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A word about our great Saviour
One of the most influential preachers of the last 50 years shares a message based on 1 Timothy 1:12–17.
James Earl Massey

You did not know us, but you loved us: An interview with ADRA
This ministry does more than just respond to disasters. ADRA is the Adventist Church’s clearest expression of its commitment to acts of justice, poverty reduction, and responding to human needs and human rights.
Nikolaus Satelmajer | Willie E. Hucks II

Forgiveness: An essential in Christian life
Who benefits from forgiveness? And why is this so important for the Christian?
Colin T. Richardson

How to avoid destructive behavior
There’s no denying the fact that many pastors face sexual temptation. How does one recognize the warning signs? What can be done about it?
Lawrence G. Downing | C. Richard Johnson

Worship: Maintaining theological soundness and cultural relevance
[Part two of a two-part series]
In Revelation 14:6, 7, John offers an integrative framework for worship leaders to forge authentic worship services. How does this text inform our thinking?
Alain Coralie

Growing leaders through coaching
Mentoring is a critical element in pastoral development. How is this accomplished? How does it impact the mentor and the one being mentored?
Michael Cauley
Domestic violence

I applaud Ministry for tackling the difficult but very real issue of domestic violence among church members. Unfortunately, Natalie Joy’s story (“Recognizing Abuse for What It Is: A Personal Story,” November 2008) is repeated far too often in our churches—pastors and members are often in denial that seemingly upstanding members (often church leaders) could possibly abuse their wives, children, or a young person in the church. How incredibly sad when, as the article points out, the church revictimizes the very people it should be protecting by taking the easy way out—failing to believe them and take appropriate action.

This is the reason that the Adventist Church voted (Annual Council 2001) that every Adventist church around the world should observe Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day (APED) annually. The designated day is the fourth Sabbath in August; however, we suggest that each church choose the date that works best for them. The important thing is that the issue of abuse be addressed at least annually in all our churches.

To facilitate APED observance, the General Conference Women’s Ministries Department produces an excellent packet of resources each year, including a sermon, a children’s story, and a PowerPoint presentation. It can be downloaded from their Web site or the Web sites of several Adventist Church ministries: Women’s Ministries (www.nadwm.org); Children’s Ministries (www.childmin.com); Ministerial (www.nadministerial.org); Family Ministries (www.adventistfamilyministries.com); Health Ministries (www.nadhealthministries.org); and Youth Ministries (www.adventistyouthministries.org).

—Carla Baker, Women’s Ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Natalie Joy’s article outlines everything that a relative of mine has been going through for 42 years (physical, mental, emotional, and verbal abuse). Her husband (“wonderful,” church—going man) would repeatedly kick her out of their home because she disagreed with him, then take away her house and car keys and credit card. He also listened to or taped all her phone conversations, and isolated her from people. She would be taken in by neighbors, but would always go back because she had nowhere to go. Plus, she wanted to be the dutiful, Christian wife she was expected to be. And somehow, she too, would condone his behavior! By God’s grace, the last time her husband kicked her out, my sister was visiting in their state, became aware of the situation, and brought her to our home.

Just before my relative left, she visited her pastor and he gave her the article “Recognizing Abuse for What It Is.” She saw herself in the article, and it gave her the affirmation she needed to separate herself from this abuse. Her husband, too, had tried to convince everyone that she was crazy, because she appeared scattered, unable to focus, and totally unable to make a decision. Anytime she did not agree with him, it was because she was crazy. He had even taken her to a neurologist and tried to have her declared incompetent to make decisions. To the neurologist’s credit, he told her, “You’re not the one with the problem. It’s your husband’s problem.”

Thank you for publishing this article. We’re praying that she will soon experience that spirit of liberty Natalie did.

—Christie Weston, email

Worship

Pastor Robert Leslie Holmes’s article, “In Spirit and in Truth: Let’s Talk About Worship!” (January 2009) speaks to the heart of the issue when he writes, “Worship is not about you or about me or about what we like; and . . . certainly not about entertaining us. Worship is about God alone.”

As one who is saddened by the loss of too many of the church’s youth, I long to hear “‘Fear God, and give glory to Him . . . and worship Him who made heaven and earth’ ” [Rev. 14:7, NKJV, emphasis added]. The same God who, through His angel, issued that urgent call, gives us not only the ability, but has created in each of us a yearning for the sacred—for meaningful, spiritual worship. It is for us as pastors to provide worship services that awaken and nurture that hidden hunger.

Worship services that feature informality and “cool” music may attract and entertain, but seldom hold today’s jaded young people (or others, for that matter). Yes, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” [John 4:24, KJV].

—Oliver Jacques, Fallbrook, California, United States

Alain Coralie’s article (“Worship: Maintaining Theological Soundness and Cultural Relevance,” January 2009) is a well-considered and carefully presented article. The author should be recognized and encouraged for his efforts. At the core of his premise are his two questions: “Do we run the risk of denaturing the gospel by mass-marketing it? By making the gospel as palatable as possible, do we end up robbing it of its power to challenge the world with the values of the kingdom?” These are popular questions in some circles in the church today. But they are the

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Play at least one musical instrument well

The other day I came home, and immediately my wife told me that I needed to call our five-year-old granddaughter. As soon as she answered the telephone I could tell that she had something exciting to tell me. Just a short while before she had completed her first piano lesson, and she had to tell me how much she enjoyed it and what a great experience it was. Without stopping for breath, she told me that she was going to learn to play the piano, flute, piccolo, clarinet, drums, and xylophone. And when she learned to play all of those instruments, she would then study music, and when she grows up she will become a music teacher and teach kids to sing and play music. I assured her that I would be at such a concert.

Will she learn to play all of those instruments? Will she become a music teacher and share the joy of music with others? I don’t know. But I do hope that she will learn to play at least one of those instruments well for her enjoyment and for the glory of God.

Do you remember your thoughts about what you were going to do as a minister before you started your first assignment? I do. My plan was to do everything in such a way that it would be outstanding. I was planning to be the best preacher, teacher, leader, fund-raiser, administrator, and everything else associated with ministry. The reality? We found out that we cannot be first in all these areas. Some areas are just difficult for us. Other areas? Well, we just don’t enjoy them, but some areas always remain our favorite parts of ministry.

While it is important for us to focus on all aspects of ministry, we should single out one or two areas in which we will excel. Looking back at my years of ministry, I have noticed that a number of pastors did exceptionally well in one or two areas, but they could not excel in all areas. Let me share with you some of the areas in which individuals whom I recall have excelled.

**Personal studies with individuals.** One particular pastor had developed a gift of successfully working with individuals or small groups for Bible study so that there was always growth in his church. He thrived in that area, and enjoyed doing such studies. In several other areas, he was actually weak—although he did his best. Consequently, because he stood out in at least one area, he was a successful pastor.

**Visitation.** Another pastor I knew spent considerable time visiting his members. In fact, if someone was listed on the church books and he didn’t know where they lived, he went to great lengths to find that person. I recall one case when the pastor spent the whole day tracking one inactive member who, after the visit, became an active member. Now, frankly, that particular pastor was not an outstanding preacher—and I have to smile when I look back at his lack of organizational skills, but I do recall that his congregations loved him and considered him to be a successful pastor.

**Program planning.** Some pastors do not like the idea of having to plan programs. It just seems that there are too many details and they are far removed from what some of us see as our spiritual role. But there are programs that need to be planned and overseen. Early in my ministry, there was a pastor who taught me the importance of planning and following through with programs. In fact, he was so effective that unashamedly I copied many of the things he did and found that they really worked well. To this day I’m grateful for that example. Because of that skill, he successfully led the congregation.

**Scholarship.** Pastors, by the very nature of the profession, need to study. But some individuals whom I know are exceptional in the study of the Word of God and theology. I think of some of the individuals whom I have known who stand out as the kind of person you can go to and ask, “Give me your input on this theological issue.” By the time they provide the input you have a sense that they have prayed, studied, and thought through the issues. Therefore their input is valuable.

**Leadership.** Pastors are leaders, but some whom I have known worked diligently on being effective leaders. I think of one individual in particular who did not have much formal training in the area, who did not necessarily read the latest books on leadership, but was a successful leader because he focused on his role as leader. Because of that focus, he was able to lead effectively.

Choose an area or two—without neglecting the other various responsibilities of ministry—in which you will excel. Since 1998, for example, *Ministry* has sponsored the Ministry Professional Growth Seminars by satellite. Once a year, we invite some of the most outstanding speakers to make presentations to clergy around the world. As I look back, and this group of speakers now numbers almost 50, I am impressed with each one’s presentation. Obviously, they worked hard and focused on what they were going to say, and because of that they succeeded in their presentations.

The next broadcast will be Tuesday, April 21, 2009. You can get additional information by visiting www.ministerialassociation.com. I hope you will participate.

In what area of ministry do you excel? Surely there must be an area in which you can excel and experience satisfaction. Choose the area without neglecting the others and you will be blessed—and the people whom you lead will benefit. Maybe you can’t play six or seven instruments, but play at least one and play it well.
A word about our great Saviour

Editor’s note: Each year Ministry sponsors the Ministry Professional Growth Seminar, a live satellite broadcast. This is an adaptation of a sermon delivered during a previous broadcast. This issue of the journal will be distributed at many downlink sites that will participate in the April 21, 2009 satellite broadcast.

Living in the so-called Bible Belt of the United States for several years now, I am accustomed to the large lighted signs churches there use to draw attention to their services. Some signs even offer a concise message—a saying—to prod thought and promote faith. One church sign I saw stated, “Satan Subtracts and Divides, God Adds and Multiplies.” Another sign warned, “Forbidden Fruit Creates Many Jams.” Another sign promised, “God Answers Knee-Dividers: God Answers Knee-Dividers.” We are all familiar with “sayings,” those maxims that hold true-to-life insights gained by human trial and error, wisdom from life below shared and taught to guide our behavior. But the saying in our text is no trial-and-error truth, it is a revealed truth that God disclosed “from above.” Remember the angel’s informing word to Joseph: “‘[Your wife Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’” (Matt. 1:21). And remember what Jesus said about Himself to Zacchaeus, “‘The Son of man came to seek out and to save the lost’” (Luke 19:10). Yes, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

The prophet Isaiah said this about humans: “All we like sheep have gone astray; / we have turned every one to his own way” (53:6a). The result has been lostness and many fated ills. The salvation Jesus offers rescues us from two life-threatening realities. The one reality is God’s wrath, His indignant anger against sin. Sin angers God because it violates God’s righteous will and spurs God’s wisdom, causing sad consequences to result. Some of those consequences are sad here-and-now outcomes from selfish choices, happenings for which we have sayings such as “You reap what you sow” and “No one can do wrong and get by.” There is always a connection between selfish choices and sad outcomes, between sowing and reaping, between disobedient actions and inevitable disorder. But God’s wrath includes more than sad here-and-now outcomes. A life of sinning invites eternal consequences as well, consequences the Bible refers to as “the wrath to come.” Jesus warned that “‘he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him’” (John 3:36). Jesus came into the world to save us, not only from the wrath of God, but also from the waywardness which makes one deserve that wrath. I speak of waywardness because that word best describes the conditioning selfishness induces in us, and that word embraces the gamut of deliberate human failures. Waywardness involves wrongdoing, and Scripture has explained that “All wrongdoing is sin” (1 John 5:17). Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners from God’s wrath and from the waywardness that makes one merit the effects of that wrath.

The testimony of Paul

The textual passage reports Paul’s testimony about how he came to experience that salvation. Four words stand out boldly in his testimony about what issued from Christ to change his life and destiny: mercy, grace, faith, and love.

Like every other human, Paul had a sinful past that needed to be remedied and he had a flawed personality that needed to be corrected and harnessed. He was well educated. He was highly gifted. He was a tough-minded person whose tremendous energy and personal forcefulness had made him noticed and valued. He had dedicated himself to the service of a religious system, and he was doing well by its standards. But although well-educated, highly gifted, tough-minded, personally
forceful, and intensely religious, Paul was a sinner who needed to be saved from his sins and from himself.

Paul tells us in this passage how that needed change in his life took place. Looking back on his life before conversion, and remembering what he had slanderously spoken against Jesus, Paul confessed, “I was formerly a blasphemer.” Remembering how he had zealously sought out and arrested followers of Jesus, he admitted, “I was a persecutor.” Remembering how he had ordered the torture of Christians, and the undeserved death of Stephen, which he directed, Paul lamented, “I was a man of violence.” Paul had been a religious zealot, an eager enthusiast for the system, but sinfully wrong because in it all, he was opposing the Son of God.

Although years beyond the past he mentioned here, and despite the incredibly active and fruitful life he had lived since experiencing conversion, Paul still felt a stinging shame from that past, a shame so deep that he considered himself “the chief of sinners.” So deeply did Paul lament his past that, even the Lord’s honoring summons to be one of His apostles did not make him feel worthy. “I am the least of the apostles,” he told the Corinthians, “unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (I Cor. 15:9). But what he lamented about his past was all in the past. Jesus Christ had saved him from his sins and had harnessed his selfhood for right living. He was busy witnessing across the Roman Empire world about Jesus as Saviour, and was making what became an indelible imprint on Christian life and thought.

Twice in his testimony Paul stated, “I received mercy.” He mentions this first in verse 13 of 1 Timothy 1, concerned to explain how, despite his past, he had been divinely appointed to serve Jesus. Due to God’s mercy, the magnitude of Paul’s sinfulness as a blasphemer, persecutor, and man of violence had been matched by the grace and faith and love found in Christ Jesus. As for that “grace,” Paul spoke of it as an abundant quantity of favor sent in his direction, a gift Jesus Christ personally addressed to him: “The grace of our Lord overflowed for me” (v. 14).

I do not want to come across as pedantic or bookish at this point, but the Greek term translated here as “overflowed” (huperpleonazo) is so pictorial—and was so personal to Paul—that I must say something more about it. It is a compound term that means “to be plentiful, great in quantity, to be in surplus.” Paul himself coined that term in seeking to express adequately what he had experienced of God’s grace: he took pleon, a comparative that means “more, greater in quantity,” and added the prefix huper, which means “over, above,” to express the notion of superabundance. If used with reference to pouring liquid into a vessel, or to a river at spate, the word means “to run over, to be in such abundance as to overflow.” That is the way Paul understood God’s grace, and that is actually the way God’s grace operates: it is sufficient, it is efficient, and it is abundant. God’s favor toward us is always offered in an abundant measure, and that favor is always more than a match for all aspects and stages of our human condition. The songwriter expressed it well: “Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe!”

“I received mercy,” Paul further explained, “that in me, as the foremost [among sinners], Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (v. 16). These are the words of a grace-claimed person. This is the testimony of a Christ-claimed life. This is the witness of one who had experienced what salvation does, and this remains an exultant message about what salvation means and how it can happen for all others.

Saving people, changing lives, is what Jesus came into the world to do. He saves from the wrath of God, and He saves from the waywardness that makes one worthy of that wrath. By saving us, Jesus gathers us into His purposed life, renews us, and sets us...
on the right path. It is all motivated by His mercy, grace, faith, and love.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, Spread His praise from shore to shore! How He loves us, ever loves us, Changes never, never-more! How He watches o’er His loved ones, Died to call [us] all His own; How for [us] He intercedeth, Watching o’er [us] from the throne!1

Those who have experienced such mercy, love, and grace, will readily understand why Paul broke into praise as he concluded his testimony to Timothy about his conversion and call to service: “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (v. 17). Sinners order their own lives and understandably lament their fate, singing the blues, but the saved offer praise, grateful for a gracious Saviour. And they let their gratitude show in how they live.

The testimony of others

The psalmist exhorted his fellow worshipers: “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Ps. 107:2a). George Fox, the Quaker leader, understood the importance of the testimony of others. “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Like Paul and the many others who have borne witness to this truth, I conclude this message by sharing my witness to it. Having experienced the mercy, grace, faith, and love that Jesus offers, I, too, know what it means to be saved:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest; Lay down, thou weary one, lay down Thy head upon My breast.” I came to Jesus as I was, Weary, and worn, and sad; I found in Him a resting place, And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold, I freely give The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink, and live.” I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream; My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him.5

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and He still does! Spreading this word is the central issue in preaching, and gaining its acceptance is every true preacher’s major concern. Let us never forget that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21, KJV). With the apostle Paul, I gladly and gratefully thank “him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to [this] service” (1 Tim. 1:12). And I am ready—anytime, anywhere, and here and now—to tell everyone:

I know a great Saviour, I do; don’t you? I live by His favor, I do; don’t you? For grace I implore Him, I worship before Him, I love and adore Him, I do; don’t you?

I need Him to lead me, I do; don’t you? Heav’n’s manna to feed me, I do; don’t you? Whatever betide me, I need Him beside me, In mercy to hide me, I do; don’t you?

I want Him to use me, I do; don’t you? For service to choose me, I do; don’t you? I want Him to bless me, To own and confess me, Completely possess me, I do; don’t you?6

1 See Markesha Ricks, “Divine Signs,” Tuscaloosa News, Saturday, April 2, 2005, section D.
2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the Revised Standard Version.
You did not know us, but you loved us: An interview with ADRA

Editor’s note: Three leaders of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Charles Sandefur, president; Mario Ochoa, executive vice president; and Gideon Mutero, chief financial officer, met with the Ministry editors.

Nikolaus Satelmajer (NS): Please tell our readers what ADRA does.

Gideon Mutero (GM): ADRA ministers to the needs of the poor as the hands of Jesus to fulfill His mission to those who are in distress and those who are in poverty. Through ADRA, the Seventh-day Adventist Church expresses its ministry of compassion.

Charles Sandefur (CS): We believe that the arch of God’s love is especially bent towards the poor and those who are vulnerable and marginalized. ADRA is the church’s expression of that commitment. We’re not the only expression of the church’s mission, we’re not the only expression of the church’s ministry to the poor, but we are probably the clearest instrument of the church’s commitment to acts of justice and poverty reduction and responding to human needs and human rights. So, ADRA does this in the name of Jesus and in the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church couldn’t be the church without ministries like ADRA.

NS: You just touched on my next question. How does the work of ADRA relate to Christ’s commission to His church?

CS: I think a lot of times, people want ADRA to be the front person for the rest of the church, the other missions and ministries that the Adventist Church has. So, we’re seeing this kind of icebreaker, or entering wedge, or the first steps, and that model just simply makes this mission instrumental to something else. It isn’t a sign of God’s unconditional love; it is a public relations technique where it’s something that increases the image of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We’re always grateful when the image of the Adventist Church is enhanced by what we do, but some of the ministries we do for the poor and the oppressed aren’t necessarily popular. They are nevertheless expressions of God’s unconditional love. So we do this with no strings attached.

Mario Ochoa (MO): It’s amazing for me how the person in need can see through our acts to see Jesus. It’s simply amazing. I was in Honduras recently, visiting a very isolated mountain community. It was surprising to me the clarity that the people had about the mission of ADRA in relationship with Jesus. They said, “Thank You to the Lord because the Lord sent you to work with us.” For me, that essentially summarizes what we should do.

NS: You do your work without conditions?

MO: That’s exactly right.

CS: The three of us were in Rwanda a while ago. We were visiting a project, and a woman spoke to us and just kind of captured the entire theology of mission and ministry for ADRA. She was grateful for the difference our staff, and the work we had done with her, had made in her life. She was living with HIV/AIDS, had been ostracized, and we were doing counseling and supplemental feeding and Christian programs. She said this, “You did not know us, but you loved us.”
Willie Hucks (WH): What are some of the challenges and rewards in this ministry?

GM: We are stewards of resources that come to us from public sources, from governments, and from private donations. Full accountability of these resources in difficult times and in difficult places with limited capacity is one of the challenges that we face. It is an area that we continually seek to improve so that we can become better stewards and be the preferred organization and agency for those who want to partner with ADRA to fulfill its mission.

The rewards? We see lives changed and transformed and communities improved. God’s love is being made manifest in others.

CS: I think one of our huge challenges is that the people that we work with, the poor and the oppressed, are so invisible to the other three-quarters of the world. They don’t live in many of our communities; we don’t see them on the news. So we minister in very invisible places. It is difficult sometimes for my church family to recognize the brutality and injustice that so many people in the world face. So, that means that one of our greatest challenges is not just the ministry that we do with the poor but to bring a vision of how the poor are part of our family, our human family, and to recognize a sense of obligation that really is duty.

NS: ADRA has gone through so many changes, name changes even, but before there was any structured organization, have we always had this idea of ministry, of mission?

MO: In the history of our church, the local congregations have been very active in the sense of reaching out to communities in need. As a church, we have a Dorcas or Community Services ministry. In the early stages of our church, the church organized the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service (SAWS), and then that was re-organized into the Seventh-day Adventist World Service. Twenty-five years ago, the church decided to put it all together into ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. So, from that moment on, we have been interacting with different levels and units of the church to serve as an ignition point for the ministry to the poor and needy. In Latin America, for instance, there are some countries where ADRA is totally embedded into the fabric of the church, all the way to the pews. In some other countries, we’re not. In other countries, we have a challenge in that respect; we have to reach out more to the pastors and other leaders to make them aware of the church’s responsibility to the poor.

CS: The Adventist Church has always had the privilege of having church members that have been loving, caring, kind, and compassionate. Embodying that in a structured ministry of the church has been more challenging. And at the start, we focused mostly on disasters. We were kind of catastrophe oriented. And then came the recognition that we were about the transformation of people, not just responding immediately to needs, but how do you keep those catastrophes and disasters from happening in the first place, and how do you respond to long-term growth and change in people’s lives, rather than merely responding to headlines? I think ADRA came formally into existence with a recognition that we were a development agency, not just a relief agency. That we were about sustainable change, not just an emergency response. Hurricanes and tsunamis are just a small window to the kind of work we do, and even there we are engaged for years.

GM: And what Charles Sandefur just mentioned has been a trademark for us. We don’t just go and touch them and then leave. We stay there to make a change that is sustainable.

CS: I actually think it’s one of the unique things that ADRA offers because we rise out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that’s planted one hundred thousand churches, one thousand hospitals, and thousands of schools. Doing our work in local communities and doing local community
development is something just kind of wired into our DNA, and that is what we’re best at. We are best at working with local communities, and we work with thousands of them.

WH: Gideon, please address a little more the financial side of ADRA’s operation.

GM: We have continued to get very favorable ratings with major credentialing agencies like Charity Navigator and the Better Business Bureau. They recognize our responsible management of our resources. Our documentation to donors normally has the charity seal that is granted to us by the Charity Navigator because of our four-star rating. We appreciate that our efforts are recognized by these agencies. They recognize that we render sound financial reports and get good audit reports. This is important for us because we need to demonstrate to the donor community, the church, and ADRA partners that we are a responsible agency that conducts its business by upholding the highest principles of integrity.

NS: So, any money you receive is appropriately accounted for, audited, and reports are open to the public?

GM: Yes.

WH: What can pastors and other church members do to further the ministry of ADRA?

GM: One of the ways would be in talking about the biblical concept of social responsibility, letting the members know that they have a responsibility to their neighbors, to their communities in which they live. This goes beyond trying to proselytize the communities, trying to make them Adventist, but even if they will not become Adventist, they need to see that they are the object of God’s love through actions of our members—that ADRA is the arm of the church that extends to people in these ways. Another way for them to support this mission is by praying for ADRA, contributing resources, and volunteering services. All of these are needed for ADRA to be able to go even further in terms of accomplishing its mission.

CS: My vision would be for every church member to see that every ministry to the poor and oppressed is part of discipleship and Christianity.

NS: How has this ministry that you are involved in impacted your personal Christian experience and walk with God?

MO: I embraced this ministry of the church early in my Christian experience. I decided to give up my career as an attorney to become a worker for the church in ADRA. I became a country director for ADRA when I was twenty-four years old, so from then on, I have always understood the work of the church through ADRA as the work that Jesus would do if He were here on this planet. To see the change that people experience in their lives, to see how they become better people—that has impacted my personal experience with God.

GM: Just the realization that there is a lot of suffering in this world and that ADRA as a ministry plays a role in affecting these needs in making change to people’s lives and communities—that is something that gives me a lot of personal satisfaction.

CS: I think a lot of us, who grew up in the church, grew up choosing to identify ourselves as very caring and compassionate people. None of us would ever want to say that we are not compassionate or caring. What I have experienced in my own life is a vulnerability to seeing people so oppressed and so hurting. When I was a pastor, I could somewhat regulate that vulnerability. But now I’ve let new victims come into my life to see them as part of my ministry.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
Forgiveness exists as an essential and inescapable aspect of Christian life. Jesus Himself gave us the supreme example of forgiveness in the face of the most ignoble cruelty inflicted upon Him on the cross: “Father, forgive them,” “He prayed, “for they do not know what they do’” (Luke 23:34). The Scriptures challenge us to follow His example: “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Col. 3:13).

Indeed, Jesus placed forgiveness as central to the Christian way of life and put it in the center of the prayer that He taught His disciples to pray—a prayer that Christians have prayed for two millennia. That prayer links God’s forgiveness of our sins to our willingness to forgive others (Matt. 6:12), a crucial thought elaborated a little later: “‘And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses’” (Mark 11:25, 26).

**Called to forgive**

Consider what Jesus taught us to pray, “‘And forgive us our debts, / As we forgive our debtors’” (Matt. 6:12). Consider also Christ’s parable in Matthew 18:23–35, where an unpayable debt is freely forgiven by the one to whom the debt is owed. The parable then likens the wrongs others have done to us as a small debt, which we should likewise forgive, pointing out that we ourselves have been forgiven a large debt. The failure to adopt forgiveness as an essential lifestyle brings forth its utter dilemma: we stand unforgiven before God and humans. The king in the parable retracted the forgiveness when the forgiven refused to forgive in turn. Jesus concludes, “‘So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses’” (v. 35).

In the parable, Matthew defines forgiveness as canceling the offender’s “debt” toward us. Not only do we cancel any indebtedness or obligation toward us, we also renounce any claim or liability against the forgiven person. Viewed thus, forgiveness becomes intensely personal, and relates more to the forgiver than to the forgiven. Forgiveness is no mere form but must spring from the heart. Even if one cannot forget the incident in an absolute sense, no room for any grudge or resentment should live in the forgiving person’s mind. Such an experience may be very difficult in human terms, indeed impossible for human strength; it calls upon us to claim that great promise, “‘with God all things are possible’” (Matt. 19:26).

One of the great tragedies of recent history comes out of the civil war and the resultant genocide in Rwanda. I had served in that country as a missionary nurse and health educator. When I left the country in 1989, it was not easy to leave so many friends behind—students, colleagues, church members. When the civil unrest broke out in 1994, I heard of the wrenching stories of what happened to so many of my friends. Maimed, slaughtered! Entire communities left homeless, hopeless, on the run. Even church compounds and mission centers became blood-letting centers. My best friend was killed horribly, and soon I learned that among my friends were both victims and hatchet bearers. I found it hard to believe and even harder to forgive. As the stories of atrocities flooded in, even though I was sitting in the comfort of distance of time and space, anger boiled within me. Three years and more elapsed before I could, by God’s grace, lay aside my anger, my desire to see the perpetrators punished, and my bitterness at the foot of the cross, and acknowledge that this was no longer my burden but Christ’s. He must have suffered infinitely more sorrow than I did, since He loved every one of them infinitely more than I ever could.

In the midst of all this pain, agony, and shame, I heard of one Rwandan woman, a faithful Christian, who watched in horror as a neighbor, considered a friend, hacked her husband to death. With blood on his hands, the murderer, with some two million others, fled to neighboring Zaire. Two years later, when civil war broke out in Zaire, he returned to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Starved and in rags, he sought survival in anonymity. One day, in the marketplace, he came face-to-face with the woman whose husband he brutally murdered. They recognized each other instantly. It is hard to say who was more shocked.
He froze in terror for all she had to do was to cry out, denounce him, and he would be arrested at best; at worst, he might have been lynched on the spot. Even if arrested, her testimony would be enough to have him condemned forever. Instead, she invited him to her home. Fearing reprisals, but not having any other alternative, he followed her to her home. She made him sit. He thought to flee, but she brought him food and water. While he was eating, she brought him some of her late husband’s clothes. And she told him, “I want you to know that I forgive you for your sin against me. I can do this only because I love Jesus, who has forgiven me. Through His grace, I can follow His example. You may go in peace.”

I do not know if the man repented of his deeds and sought salvation in Christ. That is between him and God. But this simple woman taught me that forgiveness is not easy, but with God, forgiveness becomes possible.

Forgiveness and repentance

Who benefits from forgiveness? And why is this so important for the Christian? In any forgiveness situation, there are four possibilities:

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1. The sinner repents, the victim forgives.
2. The sinner does not repent, but the victim forgives.
3. The sinner repents, but the victim does not forgive.
4. The sinner does not repent, and the victim does not forgive.

What happens in each of the cases?

1. The sinner repents, the victim forgives. This is the best case scenario. Both sinner and victim are at peace with each other and with God.

The sinner has made their peace with God, and so far as possible, with the victim. The victim has allowed the love of God to heal their heart and to let go of the anger, hurt, sorrow, resentment, and bitterness—to turn it over to God and allow Him to deal with it. From being enemies, the two can move forward to becoming brothers/sisters in Christ.

2. The sinner does not repent, but the victim forgives. The sinner remains in sin, but the victim has made their peace with God. Note that the victim does not need to wait until the sinner repents before forgiving them. It is vital for Christians to forgive for their own spiritual health. This was the case with Jesus and those who crucified Him. “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” Thus, Jesus showed that to forgive remains our duty regardless of whether the other party accepts this offered forgiveness or not. Indeed, many of those involved in the crucifixion of Jesus did not repent or accept the forgiveness Jesus offered them, but chose to remain in their sins.

3. The sinner repents, but the victim does not forgive. The sinner remains at peace with God, and eternally speaking, may be forgiven. However, this does not mean all consequences are erased. But the person who has forgiven may trust God to deal with them. Sadly, the victim remains a victim: unable to surrender the pain and anger to the loving Jesus, unable to allow the barrier between them and God to be broken down.

Maria fell in love with Carl. Her friends all warned her that Carl was a womanizer, that he had broken other hearts; her answer to all this was that her love would last and this love would make all the difference to Carl. She became pregnant, and a rushed wedding followed. Six months later, Carlotta was born. Less than a year later, Carl abandoned them both, going off with another woman. Maria was heartbroken, and as months passed with not a word from Carl, not even to Carlotta, her pain and anger hardened into bitterness. Divorce followed, and over the years, she became armored against kindness and pity. A deep hatred of Carl became a part of her life. Years later, something changed in Carl’s life. He came to know Jesus as his Savior, and he accepted divine forgiveness for his sins. He could not undo the consequences, but he tried his best to make right what he could. He could not return to Maria, for he had remarried and had two more children. But he offered regular maintenance income—only to have it rejected. Maria’s response was, “You weren’t around when I needed you, and now I want nothing to do with you.” A common scenario, but a tragic one. Carl is in the Lord—and Maria is not, for she cannot let go and turn the pain and anger over to God.

4. The sinner does not repent, and the victim does not forgive. This is the worst case scenario, and sadly, the most common one. No repentance from the one and no forgiveness from the other can be identified as the root of all feuds, disputes, fights, wars, massacres, and other atrocities. Neither person will allow Christ into their hearts, and both risk eternal loss. The tragedy needlessly continues, often from generation to generation.

Jesus placed forgiveness as central to the Christian way of life and put it in the center of the prayer that He taught His disciples to pray—a prayer that Christians have prayed for two millennia.
Continual forgiveness

How often should we forgive?
The Pharisees taught that one was obligated to forgive three times; after that, if the offender persisted in offending, one was freed of any obligation to forgive. So Peter thought he was being very magnanimous when he asked Jesus, “ ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ ” (Matt.18:21).

Christ’s response must have stunned Peter: “ ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven’ ” (v. 22).

I remember, as a child, I once recounted to my mother my newly acquired mathematical ability and proudly announced that I should forgive my pesky little brother 490 times, and after that I could get even with him. My mother said just four words: “Wouldn’t you lose count?”

Indeed, this describes the essence of Christ’s reply: there can be no end to our Christian duty to forgive. In fact, if we try to keep a record of the times we have forgiven, we have not forgiven at all. When we continually keep a record of forgiving, we continually keep a record of the wrongs as well. This is contrary to the entire biblical concept of forgiveness: to let go, and to leave it in God’s hands.

Forgiveness, a blessing for our own benefit

Thus, for our own blessing and salvation, we are called to forgive. We must let go—let go of anger, resentment, hurt, hatred, bitterness, desire for revenge, and getting even. Instead, we must move on with God. Sin, as a two-edged sword, damages the victim and also damages the sinner. Likewise with forgiveness: refusal to forgive damages the victim as they cling to their pain, anger, and hurt, and fail to move on with a life of peace that comes from the experience of having forgiven, for a refusal to accept forgiveness leaves one in sin. Spiritually, the only real healing for a victim is to forgive.

A traveler forded a river. When he emerged on the other side, he found his body covered with small blood-sucking leeches. His first impulse was to pull them off, but his guide said, “No, don’t! Part of the leech in your body will remain and thus cause infection and swelling. Wait till we arrive at our lodging. There I will show you a better method.” On arrival, he prepared a warm bath for the traveler and added to the water certain herbs. As the traveler immersed himself in it, the leeches dropped off one by one. Unforgiven injuries are like leeches, draining our spiritual and emotional life. Keeping them drains our vitality. Our own efforts to remove them cause festering and emotional poison. Only bathing in Christ’s love can cause these injuries to drop away—and only thus can we truly forgive.

Forgiving, a condition of forgiveness

“ ‘Whenever you stand praying,’ ” said Jesus, “ ‘if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.’ ” (Mark 11:25, 26). What does this mean? Simply this: when our hearts are filled with negative attitudes because of our anger, bitterness, resentment, or hatred of another, we are in no state to repent of our own sins and receive God’s forgiveness. We are unable to accept the Father’s love, for we refuse to allow Him to soften our hearts to receive His love. But when, through Christ’s own love, we turn it all over to the Lord, we choose to let go, to resign any interest in vengeance, any right or claim we may have on the one sinning against us. Thus we open the way for His love and peace to fill our hearts.

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How to avoid destructive behavior

A month after Eliot Spitzer resigned as governor of the state of New York in early 2008, Evan Thomas, a Newsweek writer, reported that one of Spitzer’s old friends asked him, long before the scandal broke, if he liked being governor. “ ‘I hate it,’ ” Spitzer answered. “ ‘Really?’ ” the friend asked. “ ‘Yeah, I’d rather be a high-school teacher.’ ”

We, along with Thomas, can wonder if indeed Spitzer’s dislike for his job was at all related to the destructive behavior that would end his promising political career. If he did hate his job and wanted to get out of it, but lacked the courage or will to make such a momentous decision, his traceable association with a prostitute was a sudden and sure solution.

Spitzer’s case is not unique. Examples of people with self-destructive behavior can be found in every profession, pastors included. As did Spitzer, some pastors dislike their job, even hate, their jobs. They would rather do almost anything than be a pastor, but they cannot bring themselves to resign. And, if they did resign, they do not know how they could pay the bills. They feel trapped and, like Spitzer, they become involved in self-destructive behavior, often of a sexual nature, that, when discovered, results in resignation or termination. The pastor has solved the frustration with ministry. Sound far-fetched? Reflect on the circumstances that led to the termination of people you know.

Destructive behavior in the church

A pastor, over a period of months, seduced several women in their homes (on visitation) from his churches. After each seduction, he mailed a tape recording to the woman he seduced, and in tears, begged forgiveness for his sin. The husband of one of the women discovered several of the confessional tapes and sent them to the pastor’s supervisor. A minister’s career came to a sudden and scandalous end.

Another pastor had an illicit relationship with a woman whom he had known in high school. He filmed his sexual conquests and left the film and videos in his church office where they were seen by a parishioner. Another career was over.

Those of us who have witnessed a valued colleague’s career crash and burn because of an inappropriate behavior deal with an array of emotions: sadness, disappointment, embarrassment, anger, and wonder. What drives a person to such foolishness? How could such smart people do such dumb things? Why did they make it so easy to get caught? It’s almost like they were crying out, “Here, catch me!” And, perhaps, they were.

When pastors feel there is no way out

When pastors feel trapped in their job and want to change careers, they find themselves in a dilemma. To leave ministry becomes difficult, for expectations are associated with being a pastor. The call of ministry is often understood to be a direct call from God. To explain to family, parishioners, friends, and colleagues the decision to forsake that call cannot be expressed as an easy task.

Times do exist when the tension within a pastor may build until, consciously or unconsciously, the pastor allows, or even initiates, a situation that assures sudden and final solution to the building frustrations. Should this involve a sexual relationship, then with the discovery of that relationship, the anxiety over a career change ends.

Effects of destructive behavior

When an illicit relationship or other high-risk venture results in a pastor’s termination, the shame and disgrace is not limited to the perpetrator, for a ripple effect results. No one can calculate the effect on family, parish, those violated, and the community. The negative effects linger for years. We also know that people do not enter ministry with an intention to self-destruct.

If we were to interview the pastors before they left ministry, no doubt each would condemn the acts that brought an end to their career. We would expect the pastors to affirm their commitment to ministry, their love for the church, their desire to help people, and to lift up the Lord. How, then, does one explain the disparity between what they claim and the sad actions that ended their ministry? What can be done to help valued people avoid situations that damage people and destroy careers?
There are things that can be done. And the avoidance systems begin with the pastor.

**Factors that lead to destructive behavior**

Pastors need to be aware of the importance of recognizing the cognitive and emotional factors and forces that affect our behavior. Within each of us swirl perceptions and expectations that arise from our real and perceived needs: our hopes and fears, our dreams and fantasies, and the reality that is our life.

At times we feel overwhelmed by what life brings, and we find the things that bring us pleasure are shortlived and of limited effect. We find ourselves in a whirlpool of events that we feel powerless to overcome.

The fact is, though, that we are not powerless. We can avoid destructive behavior and high-risk situations. We must accept that we are in control of what we do, and that we are responsible for our decisions and behavior. We have the ability to be intentional with our relationships and behaviors.

**The pastor trap**

Many people who come to the pastor for help are weak, needy, and vulnerable. (In rare situations, there are predators from both sexes that prowl for victims and cast their wiles toward those in positions of power, including pastors.) Pastors understandably accept compliments when these people assure them of how they have ministered to them and stress how much they are needed. They give of their time and energy, and thus become emotionally involved with their needs.

Beware! You may not see a red flag flying, but it’s there. And if the roots of an unhealthy relationship begin to take hold, cut off that relationship—and do it quickly!

Contemporary culture, as depicted in the media, suggests that unfaithfulness to a spouse, rather than faithfulness, is the norm. We suspect that ministers, despite denials, may themselves be influenced by the popular culture. Clergy, like all others, are products of their time and place.

Ministers and other professions that require the occupancy of a center stage are susceptible to flattery and the adulation of the audience, especially from the opposite sex. This susceptibility may often result from unmet and unconscious psychological needs. Then, when a parishioner of the opposite sex comes for counsel and is undergoing obvious distress, the human impulse is to touch or embrace that person in order to provide comfort and support. This physical response can be fraught with some danger. Touching can stimulate a fight to both parties. Save the embraces and the touching for family members; don’t do it for parishioners.

**Power and its abuse**

Of course, occasionally a minister who has some sociopathic traits will take advantage of vulnerable parishioners. This consists of an unholy use of pastoral power.

In most cases, though, the pastor falls into the trap unexpectedly. For instance, Jesus said that to look on a woman with lust is the same as committing adultery. This statement equates with the idea that a thought is the equivalent to action. If a person subscribes to this belief and recognizes that feeling and desire, the person may reason that because the wrong already prevails in the thoughts, and thought is equal to action, why not experience the action itself?

Deny this irrational conclusion! To make every thought equal to action carries high risk of heartbeat and ruin!

Here are some important precautions every pastor should take:

1. Recognize and admit to ourselves that we can have sexual feelings in inappropriate situations. We do not have to judge ourselves harshly for these feelings, nor do we have to act on them.

2. Recognize that our congregation sometimes allows us, as ministers, by virtue of our calling, special power and privilege. We should never use this power to our own advantage.

3. When in a counseling situation, we should avoid physical contact other than a handshake.

a. When in a counseling situation, the pastor should establish a definite time limit per session and adhere to that schedule. Usually not longer than an hour.

b. If the minister has not had formal training in counseling, it would especially be wise to avoid seeing the parishioner on a regular basis over a long period of time. We believe that even if the pastor has licensed counselor credentials, it is not a good policy to enter into long-term therapeutic counseling with a parishioner.

**Transference and countertransference**

The pastor should be aware of the importance of the concepts of transference and countertransference. These are technical terms that define the feelings a counselee
(parishioner) has toward the counselor (pastor) and vice versa. For example, in transference, the parishioner transfers feelings they have toward others—such as toward a parent, a sibling, a boyfriend, or a lover—onto the pastor. These feelings may be either negative or positive. In either case, when a parishioner tells a pastor how they feel toward others, the pastor must recognize that this describes how transference operates.

Countertransference comes when the pastor transfers their own feelings onto the parishioner. The pastor may feel the suffering of the parishioner to such an extent that the parishioner’s sufferings are perceived to be their own.

Both transference and countertransference are real. The feelings of love or hate that a parishioner expresses toward a pastor may be real. Likewise, the feelings a pastor has toward the parishioner may be real. The pastor should recognize the importance of responding to both perceived and real feelings appropriately. Never should the pastor compromise the counselor-counselee relationship or violate the ministerial moral code that defines appropriate relationships between a pastor and a parishioner.

The parishioner usually does not have insights to know that the feelings they have toward the counselor result from transference. The pastor must recognize the importance of remaining aware of the potential mischief these emotional powers exert if not under control.

**Ethical guidelines and accountability**

Rules and policies alone are not enough. Of course, we need rules, policies, and guidelines that govern professional behavior, but because these are not enough, every church organization should have a Ministerial Code of Ethics that each employee must read and sign. The Adventist Church in Southern California has adopted a Professional Code of Ethics that can serve as a model. Employees are required to sign that they have read the Code of Ethics and understand what it says. While necessary, that in and of itself is not enough.

Every conference should establish a pastoral continuing education program with a component that addresses ministerial ethics and behavior. The parish minister, like other professionals, should be required to complete a minimum number of continuing education units (CEUs) each year. Those who do not comply will have their ministerial credentials suspended until they complete their CEUs.

We suggest that church administrators assure pastors that they have the freedom to pursue other fields besides ministry. No negative judgment toward those who change occupations should be expressed. If a pastor pursues another line of work, the conference should assist in this transition.

Establish an accountability system with a close friend or colleague whom you trust. If that person raises warnings, pay attention and take action to remove yourself from the potential problem. It’s better to cause a bit of hurt now than a greater pain later.

**Personal and professional responsibility**

Accept as fact that, whenever a minister enters into an illicit behavior, the minister is at fault. There is no exception! “I could not help myself.” “I was trapped.” “I did not intend things to go this far.” These excuses are unacceptable. When feelings take us into areas that we know violate the moral code, the pastor’s responsibility is to back off.

Be honest with yourself. Every person is vulnerable. Our brains below the cerebral cortex are basically wired like other mammals, and mammals are not known for sexual faithfulness. What separates us from the other mammals? We have a cortex that allows us to choose or modify actions and that enables us to have ideas about moral behavior. Our mammalian instincts and the moral values may, at times, conflict. There is within us, says Paul in Romans 7:21, a war, a struggle between what we know is right and the evil we are tempted to do. Simon Peter, meanwhile, echoes this warning. “Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, NRSV). His solution: resist him! How? Be “steadfast in your faith” (v. 9, NRSV).

It comes down to our decision. When we are in the throes of destructive behavior, we can choose to remain true to our calling and honor our values, or we can make the decision, as did Governor Spitzer, to be caught in self-destructive behavior. There are better ways to leave the ministry than doing something very damaging and destructive, not only to yourself but also to others.

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1 Alswang, March 24, 2008, 44.
2 http://sccsecretariat.netadventist.org/index.php?option=com_na_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=42.

**Additional resources**

“Does Ministry Fuel Addictive Behavior?”
Leadership journal ChristianityTodayLibrary.com
http://www.ctlibrary.com/36725

“A Preventable Tragedy”
Evangelicals must not pretend to be immune to sexual sin by clergy or volunteers
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“A Family That Risked the Relationship”
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“Journey of Recovery” http://www.journeyofrecovery.org/faq.htm

“Sexual Training,” Leadership journal, ChristianityTodayLibrary.com


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Editor’s note: In part one (January 2009), the author reviewed the current trends in worship that emphasize the emotional and the subjective in worship experience. This concluding part provides a theological framework for worship within the understanding of Revelation 14:6, 7, to assure a balance between subjective and objective, emotional and theological content of worship.

In a world where people are eager to embrace mystery and give more space to their intuition, personal involvement becomes the key word. Reflecting on today’s worshipers, Kenda Dean writes, “To them worship is a verb. ‘To worship’ is to invoke God’s immediacy—God’s awesome ‘nowness’ in which the divine presence is subjectively apprehended.”

This experiencing of God is a fully active and dynamic engagement. The Praise and Worship movement (P&W) and its newest cousin, the Emergent church, can be seen as a response to a thirst for more intimate religious experiences. The type of music (most often soft popular or light rock) plays an important part in the ability of P&W to resonate with the current generation with no need to revisit the past and sing unfamiliar words and unusual tunes to meet the God of the ages.

This vernacular approach also manifests itself in the texts used. Most of them are kept simple, current, and short. Although many of the songs are based on passages of Scripture, they are generally devoid of deep theological meaning. Rather, they stress heartfelt thanks and praise for God’s greatness and goodness. The common use of PowerPoint technology in worship services also favors greater bodily freedom than hymnals would allow. Hence, contemporaneousness and accessibility are paramount to P&W.

Another element of this experiential nature of P&W music focuses on songs to God rather than songs about God. British theologian Pete Ward argues that this shift denotes a move from objective to reflexive worship. Whereas traditional hymns tend to be centered more on the “objective” rehearsal of salvation history, contemporary songs tend to stress more our feelings and emotions toward God. Thus, they see God as being actively involved here and now, eager to touch and transform lives.

This emphasis on God’s immanence results in a welcome change, for in worship we do not exalt a God locked in time or impervious to our praise and adoration. Yet, worship also needs to take into account the transcendence of God because He is “a God at hand . . . and not a God afar off” (Jer. 23:23, KJV). Hence, limiting the worship of God to a present experience seems rather restrictive and does not keep in balance the biblical tension that should inform contemporary worship. This leads me to raise two important issues regarding worship.

**Emotionalism and individualism**

The first area of concern includes emotionalism that is never far away when “belief is demoted, [and] experience promoted.” Too often, the value of worship experience runs the risk of being measured almost exclusively by the feelings it generates, thus divorcing intellect from Christian experience.

In a milieu where people take experience and emotions very seriously and consider propositional truth as a social construct, fine points of doctrines tend to become simply irrelevant. However, detaching worship from theological reflection on God and His mighty works cannot be helpful to congregations. Church members should not only be encouraged to express their feelings to God but also be challenged to think. The notion that we come into the presence of God just to relax simply stunts spiritual growth and hampers theological reflection. Indeed, such types of sentimentalism are antithetic to a true engagement with God. Worship, as holistic in nature, should involve all our faculties.

The second area of concern is the notion of individualism. In an age where people thirst for a spiritual experience, what matters most is the human-divine contact. Many
of the contemporary songs stress the individual expression of faith. The overuse of the I and me instead of the we and us in lyrics reveals that tendency. Such expressions of individual experiences exalt God for His care and mercies toward the believer. Yet, a question remains, Are they simply expressions of an inward-looking faith? We need to be reminded that the original meaning and nature of corporate worship should be communal, not individualistic. Worship includes a dialogue and a communion along vertical and horizontal axes, as it unites us both with God and one another. The songs we sing and the worship we conduct should not fail to express the communal nature of our faith. Gospel-centered worship

Despite its strong symbolism, the text contains an important consideration—the “eternal gospel” (v. 6) constitutes the basis of true worship. This emphasis on the gospel reflects the essence of the Christian kerygma. The good news is that Christ, through His victory on the cross, has brought salvation to the human race and made true worship possible. At the heart of the gospel stands not only a glorified cross and an empty tomb but also a living and coming Christ who now ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. In other words, Christian worship looks not only backward to the past but also forward to the future, while also focusing on the present—Christ’s ministry in “the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24, NKJV). The author of the letter to the Hebrews clearly points out Christ as our Leitourgos (Heb. 8:2), our heavenly Liturgist, who gathers in His life and person the worship and prayer of His people. In a remarkable way, He is both the One we worship and the “Worshiper.” As the supreme revelation of the Father (John 1:18; Col. 1:15, 16) and the only way of salvation, Christ deserves all the praise and honor of the entire creation. As the Mediator of the new covenant, He cleanses and purifies our tainted worship and prayers to offer them spotless to the Father. Within such a vision, the local worship leader does not act on behalf of worshipers but among them, in recognition that a single High Priest now serves on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Viewed this way, the gospel can be a powerful and liberating insight for worship leaders. It puts things in perspective by reminding us that Christ, not the market or culture, is Lord. By overlooking the fact that worship is our response to God’s redemptive provisions in Christ, many pastors have often been burdened by a sense of overanxiety concerning forms and accessories of worship rather than content and truth. Hence, many pastors have been overtaken by an urge to design user-friendly anthropocentric worship services to attract people rather than focusing on the transforming power of the Cross. Therefore, we cannot overemphasize the fundamental principle of attraction in worship: Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 1), not our ingenious ceremonies or entertaining rituals. Thus, true worship will be possible only as focused on the gospel, and if its ethos and forms reflect the liberating message of Jesus Christ. Worshiping God is not an option; it is a gospel imperative. Revelation 14:6 describes the eternal gospel as one that concerns the entire globe and addresses “every nation, tribe, language and people.” Contrary to the postmodern ethos that tends to turn worship into a nicely packaged and fuzzy product, Revelation 14 points to a threefold imperative of true worship. Look at verse 7: “‘Fear God . . . give him glory. . . . Worship him.” Let’s explore these essentials.

Imperatives in worship

Fear God. While worship can easily slip into personal preference or prejudice, the angel summons the nations to fear God. The biblical notion of “fear” (phobèō) suggests reverence, respect, and honor to God. God is God, the Wholly Other. Fear develops into the appropriate response to the greatness of God, especially as it relates to His mighty acts of salvation and judgment. To fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him, but to take Him seriously. It demands full surrender of all aspects of our lives to Him. 
The notion of fearing God can be very odd in an age where worship services often lack a sense of awe. Marva Dawn refers to it as “the postmodern lack of genuine ‘fear’ for God.” Dawn claims that the scriptural tension between fear and love has been lost in many churches because of the trend toward cheap grace and the muting of God’s justice. As a result, we often end up with services infused with tepid sentimentalism geared at making worshipers feel happy rather than confronting them in their innermost being and challenging their complacencies.

Worship tailored only with the spiritual consumer in mind will be profoundly lacking in heightening a sense of God’s glory and holiness. It will tend to adopt “a cozy and sentimental Jesusolatry” and reduce the living God to an indistinct Lord, i.e., one with no explicit references to biblical history.

Consequently, we can safely assume that one of the biblical guidelines for our age contains an invitation to be re-sensitized to a due sense of fear in worship. This fear cannot be an initiative from below, one purely and humanly crafted. Rather, fear has to come from the worshiping community’s realization that they serve a God who is exalted above the heavens (Pss. 57:11; 108:4). Only a theology that exalts God’s glory and purpose along with the eschatological presence of the Holy Spirit in worshiping communities can bring that sense of awe and reverence. To this effect, the angel’s summon to fear God embodies a wake-up call to our worship leaders to embrace the biblical paradigm of a transcendent God who is just and holy.

Give glory to Him. To glorify God as seen in Revelation 14 is the second imperative of worship. The supreme purpose of God creating humans is to glorify Him (Matt. 5:16; Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 6:20, 10:31; Eph. 1:12; Phil. 1:11). The angel summons the nations to fear God and glorify Him for “‘the hour of his judgment has come’” (Rev. 14:7, NIV). Clearly, the global scope of the angel’s message recaptures the Old Testament hopes of nations being united in the worship of the true God. David emphasizes this call to the nations to worship God in Psalm 96:7–10:

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his name; . . .
Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth. . . .
He will judge the peoples with equity (NIV).

In an age where laxity and casualness are often celebrated as virtues, the very notion of judgment must be quite shocking. Yet, on the positive side, worship can be greatly improved if congregations are reminded of their accountability to God. He who inspires and enables our worship also judges it. He who empowers us also brings us into account (Rev. 1:10–3:22). This becomes especially important at a time when “false worship is as much a possibility as true worship, and that the distinction between the two is not always crystal clear.”

Interestingly, the term giving glory to God contains a dialectical tension that characterizes balanced worship:

- Training lay leaders to effectively work with you
- Designing sermons to meet the needs of different churches
- Addressing family life in a multichurch district with special emphasis on children
- Organizing the evangelistic outreach in a district
- Coordinating boards and committees in a district
- Working with the communities in the district
- Creating a spirit of cooperation among the churches
- Recognizing the needs of the pastor’s spouse and children for continuity as the pastor preaches in a different church each week

If you pastor several churches, you will no doubt have other topics in mind.

NEXT STEPS:
- Email, write, or call and discuss with us the topic or topics you are suggesting.
- Once we have agreed on the specific topic, we will ask you to proceed with the writing.

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reverence and joyfulness. Sadly, the two extremes of the Christian spectrum have often tended to stress one at the expense of the other. Traditionalists have stressed reverence, charismatics have emphasized enthusiasm, and those in the middle have often fallen short of both.

Certainly, only a God who comes to us with grace and judgment, justice and love can inspire such apparently contradictory and simultaneous responses as respect and joyfulness, reverence and jubilation. This dialectical tension needs to be kept alive for worship to remain theologically sound and experientially meaningful.

Worship Him is the third imperative of worship. Etymologically, the core meaning of the verb worship emphasizes submission and homage. The meaning surpasses the common restrictive use of worship to congregational services to embrace the fuller range of “Christian life and thought and experience.”

The angel of Revelation 14 points to the true ground of divine worship: the distinction of God as Creator “who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (v. 7, NIV). Here the angel gives a salutary reminder that we worship God not only because He created us but also because we were created for Him (Rev. 4:11). That’s not all. The angel summons us to worship God for three interlinked reasons:

- Because He is the Creator (worship him who made the heavens and earth)
- Because He is the Redeemer (the eternal Gospel)
- Because He is the Judge (the hour of His judgment has come)

As we look at these three reasons for divine worship, we cannot but note a glorious parallel to these three characteristics of God in the call to worship and obedience found in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:1–11).

God is Creator: “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (v. 11, NIV).

He is Redeemer: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (v. 2, NIV).

He is Judge: “For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing... those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (vv. 5, 6, NIV).

If this theological framework with themes such as creation, redemption, judgment, eschatology, and the Sabbath informs our concept of worship, our worship emphasis and style will take on a theocentric and eschatological emphasis. As argued already, one of the problems in contemporary worship is its anthropocentric tendencies. Many programs, ideas, and ministries revolve around human wants and desires instead of the primacy of God, His love, holiness, and justice. A human-centered mentality distorts the nature of true worship by displacing God from the center. True worship, as a matter of proper focus, “must first be God-focused and then be human sensitive.”

Pastors should, therefore, put things in proper perspective when it comes to such a sensitive issue as worship.

Conclusion

With these biblical guidelines in perspective, I now proffer a brief ensemble of ideas that necessitate further consideration by worshiping communities. I believe an urgent need exists for spiritual leaders to:

1. Move from the prevalent anthropological model (in which the ambient culture predominately defines how worship is conducted) to a more theologically robust model (in which theology courageously engages culture, alternatively accommodating or rejecting its varied aspects).
2. Craft worship services by taking into account the eschatological dimension of faith.
3. Carefully choose and train worship leaders. Some of them are good singers but not good theologians, and fine singing does not make up for sound theology.
4. Stay away from nebulous spirituality that makes Christianity simply a matter of feelings.
5. Make sure that sermons explore the exceeding riches of biblical truth.
6. Connect the worship experience to real life by creating space in the worship service not only for celebration, but also for reflection, confession, repentance, and mourning. A danger exists in constantly requiring people to be joyful and happy within the worship context, when they are struggling and hurting in life.
7. Make worship more intercultural and intergenerational rather than being narrowly selective and potentially divisive. Multichurch services for different ages, worship styles, musical tastes, and ethnic categories are bound to lead in a number of unhealthy directions. A better way to go could be blended services where elements of traditional, contemporary culture, and innovation cross-fertilize to enrich the worship experience.

2 Pete Ward, Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church (Milken Keytons: Paternoster, 2005), 207.
5 Marva Dawn, How Shall We Worship? (Whitby, IL: Tyndale, 2003), 49, 50.
6 Ibid., 50–52.
What would happen if every leader had someone with whom they could talk, who would challenge them to grow and help them identify resources to do so? What would happen if every leader had an unseen friend to ask them hard questions about self-care or their growth plan for the new year? What would happen if every leader had someone to speak with regularly, who, no matter what they discussed, would love them as a brother or sister in Christ and hold their confidences? And, what would it feel like to know that you are not alone in your journey through life? While this may sound inconceivable, it is something I have experienced firsthand in many ways. And it has blessed my life and my leadership.

About five years ago, while on a trip with my brother-in-law, we dialogued about a fundamental leadership issue: how to help leaders develop their skills and lead more effectively. He had served in health-care administration for several years and had recently completed extensive training to become a leadership development coach. He then told me something I hadn’t heard before: he had never seen anything that equaled coaching in terms of its potential for developing people. Since I was looking for a Doctor of Ministry project on growing leaders, immediately my interest was piqued. We discussed the process of being trained to function as a coach, and I learned that the first step is to be coached by a skilled coach. I was put in touch with Dr. Nick Howard, a psychologist and leadership coach practicing about two hours from where I was living at the time. I decided to give coaching an opportunity, and we had a few sessions before I moved to another state.

Because of the move, my doctoral work was delayed. In the meantime, I had begun to experience great value in being coached. I was growing as a leader and a person. The initial idea of training my key leaders in coaching skills took on greater meaning as I was experiencing genuine growth through the coaching process. Meanwhile, I had coaching sessions with Dr. Howard by phone, and I began to lay out the academic project that would involve developing a system of coaching for pastors and school administrators. Over a period of seven months, a number of the leaders in our organization became trainee coaches. The eight of us received coaching from Dr. Howard and he, as the coach/trainer, conducted three two-day seminars over a six-month period.

Moreover, we read about 1,100 pages of material from various authors on coaching, systems theory, change theory, and human development. The capstone of the training process was that we each coached two people over a six-month period under the supervision of Dr. Howard. I have listed below some of the key findings that emerged from that unique learning experience.

The impact on those who were coached

As a part of my doctoral project, I received permission to interview those who had been coached by the newly trained coaches on our staff. I also interviewed the trainee coaches who were coached by Dr. Howard throughout the time they were being trained to serve as coaches. Given that this training was different from others, I was curious about how my peers, and those who were coached by them, ultimately viewed their experience. Interestingly, the responses from the people who were coached by the trainees were overwhelmingly positive and affirming. When I asked the coachees what the single greatest benefit of the coaching experience was, their responses fell in the following categories:

Providing a framework for growth and accountability. Coaching helped certain pastors and educational administrators by providing a framework for professional growth with accountability; something highly important in helping a leader move forward on their most important priorities. One coachee’s comment was typical in describing the way his coach provided a kind of supportive accountability: “Now, as I go about my work, I hear my coach’s voice in my head saying, ‘How are you going to do that? What is the first thing that you are going to do?’”

Giving support in the midst of challenges. Coaching gave support in a profession vulnerable to discouragement because of the real existence of isolation. I was struck by how coaching was striking a deep chord in those receiving coaching. Note this comment: “To come into a church and find opposition and resistance is discouraging. Before, I easily became discouraged and I felt that I wasn’t...
succeeding. Coaching has led me to be more patient with myself and people in the church.” Another comment, “Coaching has rescued me from discouragement and doubt . . . . It has enriched my prayer life and increased my confidence in myself.”

Growing as a leader. Some of the coachees began using coaching skills with their church leaders without receiving the formal coach training. They reported results I hadn’t anticipated, but they were outcomes I certainly welcomed. People shared things such as:

- I use the coaching principles to ask more questions to see what others think. I coach my church leaders toward a common goal or vision.
- Coaching has sped up the process of turning over responsibility to others. I spend time with the church members getting them to share responsibilities.
- It has given me a model for doing discipleship.
- It is making me more focused and more assertive and has helped me to lead the congregation better.

Facing issues of self-care and family needs. Learning how to take care of ourselves as church leaders becomes one of the tougher challenges we face. I’m beginning to think that healthy self-care is fundamental to creating a truly effective ministry over the long term. As a result, I was pleased by how self-care emerged as a theme in the responses. One coachee responded, “I have established boundaries regarding my health. . . . The tyranny of the urgent had pushed my personal life to depletion. Coaching forced me to do an inventory on how I was living my life. Taking the time for contemplation and reflection has caused me to look at what is really important.”

“One of the things that I do differently is that I enjoy life more. I am happier. I spend time with my family and enjoy it and feel good about it instead of always feeling that I have to be working.”

“In my relationship with my wife, our communication has definitely improved as a result of the coaching experience. . . . I am now freer and have peace of mind when I set aside time to be with my family.”

The impact on those who were trained as coaches

Since I was a part of the learning group, I was able to experience firsthand the transformation in the lives of several of the trainee-coaches. They received expert coaching by Dr. Howard, while acquiring a vital skill. Here are some of the benefits:

Obtaining new skills in communication. Communication skills are obviously highly important in effective ministry and leadership. The trainees reported improved skills that are essential to solid coaching, such as active listening, asking open-ended questions, naming, and affirmation. One staff member shared, “I learned new listening skills, questioning skills, and naming skills that have made me a better husband, father, and leader. I have become an advocate with my subordinates and have gained the skill of affirmation.” Another stated, “Coaching has changed my perspective on every conversation I have with the pastors with whom I work.”

Developing effective teamwork. A well-functioning leadership team becomes central to effective leadership. One coach reported that his subordinates had picked up coaching skills through the process of being coached by him. This resulted in them working more effectively to resolve problems as a team. “Soon [my subordinates] were reporting to me, not only the answers to their problems that they had discovered, but on their success in cooperating with their peers to discover solutions.”

Living more consistently with their vision and values. Lastly, those participating in the training reported increased focus and confidence. Many made progress on long-term goals and short-term plans. Several addressed areas of their lives that had held them back from reaching their potential. For many, it included wrestling with the issue of

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balance—especially relative to family and health.

Conclusion
As leaders, we are often faced with substantial questions that can certainly be overwhelming at times. Questions such as, How do you meaningfully impact the culture of a church, institution, or conference? Or, how do you develop leaders in your place of ministry? Further, how do you address the desire and need of people to grow? And, lastly, what can we do to tackle issues of isolation in ministry? As leaders, we are charged with addressing these real needs but, of course, this is much easier said than done. Through this training process, I’m realizing, on deeper levels, that it does not happen overnight or without a real investment of time and resources in the right kind of training. And, while I did not dare to hope that a tool existed to address those issues, I was happily surprised by the impact of the training program. I was amazed that the experience of having a coach over a period of approximately six months impacted people to the extent that it did. I felt rewarded to see people grow to a healthier place and become more effective in their leadership and service.

I’m now beginning to see that coaching is, in reality, a kind of discipleship for vocation. Fundamentally, coaching focuses on coming alongside people, creating a safe environment, and helping them achieve their potential. In the book of Acts, the church seems to have lived in a role of supporting, strengthening, and encouraging one another, fundamental to New Testament religion. Perhaps this was more natural for people living in simpler times. Could it be that in our complex world we need an intentional structure to help us have meaningful conversations that facilitate growth? It seems clearer to me that we don’t naturally take time to reflect and process and hold each other accountable for our growth.

Ultimately, this project has confirmed my thinking that to live up to your full potential as a church leader, if you are going through life solo, is simply not possible. God’s ideal appears to include people having someone to come alongside them to be an unseen, trusted friend on their journey through life. This is likely the only way for individuals to mature fully to God’s ideal for them.

Aligning a person’s life with their vision and values becomes critical to living empowered lives and becoming agents of transformation. And the experience of personal transformation is perhaps more powerful than all the leadership lessons that we can study otherwise. I am more and more convinced that who we are and how we live communicates so much more than what we say. The coach training program brought these truths to light in a deeper way, and I am grateful for the impact it has had.

Through this doctoral project “experiment,” we are now incorporating coach training for more of our pastors and administrators, and the ripple effect of this vital work is spreading throughout our field. This includes an investment in time and energy, but I believe coach training will pay significant dividends when we invest in our people.
Religious freedom report released

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—The Religious Freedom World Report for 2006–2007 was recently released as a joint project of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the International Religious Liberty Institute of Andrews University.

The report, which is published biennially, gives an account of the status of religious freedom in every country in the world, with a special focus on the Adventist experience. The report ranks each country on a scale of one to five regarding its religious freedom record. “One” represents countries that have full freedom, and “five” represents the most oppressive states. The report gives a general account of the legal, political, and social climate of each country in regards to religious freedom.

Managing editor Nicholas Miller says the details about the Adventist experience are useful for others as well as the church because Adventism’s minority status makes it a good indicator of the health of religious freedom in a country.

Lifesaving seminars

Malakal, Sudan—More than 350 people attended evangelistic meetings in southern Sudan, December 14–30, 2008. The meetings, jointly organized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East and local Sudanese pastors, were advertised to the surrounding community as “Life Saving Seminars.”

Each program began with music and drama, followed by health and family-life lectures that were conducted by local pastors, Gai Dualnyuak and Jacob Frungus. Bern Yuot, evangelism coordinator for the Adventist Church in the Middle East, then gave the devotional presentation.

“The support of the local congregation made it possible for this evangelistic campaign to proceed smoothly,” said Yuot, who was moved by the fact that the local congregation in Malakal contributed their meager funds to feed the youth participants, pay guards, and rent a sound system that cost $100 a day. “Praise the Lord for their willingness and commitment to serve Him!” he added.

Toward the end of the campaign, the team handed out decision cards and 83 individuals made a decision to join the church by baptism. Fifty-one of these persons were baptized at the close of the meetings, having received additional Bible studies during the day, and the rest will be prepared for baptism by the pastoral team at a later date. [MEU News/TED News]

Growth in the Netherlands

Huis ter Heide, Netherlands—From January to September 2008, the Adventist Church in the Netherlands saw a net growth of 105 members. Total membership has now grown to 4,781 members. In the same period, the tithe income increased by 7 percent.

The Netherlands has struggled against a tide of secularism; and these figures reflect the church’s determination to do something about this.

“This is good news. All efforts for church growth and stewardship have been richly rewarded and blessed by our good Lord. We are hopeful for the future of the Adventist work and presence in the Netherlands,” says Wim Altink, president of the Adventist Church in the Netherlands. [TED News]

The production of Bible commentaries has proliferated during the last 25 years. They are written for different purposes (e.g., devotional, theological, historical, linguistic, etc.). This is Ben Witherington’s third volume of a three-volume commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, the Johannine Epistles, Hebrews, the Petrine Epistles, James, and Jude. He grouped the epistles according to the socioreligious context for which they were written. In this volume, he placed together Hebrews, James, and Jude because they were written for Jewish Christians. The approach he is using has become quite popular among New Testament scholars. He calls it “A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.” In other words, although he is commenting on the biblical text, he is placing the emphasis on the social setting and on the rhetorical techniques used by the biblical writers. The social setting is important as background information that will help the modern reader gain a better understanding of the message of the book.

Consequently, in an effort to illuminate the biblical text, Witherington uses materials found in the works of classical experts who know about the social history of the Greek and Roman society and historians of early Judaism and early Christianity. Rhetoric has to do with the art of persuasion and the techniques used to achieve that end. The three documents he will comment on (Hebrews, James, Jude) were sermons or homilies. Their specific object was to persuade the readers and listeners to do or avoid something. Witherington argues that the writers used the rhetorical techniques available to them during the first century; the early Jewish and Greco-Roman rhetoric. It is that type of rhetoric that he uses to analyze the homilies. The reader will find references to those sources throughout the commentary. He uses the technical language of rhetoric, but he clarifies what it means as he applies it to the text. It is not difficult to follow his careful exposition of the text.

The structure of each letter is analyzed on the basis of rhetoric rather than on the basis of the theological or thematic content of the document. For instance, James begins with “The Epistolary Prescript” (1:1), which identifies the addressee and the addressee and contains the greetings. This is followed by the “Exordium” (1:2–18). Its purpose is to establish a good relation with the audience in order to make them positively predisposed toward what the writer will ask from them. It is in this section that the author makes reference to his authority and where he lightly touches on some of his main concerns. This is followed by the “Propositio” (1:19–27). It is a statement about the substance, urgency, and theme that will be developed in the discourse. This is the main advice that the author needs to get across to the audience. Next we find the “Elaboration of Themes.” In the case of James, we have three different elaborations based on three main concerns. The first elaboration deals with the rich and poor, word and deed (2:1–26); the second with teachers and tongue (3:1–18); and the third deals with the most controversial element and, following good rhetorical practices, is saved for the last. According to Witherington, James is here combating the desires and antiwisdom of the mercenary and military mentality (4:1–5:6). Finally comes the “Peroration” (5:7–20); the conclusion not only of the last elaboration but of the whole discourse (“the final harangue”). This type of rhetorical analysis is unquestionably useful in the reading of the homily.

We need to ask ourselves, What is the final contribution of this socio-rhetorical approach to the text? There are many. For instance, it is always useful to know the social practices and convictions found in the culture in which the biblical writers crafted their messages. They do help to illuminate some obscure aspects of the text. The rhetorical dimension itself reveals the authors’ writing skills, their knowledge of the human mind, and their interest in making their messages more appealing to their audiences. All of these were used by the Spirit to touch the hearts of the original audience and of the many who throughout the centuries have read these documents. But in general, the socio-rhetorical approach does not significantly uncover more than what a careful exegesis would find there. The approach does not make a major contribution to our understanding of the message of each one of the homilies. But perhaps that is not the intention of the method. In any case, what Witherington has produced is very useful for preachers, teachers, and interested church members who may want to know more about the contribution of the socio-rhetorical approach to the study of the Bible and its social background. In that respect, this volume is very rich.

Wesley Carr writes in the preface that the theme of the book is “the way that the practice of ministry generates theological insight” (ix). He considers the pastor as the theologian. The introduction lays the framework within which he writes his book. He cites three behavior insights: unconscious activity, transference (and its corollary, countertransference), and projection. He writes that the unconscious is crucial for our estimates of people, whether as individuals or in groups.

Transference occurs when the patient “transfers” on to the analyst feelings and attitudes, primarily from their childhood relationships. Countertransference describes the feelings of the person who is the focus of the transference. Transference uses a repetition of something in the past by imposing it upon someone or even something in the present. Projection is disowning an aspect of our self and locating it in another person and attempting to deal with it there as their problem, thus freeing our self. The author notes that these three insights form the foundation of modern thinking on human behavior, whether as individuals or groups.

In chapters 2–4, Carr deals with the atonement and its relevance for pastors in their ministry. In chapter 2, he discusses the meaning of the atonement. He notes the centrality of the Cross and how it becomes absolutely essential for Christianity. In fact, the Cross is the center of Christian belief, with the Cross as the window between humanity and God. Through this window, we see how God deals with evil—seeing how God takes the responsibility for giving His creation the freedom of choice. He discusses two Greek prepositions: anti and hyper, which are used in Scripture for God’s activity. He notes that anti means “in place of” and hyper means “on behalf of.” The preposition hyper is used most often describing God’s activity, including the Cross. The author draws the conclusion that Christ does not die “in place of” me but “on behalf of” me. Hence, I am not excluded but a participant. The Cross stands for God’s willingness to be used and abused.

In chapter 3, Carr shows how the doctrine of atonement can be applied in pastoral situations by taking into consideration the insights of behavioral science. He notes, “projection is a basic ingredient in normal human behavior, and consequently in pastoral ministry.” . . . Ministerial expertise, therefore, means to follow the model of the atonement and transform what inhibits or potentially distracts to new creativity. When we realize that projection constitutes basic human behavior and is not a weakness or failure, we can seek ways of employing it in the service of pastoral ministry” (47). Projections in ministry are primarily directed at the minister’s roles. When the minister accepts these roles, opportunities arise for responsible ministry.

In chapter 4, Carr notes that “the way of discipleship is that of forgiveness, particularly of those whom we perceive as enemies” (60). He notes first, in forgiveness we take back the negative aspects of ourselves that determines who our enemies are. Secondly, by doing this, we have an effect on our enemies. With projection recognized and taken back, feelings are also changed. Thirdly, the relationship is altered. Christ’s death makes forgiveness possible. Forgiveness does not come as a result of one’s confession. Forgiveness is the precondition of confession. Christ’s death on the cross is on our behalf, thus the “on behalf of” becomes the ultimate clue to the Christian understanding of life and God.

By using the insights of behavioral science, Carr was able to apply his understanding of the atonement to the pastor’s differing roles as minister. There are certainly many more insights than those that I have commented on.

In the second and third sections, Carr addresses the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation. He first discusses the doctrine and then attempts to apply it to the pastoral situation.

In chapter 12, the conclusion, Carr notes that theological reflection is required of all engaged in ministry. He also states that “ministry must creatively interact with the Church’s developing theology, making a distinctive contribution . . . which links the individual to his or her social context and hence to society [which] is found in the contemporary human sciences. The inspiration of ministry, the clarification of roles and theological reflection potentially hold the whole enterprise together. Difficult and strange as that often appears, it still seems to me to remain intrinsically worthwhile” (171).

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a pastor with the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United States.
José, Can You See?

Today, January 20, as I watch the inauguration of President Barack Obama, I recall the anecdote about the Hispanic kid returning from his first-ever ball game to proudly report, “Mama. They were singing about me at the game. They were singing about me!”

When questioned what he meant, the youngster replied, “The whole crowd stood up and sang, ‘José, can you see? ’”

Impossible that “Oh, say can you see?” (the introductory phrase of the U.S. national anthem) could refer to a youngster dreaming of greatness? Not anymore!

Today, my country moved into a new era with an African American inaugurated into the most powerful office on earth. Our recent elections have moved us to a post-racial era where skin color is not the first criterion for evaluating a person’s potential.

Does this mean we have resolved all problems? Does one election erase the scars of racism past? Have we advanced to the point that no individual will ever be discriminated against again? Have hatred, suspicion, skepticism, and racism been permanently eradicated? Of course not!

Discrimination and evil will always rule in the hearts of wicked people like the hate-filled behavior of students at a high school who, upon witnessing President Obama’s oath of office, stood and shouted racial epithets at fellow students.

Shame! And somewhere it will happen again. Neither America nor the wider world has resolved all the challenges and sinfulness of racism just because one black man has become president. But something has happened.

What? Simply this: Barack Obama, son of a Kenyan father and an American mother is the president of the United States.

José, can you see? This door has been opened for you too! The slogan about American society’s “melting pot” has been stirred into a new stew.

José, can you see? If an African American can become president, so could a Hispanic.

Josefi na, can you see? If a Hispanic could become president, so could a woman.

Jae-Hwa, can you see? If a Hispanic woman could become president, so could a Korean American.

José, can you see? Doors have been opened that never again can be shut.

For more than 16 years, I have watched a young black child develop into an outstanding, capable man. Back when I first met three-year-old Tony, no one would ever have told him, “You can grow up to be president of the United States.”

Sure, we might have chanted the mantra, but we would not have really believed the slogan that any kid could become president. Even worse, Tony would not have believed it!

But Tony has grown up. Today he is a scholarship student on his way to becoming a RN/pharmacist. And America has grown up. Because of today’s inauguration, no one can ever say, “Tony, you could not become president.”

José, can you see?

Society has kicked down that barrier by this peaceful transition from one elected president to the next. I exalt in the joy and release of Aretha Franklin singing, “My country ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty.” I am enthralled with the drama of a black family moving into the White House.

Despite the reality that sixty years ago President Obama’s father could not have been served lunch at a restaurant in the segregated District of Columbia, today’s pomp and circumstance, ruffles and flourishes, and “Hail to the Chief” stand in stark comparison to the reminder that our First Lady’s slave ancestors built the monumental structures of America’s beautiful capitol, expecting nothing more for the future than that they might be hired to clean and maintain those same buildings. But with one oath of office—even one bungled by the chief justice of the Supreme Court—the country has changed.

José, can you see?

Oh church, can you see?

Have we slumbered along as the world awakens to a new state of affairs? How should we believers respond to this new reality?

Why, all too often, must the church learn—or fail to learn—from society rather than the sacred teaching the secular? Do we believers have something to tell the world on the issue of post-racial cooperation?

When the nation has chosen to move beyond racial profiling in electing our most powerful leaders, why do Christians remain segregated? In North America, the divine worship service remains the most self-segregated hour of the week. African Americans come together to stand apart. White flight breeds exclusivity until there is nowhere else to flee. Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups conclave under the guise of “language and heritage,” while their children reject their linguistic heritage and, if they go to church at all, make certain that English is the language of fellowship and proclamation. Even where preservation of cultural heritage is important, the incipient racism of assuming we cannot all get along reproaches the gospel.

Remember Galatians’ declaration of interdependence! “In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile; in Christ...
there is neither bond nor free; in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ.”

Does Jesus want His followers to be less faithful than society in matters of distinction, division, and discrimination? Of course, this is not God’s will any more than God wills for the church to remain structured for racial separation.

God’s plan makes all nations one people.

Our young people are a vital part of our worship. They not only have their own worship team, but most of the time they are a part of every worship team. Some times these kids can jazz up the music more than I like, but I am thrilled to have them leading our worship team. Some times these kids are a part of our worship. They not only have an inclusive worship program, but also an older member of the congregation, an older member of the congregation, and taking part in our worship.

Worship is a verb, praising God, praying, and lifting holy hearts heavenward.

A theological approach to pastoral leadership

On Coutts’s article, “A Theological Approach to Pastoral Leadership Today” (November 2008), is full of good material. Thank you for publishing it. When we focus on the main thing—that leadership is primarily a spiritual issue—then we will pursue spiritual disciplines. This offers me the freedom to do what is needed and leave the rest to the Spirit and God’s people walking side by side while going into the mission field with Jesus Christ.

break

—Bill Harrold, email

Embracing those who reject religion

I just finished reading the article, “Embracing Those Who Reject Religion: An Interview With Roger Dudley” (January 2009), and will read it again before I sleep tonight! Our congregation has been open and, I would say, fairly successful in its struggle with adult versus youth ministry. We have an inclusive worship program, with young people involved every week leading a significant portion of our worship period. The truth of the faith we hold dear hasn’t changed, but some of us who are older folks have a natural tendency to forget that the comfortable practices we’ve adopted (for example, worship style, music, preference of parables, dress, communication, and language used to describe important matters) are largely based on norms that existed when we were much younger. This causes us to treat the next generation in a trivial way because they “just don’t get it.”

As this article pointed out, we have to keep refocusing conscious efforts on increasing the involvement of the youth—ownership in the congregation. This is a ministry that I, as an older member of the congregation, need to be encouraged to constantly consider. The reality brought out in the article—that this isn’t a ministry that can be simply coordinated from higher levels of church structure—rightly places the challenge of being relevant to our youth on the local church level, on me!

—Terry Burns, Ukiah, California, United States

Tell us what you think about this editorial. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
Messages from all over the world blare at us through an increasing assortment of electronics. Thanks to our labor-saving devices, our pace of life is more stressful. Somehow we’ve come to think of relentless activity as noble.

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[Repeat Broadcast April 22, 2009]

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Israel Bamidele Olaore is the senior university pastor and head of the Division of Spiritual Life at Babcock University, Nigeria. Dr. Olaore has been a senior pastor in Tucson, Arizona and Los Angeles. Additionally, he has had pastoral experience in Nigeria as a hospital chaplain, church planter, and university lecturer. The focus of ministry for Dr. Olaore has always revolved around empowerment and the equipping of lay professionals for ministry in the marketplace.

Chris Oberg currently serves as senior pastor of the 1200-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in Calimesa, California. She describes her assignment as “life’s grandest blessings: to be among colleagues for whom church matters, and to be with a congregation seriously seeking to follow Jesus in a complex world. Well, it doesn’t get more rewarding.” Chris Oberg is an alumna of La Sierra University, School of Religion in California, completing both a BA and an MA in Religion, with emphasis in NT Studies and Theology.

Michael Quicke is professor of preaching at Northern Seminary in Illinois. Educated at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, he spent 21 years in pastoral ministry in Blackburn, England and at the historical city-center church of St. Andrew’s Street in Cambridge, where a mission center was developed and opened serving 4000 people weekly. Since 1993 he has served in seminars, first as Principal of Spurgeon’s College, the largest Baptist seminary in Europe, and since 2000 by teaching preaching in the United States. Author of many articles, his main books include 360-Degree Preaching and 360-Degree Leadership.

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