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The statement "wearing, or not wearing, wedding rings is entirely a personal conviction of the individual members" ("We Get Questions," Pastor’s Pastor, James Cress, February 2003) is popularly interpreted to mean if you wish to wear a wedding ring, it is appropriate. There are many reasons for desiring to wear a wedding ring, but not all are in keeping with Scripture. Since the Bible expressly forbids wearing gold (1 Peter 3:3; 1 Tim. 2:9), there must be a sound reason for doing so [sic.]. The teachings of Seventh-day Adventists is in the Church Manual which says, “In some countries, the custom of wearing the wedding ring is considered imperative, having become in the minds of some people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances, we have no disposition to condemn the practice” (2000, p. 166). The manual was written for the world church. The wedding ring is not imperative in all countries; it is reasonable that the church in various countries should decide the case for that country (1 Cor. 1:10). The Ministers’ Manual counsels that we “do not go contrary to the letter or intent of [church] manual policies” (1992, p. 60). I do not see the intent of the Church Manual to give blanket approval to wedding rings. Its intent seems to be to protect Christ’s followers from a false reputation of immorality in some cultures. And precious stones and multiple bands are not necessary to protect the reputation of Christ and His church despite the popular belief that “all wedding rings are O.K.” Why the fuss? Fashion is an idol (ST, May 26, 1881, par. 23) and fashion is doing more than anything else to break our people’s saving relationship with Christ (4T 647.2).

—David Jones, Dayton, Tennessee.

I just received the February issue of Ministry. With a number of challenging articles, the article by Gilbert Valentine caught my eye for its relevance today. Valentine has used the experience of history to show that “control” of either sermon content or classroom teaching must not be left in the hands of a small group, whatever position they hold. He goes on to further balance this position by recognizing the accepted understanding of the body of the church.

It can easily be demonstrated that through the many decades since the inception of the church, there has been a developing understanding of both doctrinal truths and prophetic understanding. Some truths have never moved but have just been elucidated. Others have been modified or changed through the years, particularly the interpretation of prophecy.

What the church has found extremely difficult is a method to explain any acceptance of a new understanding to the membership at large. The medium of sharing this information is usually left to ministers trained at our institutions of learning in their sermons and teaching. This often causes a negative reaction from many who do not understand—or want to understand—“present truth.” Churches often split, and younger ministers lose courage as they seem to think they alone are fighting a battle. Evangelism wanes, and the training institution is seen as a “hotbed of heresy.”

We certainly cannot and do not want to muzzle the preacher being led by the Spirit. We do need to be open to His leading and to find a way whereby precious truth for these times may be shared and accepted in an open way with the church understandings which may be seen as new. May we find a way to keep the faith alive, and the membership informed as we work together.

—Harold G. Harker, retired administrator, Terrigal, New South Wales, Australia.

Thank you for the excellent theological study of the Trinity by Woodrow Whidden, and the biblical study of what Job believed about the resurrection, by Lael Caesar. “A Slice of History,” by Gilbert Valentine, is very relevant to the situation of our church today. It is good to have real content in Ministry!

—Ralph Neall, Lincoln, Nebraska.

In Dr. Whidden’s article on the Trinity, he reasoned that echad, as used in Deuteronomy 6:4, “the Lord is one” was used “to express the idea of one among others in a joined or shared oneness.” This line of reasoning, however, would seem to support the concept of polytheism rather than the concept of a Trinity. If the Lord is “one among others,” it would seem to imply that there are other gods, not that there is a plurality within the Lord.

—Lewis Anderson, pastor, Grand Haven, Michigan.

Free Subscription If you’re receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven’t paid for a subscription, it’s not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventists ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can’t use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.
No matter the activity, if it’s worth doing it’s always worth the time and energy it takes to make sure we’re operating according to that which is basic to it. Whether such an appraisal of the basics has to do with our marriage, our health, our automobile’s maintenance, or our preaching, it’s always worth being sure that we’re still genuinely in touch with the fundamentals.

What are the basics when it comes to Christian evangelism, to Seventh-day Adventist evangelism? I’ll cover three aspects that especially strike me.

First, the essence of Adventist evangelism is that it is distinctly and distinctively Christian. That is it has first of all to do with Christ Himself. Paul’s passionate, definitive cry is the cry of the authentic evangel: “We preach Christ crucified . . .” (1 Cor. 1:23, NIV). The context of this statement is very well worth marking: The Jews demand signs and miracles, and the Greeks want wisdom (verse 22), but despite our knowledge of these preferences, we nevertheless preach Him . . . Christ.

Let’s hold the basic of Christ and Him crucified (and risen) absolutely firmly in heart and hand as we proclaim Him in word and deed throughout this upcoming special year of evangelism.

But second, evangelism—being His witnesses—especially the “world evangelism” He is calling us to do “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea . . . and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV), is a deeply spiritual work. That is, it is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit.

This is a crucial basic, and one that is easily slighted in the crush of baptismal goals, ministerial egos, and the urgent press of all one inevitably has to do when evangelizing. It is critical to embrace the fact that, according to Jesus in Acts 1:7, the power to be His witnesses is promised to the one called to be a witness. And we receive that power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

We are ever subject to the pull of the thought that the power or the potency of our witness is in the method or the evangelistic strategy that we employ. Let’s face it, if you dispassionately watched us going about our evangelism, and even if you assess the content of a magazine like Ministry, you would have to say that the employment of this or that evangelistic strategy is sometimes more important to us than the “intangible” of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit!

The work we are called to do is a Spiritual work and an absolutely indispensable fundamental that we must hold to our hearts and in our hands during this coming Year of World Evangelism.

The third basic is that we are Seventh-day Adventist evangelists. That means that our proclamation of Christ and of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit is done in the unique, one-of-a-kind context of the three angels’ messages as they’ve been delivered to us. Adventists are especially charged with the call to evangelize in the face of the approaching eschaton.

This means that during the coming year and always, we Adventists proclaim “the everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6) with “a loud voice” (verse 7) “to every nation, kindred, tongue and people” (verse 6). Again, it means that our proclamation of the gospel of Christ and Him crucified is a proclamation that is fundamentally eschatological at its heart. It has inescapably to do with the second coming of Jesus, the final judgment, the end of the world and of humanity as we know it.

Proclaiming the gospel in this final judgment context gives it a special potency, a force, urgency, and effectiveness that it does not have in any other setting, especially if we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we face the challenges of this upcoming Year of Evangelism, let’s step out on the solid platform of these three basics. They have a way of not only giving us evangelistic focus and energy, but of giving us the personal courage and strength to tackle something special for our Lord, our congregations, and our communities.
Year of World Evangelism 2004: Reaping God’s Harvest

TED WILSON

A t the 2002 Annual Council, Seventh-day Adventist world division leaders chose 2004 as “The Year of World Evangelism.” This is a bold step forward in fulfilling our Lord’s primary commission of Matthew 28:19, 20, and Revelation 14:6-12.

God has given this church a unique mission, one critical to the people of earth in the closing days of their history. It is to proclaim the everlasting gospel to the whole world in the power of the Holy Spirit. This issue of Ministry is devoted to this special evangelistic emphasis.

Evangelism is nothing new in our church. God has given us the opportunity to collaborate with Him in the greatest endeavor ever given to human beings: to share Jesus and the reality of His promise to come again to the world, and to call our fellow human beings to the true worship of God.

The “Year of World Evangelism 2004—Reaping God’s Harvest” (YWE 2004) is a rallying cry to place our total confidence in God. YWE 2004 is designed to build on all kinds of personal and public evangelistic endeavors, including “Go 1 Million” and “Sow 1 Billion,” currently being conducted by God’s people around the globe.

YWE 2004 calls on every member, young or old, every pastor, every worker, every administrator, every congregation, every supporting ministry, every school, every publishing house, every medical facility, and every church institution to participate actively in this worldwide soul-winning outreach.

The initiative will involve all of us—lay and pastors—united in evangelistic proclamation through personal evangelism, small-group evangelism, public evangelism, literature evangelism, health evangelism, and every conceivable means of technological communication, including radio, television, satellites, printed media, and the Internet!

YWE 2004 will give special evangelistic emphasis to reaching the millions in the urban centers of the world. There is the 10/40 Window where only about 5 percent of the people are Christians, and the secular, postmodern culture denies the need for the gospel.

Specific focus is to be directed toward young people, encouraging them to join with older members and pastors in an aggressive, all-out effort to bring the Bible truth of our message to the world. What an opportunity to serve the Lord, especially in the light of the end of world history.

Each division, union, conference/mis- sion, and local church will undoubtedly have to adapt and contextualize the format or approach of YWE 2004 programs to fit their local needs. However, the message is clear... to lift up Jesus and point people to Him and His soon coming. It’s an immense privilege to be part of God’s advent movement embraced in the three angels’ messages expressed so powerfully in Revelation 14:6-12.

One of the most important aspects of the YWE 2004 is to keep church members, pastors, evangelists, and leaders focused on our unique evangelistic mission—sharing Christ with others in the context of this one-of-a-kind Adventist message. We may be sure that every satanic force will rally in an attempt to distract us from doing this.

The challenges ahead are huge. Only complete reliance on Christ and His Word will help us to stand the test, and do our task well. As we rise to this challenge, we need to spend specially concentrated time with our Lord, in our Bibles and with the particular gift that is ours in the works of the Spirit of Prophecy, which will be an indispensable blessing to all of us as we walk through this Year of World Evangelism 2004.

During YWE 2004, we need a growing understanding that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s special movement, brought into being to share His message with the world. We need to uplift Christ more in our personal associations, and in the pulpit, pointing people to His second coming. Let’s proclaim our message with heavenly power. We have distinctive beliefs rooted in the Bible, and we must not allow these to be compromised. We must positively point out Truth in all its glory!

Ellen White’s counsel is timely: “In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”

Please pray for YWE 2004 and your fellow believers worldwide. Pray for the church’s leadership and let’s pray for one another as pastors, humbly asking the Lord to use us during this special year, as we share the Advent hope.


Ted Wilson, Ph.D., is a general vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.
The redemptive harvest: A four-factor equation

Peter J. Prime

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were One in thought, One in purpose, and One in action in bringing about primary creation, including the creation of humankind. The declaration of God, the mediation of the Son, and the operation of the Holy Spirit were clearly present in the creative activity of the Godhead. Similarly, except for the addition of the responsive cooperation of humankind, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are inextricably involved in the consummation of the plan of redemption and the redemptive harvest.

Each factor that makes up the equation of creation and the equation of redemption is equally essential to the integrity and effectiveness of the equations. The first equation of creation consists of exclusively divine factors, while the second equation of redemption consists of divine action and human response.

The divine factors in both equations are invariable since with God there “is no variableness, or shadow of turning.” In contrast, the human factor that forms part of the second equation is the only variable element in the total construct. However, when by God’s grace, the human response is one of acceptance of God’s redemptive plan, the miracles and wonders that will follow will be no less spectacular and conclusive than those that attended the equation of creation.

The Bible speaks of creation in terms of God’s declaration (“For he spake, and it was done,” Ps. 33:9), the Son’s mediation (He “made the worlds” through the Son, Heb. 1:2), and the Spirit’s operation (“The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life,” Job 33:4). Likewise in the equation of redemption as re-creation, the Godhead is One in thought and action.

First, there is the declaration of God the Father (“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed,” Gen. 3:15), the mediation of the Son (“It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel,” Gen. 3:15), and the operation of the Spirit (“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death,” Rom. 8:1, 2). In declaration, in mediation, and in operation of the redemptive action, the Godhead stands as One, just as they were One in creation.

The roles and functions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit make up the three exclusively divine invariable factors that are common to both equations of creation and redemption, and with redemption the redemptive harvest.

However, the human factor of responsive cooperation that is absent in the first but present in the second represents the only point of dissimilarity between the two equations. Unlike the first equation in which human cooperation is not a factor, without the element of the human factor in the second equation, redemption would be an exercise in divine futility, and the consummation of the harvest would be an outright impossibility.

When Jesus says in John 3:16 that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” this is an absolutely seminal declaration of how human redemption comes about. As such it clearly indicates that while the divine provision for eternal life is available to all, its realization requires human responsive cooperation at the level of belief and acceptance. There could be no such human factor in the equation of creation.

Choice: God’s gift to humans

In creating humankind in His own image and likeness, God bequeathed to us the dis-
tinctive gift of “response-ability” to Himself and His Word. This gift of response-ability provided humans the opportunity to exercise and develop that gift and explore its infinite riches and possibilities. Accordingly, God placed in Eden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and revealed to our first parents the significance of their response-ability. But Adam and Eve deliberately chose noncooperation with God over responsible cooperation. The choice was more than tragic, and so were the losses.

This wretched tragedy and fall created the need for a Savior. Hence, God the Son assumed voluntarily the role of the Second Adam to make possible the new prototype of the human family: “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5).

How were both the prototype and the Savior role to be accomplished? By nothing less than the Son’s perfect obedience to God, involving flawless responsive cooperation with God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14).

Christ in His unique life of “being obedient unto death even the death on a cross” fulfilled all the requirements of His role as the prototype and the Savior of humankind. And it is this, His very life, that will be replicated by God’s grace in the lives of His followers who themselves will be distinguished similarly, in that “they loved not their lives unto the death.”

Since humankind’s lost state was precipitated by their irresponsible noncooperation with God, their recovery was made possible by the Son of God, but only after His experiencing in human flesh perfect cooperation with God. God’s objective in the Son’s incarnation and death has everything to do with restoring humankind to harmonious cooperation with Himself.

This is a pivotal truth that must govern the lives and the reaping activities of all the reapers of God’s harvest. Without a full understanding of this basic truth, there will be tragic failures for reapers and harvest alike.

It is this preeminent truth that the Year of World Evangelism 2004 seeks to bring to the center stage of the thought life and practice of the total world church so that God may effect through the church the consummation of the harvest with utmost precision and in the shortest possible time. “For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: for a short work will the Lord make upon the earth” (Rom. 9:28).

Thus the church should never forget that the reaping and consummation of the redemptive harvest is first and foremost a divine prerogative and responsibility. God graciously invites us to experience this redemption ourselves first, and then collaborate with God for the benefit of others.

The redemptive formula

The fixed formula through which we ourselves are reaped redemptively, and are able in turn to cooperate with God in the reaping of others, is that of the declaration of God the Father, the mediation of God the Son, and the operation of God the Holy Spirit, and our responsive cooperation with God.

In this formula, consisting largely of divine invariables that are more than sufficient for reaping the whole world, our role is the only variable and fragile factor. As such, it presents the only dilemma in the completion of the harvest.

However, we are not without assurance: In Christ our variable and fragile cooperation with God may become as resolute as was Christ’s. When by divine grace this spiritual miracle occurs then will be brought into being the perfect equation that will be more than sufficient for the evangelization of the whole world. Against this reaping model no gate of hell can prevail.

Is the quest to fulfill our designated role and function in this model for
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success in evangelism a checkered journey of countless fits and starts, illusory advances and besetting reverses? Is it a tantalizing dream full of beguiling hopes? It may be if we perceive our responsive cooperation with God to be the outcome of mere human blood, toil, sweat, and tears, rather than a gracious gift of God which precludes any human grounds for boasting.

Response-ability to God and His Word, and responsive cooperation with God were a gift from God that the first Adam chose to repudiate. But the Second Adam, in His perfect life of responsive cooperation with His Father to the point of His death, resurrection, and mediation, recovered for the forlorn Adamic race. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). "And so it is written. The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

Therefore, our role and function within the perfect model of evangelism are gifts of Jesus Christ earned by Him and freely bestowed on us. But they are not only gifts, they are also, in Christ, our legal right, which we are privileged to claim at the throne of grace. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Additionally, the gifts of God’s grace in Jesus Christ carry more than a theoretical and legal meaning. They also have a highly meaningful, practical application to all of human life and experience. In other words, the gifts of grace extend beyond mere legal dimensions to include on the practical level the whole range of human emotions and dispositions—total cognition, behavior, and every deed or action in every area of human life.

They are, moreover, operable in and for all times and human circumstances. God’s grace is more than sufficient for all humanity even in their extremity and worst depravity. In the framework of the strange display of divine grace with all of its extravagant benevolences, God has provided in Jesus Christ the wherewithal with which to gift us with all of the worthiness of His only begotten Son, and this in exchange for all of the worthlessness of us sinners.

His Son’s beauty, God exchanges for our ashes; His Son’s abiding joy for our pitiful mourning; His innocence for our guilt; His fullness for our emptiness; His responsive cooperation with God for our unresponsive cooperation with God, ad infinitum.

All these inequitable exchanges of grace occur not just on the legal level, but extend simultaneously on to the experience level in the lives of those who continue by grace to respond cooperatively to God’s calling.

**Experiential reality**

Paul speaks emphatically to these experiential realities: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The Galatian passage is particularly poignant. When we respond fully to God’s grace, our sinful life is crucified with Christ on the cross, and we are gifted with a new life that is no longer our own. It is Christ living in us. It is that experience that assures that God will use us as instruments of His harvest work.

The brilliant light of imminent victory will envelop the dismally dark evangelistic tunnel now, for many, buried in hopeless despair and defeat. This harvest concept, ingrained in the Galatian text, can be paraphrased as follows: We, the church with our noncooperation with God, have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless we live; yet not we, but Christ with His responsive cooperation with God liveth in us: and the life of responsive cooperation with God which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us, and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Thus it is only in this setting that the words of Jesus will be fulfilled. “Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12).

**Potency and efficacy**

Where lies the irresistible potency and efficacy of responsive cooperation with God? The answer is simple: in the replication of divine love. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

But there is more to this love than its vertical expression. The horizontal expression is no less an integral part of love than is its vertical aspect. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Responsive cooperation with God that is devoid of love is a caricature at best and terribly tragic at worst; to all intents and purposes it is completely worthless.

**The Year of World Evangelism 2004**

The Year of World Evangelism 2004 is expected to be the most historic of years for evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. It is to serve as an evangelistic model for years to come. The essential outline of the model is:

- Declaration of God the Father.
- Mediation of God the Son.
- Operation of God the Holy Spirit.
- Cooperation of the church worldwide on the vertical and horizontal levels.

Declaration-Mediation-Operation-Cooperation—these are the factors that constitute the divine equation for the optimum reaping and the consummation of the redemptive harvest.

The roles and functions of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are already in place. To complete the equation and to accomplish the consummation of the continued on page 13
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Heaven wills a completed task!  
Spiritual empowerment and revival

Charles D. Brooks  

I write this from my heart—a reflection from within. Look around. Astonishing prophecies are being fulfilled and spectacular “signs” are seen and heard everywhere. Ours is the age of “apocalyptic politics.” In the midst of all this, heaven wills a finished work and the King’s business, haste.

Thank God for a new, bold emphasis in our church on evangelism and the work of alerting our fellow human beings that Jesus is coming soon. We are praying that the power promised us will accompany what we do for Christ so that a judgment-bound world, with all its searching souls will be arrested and won before it is too late.

Religious confusion is everywhere, and the enemy is compounding it. The popular media are bringing fallacy and error into homes through bewitching presentations that fascinate the imagination and stir the emotions. Unbiblical propositions are convincingly portrayed so that minds and hearts move progressively further from the pure, sanctifying truth designed to prepare us for the fury, potency, and wrath of final events. These dazzling things precede the actual appearance of the Lord—coming in matchless glory!

Jesus is coming soon! He wills His church to gather everyone who is open to hearing His word, to loving and obeying Him, and that voice will be heard above the din of fallacy and foolishness. But the church cannot accomplish the will of her Lord at this critical time without the special “outpouring” of the promised power that comes in the downpour of the latter rain.

The enemy seems to have stolen a march on us by demonic delusions and counterfeit. Men and women now pretend to talk directly to the dead on national television. World leaders emphasize religious dogmas as solutions to our political, social, and moral ills! This is the time for us to move forward with faith and courage. We are divinely called to win for Christ all who will respond to His last appeal. Truth will prevail! God’s Word and wisdom will succeed in glory.

Empowerment and revival

We are in urgent need of empowerment and revival! “It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talent, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but, without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected to Christ . . . the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. . . . Is not the Spirit of God to come today, in answer to earnest, persevering prayer, and fill men with power for service? Why then is the church so weak and spiritless?”

As truth begins to triumph, many among us will be shaken out, but the ranks of God’s army will not be diminished. Thousands will pour into God’s family just as the disaffected are abandoning it. We must understand that souls are won by the Holy Spirit. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). Not by logic or human charisma or philosophy or erudition or any other purely natural entity.

Once, I was lecturing to a group of young ministers gathered at a convention. We had just left a general session where a fine and cerebral gentleman had countered one of the propositions we had tried to establish.

He was discussing “communication,” using the thesis of an ancient sage. He spoke of “ethos” as a necessity to establish rapport. Suddenly, he said that we might as well forget the notion that we could do effective evangelism in five or six weeks. Why, he asserted, it would take that long to develop ethos!

Following his presentation, I was waiting
Attention Preachers!

The Annual H.M.S. Richards Lectureship on Biblical Preaching will be held at Andrews University on Sunday, Oct. 26 and Monday, Oct. 27, 2003!

Featured Speaker: Dr. Hyveth Williams

Dr. Williams is currently senior pastor of the Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California, and also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Religion at Loma Linda University. Prior to Campus Hill, Pastor Williams served as senior pastor of the Boston Temple Adventist Church and associate pastor for Evangelism at Sligo Church.

After a dramatic conversion in 1978, Pastor Williams abandoned a successful political career in Hartford, Connecticut, to be baptized and prepare for pastoral ministry. She earned a B.A. in theology from Columbia Union College in 1984, an M.Div. degree from Andrews University in 1989, and a D.Min. degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1998, where she did her dissertation in the area of preaching. In 1996, Pastor Williams received a Fellowship from the Episcopal College for Preachers, National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., the first non-Episcopalian to receive this prestigious award. She is also an internationally-acclaimed preacher and prolific writer, having authored three books and numerous articles.

Dr. Williams appreciates every opportunity to share the Gospel and comes well prepared to share her love for preaching as this year’s presenter.

SCHEDULE & TOPICS

Theme: The Miracle, Measure, and Marvel of Grace!

**Sunday, Oct. 26, 2003**
- 9:30 A.M. Lecture #1 “The Miracle of Grace”
- 1:30 P.M. Lecture #2 “The Measure of Grace”
- 5:30 P.M. Lecture #3 “The Marvel of Grace”

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at the door for my group. As they approached me, they asked, “Pastor, did you hear what he said? We can’t win souls in a single campaign!”

I asked them to come in and be seated. Wishing fervently to be fair I said, “Let’s suppose we misunderstood our speaker. What do you want you to understand is that soul winning is not just a human to human encounter. There is another Person involved! His name is the Holy Spirit.”

I then referred to the Ethiopian eunuch. A single Bible study with Phillip convinced, convicted, converted, and baptized the man—all in one encounter. The Holy Spirit took care of the “ethos,” “pathos,” and “logos”! Soul winning involves a supernatural conjunction of the divine and human elements. God makes Himself responsible for our success.

**How long to win a soul?**

One night, in a great city, as we announced the final baptism of the campaign, a young lady came forward. She was elegant—impeccably dressed. She was bright and intellectually aware. She could not stop the flow of her tears... insisting that she had to be in the next baptism.

Since I hadn’t seen her in the audience before, I asked if she had been exposed to the truths of Adventism in the past—any Adventist relatives or friends, or anyone who had studied with her? Did she fully understand the commitment she was making? To all my queries she answered, “No.”

Finally, I took her aside and began teaching her the “27 Fundamental Beliefs” of Adventism—all in one meeting. She listened carefully, followed my finger as I traced the Word in my Bible and called on her to witness it. At the conclusion of this, long after the huge crowd had dwindled and while my staff waited patiently for final instructions and prayer, she said softly, “I see the Word of God. I believe what I have seen. I must be baptized on Sabbath.” Well, she was.

Decades later, this former model was settled and active in her church,
transformed by the Spirit of God. Human instruments cannot do this alone, but they can be used in the transaction.

As I've taught the "art and science" of evangelism to pastors and evangelists through the years, I haven't recommended that we consistently practice rapid baptizing, as with this young woman. We believe in laying groundwork and building truth upon truth, on the foundation of Jesus Christ until the full message is covered. Yet in my ministry I have seen on several occasions the kind of miracle mentioned above. Is it safe to do this?

It is, if the Holy Spirit is leading. How can one know? Surely, the soul winner involved in this "close" work will know whether or not a person is being led by the Spirit of God. When whole nights are spent in prayer, when one is sure they are humbly depending on God and seeking only His glory, when the church has been responsibly prepared, when the heart pleads in prayer even as the Word is being explained—one will know that one is being empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will always be remembered as one of those sacred experiences in the presence of the Lord. It cannot really be explained! It defies logic! It just happens by His grace!!

**What's our work?**

Our work is to define righteousness, lift up Christ, point out sin, and let the inquirer know what God's will is. We must encourage them by pointing to the cross and the possibilities that Christ's ministry has provided. We must proclaim the year of God's favor and the forgiveness there is in Christ.

We are to speak of faith, which appropriates all righteousness. We must teach about victory and sanctification, about the sure word of prophecy and the "Rock-based" promises of God which are as certain as His throne! Then, we must "leave the results with God."

In my evangelism, I approach the task with great faith in the Lord, and none in the flesh. I believe the truth with all my heart. One cannot preach with power what one does not believe. I expect that souls will come to Jesus as God, through His love, works through us.

We must be deeply aware of what God has promised us in the work of evangelism. It is thrilling to know and believe what God has promised, and then to see Him do it! He delights in mercy and in saving searching human beings!

It is risky—even dangerous—to attempt to do His work without sincere, personal preparation. He is loving and kind. He will forgive and He will empower. He wants to use us! He is waiting to do so, but there is this "prework" of personal preparation before we lead the church that is participating into revival and preparation.

"The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it by doing the work which God bids them, namely, cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

"The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. Seek for it, pray for it, believe for it. We must have it and Heaven is waiting to bestow it."

We cannot overstress the importance of revival and preparation. "The sermon that saves the sinner must first have saved the preacher." We have so much encouragement to participate with the Godhead in the greatest work on earth.

**God can use anyone**

God can use a "denying Peter" or a "persecuting Paul." He can use each of you if you surrender to be used. He will use preachers and lay persons.

I once sat with a notable preacher in a college classroom when we were both quite a bit younger. I discovered that he had a serious speech impediment. In my naiveté, I wondered, Why does he feel he is called to preach? He can't even talk. I am so glad I never discussed this with anyone else.

This young man graduated ahead of me and while I was struggling with tuition and classes and other problems, he went out and in his first campaign baptized well over 100 souls! That cured me and taught me a very wonderful lesson; God chooses whom He will and if the chosen chooses, He will empower him for the special work He wants him to do!

If the church wills, God will revive her for evangelism (or through evangelism). His army of true believers is moving forward to victory. God will "shake" and "refine" and "purify" His people . . . and He will pour out His Spirit in copious showers upon those who seek Him and are willing to be totally His.

The work will be finished with more spectacular manifestations of divine power than it began at Pentecost. Let us pray for this, work for this . . . and let us expect this! Then let us triumph with God's mighty army of saints through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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2. Ibid., 1:539.

**Year of World Evangelism**

continued from page 9

redemptive harvest, all that needs to be in place is our fullest cooperation with God and with one another.

Empowered by the operation of the Holy Spirit, grasping the mediating grace of Jesus Christ, let us, as we have never done before, cooperate with God and with one another in the Year of World Evangelism 2004. Our six-billion-people world will humbly fall at Jesus' dear feet. Only when the church's cooperation with God is truly complete, Against the church shall prevail not one of the gates of earth or hell. Since the Spirit of Jesus in us is more than able to do all things well.
Integrated evangelism

Alejandro Bullón

As a prophetic movement, Adventists believe that Daniel 8:14 and Revelation 14:6-12 speak of two important events—one in heaven, one on earth—that would take place at the end of the 2,300-year prophecy of Daniel 8:14. That prophecy brings us to October 22, 1844. The event in heaven, we believe, is a reference to a new phase in the heavenly ministry of Christ our High Priest—what we Adventists call the beginning of the investigative judgment. On earth, God would raise a remnant to proclaim to the world the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6-12) with a final judgment emphasis.

According to Revelation 14:6 the remnant are a people with a purpose. “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people” (Rev. 14:6, emphasis added).*

We often tend to ignore the preposition to. Yet, it is this word that defines the reason for our existence as God’s remnant people in the last days. Adventists appeared in the historic-prophetic time frame of 1844 to fulfill a specific purpose in God’s redemptive plan. The purpose was to preach the eternal gospel, in the context of judgment: “He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’” (Rev. 14:7).

The remnant have the eternal gospel, not only to tell it, study it, analyze it, or hear it, but to preach it. Peter understood this concept of proclamation clearly: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” That’s what we are, but for what? “That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“The church of Christ on earth was organized for missionary purposes, and the Lord desires to see the entire church devising ways and means whereby high and low, rich and poor, may hear the message of truth.”

The whole church in proclamation

God calls for the whole church to be about the task of accomplishing its mission. The whole church means everybody: great and small, leaders and followers, men and women, institutions and departments. “If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world.”

How can the whole church move as one person? Paul gives us a clue: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12).

Imagine a person crossing a very busy road that has no stop light. Each member of the person’s body fulfills its specific function, but each function helps the person fulfill the central purpose of crossing the road. The eyes do not look at the birds in the sky, but at both sides of the road. The legs help cross the road as quickly as possible, without lingering or meandering along. The ears are alert for the noise of other vehicles coming.

What would happen if the eyes, ears, and legs did not concertedly concentrate on the primary function of the moment, choosing instead to go their own way? The objective of crossing the road could not be fulfilled, and the person’s life would be in danger.

So it is with the church. The church can function as one only when every one that makes up the church is united to fulfill the purpose for which the church exists.

Let’s apply this principle to the institutions and departments of the church. These have two purposes. First, a specific one, related to the function of the institution or the department. Second, a general one, related to the

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mission of the church.

This means that a literature evangelist is not expected to be involved in healing; nor a physician to sell books, but both must do what they can to fulfill the primary gospel mission of the church. While each department and institution should fulfill its specific function, the fulfillment of this function should be related to the mission and purpose of the existence of the church—the proclamation of the gospel. When such cooperation in mission governs all the constituent parts of the church, integrated evangelism takes place.

**Integrated evangelism: A South American model**

How does integrated evangelism work in the South American Division?

“The secret of our success in the work of God will be found in the harmonious working of our people. There must be concentrated action. Every member of the body of Christ must act his part in the cause of God, according to the ability that God has given him.”

Harmonious work and concentrated action are significant to the success of any evangelistic endeavor. That’s what we try to do when we organize an evangelistic campaign in South America. Here’s an expression of the model we follow:

**1. Twelve months before the campaign:** ADRA launches a project of social service in the city chosen for the campaign. The Publishing Department sends a team of colporteurs to distribute books and magazines with our message. The Stewardship Department promotes revival campaigns and weeks of prayer in all Adventist churches in the city, encouraging the members to give to God their time, talents, and financial resources.

**2. Eight months before the campaign:** The Personal Ministries Department offers training courses and organizes the church in small groups with missionary pairs. These Bible instructors and volunteer evangelists prepare the soil for the campaign and the harvest.

**3. Six months before the campaign:** The Health Department conducts courses on how to stop smoking and how to deal with stress, and leads out in other health-related projects. The Communication Department visits with the media in the city and establishes contact with city authorities, making them aware of the impending evangelistic campaign, and creating goodwill in the community.

The Youth Department conducts youth camps and blood donation campaigns. The young people visit the hospitals taking “one rose with love” to the patients. On Mother’s Day, they visit the mothers of the city singing and giving a card in honor of them. The Education Department establishes Bible classes in each school for parents and students who do not belong to the church.

**4. Three months before the campaign:** The Women’s Ministries Department offers training courses for receptionists who will be helping during the campaign. They also mobilize the women of the church to be involved in the evangelistic campaign.

Finally the evangelist leads the evangelistic campaign with the active participation of all churches and different institutions and departments. When the campaign ends, nobody can say the work was just that of the evangelist. It has been a harmonious work, because all did what they knew. At the same time it has been a concentrated, concerted action because everybody had the same goal. In other words, the body fulfilled its purpose with the participation of each member.

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.*

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2 Italics mine.
3 Ibid., 75.
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Evangelism: Adventism’s heartbeat

Anthony Kent

Adventist church growth around the world is truly inspiring! It demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit, the faithfulness of a large portion of the membership, the clergy and the church’s leadership. Besides that, it indicates the credibility of a message that offers meaning, hope, and purpose.

As a church, we frequently remind ourselves that we were once small, but we have grown to global proportions. However, before we are tempted to feel too smug at the prospect of our growth, we need to consider a few facts.

A number of other Christian denominations are growing at a faster rate than the Adventist Church. For example, in 1998 alone, one denomination added 18 million people to its membership,¹ an accession considerably greater than the total baptized membership of the Adventist Church. Another denomination, which traces its origins to the early years of the 1900s, has at least 400 million adherents!²

Our achievement, therefore, good as it may be, must not lead us into a relaxed mood. Instead it should drive us to see ahead an opportunity for much larger harvest. We must pursue and study the “how’s” and “why’s” of evangelism, like never before! This is no time to dilute or compromise our message; to do so is to deny Christ, the biblical nature of our teachings, and our identity.

Difficult, yes; impossible, no!

Evangelism is difficult and always has been! When the apostle Paul was on his evangelistic journeys, his baptismal tallies in most locations were modest at best. For example, he baptized only a few in Philippi and Thessalonica, and hardly any at Athens. These figures were not startling, yet each candidate was cherished, loved, and celebrated.

Modern authors and practitioners recognize that there is no easy, “quick-fix” solution to the challenge of evangelism. Even the title of some books make this point: *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult.*³

I doubt there is a place on earth where the local residents believe it is easy to evangelize members of the local community. In Africa, at the conclusion of an evangelistic series, when 2,495 people had been baptized, it was explained to the visiting evangelist that the location was a tough area. While the evangelist was thrilled with the baptisms, he was told that if he was to present the same meetings in another nearby location, twice as many would have been baptized. Everywhere evangelism is regarded as difficult, but nowhere should it be regarded as impossible.

In some regions of the world it is possible to baptize thousands of people at the end of an evangelistic series. In such cases, usually a lot of preparatory work has preceded the actual campaign. Pastors train members in the various tasks involved in evangelism. Members get involved in visitation, small-group meetings, prayer sessions, publicity, etc. All these activities are foundational for successful public evangelism in any setting.

In regions of the world where baptisms occur at a low rate, where materialism and secularism reign supreme, it is important to remember that a great deal of effort may well be invested in each baptism. Years may be spent working with one individual—sharing a meal, spending time together in recreation, even as the evangelist waits for an opportunity for regular Bible studies. Such work involves an enormous investment of time, energy, interest, and prayer to help individuals on their spiritual journey.

Even in these difficult regions, we are seeing some wonderful evangelistic developments, such as Church Planting, Small Groups,⁴ and the use of technology in public evangelistic meetings. But ultimately the real success occurs when one believer, led by the Holy Spirit, puts
aside all inhibitions, applies his or her spiritual gifts, and engages the person who needs Jesus Christ.

Assuming that we have such believers who are willing to reach out in evangelism, the question still needs to be asked: How can the gospel seed be effectively sown in the face of differing and competing cultures, religions, nationalities, worldviews, and other varying orientations? I'd like to suggest the following seven points.

1. Be pastoral in soul winning
   The evil one has maimed, wounded, and damaged many lives. These victims, and there are multitudes, need "pastoral evangelism." This title is not just a pastor's job description; it also describes the needs of those who are to be the recipients of our ministry. They need "care evangelism."

   As a church we need to beware of "remnant triumphalism," which can readily have a "slash and burn" approach to the proclamation of the three angels' messages. Obviously we need to present the message with a fair share of confidence, but bigoted arrogance is to be avoided at all costs!

   Pastoral evangelism calls for a carefully cast balance. The pastor needs to show tenderness and compassion for the bruised, searching individual, but at the same time, challenge their comfort zone by the Adventist message and the biblical worldview.

2. Be courageous
   The sharing of the gospel requires courage and an element of risk taking. Ellen White puts it plainly: "There must be workers now who will push ahead in the dark as well as in the light, and who will hold up bravely under discouragements and disappointed hopes, and yet work on with faith, with tears and patient hope, sowing beside all waters, trusting the Lord to bring the increase. God calls for men of nerve, of hope, faith, and endurance, to work to the point."

   Courage is also required in other contexts. Nick Pollard makes the point that people develop their own worldview primarily from a wide variety of sources and they tailor it to fit their choice of lifestyle. "They are attracted to a belief, not because they see it is true, but rather because it justifies some behaviour which they find particularly appealing."

   These people need to be appropriately challenged! Sin still exists and judgment is a reality. Michael Green, writing about agnostics, says, "But many agnostics are not genuine. It is a convenient cloak for their personal selfishness. It is not that they can't believe in God. They don't dare to, because it would make too much of a challenge to the way they live."

   Green goes on to say, "I have found numbers of agnostics who have come to faith in Christ when the root of their unwillingness to face God was exposed and dealt with. Once that unwillingness is removed, the living God will not neglect the honest cry of the agnostic heart, 'Is anyone there?' He will make himself known."

   While courage is required to challenge people to a different worldview, proficient listening skills and an extra helping of tact and sensitivity are essential.

3. Prioritize soul winning
   Nurture is as important as soul winning. Without nurture and soul winning, death of the Advent movement is but one generation away. But, do our expenditure and staffing (which are indicators of priorities) reflect the importance of these two essential components of church growth?

   Examine your church or conference budget and staffing pattern, asking, "How does this expenditure/position, positively impact upon nurture/soul winning?" Such scrutiny will undoubtedly be a painful process. Alterations to budgets, assignments, and responsibilities immediately translate to pain and insecurity in personnel, who are just as valuable as those we are attempting to save. As painful as this process is, it needs to occur regularly, if we are going to be true to the commission.

   Looking beyond finance and staffing, particularly in the world regions where the Adventist Church is not growing strongly, another question needs to be asked: "Is evangelism (in any form) a significant priority of the church or have we all but given up on it, merely giving it lip service?"

   One of the real dangers facing the Adventist Church is an unwritten and unspoken attitude, primarily in the so-called "developed" parts of the world, that evangelism is "old-fashioned," "blue-collar" work, practiced largely by those who are "into that sort of thing" and the poor unfortunate individuals don't know any better. If this attitude takes root and prevails, it will spell the end of the "Movement."

4. Dream and experiment
   Every successful enterprise begins with a dream or experiment, somewhere by someone. All dreams and experiments are criticized! That's expected!

   The early church and the early Adventist Church took some time before they dreamed the experiment of sending missionaries to foreign cultures and fields. The experiment succeeded and continues to succeed. The experience of experimentation is stressful and harrowing but exciting. Surely we are at the time when "old men will [must] dream dreams, [and] young men will [must] see visions" (Joel 2:28, NIV).

5. Cherish the tested, tried, and true
   We have carried on many activities for generations in order to spread the gospel. Some of them are still effective, but every activity and procedure needs to be revisited periodically. While we must be open to new possibilities, we need to cherish the tested, tried, and true.

   I was reminded of the need for this, following the horrors of September 11, 2001. Ravi Zacharias, a prolific author on evangelism and apologet-
ics, tried to bring some understanding to the events of 9/11 by referring to the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 8 and by asking his readers to find security in the "coming of Christ." The Adventist Church certainly doesn't have a monopoly on the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 8, but dare we neglect their relevance for today?

While these prophecies may be commonplace for some, a relevant and correct application of biblical prophecies continues to be a "winner" in leading people to accept the gospel. In many parts of the world, Prophecy Seminars continue to be a valuable resource in leading people to Jesus.

6. Provide suitable training and resources

Appropriate training and resources are necessary to equip people to share and distribute the gospel seed. There is no better training than putting a learner beside an experienced, successful campaigner. We learn more when we work with a person in action than when attending a seminar on how a task is to be done.

Training and resources are invaluable. However, a blind reliance on the latest "fad" or some new equipment can dissolve the "can-do" spirit and ultimately be counterproductive in seed sowing.

7. Remember that seed sowers are not alone

It's very easy for seed sowers to feel lonely and isolated as they minister in places with unfamiliar values and worldviews. But such need not be the case, if the evangelist discards the lone ranger approach to witnessing, and embraces the community of believers and involves them as evangelistic partners.

Conclusion

Michael Green provides us with a challenging conclusion. "Evangelism and apologetics are not a matter of intellectual firepower and technique. They owe a lot more to friendly relationships and laughter, honesty and directness. It is a mistake to imagine that people are hardened against the gospel. They are simply bored by the way it is so often presented—too rigid, too rationalistic, too uncomprehending of other worldviews, too small minded. Let us make sure that no such accusation can be leveled at us."

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2 Ibid., 60.
6 Pollard, 36.
8 Ibid.
10 Green, 135, 136.
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Affluent West, slow church growth: Another look

Børge Schantz

The church growth movement, with impetus from the “mission fields,” reached the Western world around the early 1970s. At the foundation of the movement was Donald McGavran, and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

The genius of the movement is that studies in biblical theology, church and mission history, social and political sciences, church structure, and statistics are integrated and become a basis for growth principles applied to both mission fields and Western churches. This new approach has brought blessings but also some dangers.

When I began my studies at the School of World Mission at Fuller, the dean warned me not to be too engrossed in the extreme “pragmatism” of the church growth movement. He knew there were aspects, strategies, and fallacies of world outreach that were explained solely on the basis of human logic and science. He also had the numbers-game in mind, through which church statistics are easily turned into an end-in-itself ecclesiastical numerology. As time passed, and I have been involved in both teaching and practical evangelism, I have often thought of and agreed with his warnings.

Western churches: a bleak picture?
The December 2002 issue of Ministry presented some analyses and research studies related to the present state of American (Western) churches. George Barna was quoted, who in various books and articles (between 1993–2001) no doubt accurately and honestly presented some of his findings. It mentioned that 80 percent of the evangelical—even Seventh-day Adventist American churches had plateaued, and were ending up with a life span of about 70 years. The members were described as a “community of saints” living in “country clubs,” where they were “pampered” and “over-comfortable.”

These rather pessimistic sentences were presented to Ministry readers, many of whom have responsibilities in Western countries, where soul winning generally is hard work with meager results. What is the effect of publishing such facts to ministers who carry the burdens and heat of days, and who spend time and energy keeping the flock together?

Is the picture too one-sided? Are we getting too deep into the pragmatic aspects of church growth? Is it encouraging information for the pastors (up to 25 percent of ministers in the SDA world) who have been called to work in dry areas where soul winning is an uphill battle? Let me suggest that there are other aspects and explanations to consider when we view and evaluate the situation the churches in the West are facing today.

Where do Adventist children go to church?
In Europe (my location), we have Christian churches in various traditions that can report lifespans of considerably more than 70 active years. In my services in various parts of the world I know of active Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and some “mainline” Protestant churches, some of which can report more than 1,000 years of continual spiritual, social, and pastoral services to their respective communities. Canterbury Cathedral, for instance, has a sign at the entrance announcing that in that church continual services have been held for more than 1,500 years. This has been despite the increasing secularization of Western Europe.

No doubt, their uninterrupted existence through generations has many explanations—spiritually, socially, culturally, economically, even politically. The main reason, however, is that the parents in each generation brought up, taught, and instilled in their children that the Christian faith and
their active presence and support for the local community are significant to their personal life.

In our desire to see dynamic and filled churches we could, no doubt, have reached that goal ourselves if we had been able to bring up and keep our own children in the faith. Had we been more successful in this respect we would in many churches have had three generations of Adventists filling the pews. In many ways, it would not be necessary to win the unchurched in each generation in order to have an active church and overflowing pews. Those who were born into the churches would be able to carry the torch.

Referring to Deuteronomy 6:21, Ellen White has this counsel: “Here are the principles that we are not to regard with indifference. Those who have seen the truth and felt its importance, and have had an experience with the things of God, are to teach sound doctrine to their children. They should make them acquainted with the great pillars of our faith, the reasons why we are Seventh-day Adventists—why we are called, as were the children of Israel, to be a particular people, a holy nation, separate and distinct from all other people on the face of the earth. These things should be explained to the children in simple language, easy to be understood; and as they grow in years, the lessons imparted should be suited to their increasing capacity, until the foundations of truth have been laid broad and deep.”

Church growth principles and Advent message

Our original commission and prophetic calling was not, of course, just to bring our children into a meaningful relationship with Christ. It is not even limited to filling the churches with people who are sincere and happy Christians, although this would give us a sense of fulfillment and certainly is one of the main emphases of those in the church growth movement.

Our divine call is much more comprehensive and somewhat different. It is to warn the world about the soon coming of Jesus Christ and proclaim the three angels’ messages. This really means that we should not aim at getting people into the pews on Sabbath by any method. The main attraction should be the Advent message.

Ellen White’s counsel quoted above also underlines this special call and role in the world. Seventh-day Adventists are to bring a warning message to the world. Our work is to call people into a community of believers who are “distinct from all other people on earth” with a proclamation of lost biblical truth.

For that reason our main task is not just to get people into the churches. It is to invite those to join us who are looking for sound doctrine and who are heeding the last call before the advent of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps there is a notion here that, valuable as church growth principles are, they should always be geared and adapted to this special role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our goal is primarily not to grow in numbers. More specifically, we are here to call those who are seeking the truth for the last days. And we have to accept that they generally are few in numbers in some areas.

God’s right- and left-hand work?

Some church growth analysts say that 80 percent of Western evangelical churches have plateaued and lost their sense of mission. And these 80 percent want to be pampered rather than “get dirty” by involving themselves with winning the lost. They are comfortable Christians gathered as a “community of saints” in churches that are more like country clubs.

Is it fair to apply such an evaluation to Seventh-day Adventist churches in the affluent West? Perhaps there is some truth to such an evaluation, but isn’t it possible to understand that the Lord of missions has both a “right-hand” and a “left-hand” work in the world?
God's "right-hand work" could be seen as frontline activity where Adventist Christians are proclaiming the three angels' messages in many parts of the world, sometimes under trying circumstances, but mostly with good results. They constitute a growing number of national workers and missionaries who in spite of dangers choose to go to places that are ripe for the harvest.

The "left-hand work" takes place at traditional home bases. Here believers are specially called, among other things, to support the "right-hand work" as it goes on at the demanding frontier venues. In this calling, these so-called "country club" Christians have an important role to play in salvation history. They may not be living where many souls are won, but they are generally members of financially strong churches, with well-educated members in good positions.

This means they contribute considerable amounts of tithe and offerings to the general storehouse. This creates a setting in which sound financial strategies may be implemented in behalf of the world church as it presses forward with the activities of the "right hand," resulting in large additions to church membership, generally in areas that are less financially advantaged.

Another important contribution of the "left hand" is the supply of human resources. A vast majority of administrators, missionaries, teachers, theologians, pastors, and evangelists in the worldwide Advent movement are second-, third-, fourth-, and even fifth-generation Adventists. They generally stem from what some have perceived and termed the "pampered community of saints."

Thus, during a time when their churches do not have the great possibilities for wholesale numerical growth, these communities of saints have a very significant "left-hand work" to do. They supply the ripe fields with resources. They are keeping the wheels turning. God's left- and right-hand workers are supplementing one another and seeing to the growth of the body as a whole. Both left and right have their important place in the overall plan of the Lord of missions.

Is church growth always possible?

There are other important matters to consider when we evaluate Western churches in a merely negative way. Soul winning and church growth are sometimes legitimately seen as resulting from such factors as the four Ms: effective, charismatic ministers; active members; attractive methods; and convincing messages. There are many active "left-hand" churches with hardworking pastors/evangelists, all kinds of stimulating methods and ideas, keen members who are consistently reaching out, the spending of vast amounts of money on various evangelistic approaches, that still yield meager results. Let us consider some reasons for this.

1. Only people in transition are generally winnable. The most significant factors that cause people to come to Christ and the church are not evangelistic approaches. They are persons yearning for God, homesick for His kingdom. They are sinners longing for forgiveness and the peace that passes understanding. Often they suffer from a feeling of emptiness, depression, and insecurity. They are people with all sorts of needs, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. They are people in a state of transition on both a personal and community level. At the heart of things, they are in no way prompted by any church activity.

Generally people in affluent Western societies do not experience extreme distresses in the way their counterparts do in other societies. They are taken care of socially from the cradle to the grave. The places where people are turning by the thousands to Christ are countries deprived in various ways. The impressive reports of people turning to Christ come from the so-called developing world. A hardworking pastor in an affluent society cannot change this situation, and therefore should not feel guilty, or take the rather thoughtless criticisms of others too much to heart, even when such criticisms come from the "left-hand" ranks right around him or her.

2. An area can have reached a state of gospel saturation. At His ascension Jesus outlined the geographic sequences of future mission: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). He promised His apostles the power of the Holy Spirit in order for them to witness. First mentioned is Jerusalem, then Judea, and after Samaria to the ends of the earth. We notice that Galilee is not included in Jesus' outward vision. Still it was in this province that He grew up and spent most of His earthly ministry. Geographically speaking, if Samaria is mentioned, surely Galilee should also be included.

Is the reason for omitting Galilee the fact that Christ and the disciples, the majority of whom were Galileans, evangelized Galilee to her borders? They spent most of their time there. Of His 33 recorded miracles, 25 were performed in Galilee, and 19 of His 32 parables were told to Galileans. Galilee in the days of Jesus had a small population and covered only about 1,250 square miles (the size of the state of Rhode Island). Are we to conclude that after the Ascension there was not very much to do in Galilee? The people there had had their opportunities. It was now time to go to the world around Galilee.

Is there a lesson in this for us today? A town or an area can be evangelized to a saturation point in such a way that after a certain point few will embrace the gospel invitation. Further intensive work may be futile and a waste of energy and money.

This is often the case for SDAs living around major church institutions. Members are drawn to these places, not only because of employment opportunity, but also due to interesting church programs and church...
schools. Where this state has been reached, the task of the pastor/evangelist is largely to keep members faithful and to support mission in areas where people are winnable.

3. Other nongrowth factors. Three motifs from the New Testament will further help us to understand the hard times “left-hand” churches experience as far as growth is concerned.

First, the Bible speaks (Matt. 10:14; Luke 10:11; Acts 13:51) of cases where people do not welcome, refuse to listen, and even persecute the missionary. The biblical message in such a case is that the messenger should not waste time on such people and do as Jesus said: Shake off the dust of the feet and move on.

Second, on one occasion Paul was held back by the Holy Spirit from preaching in certain areas (Acts 16:6-10). The apostle proceeded to Macedonia where the first European converts were baptized. There are areas, which at a certain time are not ripe for the gospel. The messenger is advised to go on to the next place.

Third, the church in Ephesus received a warning: You have forsaken your first love and the lampstand could be removed from its place (Rev. 2:4, 5). The lampstand is a fitting symbol of the church’s proclamation of the gospel, resulting in growth. There can be churches not spiritually ready for new converts. The primary work in such situations is to evangelize the local lukewarm church.

These three situations reveal obstacles to church growth and planting. Such negative causes can stem from inside and outside the church. The lampstand is mobile: 2,000 years of church history have shown that the lampstand has moved from Western Asia to North Africa to Southern Europe. During the Reformation God moved the lampstand to countries in Northern Europe and from there to North America. Today it seems that the lampstand burns brightest in Latin America. Missiologists predict that in 50 years Africa will be the strongest Christian continent. This seems well on the way to being true.

In the Adventist experience we have also seen the phenomenon of the moving lampstand. Our movement was only a North American one 150 years ago. One hundred years ago it had developed into a “white man’s” movement, as it began to encompass Europe, Australia, and South Africa. Today these bastions only account for 10 percent of the world membership, promising even smaller proportions in the future. The lampstand has now moved to almost “every nation, tribe, language, and people.”

Advice to pastors in affluent churches

Do not lose courage. Don’t feel pity for yourself or be slack on your activities and initiative. Facing your special challenges, you have a very important call and tremendous responsibilities. It could be, of course, that your priorities should be changed. Here are some thoughts along this line:

1. Prepare and make your churches and members aware of the activities of the Spirit of God, who alone is able to make a church effective in His mission, so that it brings true growth. The day could well come when the lampstand moves back to your area. We should stand ready for this, striking to make an otherwise cool iron hot.

2. Conduct inspiring programs in the church and be diligent in regular home visitations. This will keep the members content and even proud of their church and her activities both at home and abroad. Let them understand that growth and progress in so-called mission fields is certainly also their reward, because they have been faithful in tithes and offerings, prayers, and even sending personnel to places where things are happening. Regular home visits will increase church attendance, tithe, and offerings.

3. Let special meaningful activities be geared to the children in the church. However, in doing this, we must be careful not to give the idea that the children are so distinct and favored that they begin to separate themselves from senior members. Although the programs for children should be somewhat different, it should still be made clear to them that they are by all means members of the body. It is vitally important that the worship service be an occasion each week where the whole family of God is together, singing the same hymns, listening to the same sermon. In the baptismal preparations for the youth, we need to emphasize the uniqueness of the Advent message while we make faith in Jesus the uppermost concern.

4. Public evangelism is a demanding but by no means hopeless undertaking. There are persons, also in the neighborhood of any church, even in prosperous Western areas, that are in states of transition—physically, emotionally, or spiritually. They are the winnable. Study your district to find out what the issues are and where the problems reside. Then design evangelistic programs that meet the needs of the people.

5. Pay close attention to church growth literature. But read it with a grain of salt. Above all, do not be discouraged by what you read. Always have in mind that in soul-winning work, you are not at a table of self-service. God is the only true Author of church growth, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Cor. 3:6, NIV, emphasis supplied).

Women in evangelism: The church’s buried talent?

Adly Campos

My travels to different parts of the world have led to a worrisome discovery: Serious concerns exist about the role of women in the church, particularly in its evangelistic mission. These reservations are shared not just by members and pastors, but also leaders and administrators. In the past, we as a church have not used to the maximum the skills and capabilities of women.

I cannot forget the day a church invited me to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings, while at the same time the church elders asked me not to preach from the pulpit. The church pastor was not sure how to handle the situation. But after some persuasion on my part, I was allowed to use the pulpit to preach that Sabbath morning.

On another occasion, at the end of a series of lectures, over 60 people responded to my altar call for baptism, but the elders, along with the pastor, decided to postpone the baptism for a future date when a male evangelist would follow up with more meetings.

It is gratifying to see that recently some of the officers of the church at all levels have been moving toward correcting this bias against women’s full participation in the life of the church. In fact, different departments are seeking ways to integrate women in a more direct way to fulfill the mission of the church. This is a step in the right direction.

Clearly, women can make a significant contribution in advancing the message and mission of the church.

The role of women in the Bible

The Old Testament speaks of several women who dedicated their time, homes, vocation, and unselfish service to God’s church, setting an example for today’s women. Indeed, the Scriptures recognize that in Christ and thus in His service, men and women are of equal value (Gal. 3:28).

Throughout history, men as well as women have made important contributions to the progress of God’s cause in different ways. Consider some biblical examples.

Deborah, the prophetess, led Israel through decisive battles and judged God’s people wisely, resulting in 40 years of peace and freedom from the Canaanites (Judges 4:4-7). Huldah, a messenger of God, delivered the word of God to Josiah even when the message was not a pleasant one (2 Kings 22:14-20). Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, was filled by the Holy Spirit and announced to Mary that the child she was carrying would be the Savior of the world (Luke 1:39-45). Anna, a prophetess, saw her faithfulness and devotion to God rewarded when she saw the Child who would be the Redeemer (Luke 2:36-38).

Jesus’ earthly ministry was supported not only by the 12 male disciples, but also by several women disciples who followed Him and served Him actively (Luke 8:1-3).

On the Resurrection morning, it was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus first appeared. Thus God gave her the privilege of announcing the immensely important news of the Resurrection to the disciples (John 20:11-18). Then there was Dorcas, who defined the compassionate concern involved in the gospel proclamation. Paul’s ministerial partners included several women, some of whom are named in Romans 16. Philip the evangelist had four daughters whom the Holy Spirit used to prophesy, supporting the mission of the infant church (Acts 21:8, 9).

All these biblical examples indicate not a token role for women in the church, but a vital contribution women can and must make in the life and outreach of the church.

Women in the Adventist Church

During the early, developmental years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, women
The tradition of reaching out to friends and neighbors to share in the support of humanitarian projects continues to be an important part of the ministry of Ingathering: Hope For Humanity. You can support this compassionate ministry of your church through your time, your prayers, and your financial gifts. Every person you talk with will be blessed. Every dollar that is raised goes entirely for humanitarian projects. The help received from you and your congregation is needed and appreciated.

Let it shine, let it shine!
The tradition of reaching out to friends and neighbors to share in the support of humanitarian projects continues to be an important part of the ministry of Ingathering: Hope For Humanity. You can support this compassionate ministry of your church through your time, your prayers, and your financial gifts. Every person you talk with will be blessed. Every dollar that is raised goes entirely for humanitarian projects. The help received from you and your congregation is needed and appreciated.

Let it shine 'til Jesus comes!

The tradition of reaching out to friends and neighbors to share in the support of humanitarian projects continues to be an important part of the ministry of Ingathering: Hope For Humanity. You can support this compassionate ministry of your church through your time, your prayers, and your financial gifts. Every person you talk with will be blessed. Every dollar that is raised goes entirely for humanitarian projects. The help received from you and your congregation is needed and appreciated.

In 1990, the General Conference appointed Rose Otis to be the first director of the department of Women's Ministries, to train and lead the women worldwide in different ministries of the church, including personal and public evangelism.

It was in 1990, I was convinced of my call to do public evangelism, and I began to hold weeks of evangelism in the churches of the Greater New York Conference. Then, in 1995 I resigned my work at the General Conference Ministerial Association to dedicate my time fully to public evangelism.

The role of women in evangelism today

Jesus gave the Great Commission not just to His disciples or to male members of the faith community, but to all His followers, including women. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the world” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

Peter’s understanding of the gospel proclamation was both prophetic and universal: “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit’” (Acts 2:17, 18, italics supplied).

Today women make up close to 72 percent of the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What an enormous potential of strength and talents to advance the church’s mission! If only all the women were challenged and trained to become partners in the fulfillment of the gospel commission.

Pastors with vision know how to value the women in their congregations and how to give them opportunities to develop their talents as teachers and nurturers of children and youth, music directors in the
worship hour, directors in Personal Ministries, and leaders in other avenues of service.

Women, trained and motivated in witnessing, can reach women in homes where no male evangelist can enter. They can serve as Bible instructors, hold cottage meetings, and lead out in public evangelism where opportunity presents itself.

Perhaps, we need to acknowledge the great need we have to educate women participating actively in our worship services.

The presence of women on the church platform is a testimony of our appreciation of them. Their collaboration and participation should be accepted and recognized. When a woman is invited to preach, this testifies to the healthy open-mindedness of the church and its pastor. The best teaching we can offer our members is our own example, practicing what we believe as leaders of the church. I praise God for those pastors who have this Christian attitude toward women.

Every church should become a training center for evangelists for everyone. Every pastor who is truly concerned for this aspect of the ministry converts the congregation into a soul-winning army, bringing them to a joyful experience in their service to the Lord.

A few years ago I was invited to conduct an evangelistic campaign in Cape Town, South Africa. As is my custom, before I arrived, I sent to the pastor a set of Bible lessons, "Building a Happy Home," which the members of the church used in doing the groundwork for the meetings.

The pastor efficiently organized the whole church into groups who visited the families in the community with the purpose of studying the Bible course with them.

When I arrived at the airport, the pastor welcomed me by saying: "Sister Campos, if we don't baptize one soul at the end of the evangelistic meetings, I will still be very happy and satisfied." When I asked him why he would say such a thing, he simply replied: "The church members have been so busy doing the Lord's work in evangelism, that they have forgotten all about their problems, and the people are united in one purpose: soul winning."

**Ellen White and women in evangelism**

Even though Ellen White lived most of her life in the nineteenth century, she was ahead of her time when she talked about the participation of women in the preaching of the gospel in varied ways. Here are a few sample statements Mrs. White has written along this line:

"There is a wide field in which our sisters may do good service for the Master in the various branches of the work connected with His cause."

"In this time of crisis the Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis and He will work through them. If they are imbued with the sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Savior will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the heart of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed."[2]

"Women can be the instruments of righteousness rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth."

On one occasion Sister White said to a church member: "Teach this, my sister. You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd when-ever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master. Personal consecration and sanctification to God will accomplish, through the most simple methods, more than the most imposing display."

All these inspired passages have guided me to commit myself to public evangelism. It was my privilege to be born in a Christian home where I saw my father do evangelism. On many occasions I collaborated with my husband in his evangelistic meetings as a singer.

God has allowed me to work with well-known international evangelists, such as Elders Carlos Aeschlimann, Kenneth Cox, Milton Peverini, and others, learning from them the ways to present the gospel before an audience, bringing people to Jesus’ feet.

But it wasn’t until 1990, when I was invited to lead out in a youth week of prayer in New York, that I experienced God’s call to do public evangelism. Since then, 12 years have passed. God has taken me to make presentations in auditoriums and stadiums to preach His glorious gospel to thousands of people.

God has shown me in a personal way that women need not have their talents buried. They have a role in the life of the church, and God is willing and wanting to use them if they respond to the call of the harvest. The Holy Spirit will empower anyone who like Isaiah will respond, “Here am I, send me.”

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3. Ibid., 471. Italics supplied.
“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1, 2).

It was to be a once-in-a-lifetime fly-fishing adventure on the famous Yakima River. Like most of my fishing experiences with Dad, we pulled out at such an unearthly hour nobody saw us leave. Ever since childhood, when I began following my father up rivers and down rivers, over lakes and through lakes, I’ve tried to reason with him. “Dad, if the birds aren’t awake and the worms aren’t awake, it just goes to reason that the fish probably aren’t awake either.” But when it comes to fishing with Dad, reason has little to do with it. It’s more about passion.

We had been warned that it got very hot in the canyons. We were prepared for it. The only problem was that at that early hour it was 42 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade—and everything in the canyons was shade! The man with the raft looked at us in our shorts and T-shirts and said encouragingly, “It will warm up when the sun comes up over the canyon walls.” No sweat. Literally, no sweat. The problem was, it would be four more hours before that happened!

Pushing off from shore, I whipped the oars out and paddled wildly. It wasn’t my fervor for fishing . . . it was just that I was freezing and wanted to keep moving. Dad, on the other hand, was casting as soon as we hit the water. I paddled hard across the fast current, ducking my head at appropriate times so that I wouldn’t be Dad’s first catch.

At last I had us in the drift I wanted. Putting down the oars, I threw out the drag anchor and reached for my fly rod—it wasn’t there! I frantically searched the boat—which only takes about ten seconds when you’re in a raft.

My heart sank, probably much like the fly rod had. It was gone. Worse yet, it wasn’t my fly rod—it was my father’s, a beautiful rod and reel. I must have knocked it out of the boat when I put the oars in. I should have been more careful. I should have taken better care of it. But I hadn’t and it was gone.

Dad was sitting in the front of the raft—fishing, humming, happy, and content. I sat in the back of the raft—not humming, not happy, and certainly not content. It was going to be a long day! There I sat, a frozen fisherman without a fishing rod on our once-in-a-lifetime fly-fishing adventure.

I wondered, How should I tell him? How should I break the news? What about, Nice weather we’re having, Dad. Oh, by the way, your expensive fly rod is somewhere at the bottom of this huge river. No, it wasn’t nice weather.

What about, Hey, Dad, having any luck? Catch anything? Rainbow trout? Wild trout? Brown trout? Fly rod? No, that wouldn’t work. What about, Dad, if you had a friend who lost a fly rod in this river, how well would his fly rod float? Or perhaps the mathematical approach, Dad, what do you think the odds are of going on a fly-fishing trip and losing the fishing pole in the river before your first cast?

Finally I gave up. I decided on the direct approach with a plea for help. I relived the moment, “Hey, Dad, have you seen my fly rod?” The two of us made a frantic ten-second search of the raft. It still wasn’t there.

So I made a very long fly-fishing trip without a fly rod.

Whenever the raft guide came by to check on us that day, I rowed harder. He took pictures of us along the journey. In every picture, I am rowing. He asked how we were doing and if there was anything he could get us. My dad said I should tell him what happened, and he would probably get us another pole to use. But I was too proud and too embarrassed to admit what had happened. So whenever he
Every Sabbath morning your Sabbath School helps members know about the worldwide work of the Adventist Church. Your congregation’s support of Adventist Mission makes possible the daily work of Adventist missionaries at the forefront of telling the story of Jesus.

Here are some of the ways your congregation can support Adventist Mission:

**Pray.** Include missionaries and the church’s worldwide mission work in the prayer ministry of your Sabbath School and its classes.

**Report.** Use stories, videos, and other materials to give reports on Adventist Mission around the world.

**Adopt.** If your church has a special connection to a specific missionary, share letters and information from that missionary with the congregation.

**Give.** Your congregation’s financial support makes possible the funding of the church’s mission work. Some of that comes through World Budget giving, but much of it is given during the Sabbath School offering each week. Please remember this important offering in your program each week.

Thank you for your support of Adventist Mission. In a globe wracked by uncertainty, the message of the return of Jesus to our world has never been more relevant. Your support is helping to preach the gospel throughout the entire world.

Seventh-day Adventist Church
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Making a world of difference.
came by, I rowed all the harder. So he not only thought I was a fisherman, but a kind and thoughtful fisherman!

When he wasn't around, I had plenty of time to reflect on my once-in-a-lifetime Yakima fly-fishing adventure. Sitting in that dingy, I had time to go through all the stages of grief—some more than once—like denial, anger, bargaining . . . !

That day I did a lot of things. Eventually the sun came up over the canyon walls, and I thawed, and then burned. But I didn't do what I went to do. I went to fly fish the Yakima, but I didn't. I got up early. I froze. I worked hard. I reflected. I got blisters. I rowed and rowed. I covered a lot of river. But I didn't get anywhere.

I wonder if you see what I'm getting at? Maybe there is something we can gain by my foolish loss. Without a pole, you are not on a fishing trip. You are just a goosebump-making, backbreaking, muscle-aching rafter. You are only an embarrassed sightseer without a rod and reel. You are not a fisherman. How quickly you can paddle doesn't prove you are. The type of lunch you bring doesn't confirm it. Just because you take pictures along the way doesn't make you a genuine fisherman. You can dress like a fisherman. You can have all the right lures and flies. You can even know how a person got clean before the mercy seat—the only way it will ever really be seen.

Saul knew what kind of meat was clean and what kind was unclean, but for the life of him he didn't truly know how a person got clean before God. He could preach about judgment, and he could judge his brother, persecute him too. He could crush the hurting and whip the weak, but he didn't know how to preach sermons that could bring hope and help to desperate people. What a waste of breath. What a waste of time. What a squandering of a rich inheritance. What a way to trash a God-given calling.

So how could he share life more abundantly with others? Saul preached standards and claimed orthodoxy, but he didn't really know Christ. What a dangerous condition to be in. What a dangerous situation for those in his audience.

**Paul's determination**

Paul wants us to know that: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Paul knew what it was like to have everything for the trip except the pole. He knew what he was talking about. Paul the Christian had been Saul the Pharisee. Before the road to Damascus he was evangelistic without the gospel. What a waste!

Before Damascus he was fervent. He was sincere. He was passionate. He quoted scripture. He upheld standards. He fasted and prayed. He went to all the right schools. He went to all the right synagogues. He was at all the right stonings. He could carry his Bible and beat people at the same time. He could preach with conviction, even without the Cross. He could hold coats and cast stones because he was religious, but not redeemed. He was strict, but not saved. He could watch Stephen look into heaven and accuse Stephen of being in league with hell. Saul could quote scripture and with the same lips consent to Stephen's murder.

Saul upheld the law, but not the Cross. He knew how to count to seven and which day truly was the Sabbath day, but he didn't see the grace in it. He understood everything about the sanctuary except the heart of it: the blood of the Lamb and the mercy seat. Somehow he forgot that the only way anyone could ever see the law of God would be to look through the blood of the Lamb and the mercy seat—the only way it will ever really be seen.

Saul knew what kind of meat was clean and what kind was unclean, but for the life of him he didn't truly know how a person got clean before God. He could preach about judgment, and he could judge his brother, persecute him too. He could crush the hurting and whip the weak, but he didn't know how to preach sermons that could bring hope and help to desperate people. What a waste of breath. What a waste of time. What a squandering of a rich inheritance. What a way to trash a God-given calling.

**Crooked smiles and cold hearts**

When people come to a church that has forgotten Christ, keeping the law becomes a matter of merit—not a natural heart response. When people come to a church that has left the Holy Spirit behind, they lose their smiles.

They become critical—with crooked, strained smiles, pointed fingers and stone-cold hearts. They persecute others. They talk more about the sins of the saints than the blood of the Savior. They talk about fear and evil and say little about faith. They talk about man and even the devil, but scarcely utter a meaningful word about our saving God.

They talk about the Holy and the Most Holy, and yet in their cruelty there is nothing holy. They forget all about the mercy seat. Have mercy! They know what happens to a person when they die, but they have not experienced what happens to a person when they really live with and for Jesus. They have the biblical understanding of the fires of hell, and yet have not felt the saving fire of the Holy Spirit. They have convictions—but no Cross. Perhaps worst of all, they are sincere—but not saved!

Those of us who have gone fishing without a pole know this is true. Saul found out it was true. Saul had proclaimed and stood for all kinds of orthodoxy, but he didn't know the gospel. Until on a road heading to Damascus, on his way to persecute somebody, he met Someone. On his way to imprison others, he was set free. On his way to stone somebody, Saul was offered the Rock of Ages.

Then the one who had been taught so much in seminary, but knew so little says, "I am determined." The Greek word is krino. It means I have thought it through, I have resolved, I have made a definite decision not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Pastor, evangelist, how determined are you?

Some may think that Paul tends to exaggerate at times. But I say he wasn't prone to exaggeration—he just knew what it was like to go fishing without a pole, and he was determined never to do it again.

When Saul met Jesus on that road, it so changed his life that he had to
change his name. He was a different man. He still traveled, but he traveled differently. He still brought news, but now it was the “good news.” In fact, it was the greatest news of all. It was the story of Jesus.

* * * * *

Just a day after my disastrous fishing trip, Dad wanted to take my little son fishing. I guess he wasn’t giving up, at least on the next generation of Halvorsens. We drove down the road about a mile to the Point Defiance docks in Tacoma, Washington. My son, Ronnie III, was probably six or seven at the time. I stopped to buy some bait at the little store on the dock. I bought one small herring. I still remember that with tax it cost 11 cents. The clerk looked at me strangely as he took my money.

I took the bait out to the dock. Little Ronnie’s eyes were big with excitement as Dad handed him his pole and I cut up the bait and put a small piece on the hook. I picked up Ronnie and the pole so he could see over the railing as we dropped the line. The other fishermen on the dock had their lines cast way out, dreaming of hooking a big salmon. They let their hooks and fancy bait sink deep into the current. Ronnie’s line was just at the surface so he could watch the little fish that were there, biting at the bait that was just about their size.

I nodded sheepishly at Ronnie as he giggled, and the other fishermen watched. I explained that it was his first time fishing. I could see that they were not impressed with our technique.

We were both holding on to the pole when suddenly out of the corner of my eye I saw a silver flash. The pole bent in half. The drag on our reel was singing. You should have seen the excitement! Other fishermen were getting their lines out of the water and coming close to watch us land a huge salmon. They were applauding the little kindergartner who had caught the biggest fish of the morning. I just smiled with joy for my son—and thought to myself, What a difference it makes to have a fishing rod and hold on to it tightly.

Ronnie not only caught the biggest fish that day, he changed everybody’s fishing technique. On the way to the car, I looked back at the dock. All those big fishermen were putting tiny pieces of bait on their hooks and holding their poles over the railing with their bait just at the surface.

“I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Next to Jesus, Paul may well be the greatest evangelist the Christian church has ever seen. And it’s no wonder. Do you see how tightly he holds on to his fishing pole? 

Excerpted from the sermon “Adventist Alzheimer’s” by Ron Halvorsen, Jr.
Paradigm shifts in evangelism today

Ron Gladden

You may think you live where you do, but in fact you are living in Athens! The United States, Canada, Britain, Europe, and Australia are amazingly similar to the Athens of Paul’s day. Cynicism, confusion, and resistance to truth marked Athens then, and mark much of our world today.

In Acts 17, it says that Paul preached in three cities—Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. When he later had time to reflect, it is not difficult imagining Paul thinking that these places weren’t anything alike; that they were almost like three different planets.

Thessalonica: conversions, but stiff persecution

It was Sabbath and Paul entered the synagogue in Thessalonica. In an act of audacity, he proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ. Conversions occurred, especially among the Greeks. “But the hard-line Jews became furious over the conversions. Mad with jealousy, they rounded up a bunch of brawlers off the streets and soon had an ugly mob terrorizing the city as they hunted down Paul and Silas” (Acts 17:5, The Message). To save their lives, the believers whisked the evangelists out of town under the dim glow of suffocated stars.

Berea: Lots of conversions, no internal persecution

The next town was different. It was an easy place to work. Paul preached, people pondered, and many were persuaded. Luke reports that “these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11).

Even more exciting, it was apparently the Jews who led the way in receiving the gospel. The Bereans absorbed the truth eagerly. Later, persecution arrived from Thessalonica, but none from Berea itself.

Athens: few conversions

Then there was Athens—a virtual junkyard of idols. “It is plain to see that you Athenians take your religion seriously” (Acts 17:22, The Message), Paul declared. Athens was indeed very religious. Worshipers chose their god of the month from an idol-rich menu. Their fascination with theories revealed a frightening mix of intelligence and naivety. The result? Few received the Messiah.

Paul never planted a church in Athens. Yet Ellen White heaps praise on Paul for his efforts and his methods in Athens. She calls his ministry there a “victory he gained for Christianity in the very heart of paganism.”

Paul wasn’t used to this kind of victory, but then this was Athens.

Our twenty-first-century world

The cities of Acts 17 help us understand our world today. When it comes to spiritual receptivity, interest varies widely from place to place, even from nation to nation. But the nature and degree of receptivity generally corresponds to one of these three cities.

Thessalonica: restricted nations. Some countries of the world are like Thessalonica. We preach the gospel and people are converted, but persecution results. All these countries are dominated either by religious or communist extremists. In these places Adventists and other Christians are generally mystified as to how to advance the kingdom.

Berea: open nations. Other countries are like Berea. It’s fun to evangelize in Berea! In such places a team of workers goes to work and thousands are converted. The laws of the land support freedom to practice and propagate religion. People are ravenous for Bibles and for the truth.

Consider Pastor Dave, a friend of mine, who recently conducted a reaping series in a “Berean” country. He returned to America
with his face glowing like Moses' after Sinai. Stories spilled out of him. His photos were astonishing. He insisted I see every one. He described how from where he had stood, high on a platform as he preached each evening, it had been impossible to see where the crowds of people ended. On the final Sabbath, hundreds of brand-new Christians followed Jesus in baptism. I praised God with him at the mighty moving of the Spirit. Evangelism in Berea is thrilling. It gives us hope. It assures us that God is still blessing the church.

*Athens: first-world nations.* Pastor Dave returned to his own hometown and preached a reaping series. Same preacher, same sermons, same computer, same Holy Spirit. He baptized 11 people. What is the difference? He lives in “Athens.”

The United States is Athens. Canada is Athens. Australia, New Zealand, and most of Europe are Athens. Spiritual receptivity is different in these places, especially among the majority population, and we shouldn’t be surprised.

Nationally speaking, many of us are stuck in Athens. The gospel commission demands that we minister where we are.

Here are our options. First, we can ignore the people of Athens and conclude that they don’t care about God. We can throw up our hands in pretended concern and say, “They know where our churches are. If they were interested, they would come.”

Or, instead, we can resolve, “We are not afraid of Athens. Our mission is clear: to take the message of Jesus right into the heart of the toughest places on earth. Under the Holy Spirit, we will not shrink back. In fact, we will prevail.”

**Some basic assumptions**

- Soul winning is in the Adventist DNA. Clearly, our approach is less effective than in years gone by, but we still truly care. If we knew what to do, we would do it.
- The people of Athens are spiritually polarized. While many drift off into postmodernism or other orientations and religions, thousands from all ages and backgrounds are joining churches. In either case, everyone is searching for something better.
- What works in Berea may or may not work in Athens.
- What used to work in Athens in a previous era is only effective if it’s still relevant today.
- When the church lives the gospel and communicates the message in ways appropriate with the times, we will experience a vigorous revival.

**Our evangelism is too narrow**

Our current evangelistic methods are OK, but it seems to me that they’re too narrow. When our local church announces that it is planning to “do evangelism,” we all know what to expect. Here’s what we envision.

- We will host an event four nights a week for five weeks or so.
- A professional will make the presentations, sometimes in person, sometimes via satellite.
- The event will interrupt the life of the church; when it’s over, we’ll get back to doing church as usual.
- We will spend a lot of money advertising to people whom we’ve never met.
- We will measure success by the number of baptisms.
- It will appeal to an ever-shrinking minority in our community.
- Two issues contribute to the shrinking. First is time. Suppose you receive a flyer in the mail inviting you to attend a seminar on your favorite topic (trekking in Nepal; remodeling your house; or whatever). Then you notice that it meets four nights a week for five weeks. Would you attend? Could you attend? Probably not.
- The second issue has to do with curiosity about the Bible. According to one study, 4 percent of Americans say they would be interested in attending a seminar to learn more about the Bible and prophecy. If we plot the 4 percent on a pie chart, it’s clear that this is a minority interest.

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**Helping People Pray**

We tend to think that prayer is what good people do when they are doing their best.

It is not.

We suppose that there must be “insider” language that must be acquired before God takes us seriously in our prayer.

There is not.

Prayer is elemental, not advanced, language.

It is the means by which our language becomes honest, true, and personal in response to God.

It is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God.

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As time goes along in places like "Athens," we find ourselves having to spend even more money to attract a crowd from this ever-narrowing slice of the population. And what about the other 96 percent? Consciously or not, they are all seeking for God. How will we reach them?

Now consider the evangelism scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hostile</th>
<th>Devoted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-10</td>
<td>+10</td>
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On this scale, someone who is, spiritually speaking, a long way from God is a minus ten. The steps toward the cross indicate a warming up toward Christianity until, at the cross, the person chooses to be a Christ-follower. The steps east of the cross denote spiritual growth with the eventual goal of becoming a definitely devoted disciple or what I call a 3-D Christian.

Reflect on the 4 percent who say they would be interested in attending a seminar to learn more about the Bible and prophecy. What is true about them in relationship to the evangelism scale? Most of them believe in absolute truth and would like to learn more about the Bible.

If we were to plot them on the scale, they would be very close to the cross, at minus one or two. But when our only evangelism is the semi-often event, we appeal to people close to the cross and unwittingly exclude the rest. Since they stay away from our meetings, we make the tragic assumption that they don’t care about God.

Average Americans are somewhere in the neighborhood of minus six on the scale—they do indeed care about God. In their heart of hearts, they know there is a final answer. Sure they’re confused about the Bible. Ask them what word comes to mind when they think of church and their answer will fall somewhere between “boring” and “leave me alone.” But in their own way, they are seeking. And we can reach many of them with the gospel.

Paradigm shifts

If we’re ready to broaden our definition of evangelism, we have to start with four paradigm shifts.

1. The goal of the gospel commission is to make disciples. For years, we were confused about the gospel commission. We thought Jesus said, “Go ye therefore and baptize” when He actually said, “Go and make disciples.” So the conference president demands to know, “How many did you baptize?”

But as rare as penguins in Chicago are churches with a discipleship track to help the new member actually become a definitely devoted disciple.

And who exactly is a disciple? One who has the character and priorities of Jesus. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus says, “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12, NIV). The implications of these words are indeed profound.

Traditional evangelism starts with people who are already close to the cross. Through four to five weeks of meetings, the Holy Spirit moves them a notch or two to the point of decision which, on the evangelism scale, is represented by the cross. With their clothes still wet from their baptism, the evangelist tows his trailer to the next town. And in so many cases that is about all that is done about the “discipling” of the new believer.

This, in all honesty, largely explains the high apostasy rate among persons baptized through a series of meetings.
2. Evangelism is not an event; it is a process. Every farmer knows that you reap in a different season from the one in which you sow. Unfortunately, few in church leadership have figured out that this is also true in evangelism.

Winning people to Jesus has always been a process. Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6, NKJV).

“I’ll do my part,” Paul says, “then I trust that God will bring Apollos along to water the seed. And I’m confident that God can be counted on to give the increase.”

When evangelism becomes more than just an event, thousands will find salvation. But let’s be honest. We’re addicted to the quick fix. In effect, the evangelist is taught to think, Who needs Apollos? If I don’t get the decision now, they may never make it.

The event we call evangelism has unwittingly pushed aside the discipling process as though it was an unwanted weed in a flowerbed. Almost anything other than this fast-track evangelism is pooh-poohed as not really evangelism. Which brings us to our third paradigm shift.

3. We have to redefine some terms.

Evangelism. If the four- to five-week event is basic to our definition of evangelism, what does that say about everything else the church does? It isn’t evangelism, or at least it isn’t really evangelism. And since it isn’t, we don’t really try much else. After all, at best anything else is seen to be something second best. So, we shouldn’t be too surprised when, apart from the short evangelistic series, baptisms are an infrequent occurrence, and that we therefore are all the more determined to have as many “evangelistic meetings” as possible, thus perpetuating our struggles.

Everything a church does can and should have an evangelistic dimension. Accordingly, it is urgent that we change our vocabulary. We have to stop calling the four- to five-week event “evangelism.” It is a part of evangelism—a vital part when done as one element in the process. But by
itself, it is not evangelism. Instead, let’s call it reaping, or the harvest event, or some other contemporary name.

Rewind to the 1950s, and you’ll find that what we currently call evangelism used to, in fact, be reaping.

What have we done today? Taken the six-week reaping series, compressed it down to five, four, or even three weeks. And since we almost never have contact with non-Adventists before the series begins, we advertise to total strangers who don’t even know we are Adventists, then turn the extra-short series into the entire process of evangelism.

We urge people to hurry and get baptized, then when they leave, we scratch our heads and lament that the information transfer was not enough to ground them in the church.

Evangelist. The second term we must redefine is “evangelist.” If the person who tows his trailer into town—or speaks from a distant city via satellite—is the evangelist, what does that say about the rest of us? We aren’t. And since we aren’t, it seems perfectly logical that we shouldn’t worry too much about doing it. We’ll just leave the job to the pro.

We have to redefine the word. If the four- to five-week event is called “reaping,” what should we call the person who leads the reaping? The obvious answer is “reaper.” So we have chosen to call this person the “reaping specialist.”

So we have to change our vocabulary. What we used to call evangelism we now call reaping. The evangelist is now the reaping specialist. And everyone else in the church becomes an evangelist in a way that matches their spiritual maturity and gifts.

Sanctuary. I think we need to redefine the word sanctuary. What, literally, does the word mean? The dictionary says: “A place of refuge or asylum. A reserved area in which animals or birds are protected.”

When we refer to the room where we worship God as the sanctuary, we aren’t really being biblical. Since the Cross, the Bible speaks of two sanctuaries; one is in heaven, the other is the human heart. Furthermore, we send the wrong message when we call the place we meet the sanctuary. The common understanding is that a sanctuary is for protection. But from what does the church protect us?

I think the church could more easily recapture its passion for mission if we stopped reinforcing the notion that the world is bad, the church is good and we come together to protect ourselves from evil. That way of thinking, in fact, lies near the root of our problem.

4. The Great Commission does not say, “Come,” it says, “Go.” This paradigm shift is especially profound. We act as if the gospel commission was given to the lost, telling them to come to our churches. So we create events: health programs, reaping series, Bible study classes, then hope people will come to us.

Just to be sure, I looked up the word “go” in the dictionary. It says: “To move or travel. To move away from a place; depart. To function properly, as in: The car won’t go.” The problem, it seems, is that many believers won’t go.

Society has changed. People no longer bring their kids to church as they did. This is for an obvious reason: Their kids are grown up. If we operate merely on the Come paradigm, we will fail. Especially today, the church must Go. Which brings us to another word that needs to be redefined.

Seeker. For years, we have used the word “seeker” to refer to lost people who are searching for God. It’s a reasonable definition, but it is based on Come instead of Go. The church must now take the initiative. It must move from being the inviting church to becoming the infiltrating church.

It is not enough for the church to be “seeker-sensitive.” The church itself must become the seeker. The ultimate seeker is Jesus Christ. To be faithful to our mission, to follow in His footsteps, we are today’s seekers.

When every member embraces that vision and the church organizes accordingly, we will begin to reach the lost in Athens in significantly greater numbers. Not only would that be awesome for the church, it would thrill the heart of God.

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2 World Prophets of Bible in Knowing, 2nd ed., (Philadelphia, 1985). “We reach a critical mass when the true spiritual population is in the world continues not easily exposed to the gospel”
3 Evangelism research conducted by Gospel Marketing Group (report in Missing gets evangelism, 140-145
4 Death of the Legal Sabbath
5 former Rosenthal group claims that less than 1 out of 10 American adults believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth
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Every minister’s recurring question is “What shall I preach?” I hope you ask earlier than the evening before your sermon. Friday-night specials are as deadly as a handgun to your church.

Our approaching Year of World Evangelism encourages every congregation to plan special outreach activities. What a harvest will result from uniting in concentrated soul-winning efforts!

Also consider the evangelistic potential of your regularly scheduled services. The times when your members already come together provide excellent opportunity to preach with the purpose of expanding the numbers and deepening the spirituality of your members.

Now is the time to plan your preaching for an entire year. Heaven will bless your planning process and the Holy Spirit will awaken you to deeply spiritual facets of the themes you intend to proclaim. Of course, God cannot give advance insight if you fail to plan. How would you even comprehend God’s voice if you are unaware of what you expect to preach?

So what shall I preach? Preach Jesus! “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and power. Build confidence in the authority of Scriptures and the transforming power of spiritual communion through study and prayer.

Preach Jesus as Creator. Increase faith by pointing to the choice of belief in a literal six-day creation. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are invisible” (Heb. 11:3).

Preach Jesus as Conqueror. Just as He made full atonement for our sins at the Cross, Jesus came forth from the tomb with glorious victory over death and the grave. In the great controversy between good and evil, the ultimate triumph of God’s love is assured.

Preach Jesus as Compassionate High Priest. Just as He secured our salvation at Calvary, Jesus applies the benefits of His redemption through His powerful ministry of intercession on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary.

Preach Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath. The seventh-day Sabbath will become a hollow and empty ritual apart from a dynamic relationship with the Lord of the Lord’s Day. Demonstrate the beauty of a sanctuary in time devoted to rest, worship, and fellowship.

Preach Jesus as Desire of Nations. Although peace on earth is unlikely to occur until His kingdom is established, Jesus can reign as Prince of Peace in our hearts to establish love for neighbors, empathy for strangers, justice for the disenfranchised, and to eliminate racism, abuse, violence, and class or gender discrimination among His believers.

Preach Jesus as Empowering Lord. Salvation by grace alone through faith in His marvelous gift leads believers to follow Jesus’ own example of good works. Obedience is never the method, but always the result of salvation. All His biddings are enablings and through Christ’s strength we can do all things.

Preach Jesus as Exemplary Model. Do you want to raise the standards? Lift up Jesus. Avoid behavioral check lists and advocate Jesus’ own wholistic pattern. Portray Jesus as the Founder of marriage, the Friend of children, and the Partner who shapes families for eternity. Show how Jesus gives abundant life now and invite the response of faithful use of time, talents, treasure, and testimony.

Preach Jesus as Judge. Good news in the judgment shows Jesus as our Judge, our Defense Advocate, and our Brother as He stands for His people. Justified, sanctified, and glorified by Jesus. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

Preach Jesus as Enabling Head of His Church. God has raised a prophetic people to accomplish His purpose. He provides His church’s needs through the Holy Spirit’s gift so that we lack no good thing to fulfill His great commission.

Preach Jesus as Coming King. Keep the blessed hope alive in the minds of your members. Develop joyous anticipation of resurrection reunion and focus on the promises of His near return.

When you have exhausted these topics, then ask the question again. What shall I preach? The answer will remain the same: Preach Jesus!

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