on the move to a new creation for all. . . . God's presence in the tabernacle is a statement about God's intended presence in the entire world. The glory manifested there is to stream out into the larger world."14

Conclusion

The sanctuary is a reconstructed portion of God's original creation in the state of purity and harmony with which He endowed it at the beginning. The harmony and purity that characterizes this unique place is graciously extended by God to His own people. Yet, His final goal is for the whole world to be possessed by the glory of the One who in the earthly tabernacle was dwelling in the midst of the impurities of His people.

We should not overlook the fact that the tabernacle was built according to a heavenly model shown to Moses, a tabnit (Exod. 25:8, 9). The implication is that the fragment of the original creation is modeled after a heavenly reality. The space of God's presence in a world of disorder reflects the space of God's presence in a heavenly world of harmony and order.15 God's place of residence in the heavenly realm extends itself to the world of humans and creates a holy space where God locates Himself.

This is necessary because God's original creation (Gen. 1–2) is no longer available to humans. But the heavenly world still exists and the world of humans can be incorporated into it through an act of re-creation. One could say that the tabernacle was a symbol of cosmic order16 in that the harmony and order present there should reach the whole world.

The cosmic symbolism of the tabernacle means that universal order is restored only when God's presence in His heavenly dwelling is felt and experienced in the world of humans. It is through the divine descent to the human sphere that order is created and instituted in a world of chaos (Exod. 19:18; 40:34, 35).

Within that theological frame of reference, the sacrificial system served the purpose of initiating, preserving, and restoring the state of order and harmony recreated by God in the tabernacle.17 This adds significance to the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), which can now be understood as a ritual that "symbolically restores both the individual and the world to the founded order of creation."18

During the activities of that day the evil cosmic powers are defeated by God, and in an act of sovereignty He returns to them uncleanness and sin. The separation of the holy and the unclean reaches cosmic dimensions and points to a future permanent and universal experience.19

Note: A second article by Dr. Rodriguez on this theme will appear in the April 2002 issue of Ministry.


2 Blenkinsopp, 281.

3 Balentine, 136.

4 This summarizes what is found in Blenkinsopp, 280. Cf. Sarna, Exploring, 213, 214.


6 Blenkinsopp, 282.
Prayer not a substitute for the Word

As we lead our people to a deeper prayer life, it is important that we call them to faithfulness to the Word of God. While prayer may be thought of as the umbilical cord connecting us with the Almighty, we must not forget that the nourishment that flows to our hearts through this cord is the Word of God.

Prayer is very subjective and may actually crowd out the Word of God in the life of the minister. It is not uncommon to hear someone say that God “told” them thus and so. On occasion I have even heard a person say, “I don’t care what the Bible says, I know what God told me.” The point is obvious—prayer must not be allowed to become a substitute for the objective truth of Scripture. The two must work together.

His will or ours?

Through the years I had the habit of closing my prayers by saying, “If it be Your will.” As I look back I can now see that what I probably meant was that if my prayer didn’t turn out the way I expected, then I would not be to blame. More recently I have come to understand that the first purpose of prayer is to bring our lives into a condition to accept the will of God as revealed in His Word. If this is true, then to pray “Not my will, but Thine be done” is the highest expression of prayer rather than an escape hatch (Matt. 6:10).

Is it possible for us to place ourselves, and even our congregations at risk when we turn to pray without a readiness to understand and submit to the will of God? There are those who feel we have nothing to fear in this respect if we can somehow find a text somewhere in which God at some time did a particular thing for someone, which happens to be along the lines of what we are requesting.

I believe we must not presumptuously ask God to do for us today what He did for someone at some time in the past. This approach to prayer can make us susceptible to the reprimand of the Holy Spirit for praying for selfish reasons (James 4:3).

Sometimes in prayer groups a petitioner may make a particular request and the leader will ask if there are others to affirm the petition. This is done based on the text in Matthew 18:19 that where two or three agree, it will be done. It is not difficult to get two or three in the group to agree to a particular request. What is more difficult for us to agree

Avoiding the pitfalls of prayer

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upon, however, is that we will obey a clear “Thus saith the Lord.”

I once talked with a young woman who was dating a person not of her faith. She asked me to pray that God’s will would be done in their relationship. Since the Word clearly states that believers should not be joined together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), I explained to her that God had already revealed His will to her in this respect and that she might do better to pray for faith and strength to obey.

Systematizing prayer

In this highly organized age there is a growing tendency to systematize prayer. Answers to prayer are seen as being conditioned on using the correct technique. Someone once asked me who we should pray to, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. I asked her in turn why she wanted to know, and she replied that, inasmuch as she didn’t seem to be getting any answers to her prayers, she feared she might be praying to the wrong One!

Today there is a trend to emphasize the physical place of prayer, the time of prayer, and the positions of prayer as important to successful prayer. In effect, the Samaritan woman asked Jesus “Where should we pray, my place or Yours?” (John 4:20). Jesus came right to the point. He told her that prayer is not about place (or technique), rather it is about spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

This lesson should not be lost on any leader of prayer in the twenty-first century. Increasingly, prayer is being reduced to something done “by the numbers.” Instead of prayer being directed from our hearts toward God, it often seems to be something we do to or for each other—perhaps even to manipulate and intimidate. A person who owns a Christian radio station told me recently that in seminars she has attended it is suggested that frequently mentioning prayer to the radio audiences increases donations!

Praying to manipulate

In Christ’s time, prayer was evidently being abused and misused by the religious leaders. Jesus instructed His listeners not to pray as the Pharisees prayed (Matt. 6:5). The point was, they were using prayer to impress and even to manipulate each other. Jesus said that the best place to pray is in secret; and that if a person has a meaningful personal prayer experience, it will be evident by the way they live and, for us who stand in the pulpit week by week, by the way we preach (verse 6).

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We ministers should consider carefully what we pray for and how we pray in front of the congregation. Often, before we preach the prayer is, “. . . and now, Lord, may every word that I speak be Your Word.” Praying this way in the hearing of the people may be somewhat intimidating. Although there is no doubt that as preachers we want our sermons to be a proclamation of the Word, when we pray this way it may sound as though we are telling the congregation that they had better listen to what we have to say because it is verily the word of God.

As we preach, it is important that people feel free to evaluate what we present in the light of whether it is indeed in conformity to the Scriptures (Isa. 8:20). Therefore, it may be more appropriate for us to pray this prayer silently in the pastor’s study before we go into the pulpit. In short, the prayer with the congregation before the sermon is better as a “we” prayer than as an “I” prayer.

Praying to be, not to get

During my study for my book Transforming Prayer, I realized that the highest purpose of prayer is not to “get” but to “be.” At a time in which success is seen in terms of what happens to be selling at the moment, we must resist the temptation to commercialize and exploit prayer.

We must not see prayer as a substitute for the Bible or the study of the Bible as a substitute for personal prayer. Sometimes in a sermon I use the concept of the computer to illustrate the importance of prayer. I tell the congregation that, when we read Scripture, the Word is put into, as it were, the RAM (read-only memory) of the mind. To lay the Word down without praying that the Holy Spirit will implement it in our lives will result in the Word being lost (hitting the Delete key). To take up the Word in prayer enables the Holy Spirit to “Save as” a changed life.

Secret prayer, a breath of life

Many wonderful books on prayer have been written in recent years. As we search for a deeper connection with God through prayer and His Word, we get to know the true purpose of prayer. As starters, I would recommend the classic little books by E. M. Bounds on prayer and the book by Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer.

As ministers of the gospel, we must be men and women of prayer, not just of public prayer but much more of private prayer. A minister who in the morning spends an hour alone with God praying not to “get” but rather to “be” in harmony with the written Word will be a person whose ministry will leave the hearers saying, “Did not our hearts burn within us when we heard our pastor preach?” Anyone can form a sermon from the “dust of the earth,” but it is the secret prayer life of the preacher that will breathe into it the breath of life so that through the power of the Holy Spirit its hearers become new and living souls in Christ.
What does the Lord require?  
The demand on Adventist mission in today’s complex world

Gorden R. Doss

What does the Lord require of the Adventist Church today? Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, God has been working out His redemptive mission for this world. When the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born, its founders sensed a particular Divine calling for their infant church. In gradual stages they extended their missiological vision until it encompassed the entire globe.

Just a century ago church structures were redesigned to permit us to more effectively accomplish the mission God has given us. During the last 100 years, Adventist world mission has enjoyed phenomenal success. Today, the Adventist Church has about 12 million members worldwide. We praise God for our success in world evangelism. Yet, recent events on the world scene may be God’s wake-up call to shake us out of any premature or presumptuous self-congratulation. Although our membership and global extension in 2002 are huge compared with 1901, the remaining task can only humble us if we understand its true scale.

Looking the facts in the face

Consider the following facts. In mid-2000 the world’s population stood at about six billion. Christians of all denominations accounted for a third of the total. Another third were non-Christians who live within reach of a Christian church from which they could receive a person-to-person gospel contact. The remaining third, two billion strong, were non-Christians beyond the reach of a local Christian community. Most of this last third reside in countries that are resistant to Christianity. These people can be reached only by cross-cultural missionaries.

In the last hundred years Seventh-day Adventists have baptized large numbers of Christians of other denominations and non-Christians of tribal origin. But we have not been very successful with peoples of other major world religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism.

Our work is minimal, registering an almost zero impact when it comes to the largest non-Christian world religion—Islam. Muslims make up almost 20 percent of the world’s population—1.2 billion people. They are fellow monotheists who worship the God of Abraham. They value peace and advocate a lifestyle very similar to our own. Yet, they have suffered terribly at the hands of nominal Christians during the Crusades and over succeeding centuries. Instead of seeing Christians as offering them a closer walk with God, many Muslims see us as undermining their morality, worship, and spirituality.

What does the Lord require of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? The following are some helpful suggestions.

Put aside business as usual

The world changed irreversibly on September 11, 2001. How could a few suicidal hijackers affect the whole world so dramatically? One thing is obvious: just a handful of people have the capability of changing the course of human history—for good or ill. We are not merely reactive pawns or minuscule grains of sand on the seashore. We are moral agents whose decisions are real-life, real-time decisions. We are caught up in the predicament of sin. Human actions since the Fall have continued to affect the universe in out-and-out tangible ways.

Good decisions and actions are ultimately more powerful than bad ones because good is ultimately stronger than evil, although it often does not appear to be so. Christians have real power to effect real change in the world because there is no force on earth more powerful than the gospel. By grace and with the Spirit’s power, we can participate in God’s
mission to earth in a way that makes an eternal difference in the lives of human beings. What the Church does ultimately has significance now and will have eternal significance.

Our times call for us to set aside business-as-usual. In 1901 Ellen White led the General Conference session to shelve its planned agenda. Both she and her colleagues understood that the Church had reached a juncture that demanded a new vision, a new dynamic. The Adventist Church changed in 1901 and has never been the same since. The successes of the last century have depended, in significant measure, on the Spirit-inspired restructuring that happened in 1901. Although no human structure is flawless and mission success is always the fruit of divine power, God chooses to work through human organizations. With ample justification, we can assert that Adventist world mission after 1901 would have been less successful if our pioneers had retained the pre-1901 structure.

We are again at a momentous juncture both similar and dissimilar to that of 1901. In 2002 we have a much larger, more complex church. Our size and complexity give us more institutional inertia and resistance to change than our pioneers faced in 1901. We have many more human and material resources to mobilize and direct. We are a century closer to the Parousia.

The last century has included two world wars, the Great Depression, the Holocaust, the nuclear era, and much more. The witness of history against evil and for truth is far stronger today than it was in 1901.

The similarity between their then and our now is that in both Adventists are confronted with a task for which we lack an adequate shared theology, vision, strategy, and structure for world mission.

The circumstances of 1901 demanded that Adventists set aside business-as-usual and make room for a period of creative, Spirit-led reevaluation and retooling for mission. The same is true of 2002. Our agenda, our turf, our territory, our position, our piece of the budget must be laid on the altar of sacrifice, opening the way for a new and more powerful, Spirit-filled initiative.

Seek a new and unified mission vision

One consequence of our growth over the last century has been mission institutionalization. When institutionalization occurs, we tend to think and act largely in relationship to policies, budgets, and politics. Under pressure to keep the bureaucracy running smoothly, we may lose sight of our duty to cast an ever broadening vision for the Church’s mission. Major decisions may be made solely with reference to practical considerations, without the guidance of a unified vision, strategy, or theology.

Most of us have certain segments of the Church’s mission in reasonably good focus but we sometimes suffer from a concentrated form of tunnel vision. Different individuals, offices, departments, and geographical areas may see parts of the task clearly while lacking a shared, comprehensive vision. Some of us focus exclusively on peoples and areas near us while others think they have to cross the frontiers to do mission. Some world divisions have a vision for the whole globe and others feel limited to their own territory.

Developing a new vision for mission will not happen overnight. Pastors, administrators, teachers, and lay leaders will have to lead the way. Adventist missiology needs to be a part of ministerial education and Bible courses in every Adventist school. Regular sessions need to be planned for vision development and shared communication of that vision. Supporting ministries and parachurch organizations need to participate in the process.

Design a unified global mission strategy

Is Adventist mission in 2002 like...
Israel during the time of the Judges, when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25, RSV)? No doubt, Adventists are engaged in a multifaceted array of excellent ministries, but are they pulling together in the same direction, in fulfillment of a well-defined and shared strategy? What is the de facto Adventist global strategy? Is it reporting an increasing number of baptisms? If so, is this strategy adequate for mobilizing and directing the work of a complex church like ours?

For several years we have been publicizing the “10/40 Window” and raising funds for mission to its peoples. The 10/40 has become the focus of our global task. But who will in fact carry out our mission to the 10/40? Where will they come from? Who will pay them? How will they be trained? How will their service be administered? What will they do when they get there, given the fact that regular churches cannot be planted in many of these areas?

How will the various world divisions participate? How will we assess effectiveness and success in resistant areas? In the absence of a well-defined, shared global strategy we lack answers to most of these questions. A number of organizations are at work in the 10/40 but the existing degree of planning and procedure will not support the kind of work that needs to be done.

Besides these questions, what of the rest of the world outside the 10/40? There is the secular West to be evangelized. There are the megacities and the poor countries. Every nation has “hidden peoples” to be reached. How can the former “receivers” of missions become “senders”? How shall wealthier members and organizations assist their less wealthy brothers and sisters around the world? How can short-term and project mission trips be integrated into a global strategy?

What is the appropriate role for television, radio, and Internet ministries? How can visiting evangelistic teams and satellite evangelism make the best contribution? What role should ADRA and other humanitarian ministries play? How should parachurch and supporting ministries be integrated into the design? What are the best measures of success in world mission? A global strategy will answer these and other vital questions.

Make appropriate structural adjustments

Our present structure has excellent features that should be treasured and celebrated. I know for I have worked as a missionary for 31 years. But our structure is not doing the best possible job, in spite of its many good features. We lack the structure we need for recruiting, training, and sup-
porting young adults from around the world as cross-cultural missionaries among unevangelized peoples.

Perhaps this is an appropriate moment for a reminder that structures are servants—not masters.

In my seminary teaching, I work with many young ministers from many cultures who are ready to study languages, to make the necessary sacrifices, and to be lifelong missionaries. When they ask how they can obey God’s call I have to tell them that the official General Conference missionary service probably has no place for them until they are ordained, mature, experienced, and have a doctorate. I can only refer those who persist even after hearing this dismal forecast to Adventist supporting ministries.

My grandparents went to Trinidad in their mid-thirties, my parents to Africa in their late-twenties, and my wife and I also to Africa at age twenty-five. However, there is almost no pathway for our children, now in their early-twenties and eager to follow the family tradition. Sending mature people with doctoral degrees as missionaries is a valid sharing of workers between various parts of the body of Christ. But the energy, adaptability, and language-learning potential of young adults is absolutely essential for mission to the resistant parts of the earth.

The structure of Adventist missions has simply not kept pace with changing world conditions so as to achieve our corporate goals and facilitate individual spiritual giftedness.

Some Adventists have given up on the official mission program entirely, looking to parachurch organizations or to supporting ministries as the only hope for channeling their money and abilities into service. The willingness of Adventists to serve as missionaries and to support missions materially has outpaced the ability of the official structure to channel and administer its human and material resources.

A central feature of an adjusted Adventist missionary program needs to be involvement and ownership by all Church organizations—from the local church to the General Conference.

In the present structure, missionaries are sent by the General Conference without the involvement of the local congregation, conference, or union. Some divisions play a role in the process, but only a limited role. General Conference missionaries sent from North America are virtually invisible to the churches and organizations that support them through the offering plate.

Reach for a new theological consensus

An intentional theological journey toward a consensual Adventist theology of mission needs to undergird and encircle the steps suggested above.

“For the past 30 years mission theology has taken a backseat to mission practice. . . . Regardless of the theological tradition, [in the decades after the Second World War] missiology concerned itself with a host of activist issues and agendas like . . . sociopolitical action, liberation, evangelism, church growth, relief and development, . . . Unfortunately, in the midst of such busy global activism, the deeper questions of mission theology were too seldom asked. During the last ten years [mid-1980s to mid-1990s] this has begun to change, and people of all theological stripes in mission today are reexamining theological presuppositions that underlie the mission enterprise.”

We need to reach a renewed and deeper consensus on our official theology of mission. We need to evaluate what we are doing now to see whether our de facto and official theologies match. We need to chart a new course for Adventist world mission that fully expresses our official theology of mission.

As we seek to obey God’s will for Adventist mission in 2002 and beyond we can be assured that our journey will be challenging. But the bearers of the good news are always encircled, comforted, and strengthened by the joy of the Lord and their ultimate victory is assured.

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Ten years and counting
Journal from a journey of tensions

Recent articles in Ministry have focused upon North American graduates from 1987 ministerial pools and the resiliency of these individuals as they have entered ministry (see the August and October 2000 issues). In reviewing my just-completed first decade in pastoral ministry, I notice five points of tension in my journey. Although all of these may not be present in every pastor, as I share them here I hope they will spark a constructive reflective process in every fellow sojourner in pastoral ministry and cause us all to realize that we are not alone.

Although one might wish or expect these points of tension to fade over time, they refuse to do so. In many and various ways they continuously raise their mythic heads. They are the silent voices that lurk behind the weekly message and the daily grind of pastoring. It is in this disquieting territory that we are called to lead and live, be and do, sing and weep. Recognizing these tension points helps me to stay centered on my Lord and to know that I am safe in His hands.

Here are my five dominant tension points.

Global versus local

In my training for ministry I received a devoted love for Scripture. One of the greatest joys of ministry is the opportunity to study God’s Word and then share the fruit of that study with others. Practicing the discipline of scriptural immersion is vital to speaking with confidence to an unsettled and wounded world. God’s Word still changes lives today.

Part of the heritage of my training is the perspective of a world church. The Church universal is an extremely strong theological and cultural force in me. Contributing to something bigger than myself and bigger than my local congregation provides a wider sense of fulfillment and purpose. This strong fiber within the fabric of my subculture runs deep in me and in every aspect of our Church’s approach to ministry.

Opposite this perspective, however, are the deep needs of my local church. People are wounded. Life is difficult. The choices are many. The practical aspects of high need and few resources at the local level are balanced against the heart of the poverty and the theology of the universal Church—the world at large. Here is where the tension lies for me.

While my training has been highly theological and biblical, the demands of divorcing couples, abused children, and emotionally scarred wanderers bring me to my knees. The people knocking at our local church door are extremely hurt, frustrated, and pained. For many, life has killed their dreams. They have come to our local church as a last resort. There is a desperate thirst for something real and tangible, and I feel called upon to help provide that where I am.

Pursuing the incarnational model of ministry of being culturally relevant and theologically pure, is a tension lived out every day in the lives of men and women seeking for answers and community. Balancing global and local demands of a world desecrated by sin is no small task. Bringing people face-to-face with Jesus in every language, tribe, and culture is an undertaking of massive proportions.

Family versus church

Gone are the days of single-income families. The demands of living in a more high-density society have put a stress on the homes of ministers and their spouses. My wife has consciously decided to put her pastoral career on hold to raise our children. This is an incredible ministry. She also is a stipend music director for a church but this takes her away on Sundays.

I find my heart torn by two intense desires.
I want to be at home with my family and at the same time I want to follow my compelling passion for the local church. The intensity of this tension point cannot be understated.

My wiring leads me to easily drift away from home toward my other love. Compelling voices continually beckon me, whispering about agendas, phone calls, messages, and other items left unchecked on my "To Do" list. There is always another person who needs a visit, another wounded soul in need of a friend, another objective to achieve. The work is never "done." But then there are my wife and my children.

To be fully present in both home and office is where this tension point gets lived out moment-by-moment. How often, with the best intentions, have I gone home to my wife and boys continuing to brood about all that hasn't been done at the church. It's easy to be at home in the body and at the office in the spirit. Truly my family suffers. Sometimes I find my energy so expended at the office that I have nothing to give when I get home.

Being versus doing

This tension point is more subtle than the others. I find myself becoming so busy doing that I don't stop to take inventory of my being, and at times I can spend so much time working on my being that I don't stop to take an inventory of my doing.

Probably the place this most often shows up is in my desire to see results—to measure ministry in some fashion. I want to know I am a ripple in the ocean of life and ministry. My spirit echoes the words of Paul, "I do not run like a man running aimlessly" (1 Cor. 9.26) In my fantasy moments, I envision my life as a mower of lawns, able to see the lines I've made in the lawn of ministry, how much I've done and how much more there is yet to be done. While this drive for visible results has its place, it can erode the joy of ministry and shrink the soul. The problem comes when my desire to do is dominated by my desire to measure, especially if my standard of measurement is the performance of someone else.

We inhabit a society of measurements. Consciously or unconsciously, I minister in a place dominated by pay scales and outcomes. Consequently, my congregation measures. They measure the value of this church through the person of its pastor.

A more benign but harmful scale is the one of comparison. In weaker moments, I find myself measuring my ministry by the ministry down the street, across the state, through the region, or up the coast. Comparison is a cancer in ministry. It eats away at the foundation of ministry: the selfhood or person of the pastor.

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I can easily begin to think ministry is my life and measure my life by my ministry. My value as a child of God can end up being based upon my "success" as a pastor. It is easy to compare where I am now to where others are and thus miss entirely the whole point of ministry. Value is never built merely upon baptismal figures, church attendance, or financial balances. Value never originates in speaking engagements, seminars presented, or programs initiated.

I love what J. Robert Clinton says, "Doing flows from being." I am first and foremost a child of God saved by and bathed in grace!

Self-management versus team management

This tension point revealed itself to me recently as I read an article, from which I quote: "The first and paramount responsibility of anyone who purports to manage is to manage self: one's own integrity, character, ethics, knowledge, wisdom, temperament, words, and acts. It is a complex, unending, incredibly difficult, oft-shunned task. We spend little time and rarely excel at self-management precisely because it is so much more difficult than prescribing and controlling the behavior of others. However, without management of self, no one is fit for authority no matter how much they acquire, for the more authority they acquire the more dangerous they become. It is management of self that should occupy 50 percent of our time and the best of our ability. And when we do that, the ethical, moral, and spiritual elements of management are inescapable."

It is easy to forget that ministry is played out on the field between what God is doing in my life and what He is doing in His church. It is as though there is a piece of holy space between these two poles and God inhabits it, bidding me come and walk and work there.

Peter Drucker makes this insightful claim: "In a few hundred years, when the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. For the first time, literally, substantially and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it."

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I love what J. Robert Clinton says, "Doing flows from being." I am first and foremost a child of God saved by and bathed in grace!

Self-management versus team management

This tension point revealed itself to me recently as I read an article, from which I quote: "The first and paramount responsibility of anyone who purports to manage is to manage self: one's own integrity, character, ethics, knowledge, wisdom, temperament, words, and acts. It is a complex, unending, incredibly difficult, oft-shunned task. We spend little time and rarely excel at self-management precisely because it is so much more difficult than prescribing and controlling the behavior of others. However, without management of self, no one is fit for authority no matter how much they acquire, for the more authority they acquire the more dangerous they become. It is management of self that should occupy 50 percent of our time and the best of our ability. And when we do that, the ethical, moral, and spiritual elements of management are inescapable."

It is easy to forget that ministry is played out on the field between what God is doing in my life and what He is doing in His church. It is as though there is a piece of holy space between these two poles and God inhabits it, bidding me come and walk and work there.

Peter Drucker makes this insightful claim: "In a few hundred years, when the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. For the first time, literally, substantially and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it."

COMPARIson is a cancer in ministry. It eats away at the foundation of ministry: the selfhood or person of the pastor.
I realize that my church will only grow as I grow. I cannot lead people to become something I am not. This is a tough responsibility for us as pastors to swallow: stick a thermometer in the mouth of the pastor and you get the temperature of the church.

An organization cannot change if the leaders of the organization are not changing. Organizational change is always preceded by personal change. Healthy growth in the church requires healthy growth in my life. The capability of the whole is influenced by my own capabilities. How I manage and lead my own life has a direct bearing on how the church is led.

Often I wrestle with leadership insecurities. I so often feel like Joshua. There are a thousand Moseses out there and how am I to follow his act? Joshua had to deal with himself before he could face Jericho. The internal walls of Joshua’s doubts had to be removed before Israel could conquer the external walls of Jericho.

This tension of being with people and being with God will not go away. There is a time to stand before God and a time to stand before the people. The quest to find the right mix never ends. Ministry is about both.

Evangelism versus nurture

The Great Commission is about going into all the world (evangelism) and making disciples (nurture). Many discussions revolve around this tension. How do I leave the 99 in a safe place and yet ask those 99 to venture out into the dark night to find the one who’s lost? How does the amazing Father bring home the lost son while growing the reluctant son?

The biblical reality is this: both the lost son and the reluctant son matter enormously to the father. Eventually, the reluctant son was challenged to at least party with the lost son while growing the reluctant son.

The paradox of ministry is that I need both ends of each continuum. I need both the global and the local, home and office, being and doing, self-leadership and team leadership, evangelism and nurture. The challenge is for me to truly embrace both just as God does.

As I reflect on Christ and His journey of ministry, I take courage. He felt fully both poles trying to pull Him from one side to the other. Knowing the journey that I travel, I marvel that He would call me to follow such a path, to drink from His cup. I am amazed that He would invite me to join Him on His journey.

And yet, why should I be amazed? He Himself “pastors” today from the crucible of His struggles and wants a traveling companion. It is this journey we are called to take with Him.

Evangelism without nurture leads to lifelessness and vice versa. Notice Christ’s words to the raw evangelists of His day, “You travel over land and sea to win a single convert [talk about fervor and commitment!], and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are” (Matt. 23:15). Ever wonder why they nailed Him? Evangelism without nurture leads to hellish living. Nurture without evangelism is an oxymoron.

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Mine is perhaps one of the most circuitous routes ever taken to ministry! When asked whether I had planned or thought it through in advance, I have customarily replied that “I could not have envisioned myself doing the sort of ministry I do today. It was God leading all the way and simply a step of faith for me.” This is my story.

Early interest in public service
I grew up in the Adventist church in Hawaii. I graduated from Hawaiian Mission Academy. Mrs. Lynne Waihee, my advisor, was an Adventist English teacher married to then Lieutenant Governor of Hawaii John Waihee, an Andrews University alumnus and a rising star in the Hawaii Democratic Party.

Fortuitously, I interned with the Lieutenant Governor’s Office the summer before attending college. The experience reminded and convinced me that government could be a force for good. I wondered whether I might be able to be a modern Daniel or Joseph. I found the work intriguing, yet when I enrolled at La Sierra University that fall, I found myself majoring in biology. Because my parents were nurses working in the Adventist health system, medicine seemed the logical choice.

At La Sierra University, however, a number of experiences nudged me in a different direction. One was attending a Sabbath School class taught by professors Rennie Schoepflin and Richard Rice. I was intrigued by the inter-relationship between our ultimate beliefs and our social responsibilities. Another was that of feeling queasy while observing the dissection of a frog. God was clearly calling me to something other than medicine!

Over the next few years I enjoyed a rich intellectual life. I carried books wherever I went and had a voracious appetite for ideas—from Adam Smith to Augustine and Kant; from the Federalist Papers to collections of U.S. Supreme Court cases; from Cotton Mather to Carl Henry; from Ellen G. White to George Knight. In 1989, I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science with theology as my minor.

The world of work
By commencement day I had already volunteered for several political campaigns, including that of the 1988 U.S. Presidential candidate, George Bush. Though in all this I had only been a lowly “gopher,” I was thrilled at having been part of a victorious effort. I had also served as student body president at La Sierra and had relished representing the students on various university committees.

I had also, and perhaps most importantly, served the Camarillo Adventist Church as its youth pastor. There, under the mentorship of Associate Pastor Al Frederico, I acquired a love for ministry. It was more than the hikes, water ski trips, campfire singing, or Bible studies. What I found so thrilling was talking about Jesus, pointing others to Him who made all the difference in my own life, and leading others to make the decision of a lifetime. At Camarillo I experienced the joys of full-time ministry.

I flirted with pursuing a public policy degree of sorts, and explored Claremont Graduate School and the University of Southern California administration program, but in the end I found myself applying to the Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Graduate school
My acceptance letter outlined my financial package, but when I arrived in Berrien Springs, Michigan, it became evident that all was not in order. Disappointed and full of questions about whether I had misheard God’s calling, I called one of my administrator friends to vent my frustrations. Niels-Erik Andreasen was then Dean of the School of Religion at what was then the La Sierra Campus of Loma Linda University. That telephone conversation led me to an M.A. in religion at La Sierra.

I studied Old Testament from Andreasen, systematic theology from Fritz Guy and Richard Rice, Church history from Paul Landa, ethics from Gerald Winslow, philosophy of religion from Dalton Baldwin, Christian psychology from Bailey Gillespie, and sociology of religion from Charles Teel. It was a fabulous experience.

While studying I served as a church elder at a local Adventist church and found myself on the preaching circuit. By then I was married.

All was going well until I started thinking about the pervasive threat to our young people posed by drugs, domestic violence, and gangs. As a pastor I could work with a congregation. But what of all the others who were outside my congregation? There were so many others who needed help.

Because of concerns and convictions like this, after a few years I found myself completing a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the University of Southern California Law School and passing bar exams in California and Hawaii. During the time I prepared for those exams I
was briefly an educator, first at San Gabriel Academy and then at La Sierra University.

I then returned to Hawaii with my wife and two children. For the next few years, I worked as a trial lawyer with a Honolulu law firm. I was making more money than I ever had before.

Elective office

But public service was calling me. Impressed by the need for genuine “servant leadership” in public life, I launched a campaign for the State House of Representatives. My goal was to be “part of conversation.” I was going to give my unresponsive legislator opponent a “run for his money.” All went according to schedule—until election day.

When the television reporters announced that I had won, I asked out loud, “What have I gotten myself into?” But my wife, ever aware of the Christian perspective, asked: “No, what hath God wrought?”

And truly it was the work of God. In terms of the usual standards of political campaigning, I had been outspent and outmaneuvered. But I had won anyway. Now I began a new chapter serving in our state’s legislature, while continuing to practice law. I found the work satisfying. Yet the winds of change again began to blow.

In 1999, half-way through my second term in office, the Hawaii Conference executive committee selected a new conference president, a veteran pastor and union conference administrator who had (years before) himself run for the U.S. Congress. We had worked together to introduce a religious liberty bill in the Hawaii Legislature. He now had an ambitious agenda to put together: a team with a passion for evangelism, a commitment to empowering the local congregation, and a sense of urgency reminiscent of our church’s founders.

Return to full-time ministry

Months later I got the call. Elder Arnold Trujillo asked whether I would come on board with the conference office. Would I return to full-time ministry?

I had grown to consider the Legislature my mission field. I had become the unofficial chaplain there, holding Bible studies and organizing prayer groups among some of the state’s political movers and shakers.

I was both a promoter of personal faith and an advocate for public separation of church and state in terms of government policies and funding. God was using me. And besides, my family had grown by another child and my wife was busy serving on the State Board of Education and as vice chair of the Hawaii Republican Party.

However, the offer was one I could not refuse. I immediately assumed leadership of the Hawaii Conference religious liberty and communications departments, and within a year became pastor of the Waiola Worship Center.

I still serve as a legislator. But when I’m not at the state capitol, I’m writing for our Union Conference magazine, addressing Sabbath employment problems, and pastoring my parishioners.

For me there was no Damascus road experience. No thunder, lightning, or whirlwind. Just the quiet yet profound whispering and nudging of God. My role models are still Joseph and Daniel.

I thank God every day for the privilege of being a servant to the servants of God.

David A. Pendleton is an attorney, Adventist minister, and elected member of the Hawaii House of Representatives.

Communion with God

This short book is filled with powerful quotes from Ellen White on prayer. Its 53 sections include a Bible quote, question, pertinent excerpts from the pen of Ellen White on many aspects of prayer, and a brief prayer summary. A powerfully uplifting and encouraging book on developing a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer. Great for morning devotions.

Also available in French and Spanish

Note to potential writers

This article represents the kind of story Ministry is inviting its readers to contribute. These accounts will make up a new Ministry feature entitled “The Pastor’s Call.” This feature will take the place of “The Pastor’s Day” column, which is presently intermittently published in the magazine.

We are looking for crisp, well-written, and particularly meaningful articles which tell the story of pastors’ calls into ministry. We are especially interested in manuscripts that expose in story form, the underlying dynamics and divine implications of the call to ministry. The intent of this feature is to inspire readers and confirm our sense of divine calling.

Please keep manuscripts to 1,000 words or less. Writers whose submissions are accepted for publication will be paid U.S. $100.00. Please follow the instructions for submission of articles outlined under the heading, “To Writers,” found on the masthead page of each issue of Ministry.
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is for frustrated but loyal
members who are eager to
invest their lives in hastening
Jesus return. Want to
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for soul winning? Take the
author’s advice: plant a
church! Using an effective,
realistic storytelling style,
Ron Gladden gets down to
the heart of the matter.

Preaching the Four
Faces of Salvation
Righteousness by Faith . . .
Steven Vitrano invites us to
return to Scripture and explore
God’s plan of redemption in a
more holistic manner. By
letting the Bible interpret
itself, he uncovers four
facets or “faces” of salvation:
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In this serious, but
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ALSO AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL ABC
Breaching the barriers in attendance

David Ripley

Are you tired of adding names to church books, while attendance remains flat? When I began ministry as a young intern, I was sent to a large city to assist a successful evangelist in a series of meetings. That church had a book membership of over 300, and its Sabbath attendance was around 175. My job was member visitation. We worked our hearts out and were rewarded with 56 baptisms. We were happy for the results.

About a year later I learned the attendance at the church was still around 175. What had happened? Many reasons were given for the failure to hold these people; however, the simple answer was that the church was up against what some church growth specialists call an “attendance barrier.”

Some believe we should abandon the effort to grow churches because “it simply cannot be done.” The push is on to plant churches, and it should continue because it promises to boost the Church in North America. However, we must not abandon efforts to grow existing churches. It can be done! All those empty seats represent places where people can come weekly and meet with God and His family. We must learn how to move our churches through attendance barriers.

Growth in existing churches is biblical

The parables of Christ show that the gospel is a story of life, expectancy, and growth. The Day of Pentecost, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, created almost instantaneously a large congregation (Acts 2:42, 47). Large congregations were formed everywhere as the gospel spread (see Acts 4:4; 8:6; 9:35, 42; 11:21, 26; 13:44, 49; 14:21, 23; 16:5; 17:4, 6, 12; 19:20). We should expect no less today. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” is God’s command (Matt. 28:18-20, NKJV).

We believe that there will be a global spreading of the gospel before Christ returns (Matt. 24:14). We should expect this even in areas such as North America, Europe, and Australia. Such an expectation demands that Adventists understand how to move through barriers to growth. Thousands of small Adventist churches need to be moved through attendance barriers as we move to accept the final influx of people for the kingdom.

Ellen White called for a plan of action to bring members of large church communities into active service. The call is to have every member a minister working to bring the gospel to those around the church. She calls for reform and more effective organization. Large churches are called upon to assist smaller churches. They are to train and send the trainees out into new areas.

Structuring to meet the demands of large churches

Imagine a large auto factory trying to operate under the same organizational structure as the local hardware store. The store could be a sole proprietorship, but the large factory will never be successful as a sole proprietorship, or even a partnership. It must organize and operate as a corporation with a high degree of structure. Likewise, if a church has, or desires to have, 1,000 people in attendance in its worship service, it cannot organize or operate as a small group, or even as a small church. A church will tend to be what it is envisioned, structured, and organized to be. If there are 12 in your church and you wish to have 100, you must structure and operate like a church with an attendance of 100. If you have 150 in attendance and you wish for 400, you must structure and operate like a church of 400 in attendance.

There are different barriers that may make it difficult for a congregation to grow without changes in structure and operation. While these numbers are somewhat arbitrary, I
believe there are growth barriers at 12, 75, 200, 400, and a 1,000.

My experience and concern for the lack of growth of attendance in existing Adventist churches led to the topic of my dissertation. I chose the 200 barrier because the literature described it as the most stubborn barrier number. Ten churches below this barrier were surveyed and compared to ten that had moved beyond the barrier. These findings were applied to the Northwest Houston Seventh-day Adventist Church. The results were that it grew from an attendance of 180 to 300 in about four years. I would like to share what I have found about moving churches through barriers in attendance. While each size of church will have its unique answers there are elements that are common to all.

**Structure for growth in attendance**

First, we must realize that different sizes of churches demand different types of organization. Once we identify where we are, we can begin to structure and organize for the next level. Just the knowledge that we must be different to reach the next attendance goal should be empowering. Change should be easier in a congregation if we understand that it is necessary to make alterations in our present structure to reach our desire for effective evangelism and growth.

**Physical facilities and growth.** While church growth literature speaks of crowded facilities as a hindrance to maintaining attendance above the barrier, my survey revealed that churches maintained attendance beyond the barrier in spite of crowded conditions. We must not say, "We can begin to grow as soon as we build a new church facility or parking lot."

The churches I surveyed below the barrier had a great deal of extra capacity, yet they hadn't breached the barrier. Crowding is not a guarantee that growth will be arrested or reversed. Growth can come first and the problems dealt with along the way as growth occurs. The churches above the barrier dealt creatively with the problems. They would park on the lawn, have two services, or use portable classrooms for more Sabbath School space. We should move ahead and deal with the issues as they arise.

**Location and demographics.** While urban and suburban locations are beneficial for growth, small cities and towns are also ripe places, even where larger churches already exist. These churches are not there because of their location or because the congregations are younger on average. These churches are able to sustain larger attendance in a multitude of locations because they have transformed into a different kind of organization.

**Vision and goals.** Pastors and staff, along with church leadership, must truly understand the concepts in visioning for the future. Vision and goals must not be confused with one another. A vision is a view of a desired future; goals are measurable steps along the way to attaining the vision.

The vision and goal concepts must then be communicated continually to the church family. The pastor's understanding of the vision is critical for a church to be able to move through barriers and maintain attendance. Both the leadership and the congregation must see it as God's will that they grow. A clear vision, discovered by the church, and constantly communicated allows them to be willing to do what is necessary to transform and grow. Without a clear vision a church is destined to plateau or decline.

Leadership is key to a successful push-through and a sustained attendance above an attendance barrier. If the surveys I did showed me anything, it was that the future of the church depends on leadership. Leadership must discover, stimulate, and communicate the vision on a continual basis.

**Church staffing.** The staffing of a church is critical to growth and maintenance above an attendance barrier. The literature I surveyed spoke of one pastoral staff member for every 100 to 150 in attendance. My survey showed this to be true (at least in North America). If we wish our churches to grow, we must staff them properly. If we feel we can't afford such staffing, we can be creative in how we find these full-time equivalents. Beyond the pastor, we can use Bible workers, retired pastors, and lay ministry teams to name a few suggestions.

My survey showed that longer stays by leadership in a pastoral position is important. Growing a church through an attendance barrier is a long-term project. Pastors must stay long enough to provide continuity to make this happen.

**Ministry training.** Professional pastors should spend more time and emphasis on training lay leaders for ministry. This would bring them less role frustration, as lay leaders take on greater ministry responsibility.

The survey indicated that larger churches tended to offer a wider range of training events. Some were evangelistic and others were more nurturing in nature. These churches tended to be more creative and less traditional in the training events.

**Small groups.** Most church growth literature is almost unanimous when it comes to the importance of small groups in the church. Our local survey showed that only 17 percent of those attending the Adventist...
churches we covered were involved in formal organized small groups. Relationships are completely necessary to moving and maintaining attendance above the barrier.

Our definition of a group must widen beyond the formal, organized small groups. A pastor should foster a wide range of opportunities for people to be engaged in. All these should have a strong relational component undergirding their reason for existing. Win Arn defines a small group as, “a face-to-face fellowship of persons (normally 10-30) who meet at least monthly.” Small groups are absolutely necessary. The forms and reasons for their existence are almost limitless.

Prayer. Scripture, church growth literature, and church leaders in general are unanimous in affirming that any plan to grow the church of God involves communion with God in prayer. Jesus spent large amounts of time in prayer to complete His mission. Our survey indicated that the pastors in churches that had broken through a barrier spent significant time in prayer each week. A church wishing to move through an attendance barrier needs to intensify its prayer life. After all, it is God’s dream, vision, and mission we wish to follow.

Worship. Our survey indicated that a more contemporary mode of worship is part of growing a larger church. Increasingly we find ourselves needing to discover ways to make secular people, or nominal Christians, into devoted Christians and Seventh-day Adventists. What was formerly comfortable to people with a strong church background is often no longer valid today. Many of the people we desire to fellowship and worship with us have no context with which to compare today’s church, except perhaps the professional and other venues they encounter in their everyday lives. A church that wishes to grow must rethink its liturgy. It must ask the question “What will ‘worship’ mean to the particular people we wish to have with us in church this week?” Whatever the answer is, it must be done with excellence.

Evangelism. God ordained evangelism. The survey of churches showed that just an emphasis on major evangelistic events was not enough to bring about growth into a larger, growing church. The larger churches tend to have a wider definition of evangelism. Evangelism today must be innovative.

We need to be willing to think outside of the box. A more relational approach is more effective. Whether the new people in attendance at worship are denominational transfers from elsewhere, reclaimed members, or new people from the community, the reason they have come and
Our Sabbath School's theme for the quarter was "Jesus Keeps Us Singing," and when I conducted Sabbath School on May 26, I used "Don't Hang It Up!" as a subtheme. I presented the whole article, interspersed with song, commentary, Scripture reading, and even a poem I wrote for the occasion.

It was as if God was preparing me not to hang up my harp. On the second day of June, my husband, retired pastor Joseph Hunte of the South Caribbean Conference, was admitted to the hospital. Some days later, Dr. Black's article came to mind and I was tremendously encouraged. I have reread the sermon several times and been greatly blessed. I thank him for the wonderful message and you for publishing it.

—Auldith Hunte, Trinidad, West Indies.

June issue

I'm not sure if "ironic" would be the correct word, but what a contrast in your June issue! I read some of the letters to the editors regarding the 27 fundamental beliefs, then I read Rudi Maier's article on his friend the Buddhist monk. Wow! Thanks for his story.

—Robert Holbrook, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Commendations to the Ministry editorial staff for the excellent and timely June issue on "Evangelism: Reaching the Contemporary Soul." It is exciting to hear about the various ways that people can still be reached and won for Christ in this day and age of ethical relativism, hedonism, and plain cynicism. Since the topic of evangelism is a byproduct of the worldwide nature of Seventh-day Adventism, could the editors perhaps not produce another issue featuring evangelism, with articles by church leaders and pastors from other divisions that were not included? And how about making it gender inclusive?

We in the Trans-European Division are proud of Peter Roennfeldt for his utter dedication and vision in reaching out to the unchurched and secular mindset ("Reaching the Unchurched"). I thoroughly enjoyed reading his scholarly article and will give a copy to each of the church members of my two churches in Scotland.

—Claude Lombart, Scotland.

I read with interest the articles on divorce and remarriage (August 2001). When I observe the never-ending dissection of texts and syntax to make a point, it suggests to me that we do not have it right yet. Truth can be stated simply, so the more complex something becomes, the more suspicious I become. I believe the simple truth is that marriage is based on commitment, and as long as both persons in the marriage remain committed to each other, problems and difficulties will get worked through as each matures and grows. But when either party abandons their commitment, the marriage dies.

The reason we continually miss the mark on this topic is because we are attempting to legislate relationships. When will we learn that there is no law or policy written that can dictate love? Love is a choice which continues to exist only when based on commitment and trust (we would say "faith" in religious terms). As a church we do not believe in once-saved, always-saved, so why would we want to believe in once-married, always-married? Rejection of Christ and the rejection of one's marriage partner is based on the same principle—when one abandons his or her commitment to the other, the relationship is over.

Because it takes two to be married (you cannot have a marriage by yourself), when one person is no longer committed to the other, and refuses to do anything to rebuild that commitment, then divorce is the legitimate way of acknowledging the death of the marriage relationship. Any inappropriate behaviors which may or may not follow, are only the symptoms and not the cause. Even God recognized this when, with deep regret, He divorced His bride Israel because of her continual rejection of Him (Jer. 3:6-8). Yes, God is divorced! ☐

—Dick Tibbits, vice president, Florida Hospital, Orlando, Florida.
Not all ministry is on the public platform. In the spirit of honoring those to whom honor is due, I salute a sizeable group of individuals who serve God’s cause unheralded and, typically, away from public notice.

My friend, Maxine Leonhardt, is an example of such workers who are often called “support staff” for lack of better terminology. Even their “credentialed missionary” status fails to adequately express the sustaining structure they provide the denomination as secretaries, administrative assistants, accountants, desktop specialists, and technicians.

Maxine, who recently retired at seventy-something and nearly five decades of church employment, will insist that she should not be singled out for recognition. In fact, she will be quite peeved that I actually obtained a photograph of her. Despite nearly two decades of close friendship, we have never persuaded her to pose for even a snapshot.

Maxine has always shunned the spotlight, preferring a level of anonymity for her ministry as a career accountant for the church. Fair enough! Consider this a big thank you to every church worker who has labored quietly behind the scenes.

In a clear example of the church’s historic gender disenfranchisement, if Maxine had been male, undoubtedly she would have been elected as a conference or union treasurer and subsequently ordained. Nevertheless, we have observed her carefully support her supervisors and even coach some bosses into an effective management role. She has devoted myriad hours of uncompensated overtime to managing, purchasing, and accounting for various major projects.

Sharon and I first became friends with Maxine about the time she was losing her beloved Pug, Danny Boy, as we discovered a mutual love for dogs. Her perpetually gruff exterior belies a warm heart and true, loyal friendship to anyone—human or animal—fortunate enough to enter her circle.

Maxine is old enough to be my parent, but young enough in spirit to maintain real friendship with twentiesomethings! Sharon and I have observed her counsel and encourage young married couples despite the reality that she remains single. For years she drove a very old car that she had carefully maintained and saw no sense in purchasing a new one. “I’ve gotten along quite well without a man or a new car and I have more interesting things to do than invest in either one.”

Maxine and I also share an interest in offbeat collections. Her raccoons, ranging from the kitschy to collectors items of real quality, are as numerous and legendary as my Noah’s Arks.

One of the longest-term survivors of melanoma, Maxine philosophically decided after losing a leg to the aftereffects of her successful cancer treatment to look on the positive side. “I’m making a list,” she declared, “of the people I want to kick with my wooden leg.” And beware the unfortunate soul who would describe Maxine as disabled. She allows no condescending pity.

When launching a project, Maxine is seldom daunted before accomplishing her objective. For example, frustrated that Hallmark published a “Maxine” series of greeting cards featuring a crabby old crone who was always portrayed with a cigarette, she telephoned the artist and demanded that his fictional “Maxine” stop smoking. “After all,” she told him, “tobacco is dangerous, a poor example, and your own mother would be ashamed of you for using my name to portray smoking.” Amazingly, the artist concurred and his popular line of cards has continued years of record sales sans the cigarettes!

Maxine never wanted to retire. She resisted even discussion of the issue. Whenever someone had the temerity to question her plans for sustentation, she would inform them that it is illegal even to inquire. One of her favorite expressions was about Mid-America Union’s Secretary, George Timpson, who was a few months older. “I’ll retire right after George does!” Then, when Pastor Timpson unexpectedly died, she changed her story to, “I’ll leave the same way George left!”

When retirement finally arrived, she threatened anyone who would dare plan a party to celebrate her departure, but ended up delighted when coworkers “surprised” her with acknowledgment of her lifelong contributions.

If you reviewed Maxine’s career, you might conclude her “behind the scenes” work was unimportant because it may have been little known. Untrue! In God’s cause there are no unimportant workers and Maxine is a great example of ordinary individuals faithfully accomplishing extraordinary things for the kingdom. Thanks Max for your ministry!
RESOURCES

0 How People Grow, by Henry Cloud and John Townsend (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001; 368 pages, hardcover, $19.99).

Is Christianity workable? Are its claims just that? Why do Christians fail to make any impact on the moral and spiritual arenas in the world? Why do they feel helpless when it comes to their own spiritual growth? What is necessary to experience increased strength and depth in our spiritual walk, worship, marriage, family life, work and friendships?

In How People Grow, Christian counselors Cloud and Townsend address these and other vital issues that perplex serious Christians and provide biblical answers. They chart a step-by-step route that enables Christians to know and apply biblical principles for their personal growth. These authors are nationally recognized speakers and psychologists and particularly noted for their best-selling series, Boundaries.

The present work is a result of the authors’ lifelong journey of faith. Based on personal and professional experience and the personal study of God’s Word, the book begins with an examination of the problems of growth. Unlike most psychological analyses in the market place of ideas, the authors zero in on the real issue: our problems begin with sin, and our solution rests with Jesus. With this kind of a theocentric approach, the authors guide the reader to face issues such as the role of suffering and grief, becoming and being a righteous person, the value of discipline, the meaning of spiritual poverty, handling the perils of temptation, and many more.

Extremely readable, filled with illustrations from real life, the book is an excellent source material for pastors and spiritual care givers.


The turbulence of teen age brings its own challenges both to the teens and to those who have to live with them: parents, teachers, pastors. A time of such a challenge is not a time to throw up the hands, and give up the struggle. In fact, it is the time—the best time—to turn the challenge into an opportunity for spiritual growth and commitment. The how is the big question that we all face.

Spiritual Mentoring of Teens provides some pertinent answers. It is a guide for parents and others who deal with teens, a guide to catch the vision of ministry to teens, to build strong parent-child relationships, to disciple by intent, and to grasp biblical promises and assurances for our children.

Pastors will find great insights in this book to help them develop the best kinds of relationships with teens in their congregation. The book can also be a useful guide in conducting parenting seminars and group studies in churches and to help parishioners deal creatively with teenagers. From understanding teens to motivating them to moving them on the ladder of spiritual growth, the book is an unusually helpful guide.


John MacArthur writes without apology or indecision. His passion to be biblical and evangelical runs through his books, and his current work is no exception. The mystery, the miracle, and the majesty of Bethlehem’s crib runs through God in the Manger, providing both the pastor and the layperson with firm theological and biblical ground to affirm and proclaim the virgin birth, the nature of the Incarnation, the divine-human miracle that occurred in Bethlehem, and the supreme reason for it.

The book is not all theology. There is much historical and faith-affirming drama. The author’s treatment of the two genealogies of Jesus given by Matthew and Luke provides much valuable insight to a preacher. Even the mundane becomes profound.

MacArthur dares not trivialize or sentimentalize the persons or events around the crib. He deals with each one as the Bible does, and brings a sense of wonder and awe to the Christmas stories. Those who accepted Baby Jesus and those who rejected Him seem to leap out across the centuries, suggesting to us that our time is no different.

The excellent but simple study guides for the 11 chapters in the book can make it a good tool for group studies or for personal enrichment.
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